

Southeast Gateway Area Board Meeting Minutes

August 9, 2008

Florissant Valley Christian Church

The Board of Directors of the Southeast Gateway Area of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Mid-America met at Florissant Valley Christian Church on Saturday, August 9, 2008.

Present were Patricia Clark, Doug Cripe, Mike Dixon, Norma Ellington-Twitty, Joy Faires, Melissa Feldhaus, Jacque Foster, Ashley Gordon, Andy Handy, Barbara Jarman, Sharon Keith, Kay Marshall, John Morton, Margie Pride, Penny Ross-Corona, Dave Sager, Doyle Taylor, Dietra Wise, and Susan Moore.

Director Dave Sager of Florissant Valley Christian Church welcomed everyone.

Moderator Doug Cripe called the meeting to order at 10:03.

Jacque Foster led the opening devotion, stressing the importance of encouraging and empowering church members to minister to people outside the church.

Educational Moment: Pro-Reconciliation/Anti-Racism Task Force

Margie Pride informed the group that September 28-October 5 is designated as Week of Reconciliation. The task force has set a goal of raising \$20,000, which would be double the level of prior giving. The task force will be sending information packets including brochures and DVDs during the last week in August. Congregations are asked to utilize these materials to encourage generous giving. The task force can also provide additional information, support, and even speakers to help achieve this ambitious goal. Since the last Board meeting, there has also been another Pro-Reconciliation/Anti-Racism training event in Jefferson City which was described by participants as very powerful and enlightening. For more information about the Week of Reconciliation, please contact Margie.

Sharing of News from Our Congregations

Information shared included the following: successful completion of renovation project, initiation of renovation project, 50th year celebration, ordinations, attendance at National Convocation of Christian Churches, Vacation Bible School, mission efforts, and 3 churches participating in the Church Extension's New Beginnings program. In addition, Maplewood Christian Church has voted to close effective Christmas Eve 2008. Please keep Rev. Charlsi Lewis and all of Maplewood Christian Church in your prayers.

Minutes from the April 19, 2008 Meeting

The minutes from the Board's last meeting were not read as they had been emailed to the group prior to the meeting. Margie Pride moved to approve the minutes. Doyle Taylor seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Treasurer's Report

Please note that the 2007 financial report (page 6 in board packet) is *unaudited* and is for management purposes only. This summary, as well as other reports for audit purposes, was created primarily from our bank statements, as the data entered into our bookkeeping software were largely unreliable. The 2007 audit is well underway by Mare and Company and the results will be distributed as soon as they are available. There will likely be some adjustments to the 2007 financial statements as a result of the audit. Special thanks to Pat Garnett who spent many hours helping with bookkeeping tasks while the Area had no administrative assistant.

The Area is currently in a state of financial crisis. Though this crisis actually began in 2007, the bookkeeping at the time was not complete or accurate enough to bring this fact to the attention of the Area Minister, the Financial Coordinator, or the Board. Many bills in 2007 did not get paid in a timely manner and, as a result, incurred finance charges and late fees. Some very large bills (noted on page 5 of the Board packet) did not get paid in 2007 at all and are, therefore, shown as 2008 expenses. In addition, congregational giving in 2007 was \$25,637 short of the budgeted anticipated amount, and congregational giving for 2008 is currently \$7,204 short of the anticipated budgeted amount for July 31.

Adding to the Area's financial problems are a significant decrease in camper registrations for 2008, as well as a significant increase in the number of summer staff hours at Orchard Crest.

Unfortunately, the Area savings has been depleted in order to pay these bills. Approximately \$10,000 of these savings funds had been designated for the Pro-Reconciliation/Anti-Racism Task Force and for the Alan Roxburgh Missional Church event and, therefore, need to be replenished. Almost \$5,000 has already been replenished as a result of an outside church utilizing Orchard Crest. The Area Minister proposes to liquidate the Parker Fund to return the rest of the designated money taken from savings, and will be seeking permission to do so under New Business. In addition, she will be seeking authorization to access any monies contained in the Area's unrestricted Foundation Fund, currently valued at approximately \$15,000, as necessary.

The Area Minister is pleased to now have the 2007 and 2008 year to date books reconciled and is confident that appropriate systems are in place to keep accurate, complete, and timely financial records. She hopes to increase income through the usage of Orchard Crest Camp by marketing to outside churches, particularly in Cape Girardeau.

Jacque Foster asked the admittedly very difficult question of, considering decreased usage and increased expenses over the years, is it good stewardship of the Area's resources to continue to operate Orchard Crest?

Dave Sager asked what policies and procedures are in place to ensure that the Area Minister, the Board Moderator, and the Financial Coordinator always have a correct and complete accounting of the Area's finances. The Area Minister outlined the internal controls that are already in place, namely the fact that she opens and signs off on all bank statements as they arrive in the office; the Administrative Assistant fills out the check request and prepares the checks, and the Area Minister approves the check requests and signs the checks; and we have an annual audit by an outside accounting firm. In addition, the Administrative Assistant will begin to send a reconciliation summary report to the Financial Coordinator on a monthly basis as each month's bank reconciliation is completed.

Additional discussion was held about the fact that there is not currently a financial policy manual in place for the Area, and how such a document might help us to recognize and prevent future financial problems.

Moderator's Report

Doug Cripe thanked the Area Minister and the Area Administrative Assistant for their work in straightening out the Area's accounting and record keeping. He noted that the Administrative Assistant has also assumed responsibility for updating the Area website.

Executive Committee

There was no Executive Committee Report. The Executive Committee will meet on Wednesday, September 24, 2008 at 5:30 p.m. in the SEGA office.

Administrative Report

The Administrative Report (page 11 of the Board packet) was received as written.

Property Committee Report

The Property Committee Report (page 12 of the Board packet) was received as written.

Ministry Division Report

Mike Dixon reported that he attended a Commission on the Order of Ministry meeting earlier in the week and that two ordinations had been approved. Approved for ordination are John Morton and Wesley Knight.

Mission Division Report

In the absence of Larry Thomas, Penny Ross-Corona highlighted pages 13-20 in the Board packet which include new church and new missionary activity. Please note that the time of the Bentrott's reception on September 14 is 2:30, not 2:00 as printed on page 20 of the Board packet. Please plan to attend this important event and encourage your congregations to do the same. If your church is not already involved in supporting this new missionary effort, please encourage them to find a way to do so.

Nurture Division Report

Brian Kirk's Nurture Division Report was distributed separately from the Board packet. In addition, the Area Minister highlighted the possibility of Brian and Barry Kirk's Safe Sanctuary program being utilized in Area churches. Camp participation figures were also presented on pages 21-23 of the Board packet and were noted to be significantly lower than last year.

Nominating Committee Report

There was no report but an announcement was made that there is need for a nominating committee to be named by the first of the year. There was also some discussion about the Regional Assembly in October. The Area has been invited to set up a display in the exhibit hall. The Area Minister will consult with other areas to determine whether or not we will create one. Union Avenue Christian Church will be hosting the Area Assembly in 2009.

Area Minister Report

Penny Ross-Corona presented her report as it appears on page 24 of the Board packet and explained the purpose and format of the STOLE camp. She also noted that, even given the current financial crisis, the programming of the Area, including Orchard Crest, has been exceptionally good.

Old Business

Margie Pride outlined the status of ECHO. As of May 2008, all of the children have gone and almost all of the buildings have been closed. Disciples Benevolent Services and the steering committee, chaired by Margie, plan to identify a flagship program for the facility within the next couple of months. In the meantime, they are gathering information and considering the unmet needs within the community.

New Business

Norma Ellington-Twitty posed a question about reducing expenses and the need for a long-range plan other than just accessing Foundation funds. At their next meeting, the Executive Committee will create a long-term plan for the addressing the financial situation of the Area.

Mike Dixon moved to authorize the Area Minister to do two things: first, to liquidate the Parker Fund in order to replace monies utilized out of the Area savings account, secondly, to access the unrestricted Christian Church Foundation Fund, currently valued at approximately \$15,000, to cover Area expenses as needed. She will also send out a letter to churches outlining the current financial situation of Orchard Crest and making a plea for contributions. The motion was seconded by Jacque Foster and carried, though opposed by Norma Ellington-Twitty and Dave Sager.

Kay Marshall moved to empower the Moderator to appoint a task force to study, outline, address, and ultimately improve the currently declining state of Orchard Crest. Margie Pride seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Dave Sager moved to have the Area Minister send a letter to all SEGA congregations outlining the current shortfall, for both Orchard Crest and the Area, when comparing expenses to income. This letter will include an appeal for donations by not only congregations, but by individuals, CWF groups, or even Sunday School groups. Norma Ellington-Twitty seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

The January 10, 2009 Board meeting will be held at either Dover Place or Memorial Boulevard.
The April 18, 2009 Board meeting will be held at Orchard Crest.

Ashley Gordon volunteered to provide the opening devotion at the January 10, 2009 meeting.

Doug Cripe gave the closing prayer.

Kay Marshall moved to adjourn. Norma Ellington-Twitty seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 2:09 pm.

Respectfully submitted by
Susan Moore
SEGA Administrative Assistant