

**FCC Board Meeting**  
**First Congregational Church of Minnesota, United Church of Christ**  
**Thursday, June 19, 2025**  
**6:00 – 7:30 pm**  
**Minutes**

In attendance: Linda, Kris, Paul S., Jean, Jane, Rob, Allegra, Greg Hubinger from the HVAC task force; Xan, recording

1. Opening: Mary Byers – Mary was unable to attend, but sent her openings and closings to Linda, who read them. The opening was a version of Psalm 12
2. Approve minutes from May meeting. Kris/Paul/approved
3. HVAC Report: Greg Hubinger from the HVAC task force updated the board on the work of the task force (see attached report below) The task force has determined that a geothermal system is too expensive, and with the loss of the tax credit is unaffordable. The VRF heat pump technology is currently too experimental, with the risk of becoming outdated too soon after installation. The task force recommends that we hold off on conducting a capital campaign for HVAC purposes at this time. The current boiler is 35 years old and has been well maintained; it is in good shape and can be updated. We currently have mini-splits in Jane's and Sarah's offices, but more will be needed. The task force proposes that we undertake the following:
  1. Current boiler.
    - a) Contract for services to assess and replace faulty steam traps.
    - b) Contract for a detailed inspection of the boiler and make any repairs that will help ensure on-going reliability and efficiency.
  2. Contract to replace the two mini-splits for the two offices
  3. Contract to evaluate and if appropriate, install mini-splits for:
    - a) Byron's office
    - b) The two small upstairs offices (Chris's former office, the far end of the building from Byron's office and the one next to that, and the archive space.)
    - c) The larger upstairs classroom space
    - d) The kitchen (if affordable)
    - e) The Marcy Holmes office space
    - f) The basement level space that is not the current Marcy Holmes office.
  4. We need to evaluate whether our current electrical service will support the installation of the mini-splits (and eventually the electrification of the kitchen).

In order to finance this work without a capital campaign, we would have to find approximately \$100,000 from current cash accounts. The task force therefore proposes to the board that they:

1. Approve the HVAC group's recommended tasks to upgrade and maintain our current heating systems.
2. Accept the HVAC group's proposal to allocate up to \$100,000 for HVAC design and replacement
3. Direct the HVAC group to solicit at least two bids for all work.
4. Direct the HVAC group to solicit at least two bids for professional consulting support for this work.
5. Update the Board on all decisions and issues.

Motion to approve the proposal was made by Xan, seconded by Jean, and approved by the board. The board also offered its thanks to Greg for representing the HVAC task force, and to Brad for taking such good care of the boiler.

4. Creating our mission statement: the team created to draft a mission statement (Allegra, Mary, Linda, and Jane) presented two options for a brief statement, and a longer statement of explanation (see attached report below). The two options for a brief statement were:
  - *Rooted in Jesus' radical love and justice, First Church creatively nourishes belonging.*
  - *Rooted in Jesus' radical love and justice, First Church creatively nourishes space for belonging.*

After some discussion, the board chose the second option. It was proposed that we read the statement aloud once a year during a service. A question was raised: how do we live up to this charge?

5. Visual Image/Logo: We would need to hire a graphic designer for this. The logo needs to be refreshed, but it is part of the larger task of improving our communications plan and is not as urgent as the mission statement. We could put out feelers to our networks for people who might be able to help or might know someone who is a designer. We could also look at the images that were suggested at the board retreat and in the clay play session.
6. Chimes: The Chimes working group (Barb Franklin, Mary, Sarah T., Jane, Allegra, and Linda) reported on their discussion of the future of the Chimes newsletter. They discussed its history and recognized that some people may feel a loss if it is discontinued. A survey of the congregation was proposed to get reactions and suggestions, perhaps using a Google form accessed by a QR code in the bulletin or having an iPad available at coffee hour.
7. Administrative Staff Issues: The personnel committee (Jane, Linda, Allegra, Bill Lindberg, and Hikaru Peterson) is working to hire a replacement for Sarah T., in a new position to be called Communication and Administrative Lead. The board approved the proposal for this to be a part-time position (20 hours with some flexibility) paid \$26,000-\$28,000 a year. Jane will create a more detailed job description and procedures manual. The next steps are to post the job and review the applications. We want to hold a celebration of Sarah on her

retirement, which will happen before the next board meeting, so Jane spoke to Sarah, and she agreed to an August 17 coffee hour for the celebration. We will be collecting cash for a gift.

8. Capital Campaign Report: The James Co. has been contacted to say that we are not proceeding with a capital campaign at the moment, but we will keep them in mind for the future. We had signed a contract for a feasibility study and requested to withdraw from that contract; the request was granted.

The Flourish team has been discussing the use of the downstairs space now that the Marcy Holmes Neighborhood Association is moving out. The May 31 Labor Liberation Day cleanup effort resulted in carpet being removed and stuff cleared out. The downstairs space is used by the Community Kitchen, family gatherings, and the Southeast Play Group. Everybody collaborates on the use of the space. The Community Kitchen needs a new freezer, refrigerator, and shelving. Sarah Almén suggested a designated quiet space for family gatherings. She may ask for volunteers to move stuff from the upstairs playrooms to the basement after the service on June 22. The next things on Flourish's list are to look at the upstairs kitchen and go over the church space by space. Jane reported that Southeast Seniors has approached us about using the space opposite Byron's office on the upper level, which were Chris's office and the archive space. They have five employees.

9. Board member ministry team reports
  - Linda reported on the Flourish team
  - Xan reported on the Hospitality and Engagement team

10. Reports and action:

- Treasurer and Finance Committee: Kris reported on our available assets. We have \$1 million in total between bank accounts and investments. We have about \$150,000 in current capital campaign funds; we may need to negotiate for other anticipated uses. We have a "rainy day fund" equal to about a year's budget (\$300,000); this depends on what the market does.

11. Closing: Mary Byers (read by Linda): "Smiling is infectious", by Spike Milligan

Next meeting, August 21, 2025, 7-8:30 pm.

*Xan Laurence, secretary*

HVAC Group  
Update to Board  
6 19 2025

**Background:** Our HVAC group met to review our recent work, and begin determining where to go from here. Our consultant, Jeremy Davis, joined our meeting to provide his expertise.

We recognized all of the work that has been done to explore geothermal and VRF as the most desirable and most efficient heating and cooling systems available. We expressed disappointment that geothermal is definitely not financially feasible at this time. We decided that even if we could afford to install VRF, we are not comfortable pursuing it right now because it is still experimental and may not be a viable option technically at this time.

We believe that it makes sense to make incremental changes that move us toward our goals now and return to the question of installing a more comprehensive solution in a few more years. We discovered in this HVAC review process that our existing boiler and the steam system can have extended life if diligently maintained. This extended life is a result, in large part, to Brad's excellent care and maintenance over the last number of years. We have therefore shifted our attention to an interim strategy focused on our goals of making our system(s) more efficient, and providing improved comfort in physical spaces we use, and plan to use the most. These include the two main floor offices, Byron's therapy office, and upstairs offices that we seek to rent out. We also want to ensure the existing boiler is maintained and operated as efficiently as possible.

**Our proposed tasks include:**

1. Current boiler.
  - c) Contract for services to assess and replace faulty steam traps
  - d) Contract for a detailed inspection of the boiler and make any repairs that will help ensure on-going reliability and efficiency.
2. Contract to replace the two mini-splits for the two offices
3. Contract to evaluate and if appropriate, install mini-splits for:

- g) Byron's office
- h) The two small upstairs offices (Chris's former office, the far end of the building from Byron's office and the one next to that, and the archive space.)
- i) The larger upstairs classroom space
- j) The kitchen (if affordable)
- k) The Marcy Holmes office space
- l) The basement level space that is not the current Marcy Holmes office.

4. We need to evaluate whether our current electrical service will support the installation of the mini-splits (and eventually the electrification of the kitchen).

**Financing.** With respect to financing, we believe it's appropriate to set aside a capital campaign for now, waiting for alternative funding mechanisms to re-emerge in a more favorable political climate, and better history on the performance of VRF systems.

We would instead request approval from the board for funding from current cash accounts. We anticipate needing approximately \$100,000 for this work, including consultation fees for Jeremy and Angie or alternative professional services. If funds are short, we would reduce the scope of projects from our task list.

Jeremy pointed out that there may be rebates from Xcel for the steam trap work, and there may be financial incentives for fuel switching related to installation of heat pumps.

**Consultant or Owner's Agent role.** The HVAC group has had an on-going discussion about the need for professional services to get this work done. Jeremy is interested in serving in a construction manager role, where his fee would be based on a percentage of the value of the work (8%?). Alternatively, the group also discussed his possible role as a consultant based on his hourly rate (\$150/hour). We all recognize that we need a professional to assist us in this process. The HVAC committee will examine professional service options as part of this next phase. We will certainly want to keep Angela Wolf Scott from McDonald and Mack in the loop on any of this work.

**Proposal to the Board.** We request that the Board:

1. Approve the HVAC group's recommended tasks to upgrade and maintain our current heating systems.
2. Accept the HVAC group's proposal to allocate up to \$100,000 for HVAC design and replacement
3. Direct the HVAC group solicit at least two bids for all work.

4. Direct the HVAC group to solicit at least two bids for professional consulting support for this work.
5. Update the Board on all decisions and issues.

### **Mission Statement drafts 6-17-25**

Drafted by Allegra, Mary, Linda and Jane

#### **Brief (memorable) mission statement (two options):**

*Rooted in Jesus' radical love and justice, First Church creatively nourishes belonging.*

*Rooted in Jesus' radical love and justice, First Church creatively nourishes space for belonging.*

#### **Longer statement/ explanation (if we take out "space for" in the short statement, this can be edited accordingly too)**

First Church is **rooted** in an ancient tradition that is ever-evolving toward fresh relevance. We are **rooted** in scripture, **rooted** in our ancestors' witness for justice and peace, **rooted** in the earth. We have inherited a Christianity that has been manipulated to justify enslavement, colonialism and white supremacy. And so we also seek to be **rooted** in the work of repairing this harm, restoring wholeness, and reclaiming the authentic way of **Jesus**. We celebrate the diversity of our differing beliefs -- our faith, doubt and questions, and we find kinship in following **Jesus**. We use the word "**radical**" to describe **Jesus'** way of **love** and **justice**, because we find that Jesus-- as a teacher, healer, and liberator--continually challenges and transforms us. With **creativity**, we seek to **nourish** each other and our neighbors in body, mind and spirit, weaving together music, artistic expression, storytelling and worship that is participatory and alive. We humbly seek to make **space** to **nourish** deep connections, **space** to engage the gifts of all in service, **space** for tears and laughter, prayer, learning and advocacy, **space** in which we can **belong** together. We prioritize making **space for belonging** in our building to welcome partners from the wider community whose values resonate with ours.