

AGENDA

Committee to Establish an Independent Cemetery Association to Care of the Paradise Cemetery
Tuesday, July 20, 2021 at St. James UMC, Coburn PA

Please sign in

Welcome & Call the Meeting to Order

Last Meeting's Minutes

Old Business

Update regarding legal assistance – Pastor Theresa, Kimbra Nyman

Naming the Association – (Georgene's suggestion, others)

Tombstone restoration and replacement updates – Pastor Theresa

Fundraising ideas updates from the last meeting:

- Drawing, Guess the number of Halloween candy in the jar (or some other game to win a prize) at St. James Trunk or Treat, others? Memorial Day event on the site?
- Who would like to pursue these efforts? Timeline?

Bylaws task force

- Who would like to be part of the group to refine the bylaws? Reminder: Bylaws will be subject to review by our committee attorney prior to a vote by the formalized cemetery association, at their organizational meeting.

New Business

Nominations for Trustees to serve on the newly created association

Would it be helpful to do an on site meeting?

Other New Business

Define goals and set the date and time for the next meeting

Adjourn

Minutes from the organizational meeting of the
Committee to form a Cemetery Association for the historical site on Paradise Road

June 22, 2021 7pm St. James UMC, Coburn

Attending: Edward Biddle, James Brown, Dianne Crater, Pastor Theresa Heiser, Kathy Highbaugh, Rosanna Mersinger, Kimbra Nyman, Kathy Puff, Georgene Searfoss, Rosemary Shearer, Gaylynn Shouey, Melanie Styers, Devra Wolf, Shirley Zimmerman and Randy Muthersbaugh (guest)

Pastor Theresa Heiser opened the meeting at 7:10pm. Everyone introduced themselves and shared their personal interest in the historical site and the association.

Packets were distributed that included historical information.

The purpose of the independent association and need to separate from St. James UMC was discussed.

The best practices for establishing a cemetery association were shared with specific steps.

Edward Biddle has been overseer of the site for many years and serves as the treasurer caring for the account, which is a certificate of deposit. Reported account balance \$1900.64. The account is supported by donations including proceeds from an annual Marrianna's Hoagies & Pizzas sale held by St. James UMC. The margin is thin but has covered the mowing thus far.

The overall condition of the cemetery was discussed. A section where infant headstones were lined up is now missing the stones. Several headstones were at one time in a pile for purposes unknown and had disappeared over time. There are few graves left at this time for purchase.

The issue of repairing fallen headstones and replacing missing ones was discussed. Mayes Memorials will be contacted by Pastor Theresa to get information about how this may be remedied.

Discussions were had about surveying. It is believed that the site was surveyed for a neighbor's purposes within the last five years and the pins should be easy to find. It was suggested for all to visit the site to observe and record anything that may be helpful improvements for the association to undertake in the future.

Ideas were shared to bring in further donations to make repairs and improvements possible, many ideas offered by Melanie Styers. Several ideas for fundraisers were offered with updates to be provided at future meetings.

Nominations were entertained for officers to serve the committee and resulted as follows.

Motions were made, seconded and affirmed unanimously;

Chair – Kathy Highbaugh, runs the meeting

Vice Chair – Devra Wolf, runs the meeting in the absence of the chair

Secretary – Kimbra Nyman, takes minutes and reports at subsequent meeting

A sample bylaws template was shared and briefly discussed.

An attorney is needed for this process. Suggestions to contact were; the older gentleman suggested by the conference however his health may make it difficult, Jim Bryant who has worked with the church in the past. LeDon Young was brought forth, she is affiliated with the Penns Valley Museum and has a heart for history. And Justin Kirk Houser in Lock Haven, who also has a heart for preserving history. Pastor Theresa will start contacting them in order very soon.

Randy Muthersbaugh, trustee and officer for Zion Hill Cemetery which was once connected to Tusseyville Bethany UMC, answered questions and offered great direction. He suggested having as many people possible be involved. Have 2 meetings a year; plan for the months when you mow and can make repairs and improvements, and one in late fall to assess anything that needs to be prepared for the following spring/summer season. He recommended Jim Bryant as the attorney who assisted their association free of charge and they were very pleased with the outcome.

Randy also explained how the process works for burial: A family may contact him to arrange purchase of a plot and make that part of their pre-planning. They will pay for the plot/grave at that time. It's critical to remind the family to make sure other family members know their plan. Some make arrangements with a funeral home. Other times a death will occur and the family, with the help of the funeral home, may be in contact with the cemetery association to arrange the location. The purchase is then part of the funeral cost. Graves are dug by a vendor. We have one person in the valley who does pretty much all of the digging and finishing for the sites, Dave Miller. The funeral home alerts Dave when the graveside service will be and he ensures the location is ready for set up. After all have left the cemetery, he fills in the space.

The historical significance of the area as being the site of the first church building erected, it is believed, in the county and serving as the site for the 7th General Conference of the Evangelical Association in the United States when they elected a new bishop make the site worth celebrating. Georgene Searfoss shared that she had published information on the events and offered the name Historical Paradise Road Cemetery Association for consideration. It was decided the name will be set at the next meeting.

The next meeting date was set for Tuesday, July 20, 2021 and all were adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Pastor Theresa M. Heiser

MAYES MEMORIALS – contacted June 26, 2021 – Submitted by Pastor Theresa Heiser

I reached out to Mayes with questions regarding the restoration and "fixing" of headstones and the best way to go about the baby section to offer some kind of recognition in that area.

Dick Stever offered the following wisdom for your consideration at our July 20th meeting;

Headstones that have fallen over are best left down and made a flush stone.

The reason many fall off their base is that the base was not put in deep enough and are subject to move more easily than one that has. To put the headstone back on will end up with the same result over time because the main issue is the base, not the top. Again, better to allow the stone to be set in the ground as a flush stone whenever possible. Old stones we want to preserve cannot fall any further when they are lying flat and are therefore protected more naturally. [I will follow up to find out what should be done under such a stone to protect it from shifting ground over time.]

Unfortunately, stones with inscriptions that have worn away are not repairable. If we can get the inscriptions off older stones, it would be wise to record it digitally and make it part of an online record. The stones will continue to weather.

Mayes is extraordinarily busy all the time but they offered to donate one marker that could include all of the babies' names that are in that section as a way to rededicate the section with a stone they would create and install in a manner that ensures longevity. That is a really awesome gesture and I plan to have a thank you card at our next meeting for all of us to sign to officially recognize, (upon approval of the donation by the committee) formally accept and show our appreciation for their generosity.

If there is another section missing its stones we might consider using donations to have a similar stone created to recognize the section.

MEETING WITH ATTORNEY JIM BRYANT – June 30, 2021 – Submitted by Kimbra Nyman, Pastor Theresa Heiser

Contact information: James N. Bryant 814-349-5666

107 E. Main Street, PO Box 551, Millheim, PA 16854-0551

Mr. Bryant has agreed to assist with our efforts free of charge. A gesture on behalf of the association is in order, and we may entertain what is suitable in the near future.

Recommendations from Mr. Bryant:

Do not get a 501c.3. It's not necessary, there is no benefit. Anyone donating should either write a check as the means of record for their taxes or we should issue a receipt for cash donations, something that acknowledges the amount, date and confirms the association name.

Once we settle on a name get the EIN for our unincorporated association. This should be free.

We need to create and approve an operating agreement with the rules and regs (bylaws) and keep it simple. We need to name 3-5 trustees, preferably the youngest among us for longevity's sake. Include

the process for choosing successor trustees. *An official of the church needs to sign off on the operating agreement as the agent on behalf of St. James UMC. The Ad Board should approve the agreement and make this note in the minutes along with the signing of the agreement, and who signs.*

He will handle deeding the property to the trustees of the association, there should be no taxes involved.

Ensure that the trustees/cemetery association meet 1 – 2 times a year.

Other note: By law, if a time comes when a cemetery is “abandoned”, left without care, it becomes the responsibility of the borough or township to maintain. He cited the example of the two cemeteries in Millheim; Union Cemetery was abandoned, and the borough took over care by law. Fairview Cemetery is under the care of churches.

Next steps will be to come up with the official name of the association, get the EIN, name the first set of trustees, and put together the operating agreement. Then we will be able to take the deed and the operating agreement along to Mr. Bryant so he may take the steps necessary to transfer the deed to the new entity.