

BCC Cabinet Meeting Minutes

Date: 5/10/2020

Submitted by: Sanjay Cherian

In Attendance (via Zoom videoconference):

Name	Role	Voting?
Catherine Merrill	Minister	N
Ann Desrochers	Moderator	Y
Carol Cherian	Deacons/Fundraising	Y
Sanjay Cherian	Clerk	Y
Susan Haight	Trustees	Y
Rena Duncklee	Treasurer	Y
Amy Razzaboni	Outreach	Y
Candy Tiner	Secretary/Publicity	Y
Bill Dunbar	Finance	Y

The meeting started at 8:30 with a prayer from Rev. Cath. We had a voting quorum.

Review of Prior minutes

- Re: AA meeting
 - Ann: The answer of “yes” was from the last query made to AA, not as of that meeting. Candy still hasn’t heard back from them and continues to have trouble with communications.
 - Re: copyright laxity – two church music places - One License and CCLI are the ones being more relaxed during the pandemic. Since then, Ann has received notice that they will not be lax anymore.
 - AA sent Rena a check for building use.
 - Cath: someone told us that AA has not met since the social distancing order. Susan & Amy have seen no evidence of any meetings.
 - Susan: if they start to meet again, how will we know the building needs to be cleaned? Candy: the contact for Monday night meetings is new. Candy will drive by and check on Monday and leave a note in the box.
- Bill had asked the capital campaign committee to do research on online giving options to see that they meet our long-term needs.
- Bill moved to accept the minutes with the above modifications, Susan seconded; the motion passed unanimously.

COVID situation or How online church is going

- A question came from the NH conference: Do our bylaws allow for electronic voting?
 - Ann: ours are vague about this. The conference is asking if we are comfortable or if we need to change the bylaws. Bill: vague is the best policy.
 - Cath: is there any concern that we could have a vote contested procedurally to undermine a decision?

- Ann: we changed the advanced notice requirement to be via the best medium at the time but our bylaws still say something about announcing from the pulpit. Can zoom be considered this?
- Cath: we can put an announcement into the worship service as a video so it's equivalent to an announcement from the pulpit.
- The sense of this meeting was that we should keep things as-is in our bylaws.
- Outreach is staying connected to the community:
 - They wonder if we'll lose visibility and the community's sense that we are around.
 - Seniors who were contacted for meal delivery just want someone to talk to.
 - Ann: should we post on Facebook to make things more visible that we're out there doing things in safe ways? Amy: we can but most people who come to senior luncheons are not on Facebook.
 - Ann: Facebook posting can let other people in the community know. Candy: it won't hurt and we can do it.
 - Susan: we put a teddy bear in window for kids to find. Some people found it.
- Cath: We're trying to keep the message on the front board positive and changing it to let people see something going on. We have the problem of showing we're active even without a pandemic. It's a challenge for people who are not online.
- Susan has noticed people have been visiting the cross in the yard and sitting on benches periodically.
- Ann: are we letting other organizations in town know we're there for them when they're doing stuff? Amy: hasn't reached out to them personally. It may not be the right assumption that they're not doing stuff.
- Megan, who is good at connecting people together, has been collaborating with Outreach and making helpful contributions. With the gratitude card project, she told other organizations about our plan. Amy is in touch with Tad Putney, Dave Coffey (CERT), the Food Pantry, and the Welfare office.
- We had a discussion that the Deacons would like to start mailing the worship bulletin to a small handful of people who can't attend and who requested it. We decided we would go over budget on postage, put the expense under that category, and figure it out later.
- After the May 3rd service, Yi Fan felt we could do better on music. In the last two weeks, Cath feels the music has stepped up.
- We now have one lay leader who reads a lot in each service. The level of effort to chase down one reader is easier than chasing down five readers. She asks if this is working for us. Can something be improved in the electronic format? There was no critical feedback from the attendees. Cath leaves it to the Cabinet to let her know if the approach is not continuously improving. She's trying to give us a good online experience, not a bad physical church experience. She's trying to make the online experience its own thing – shorter sermons, one scripture, more focus to suit the medium better. She has spoken with the Deacons. As a body, they have agreed that while communion needs to be synchronous, they would like to continue with the worship services as asynchronous. This is technically easier for Cath.
 - Ann: loves the playlist approach.
 - Cath: as long as she can keep getting readers to go through the steps, it's easier to do. For Out Of Pulpit Sundays, she can grab an available source for the reflection and plug it in.
 - Ann: The Council of conference ministers for the UCC has created a service coming out on Tuesday to be used anytime in Eastertide so that pastors can get a week off.

- Cath: the NH Council of churches is also doing one and the Methodists too so she has a choice.
- Financial Impact from Bill
 - There is no financial impact.
 - Bill submitted 4 different times for the Federal Government's PPP program and got a phone call each time asking for different things. The final result was that we didn't get it. We'll be fine.
 - Rena & Bill and Bill & Finance have talked. In the past month, pledges came in quite a bit higher than normal. Regarding expenses, we had to pay retirement contributions but this only happens only once a quarter. We haven't gotten TD bank affinity money yet – should be \$2k or so. Revenue was \$5,500 - \$6,000 and Expenses were \$5,300 so we should be okay for May.
 - Looking at cash: we have \$51k in cash minus dedicated funds. Checking contains \$17k. The constitution says we have to stay over \$10k. Finance says we will take any required funds out of our money market account, which pays the least interest but Bill doesn't think we'll need to tap it this month.
 - Cath: how much do we usually get at Easter? Rena: 2019 was \$4,900. This year, we got \$100.
 - Cath: we're doing okay in May but when we get to the bottom revenue line of Rena's report, we're behind where we wanted to be.
 - Bill: in the bulletin, can we please put in a reminder to use Amazon Smile since everyone's ordering online?
 - Bill feels we're doing fairly well in revenue so if that keeps up, we've managed expenses to where we'll break even.
 - The Small Business Administration (SBA) is who determines if we're approved or not. Cath thanks Bill for seeing it through to the end despite the frustrations.
- What would it take to resume in-person worship?
 - Cath: we're talking about congregational worship at the church on a Sunday morning at the same time. Sanjay noted that it's not necessarily in the sanctuary. Susan: Trustees are delaying removal of the old tank in anticipation that we may do outdoor worship in that area.
 - Cath: we have to balance the pressures of people wanting to be back together with the feeling of wanting to do this appropriately. She thinks of the choir in Washington where many got sick from one meeting.
 - Cath's conclusion: we will have to worship online and in person concurrently because not everybody will be able to come back to live church at the same time. This may be for a while or maybe forever. She doesn't want to create a second-class group of citizens. If the governor raises the safe number of people at a meeting to 20, she still wouldn't want to have to turn people away for exceeding that number. We can't offer two services on Sunday. It will place a demand on musicians. Can we clean often enough to be safe? Do we start with smaller things like the Deacon's meeting or the Cabinet meeting?
 - Ann: On Tuesday, there was an emotional message from Gordon Rankin about how they decided to close Horton Center for the summer. The issue was that if they could open, what would they have to do to make things safe? They can't do activities, campfire singing (needs 30-40 foot spacing for singing), etc. It wouldn't look or feel like camp. He cautions people to look at services and see if they're adequately spaced out with no singing, etc., does it still feel like church or is the new thing we're creating closer to the spirit of church?
 - Cath: the sense from the NH governor's office is that reopening is going to be staged and she doesn't think churches will be in the early tier. Announcements come out on Friday to take

effect Monday. She would appreciate not having to throw out the plan for Sunday on an immediately preceding Friday.

- Amy: is there any guidance from the governor on other industries? Cath: the governor says religious organizations should not meet yet. Susan: this is probably because of what's happening in the south where orders were defied, churches met, and there are now repercussions. It's likely religious organizations will be towards last phase.
- Bill: in MA, religious organizations are talking to the governor about what they can do and how. If MA puts them into the first tier, NH may follow suit. Cath: our size may work in our favor. We can fit people into the sanctuary with good spacing. Bill: if we do it outside or at the lake against governor's orders, what will the public perception be? Cath: argues that we're trying to show love of neighbor by shutting down in-person worship. She can't see going against people who have actual access to epidemiologists. Part of our guidelines was to follow the policy of the schools but this is no longer an easy analogue for us. Horton center is closed, 2 UMC camps are closed, and other UCC camps are closed.
- Cath: can we keep our building clean enough? Susan doesn't think we can keep building clean enough on an ongoing basis to have meetings and church. It's not something Sue Laub could or would be expected to do. We would need the congregation's help. Ann: or we hire a special cleaning service – the conference's cleaning service has to use special compounds at a higher expense.
- Cath: we know of people who are immunocompromised, people whose work takes them into contact with others, people whose work takes them into contact with the vulnerable. Can we meet everyone's safety needs at once?
- Cath: to have a service with no communal singing, how would we handle a soloist safely, etc. The virus is brittle enough that if we didn't use the sanctuary for anything else between services, it would decay. There was discussion about how to get people in and out of sanctuary without touching things. Susan: it sounds like we need to wait for official guidance.
- Cath: can we look into it, e.g. can Susan ask Ann about what's happening at conference? Bill: we may have to pass the plate.
- Cath: What else can we do? Deacons, what's the minimum worship experience? Should we say we thought about it and tell people the conditions and timeframe at which we can make church a safe experience? Or do we just want to hold in our current state?
- Bill: we should look at what the cost would be to open. We'll need hand sanitizers at doors, etc. Maybe we have to clean for worship but not support external groups. Do we want to temperature scan everybody? Does everybody have to wear a mask?
- Carol: we definitely need to have this conversation about what we need to do when it becomes possible to meet. She personally doesn't think we should do anything until the governor's okay. We don't know what the world will be like in 6 weeks in terms of knowledge. Based on her work and things she's read, it's all about the viral load, which can come from one big exposure or multiple smaller ones. So outdoors with spacing may reduce the load you receive but you will still be exposed if someone has it. Summer is the ideal time to start meeting outside because of the weather. If it goes to Fall, she doesn't see how this could work. We would have to clean the bathrooms after every user and wait for airborne particles to fall, etc. She doesn't see how we can meet in the building until they figure out how we can immunize or until people are willing to say they're willing to get it. That would be a small group of people able to meet, so she is grateful to Cath for recognizing the concurrency of the online option. Carol wouldn't go to church under these circumstances and wouldn't want several members of our community to go either.
- Cath: we have research to do. She doesn't think we'll open up before the June cabinet meeting. It's at least a month away but any research we do now will be thrown out. If we're okay financially and don't have to meet in person to keep the flame alive, maybe we should let other people/industries go first to learn if there are better protocols to follow. Hong Kong

opened the bars because they were doing well. Bars are now closed because they realized it couldn't/wouldn't be done safely. Shall we say we'll follow the guidance of the governor, the experience of the two conferences, and think about how we offer a meaningful experience that works both online and in person? Susan moves to monitor the governor's & conference responses, continue with online worship, revisit the situation at the next cabinet meeting, and in the interim do what it takes to get information out to the congregation that we're not ignoring the desire to get back to more normal worship situation.

- Carol: has spoken with people who are **very** anxious to get back to church but it's very emotional. She doesn't want to lecture people on data. She's thinking that the first time we do get back together, she doesn't see how we could get everybody to sit down and just listen to church in the same room. Maybe we can find a way to meet that emotional need to get together without having it be church. Maybe keep church online and do something on the lawn. This is an emotional need not a logical one.
 - Bill: we can open the church with many restrictions but people want to get together and talk. That's the part people will miss if they are herded into and out of the sanctuary.
 - Cath: doesn't think we need a motion but it's a great summary of the decision. She's also struggling with what she feels about going back into community if it means she can't be with her parents. She recognizes that she can't be in community until we have a vaccine but it would be a great hardship if she couldn't see her parents because of an automatic 2-week quarantine after seeing us. It's part of her thought process around the issue. Others agreed for the need for caution because of upcoming babies, etc. Cath: if there are enough people in this situation, maybe online church is the best we can do.
 - Amy: agrees with Carol. Logically she understands everything we've discussed but has a different emotional reaction.
 - Sanjay noted the possibility of a hybrid mode where we do the coffee hour or event online but a subset of people may be in the same location for the f2f fellowship. This may cause fear of missing out.
 - Cath: recognizes the needs people have but letting the situation deliver more information may be important. Also people can think about what their spiritual needs really are and see how we can meet them. It may happen in unexpected ways that are faithful to this reality. We should continue to think about it and rope more people into the discussion. Please send people who are really interested in face-to-face church to Cath & Ann. Right now she's not hearing their voices at all.
- John & Ann were at the church with David Wright on Thursday. All issues with windows are fixed – screens, cracked sash, and caps on screws. We are 100% done with windows. Susan: the new curtains are up.
 - Offline request for Sanjay: is there any way to send emails from moderator to all. Sanjay & Cath will see if we can configure this.
 - Bill: re windows, we had moved \$70k to pay for the windows with overages. Now that the project is completed with \$18k left over because we had no overages, Bill wants to move the excess funds back to the capital fund. Susan moved to authorize this, Amy seconded; the motion passed unanimously.
 - The ONA group got a season pass to watch all ONA coalition webinars to stay educated. So far they have watched two: ONA and the Bible, and 1-on-1 conversations. Other webinars are coming up in the next few months, including include Transgender/Nonbinary and Bisexuality/Pansexuality.

- Cath: in light of today’s conversation, do we want to have the Deacons ping the town about worship at the lake in June and July? She doesn’t think we’ll lose our slot if we don’t use it. We decided not to ask.

Finance & Treasurer’s Report

BCC YTD Financial Summary	Actual Income	Actual Expenses	Income vs Expenses + / -
April	\$24,071	\$30,873	(\$6,802)

Outreach Report

- May 9th Senior Luncheon – Delivering meals. Thank you to Ethel for doing all the cooking.
- Ongoing card project – Thank you & Appreciation notes for local hospitals, grocery stores & Brookline emergency departments
- Dropped baby items off to Welfare officer for young pregnant woman in community
- Staying in contact with Brookline welfare officer to access needs in town
- Spoke with Sandy Garvin & contacted her daughter Jennifer. Sandy is healthy & doing well in her assisted living facility
- Outreach board in constant contact with each other for support and discussing ways to continue our work

Deacon’s Report:

- During the last month we reviewed the “Lent and Holy Week To-do List” and made notes on some items for next year
- We met on 4/26 on zoom
- Discussed the spiritual health of the church
- Discussed beginning thoughts on re-opening worship
- Discussed using an online service from another church for the week of 5/24 so Cath can virtually attend the Festival of Homiletics (Preaching)
- We obtained our usual number of copies (7) of “Our Daily Bread” from the Hollis church and mailed them to members
- We checked in with church members who have not been active with the services being offered online at this time to make sure their spiritual needs are being met

Minister’s Report:

The Covid-19 global pandemic led the church to stop in person meetings and services on March 13, 2020. They had not resumed by May 3

May 2020 (through 5/3)

- Averaging 26.3 hours/week, which puts me between 39 hours under and 44 hours over since Sept. 15. This time last year, I was 8 hours under to 77 hours over.
- I was hospitalized from 4/3 – 4/6 with atrial fibrillation. Thankfully everything turned out fine. I’m grateful for all the help and support I got while I recovered.
- Began calling two members of the congregation four days a week and sending three postcards four days a week. By 5/3 was up to 54 pastoral contacts
- 2-4 virtual coffee hours on 4/5 (hosted by Ann), 4/12, 4/19, 4/26 and 5/3.

- Recruiting a whole squad of lay readers for Easter and then a single lay reader for the 4/30 & 5/3 services.
- Getting components of the Maundy Thursday and Easter services made by members of the congregation, then handing the entire box of Legos over to Sanjay so he could assemble the services. I am so grateful for his help.
- Online Prayer Group: 4/1, 4/15, 4/22, 4/30
- Pastoral counseling over the phone.
- Designing the 5/3 communion service for on-line participation.
- Gathering Joys & Concerns ahead of the service.
- Finalizing the Good Friday bulletin for the in home vigil.
- Writing Easter letter in a time of pandemic.
- Figuring out if/how to do a flowering cross for Easter.
- Inviting deacons to take a breath on Holy Saturday and reflect on all the niggling details we weren't chasing down at that moment because of the pandemic.
- Learning how to use YouTube's playlists for worship.
- Finding resource for 3 session Bible study on The Life & Times of Paul.
- Attending NH UCC clergy meeting about preparing for an on-line Holy Week.
- As I contact church members, confirming and updating the Clerk's membership spreadsheet.
- Making sure local funeral homes knew how to contact me in case they needed more help laying people to rest.
- Providing emergency pastoral coverage for Mason, April 13-18.
- Reaching out to Mason & Hollis pastors in particular and joining in a group discussion of the Hillsborough Association ministers about what we're doing about virtual worship.
- Slowly, slowly finalizing the worship plan for July, August and the first half of September.

Services:

- 4/5: Palm Sunday: the service was assembled before I went in the hospital
- 4/9: Maundy Thursday: the service was designed and the bulletin done except that the videos had not been processed or uploaded and therefore the links were missing. Thank heaven for Sanjay's help.
- 4/12: Easter Sunday and a reflection on John 20 & Jeremiah 31, with as many folks from the congregation as I could get to record a video. Very special Lord's Prayer from everyone.
- 4/19: Reflection on Doubting Thomas.
- 4/26: Reflection on Road to Emmaus.
- 5/3: Reflection on Good Shepherd Sunday.

Regular Meetings: Cabinet, Deacons, Clergy Support

The meeting was closed at 9:53 am with a prayer from Rev. Cath.