

FCC Board Meeting
First Congregational Church of Minnesota, United Church of Christ
Thursday, May 16, 2024
7:00 – 8:30 pm
Meeting on Zoom

Minutes

Attendance: Chris Bohnhoff, Linda Valerian, Hikaru Peterson, Tom von Sternberg, Carl Dyar, Xan Laurence, Jean Anderson, Mary Byers, Kris Felbeck

Absence: Paul Fate

Guest: Gabe Magby (Vinery Team)

1. Opening
2. Check in with each other.
3. Approve minutes from April meeting (*see attached*).
Move: Tom Second: Xan **Passed**
4. Review and finalize goals from our April Board retreat (*see attached*).
The first two were pretty directly a result of our retreat. The third was crafted by Jane, Kris and Linda.

First goal:

Visual identity – is that like a logo or an image of the church? It includes both a visual (perhaps a logo) and a color palette that will be used in all materials.

Hikaru: Are there metrics that we can track? To determine effectiveness of outreach?

Chris: Maybe a good starting goal (by May 2025) would be regular reporting to the Board on these metrics – perhaps monthly or quarterly

Examples: Open rates of e-news. Number of reactions to Facebook posts. There are different levels of specificity that can be tracked – Google Analytics might be our first tool to consider.

Jean A. and Chris are both experienced and could help us develop these metrics.

We may also want to count new visitors as part of the metrics. Is number of clicks equivalent to number of people who cross the threshold?

Second goal:

These bullet points come directly from the Flourish report. Prior to the pandemic, we came close to this goal of \$10,000. Goal is geared towards December 2025, not May 2025, to align more closely with budget year.

It's an aggressive and also an achievable goal.

We have some additional consulting service available from Flourish.

Third goal:

These are specific suggestions on interacting with new attendees. We need to be respectful both of congregational members' differing levels of comfort in interacting with visitors, and the visitors themselves!

A key part of the goal is to create a space of belonging. Once the goals are adopted, they go to the Ministry Teams. How do we do this (create a space of belonging)? Each person is going to have a different sense of both being approached and approaching. Need to underscore this with the Ministry Teams.

These are actionable, measurable goals. This is an evolution from last year's goals.

Linda: Group response: greatest agreement on Goal #2. Concern in Goal #1 about measurement. Goal #3; Concern about acknowledging different interpersonal styles in our outreach to visitors.

Linda will work on revisions of #1 and #3 and submit via email to all Board members. We are not ready to adopt these goals.

5. Participate in the Vinery Team deep listening session.

Hikaru and Gabe led the discussion. They gave a brief background of project. Goal is to become a better neighbor to the university community. Right now the team is asking individuals for their stories about their relation to the university community and their hopes/dreams.

The Team is reaching out through different venues to try to capture people's ideas. Examples include: Faith on Tap; Second Hour; one or more "house parties", Gen Z Listening Session See article in Chimes

The team wants to weave together all the responses into a public narrative about how we can foster this relationship with the university community..

There are a total of 5 cohorts, spread across the country.

There is some visiting among the cohorts and sharing of ideas.

Tom: So far the conversation has been very vague and high level. Are there some examples of success stories? If so, perhaps we should be holding them up more front and center.

Hikaru: Success is very specific. We have had interactions with previous cohorts who have experienced success.

Linda: Last slide is Call for Action. We will address all four questions, but spend the most time on Questions 3 and 4.

Question 1: A number of Board members are U of M alum, or faculty. For several, the main reason that they became involved with First Church was because of their initial connection to the U.

Question 2 – Is being answered by Ministry Team and Vinery Team

Question 3 - Who are we? How do we want to present ourselves to the neighbors?

Jean: Part of it is part of our third goal – presenting a safe space. Students need it as much as anybody. We strive to be a safe, supportive space.

Linda: We are deep thinkers. We are not superficial. We wrestle with things. We are still learning to not shy away from controversial issues.

Jean: We are a church of exploration. Faith Formation is considering changing their name to better emphasize the exploration.

Xan: We don't have strong expectations about an individual's beliefs.

Gabe: He feels freedom to think about his faith. It's not in a box. He's not scared to question things.

Kris: Her first impressions were that this could not be a congregational church (based on her experience in New England, where most Congregational churches are white clapboard). It looks

Episcopal or Catholic; stained glass is so non-congregational. We are fighting first visual impressions of High Church and Traditional.

Chris: We represent stewardship and are willing to turn our tradition on its head for our beliefs.

Mary: Many people come in because of the architecture. It draws people in.

Gabe: He was really drawn to the building. It felt quite different from newer churches that tend more towards evangelical.

Question 4 How do you imagine we might cultivate new kinds of relationships with our University neighbors?

Gabe: He has come to see the value of the Community Kitchen – we have had several people come to worship from the CK. Yes, the building can be intimidating, daunting, but when we get people in the door for something other than church (like CK), then they can see who we are really are.

Mary: She would like to do more things outside. Did any of our neighbors join the kids in planting? Blessing of the Animals? Other things outside – be visible.

Tom: Is there an opportunity within the University organization for social groups or clubs that share our values to join us in some way? The neighborhood and the University are two different things. Neighborhood is changing – housing in Stadium Village and Dinkytown is shifting. Marcy Holmes and Como used to be outliers. There are thousands of people on the other side of the freeway – 35W is a big barrier.

Jean: She views our neighborhood as overlapping Marcy Holmes and U of M – they are both. We have time over the next year to identify who we are talking about.

Linda: We are focused on University neighbors. Appreciates Tom's identification of 35W as an unacknowledged barrier.

Xan: Figuring out who our neighbors are. Brad knows a lot of people who live in our immediate neighborhood. He would be a good resource for determining who is student and who is non-student.

Jean: One of the things she valued was having surrogate grandparents in the church. Having multiple generations in the church community could be highlighted. It is highly valuable to lonely students.

Chris: What about students who grew up in a UCC church. Can we make it known through the denomination about our existence?

6. ***Due to time constraints, the Board did not address this topic.*** Sabbatical planning report – discuss as needed
7. ***Due to time constraints, the Board did not address this topic.*** Ministry team reports. In our visits with the ministry teams, we reflect on these three questions: *What aspects of this ministry area/team are the strongest and what are our growing edges? Does the team feel integrated into the whole of First Church? What support or resource does the team need that the Board can provide? And, finally, what are we learning from our interactions with the ministry teams?*
 - Hospitality and Engagement – Jean Anderson, Tom von Sternberg
 - Justice Team – Kris Felbeck.

8. Review ongoing projects and decision-making conversations anticipated for 2024 (see “*May 2024 – Yearly Board Tasks 2023-2024,*” attached)
9. Reports and action – Discuss only as needed:
 - Treasurer and Finance Committee
 - Building Committee
 - Building Use group
 - COVID working group
 - Personnel Committee
 - Planned Giving group
 - Preservation Projects
 - Principal Minister
10. Closing

Next board meeting: Thursday, June 20, 2024, 7:00-8:30PM

Mary Byers offered to do the June opening and closing.

Recorded by Kris Felbeck