

FCC Board Retreat - 4/25/26 – Minutes

Attending: Linda Valerian (Moderator), Jane McBride (Pastor), Jean Anderson, Rob Cooper, Kris Felbeck, Joy Gullikson, Allegra Montanari, Jeff Peterson, Paul Snyder (on Zoom); Xan Laurence, recording

Purpose

The purposes of the Board Retreat were to deepen our relationships with each other and to lay the groundwork for a capital campaign. Desired outcomes included understanding our present context as a prelude to a capital campaign, discussing what the process of this campaign would be like, and determining how it could help us accomplish our mission and goals.

The meeting opened with food and icebreaker questions proposed by Kris Felbeck:

1. What was the stupidest thing you've ever done?
2. What piece of music brings back the same intense memories whenever you hear it?
3. If you could thank anyone, who would it be and for what?

Jane then led the group in a reflection on the scripture passage telling the story of the meeting with Jesus on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35).

Our 175th Anniversary

The meeting began with reflections on the church's history considering the upcoming 175th anniversary in November. The discussion for the most part raised questions, such as:

- What patterns have appeared?
- Who have we been reaching out to and how has that changed over time?
- Who have we been asking to "stay with us" (reference to scripture passage)?
- How have we defined belonging, in the past and in the present?
- Where will we be in 25 years?
- How would, or will, we adapt to a different group of people if we brought them in or they came in – what is our history with other races and groups?
- How will we respond to our changing neighborhood?
- How do we learn from the past?
- How will we see our actions today from 25 years in the future?

Program Goals

Jane gave an overview of our program goals and where we are in the process of achieving them.

Goal 1: Develop and implement a comprehensive communication plan that provides a framework for us to tell our story to the larger community.

Movement towards completing this goal is progressing, but messy. There are new questions, new procedures, and new technologies to be dealt with, which have been more complicated than anticipated.

Goal 2: Steadily increase rental income from the use of our building each year.

We are on track to exceed the \$16,000 of rental income that we set as a goal for 2026. We are currently in the middle of determining how to accommodate new building users. This involves added security measures, upgrading equipment, and HVAC-related expenses, which are more costly and complex than anticipated.

Goal 3: cultivating a community for all to belong.

We want to cultivate a relationship with neighboring colleges, and we've connected with Neon at the University of Minnesota, but that relationship has plateaued since the initial connections last year. The Vinery project has completed its agreed-upon mission. There is potential to carry on this work with the Faith Formation Team and the Hospitality and Engagement Team.

We have received one new member in 2026, and another is projected to join soon, out of a goal of two dozen by the end of 2026. There are more new people who are involved in various activities of the church, but who have not become members. We have not yet created a way to measure the success of increased engagement with our ministries and activities.

The Capital Campaign

The proposed Capital Campaign was discussed, with information being presented by Joy Gullikson and Jeff Peterson. Joy shared information from The James Company, a consulting firm we used to help us structure our last campaign. They provided a brochure outlining how they assist and support the campaign, which would extend over three to four years. They provide significant input guiding the process of discovery and defining success. We need to decide on a monetary goal, which could be balanced with grants if possible. We also need to decide whether a portion of the proceeds would be designated for donation, as we did in the last campaign.

Jeff presented a list of the building-related projects that need to be addressed, and the approximate cost of repairs to the structure or replacement of equipment.

1. Painting of the sanctuary. We want to have this completed no later than the church's 175th anniversary in November, but we will have to pay for this expense. The Minnesota Historical Society will not approve a grant to pay for it, considering painting maintenance rather than restoration. A quote from 2023 projected a cost of \$235,000 plus an architect's fee of \$5,517. More information is needed after three years have passed. Currently, we have approximately \$145,000 to put toward this expense, with the balance made up by a loan which would be repaid out of Capital Campaign funds. This would need board approval.

2. Roof repairs. Parts of the roof have been replaced at various times. The oldest part of the roof, about 60 % of it, has not been replaced for at least 25 years and the building

committee is in the process of finding a contractor to evaluate its condition. The rest of the roof is newer: 25% of it is 18 years old, 5% is 10 years old, and 10% is 3 years old.

3. Organ repairs. The most recent estimate for the cost of organ repairs took place in 2018 and was estimated to be at least \$100,000. This estimate did not include all the recommended renovations. There was discussion of having a separate campaign to fund organ renovations, and the possibility of finding grant money to cover this expense.

4. Installing an elevator. This expense has been estimated at \$1 million for an elevator that will reach all three floors; \$700,000 for an elevator that will reach the second level from the main level of the church but will not include the basement.

5. Upgrading the Eighth Avenue entrance. A consultation is planned with an architect to determine how this entrance can be improved for access and climate control, and what the cost would be. This might be a candidate for a 1-to-1 matching grant from the National Fund for Sacred Places.

6. Basement wall leak. This is not a project to be funded through the Capital Campaign; at an estimated cost of \$15,000-\$20,000, we can fund the repairs from other sources.

7. Arched windows in the Sanctuary. Minnesota Historical Society denied our request for grant funding in the last round of applications because the condition of the windows was at that time considered "fair." They will eventually deteriorate to the point where they will qualify for funding, although not at a 1:1 match. More information is needed.

8. New electric range and vent hood. Replacing the current inefficient gas range with an electric range and accompanying equipment was estimated in 2024 at \$56,000, which may not include whatever electrical upgrades might be needed. More information is needed. Replacing the old gas range with an efficient new one might cost less; currently the pilot lights consume more gas per year than the actual usage. We might investigate asking for help from Community Kitchen and other users.

9. HVAC project. A number of rebates and grants have been identified that may help us fund a significant amount of work with the \$100,000 we hope to raise. This will enable us to replace the office mini-splits and add mini-splits to the other upstairs spaces, the main entryway and the kitchen, replace the aging furnace, and install a new heat pump. We will also be able to tune up the boiler, replacing failed steam traps for optimal efficiency. We may have funds to install an automation system that will enable us to control all these units.

A caveat: We need to apply to the City of Minneapolis for a variance of the code related to fresh air intake. There will be architectural fees involved, and no guarantee that the variance will be granted. A rejection would require that we reevaluate the project.

The sanctuary and the gathering hall are not included in this list of needs. The options for climate control of these spaces with still experimental technology are extremely expensive, and we are unlikely to be able to raise enough money to cover the cost.

Discussion

The board evaluated the list of needs and voted for the project(s) they found most exciting or compelling. The results broke down into three categories:

- Priorities: Addressing the leaks, the roof, the painting of the sanctuary, and the HVAC. These were considered the most necessary to have completed quickly.
- Wants: A new range, reconfiguring the 8th Ave. entryway. These were considered important to accomplish, but they need more information and updated cost estimates.

- Dreams: An elevator, repairing/restoring the organ. These were more aspirational than possible, but still important, especially an elevator for improved accessibility. The major stumbling block is the cost.

The board was asked about setting aside an amount from the Capital Campaign for a one-time expenditure on something ministry related. Questions were raised regarding what type of activity might be funded and whether it should be something that is already ongoing or something new, and suggestions were made such as creating an endowment or adding to the current trust fund. All agreed that more discussion was necessary.

A similar question regarding setting aside monies for an outside cause was discussed, making comparisons with the beginnings of our reparations program. Again, the board agreed on the need for further suggestions and investigation.

The board acknowledged throughout the discussion that we have made significant progress in working toward achieving our goals, that there is more left to do, and that we have the enthusiasm and determination needed to keep moving forward.