

MINUTES OF 2022 ANNUAL MEETING

February 6th, 2021 11:15 am

Taken by Sanjay Cherian (Clerk)

Conducted via Zoom

Quorum

We needed a quorum of 10 eligible voters based on a most recent 6-month average of 17 adults. We had 17 eligible voters present, constituting a voting quorum. [One more eligible voter joined during the Trustees report].

Opening

The meeting was called to order by Moderator Ann Desrochers, at 11:16 am. The primary purpose is to review 2021 operations & ministry, vote on nominations & budget, and to discuss life together during pandemic/endemic times. We will talk about how we've adjusted and prepare for future ministry together. Ann confirmed that we had met our quorum requirement and that it will take a 2/3 vote of eligible attendees to pass any motion.

Reverend Catherine Merrill opened the meeting in prayer at 11:19.

Ann noted that she had been looking forward to an in-person Annual Meeting this year with the traditional pot luck and fellowship but that we're not there yet.

Discussion of Annual Meeting Minutes from 2021

Ann noted that Cabinet reviewed these minutes in Feb 2021 and that there were no recommended changes. Donna Bretschneider moved to accept the minutes as recorded, Candy Tiner seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Review of Board Reports: Our Mission of Ministry

- **Minister:** Rev. Cath expressed gratitude for our support at a trying time.
- **Outreach:** Amy Razzaboni shared that as she was typing the Outreach report, she was very happy at the work they were able to do during the pandemic and hoped to be able to continue it this year.
- **Music:** Yifan Kang thanks everyone who supported music ministry and thanked Sanjay who brought the band back to life this year.

- **Deacons:** Jill Aitken thanked everyone for their support of the deacons particularly around Christmas and Easter and said she was lucky to have an amazing board of deacons.

Donna moved to accept the reports of the Mission of Ministry as written and submitted, Bill Dunbar seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Review of Board Reports: Our Mission of Stewardship

- **Finance:** Bill gave big thanks to the THM (Take-Home Meals) crew and the Christmas Faire for really helping the budget out.
- **Stewardship:** Cindy Perkins thanked participants in the stewardship campaign. She wishes we had raised more pledges but acknowledges Bill's sense that things always work out somehow.
- **Faith Formation:** Rev. Cath noted that it has been a tough year and hopes we can do more this year.
- **Trustees:** Sue Haight noted that we couldn't get to some of the projects on our list. She thanked those who assisted the trustees this year as it takes the whole church to maintain our property.
- **Pastoral Relations:** With Peter Bretschneider away, Ann noted that it was a tough year with Rev. Cath being out and the complexity of people's schedules but we will be moving forward next year.

Donna moved to accept the reports of the Mission of Stewardship as written, John Panto seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Review of Current Church Initiatives

Boy Scouts of America Settlement and Reorganization plan

- Ann walked us through the timetable from late 2020 onward describing how we'd followed recommendations by the UCC and UMC.
- The UMC has been giving us frequent advice because they are very active and have a dedicated committee for this topic.
- The UCC treats local churches as autonomous so left us to figure out our own path through our own attorney.
- Cub Scout Pack 260 rechartered under Daniel Webster Council instead of through our church.
- The Scouts are using our facilities under a facilities use agreement, updated with a certificate of liability insurance.
- Local legal counsel didn't feel confidence in their domain expertise to be able to help us.
- Bob Ashton asked how many boy scouts there are because the number of claims seems high to him. Ann explained that it's over 30 years of abuse reports coming forward.

Open and Affirming (ONA) Process

- Melanie Levesque provided a review of the process so far, noting that we started the ONA investigation in Jan 2019.
- Covid delayed us from 2020-2022.
- The committee held listening sessions with people.
- The ONA committee has not met as frequently this year. Melanie's role has taken a back seat because of other commitments. She thinks this is very important work and that after conversations within the church, more educational activities are necessary. Education doesn't mean we're adopting ONA but learning about it.
- They did a lot of learning as a group but the next step is to do it as a church.
- Melanie invited people to reach out to her or other committee members if they haven't been spoken with.
- Melanie thanked Ann for her support and guidance.

Trustees Projects

- Covid stopped us from getting to all we needed to address.
- We are having difficulty getting any contractor to come look at the steeple and clock face because it's not a huge project to them. It will require a unique individual.
- We just had an elevator inspection and the inspector noted that it hasn't been used much.
- The trustees are looking at a quote from the company that did our front windows to replace the windows in the rear section of the church.
- We have postponed replacing the rear windows in favor of insulating the church, which is largely not insulated. Susan met with Michael Russell from Quality Insulation in Nashua.
 - He noted that the basement was a huge source of heat loss and we should start there. We will need a work crew to clean out the crawl space before putting in poly film and foam insulation.
 - He used thermal imaging unit to find that the sanctuary and downstairs has no insulation between the exterior wall and the tin interior wall. Blow-in insulation would leave plugs in the church exterior that we would have to finish and paint.
 - We may need new clapboards for areas where they can't be replaced after blowing in insulation.
 - The attic is okay except for the stairwell leading up to it. He recommended they spray foam on to the outside and interior walls of the stairwell.
 - He went up to the chancel area with thermal imaging and noted that the walls between the chancel and the deacon's & music rooms have no insulation and showed heat loss 1/3 of the way up the walls. He would

- have to drill from the ceilings of the side rooms and spray insulation into the walls, then we would have to refinish.
- Susan noted that the cost estimates don't include additional clapboard and crews to do finish work if we can't.
 - The trustees recommend for 2022 that we at least insulate the basement and interior walls and attic stairs.
 - Exterior walls are going to be a major project for us because we don't have a lot of people to do the follow-up work required. Can we do finish work? Will we have to repaint the whole church and can we tackle that now?
 - In response to John Panto's question, Susan replied that the insulation guy said he'd look for discounts. If we had natural gas or electric heat, it falls into a grant money category but not with oil or propane heat. She will research it. She is not sure if the Ella Anderson grant will cover it. Russell doesn't think it's likely.
 - Jill: did the people who gave quotes give any indication as to the heating cost savings that would result. Susan: no, but she thinks we paid around \$5,000 for oil last year. She doesn't know how to calculate fuel cost savings.
 - Bill: we have \$158,000 in our Capital Improvement Fund to help with this. A grant would help offset a drawdown of those funds.
 - Susan thinks the proposed subset of the project is within the Cabinet's discretionary spending authority but because the whole project is around \$30k, it requires annual meeting approval. The original thought was to do it all but considering the exterior wall consequences, we would be committing manpower to post-project work. This is not a project we can leave half-done.
 - John P thinks this is really important work and may make sense to do piecemeal. He thinks insulation is very important for integrity of the building.
 - Bill: would go along with approval. He thinks Susan is right that the outer walls will take more money so we may want to link that work with immediate exterior repair and repainting. He thinks maybe a big project for next year and the basement work would be good to do this year.
 - Ann: noted that the two projects proposed are right on the cusp of 10% of budget that can approved by Cabinet and any overruns would go over.
 - Susan: recommends we do phase 1 & 3 now, phase 2 next year.
 - Megan: brought up the cash reserve growth each year, asked where we put it, and asked if we can put a portion each year towards building upkeep. Bill explained the mechanics of the money handling and noted that we don't set any aside for a particular cause. He said most of the money in the capital fund came from the sale of the parsonage. Megan feels like we should add to that fund regularly from any budget surplus.
 - Kevin: insulation sounds good and usually is. One hesitancy he has is wondering what the payback on investment is. If we spend \$7,000-30,000, how much are we saving? \$100/year? \$1000? How long before

we get payback on our investment? This is a church building that's not used every day. He says there are ways to figure it out such as a professionally-done energy model of the building and offered to help make that happen. He says it will cost some money. He notes that the total price of insulating the upper walls is not currently known because of all the extra work that has to be done afterwards.

- John P: would proper insulation cut down on mold and animal intrusion? Kevin: absolutely. The basement is a no-brainer but upstairs walls are a question. The biggest heat leak upstairs was the windows and we fixed that. He recommends holding off on exterior work until we've done an energy audit.
- Susan recapped the options and said she's getting the feeling we should at least do the basement. She & Melanie are confident we can get the manpower to do the necessary clean out. The trustees are comfortable with that result.
- Cost Estimates from Ann's slides
 - Basement crawl space, walls, and sills \$ 6,913
 - Exterior walls both levels \$19,592
 - Interiors walls chancel area, attic stairs \$2,976
- Bill moved to spend from the capital improvement fund up to \$10,000 to do the basement insulation. He raised the amount from \$7,000 to account for unexpected things. Kevin noted that we might need a dumpster. Ann asked Kevin the rough cost of an energy audit. He said it would be \$2,500. Susan says an audit might help because both grants she's looking at require it.
- Bob: will work with Kevin on energy audit. He had one done on his house before it was built. He thinks he did one on the church when David Smith was here.
- Linda asked if we could put a railing on the stairs to the basement. Susan said yes but after removing junk from basement.
- The amended motion from Bill was to spend from the Capital Improvement Fund up to \$11,000 to do basement insulation and an energy audit. Donna seconded. The vote was 17 in favor, 1 opposed, so the motion passed with a 2/3 majority.
- Susan will contact Quality Insulation and figure out a timetable for moving trash out of the basement. People should contact her to volunteer to help. She'll make sure we have the right clothing, N95 masks, etc.
- Rev. Cath asked us to be aware of Holy Week & Easter to avoid making things tougher on ourselves with dumpsters, etc.

Church Visioning

- Sanjay described the upcoming conversation on church direction.
 - The past couple of years have been ones where we've learned new things as individuals, as families, and as a church. We should take stock of those things and see how they might have affected our values and priorities.
 - Historically when we ask ourselves what we want to be as a church, our appetite has been greater than our means. We want to take on new things but we resist letting go of things that were once central to the church. The

true work of figuring out what we are meant to be is a process of discernment, working as a body with God. In order to do that well and to understand where God is leading us, we must also understand where our own hearts are pulling us.

- Often, our actions tell us more about what is important to us than our words do. Part of the conversation we'd like to have is to look at where we've actually put energy and see what that tells us.
- Details are not yet figured out but what we're thinking is one or more conversations where we share our learnings and integrate them into what we've learned as a body. We also need to ask ourselves challenging questions and try to work through any discomfort to find what is truly true of us, not just what we wish was true. Armed with that self-awareness, we then move into a discernment and brainstorming process to help us understand how we want to allocate our finite time, energy, and finances in a way that best honors the faith-centered community that we are called to be and the God that we serve.

Nominations:

- Melanie noted that her term for trustee is up and asked if renewal was automatic.
 - Ann: no, if she wants to renew, to speak up and we'll vote on it with everything else. She said we'd be happy to have Melanie renew her term.
 - Ann noted some people were renewing for just 1 year even if the official term is 3 years. Rev. Cath made it clear that it's okay for people to step back if the commitment is not right at this time.
 - Melanie noted that this is her 2nd term and she's been doing it for 6 years so she feels she needs to step back. She observed that it feels like we are all trustees so she would still like to be involved even if not officially on the board. She thanked Susan for all the work she has done to keep the board going. She asked us to consider her on call but not committed because her schedule is getting busy.
 - Susan thanked Melanie for all she'd done in her 2 terms.
- Donna: texted Peter and he said he'd do Asst Moderator again for a year.
- Ann: asked Cindy about Stewardship. Cindy would like to think about it. She needs to know what it means to do stewardship year-round. Ann: it's technically year-round but the bulk of the work is the Fall stewardship campaign.
- Donna moved to change Peter's commitment to 2023, remove Melanie from the Board of Trustees as requested, and accept the rest of the nominations as submitted. Everyone whose term is in red expires in 2022 but they can notify the Cabinet if they change their minds and the Cabinet is authorized to accept. Bill seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

2022 Budget:

- Bill noted changes to budget relative to initial publication.

- Pledges are now \$35,495
- Expenses: the elevator test went from \$1,500 to \$2,575. It's changed because it was done in January so we know the real price.
- Final revenue is \$58,330. Expenses are \$96,724.
- This gives us a 39.7% deficit. The way to correct it is to use our cash reserve which was \$65,001 at the end of last year. We would use \$28,722 to get us to within 10% of balance, which is constitutionally allowed.
- Most of the budget stayed the same as last year. Everyone did well saving on expenses.
- THM was budgeted at \$7,000, though they have tended to exceed budgeted amount considerably.
- The Christmas Faire was previously budgeted at \$3,000. Now that we've had experience with it and online giving, we may be able to increase that number.
- Rev. Cath: noted that the line item for paying the minister for this year looks weird but we're in keeping with conference guidelines. That's because we're shifting funds towards housing allowance from salary for personal tax reasons as allowed. Ann: it's a very common thing for ministers to manage their total compensation this way.
- Sanjay: is nobody else concerned with the magnitude of the shortfall?
 - Cindy is.
 - Bill: last year, we were at 30% shortfall also. By using cash reserves, we made it. During the year, other funds come in, whether bequest in a will or a one-time donation. It's things we can't count on. Usually by Aug/Sep, we get a substantial donation but we can't budget for it. Bill notes that we're a fortunate church that's never had to go into our trust funds.
 - Sanjay articulated concern with operating at a sustained deficit. Donna: understands but doesn't see where we could cut expenses without seriously undermining what we do. Sanjay agrees and just wanted to "contaminate" other people with his worry.
- Ann: asked Bill if there is a point where we can see that it's not going to sustain us for 3 more years.
 - Bill: from 2012 to present, the lines run the same between expenses and revenues. He says we've never had a balanced budget though within the past couple of years, this has been the greatest deficit we've faced. We said if God wants us to continue, He would provide somehow. We get through the year and end up to the good. We ended 2021 with a surplus. Cash reserve over the years has grown from these recurring surpluses.
 - Bill notes that unpledged givers were a big part of in-person worship and expects it to return post-Covid.
 - Sanjay: requested guardrails on future budgets to describe trigger criteria at which we will have difficult conversations and realize we have to do things differently.
 - John noted that he expects people do want to support us.

- Bill: in Jan 2021, cash was \$50,221. The lowest level over the year was \$49,549, and we ended with \$65,001. This excludes checking account where we usually keep \$20,000. He noted that Betty Hall used to say if God wants the church to survive, He will provide.
 - Rev. Cath: also noted we're not supposed to tempt the Lord. She noted that Donna's statement that we can't cut more without no longer being a church is true, and also that Sanjay's guardrails request is reasonable. She further observed that John's thoughts on the community not really knowing what we offer and being willing to participate if they did also show there are things we could be doing there.
- Action item for Cabinet: to talk about where is the point where we really need to have a difficult conversation and take action around financial conditions.

Donna moved to accept the budget as presented: John Panto seconded. There were 16 in favor, 1 abstaining. The motion passed with a 2/3 majority.

New or Other Business

none

Rev. Cath closed us in prayer at 12:47 pm.

The meeting was adjourned by Ann at 12:48 pm.