

FCC Board Meeting
First Congregational Church of Minnesota, United Church of Christ
Thursday, August 15, 2024
7:00 – 8:30 pm
Meeting on Zoom

Minutes

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

Absence: Paul Fate

1. Opening
2. Check in with each other.
3. Approve minutes from June meeting (see attached).
Moved Mary, 2nd Carl - Approved
4. **Review the revised 2024-2025 program goals (see attached).**

Most of the discussion in this area focused on Goal #1 (about developing a communication plan). After the June discussion of the goals, Linda (and later Jane) felt that the Board had strayed away from its basic role as a body that sets policy and provides an overview of where we are and where we want to go. The Board is not tasked with working out the details of how to achieve our longer range goals.

Jane clarified that she desired some latitude in working with both the various Ministry Teams and staff to achieve the goals – she prefers that the Board not be overly prescriptive.

Kris commented that many of us wear multiple “hats” in the church – for example, some of us are on the Board, and also on one or more Ministry Teams, so the boundaries can get blurred. We all need to remain cognizant of what role we are playing in different settings.

Chris and Alegra (congregation member with experience in coaching/working with organizations) have been talking about some of these issues.

The Board unanimously voted to affirm the 2024-2025 program goals.

What resources or other support might the congregation need from the board as we work on these goals?

Jean suggested that financial resources might be needed for training, for example, in effectively using and setting guidelines with social media. Informal training might be another option, but we would still need to identify resources within our community who have the time and energy to do informal training. Additionally, Hospitality is working on improving the internal signage, which would require some financial resources.

Given the lack of response when we solicited feedback on last year's goals, we might want to create dialogue around these goals or engage in one-on-one conversations about the goals to establish a greater understanding of the goals? Perhaps a Second Hour to help spread the word and inform the congregation about the goals. And in the spring, when we are assessing the goals, perhaps have a listening campaign where we again meet one-on-one with individuals, rather than simply sending out a survey.

Jane is planning with the Ministry leaders for an end of September gathering to discuss their response to the goals and to plan for the year.

She hopes to introduce the teams to the congregation, and encourage people to join one, and to introduce the goals to the congregation. Perhaps Board members could help present the goals and listen to responses.

Chris suggested that some kind of competition for a micro grant might be offered to the congregation, to encourage new ideas in support of the goals. This would encourage the generation of new ideas, and engagement by the congregation, rather than simply a passive response to proposals coming from the Board.

5. Budget Planning – As we consider the budget, how does it reflect who we want to be and where we want to go? How are our resources aligned with that? What is our budget timeline? How does our process with reparations mesh with our budget process?

A general conversation ensued about how a budget can be viewed as a statement of our values and our vision. Rather than focus simply on the line items and dollar amounts, it can be more effective to develop a narrative or story about how the budget moves the attainment of our goals forward. For example, we spend a lot of money on staff and on the building. It might be helpful to show the congregation how a well paid, stable staff helps us achieve our vision and live up to our values.

Xan commented that keeping the Reparations Budget separate from the standard budget allows people to target their giving, knowing that all of their Reparations donations will go towards the identified organizations.

The Board's job is to look at the budget and ask: Is this what we intended? Are we moving forward on achieving our vision?

Hikaru commented that the UCC Conference Board is having similar conversations – how to use their financial resources, and not be overly cautious about conserving funds.

The whole concept of stewardship is subject to interpretation. Do we operate in a financially conservative way, or do we operate in an expansive way (scarcity vs abundance mind sets). Tom cautioned that the building is old and requires a lot of money to be maintained. Jane affirmed that maintaining the building, with the current size of the congregation, is not sustainable. Tom commented that we need to be thoughtful in our use of our resources and our signaling about abundance, or people may feel that we are not using their money responsibly and may resist future requests for the inevitable building related projects. However, quite a few years ago we grappled with and ultimately accepted the idea that we would withdraw a certain percentage of the Fund each year to support the operating budget. So it is quite possible for the congregation to adjust its thinking about how to best use our resources. Kris also commented that for most churches that end up closing, they do so because of a decrease in membership, not because of a

reduction in funds. Jane commented that our goal should be more than simply perpetuating our church into the future.

Chris reminded us about the Flourish work. There has been a communal discernment around how we use the church space. Plus there has been a healthy response to reparations

Kris noted that articulating why we spend money on staff and building is important, and how those expenses support our vision and values.

Carl observed that the more we can connect the budget to actual people, the more it will help the narrative about the budget. It's all about people.

6. HVAC Task Force Status update (see written report)
Paul can address this at the September meeting.

7. Reports and action – Discuss only as needed:

- Treasurer and Finance Committee
- Building Committee
- Building Use group/Flourish – *Greg H has been in touch with the person doing the assessment of kitchen re commercial licensure. Flourish committee will be meeting with Flourish staff later in September.*
- Personnel Committee
- Preservation Projects
- Principal Minister

Hikaru will take the minutes for the September meeting – Kris will be gone.

8. Closing

Next board meeting: Thursday, September 19, 2024, 7:00-8:30PM

Recorded by Kris Felbeck