

## **FRS Board Meeting – November 16, 2021**

### **Call to Order/Opening**

Holly Cashman called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

### **Members Present**

Reverend Rebecca Bryan, Vern Ellis, Lucy Litwin, Michelle Kimball, Tom Himmel, Tina Benik, Holly Cashman (chair), Tim Fountain (Treasurer), Jim Supple, Annie Maurer, Juliana Beauvais, Minnie Flanagan, Micah Donahue, Renee Wolf Foster, Christine Doherty, Bill Clary, Kathy Desilets (clerk)

### **Check-in/Reading Chalice Lighting, Opening Words**

Rev. Rebecca read a piece by Susan Bodoïn on Leading in Liminal Time which focused among other things on the need to recognize the power of presence and the balance of knowing and unknowing, and the importance of deep listening.

### **New Business**

- **Introductions** Rev. Rebecca led introductions and each person shared something they would give to Rob as he started his new job.
- **Finance Committee Q&A** Tim Fountain and Tom Himmel gave a brief report and responded to questions, providing this information:
  - The end of year saw an influx of funds which is common at the end of the calendar year. We are seeing some fluctuations in revenue.
  - We currently have 40% in hand for pledges. This needs ongoing monitoring.
  - The budget has a reserve to allow for 3% unpaid pledges. Last year's pledge income was within 3% of our \$450,000 goal.
  - Our financial system reports revenue collected this year for past year pledges as income for the new year.
  - We have a line of credit.
  - We recently retired our debt mortgage for the lower meeting house renovations.

### **Open Issues/Strategic Thinking**

#### **Governance Process**

Juliana Beauvais and Christine Doherty reported on governance issues. This discussion is to lay out the issues for consideration with action at a future meeting. A lot of work is upcoming. The committee is considering a policy to give more structure to the endowment. We still need to deal with pronouns and going through the technical steps of creating the Stewardship Committee. Some issues that are in process include:

**Pronouns** - One clear learning from last year's annual meeting was that there needs to be structured education for the congregation before the presentation of any by-law change at a congregational meeting.

As the Welcoming Committee was organizing, Reverend Rebecca reached out to pull in more people to work on this. An important question is how we can build communication to educate people on the issue. The group acknowledged that the work of being a Welcoming Congregation had slipped. In the discussion of changing pronouns in the bylaws, two issues were conflated: issues regarding appropriate grammatical language and issues of people's personal sense of gender identity. This included the fact that many people who do not identify with he or she to describe their gender identity choose "they" (singular) as a personal pronoun.

The pronoun changes will be brought to this year's annual meeting in May. We need to determine the best path for education – not just an open forum, but a structured approach to bring appropriate attention to the issue. This could include reading and or presentations in advance of the discussion at the annual meeting. We also need to consider how to deal with the sensitivity of the gender issues that have come to light. The committee is just beginning to discuss this and is not sure when they will have a path forward. Discussion in February may be too soon.

This issue is related to our current work on Covenant, Welcoming, and Governance, and the members of the committees are coordinating. These committees and work groups are all moving in the same direction to come to clarity on how we communicate. Part of this work is consideration of inclusion and exclusion. Covenant workshops may be one approach to giving people time and space to address this – including what makes this "my church" or not.

We eventually need to frame this to take a congregational vote. In some ways, the vote is only a beginning to the work on issues of individual gender identity and use of pronouns, as well as the grammar.

This issue may have become a proxy for the kinds of change that the congregation finds difficult. Some people are genuinely confused.

**Next step:** The welcoming committee will hold a follow-up meeting and will invite board members. We need to consider whether we are ready to change our opinions.

### **Developing a formal separation of Finance Committee into Stewardship and Fiscal operations -**

This separation has been in place for two years under a suspension of the bylaws (adopted annually each of the past 3 years). This allows separation of the work on oversight of ongoing fiscal and business operation from the Stewardship work which consists of motivating fellowship, which supports congregational cohesiveness as well as overall fundraising for all funds needed for church operations. To institutionalize the change, we need to describe it in our operating documents (By-laws and Policy Manual).

Juliana shared and reviewed an annotated document outlining proposed changes to the bylaws. These changes are still pending and open to feedback. (See Board Packet for November – Discussion Document: Proposed Amendments to the FRS Bylaws, November 8, 2021, Prepared by the Governance Committee).

### **Proposed by-law changes include:**

- Adding the Stewardship Committee as a standing committee and adding its Chair to the list of individuals to be elected at the annual meeting. Currently these are Moderator, Clerk, Auditor, Chair of the Governance Committee, Chair of the Finance Committee. The Finance Treasurer and Endowment Treasurer are also elected and must be bonded. (The board agreed that this was a useful step considering the workload.)
- Changing the term limits for board officers from 6 years to 3 years, consistent with the terms of other board members.
- Changing the definition of the Governance committee by reducing the minimum number of members from 5 to 4 (others are welcome) and aligning the language with that describing the chair of the Finance committee.
- Number of board members - Governance committee proposes that this be kept at the current level of 13 voting members. This would include 5 members elected to specific roles as described above, leaving 8 voting members not elected to specific roles, one of whom would be a youth member. The governance committee proposes that we define the youth member in policy rather than by-laws since there could be a change in direction later or an inability to find an interested youth. Also, the committee noted that the youth member serves for one year.

### **Discussion**

- Other possibilities for the size of the board would be to reduce minimum membership to 12 or to increase to 14, but both options would result in an even number of members.
- Need to consider how many new members will be elected annually allowing for rotation to include both old and new members. One suggestion was to include a statement that the board would elect enough members to fill all available seats on the board.
- Would it be useful to have shared roles or deputies/assistants/co-chairs who will work with people in key role to have someone with the needed expertise available if a person in a key role leaves the board at any time. It was noted that this could be very useful for the moderator.
- It was also noted that it would be useful to have a written policy on the option to hold congregational polity meetings virtually and a description of the process.

**Next Steps** Juliana encouraged board members to reach out to her with any questions or ideas about the by-law changes. Further discussion will occur at a later meeting to seek a board approval vote.

**Stewardship** -Vern Ellis, Tom Himmel, Bill Clary, and Tim Fountain presented on on-going work.

- **Annual Campaign** -Tina and Greg Benik have agreed to chair. The team who did the nuts-and-bolts work will do so for another year.
- The Endowment, Finance, and Stewardship committees held a joint meeting. They identified a need to develop policy on how to accept and allocate donations and on how to deal with planned giving.
- Stewardship is considering ways to promote/leverage giving. One approach is to ask people to include FRS in their wills. The endowment is looking at how they can create a legacy circle to honor donors.
- It will be important to define how funds will be used – to build capital, for church programs, for outreach.

- The board can be helpful by linking stewardship with fellowship. We are working to build community among church members. The Fall Festival was great in this regard. Vern noted that a church he went to previously held congregational retreats at Ferry Beach which were powerful in building fellowship. This is an idea we could consider. We need to keep in mind that giving is not just money. It is a part of how we support the church.

**Next Steps** – This work is ongoing. The Stewardship Committee meets tomorrow and will invite the board.

### **Consent agenda**

Parish Board Minutes – October 13, 2021

Budget Documents

Trustees of the Endowment Meeting Notes – October 20, 2021

Human Resources Subcommittee Minutes – October 18, 2021

Covenant Team Report

Parish Council Notes

**ACTION:** Annie Maurer noted that her name did not appear as an attendee on the Board Notes from October and that clarification was needed on an item in the notes. The board referred notes back to the clerk for correction.

**Tina moved that the board accept all items on the consent agenda (except the October Board notes). Jim seconded the motion which passed unanimously.**

### **Closing**

- **Closing words** Rev. Rebecca called the group to recognize that we have the opportunity as we leave the meeting to leave a burden and accept a gift. Even though we know each other in varying degrees it is important to recall missteps we have made and to accept the gift of forgiveness.

**ACTION: Minnie made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Renee and passed by a unanimous vote. At 8 PM, the meeting adjourned by unanimous consent and the chalice was extinguished.**