

FCC Board Meeting
First Congregational Church of Minnesota, United Church of Christ
Thursday, March 20, 2025
7:00 – 8:30 pm
Agenda

Attendance: Linda Valerian, Jean Anderson, Kris Felbeck, Mary Byers, Rob Cooper, Allegra Montanari, Jane McBride, Paul Snyder, Xan Laurence; Paul Fate, guest

1. **Opening** – Linda Valerian

Quotation from Maya Angelou: “Forgive yourself for not knowing what you didn’t know before you learned it.”

2. **Approval of minutes from February meeting**

Kris/Paul S./approved

3. **HVAC Task Force Report** – *Paul Fate; Approval of motion to allow the HVAC Task Force to disburse funds from the James and Judith Scoville \$25,000 gift as determined by the task force without further Board approval.*

Paul summarized his report to the Board regarding the meeting with Jeremy Davis of Minify. His full report and Minify’s Energy Report are available in Dropbox.

Some observations:

1. Our energy costs are divided between electrical (60%) and gas (40%), which is unusually high for electrical, due to our dependence on an antiquated method of heating.
2. Davis praised our ability to keep costs low in spite of this, compared to similar church buildings.
3. He suggested we keep our old boiler as a backup for whatever system we decide to install.
4. The boiler was inspected on March 20, and the inspector praised Brad for adding 10-15 years to the life of our current boiler with his careful maintenance. Parts are still available for it. The steam traps need to be replaced periodically, and they are about due.
5. Three systems are under consideration:
 - a. A geothermal system: the most expensive at \$2,104,043 without federal and other subsidies, or \$1,309,268 with federal and other subsidies. At the moment the possibility of a subsidy seems remote. This system would use one or two Darcy wells. This system is most in line with our goals to be energy efficient and sustainable, but we can’t afford it.

b. Variable Refrigerant Flow (VRF) System: still expensive at \$1,119,928 (including likely small grants available). This is a system that would require six external air-to-air heat pumps and a boiler for backup, as noted above. The cost is still likely beyond our fundraising capacity, although Jeremy Davis thinks it might be possible to reduce costs through value engineering.

c. Traditional Mini-Split Approach: the least expensive at \$828,109 (including likely small grants available) This system is the least compatible with our efficiency and sustainability goals. It would include mini-split heat pumps for the rooms and offices and a dedicated outdoor air system (DOAS) unit with a heat pump for the sanctuary. It would also include two new condensing hot water boilers to replace the existing steam boiler. It has the lowest purchase price, but the highest maintenance costs.

6. First Church is on the National Register of Historic Places, which affects our decisions. Jeremy Davis and Angela Wolf-Scott of MacDonald and Mack, the architectural firm we have worked with many times, have communicated about the conditions that are imposed by the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office.

The board is asked to approve the use of the \$25,000 donation from Judith and Jim Scoville for costs incurred by the task force without having to request approval for each stage of the process. Board approval was unanimous.

4. **Capital Campaign Report** – *Written report from Joy Gullikson; Linda, Jane*

Joy contacted or attempted to contact three firms experienced in conducting capital campaigns. One did not respond to calls, and another wanted a proposal before providing references. The third was The James Company, which responded quickly and provided the desired references. Jane has talked to colleagues who expressed favorable opinions of the James Company. The next step would be to meet with a representative. They are willing to meet with us in person or on Zoom. We would need to decide on a start date for the campaign; might we want to dovetail with the annual stewardship campaign? The James Company worked with First Church on the last capital campaign and understands that decision-making is not always a quick process. Kris suggested that we have conversations with the congregation about giving to the campaign – some people have expressed the opinion that they are already at the limit of what they can comfortably give. The amount we can raise may determine which HVAC system we can afford. We might need a loan to begin with, and we don't want to end up paying out of our operating budget.

5. **Creating our mission statement: March 23 Sunday service in the Gathering Hall**
 - **Worship planning for the March 23 service**, to brainstorm ideas for drafting a mission statement for First Church

There will be 6 tables of 8 in the Gathering Hall, and one Zoom session. Air dry clay will be provided for each table; the Zoom participants will be asked to draw or use some other medium to create their art.

- **Role of the Board– table assignments**

A board member and a notetaker will be at each table; Kris F. will facilitate the Zoom session.

- **What are we hoping for as an outcome of the service?**

The clay is a focus for participants to answer the question “Who are we as a congregation in this world in this time?” Ten minutes will be allotted to working with the clay to answer this question, followed by sharing of impressions and observations.

- **What will we do with what we learn from the service?**

The notes from each table will be collected and analyzed for common ideas or themes.

6. **Board member ministry team report** – excerpted from Allegra Montanari’s report on her visit to the Worship Team meeting on March 16.

Strengths Identified in the Group:

- **Creative Collaboration** – Ideas build on each other, and people enjoy the process of co- creating worship experiences.
- **Openness & Willingness to Experiment** – The team consistently tries new things rather than sticking to predictable patterns.
- **Interconnection & Strong Relationships** – A sense of connection within the team and the broader congregation is deeply valued.
- **Diverse Voices & Inclusive Participation** – Encouraging different perspectives and making worship accessible to all.
- **Mutual Appreciation & Support** – A culture of gratitude for leadership (particularly Jane’s), and the congregation’s openness to new ideas.
- **Integration with Faith Force & Other Groups** – Strengthening partnerships and joint projects enhance the worship experience.
- **Empowerment Beyond the Core Team** – Recognizing that worship planning isn’t just for those who “always” do it but can involve anyone in the community.

Growing Edges / Opportunities for Growth:

- **Balancing Creativity with Tactical Execution** – Ensuring discussions leave enough time for action steps and implementation.
- **Encouraging Participation Without Intimidation** – Making it clear that contributing to worship planning is not overwhelming or exclusive.
- **Recognizing & Celebrating Community Gifts** – Acknowledging the unique contributions of individuals and how they shape the worship experience.

Does the team feel integrated with the whole of First Church?

Largely, yes! There was no clear action identified in terms of lack of integration. Particularly the spirit of innovation and inclusivity led by Jane as Principal Minister from those at all levels left the group feeling empowered and included.

What support or resource does the team need that the board can provide?

The board can help to create visibility and demystify the work of the Worship Team. There was an identified opportunity to ask for more participation with those from all levels of engagement across those who attend First Church.

7. Treasurer's Report

Kris is working on consolidating the Profit and Loss statement and the Balance Sheet into a single document; this is still in process. We have received a \$67,200 Preservation Project grant, which will be transferred to the Capital Campaign bank account. The closeout of the 2024 budget was right on target.

8. Personnel committee report

Brad needs surgery and will need time off to recover. He has accumulated enough leave time to cover the period he will be off work. The committee will have to figure out what the cost of temporarily covering his duties will be and by whom or by what service. It was suggested that there should be a celebration for Brad, acknowledging his value to the church and the community. A proposal to grant Brad 8 weeks of leave time was approved by consensus.

9. Closing – Linda Valerian

Quote from Henry James: "Three things in human life are important: the first is to be kind; the second is to be kind; and the third is to be kind."

Next Board meeting: April 24, 2025, 7:00-8:30PM on Zoom

Meeting date for Board retreat – May 10, 9:00AM – 12:00PM in person at First Church