

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COMMITTEE MEETING

November 15, 2023

Present: Lois Aldrich, Jim Bonnar, Steve Larrett, Jeff Giddings, Marc MacQueen, Viola Fairweather, Rev. Peter Connolly

Guests: Susie and Bill Sherman, Alan Melchior (Virtual)

Meeting called to order by Jim Bonnar at 6:38 p.m.

Reading provided by Rev. Peter Connolly

Minutes - Approved as written.

PC Position: PC received notice from Nicole Sykes that she is resigning from her At Large position on the PC. Nicole has been a wonderful contributor to the PC and will be very much missed.

Building and Grounds (B&G): Susie Sherman, Bill Sherman, and Alan Melchior were invited by the PC to attend tonight's meeting to discuss B&G projects and financing the building's operating and maintenance costs. The PC agrees that we have not budgeted adequately for B&G in past years, reacting rather than planning for operations needs that surfaced. Funding has been an issue, and church has largely relied on one-time asks and capitol campaigns, such as I Love My Church, to meet building needs. \$118,000 was generously contributed toward the I Love My Church campaign, all of which has been spent. The Mary Fuller fund now has \$22,000 remaining that can be used for maintenance/repairs. Much has been done, but there remain many projects to be tackled in an old building such as ours. Space has also been an issue.

Currently, there are no dollars being set aside for building maintenance. The PC is proposing that B&G operations and maintenance be included in our annual budget. The PC needs to arrive at a dollar figure for annual maintenance costs that will take care of the building we have. To incorporate those costs in an annual budget, the PC asked the B&G Committee for a prioritized list of building maintenance and operations projects, along with cost estimates.

Susie Sherman, who is the lead for the Building and Grounds Committee, distributed handouts developed by the committee that describe the numerous building projects and their status and also an estimate of depreciation for church and contents developed by Bill Howe. Based on this documentation, suggestion was made to increase our annual budget by \$25,000 to cover repairs/maintenance. Having a line item in the budget for repairs/maintenance will allow funds to be available for repairs and maintenance as needed and reduce the need for special asks. The PC asked Susie and Bill Sherman to modify the "FUUSM Building project status" worksheets to include a column that assigns a priority rating (for example, high, medium, or low), as well as a column that explains the reason for the priority rating (i.e., safety, risk factors accessibility, liabilities). It was suggested that the priority ratings be defined. For example, "High" = must be completed within one year, "Medium" = must be completed within 2 years, or similar definitions.

The PC discussed how to proceed. Jim Bonnar suggested a team be coordinated that would be charged with coming up with an annual maintenance budget and a plan to fund it. Reminder that any effort in this area should also reflect our Mission Statement. Jim Bonnar and Alan Melchior offered to be on the committee.

Treasurer's Report: Marc MacQueen emailed the report to the PC, which was accepted. Marc informed the PC that we are where we should be for this time of year. However, some members sent in their full pledges early, and some members have not contributed towards their pledge yet. We therefore may be facing deficit spending in the 2nd half of the year. Fundraising events are in the works which may bring in additional revenue.

Suggestions made to encourage payment of pledges: auto-pay is an option that may facilitate pledge payments and something most people can set up with their bank; the PC should periodically remind congregation of their pledge commitments; hold off on any major fundraisers during the beginning of the pledge drive (March); use a thermometer graph to track our pledge goal and status of receipt of pledges to make status of pledge drive visible to the congregation.

Minister's Report: Rev. Peter Connolly's report was reviewed and accepted.

Music Committee: Report reviewed and accepted.

RE: Kelly Lownds emailed her report to the PC, which was accepted. The PC had informed Kelly that requested funds for additional babysitter have been approved.

Cash in the Plate (CIP): Social Justice Team recommends Doctors without Borders for December CIP. The PC approved recommendation, with exception of Christmas Eve service collection, which is traditionally reserved for Minister's Discretionary Fund. Lois Aldrich reported that CIP donations for October totaled \$1005, half of which has been donated to South Shore Resource and Advocacy Center, and half to United Way of North Central Mass. for victims of Leominster flooding.

Parlor Task Force: The task force has largely completed its charge to renovate the Parlor, which now looks wonderful and inviting. Stained glass windows will soon be repaired. Thanks to all on the task force who were part of this effort. Dedication of the Avis Clay Parlor will be held on November 19 prior to the Autumn Concert.

Minister's Agenda:

- At the recent Special Congregation Meeting held on November 5, some of the voting members expressed concern regarding the process used to draft the Covenant that congregants were asked to vote on. Some congregants stated they had not had a chance to review the Covenant being proposed. Rev. Peter asked that we examine the process used to determine what we did right and what we could do better. Rev. Peter had emphasized the importance of the Covenant during Sunday services, where the "Unison Reading" in the order of service was explained to be the draft Covenant. Andrea Priest and her team worked with others to develop a draft Covenant and post on the church website. It was agreed there could have been better communication through *UU Updates*, as not everyone attends services regularly. It may have also been helpful to have this presented at the cottage meetings. Rev. Peter reminded PC members that, when issuing a Warrant to the congregation, the language in the Warrant needs to clearly state the business to be transacted in accordance with Article VI of the Bylaws. The Covenant language was not specifically written in the Warrant. Recommend this be done going forward.

Next Steps: Rev. Peter distributed a hand-out "A Covenant-forming Process for the Church" to the PC. The PC will review, and a decision on how to proceed on the Covenant will be made at the next PC meeting. Important that whatever is decided that we make clear to the congregation what the process is and the timetable for completing it. Once a Covenant is finalized, it is recommended that the Covenant language be put in a clearly visible area in the church so all can see it.

- Policy Handbook: FUUSM has one binder that is the Policy Handbook for the church. Rev. Peter asked that PC members review different pieces of the binder and make any recommendations for change, as policies and procedures have not been reviewed in some time. Rev. Peter also recommends that the Index for the Policy book be sorted out by category to make it easier to find and read specific policies.

Request for Building Use: Vi Fairweather informed the PC that an author, Richard Trapp, would like to use the Parish Hall during either January or February for a discussion of his book regarding indigenous people. Vi will coordinate the event. PC approved request.

Governance Meeting: The PC will have a governance meeting for further discussion of bylaws, policies, Mission Statement, Covenant, etc. on November 29, 2023, at 6:30 p.m. in person.

Next Monthly PC Meeting: December 20, 2023 at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom.

Rev. Peter provided a closing reading.

Meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Submitted by Lois Aldrich, Parish Clerk