

First Religious Society Parish Board Meeting – May 16, 2023

Call to Order: Tina Benik called the meeting to order at 6:05pm.

Attending: Rev. Rebecca Bryan, Rob Authier, **Tina Benik, Jim Supple, Kathy Desilets, Michelle Kimball, Holly Cashman, Renée Wolf Foster, Annie Maurer, Laurie Evans-Daly, Tom Himmel, Vern Ellis, Minnie Flanagan, Bob Higgins.** **Note:** Names in **Bold** are **voting members.**

Absent: **Marissa Dewey,** Rev. Rebecca.

Opening Reading and Welcome: Tina Benik read Mary Oliver’s poem, “I Worried,” and reminded us to take time away from our worries.

Finance Report: Rob Authier and Renée Wolf Foster reporting.

Rob provided written reporting and indicated that total income is on target, but we still have an operating deficit. This will be relieved to some extent via the use of the Baily Fund to cover repairs and maintenance that were over budget. Rob also presented a new format for finance reports which is intended to increase clarity. This format will show YTD against the original budget approved by the board, and the management budget, which shows adjustments made during the year as work continued in resolving budget issues.

The board discussed the operating deficit and endowment funds that might be available to provide relief and discussed steps that could be taken now to reduce the likelihood of a deficit in the future. For example, the board discussed the fact that we lose people from the congregation each year for various reasons, and we may be underestimating the reserve we are setting aside for unpaid pledges in the annual budget.

The following actions were taken:

Action: Renée made a motion seconded by Tom Himmel that the Parish Board recommend that the congregation lift the restriction placed on the remaining portion of the Stearns Bequest. The motion passed without objection.

Action: Renée made a motion seconded by Annie Maurer that the Parish Board increase the reserve for unpaid pledges from 2% to 3% in the 2023-2024 budget and approve the budget with that change. The motion passed without objection.

The board thanked Renée, Rob, and Tom for their work.

Annual Campaign Update: Jim Supple reporting.

Jim reports that we currently have pledges slightly exceeding \$547,000. Some pledges or pledge increases are still coming in and it is possible that we will meet the annual goal. Jim thanked all who participated in the campaign. He also offered these points for consideration in next year’s campaign:

- Participation is critical. The intention is to encourage all members to pledge, even if they cannot afford a large amount, as a sign of their commitment.
- Segmentation did not help to speed up action by those who generally pledge late.

- Making the amount needed to operate the church clear to all was helpful...including showing the cost per member of operations.
- Mission-oriented, aspirational approach was successful.

Governance Update: Tom Himmel reporting.

The Warrant for the Annual Meeting is complete except final wording for the action on the 8th Principle. All needs to be finalized by next Monday to get out in time for notice of the Annual Meeting.

Action: Jim Supple moved, and Tom seconded a motion that the board endorse the recommendation of the Anti-Racism Committee to continue exploration of the 8th Principle. The motion was passed without opposition.

Two people have volunteered to be delegates to the General Assembly and will be included in the Warrant. Caitlin Creps will be youth member next year.

A meeting will be held on May 31 at 6:30pm to review the Warrant, 2023-2024 budget, and 8th Principle talking points.

Stewardship: Vern Ellis reported.

- The Auction went very well. He recognized all those who worked on this event, especially Bob Higgins, Diane Carroll, Michelle Kimball, Paula Renda, and Laurie Evans-Daly.
- A subcommittee is being formed to further planned giving efforts.

Focus Team Reports

Parish Board Congregational Communication: A congregational information meeting will be held on May 31 to review the Warrant, the 2023-24 budget, and to discuss the 8th Principle. This is the second such meeting the group has held.

300th Anniversary Team: Work groups are forming to manage various portions of this major project and it is expected that there will be progress over the summer.

Policy Consideration – Net Zero Policy:

Tina Benik reviewed steps to be considered in making policy including – is this policy:

- Congruent with goals?
- Congruent with mission?
- Realistic?
- Appropriate in terms of cost?

In discussion, board members suggested that we should consider Net Zero impact of all repairs and changes to our facilities and the need to maintain flexibility as technology changes. Members suggested that to finalize the policy we need more information about the education plan for this policy, the available steps and costs for implementation, the method of implementation, and how we will keep our commitment to maintenance of the appearance of the church which was a contingency of funding for the steeple repairs. Finally, how do we measure our progress and what is the implication of the possibility that we may not be able to reach Net Zero. The board will reconsider as more information becomes available.

Board Meeting Updates:

- Meeting dates for next year will be the third Wednesday of each month. The first meeting of the new church year will be on September 20th.
- Rev. Rebecca will be away from the afternoon of the Annual meeting until the board meeting in August.

Thanks to Departing Members: Holly Cashman, Michelle Kimball, and Marissa Dewey have completed their board service this year and will not return to the board next year. The board thanked them for their exceptional service and reminded them that they will be welcome to return after a break.

Consent Agenda:

Action: Michelle Kimball made a motion, which was seconded, that the minutes for the February and March meetings be approved. The motion passed without objection.

Action: Minnie Flanagan moved that the meeting be adjourned. Michelle seconded and the motion passed without opposition.

At 8:03pm the chalice was extinguished, and the meeting was closed.

Notes prepared and respectfully submitted by Kathy Desilets, Clerk