

**Holy Covenant MCC Minutes  
Annual Congregational Business Meeting  
November 12, 2023**

**Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order at 11:36 am by Rev. Martha Daniels.

**Opening Prayer:** Roxann Victory

**Certification of Quorum:**

The Clerk, Barbara Adams Latsaras established that a quorum (4 were needed) was present with 8 members in attendance out of 18 total Members.

**Minutes:**

Motion to adopt the Minutes from the November 20th, 2022, Congregational Meeting by Roxann Victory, seconded by Jim Ulisse. Unanimously approved.

**Board Reports:**

a) Moderator's Report (Rev. Martha Daniels)

(This report also includes the Worship Ministry, Education, and Pastoral Care reports.)

Holy Covenant has continued to live stream worship via YouTube. We have had to adapt and rework processes from time to time and have discovered what does and does not work well on livestream. It has proved to be an extremely useful tool, however, as not only do we have people watch at the time of worship from a distance, or if they are ill and cannot come to worship, but we also have people who watch it later in the day or even later in the week.

We had several special worship services this year, beginning with the Rev. John Hose Award recognition of service in January. Rev. Michael Cooper presented me with the Rev. John Hose Award, MCC's award to clergy in recognition of "outstanding service to the denomination." Special church occasions were also observed, such as Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, a Blessing of the Animals, and so on. In June, we shared a Pride service and potluck with our sister MCC in Chicagoland, A Church 4 Me. Members of Holy Covenant also took part in planning and offering a service at International Mr. Leather in May—this was especially satisfying, as one of the attendees had never heard of MCC before and was excited to learn there was a church where he could be all of himself. Good Friday was observed with a community service at Second Baptist Church of LaGrange. We also remembered Mother's and Father's Day, and All Saints Day. We also celebrated a reclamation service in September to recognize the restoration of the church building after the church building was vandalized with spray paint in late March. The Worship Team is preparing for Trans Day of Remembrance, the community Thanksgiving service, World AIDS Day, Advent, and Christmas Eve, to round out the year.

We hosted several guest preachers, including Rev. Nilsa Irizarry, Rev. Doreen Sturba DeZur, Minister Al Banks, and Mr. Harold Gibson.

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I led worship for Imago Dei MCC in Pennsylvania (via Zoom) several times during the year as they engaged in a search for a new pastor. I also led worship at Plymouth Place Retirement Community on three occasions.

I have to thank Roxann Victory, our tech lead for worship, for her flexibility and willingness to try new apps and new ways of doing things, of adapting to changes on the fly, and problem-solving when needed. She's also trained Barbara Adams Latsaras to run the PowerPoint when she's out of town, and thanks to Barb for taking that on. Finally, thanks to the Worship Team for constructive feedback, helpful suggestions, and a commitment that worship is continually improving. Thank you, Joanie Baird, Holly Blonde, Andrew Hillum, Jim Ulisse, and Roxann Victory!

"Joseph" was the topic of a movie discussion in October, focused on the movie of that name, a series from PBS starring Ben Kingsley as Potiphar.

I continued my outreach to the community through membership in and attendance at the monthly lunch for progressive clergy in the LaGrange/LaGrange Park/Brookfield area. We have supported many events in the area (a health fair, a community unity education day, community Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas meals, the BEDS shelter, and more). In addition, I took part in the Good Friday and SummerFest worship services.

Community Outreach also includes two groups that are specifically geared to the LGBTQ+ community—SAGE's Friday afternoon discussion group, and Thrive with Pride, a program of AgeOptions, for LGBTQ+ seniors. The national SAGE organization asked all the local groups to rename themselves, dropping the SAGE name. The group meeting in Bellwood is now the West Suburban Senior Services. I usually attend the Friday group. Thrive with Pride offers a large group meeting once a month via Zoom, which usually involves a presentation on a topic of interest to LGBTQ seniors, from Medicare to LGBTQ themes in movies to LGBTQ-oriented legal guides. Several churches and senior centers (Holy Covenant is one of them) offer small group discussions and re-presentation of the large group topic.

I have applied for another Louisville Grant, this time to implement a spiritual advocacy ministry in MCC. As of this writing, I have not heard whether I will receive it—awards are scheduled to be announced November 1, so I anticipate knowing by the time of the congregational meeting.

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Our Pastoral Care Ministry is expanding, as Holly Blonde has begun to take on the initial contact for people we haven't seen in church or online for a while. Once she makes contact, if they wish it or she feels it would be helpful, she passes the names on to me. Our prayer ministry is expanding, as those watching the live stream ask for prayers via the comment box, and more people from the general public are accessing our online prayer request form. I also continue to support two people in Cook County Jail via court presence, correspondence, and virtual visits.

I continue to participate in the Thriving in Ministry program of MCC, which is intended to support MCC clergy and ministerial leaders by encouraging selfcare and healthy practices, whatever that may be for the individual—exercise, meditation, time away, hobbies, etc. Another clergy person and I meet regularly via Zoom for mutual support and encouragement.

In late March, the church building was vandalized—spray paint was used to cover up our rainbow stairs and the rainbow lines on our front door, as well as cover our rainbow cross on our banner. The Brookfield Police were of course contacted, but their investigation did not have useful results. However, we were pleased and relieved by the response from our neighbors in Brookfield, who rallied to our support with financial donations, their labor in assisting to clean up and repaint our rainbows (and we added a few more!), and in the meals provided by Pub 78 (our Pints with the Pastor location) and Indivisible Brookfield during our painting days. In addition, we were gifted with many rocks painted with rainbows and slogans such as “Love Wins,” and “Brookfield is for Everyone.” The later slogan was also made into signs by a local sign maker and proved so popular he had to make more, twice, and expanded it to “LaGrange Park is for Everyone.” Finally, our replacement banner was donated by the banner maker who had made our original called Banner 4 Us. The malice of the individuals who marred our building had the opposite result from their intent—we were not intimidated, nor were our Brookfield neighbors; instead, we were strengthened by the knowledge that we were supported, wanted, and loved in the neighborhood.

All in all, it has been a busy year, with more than the usual ups and downs—and coming on the heels of COVID, that is saying something! I continue to be grateful for the leadership and support of the Holy Covenant Board of Directors: Roxann Victory, Barbara Adams Latsaras, and Joanie Baird.

b) Clerk's Report (Barbara Adams Latsaras):

Barbara Adams Latsaras informed the congregation that we have 18 adults and four children as Members. We recently went over the membership list and contacted four individuals to ask if they wanted to stay as members. We did not hear back from them so they were removed from membership.

c) Treasurer's Report (Joanie Baird):

i) Financial Report

Joanie presented the financial picture for the church for the last year.

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- September 2023 YTD Net Operating revenue was \$48,297 and Expenses were \$36,853, so Net Income was about \$11,444 for September 2023 YTD.
- From October 2022 to September 2023, we had Net Operating revenue of \$59,377 and expenses of \$48,095 so we had a Net Income of about \$11,282.
- We received two gifts from the now closed New Spirit MCC church totaling \$15,000.
  - \$3,000 to pay back part of the loan from the Designated Fund,
  - \$3,520 to install new gutters and downspouts,
  - \$480 we reserved in case the gutters expense ran over the \$3520 estimate,
  - and \$3000 was set aside for a reserve for contingencies.
  - The remaining \$5000 is unrestricted.
  - Excluding the \$15,000 from them, we would have had a deficit of (-3,556).
- The Spring Garage Sale totaled \$1,642.
- The June Dance/Auction totaled \$975.
- The Fall Garage Sale was in October, after the end of the current fiscal year.
- We received a settlement from Erie Insurance for almost \$70,000 to cover storm damage to the roof.
- 2) Our current Operating Fund cash balance as of 10/17/23 is about \$12,064, which includes \$3,450 restricted for Salary only, \$3,000 reserve, and the remaining \$5,134 is unrestricted.
- 3) September 2023 YTD UFMCC Assessment = \$1039.
- Our January 2023 tithe rate was 3.5%. The rest of the year is at 2%
- 4) Pension for September 2023 YTD is  $\$1.75 \times 22 \text{ members} = \$38.50/\text{month} \times 9 = \$346.50$ .
- 6) Total owed by the Operating Fund to the Designated Fund is still \$1200 as of September 30, 2023
- 7) Checking Balance in the Designated Fund on 9/30/23 was \$9044,
- 8) Current Balance in the Age Options Designated Fund as of 10/17/2023 = \$5,487, which includes \$2000 grant for 2023.
- 10) Balance forward is about \$983 in the Boiler/AC Fund.

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- Balance in the Sign Repair Fund is still about \$2528.

ii) Presentation of the 2023 Budget (Joanie Baird)

iii) Budget Approval

- Joanie talked about the differences between the two budgets.
- Raised the Pastor's salary by 5%.
- There were no questions asked about the 2024 Budget.

Motion to accept the 2024 Budget by Jim Ulisse, seconded by Sue Callahan.  
Unanimously approved.

**Interim Lay Delegate's Report (Jim Ulisse):**

- There has been no discussion or meetings for the year.

**Ministry and Program Reports:**

**Buildings and Grounds Report (Mary Ann Latsaras):**

- Coordinated volunteers, local neighbors, congregants, members, HCMCC friends and material donations for vandalism recovery.
- Installed two more ring cameras on the church premises for security and loss prevention after the vandalism.
- In July we had the roof, siding and gutters installed.
- We are asking for volunteers to clean the church weekly (light duty maintenance) to keep the inside spiffy or delegate donations to hire an outside service.
- Now that we are in the throes of winter, we are asking for volunteers for snow removal or, again, designated donations to hire an outside service to keep walkways and entrances safe and clear.

2) Social Media Report (Barbara Adams Latsaras):

- Website changes done as needed throughout the year
- Posting on Instagram, and Facebook
- Sends out a weekly Constant Contact newsletter to let the congregation and friends know what is happening at the church.
- Giving Tuesday was successful in 2022 for the church.

3) Social Action Ministry Report (Rev. Martha Daniels):

- Received 1,000 socks from Bombas and have started handing them out to

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worthy causes such as homeless veterans.

- Share Food, Share Love Food Pantry is a partner with HC and Barbara Adams Latsaras is on their fundraising and website building committee. She also volunteers there a few times a month for intake.

4) Pastoral Care Ministry Report (Holly Blonde):

- Have communicated within the church, in newsletters, website that Rev. Martha is available for home or hospital visits and for giving communion.
- Holly Blonde is sending out of cards and making phone calls to those that have not attended and if they are sick.

Motion to approve the Ministry Reports by Roxann Victory and seconded by Barbara Adams Latsaras. Unanimously approved.

**Elections:**

A) **Election of Board Members:**

Joanie Baird was elected to 2-year term on the Board. There is a 1-year opening on the Board still available.

C) **Motion to Destroy the Ballots:**

Motion to destroy the ballots by Jim Ulisse and 2<sup>nd</sup> by Roxann Victory. All approved

**Adjournment:**

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:33 pm by Barbara AdamsLatsaras, seconded by Jim Ulisse. Unanimously approved.

**Closing Prayer:** Rev. Martha Daniels