

WELLINGTON UCC

Council Minutes – Tuesday, June 09, 2026

Attendance: Kryss Chupp, Darlene Dehne, Brenda Friedman, Colleen Harper, Ann-Louise Haak, Barb and Hans Lagoni, Claudette Richards and Jim Morris

Absent: Karen Graham

Opening: -- Highs and Lows/ Opening Prayer / May Minutes Approved

Finance Report:

- Bank account balances were low at the end of May so \$50,000 was requested and received from the Endowment Fund (will show up in the June report)
- Overall expenditures are less than budgeted – in part due to the “chill” on spending approved earlier; otherwise spending is in line with what was budgeted
- Music Director salary appears over-budget but this will resolve after her summer hiatus.
- Wellington received a management fee of \$4,725 from SWG’s newly acquired grant of \$47,250 from the Chicago Community Trust – will show up on June report.
- Wellington Fund expenditures are over budget because of unanticipated congregational needs – the line will need to be increased next year.
- Pastor Expenses appear low because not all the debit card purchases have been entered.

Pastor Report:

- Working with Andrew on ways to enable committee chairs and others to access the Zoom accounts independently (without the pastor’s facilitation and hosting) are being explored. Will have feedback next month.
- Pastor attended the Community Mental Health Symposium as part of her behind the scenes work to help build relationships and establish connections in our new neighborhood – 300 people were present, 5 of them white. Connected with Mayzell Sykes who leads the Healing Breakfast at New Landmark Missionary Baptist Church which we have supported through Helping Hands. Ann-Louise now known as Karen Graham’s pastor. The event was organized by Live Free Illinois – with a grant from the state to establish mental health clinics in the African American community, particularly in churches.
- Pastor also attends the Leaders Network, a gathering of African American clergy on the West Side engaging in social justice. Mortality rate of people living on the West Side is 10 years less than those living downtown. There is a campaign to reopen West Suburban Medical Center – an important medical resource which was closed down in March.
- Brenda thanked Ann-Louise for connecting Carl with Build Chicago and Barb appreciated her for being our major connection to the “pockets of goodness” on the Blest West Side.

Update on the 425 Building Committee – Hans

- The group meets monthly and is working together well
- Dealt with the issue of folks tripping on the new dance floor installed by Honey Pot. They responded quickly and agreed to repair the edging or remove the floor by next Sunday.

Worship Committee Report - Brenda

- Thanked Hans for dealing with the dance floor – which was also an impediment to moving the worship table where it was wanted.
- Thanked Chris Inserra for preparing a spread sheet for each Sunday over the summer detailing song leaders, tech assistants and participants for each service in her absence.
- Buddy Bell volunteered to be the choir leader and soloist for the zoom services in July. Kryss will lead the first Sunday in August and Macy Danenhower (a colleague of Nick Gutterman) will be hired as song leader for the rest of August when Buddy is not available, paid the same as guest musicians.
- Guest preachers lined up – Sara Wohlleb for July 5, Jordan for August 9, Clinton for August 16 and Michelle Hughes for August 23.
- Grateful for Andrew's help with tech. He will be there for most of the summer and is capable of handling the entire set-up.
- Sid Mohn, now residing in Claremont, CA, has happily agreed to preach for Pride Sunday on June 28th and Susan Soric will be encouraged to zoom in from Sun Prairie. Ann-Louise is still researching LGBTQ ministers ordained at Wellington.

Planning for June 14th Congregational Gathering – Ann-Louise, Claudette and Barb

- Karen Graham agreed to contact Jordan or Debbie Southorn to Chair the meeting; if either is unable, she will do it herself.
- Karen Stockwell agreed to be Clerk of the Day but she and Clinton are requesting a ride to church as their car has been disabled by a deer. Darlene will ask Debbie Lee if she could provide transportation.
- Meeting will begin with a brief financial report, update on the Endowment Fund status by the Endowment Chair but the main focus will be on celebrating the past year beginning with a slide presentation.
- Worship service and the gathering will both take place in the sanctuary, as CCMC is having their service downstairs.
- Ann-Louise will give a pastor's report on all the ways she has been connecting with the community.
- Using the listening circle format, people (including Zoomers) will be given time to think about their experience being on the West Side, what's been learned, what challenges encountered, to write the positives down on green paper, the challenges on red paper and then to share their thoughts. Goal is to ensure everyone has an opportunity to be heard.
- Thinking about the year ahead, everything we do should focus on three kinds of events: (1) events that bring the community into our space, (2) events that bring us out into the

community or help us learn more about it and (3) events that strengthen and deepen our community of faith.

Planning for the Retreat, September 11-13 – Tower Hill

- Different format this year. Instead of a Saturday morning group focusing on a Church issue, an ala carte menu of activities to choose from will be offered.
- Theme will be “Welcoming the Stranger” – first by encouraging and inviting people to come to the retreat (using incentives, prizes, scholarships, whatever needed) and second, by providing ice-breaker conversation starters and third, by encouraging attendees to intentionally connect with others they don’t know well.
- Suggestion of people to encourage: Debbie and Leah, Keith Mandell, his wife and children (10 and 6), Dexter and Pia, Cindy Stahler, Sara Wohlleb.
- Activities being planned: a banner art project with Mark, a follow-up conversation on Graceful Aging with Debbie Lee, a chair yoga session with Ine, a walk to the beach, etc.
- Gathering and sharing of the group at meal times.

Congregational Life via Claudette has a passionate focus on reaching out to people.

- Ann-Louise noticed that neither Debbie Southorn or Meg Evans were seen during the month of May and encouraged us to reach out to them. Debbie and Olivia are buying a condo in Hyde Park and we might consider how to support them during this transition to their first home.
- Ann-Louise learned in a call to Slade’s daughter that he has been moved to a different care facility, has a landline rather than a cell phone and has had both legs amputated due to his diabetes. Ann-Louise will bring note cards for Slade on Sunday.
- In looking through the church’s old membership books, Ann-Louise discovered the cemetery where Beulah and Craig are buried and learned that they had purchased plots for their children. Charlotte now has a resting place and an event may be planned around getting her there.

Outreach Motion – Barb Lagoni

- Barb asked for direction on how long Outreach should defer requesting grants. The April Council Minutes had suggested holding off until July 1st.
- Colleen suggested that Outreach stagger their requests, with May grants provided now and the June ones after July 1st.
- Barb offered the following motion: “That the Council direct the Outreach Committee to request a June payment of the two grants approved in May, namely for Concern America (\$3,000) and Deborah’s Place (\$3,000). PASSED by affirmation.

Reflections on the Pastor’s Food for Thought Homework

- Ann-Louise shared that taking a moral, public stand on issues of trans rights or immigration might help people see the church as a place that has room for them. Barb added that we

need to be more visible, let others know what we stand for (like the welcome sign in Old South Church in Boston).

- Colleen found it interesting to explore all 7 changes to avoid death, was disappointed not more was said on the how. Traps of tradition – letting rules/customary procedures impede change and creativity. Looking for the silver bullet – if we had this or that, a PR person – that would save us. We need to trust what we hear our call to be, to be here for the struggle – may not see the fruits of our labor in our own time.
- Ann-Louise noted she's been at Wellington 6 years. Not going anytime soon but when she's ready to step down the new church phone can be handed to the next pastor with everyone already in it.
- The article did not express concern for others, just taking care of oneself. However, Wellington's lack of pastoral care has been a criticism in the past.
- Changing how we measure our effectiveness. Not just the number attending worship on a Sunday but overall how many people we see in a month. Not just how many are in the pew on Sunday but how many people volunteer in the ministry of your church. For example, SWG has 200 trained court accompaniers – doing the work of the church with us and because of us.
- Last suppers can be a safe gathering place for people to meet others with more progressive views (adoptive grandparents idea) when their own circles are not aligned with them.
- Another gathering place are the Singing Resistance groups, a nationwide movement that started in Minneapolis, now found across the country, in Chicago but not on the West Side. Chris Inserra has too much on her plate to become involved in this. There is a Community Sing in Rogers Park of about 25 people (not more than 5 over 50). We could start a group at the church, sit and sing together, nourish our spirits and provide balm for our souls in terrifying times.
- Regarding the School Project, the school liaison strongly advocated any before school program be in the church building, to show that the church is a safe community resource people can turn to when they need help.
- Colleen suggested an Outreach Sunday where we invite all the people we've funded to a service – a way to provide safety in numbers.
- Claudette suggested a Fall Harvest Festival in lieu of a Last Supper on Halloween. Barb suggested Trunk or Treat – “if you feed them, they will come” – will let people know we're here. Perhaps we can get Antonio on a Saturday.

NEXT MEETING IN PERSON AT ANN-LOUISE AND SHELBY'S, 6 PM – TUESDAY JULY 14TH