

## **First Religious Society Parish Board Meeting – November 15, 2022**

**Call to Order:** Tina Benik called the meeting to order at 6:10pm.

**Attending:** Rev. Rebecca Bryan, Rob Authier, **Tina Benik, Jim Supple, Kathy Desilets, Michelle Kimball, Holly Cashman, Renée Wolf Foster, Annie Maurer, Marissa Dewey, Tom Stites, Laurie Evans-Daly, Tom Himmel, Vern Ellis,** Betsy Latham, Finance Committee. **Note:** Names in **bold** are voting members.

**Absent:** **Minnie Flanagan** (off to meet new grandbabies).

### **Opening Reading and Welcome:**

Reverend Rebecca lit the chalice and offered welcoming words from Thomas Merton reminding us that we are part of a community and that we all have strengths and short comings and when we accept this and work in community we supplement and complete each other. Rev. Rebecca asked board members go around with one word to describe our feelings.

Tina Benik shared a story. Leaving the Justice Sunday meeting she came upon a parking attendant about to give her a ticket. When he found out she had been at the meeting about the Afghans, he withdrew the ticket and expressed appreciation for the work being done.

### **Minister's Report:**

- Happy about the Justice Sunday program.
- Professional development: Rev. Rebecca has been invited to be part of a cohort of ministers from various communities who will be supporting one another in their work on climate change. She also continues with the harmonium and expects to be taking a course at UNH on Indigenous Peoples history in the region.
- Looking ahead: Met with Lilly Foundation. They have a program for supporting renewal for clergy leaders which includes grants with a specific focus on ministers - could benefit from working with the congregations during a sabbatical. This could result in a grant to the church that could cover educational costs and other things to support this shared work. There is a complicated application, which Rev. Rebecca says may be a useful project, even if we don't receive the grant. We will need to take a congregational vote on this project in the future and we would need a congregational vote of support.

### **Financial Report:**

Rob Authier, Renée Wolf Foster, and Betsy Latham presented the fiscal report including a review of the October financials.

- Pledge income is still above estimates. To keep this current, we are sending quarterly pledge statements as well as annual statements.
- The AIM group met with the city regarding the sidewalk in front of the church. Due to scheduling of sidewalk repairs citywide, they will not replace our bricks for some years. They will consider some repairs in the meantime for safety. AIM is working with the city clerk regarding signage.
- The old furnace in Parish Hall has required some repairs and will be inspected this month. It is hoped that the repairs will hold the furnace through the winter.
- Church Mutual's annual review of our multiple insurance policies indicated that our coverage and limits appear appropriate.
- We have purchased some items including a new laptop and a movable monitor which can be used in the sanctuary. We will use it at the congregational meeting in December.

- Negotiations are moving forward on the steeple leases.

**Report on Updates to Financials:**

Betsy Latham reported that over the past several years finance committee members have had concerns that our financial reporting has had errors in how items were classified in the accounting system. Art Henshaw did an extensive analysis defining operating vs. non-operating activities a few years ago. Betsy, who is a finance committee member and a CPA with expertise in non-profit systems, has worked with Rob Authier and Michele Doucette, our bookkeeper, to clarify our position. She stresses that we have no reason to suspect any malfeasance or ill will. QuickBooks, the system we are using, is challenging for fund accounting (where money for specific purposes is tracked) and as a result errors can easily be made. The finance committee and staff are adjusting the FY22 final reporting to correct mistaken allocations and to assure an appropriate allocation of operating and non-operating funds. This will result in a clearer view of our standing in terms of funds for future needs and projects. Four possible options related to curing an operating cash deficit were presented to the board for action. (The explanatory data tables are included as an addendum to these notes.)

**Action:** Holly Cashman moved, and Vern Ellis seconded a motion *“that the board accepts Option 3 of the recommendations presented by the finance committee to cure the deficiency in the 2022 budget.”*

The motion was passed without objection.

Betsy reported that reconciliation of 2022 was almost complete and that she will be monitoring the application of expenses, liabilities, and income to the budget for the remainder of the year. She has also developed a list of policies and procedures to clarify how funds should be managed and reported and other fiscal matters. When feasible, a new bank account will be established to hold non-operating funds separate from operating funds. In the future, the board will receive the balance sheet as well as the profit and loss statement and all these actions will help to keep track of funds which are committed to long-term projects and stable finances.

The Board extends deep thanks to Betsy for the extensive work she has put in and her strong communications which helped to clarify our understanding of the issues at hand. This work is a step towards assuring a secure future for FRS. Thanks are also extended to Art Henshaw and the past and current finance committee members who have worked on this.

**Debrief on Social Justice Sunday/Remaining Prep for 12/4/22:**

Tom Himmel and Annie Maurer concurred with Rev. Rebecca’s assessment that the Justice Sunday presentation about work being done with the Mirzayee family and the other Afghan refugees and the challenges with securing adequate housing in our area was extremely thorough and persuasive.

A meeting will be held tomorrow (11/17) at 4pm to work on final details for the congregational meeting.

**Safe Sanctuary Discussion:** Postponed to the December meeting due to time.

**Update on Team Creation:**

Tina Benik reported that conveners have been identified for all work teams. Tina, Rev. Rebecca, and Jim Supple are meeting with the conveners to provide support in recruitment of members. Outreach is also planned to the wider congregation to identify people who would like to work on any of the teams.

The conveners are as follows:

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| 1. Covenant of Right Relations (Board Team) | Renée Wolf Foster |
| 2. PB Congregational Relations (Board Team) | Annie Maurer      |

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| 3. Support of Shared Ministry (Board Team)                   | Tom Himmel        |
| 4. Communications Strategy (Congregational Team) (New)       | Holly Cashman     |
| 5. 300 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary (Congregational Team) (New) | Laurie Evans-Daly |
| 6. Governance Structure Review (Congregational Team) (New)   | Tom Stites        |
| 7. Vote to Become an Anti-Racist Congregation (Existing)     | Vern Ellis        |
| 8. Developing/Adopting DEI Statement (Existing)              | Jim Supple        |
| 9. Operationalize VME (Board Team – Existing)                | Tina Benik        |

**Update on Response to PB Monthly Letter:**

Tina Benik reported that there had been a positive response to the first monthly letter to the congregation. John Gibson expressed appreciation for the transparency and openness of the letter and suggested that board decisions should be communicated, and the congregation should know where to find board notes.

**Cookies for Peace:**

Vern Ellis and Michelle Kimball briefly reported on plans for a Cookie Walk during the Invitation Nights in December. Half of the funds raised will go to FRS and the remainder to the UUSC Emergency Fund which provides support to Ukraine. The 2023 Daily Muse should be ready in time to be sold at this event. Cookie bakers and people to work at the event are needed. Contact Michelle or Vern if you are available.

**Consent Agenda:**

Kathy Desilets asked for any amendments to the minutes of the past two months. Annie Maurer pointed out an error in the date of the Congregational meeting in the October notes.

- Board Minutes September 20, 2022
- Board Minutes October 18, 2022

**Action:** Annie made a motion that was seconded to accept the minutes with the correction noted above.

The motion passed without objection.

**Adjournment:**

**Closing words:** Rev. Rebecca said that we are part of a beloved community, all of us have things to offer, and together we make a whole. She extended Thanksgiving greetings to all.

The chalice was extinguished, and the meeting adjourned at 8pm.

Notes prepared and respectfully submitted by Kathy Desilets, Clerk