

First Religious Society Parish Board Meeting – January 17, 2023

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

Attending: Rev. Rebecca Bryan, Rob Authier, **Tina Benik, Jim Supple, Michelle Kimball, Holly Cashman, Renée Wolf Foster, Annie Maurer, Laurie Evans-Daly, Tom Himmel, Vern Ellis**

Note: (Names in **Bold** are **voting members**)

Absent: Kathy Desilets, Marissa Dewey, Minnie Flanagan

Opening Reading and Welcome:

Rev. Rebecca read “Wintering” by Donna Ashward and led a centering exercise recalling the strength of our ancestors.

Minister’s Report: Rev. Rebecca

- Pastoral meeting requests have been high so the Board needs to be aware that Rev. Rebecca may be slow to respond to emails, etc.
- The question of changes in the church has re-emerged as brought up in the response to Candlelight. It is possible that adjustment to the many changes in the church has been affected by the COVID lockdown and some disengagement among congregants who are now re-engaging with the church. John Mercer and Susan Ricker are going to reach out to long-term members of the church to address this.
- Rev. Rebecca asks committees to refrain from surveys and foster conversations instead.
- The time has arrived to really assess the future of the church and the staffing roles and needs it will bring. Board members are invited to be part of this conversation.

Human Resources-Compensation Discussion: Leslie Lawrence, Jim Supple

- UU changed its rubrics this year in an attempt to reflect the actual work of jobs in a church.
- The church’s growth in size (moving it up into the large church designation), change in its geo code (which reflects cost of living in a given area), and inflation all have had an impact on determining salaries.
- The church is committed to reaching the midpoint in the UU salary range. To do that this year would mean a \$67,000 increase in the budget. On the other hand, we could give merely a COLA increase (adding around \$27,700) or bring salaries halfway from where they are to the midpoint (adding \$38,000).
- The HR committee recommends bringing salaries halfway to the midpoint.

Action:

Jim Supple made a motion, seconded by Vern Ellis, to approve the recommendation of the HR committee to bring salaries halfway to the midpoint from their current level. The motion passed without objection.

Finance Update: Renée Wolf Foster, Robert Authier

- Building rentals are down (due in part to the loss of AA groups, one of which owes rental money to the church) as well as fundraising (big fundraising events are coming later in the year), and

supplies and maintenance costs are up.

- Health insurance has increased 7% and three pay periods in the month made salary costs higher.
- Utility costs continue to be lower than budgeted due to the money paid by IINE to cover utility costs in the Parish Hall.
- Repair and maintenance costs are already over the annual budget amount. Work on the steeple lights and roof repairs are upcoming. Jon Steeves is going to work on the lights. A breakdown of these costs would help us understand where the overrides are.
- Finance committee is discussing the designation of finances as operational or non-operational.

Campaign Update: Jim Supple

- This year's theme is Growing the Gardens of Peace...Together.
- The communication plan is being worked on.
- There will be a "Did You Know" event in February to familiarize and engage the congregation in the ins and outs of funding and running the church.

Stewardship: Vern Ellis

- Work is ongoing to get more people involved - hoping for 12 more stewards.
- They are moving forward on projects such as circle dinners, the auction, etc.
- There are funds available from the Funds for Sacred Places which does substantial matching grants for churches. Two members of the church have offered to help write the letter of inquiry and grant proposal.
- Focus is to have enough money in the endowment to maintain the buildings.

Governance Update/Open Board Position: Tom Himmel

- There are two open Board positions, one current and one coming up as well as a possible third.
- Julie Parker Amery is looking for a youth Board member.
- One trustee position is open.

Barbara Owen: Rev. Rebecca

- Rev. Rebecca requested approval to bestow the title of Director of Church Music Emerita on Barbara Owen in recognition of her long service to the church music program and community.

Action:

Jim Supple made a motion, seconded by Tom Himmel, to accept Rev. Rebecca's request to bestow the title of Director of Church Emerita on Barbara Owen. The motion passed without objection.

Safe Congregation Protocol: Jim Supple, Rev. Rebecca

- Recent events have pointed to the fact that we need a team to discuss safeguards and procedures in the church to be clear on how to secure the building and how to proceed when incidents arise.

- Systems put in place in other churches and advice from the UU will be looked at during these discussions.

Update on Teams: Tina Benik

- Tina and Rev. Rebecca will reach out to teams to see where we are and if we need a course correction.

Sabbatical: Rev. Rebecca

- Rev. Rebecca requested approval of her taking a month of her Sabbatical time this summer which would be added to her planned vacation time.
- She proposes asking Rev. Helen to step in to cover some of her duties. Rev. Helen would be compensated.
- She also requested that there be no services over the summer (though the church would remain open) to give the staff a break.

Action:

Tina Benik made a motion, seconded by Renée Wolf Foster, to accept and approve Rev. Rebecca's request to take one month of Sabbatical this summer. The motion passed without objection.

Consent Agenda:

- Minutes for December

Action:

Annie Maurer made a motion seconded by Holly Cashman that *the items on the Consent Agenda be approved*. The motion passed without objection.

Closing Words: Rev. Rebecca

Rev. Rebecca led a short centering exercise.

Adjournment:

Action:

Rene moved, and Annie seconded that the meeting be adjourned. Unanimously approved.

At 8:10pm the chalice was extinguished, and the meeting was closed.

Notes prepared by Annie Maurer and respectfully submitted by Kathy Desilets, Clerk