

FCC Board Meeting
First Congregational Church of Minnesota, United Church of Christ
Thursday, October 17, 2024, 7:00 – 8:30 pm
Meeting on Zoom

Minutes

Attendance: Linda Valerian, Jane McBride, Kris Felbeck, Paul Fate, Xan Laurence, Hikaru Peterson, Jean Anderson, Mary Byers, Carl Dyar

Absence: Tom von Sternberg

1. Opening - Paul
2. Check in with each other.
3. Approve minutes from September meeting (see attached, also in Dropbox).

Xan moved/Mary seconded to approve.

Mary – would like to add to #8 in the September minutes – she would be happy to write thank you notes for the Capital Campaign and/or Stewardship pledges.

4. Proposal from HVAC Task Force. *Paul Fate.*
 1. We need to replace an aging heating system
 2. We want to lower our carbon emissions
 3. We want to select something that is affordable, over time
 4. We want to add cooling
 5. We want to demonstrate our commitment to sustainability

The LHB report identified five possible options.

We have decided that what we really need to do is take the LHB report to another level of detail, and focus three of the five options – analyzing the installation, operation and replacement costs of all three options.

Then we need to select one option and prepare an educational presentation for the congregation about a Capital Campaign and projected costs going forward.

We have engaged with three different firms, seeking one that could give us an objective, independent point of view on our choices.

Our conclusions were:

1. MMS was too biased.
2. Minify was highly recommended. Jeremy had worked with us about 5 – 7 years ago. There were three positive referrals. We are pretty confident that he is not biased and is well connected and is also well versed in funding sources, including state and federal tax credits. Also, his report to Gloria Dei

was well written and highly educational. Jeremy is confident that a report could be done in 60 – 90 days.

3. Angela and Ben Denker's proposal came late in the day.

Last night we met and discussed the three choices of analytical firms and decided on Minify.

Judith Scoville has approached us and offered to fund the early data gathering and planning (pre-development costs) and is also interested in substantially participating in the Capital Campaign. In addition to the \$7,500 there could also be heat load calculations (up to \$10K) and costs to engage Angela of M&M to make sure we are honoring historical requirements. Paul suggested to Judith that the total cost might be \$25,000. She was fine with that number.

Kris pointed out that we won't be ready to talk about a Capital Campaign until well into 2025. Jane is envisioning a congregational meeting perhaps in late winter or early spring to discuss the recommendation of the Task Force (after the Minify report is received and discussed).

Unanimous approval that we accept the proposal of the HVAC Work Group to engage Minify Energy to produce a report comparing and contrasting the three options.

5. Capital Campaign Planning – *Linda and Jane will provide an update to the Board.* Joy Gullikson was one of the chairs of the previous campaign and will be meeting with Linda and Jane about selecting a consultant for this next campaign.
6. Budget Planning and Undesignated Funds – *Report from the Finance Committee – Xan*

Undesignated funds are about \$97K – they include some memorial funds plus budget surpluses. We can fund nonbudgeted expenses from these funds. Right now this money is sitting in a savings account. The Finance Committee has the authority to invest it as they see fit – they can either leave it in savings or put it into the investment fund. The Board does not have to get involved at that level of decision making.

The Investment sub group has been meeting – recouping of the erroneous withholding to the IRS is still not resolved. Total amount is about \$8,500. Once we get that amount refunded, the 2023 books will be balanced.

The Investment Committee interviewed three possible firms and have identified the UCC investment firm that we want to go with after we sever links with Jim Larson. We have an accountant working on this IRS issue (paid for by Jim Larson). We don't want to go to a new investment firm until the IRS issue is taken care of.

Background (*Paul Fate*): Jim Larson has been our investment advisor for the past 20 years or more. In the last couple of years he changed his investment firm affiliation and the new firm does not have much experience with churches (neither does Jim) and took an incorrect stance regarding the need to withhold a portion of our Fund transfer to pay taxes (which we never do, since we are a tax exempt organization). The challenge now is to claw back the withheld amount from the IRS. The accountant is very good but the IRS is notoriously slow.

7. Stewardship Campaign Planning – *Review stewardship letter which will be signed by the Board (in Dropbox) and other items related to the campaign. – Jane*
Stewardship Letter draft was shared. To complete the letter, we need to get our pledge in to Kathy Hansen as soon as possible – by Saturday if possible. We need to get the letters printed and available for distribution this Sunday.
We don't want to over emphasize the loss of pledges due to the deaths and/or relocations of long term members, but at the same time, we want to suggest that an increase of 5% in pledges would cover our needs. (Xan confirmed that 5% would probably cover anticipated increase in costs.)
Jane suggested that during one of the Stewardship moments the speaker point out that we are having a generational shift, as some of our generous elders die, and that it is time for we younger ones to step up and assume a greater financial responsibility. Linda will be the first Stewardship moment speaker this coming Sunday.
8. Form Nominating Committee – *Linda and Jane will provide an update to the Board.*
Kris joined the Committee of Linda and Jane. They met recently. Carl will be going off, due to his move to Grand Marais. Paul is at the end of his second term and cannot continue. So there are at least two Board openings. Those of you who are Committee chairs need to let us know if you want to continue, and also the chairs need to query their committee members as to their interest in continuing. The Nominating process is in place and going according to schedule.
9. Apache Stronghold Issue – *We will have an initial discussion of these materials (see Google Drive link below) brought to us by church member Kathy Haskins. She is also connecting with the Justice League and considering how to educate the congregation. If this case is taken up by the Supreme Court, a request may come to the board to join the second round of Amicus briefs (we missed the deadline for the first round).*
<https://bit.ly/OakFlatAmicus>

(Background given by Jane.) Kathy brought this up to the Justice League, which wasn't sure if this was within their purview. If we file an amicus brief, we would need Board approval. We have missed the first deadline, but may be asked to file in a second round. It involves a mining project in Arizona. It is putting economic gain ahead of religious freedom for Native people. If the Supreme Court decided in favor of the Apache, it would set a powerful precedent.

The question is whether or not the Supreme Court will decide to take it on.
The October 8 deadline was to sign on to ask the Court to take it.
If the Court takes it on, then there will be another round of amicus briefs.

The issue for us as a church is whether we are willing to stand up in support of other religions. Our church has been part of the Doctrine of Discovery, which was the theological/legal underpinning of the colonialization and subjugation of native peoples of North America. Do we want to reinforce that ideology, or do we stand against it? Do we support our Native neighbors and respect their sacred lands?

Where do we stand?

It's not just this one thing happening in Arizona, but a larger philosophical issue.

Xan: We have faced this issue around Keystone and Water Protectors. If we had had this opportunity 150 years ago, the Iron Range might have been protected.

Paul: Other situations have not affected just one tribe, like this one does.

Jane: Is water more sacred than profit? What about peoples' health?

Paul: It seems like it should be addressed on a national level – what is the national UCC doing? He is interested in learning more.

Linda: She is interested in learning more. She sees all parts of the country as inter-related. For example: If I am willing to focus on our weekly reminder in worship that we are on stolen land, then we need to pay attention to what is going on with the Apache Stronghold. It's all of a piece. She needs a good reason to NOT sign on to this.

Xan: The Stronghold is on the National Registry of Historic Places. So is our church. Would we allow a company to come in and drill under our church???

Jane: The company at issue is one of the largest in this field (see website – Rio Tinto is the company). There are companies that are bigger and more powerful than many countries. It is a repeat of earlier colonial efforts to run rough shod over indigenous peoples. The church has a lot of power to tell these companies to stop. And as consumers we are also complicit.

Jane will talk with Kathy and with the Justice League to do some educational efforts.

10. Reports and action – Discuss only as needed:

- Treasurer and Finance Committee
- Building Committee
- Building Use Group/Flourish
- Personnel Committee
- Preservation Projects
- Principal Minister

11. Closing – Paul

Next Board meeting: Thursday, November 21, 2024, 7:00-8:30PM

Carl will lead us in opening and closing for the November meeting.