

St. Mark Lutheran Church
Migrant Ministries Committee
Meeting Minutes
2/29/24

Attendees: Cindy Ashton, Jeannie Weber, Les Weber, Dick Quast, Diane Quast, Nancy Snell (Guest), George Elder, Carl Anderson, Pat Gerber, Mike Haase (co-chair), and Linda Olson (co-chair)

This is the initial meeting of this committee. Nancy Snell reviewed expectations from the council:

- People have been contacting the church and council with questions and concerns about this situation. We need to make sure those with questions are directed to this ad hoc committee.
- The committee needs to maintain communication with the council regarding our progress.
- The committee needs to determine if this is feasible before starting to look for a family. We need to let the council know when we make this determination.
- The committee needs to come up with a consistent response to the issue of people being here illegally; asylum seekers are here legally.
- The committee should come up with a recommendation on how to keep the neighborhood informed once a decision is made regarding housing a family in the parsonage.
- The committee needs to get confirmation of support from the Village of Mt. Prospect.
- Clarify insurance issues.
- Clarify financial responsibilities.
 - If we decide to move forward, we will need a financial person on the committee.
- Clarify legal issues.
- When the committee figures out what we are going to do, we need to bring a proposal to the council for approval.

Mike started a spreadsheet with tasks, contacts, questions/concerns, and code of conduct contacts. He reviewed the spreadsheet and how to move between tabs with the committee. Mike will create a file in google drive where this spreadsheet and other committee related information will be stored. The drive will be shared with the committee, but you will need to have a Gmail account to access the file.

Began discussing concerns that have been brought to the committee and issues we have identified, i.e., eviction or the asylees are inviting others to live with them or, in general, not abiding by the code of conduct, how do we respond, especially if it is severe enough that we would need to evict them. We need to talk to someone who is knowledgeable and get answers to these questions. Les may be able to get a contact to address these questions. It should be noted, we will do our best to answer questions/concerns, however, we will not be able to address all the concerns of members of the congregation.

Another question that was brought up: are these people associated with some organization or government involvement? We will need to get this information.

Discussion about our partners and their ability to assist financially and not making that a contingency of their involvement. We need to look for other sources of to assist with funding. We need to have a separate fund set-up for this initiative. Nancy Hundley either has set up a fund for this or will set-up a fund. It was suggested that we start to take contributions and then if we don't do this then we will refund the money. However, this is complex.

This led to a discussion on the search for a new pastor. Will the parsonage as part of the pastor's package; if they don't want the parsonage, what is St. Mark going to do with it? We also discussed a potential timeline in looking for a new pastor, as this could impact how long the parsonage would be available. There is no concrete timeline but it seems the earliest a new pastor would start would be September of this year. If we want to make sure we have the house available for this initiative, we could exclude from the pastor's package but that would probably be met with negativity from the congregation. There was also a suggestion of slowing down the process but we believe we need to continue to move forward and not have this initiative impact the call process. Nancy will talk with Pastor Eric about timeline. Les recommended a best-case, worst-case scenario timeline.

We set a deadline of the end of March for getting a proposal to the council.

Linda brought up concerns that people have raised, is this the best time for this initiative and should we be focused on the financial situation at St. Mark and not start something that will divert the money away from St. Mark. It was restated that this will not impact the financial situation at St. Mark. We believe we will be able to raise funds to cover all costs.

Linda also brought up that given people are expressing concerns, should we hold a listening session to allow people to voice their concerns and potentially address those that we already have answers to. People were in agreement but there was no discussion on setting up a session.

We identified tasks that need to be addressed and people to follow-up:

- Talk with Village - Mike
- Investigate insurance coverage – Mike will talk with Nancy Hundley
- Contact an immigration lawyer – Les
- Financials – Linda and Carl will explore financial expectations
- Exploring where we get a family – Mike
- Steps in progressing through the asylum process/getting work permit and available assistance – Linda & Cindy
- Timeline – Nancy will talk with Pastor Eric

Jeannie shared what Linda N's of how they got involved with this at Luther Memorial.

Inviting others to join this meeting, partners outside of St. Mark. In general, this would be a benefit to the committee. Grace, Lutheran Church of the Cross, St. Raymond's, St. James, St. Paul. Les and Carl will invite members.

Changing the name of committee from Ad Hoc to Migrant Ministry.

Next meeting, March 12 at 2:30 pm in the Great Room.

Pat agreed to be the committee Chaplain and closed the meeting with prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Olson