

FCC Board Meeting
First Congregational Church of Minnesota, United Church of Christ
Thursday, March 19, 7:00 – 8:30 pm

Minutes

In attendance: Linda Valerian (Moderator), Jane McBride (Pastor), Jean Anderson, Rob Cooper, Joy Gullikson, Allegra Montanari, Jeff Peterson, Scott Williams from the Safety Task Force; Xan Laurence (Clerk), recording

1. Approve minutes from February meeting (in Dropbox). – moved, Kris Felbeck; second, Joy Gullikson; approved

2. Safety Task Force update:

Scott Williams reported from the Safety Task Force on the discussion regarding improving the safety and security of the church. Sam, a representative from the security service Sequeerity, and the task force did a walkthrough of the building to determine patterns of usage, vulnerabilities, and needs for monitoring and restricting access. Sam recommended that everyone using the building enter by a single door, the 8th Street entrance on the west side of the building, with signage on other entrances directing visitors to that door. Jane is currently contacting our tenants to encourage them to use that door only. Sam also recommended cameras, which are relatively inexpensive, but they would need to be powered, probably by solar panels, and linked to Wi-Fi, as it is impractical to connect them with cables. Scott is currently testing several of them at his home. There is a possible issue with low-temperature operation; the least expensive cameras are only rated to function down to -4 degrees F; the next step up is more expensive but is rated to -22 degrees F. The cameras would be monitored on an iPad or laptop. Exterior lighting also needs to be improved.

Also discussed was the need for situational awareness, especially on Sunday mornings, making sure that we are aware of who is entering the building. The valets are the first point of contact, and the ushers are the next, but in the past, we have had greeters at the top of the steps from the entry to the main level, and it might be advisable to revive that practice for a third point of contact. Cameras would also be recording people entering and leaving. Sam was ambivalent about whether or not the doors should be locked during the service. Latecomers would not feel particularly welcomed if they couldn't get in. With more points of contact with people arriving for the service, it might not be necessary to lock the doors.

Sam suggested training for a core group of people to take charge and direct the congregation in the event of an emergency. Also, we need to have an AED (Automated External Defibrillator) available, and people trained to use it.

The next steps involve testing cameras to determine placement, connection, and power, and drafting a safety and security plan that would cover a range of issues, including severe weather and fire as well as potential attack. Once drafted, Sequeerity would be asked to review the plan and discuss training.

3. Community Building as a Board:

The Board discussed Linda's observation that members had expressed the desire to grow in relationship with one another. Zoom is useful for meetings, but not necessarily for relationship-building. Several ideas were offered:

- have one person share more in depth on a question each time we meet;
- break into small groups each meeting to connect; or
- allocate more time to check in with each other at the beginning of our meetings.

The Board discussed all three ideas and made other suggestions as well.

- have a potluck 3 or 4 times a year;
- make space for levity – share a joke or something funny;
- share “highs, lows, and buffaloes” – with “buffaloes” being unrelated items that might be of interest.

The Board agreed on the idea of an icebreaker question, and at the April meeting we will address the question proposed for the January meeting: *“What is your dream job, and why? What draws you to it?”* For a social gathering, Allegra volunteered to host a backyard potluck in July.

4. Ministry Team Reports:

- Worship Team: Jeff Peterson

Jeff visited the Worship Team meeting on March 1. He observed that the team has a variety of new and long-term members who share many ideas with the group. A growing edge is a need to start the planning process earlier to have more time to develop ideas and carry them out. The team feels integrated with the church as a whole, as it exists to connect the congregation in our regular Sunday services. Closer coordination with the Faith Formation Team has also benefitted the team. One of the team's concerns is that there are many worship roles and not always enough people to fill them. Help from the Board could include volunteering for worship roles if they are not already doing so or personally inviting newer or less active members if they would like to take on one of the roles. If necessary, an experienced worship leader could partner with a new person to familiarize them with the role.

- Congregational Care Team: Allegra Montanari

Allegra visited the Congregational Care Team meeting on March 2. She felt that the team embodies care very well and thought that Maggie George's leadership was strong and appreciated by the team. She observed that the team members are committed to each other and the congregation, and they find ways to notice what needs care and how to respond. Growing edges are finding ways to connect with others who want to help and continuing to build connections. The team is grateful for the Board's guidance through the annual goals, which help them see how their work fits into the church's priorities.

- Justice League: Jean Anderson

Jean visited the Justice League meeting on March 3. She observed that the number of people engaged in justice work (climate and racial justice) is impressive. The members have a wide variety of interests and backgrounds; they mesh well and are flexible. The team now meets monthly, and the Signal group is active. There seems to be a "flow" now. The growing edge is a need to balance diving deep into an issue and maintaining a broad awareness of other issues. The team feels there is a need to educate the congregation on its purposes and activities, to find a way to intersect with other teams, and to give new people opportunities to get involved, to be more connected with the congregation as a whole. The team feels it has the Board's support, but they would like to create better ways to promote involvement.

5. The Board Retreat will take place on April 25, 2026, from 9 am to noon.

Next Board meeting: Thursday, April 16, 2026, 7:00-8:30PM -- opening and closing by Kris Felbeck