

FCC Board Meeting
First Congregational Church of Minnesota, United Church of Christ
Thursday, November 21, 2024, 7:00 – 8:30 pm
Meeting on Zoom

Minutes

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

Absence: Tom von Sternberg

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

Move/second Paul/Carl to accept the minutes. Passed.

4. Adoption of 2025 Budget - *Report from the Finance Committee – Xan* (in Dropbox)
 - *How may we invest in our program goals this year?* Earmarking some undesignated funds to support our 2024-2025 program goals, e.g., Flourish team (upgrades to internal signage and displays), creation of logo, etc.
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Budget update

Shortfall of about \$4,030.

Jane's gut guess is that Kathy Hansen's projections are probably accurate.

The Board has to vote tonight on the budget in its current form – cannot assume that there will be additional income, although can modify the budget at the Annual Meeting if additional income is pledged.

Xan went over the budget. Pledge income is actually minus 3.2%, rather than an increase, due to both the death and moving of some members.

Jane: We send the Summary to the congregation, and that is what we are voting on. It's less confusing.

Insurance Issue

Expenses have gone up, including the insurance premium. Kris summarized the current status of the greatly increased premium – our insurance company is moving towards dropping us, for several reasons:

1. We have an old, historic building,
2. We are a church, with a large number of people, both staff and volunteers, in and out every week,
3. Our current company has too many churches in this immediate geographic area.

Paul Snyder is working with an insurance broker to identify other companies who might be able to insure us. We have until the end of the year to get this straightened out. At this point, the budget reflects only part of the full increase, since we hope to find someone less expensive.

Jane clarified that there are two pieces to our insurance coverage – liability and building. Liability is not the biggest part, but is absolutely necessary. We have reserves, so it is not a dire issue immediately.

Linda: Property insurance is going out of sight throughout the whole country.

Paul: With climate change, insurance rates will continue to sky rocket.

Move to adopt budget and recommend it to the congregation, knowing that it is an unbalanced budget. *Kris moved. No second needed. Passed*

Discussion: Kris: A budget is a planning tool, nothing more. This is just recognition that due to changes in pledging units, we have a reduction in income.

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Planned expenditures in undesignated funds in 2025 – Board does not need to vote on this. See Dropbox report “Planned Expenditures”.

Jane: Finance Committee has been talking about one-time expenses that we need to cover, and proposes to use undesignated funds to cover these expenses. She wants the Board to decide if we are in agreement about using some of these funds to either enact the plans of Flourish task force, or to assist ministry teams. She wants the congregation to understand that we are putting resources into these different initiatives. The Board should be able to go to the congregation with a unified voice of support for using these undesignated funds in this way.

Paul: Likes that we are informing, rather than asking permission.

Jane: She thinks the congregation does not need to get involved at this granular level.

Kris: She applauds the public sharing of these plans, to inspire people who give Memorial Gifts, and to help them understand that their gifts are actually being used.

- *Reparations discussion:* The Board will meet with the Justice League on February 11, 2025 6pm – note time change and day of week change.

Jane: We have this special joint meeting every year, to choose what organizations will receive the reparations money. Also, it is a time to reflect on our values and goals in relation to reparations. Do we want to put out a public call for recommendations of organizations to receive reparations support?

Mary: Last year, somebody raised an idea at the last minute. Perhaps we should have a deadline ahead of time so we can do research and have an informed discussion of all suggestions?

Jane: Also, perhaps we should have a framework for comparing the different suggestions, so that we are addressing the same categories with each organization. For example, how does this organization's mission align with our values? Would our modest gift make a meaningful difference? What is the organization's track record?

5. Update on our stewardship campaign –

- *Follow up logistics regarding writing thank you notes for stewardship pledges.*

Jean, Mary, Hikaru, Carl all volunteered to write notes. The plan is to print a nice card and divide up the list among the group. This will be organized after Thanksgiving. Target date to mail is within a couple of weeks after receiving list and cards.

- *The challenge of generational change*

Since we are attempting to address Stewardship throughout the year, this is an issue that we will need to keep bringing up. As our largest donors age and die, it is becoming ever more pressing to encourage younger members to consider increasing their support.

Thank you notes for the different services that people provide to the church. Kris offered to spearhead the effort. First challenge is to draw up as complete a list as possible of everything that people do. If we do it in February, can tie it to Valentine's Day.

6. Nominations – *Jane, Kris, Linda will present the Board with the proposed slate of nominations for approval.*

Board committees – Status update. See Dropbox document.

Kris did the lion's share of recruiting new Board members.

Linda: feels sadness and gratitude for those people who are leaving the Board.

Kris: is excited about the new talent and voices coming on the Board.

Mary: How were candidates selected? Just wondering. Response: In some cases, it was a planned transition (e.g., Hikaru ending her chairing of Personnel and Allegra taking over), in other cases it was an effort to maintain gender balance on the Board (three of the four departing members are men), and finally, there was an intentional effort to include newer members who might bring a fresh perspective.

Move/second to approve the proposed slate of Board members: Xan/Hikaru Passed.

7. Approve agenda for Annual Meeting (Dec. 8th)

Call to Order

Opening prayer

Receive Annual Report

2025 Budget

Update on HVAC Project

Elections

Gratitude moment for outgoing officers and board members

Other business

Closing prayer

Paul: What are the expectations about the HVAC update? Time allotted? Level of detail?

Linda: What you have done in the past in summarizing to the Board would be what we are expecting.

Jane: Goal is transparency – there have been Chimes articles, but maybe people will have questions.

Paul: How much is it partly a preliminary discussion of the Capital Campaign?

Jane: Perhaps we need a heading that includes reference to CC?

Jane: We need to get the Call to Meeting out pretty soon. Could be helpful to have a link or copy of Paul's report (that he is also preparing for the Annual Meeting) for reference.

Move/Second To approve Annual Meeting agenda: Carl/Xan Passed

8. Capital Campaign Planning – *Linda and Jane will provide an update to the Board.*

Linda, Jane and Joy Gullikson have met twice. Joy contacted one consulting firm that we have used in the past (James Company) and Linda contacted Sacred Spaces (have not heard back). Nothing definite yet. They have heard a lot of good things about the work of the James Company. Our previous experience was positive. Not perfect, but solid. Part of the reason we are considering Partner for Sacred Spaces is that we had contact with them when we were considering consultants for our space development – we ended up with Flourish, but one point that Sacred Spaces made in their earlier presentation to us, is that we should approach the community for support, since everyone in the neighborhood benefits from our church. We may not go with them, but Jane wants to hear more about that idea of community support.

9. Report on Principal Minister Review – Personnel Committee

Hikaru: Due to Jane's sabbatical the review process lasted longer than usual this year. They did not try to do a survey. Instead, had one-to-one conversations with selected members. Tried to diversify who was involved in those conversations.

Also had 1 to 1 with Brad, Sarah and Chris Bohnhoff. Had Jane's review last night. Results will be included in Annual Report. Jane is a real gift to the congregation. She is good about empowering people to stretch and grow. Has a good long-term vision of where we are going – especially Flourish and Vinery. Personnel has a good connection/rapport with the staff – staff seems to feel comfortable in bringing up issues.

Jane: Thank you, Hikaru, for your leadership. Hikaru has some new ideas about staff leadership issues that Jane will be considering. It was a good session.

Linda: Thank you to Hikaru, too. And thank you for all your talents and skills, Jane.

10. Paul: The Investment Sub Committee decided that we needed to change our investment advisor. Selected three possible agencies (Morgan Stanley, United Church Fund, Ameriprise) Interviewed MS and UCF.

Morgan Stanley was good but three drawbacks:

1. lacked experience in working with churches,
2. lacked experience with investment screens and,
3. was more expensive (1% per year).

United Church Fund – everyone was very pleased. It is a 100 year old fund tied to the UCC and serves 35 churches in Minnesota.

1. Has lots of experience working with churches
2. Has a well-developed set of screens
3. Is less expensive (.7% per year)
4. The returns look good

With another upcoming fund transfer for 2025, the Sub Committee decided to go ahead and not wait for the IRS resolution, and change advisors. Paul recommends that the Board transfers the funds to UCF.

Move /Second to move the funds to UCF Kris/Xan Passed

Note: No withdrawal from the Fund will happen until after the transfer.

11. Reports and action – Discuss only as needed:

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

12. Closing – Carl

Next Board meeting: Thursday, December 19, 2024, 7:00-8:30PM

Xan will open and close the meeting.