



SERVANT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes December 13, 2023

1. The regular meeting of the VRUMC Servant Leadership Council (SLC) was convened on Wednesday, December 13, 2023, at 7:00 PM via Zoom, with all members present, except for Javier Saenz, James Kunke, and Bernadette Ealy. Based on the bylaws of the SLC, this did constitute a quorum of voting members.
2. The Chair led a spiritual and leadership development discussion about Christmas. The common element of our most fond Christmas traditions is sharing with family. This commonality has been true since that first Christmas, when Mary and Joseph welcomed their new child into their family and the world. It does not matter how one celebrates, what traditions you hold dear, or what you give or receive. The Christmas story is about your relationships – with each other and with God, and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Susan Francis led the opening prayer.
3. Pastor's Report
 - a. The Leadership Development (Nominations) Team has finalized the slate of new leadership for 2024. This slate was formally approved during the Charge Conference on December 5:
Leadership Development – Kay Allen and Pam Gowens (Class of 2026)
Lay Delegate to Annual Conference – Angie Christofferson (remains on SLC)
Servant Leadership Council – Class of 2026: Cassandra Williams, Matt Devine (Finance Chair), Wesley Potter (Trustee Chair for 2024). Karen Meeks will assume the role of SLC Chair for 2024.
 - b. Annual Church Christmas Letter – Pastor Ashley Anne will be sending out the yearly churchwide letter detailing many of the notable events that have taken place during 2023. The prevailing tone is one of excitement and optimism as we enter 2024. One highlight of the letter is despite a 5% decline in church attendance over the previous year, the number of visitors showed an 188% increase during the same time period.

4. Discussion Items

- a. Budget Process 2024 – The Chair presented the Final Proposal for the VRUMC 2024 Budget. Here are the highlights of the proposal:

Income/Offerings

In addition to the calculated Pledged and General Offerings, the church was able to access part of the Capital Funds Account at Texas Methodist Foundation (TMF). The interest earned on the account, accrued to \$19,300, can be used however we deem appropriate. The principal funds are highly restricted, however, with one exception. With the approval of the District Superintendent, which has been obtained, the church can use the account to offset the Pastor's Housing Allowance, our case a total of \$33,000. The proposed budget includes \$20,000 of those funds.

Expenses

All requests from the ministry leads were granted, with most decreasing from the current year. Two areas that have seen significant reduction since the first version of the budget include 2024 Apportionments, which decreased from \$41,495 to \$39,421 (reduction of \$2,074), and the replacement of our accounting service, reducing the yearly cost by \$5,934. The largest increase was the Trustee Budget, which now includes the cost of the new insurance policy and the \$10,000 deductible, in case of a major event. The other line item of note was a large increase in the Misc. Ministry Expenses. This item allows for flexibility when new ministry opportunities arise and have not been anticipated. The proposed number of \$33,135 does include the possibility of a mid-year hire of a Family Ministry Lead.

Bottom Line

The use of the TMF funds allows for the unique opportunity to take unused funds, with limited projected uses, to be put into active ministry by the church. This proposed budget creates an enormous amount of flexibility for the SLC to seize opportunities and strategize for future ministries.

Approval

The proposed 2024 Budget, with the Housing Allowance Offset, was formally presented to the SLC, seconded, and approved. A copy of the budget is available to anyone from the Church Office.

- b. Discussion Topics from SLC
 - No additional topics were brought forth.

5. Consent Package

- a. Financials – The current financial picture of the church is slowly improving as we approach the end of 2023. At the end of November, and excluding Depreciation Expense, the deficits (expenses exceeding revenue) by approximately \$17,000 budgeted, and \$6000 actual. This is marked improvement since the end of October. Giving through the first two Sundays in December was slightly above average.

6. SPRC (Closed Session) – The SPRC Chair brought the issue of the Staff Paid Time Off (PTO) policy to the Council. The most recent policy, adopted in October 2022, allowed for the rolling over of unused PTO to the following year. When the former Director of Worship left during 2023, this revealed unintended consequences to the policy. The SLC elected to pay her for the balance of the unused PTO, as the situation had not been addressed in the drafting of the policy. The SPRC Chair would like to reopen the issues and develop a more workable policy going forward. It was agreed to recompense the Director of Communications for unused PTO and address the possibility of a new policy during the new year.

7. Closing Words from the Chair

The outgoing SLC Chair used the opportunity to express appreciation to this year’s members of the SLC for their dedication and hard work during a challenging year. Special thanks go to Barry Sykes and Javier Saenz, serving in their last year on the Council.

This concludes six years of leadership for the Chair, a time of many challenges and unexpected events. The Chair expressed his pride in the flexibility and determination of the church, and its leadership, meeting each of these situations with grace and dignity. Three accomplishments over the six years were lifted:

1. Improved Communications, inside and out of the church
2. Mission Focus
3. Decision-making

The Chair was honored and privileged to be part of this growth in the life of VRUMC.

Blessing of the New SLC – Either January 7 or 14, to be determined

Next SLC Meeting – **SLC Retreat in January, to be determined**

Closing Prayer – Stephen Greenwade

Meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM.

Submitted:

Stephen Greenwade, Chair

Ashley Anne Sipe, Lead Pastor

Angie Christoffersen, Lay Member Annual Conf

James Kunke, Lay Leader

Hillarye Hightower, Staff Parish Relations Chair

Karen Meeks

Javier Saenz, Chair of Trustees

Susan Francis

Dan Sepdham

Tiffany Harlow

Bernadette Ealy