

**First Congregational Church United Church of Christ (FCCUCC) of Colorado Springs
Minutes of the Council Meeting**

April 12, 2018, Gregg Library

Council Members in Attendance:

Connie Brachtenbach (*Moderator*)
Scott Tetrick (*Vice Moderator*)
Lisa Mason (*Secretary*)
Mike Gemm (*Treasurer*)
Gloria Latimer (*Education*)
Adam Gibbs (*Worship & Spiritual Life*)
Wayne Bland (*Outreach*)

Council Members Absent:

Lynne Stefonik (*Care and Fellowship*)

Ex Officio in Attendance:

Rev. Heather Haginduff
(*Lead Minister*)

Rev. Jacque Franklin

(*Minister of Pastoral Care*)

Ruth Roland (*Director of Financial
Ministries*)

Ex Officio Absent: None

Guests:

Glenn Pressman, Attorney

Trig Bundgaard (*Blackbird Outreach*)

Jessica Gemm (*Leadership Cultivation
Committee*)

Fred Martin (*Owner of Rocky Top
Landscaping*)

Dinner, Grace and Devotional was provided thanks to Mike.

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER - 6:14 pm

LEADERSHIP CULTIVATION COMMITTEE:

Jessica Gemm attended to give an overview/share the processes for selecting candidates for open positions on Council, and the functions of LCC.

HOMELESSNESS AGENDA ITEM:

Connie reviewed the information sent, by e-mail, ahead of this meeting. Glenn Pressman, attorney, spoke stating he started researching the legal (and other aspects) of the homeless. He concluded that what is needed is a tent city/ managed campground as a short-term solution to assist in solving these problems. Through that he met Trig with Blackbird Task Force. Blackbird formulated a strategic plan to create a managed campground and during that process Rocky Top became available as a possible site. Glenn discussed how the RLUIPA statute can be used by religious institutions to sanction and backstop a managed campground as part of the religious institution's mission. Glenn also mentioned that regarding liability issues, those issues are generally addressed by insurance coverage.

Trig Budgaard explained the "God of the Gaps" premise that Blackbird Task Force exists because of the gaps of the current homelessness situation. Blackbird, and the wider community, continues to seek solutions, especially focusing on dignity

camping/legal camping or sanctioned villages (which is a newer phrase). Utilizing the RLUIPA statute as a reasonable solution, Blackbird Task Force is looking for a church to partner with to implement this statute. Part of the strength of implementing this statute lies in the city (of Colorado Springs) and county (El Paso) likely not wanting a headline saying they are standing in the way of a church fulfilling their mission.

Fred Martin:

He thanked Council for giving him the time to present this information and for our consideration of this proposal. Rocky Top purchased their current land in 2005 and the business was established in 2006. Rocky Top started having some homeless people camping on Rocky Top land and Fred asked these campers to follow certain guidelines and generally they did. At one point an incident of someone throwing an item lead to a camper being injured which was reported to the city and that brought the homeless camping issue to the attention of the city. Because of this, it was discovered that Rocky Top's variance to operate as a business had expired. The variance issue has been worked on for several months and is close to being resolved. 3/4th of the campers living there have willingly moved since the property is not legal to have campers on it. At the time that the variance is established, the property must not have any campers on it, it must start "clean". Trig has been helping the campers voluntarily decide to leave in order to avoid evictions. Once the campers have left and the variance is established, then a sanctioned village can be considered. Guidelines will need to be established as to how a sanctioned village is managed and how liabilities will be handled.

Pastor Jacque spoke stating several serial surveys have shown the FCC Congregation is wanting/ increasingly interested in having a larger impact locally on the homelessness issue. MG &O has routinely been excited about this issue. Pastor Heather spoke stating she thinks we can do concrete work around this, especially theologically. Pastor Heather believes this is one of the most exciting opportunities a church has been offered in a long time. She stated this is the "heart" argument for this initiative, and the "head" portion involves the use of statutes and insurance to answer the various issues that also need to be addressed.

After this information was presented, discussion from the Council ensued. The dialogue included ideas such as: FCCUCC could lease (or purchase) the property; there will need to be time spent getting the congregation educated and highly engaged about this and to be willing to do more than just donate money to the cause. The El Paso County Commissioners may be at loggerheads about the issue of sanctioned villages. Wayne explained that the El Paso County Commissioners' mantra has, in the past, been "housing first" because they believe that only then can you address mental health problems, addictions etc. The FCC Just Peace Committee has been looking for a topic to be able to show that FCCUCC doesn't just talk about issues but that we also demonstrate it by our actions.

The Council and visiting speakers stated that various arguments against legal camping/sanctioned villages are: permanent housing is the goal- any other idea is a

distraction; the homeless are supposed to go to shelters but the reality is we still need more shelter beds yet the most recently built shelter, Colorado Springs Rescue Mission cost \$24 million to build so building more shelter beds would be quite costly and time consuming to get done.

Mayor John Suthers is most concerned about the public safety issues around the idea of sanctioned villages. (Other mayors have told him "don't do this".) Trig says that if the sanctioned village management plan does not include policing sobriety or drug use, that can be a big issue for many sanctioned village opponents. The "who" questions will be harder than the "how" questions. The Blackbird Task Force proposed "sanctioned village management plan" currently supports self-governance but many opponents to sanctioned villages will disagree with that. Health and cleanliness issues will likely be raised by opponents and proponents of sanctioned villages.

Trig and Glenn stated that various models of supported housing projects from around the country usually give vouchers and holistically "take care of all the campers needs" with several cities finding that 86% are still successfully housed and it costs, on average, \$7,000 per person. The long-term mission of a sanctioned village would be to eventually have permanent structures, I.E. a Tiny Home village.

Ruth stated our insurance agent doesn't know the cost of a policy yet because the insurance policy developed would depend on the size of the variance.

Mike moved that the Council consider this mission work as part of our outreach work and that Council should continue to pursue this topic and continue to engage in the conversation and to learn what it would take for FCCUCC to be part of a managed encampment process. Scott seconded it. Discussion from Council stated the conversation should include spiritual, educational, and financial components as well. The motion was approved unanimously by Council via voice vote.

MARCH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES:

It was moved by Gloria and seconded by Scott that Council accept the March 2018 minutes as written. The motion was approved unanimously by Council via voice vote.

CORE RESOURCES:

Connie asked if there were any additional pieces of information from the Core Resource leaders and there were none.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Mike brought up the topic of temporarily restricted funds. The Financial Advisory Committee advised that there should be a mission to clean up the balance sheet of various categories of temporarily restricted funds. The Financial Advisory Committee advised that Council must formally make a motion and vote on it in order to "release the restrictions."

Mike moved (as noted in the previously e-mailed Treasurer's Report) to release the restriction on temporarily restricted funds. Gloria seconded it. The motion was approved unanimously by Council via voice vote.

FINANCIAL MINISTRY:

Ruth stated she will be partnering with each member of Council going forward in order to create a plan to manifest the additional financing needed to balance the budget.

LEAD MINISTER:

Pastor Heather provided more information about the upcoming Leadership Retreat. She explained it will be a long, full, robust day. She's met with Kimberley Sherwood, retreat facilitator, several times and they have done a thorough job in looking at items that need to be included on the agenda. Pastor Heather gave an assignment to all Council members to come to the retreat with the answer to the following questions: "What are the roles and responsibilities for staff. How do you see the council and staff working together in order to manifest the FCC mission, the FCC work values and the FCC vision." The FCC vision is: "Welcome Witness and Wonder" and "We will set the table for all who hunger and thirst." The retreat will go from 8:30-4:30 in the Founders Room, April 21st. Pastor Heather stated that a great deal has transpired this month and she is excited to share with all of us the imagining of the national theological confirmation. The retreat format includes a potluck lunch so everyone is to bring something. Pastor Heather's Installation, through the Rocky Mountain Association, will take place on April 22nd with a reception to follow.

There is still an opening for one more FCCUCC delegate for the Rocky Mountain Celebration. We currently have Pastor Heather, Adam Gibbs, Lisa Mason, Deb Buenting and Blake Pelton scheduled to go.

MEETING EVALUATION:

Wow (expressed twice)!

Scott closed the meeting with a devotion about Doubting Thomas. Thomas travelled the furthest of the Apostles. His tomb is believed to be in India.

ADJOURNMENT:

8:31 pm.

Respectfully submitted by
Lisa A. Mason, Council Secretary



Lisa A Mason, Council Secretary



Connie Brachtenbach, Council Moderator