Canterbury United Methodist Church Church Council Minutes

May 8, 2023

**Welcome & Greeting** – Linda Stone greeted the members to the May meeting.

**Opening Prayer-** Tori Hastings opened the meeting with a prayer.

**Ministry Moment-** Ruth Grissom spoke about Children’s Sunday that just occurred on April 30th. Ruth mentioned that this was her 27th year to have Children’s Sunday and it just gets better every year. It is the one thing that makes the children feel they are a part of the church and can contribute to the church with their gifts. It is very powerful to have the children say what we hear every day and for the kids in the pews to know their worth. Pictures from Children’s Sunday were shown to members.

**My Canterbury Story-** Camille Herndon first visited Canterbury, 12 years ago after she graduated from Auburn University and tagged along with her then boyfriend, Rob Herndon. Camille grew up in Mobile in the Episcopal Church. Religion was important to Camille’s family while growing up, but they didn’t attend regularly and she felt as she didn’t have a place in the church. Her now husband, Rob, grew up attending First United Methodist Tuscaloosa and was very involved. They began attending on Sundays and then eventually came on Wednesdays to a group called, The Gathering, led by Drew Clayton. Canterbury was no question to Rob & Camille. After having children, they both felt that they needed to make church a priority. They started attending the Young Adult Bible Study Class and looked forward to it every week. When their daughter started 3K Sunday School, they decided they wanted to teach her class together.

This has been the most meaningful thing they have done in their lives. They want their children to be around people who encourage and impact their children’s lives. Camille feels that she has finally found her place in the Children’s Ministry and it has been so special to her.

**Finance Update-** Doug Williams updated the members on the financials for the month of April. Income for the month of April was about $269,000, which matched budget. The expenses for last month were about $395,000 and that was under budget by about $11,000. The net loss for April was about $126,000 which was less than budgeted by about $11,000. Through the month of April, the church received about $2.124 million in gifts and other types of income; which fell short of budget by about $55,000. The year-to-date expenses through April were about $1.709 million which was under budget by about $66,000. The 2023 year-to-date net income was about

$415,000 which exceeded budget by about $11,000. The operating cash balance is about

$415,000 at month end and long term operating reserves is about $869,000.

**Discernment Team Update-** Leon Ashford, member of the Discernment Team gave an update since the last Church Council meeting. The Discernment Team consists of 12 individuals who are diverse in age and background and are committed to put aside personal opinions as they seek to be guided by the Holy Spirit. Colossians 2:2-3 & Philippians 1:9-10 remain the sincere prayer of the Discernment Team as well as every member of the Canterbury Hall. The summary that has been provided tonight is a reflection of the information gathered directly from the 508 attendees at the discernment dinners that occurred between January and March of this year. These dinners began with prayer and ended with Holy Communion, reminding members of our unity in Christ and the covenant connection to one another through faith in Christ. The team heard a myriad of perspectives, concerns, and hopes for Canterbury, but with every dinner they walked away with a sense that the people of Canterbury love God, love their neighbors, and have a sincere desire to

be guided by the Holy Spirit. The summary highlighted the Discernment Team background, Discernment Dinners, Discernment Dinner Highlights, Top Concerns, Top Hopes, Sentiment Analysis, Key Themes/Insights/Findings, & General Requests. The goals of the dinners were to break bread together as a community, hear concerns about what is happening in the United Methodist Church, and to hear hopes for the kind of church Canterbury will be in the future.

Members expressed a range of concerns about the potential costs of disaffiliation, LGBTQ issues, power and control issues, inclusivity, historical cultural divides, misinformation, and a desire to deepen their theological understanding of how to interpret and understand the Bible’s teachings. Leon reminded members that the Canterbury UMC Discernment Team has been meeting now for more than a year. As individuals, they have spent untold hours praying and

asking guidance from the Holy Spirit, trusting that the Spirit will do its work from within them as both disciples of Jesus Christ and as a Discernment Team. Leon walked the members through a timeline with dates of the next steps. A Special Called Conference of the North Alabama Conference will happen this week, May 11th, with 100- 125 churches expected to disaffiliate.

The final Special Called Conference of 2023 set by the North Alabama Conference is September 12, 2013. The date for the September 12th called Special Session of the North Alabama Conference and August 1st deadline for disaffiliation paperwork for the conference was announced after the last Church Council meeting on April 17th. With this timeline from the North Alabama Conference, these next steps represent an authentic, transparent, and good faith effort to both be open to the Holy Spirit’s continued work throughout the discernment process and the congregants desire to have clarity and move forward. The summary document is shared with

Church Council and notify them the Discernment Team’s intent to deliver a recommendation to the Church Council at a Special Called Church Council meeting on Monday, June 12th at 6:30 pm. The summary document will be shared via email to the whole congregation and invite them to an information Meeting on May 17th. The Information meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 17th at 6 pm with invitation and encouragement to members to commit to 26 days of prayer between May 17 and June 12th. A prayer calendar with scriptures will be provided to help guide congregants in their prayer time. The church will enter into 26 days of prayer on May 7th – June 12th for the Discernment Team and their upcoming recommendation to the Church Council on Monday, June 12th. On Monday, June 12th at 6:30 pm, the Canterbury UMC Discernment Team will deliver their recommendation to the Church Council to vote on. There was a time for questions.

**Senior Minister’s Report-** Keith mentioned that the Discernment Team has made a vow to be guided by the Holy Spirit. He invited the members to breathe deeply, spend time in prayer, and to think about the decision as a church. Last Wednesday, members got to hear about the transformative love in the life of those that spoke from Homeboy Industries. And just two Sundays ago, they were led in worship by the smallest members of the church on Children’s Sunday. That night, students were celebrated at Senior Night and young adults were serving the meal and that is the church- raising one another up. Keith reminded members that Jesus calls us to unity and that we are one in the body of Christ. Keith invited members to start praying today as the church makes a decision as one and continue to do great work and move forward as one. Keith adjourned the meeting with a prayer.