

**FCC Board Meeting**  
**First Congregational Church of Minnesota, United Church of Christ**  
**Thursday, January 16, 2025,**  
**Potluck and informal discussion, 6:00-7:00; Meeting 7:00 – 8:30 pm**  
**Meeting at First Church**

**Minutes**

**Present:** Xan Laurence, Jane McBride, Jean Anderson, Linda Valerian, Jeff Peterson, Allegra Montanari, Rob Cooper, Paul Snyder, Mary Byers; Kris Felbeck on Zoom

**6:00PM – 7:00PM:**

- Potluck – Informal conversation
- Practicing Hospitality: Welcoming all parts of ourselves – individually and communally – to create our 2025 Board together. In engaging in this practice, we create an environment of authenticity that will guide our relationships and our decision making.

This being the first meeting of the year, with some new board members, the concept of consensus decision making was reviewed. Consensus, as opposed to majority rule, involves participants being able to say, “Yes, I’m in complete agreement with the proposal”; “I have reservations, but I mostly agree”; “I have reservations and am not ready to move forward right now” or “I don’t agree with this at all.” The matter is further discussed until the disagreements are resolved. Majority rule, where the ayes outvote the nays, leaves the nays feeling unheard.

Board members met in small groups to discuss personal preferences and styles of participation in discussions and meetings, using prompts supplied by Linda:

1. How comfortable are you speaking up/voicing your thoughts and opinions in a group
2. Have you ever had an experience when it felt uncomfortable to say what you wanted to say in a group? Why do you think that was the case?
3. Is there something that would have helped make the situation easier for you to share your thoughts?
4. Have you ever felt that you contributed to stifling conversation in a group? Do you know why that happened? Is there something you would have done differently, or was it helpful to have done what you did?
5. Since consensus decision making relies on each person voicing their honest opinion, is there anything you might need to feel comfortable doing that?

Factors influencing participation style:

Personality: Introverted individuals may prefer to observe, while extroverts might be more vocal contributors.

Comfort level: Familiarity with the topic and group members can affect participation.

Group dynamics: The leadership style and group norms can influence how individuals engage.

Role expectations: Assigned roles within the group can shape participation patterns.

How would you identify your preferred or default style of participating in groups:

Active contributor: Actively participates in discussions, shares ideas, asks questions, and takes initiative to move the group forward.

Silent observer: Listens attentively but rarely speaks up in the group, may contribute through non-verbal cues.

Opinion leader: Influences the group's thinking with strong opinions and persuasive arguments.

The members shared their responses, some expressing that they need to think out loud in order to process information; some prefer taking time rather than feeling pressured to decide on something right away, some like to take non-verbal feedback – facial expressions, body language – into account as well. Some like conflict as a means of getting all the needs and wants out on the table; others are less comfortable with conflict. Some of this may be due to cultural programming or personal experience. Many felt that they were more comfortable participating in discussions with people they knew rather than with strangers.

### **7:00PM – 8:30PM:**

1. Opening – Mary Byers read passages from Joan Chittister's *The Monastic Heart: 50 Simple Practices for a Contemplative and Fulfilling Life*
2. Approve minutes from December meeting (see attached, also in Dropbox). **Motion:** Jean/Mary/passed.
3. Creating our mission statement

The board discussed the need to create a mission statement as we develop a communication plan and change our visual branding. "What difference do we hope to make as a congregation?" was posed as the central question around which to base the mission statement. There was discussion of whether "make a difference" was too general an idea, and also "what would be different from what" was not clear. "Is one key question enough?" was also asked.

The idea of a vision statement was also raised. This was seen as more aspirational and future-directed, whereas a mission statement would reflect where the church is at present.

In outline, the plan is to begin with one-on-one conversations between members of the board and members of the congregation, with each board member having three conversations between February and April, with a goal of 24 conversations. Using the guidelines in the document "Basics of a 1:1" which is in the Dropbox folder, the board members would engage these

individual members with questions designed to get feedback about where and who we are as a church. A special worship service on March 23 would include dividing the congregation into small groups led by board members in reflecting on the questions. A board retreat would then be held on Saturday, April 26 to draft a mission statement.

The one-on-one sessions were envisioned as following a pattern such as:

A warm-up or icebreaker

Go deeper with questions:

1. What is your relationship like with the church community
2. What are your gifts (What are you good at? What do you like doing?)
3. How would you describe the difference we make as a congregation?
4. What do you feel is our church's distinctive role right now?

When scheduling a session, say that you are doing it as a board member and that you are gathering information for drawing up a mission statement for the church. If you need to make notes during the conversation, ask permission.

Jane will create a spreadsheet for board members to sign up on with names of potential interviewees. As the interviews are completed, the names, dates, and summaries of the conversations will be entered on the spreadsheet.

#### 4. Assign Board members to attend ministry team meetings

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|-----------------------------|---------|----------|
| • Worship team:             | Allegra | Feb. 16  |
| • Faith Force:              | Paul    | April 14 |
| • Hospitality & Engagement: | Xan     | April 13 |
| • Congregational Care:      | Jeff    | March 3  |
| • Justice League:           | Mary    | May 13   |

#### 5. Other issues:

- Reviewing First Church Constitution – board members are encouraged to review the Constitution and the other documents in the Dropbox folder called Key Documents, and to give feedback if anything looks as if it needs to be changed or updated
- Joint Justice League/Board Meeting, February 11, 6:00PM-7:30, plus an additional hour for the board to meet in lieu of a separate meeting on February 20.

6. Reports and action – Discuss only as needed:

- Treasurer and Finance Committee
- Building Committee – Paul Snyder presented a report on the changes to our building insurance policy. Due to an increase of almost \$20,000 in the quote for the 2025 premium with Church Mutual, we have changed our insurer to Insurance Board, which has ties to the UCC, through a local agent, Monson Insurance Agency in Excelsior, MN. Through them we were able to get a premium of \$27,348, an increase of approximately \$6,000, with greater property and liability coverage. We will be undergoing an inspection with a CoreLogic valuation sometime before the end of March, which may change the values and price of the policy. We have also changed our workers' compensation policy to The Hartford. (Paul's full report is in the Dropbox folder.)
- Building Use Group/Flourish
- Personnel Committee
- Preservation Projects
- Principal Minister

7. Closing – Mary Byers

**The next meeting is a hybrid Joint Meeting with the Justice League, February 11, 2025, 6:00PM-7:30PM; the board will meet for an extra hour afterward, instead of the regularly scheduled meeting on Thursday, February 20, 2025.**

**Jean Anderson will provide the opening and closing.**

*Recorded by Xan Laurence*