

First Religious Society Parish Board Meeting – February 15, 2022

Call to Order Holly Cashman called the meeting to order at 6:07 PM.

Attending Rev. Rebecca Bryan, Rob Authier, David Livingstone, Ministerial Intern, **Holly Cashman, Tina Benik, Juliana Beauvais, Lucy Litwin, Vern Ellis, Jim Supple, Tim Fountain, Kathy Desilets, Michelle Kimball, Renée Wolf Foster, Annie Maurer, Minnie Flanagan** (Note: Names in **Bold** are voting members)

Not Present: Micah Donahue

Check-in/ Opening Reading and Welcome Rev Rebecca opened with a reading from John O'Donohue, *A Book of Celtic Wisdom*

Business

Minister's Report (Sent to board members) Rev. Rebecca invited questions and comments.

- A brief discussion arose about staff work vs. work that volunteer congregants should complete. This started with consideration of Rob's role, which is a new one and not fully understood, but encompassed the truth that as our congregation grows, board and other volunteer congregants need take more responsibility. We may need to offer more training and support as a board on the work we should take on and we should encourage others to do what they can to reduce burdens on staff.
- Michelle noted that it would be helpful to have more time in future for Minister's Report. Holly will attempt make this happen.

Covenant (Report in Board Package)

- Renee began discussion with the reminder that we need to be clear about our priorities and our commitment to one another to allow conversations even when people are not in full agreement. Laura Park and Rev. Rebecca helped in development of a plan to discuss the issues of covenant with the congregation.
- We will use facilitated small groups in clearly defined and directed conversations to address the practical application of covenant. The Values, Mission and Ends says where we want to go – the covenant is how we reach our goals, and how we deal with each other. Board members acknowledged that significant difference or conflicts are often about practical nuts-and-bolts issues. Using the Affirmation of Faith as a base, we will look at what it means to be in covenant with one another, acknowledging that this does not have to mean 100% agreement on every issue, but commitment to our core shared beliefs and to working together.
- We need at least 10 facilitators to work with the small groups. Groups will be either in person or online. For virtual workshops we need people who can manage technical matters. Training for facilitators will occur on the 26th in the morning. Renee will be reaching out to board and others who facilitated in the VME process. The committee encouraged board members to reach out to others who might facilitate.

Budget (Financial Statements and Notes included in the Board Packet) Report from Tim

- Re Afghan resettlement project - We have raised \$37,000 and spent \$10,000. There is significant in-kind community support including, for example, in kind labor, donations of specific items including appliances, furniture, and clothing. The financial reports track income and spending for this project separately from other funds.
- Contributions are ahead of budget, and we have completed close out on the 2021 budget year. The board acknowledged Tom Himmel for the significant work he put in.
- Financial sources for the **2022 budget** as presented requiring \$543,000 from our Annual Campaign. This is an increase of 8%.
Largest portion of the budget is for salaries, which we budgeted based on the fair compensation plan that we have agreed on in the past.
Capital reserve fund of \$7,000 proposed in the budget with the intent to have a cushion for future capital expenses. This is conservative, based on our research. An Operating Cash Reserve Fund of \$10,000 is included in the budget. This is the Finance Committee recommendation for the next 6 years. In the past, we have declared an operating loss at the end of each year but did not resolve it.
- We have had savings from the retirement of the mortgage on the church hall. We have a loss in income from Verizon's use of our steeple. The trustees of the endowment are trying to reduce spending from endowments by a quarter % as part of a long-term project to protect capital. Due to performance of investments this did not result in an actual reduction of funds this year. UUA will ask for a larger contribution, as was the case last year, but we currently are budgeting level funding.
- Depending on campaign results, we will tweak the budget if needed.

Summary of Discussion:

- This year prepaid pledges amounted to ~\$65,000 – 70,000.
- Our current process does not have a way to look at what we want – for example, we did not include the position of associate minister in this budget, although it has long been in consideration.
- Every year we find things we need to do that we have not budgeted. We have been able to use underspending in specific line items and new funds (e.g., PPG).
- In trying to recruit stewards, we are beginning to see people who have been willing in the past who are not willing this year. This suggests that now is not the best time for extra expenditures.
- Can we take funds from the endowment? The Trustees need to consent to any unplanned spending. The group is responsible to protecting the endowment and assuring its use as designated by the donors. The trustees can adjust contributions to operating but are working to keep the endowment up with inflation. Specific restrictions already in place govern the use of about 40% of the endowment. It is better to communicate how the endowment works and to create ways for people to contribute to the endowment for specific purposes. It is dangerous to spend down the endowment.
- Are there things that are strong talking points to increase the budget? Maybe put in second minister to start later in the year. At mid-point in UUA salary recommendations an Assistant Minister is \$82,300 full-time, plus benefits – \$50,000 for half time.

- We are in an inflationary atmosphere. We need to support our staff who are the heart of what holds us together.
- There were differing opinions on whether we should forgo the recommended capital and operating reserves, but after discussion the budget motion was based on a plan to reduce but maintain these items in the budget.
- Asking for a large percent increase can be difficult, especially as we are still in a time of uncertainty. There could be resistance.
- To get support for the budget, we need to show dynamism/excitement.
- We had significant accomplishments both internally and in the community despite the challenges of the past year. Examples include – Anti-Racism Work, Afghan project, creative services, small group activities of various kinds, support for Indigenous Peoples’ Day, and work on gender justice and understanding. Our church is highly visible as a force in the community for justice and a willing partner in projects that match our mission.

ACTION: Minnie made the following motion, which Vern seconded.

“I move that we approve the proposed budget presented with reductions in the capital reserve to \$2,000 and operating cash reserve to \$1,000 in order to set the goal for the annual campaign at \$529,880.”

The motion passed with one vote (Tim) in opposition and one abstention (Michelle)

Annual Campaign – Tina Benik reports:

We have a theme – Act with Courage/Transform Our world. This is aspirational and gets at how we want to move forward. The team will complete the campaign brochure in early March. Thanks to all who have volunteered as stewards. Tina acknowledged that most people do not really love asking for money, but we need to recruit more folks for this.

Stewardship – Vern reports:

May 20th - The committee is planning an auction for May 20th, and we need a leader. Vern will mention this at the program council. Also, the group is working on the campaign brochure and Cynthia and Rod are conducting a skills/talents survey of the congregation. In line with the Fiscal/Endowment/Stewardship group (F/E/S), Lark and Annie Madden have agreed to draft a gift acceptance policy. If anyone has ideas about this policy, they can reach out to Lark or Annie. Vern is looking at adding pages to the website on fiscal issues – and projects currently in progress. Auction is a community-building event as well as a fundraiser. Vern is also looking at how we can modify our fundraising approaches.

Futures fund is in existence. We need to figure out how to use it in the future – currently 50-60,000. We need to think about the parish hall. VME has been talking about this. Forrest and Michelle are working on this issue, and it will come up in a future agenda.

Consent Agenda

- Parish Board January minutes January 18, 2022 (Revised)
- Congregational conversation on covenant draft 5.0
- Jan2022 FRS Finance Committee report to Parish Board

Financial Highlights Jul-Jan 2022
Financials Jan 2022 Condensed
FY2021 Final Operating Results for Parish Board
Working Copy of FY23 Budget Draft 2/11
Stewardship meeting notes January 19, 2022
Trustees meeting notes January 19, 2022

Action: Kathy moved that the board accept all items on the consent agenda. Tina seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Closing

Closing words -Rev. Rebecca Bryan ended with a brief meditation.

ACTION - Tina made a motion to adjourn and Holly seconded. The board unanimously approved. Meeting adjourned at 8:10.

Holly reminded members to sign Process Check Forms.

Notes prepared by Kathy Desilets, Clerk