

# BCC Cabinet Meeting Minutes

**Date:** 1/8/2023

**Submitted by:** Sanjay Cherian

## In Attendance:

Name	Role	Voting?
Catherine Merrill	Minister	N
Ann Desrochers	Moderator	Y
Sanjay Cherian	Clerk	Y
Susan Haight	Trustees	Y
Bill Dunbar	Finance	Y
Amy Razzaboni	Outreach	Y
Jill Aitken	Deacons	Y
Peter Bretschneider	Assistant Moderator	Y
John Panto	Deacons (last half of meeting)	N

The meeting started at 8:33 am with a prayer from Rev Cath. We had a voting quorum.

## Calendar Review

- January 20th – Take Home Meals
- January 29th – Annual Meeting
- February 5th
  - 8:30 AM Faith Formation Program (for children and adults)
  - Scouting Sunday
- Cath: The Scouts confirmed that they want to participate in Scouting Sunday. How can we be open & inviting to the guests we will have in the church? The last Scouting Service before Covid had over 70 people in worship. What do we want to do?
  - Ann: we've always done a special coffee hour that day. Traditionally the Scouts put it on but since we've had a discontinuity with Covid, she's not sure if they're thinking that way. Cath: has not seen the scouts do it since she's been here. She personally would like to just say to scouting families to just come and we'll provide a spread. Ann: just make sure they won't duplicate effort.
  - Cath: do we have capacity in the church to do it? Enthusiastic yes from Susan & Amy.
  - Cath: will move communion to the following Sunday to not make it uncomfortable for some families.
  - Cath: what about live music? Bill: it would be nice to have Jocelyn or Yifan or some other live music. There was general consensus on this.
  - Cath: do we need greeters or other special people? Ann: in the past, scouts have filled these roles. Cath: is good with all of that except for greeters.
    - Amy: it would be nice to have a couple of scouts be greeters. Ann: in the past we've had a deacon accompany them so they have some support.
    - Cath: it's not intuitive to come in and go upstairs so we will need a guide downstairs. There was general agreement.

- Cath: the service will mention reverence but will not be too Jesus-centric to make it less denomination-specific. She will try to be scout-focused. Should she encourage them to sign the guest book to get contact information? Ann: a greeter could provide friendly encouragement to sign in.
- Cath: do we want to encourage church engagement by saying we need help with a project?
  - Sanjay: it should be a project where they work integrated with us, not in isolation.
  - Ann: we should make an announcement that is open to everyone, like a spring clean-up day. Sue: disagrees only in terms of not being ready to plan trustee work 5 months out. Ann: is just thinking about providing a heads-up.
  - Sue: service to community is fundamental to the scouts. If there's a way that we can superficially connect service to the community with a church need to position the church as part of the community, that would help. It's a whole new crop of scouts.
  - Ann: is there anything approaching Lent or Easter that we could do? Sue: not that she's planning.
  - After discussion, we concluded we should just loosely mention a spring cleanup. Jill: let's get it down to a general month to match Ann's experience that the scouts need a couple of months lead time.
  - Cath: but we need to make sure church people will show up if we say we're going to. Amy: agrees that if they're going to do something at our initiation, we need to be prepared to participate and make it a joint activity.
  - Bill: we should emphasize that the church and scouts are both part of the community.
- Amy: Lynn Giblin has offered at senior luncheon to get some of the scouts together to help us with things. We should be aware of where the scouts are and what they are doing and then meet them where they are. Ann: anything timely this time of year that we can help them with is good.
- Cath: will follow up with scout leader.
- Sue: On January 11, Eastern is coming back to look at the tank, probably in the early afternoon. Russell will let them in. There's some oil in a catch basin that wasn't there before and needs to be investigated. It will be a small expense. Bill: we're on automatic billing with them now.
- Amy: March 11 - next Senior Luncheon.

## **Review of Prior Minutes**

- Bill moved to accept the minutes as amended with clarifications (the version emailed in response to Megan), Amy seconded; the motion passed unanimously.

## **Budget Review & Annual Meeting Discussion**

- Ann: thanked Bill for filling in for what Rena used to do. Bill: showed a 3 page list of items Rena used to do, much of which people don't know about. She was using 3 different spreadsheets and he's automating and integrating some of it.
- Ann: has been reaching out to the church community and not finding takers for roles. She opens it up to the Cabinet.
- Bill: it's good that he's doing Rena's role to uncover things and automate tasks, like doing W2's online.
  - He's also documenting 44 years of what Rena has been doing. He's waiting to see if his signature for this month's checks will go through. Rena needs to sign one more document for the bank on Monday.
  - Bill has taken possession of all of Rena's physical documents and is reviewing them for retention. Some will be passed to Candy and the Moderator with retention requirements.

- Is using the financechair@bccnh.org email for website credentials so it can be handed down more easily across personnel transitions.
- Bill: if we do get a treasurer, it should be someone from the church. He related that Rena concurs. Someone had asked him how much time the role takes and Bill can't assess that right now. He is trying to get it down to an hour a week except for year-end work.
- The budget deficit is about \$50k. At year end, our cash reserve was \$64k+. To get to 10% revenue/expense variance, Bill proposes we use ~\$31k of this so we don't need to consume dedicated funds.
- Ann: Based on Bill's input to annual report, there's some difference in numbers. She & Bill will reconcile it later today.
- Bill: was asked to put \$500 in addition to existing dedicated funds for a musician. There are other items like treasurer salary that we may or may not spend. Cath: but it's not \$50k. Bill: notes we've never had a balanced budget but things always work out. Between dedicated funds and checking account we have more than \$80k.
- Jill: does money get added to cash reserves when we receive net income? Bill: it goes up and down with our inflows and outflows. He explained how cash reserve is computed and thus changes every month.
- Bill: thinks the budget is okay going to Annual Meeting using only cash reserves and not dedicated funds to make up the shortfall.
  - Sanjay: is uncomfortable with not having a crisis because a crisis would have forced us to consider important realities.
  - Ann: our current model is not sustainable.
  - Amy: does this mean cash reserves will be lower next year? Because things historically work out, will we just assume things will keep working out?
  - Sanjay: stated personal opinion that this problem shouldn't be solved by the cabinet even if it could be. He wants to make sure we have the discussion at Annual Meeting anyway. Ann: that's her plan.
- Cath: the number to watch is worship attendance. Those numbers aren't telling a great story. Financial numbers are also not telling a great story. If we just looked at financial numbers and said we're always fine, we won't be recognizing the story told by other numbers – attendance, difficulty filling board positions. To her, there's a different story being told this year even if we're trying to be as number-driven as possible. This isn't a minor tingle of suspicion.
  - Ann: worship numbers are starting to trend back up so she is concerned people will feel there's no trouble. She feels like we're in crisis mode. It feels like we're doing great on outreach, doing okay on diaconate, but nobody wants to do the business of running the church.
  - Amy: do we think people are not as invested in the running of the church? Ann: this is not the fun part of the church.
  - Amy: do people not understand that this is part of the success of the church?
  - Peter: compares the experience to what he sees at the fire department. They have 27 members. They had a call last night and 2 people showed up. They have a lot of people who are "invested" in the fire dept but have a lot of other things to do. We have a lot of people in the church with a lot of other things to do. There's a generation out there spread very thin with needs for themselves and their kids and they don't want to give up time on weekends.
  - Amy: does he think the problem is real life getting in the way? Peter: yes, the Lion's club giving up an event because nobody wants to do it. The PTO has a different experience because kids are involved. He doesn't know how to deal with this.
  - Sue: can see it on all levels and it's systemic in town events too. Peter: sees it with tree lighting as well.
  - Bill: for volleyball, all tournaments for the coming year are on Sundays.

- Peter: many of these parents did go to church when young but aren't seeing their kids get those lessons.
- Amy: so how bad is this?
  - Cath: we're a small church in a small town. Is this the time to for example merge with Mason and stop operating independently? If our model is not sustainable, what do we do? She's not advocating for this outcome. She knows we can't have a treasurer serve for 44 years and not be able to retire? How many churches have people who've served for 20 years and then get fed up?
  - Sanjay: thinks we don't understand the whole problem yet. We are focused on external factors. He feels guilty for not stepping up to meet our needs but feels like slowing down a disaster can be worse than letting it get critical so that we become willing to do radical things to completely avoid it.
  - Peter: understands the sense. Theoretically if everyone put in one more year, we could pull out but we need other people to come along. Sanjay: but if we put a ton of effort into solving the wrong problem, time & money are wasted. Peter: was saying that if we get the right leadership into the right positions, we can make the team effective. When leaders move out or up, a working team can stop being so effective. A one-year push can get things to where you can start changing the people in leadership over gradually.
  - Amy: doesn't think it's healthy to guilt people into filling roles. In addition, people may break at the worst possible time.
- Susan: is this a discussion for Annual Meeting?
  - Ann: yes, we're going to Annual Meeting with no administrative board: moderator, assistant moderator, treasurer, clerk.
  - Bill: looking at Rena's work, if it had gone to anyone other than him, it would have been a disaster.
  - Sanjay: how we bring it to Annual Meeting is critical. Just opening it up to the congregation may get people to lose hope and leave. Coming with a vague strategy may mean people think it's being taken care of and don't get involved.
- Ann: we carry things so far but no further, e.g. discernment. Sanjay: Said he has lots of thoughts & opinions on our situation, and has our discernment results and 2 other data sources we can use but he recognizes that if he treats it as one person pursuing a pet project, there's no likelihood of success.
- Cath: we're not the only small church in a small town with this problem. This means we don't have to invent a unique solution that's just for us. There are church consultants and growth consultants who'll come in with a canned solution. She thinks in the end the issue is, "do you actually want to come and be with the people in this building?" Then you come to a moment where you realize that yes, you want to be with these flawed, lovely people in spiritual community. That's not something the Lions can do. She agrees with Sanjay about short-term solutions. The worst thing would be if 4 people step up to the open positions at Annual Meeting. Part of her would rather step back at Annual Meeting and say if we leave here with a solution, it's the wrong solution. If we leave here with a commitment to search for that solution, we have some hope. Yet we still need admin work done. There's a balance of hopefulness and hopelessness and if she's the only person who can speak to that, we're in trouble. If she's the right person to step forward and articulate that, then she would be honored to do it. But not because it's her opinion. It's because every church she's seen that's minister-led in a Congregational context is led into the ground.
- John Panto: we should go to Annual Meeting saying that it's not that we have a problem but a challenge. We're not going down the tubes with a terrible problem but we have a unique challenge that we need everyone's help with. He wants an uplifting Annual Meeting.
- Amy: are we sending the wrong message by saying we need these positions filled but we need certain people? Are we saying we want to hand pick them? She acknowledges that we need a treasurer who knows numbers.

- Ann: don't want to handpick but we've seen people sign up for positions in the past and then not do anything. We don't want people to sign up out of guilt.
- Bill: the person he talked to would be a great treasurer but he couldn't estimate the workload.
- Amy: asked because in her experience, things do get done in the church.
- Cath: if she said the moderator has to put out agenda for a meeting once a month, she can imagine that happening but it being the wrong agenda.
- Sanjay: handpicking implies we're trying to choose the optimal person for each role. He thinks we're looking for people who meet real minimum standards, but are not necessarily optimal.
- Cath: there were activities we could let go of without damage and we've done that. We're now down to tasks and roles that we can't let go of anymore.
  - Ann: that's why she's concluding we may need to restructure ourselves.
  - Cath: we may have needed to let go of this much over time to realize we're down to the least we can take on.
- Cath: her observation is that at every other church, you had to fight to get a quorum to start a meeting. We have never had a problem with that. So, she's not concerned it's not just the people in this room. She thinks if we put out a budget and a slate of all-yellow positions, it will communicate that it's a good meeting to attend. If we had a highly-produced PowerPoint, it sends the wrong message – that we're under control. To have no PowerPoint at all implies we've given up. We need something that is the altar call – “do you get how deep the ditch is?” and that there are no tactical solutions. That said, for the people in this room, if the response from Annual Meeting is an agreement that there's a problem and they're willing to help, are we willing to stay in an admin position for a year? At 12:30 pm on Jan 29, do we have a moderator, treasurer, etc.?
  - Ann: her heart is here and she will do as much as she can but she knows there's so much else pulling at her life that she doesn't want to be just a warm body. She can't predict how much she can do.
  - Amy: doesn't want people to agree out of guilt but not want to do the job.
- Cath: do we have to accept nominations from the floor at Annual Meeting?
  - Ann: doesn't think the constitution says we have to but the cabinet can be authorized to fill the unfilled roles.
  - Cath: can she say, “thank you, we'll take what help you can give, but we need to figure out the right structure for the church?” We do need a treasurer.
  - Bill: will stay on and get things straightened out with the expectation of handing things over.
- Cath: is willing to be the one who says we're going to go at a more moderate pace. She will work with Ann on a PowerPoint to present the landscape in a way that's neither naïvely optimistic nor doom and gloom.
- Sue: If we have money, heat & light, and community outreach covered, we're okay. Cath: and we have a secretary.
- Cath: what we're asking for out of Annual Meeting is approval for the budget and any amendments that come up and we're looking for a commitment from the congregation about the direction they want to move in:
  - wrap it up, saving this church is too hard
  - we want to talk and try more
  - other...

what we're not looking for is for the congregation to say, “okay cabinet, solve it for us.” In essence we don't have a cabinet as of 12:30 on Annual Meeting day as Cath will be the last officer standing, other than Bill as temporary treasurer.

## Deacons' Report

- Coordinated the Carol Sing & Potluck Lunch after worship on 12/11/22.
- Held a Service of Lessons & Carols on 12/18/22 with the help of Jocelyn Jones on the piano.
- Held one Christmas Eve service at 5:00pm. Deacons provided (2) large red poinsettias to decorate the sanctuary. We were blessed to have Jocelyn Jones playing the piano and to also have the band play the introit and the anthem for the service. (60 adults, 7 children)
- Secured participants for Sunday services as needed; lay readers, greeters.
- Purchased a ceramic chalice as part of a charity auction of chalices belonging to retiring UMC Bishop Devadhar.
- Purchased oil for chancel candles.

## Finance & Treasurer's Report

	Actual Income	Actual Expenses	Income vs. Expenses +/-
December	\$92,307	\$90,959	\$1,348

Cash Reserves: \$64,573.73 (threshold < \$48,362.00)

## Minister's Report

### January 2023 (12/5 to 1/1)

Averaging 26.5 hours/week, which puts me between 23.25 hours over to 16.75 hours under since Sept.

11. This time last year, I was averaging 27.1 hours/week.

- Pastoral counseling.
- Designing and delivering the kids' portion of Swimming in the Words of Baptism
- Helping Luke Avramov practice before his Lessons & Carols reading.
- Seeing if the Scouts would like to do a Scouting Sunday service in 2023 (they would!)
- Writing personal follow up letters for previous pledgers who haven't pledged this year.
- Arranging for Clyde to lead the Christmas Carol Sing.
- Drafting portions of the Clerk's & CE Reports for 2023 Annual Meeting.
- Writing the Minister's Report for 2023 Annual Meeting.
- Registering to be a presenter for Prepared to Serve in 2023.
- Christmas & New Year's holidays.
- Doing the initial set up for worship planning for A Ash Weds-Easter 2.

### Services:

- 12/11: How are we letting go of our grumbling and strengthening our hearts so we are prepared for the coming of God?
- 12/18: Annual service of Lessons & Carols.
- 12/24: Where is the newness that God is offering coming into your life this Christmas Eve?
- 1/1: Where are the ripples of God reaching into your life making all things new?

Regular Meetings: Cabinet, Clergy Support

**New or Other Business:**

- None

The meeting was closed in prayer at ~9:50 am by Rev Cath.