

# BCC Cabinet Meeting Minutes

Date: 6/14/2020

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       |
| Amy Razzaboni     | Outreach            | Y       |
| Bill Dunbar       | Finance             | Y       |

The meeting started at 8:33 with a prayer from Rev. Cath. We did not have a voting quorum at this time.

## Review of Prior minutes

- There was no quorum so we decided to vote towards approval and confirm later. Bill moved to accept the revised minutes as sent out by the clerk, Carol seconded; the motion passed unanimously. Susan confirmed the decision at 8:42 am when she arrived and completed the required quorum.

## Bell Ringing on July 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup>

- Ann: the town is not doing activities but she has heard that people still want to ring the bell.
- Bill: it was someone called Leon on Facebook who's taking strong positions on things. Bill feels we shouldn't let him in.
- Ann: we have new windows. Are we concerned about the safety of the building? Carol: yes. She thinks the bell needs to ring whether it's us or other people. It's a tradition. Everything else has been taken away. She doesn't think people will be making good decisions and will do what they want when they want. Thinks we should be proactive.
- Ann: a creative solution was proposed at coffee hour. Keep the church locked with one of us inside ringing the bell. People can stand outside and make noise in their own way. They can be engaged without being in the church.
  - Amy: thinks this would be the best solution. Doing nothing will just cause problems. Having people outside with the police involved will be a problem.
  - Cath: if we ring the bell from the inside and have folks outside for a bring-your-own bell ringing party, this could work. She thinks the majority of people, especially drunk people, wander in from a party up the road. If she calls Chief Quigley and speaks to the host of the party a week in advance, that will probably give us the best chance of this going reasonably smoothly. She wants the Chief's input on having this be a non-event. She doesn't want church members outside church having to wrangle people. The issue is the degree of drunkenness. Not doing it at all is an invitation for the church to be damaged and the idea infuriates her.
  - Carol & Ann are concerned whether that's going to be enough for the bell ringers.
  - Susan agreed with BYO bell ringing.

- There are 2 parties going on, maybe 3.
- Carol: how do we get the word out? There was discussion about sign wording.
- Sanjay: has a security concern about church people participating. He wouldn't want to be locked in the building without a heavy police presence. Cath: will purchase a shirt with a clerical collar and be present to help set a tone that's not conducive to aggression.
- Carol: concerned that 3 weeks from now enough other things will be open that there will be an increased public expectation of being able to do things like bell-ringing.
- Consensus: have the church people ring the bell. Cath: thinks we need to speak with Chief Quigley first and then support his recommendation.
- Ann won't be here that weekend.
- Susan: volunteered herself and Russell to lead it.
- Carol: asks Cath to ask Chief Quigley for advice for when to put the info out. We want enough time for people to participate but not enough to plan how to subvert our intent.
- Cath: having enough lead time on the drag queen story hour gave people time to burn themselves out in reaction so that there was less protest on the actual day of the event.
- Sanjay: closer to the event, we should have a plan for strategic retreat coordinated with the police. Things can flip in a moment.
- Addendum 6/17/2020: based on a consultation with the Brookline Police and their strong recommendation to cancel the bell ringing, we have voted to do so.

### **When/how to resume in person worship?**

- Susan: wants to know when AA intends to start meeting again so we can have our processes in place or we can tell them not to meet until we open. The issue was set aside until the worship question was settled.
- Cath: do we want to look at resuming in-person worship outdoors? It would be on the side lawn, BYO chair, 30 minutes, not even using bathrooms in church. There would be no worship if it's raining.
- Bill: this was talked about at the finance committee meeting. They thought of leaving a tent up on the side lawn for the summer. There should be no lake service because the environment is not controllable. The reason was to increase revenue because not having in-person worship has decreased our revenue. They asked Rena if all pledgers were still giving and the answer was yes when we had in-church worship, no at the moment. Finance thinks that having an in-person worship would help.
- Ann: what is the cost to rent a tent? Amy: maybe \$400-500 for a weekend. Ann: incremental revenue resulting from in-person worship may not exceed this cost. Bill: since not much else is going on, maybe we could get tent usage as a donation. Amy: we should get it at a discount at least.
- Carol: should we open the church to get money? She thinks we should do it because we want to open the church.
- Cath: has heard indirectly that people want to have church opened. The number of attendees for an in-person service is instructive.
- Ann: we have to establish our own clear guidelines and enforce them after reading conference and state guidelines.
- Sanjay: we could conduct an experiment like holding an in-person service, say once a month, and iterate based on what we learn.
- Cath: the Governor's church guidelines are an exemption, not a "blessing." New guidelines are expected tomorrow so we'll have more data.
- Sanjay: we could do in-person worship at a rate supported by our cleaning ability and collect data so that it's not just 5 people saying they don't feel like making the effort.

- Cath: we would do an online service as usual. On Sunday, she would come and read her portions in person. Her ability to go home to Maine means people would have to keep away from her. She would prefer not to do it on the lake because it involves the town. Bill: the finance committee said we shouldn't even think about the lake because you have no control over people's behavior there.
- Cath: if too many people show up for in-person worship, she'll stay and do a second pass. Also maybe our first one should be after July 4th so that we can honestly say the church isn't open. We decided not to do it on the July 4th weekend.
- Cath: does it feel faithful to do it on July 12th to start? We will check in on July 5th to see if COVID cases are spiking up after protests and whatever opening has happened elsewhere. Carol: this is reasonable as a plan.
- Ann: once state & conference guidelines come out, we'll probably have to have an email notification of our guidelines. Ann responded to Susan's query that the conference is still formulating its response and it should come out in Tuesday's newsletter.
- Cath: UMC is ahead of UCC and their guidelines are still not that crisp and helpful. Bill: a lot of it is because each building is unique and processes have to be tailored to fit.
- Sanjay: it's important to keep the congregation informed along the way even if we wait until July 5th to make a public statement. Let them know that we're figuring out how, not just punting. Amy: agrees that as a person who wants to get back to in-person worship, it would help a lot to know that it's being actively worked on.
- Cath: if someone asks about the lake, what do we say? Susan: lots of controversy about lake right now so it's okay to say it's out of consideration.
- Carol: it's important to provide a short bullet list of why we don't just open. Cath: we can convey what is expected of people who attend. Will that be enough? Bill: we shouldn't over explain because we don't have all the details yet.
- Susan: are we comfortable with 7/12 as a target date? Consensus: yes. We will communicate a side lawn worship plan contingent on UCC/UMC guidelines and what's happening in the world. Carol: 6 foot separation will keep people who live together able to stay together. Susan: H-B graduation was a good approach. Pods of 3 chairs, people happy, successful outcome.
- Cath: asked Sanjay to think about the microphone system. We need a system for getting the AV system set up in a way that's safe for her. Cath's leg is also worse than before – she needs at least a piece of plywood to stand on. Amy: they have plenty of plywood in her garage and will let George know.
- Cath: is comfortable with in-person service but deeply concerned about bell-ringing, particularly the choices others will make in the moment under the influence of alcohol. She asks for our prayers that people even in their altered state respect & understand we're trying to support them.

## Discussion about AA

- We may need to pay a little to have the church sanitized before meetings start.
- Ann asked Bill to explain how the hospital handles this.
  - Bill: the hospital uses a UV light (about \$250) that is placed in a room and run for an hour.
  - The room is left alone for 30-40 minutes afterwards for the generated ozone to do its job and dissipate.
  - The machine covers 1600 square feet, which is more than the church downstairs or upstairs areas. If it was ordered today, it wouldn't arrive before August at the earliest.
- The alternative is increased manpower and cost of frequent cleanings with disinfectants. We would have to clean every pew, windowsills, etc.
  - With the UV machine, we'd just have to vacuum the floor as usual.
  - Ann: bathrooms would still each have to be individually cleaned.
- Cath: we wouldn't need all 150 chairs in social hall, can take hymnals out of the pews, etc. to improve even mechanical efficiency. Have we talked to insurers about what we have to do to maintain

coverage? Bill: a message was sent to the insurance co yesterday. Cath: for AA, we'd have to make sure we stay within our insurance liability. Ann: that is part of the conference guideline – processes for people we let use our building. Bill: we should ask AA for their desired outcome, and then look to see if we can work within that.

## **Finance & Treasurer's Report**

- Cash available for bills is \$48,800. The average income for the month is \$3,500. Bare minimum expenses (salaries, utilities, insurance) are \$6,300/month. We are running a \$2,800 monthly deficit.
- Bill calculates that if it stays this way through year-end, we'd have a shortfall of \$20,000, which we can currently cover. They are looking at how to increase that revenue part. We haven't received TD Affinity money yet. The Ghost Trail run & therefore spaghetti supper is off. We're having to think outside the box.
- Ann: we should make sure that every communication we send out has the address for sending checks. Cath: has there been any progress on online giving? Ann: some. We have new info from Rena. It's a matter of balancing transaction fees with increased revenue.
- Bill: we're looking at moving dollars from money market to CDs to get some more interest. None of our dedicated funds have been touched yet. If we ran into dire straits, we still have money in the capital fund (about \$150k) and general fund (\$21,000). We're having a take home meal this month but some of that revenue will be used for the operating costs of that program.
- We had previously voted to have Susan Laub paid for 3 months. Do we continue that even though she's not being asked to clean? Amy: with talk of potentially reopening, are we going to ask Susan to do work soon? Bill: she would certainly get paid for that. This is about paying her average salary no matter what. Ann: asked Susan H if Sue L would come in and clean if we asked her? Susan doesn't know the answer.
- Cath: the gardens need a lot of work and we don't usually pay her to garden but Cath thinks Sue wants to earn what she's paid legitimately. Perhaps the gardening would be a way to balance her health against the desire to pay her. Carol: somebody (confirmed by Ann to be David Drake) put a lot of work into improving the garden so we may want to check its current state. Cath: given Sue's age, we should ask her if she even feels safe doing this. Susan H will contact her.
- Ann: should we get the UV light?
  - Susan: yes, this is our new normal and we'll always need to do disinfecting from now on.
  - Cath: there's emerging information about surface risk being much lower than people risk.
  - Carol: the machine seems expensive and too early to buy.
  - There was discussion about whether we would accept it if someone would just donate the money for it.
  - There was talk that we'd use it on microphones (a smaller handheld option exists) and the bathrooms even without the broader COVID risk. Bill: it's a wheeled unit that can be moved from room to room.
  - Susan and Amy were in favor of buying it.
  - Susan moved to purchase UV disinfecting machine, Amy seconded; the motion passed unanimously.

## **Outreach Report**

- Sent & delivered Thank You cards written from the congregation to Brookline Police, Fire, Ambulance, CERT, Milford Shaws & Market Basket, Market Basket on Northwest Blvd in Nashua, Southern NH Medical Center & St Joe's Hospital. We received a thank you card from St. Joe's Hospital.
- Delivered 47 meals for senior luncheon on May 9th. Received many thanks & monetary donations for the next luncheon.

- Keeping in touch with Brookline Welfare office. Spoke with Curtis Snow from Share. Both food pantries are currently pretty well stocked.
- Contacted one of the Directors from the End 68 hours of Hunger organization. 68 Hours refers to the time between 3:00 PM on Friday until 8:00 AM on Monday morning when children are not in school & potentially going hungry. Providing food for children in the 6 Brookline/Hollis schools. Normally deliver to 20 children, but since the schools have closed are now feeding approximately 70. Outreach discussing a donation to this organization.
- Megan King is officially joining the Outreach Board.

### **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 to date.

#### June 2020 (through 6/7)

- Averaging 26.3 hours/week, which puts me between 61 hours under and 34 hours over since Sept. 15. This time last year, I was 1 to 96 hours over.
- Pastoral counseling over the phone.
- Recruiting the deacons to help make sure that those folks whom we haven't seen in any of the Zoom meetings aren't having access issues.
- Attending the Festival of Homiletics as it was offered on-line this year.
- Virtual coffee hours on 5/10, 5/17 (though Zoom wasn't working well), 5/24, 5/31, 6/7.
- Online Prayer Group: 5/6, 5/13, 5/20, 5/27, 6/6.
- Three session Bible study on the Life of Paul: 5/6, 5/13, 5/20.
- Gathering Joys & Concerns ahead of the service.
- As I contact church members, confirming and updating the Clerk's membership spreadsheet.
- Publishing the worship plan for July, August and the first half of September.
- BTS book group reading Jeff MacDonald's Part-Time is Plenty (5/22, 5/29, 6/5)
- Celebrating the Memorial Day holiday.
- Remotely supporting the June 19th take home meal.
- Slowly beginning planning for September to November worship services.
- Reading Henri Nouwen's book on discernment.
- Putting my church office back to rights.
- Putting together a proposal for future small group Adult study topics.

#### Services:

- 5/10: Even in the pandemic, how have we tasted that the Lord is Good.
- 5/17: Inviting us to lean on the Holy Spirit as one of our resources for determining when to come back to in person worship.
- 5/24: [UCC Conference Ministers worship service]
- 5/31: Pentecost reflection on how communication is more than get text from one brain to another.
- 6/7: Live Zoom worship which included a Trinity reflection on how we are in relationship with all the actors in the protests that arose after the killing of George Floyd.

#### Regular Meetings: Cabinet, Deacons, Clergy Support

### **New or other business:**

- ONA Committee acquired a Season Pass to participate in Webinars provided by the UCC ONA Coalition. To date: ONA and the Bible, and 1-on-1 Conversations. Future webinars include Transgender/Nonbinary and Bisexuality/Pansexuality.

- Ann: proposing July 12 for next cabinet meeting because we need a summer meeting. Should we defer it until the following week? The decision is to plan to zoom conference after the 9 am service, i.e. at 10 am. The principle is to reinforce the message that church is actually closed.
- Carol: has been talking to people about the Christmas Faire.
  - It will not be the same as it usually is. We will do baskets but are looking at doing online bidding. Carol is doing research to see if there's a ready-made platform to support us. We will still ask people to contribute baskets but won't ask businesses for donations because they've probably been hit pretty hard. We will start thinking about the Faire now as usual.
  - Susan: we should contact the Nashua Humane Society because they've moved to all-online auctions.
  - Cath: we should actively reach out to businesses and tell them we'll be praying for them. Bill: but if they feel like donating, to feel free. Sanjay: can we go one step further and tell them we'll put their names in our materials as traditional supporters while asking nothing of them.

The meeting was closed at 9:55 am to start the coffee hour Zoom.