

First Religious Society Parish Board Meeting – February 21, 2023

Call to Order: The chalice was lit, and 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, Kathy Desilets, Marissa Dewey, Minnie Flanagan,** Forrest Speck, Douglas Latham, and Susan Thorne (members of the Facilities Committee). Note: Names in **bold** are voting members.

Opening Reading and Welcome:

Rev. Rebecca lit the chalice and read part of poet laureate Ana Limon's poem "In the Shadows" in honor of the campaign theme (Growing the Gardens of Peace).

Approve Pastoral Housing Allowance: Tina Benik

Tina explained that part of Rev. Rebecca's compensation is listed as a housing allowance, as is allowable for clergy, for tax purposes. This needs to be approved by the board.

Action: Holly Cashman moved that the board designate a housing allowance of \$80,000 starting in the new fiscal year. The motion was seconded by Minnie Flanagan and passed without objections.

Minister's Update: Reverend Rebecca

Reverend Rebecca reported that Justin Murphy-Mancini will interview three promising candidates for the A/V Specialist position which Rob Close is vacating. The new hire will be a contractor, which will reduce the cost of this part-time position and allow for another part-time position. By reallocating funds from the Youth Coordinator position which has not been filled and adding some duties to her job expectations, we have been able to add hours to Mara Flynn's job. Mara has agreed that with this change she will stay through the next church year. Rev Rebecca also shared that she has had a difficult time recently with her father and a close friend in life-threatening health situations and that she has provided extensive support around Merryl Maleska Wilber's death. Rev. Rebecca's father is out of immediate danger, but she asks for our understanding if we see signs of her stress.

Annual Campaign Update: Jim Supple

- The campaign team has been working hard to plan for the opening of the campaign a week from this coming Sunday.
- This Sunday there will be an ice cream social as a prelude.
- Vern Ellis did a great job on the brochure which looks at the many things we have done to promote community peace.
- The campaign goal is \$550,000. This is relatively consistent with inflation and with the church's expenses.
- Different campaign kickoff letters will go to various categories of pledgers.
- Training for stewards will support them in focusing on the central messages of the campaign.

Stewardship/Auction: Vern Ellis

- The Annual Campaign is biggest current effort.
- Hoping to start fellowship dinners and start work on the Auction.
- People willing to take leadership roles are needed for the Auction which will be held on May 5.
- Two people are interested in having a rummage sale. Space is being considered.

Update on Teams

300th Anniversary: Laurie Evans-Daly

At a kickoff meeting on February 12, small groups were convened to begin to develop ideas for the eight goals. In brief, they are:

- Celebrate history
- All our work furthers the Values, Mission and Ends
- Celebrate the vision of who we are becoming
- Use this time to celebrate reconciliation with people of color
- Reconnect with old friends
- Create a book which will update history
- Coordinate with Parish Hall Renovation Team
- Have fun

An online meeting is planned for those unable to attend the initial meeting and subcommittees are being formed. Annie Maurer will co-chair the committee with Laurie. Fundraising will start with sales of a brass weathercock (rooster) pin.

Parish Board/Congregation Relations: Annie Maurer presented and reviewed a written report

The team, which includes former parish leadership, has met four times. Would like to see:

- Regular meetings after church where board members would be available to update the congregation and answer questions about finance, facilities, etc. issues with a goal of looking to the future.
- The Board meeting agenda posted before the meeting.
- A 10-minute public comment time at the start of meeting.
- Name tags identifying Board members.
- Might also be helpful to have meetings highlighting our forward-faced church activities.

Facilities Team Update: Forrest Speck, Doug Latham, and Susan Thorne

This team was set up to assist with requests for repairs/projects with significant costs to take pressure off the staff. They have been working to determine ways to project costs related to facility upkeep. Doug Latham has begun to update estimates in the 2015 Noblin report on capital needs into a tool to track and estimate the costs of meeting predictable needs which will inform what we need to have available to meet ongoing needs. Susan Thorne, who has a background in architecture, explained that the report is based on a convention used in the field to keep track of construction expenses. The

spreadsheet can be sorted to look at what needs to be done when. This tool, which shows items that are overdue for action, will help us to sort out what are and are not immediate needs.

The Facilities Team is planning to try to identify Immediate and critical repair or maintenance needs (which may cost around \$300,000), midterm needs (likely to need action in the next 3-5 years), and finally, routine maintenance.

We have tended in the past to fix things as they come up, but this has left us in a game of catchup. Deferred maintenance can increase costs. To maintain our historic building as the home to a living church and as a community institution, we need to plan for both facilities and programs.

We may have opportunities to raise funds from sources outside the church community to support the building. We will need to look at what we can do for the community and at defining projects. We also are likely to need to contribute funds. If we look to apply for a Sacred Spaces grant, for example, we will need to raise significant funds and have a clear outline of what we want to accomplish.

The board expressed appreciation to the Facilities Team and asked them to continue their excellent work in prioritizing needed repairs and developing projections for future costs.

Finance Update: Renée Wolf Foster, Rob Authier

Rob presented a report on the state of the operating budget, making note of variances and the reasons for them. Pledge income and weekly collections are ahead of budget, but fundraising and building rentals are unlikely to meet the budget goal. Needed repairs and supplies and maintenance have exceeded the budget. Adjustments will be made in the following year for expected maintenance costs.

Budget and Finance: Tina Benik, Renée Wolf Foster

The coming year's budget will be impacted by the review of our financial statements done by Betsy Latham and Art Henshaw. This review resulted in the need to change some fund allocations, which made a significant change in our operating budget. It is very important to note that none of the changes were the result of any malfeasance, only the allocation of funds posted incorrectly in the accounting system. These issues have been addressed moving forward, and all parties have confidence that we have a realistic budget proposal for church year 2023-24. The reallocation and other factors nonetheless resulted in a likelihood that without action, we will probably end this year with a deficit of approximately \$36,000. We do not need to wipe that deficit out immediately.

An executive proposal to balance the budget for this fiscal year was reviewed by the Finance Committee which recommended:

- A congregational vote at the annual meeting in June to offset FY23 steeple and roof repairs with \$11,700 from the Bailey Fund, plus an additional \$11,700 in anticipated facilities-related repairs in the FY24 budget. We would not ask for the funds for bricks which were previously approved.

- Covering the \$23,387 loss due to operating deficits with \$10,000 from the Futures Fund (currently \$43,445) and suspending the remaining UUA dues for this year (\$15,000). The finance committee did not reach agreement at its last meeting about these proposals.

The Executive Committee also made the following recommendations regarding next year's budget:

- Increase pledge goal to \$550,000 from \$510,000.
- Budget fundraising (special events) revenue to \$25,000.
- Dedicate one half of Dish revenue to general operating (\$13,800) with the other half allocated to Capital Reserve.
- Hold staff COLA at 6.4% (lower than HR recommendation approved last month). The higher recommendation would make it impossible to balance the budget.

To have a preliminary budget, the board took the following actions.

Action: Jim Supple moved that we ask the congregation at the Annual Meeting to use \$15,000 from the Bailey fund to pay off repairs to the steeple and roof, separated into FY23 current and FY24 proposed budgets. Laurie Evans-Daly seconded, and the motion passed without objection.

Action: Jim Supple moved that we suspend our annual pledge to the UUA as of December 31, 2022, in order to clear our expected deficit unless funds became available to do both. Kathy Desilets seconded the motion which passed without opposition. Michelle Kimball abstained.

Action: Renée Wolf Foster moved to accept the preliminary budget as proposed at this meeting. The motion was seconded by Vern Ellis and passed without objections.

Closing Words: Rev. Rebecca read words from poet Morgan Harper Nichols: "To breathe is brave. Never underestimate the power of an exhale." She reminded the board to breathe out as well as in.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:20pm without a vote, but with consent of all. The chalice was extinguished, and the meeting was closed.

Notes prepared and respectfully submitted by Kathy Desilets, Clerk