

## Parish Board Meeting FRS – August 23, 2023

**Call to Order:** Jim Supple called the meeting to order at 4:10pm and welcomed new members Lori Clark, Liss Larsen, and Caitlin Creps, and welcomed Bob Higgins to his new role as Finance Treasurer.

**Attending:** Rev. Rebecca Bryan, Rob Authier, **Tina Benik, Jim Supple, Kathy Desilets, Renée Wolf Foster, Annie Maurer, Laurie Evans-Daly, Tom Himmel, Vern Ellis, Minnie Flanagan, Bob Higgins, Caitlin Creps, Liss Larsen, Lori Clark.** *Note: names in **bold** are voting members.*

**Opening Reading and Welcome:** Rev. Rebecca read a piece about the work of boards. Most of what we do will be unseen and there may be criticism. There will be times when we make the sacred work of the church happen.

We all toasted (with crisp carbonated apple juice) to the hopes that we have for the coming year.

**Minister's Reflections:** Rev. Rebecca reported that the staff retreat today had great involvement, excitement, and engagement of all. Rev. Rebecca noted her gratitude for all who assured that all went well during her absence. The two months off were very helpful to Rev. Rebecca; she had not realized how tired she was. Family travel and friendly connections completed the summer.

The best news Rev. Rebecca had over the summer was that all eligible members of the Mirzayee family got their green cards.

### **Year Ahead Exercise:**

Rev. Rebecca described her process of setting aside a few areas of church life each year that she will focus on. This helps her to set her goals. Staff were all in to discuss these areas of focus. Our annual ministry theme is Interconnectedness. Focus areas are:

- **Worship:** More lay involvement has already happened. We have learned that the things that need to be done must be announced from the pulpit, including announcements, social justice themes, etc. All the parts of our church life are part of what it means to be part of this community. Rev. Rebecca recognizes her need to deeply represent the interconnected areas of church work.
- **Membership:** While it sometimes seems that a few people do most of the work of the church, Rev. Rebecca reflected on the fact that many people have life issues or circumstances (responsibility for family members, age-related issues, etc.) that keep them back from some forms of involvement. We need to consider how we can make it possible for these members to feel truly connected and engaged. We also want to attract new members – forty or more.
- **Central Coordinating Group – 4<sup>th</sup> Century Visioning:** As we celebrate the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our church, we need a 4<sup>th</sup> century vision for our space and how we use it to fulfill our goals. This includes use of the Parish Hall. A group has formed including representation of **Visioning, Fiscal Management** (Annual and Capital Campaigns, Legacy Giving), and **Building Issues** (Green Team, Facilities Team). Some of the points raised in discussion included:
  - We need to look at the engagement of all the people in our church community in what we do. We need to avoid being directed to the building.
  - Our vision can include service in all its aspects and being in community with others with like interests. This can be a key to the work of engagement.

- This is all in the context of living in the world as it exists today with various forces which we do not agree with and with needs that we see. How can we look around and see the place our church community has in this context?

### **Youth and Education:**

As we consider how we move forward with consideration of engagement of youth and education across all ages, the following ideas are being considered:

- OWL is one route forward for youth and possibly others.
- It might be useful to ask school counselors and teachers about what youth are interested in. It might be useful to have UU-sponsored events, such as beach cleanups, issues related to the environment, and other events focused on specific issues of interest.
- LRY (Liberal Religious Youth): YRUU are UU models of age-specific affinity groups.
- There are 40 something parents who we are missing. They are concerned about parenting and not sure where to look for support.
- We could consider snackable events which are not demanding but offer information support, etc., or age/situation-based affinity groups. One example could be topical groups for parents. This could lead to self-sustaining groups of members and non-members who feel close to the church. We need to think of topics for groups or community activities. Would it be helpful to talk about what it means to be a UU today?
- How do we make space for people who have different interests than the predominant age group of the church? Some young people don't like who the church membership is and may not be interested in the ideas of church.
- Is there a way to enhance our brand? Youth like to see values...youth are looking for a value proposition to engage with, such as environmental issues and climate change.
- Outreach to people who joined recently could be helpful as could on-the-spot outreach to new visitors and welcoming people when they first come. This would require a congregational vote to extend Tina's term for a year to allow her to serve as chair.

**Vice Chair Role:** The Vice Chair is Chair-Elect and given the complexity of issues being faced now by the church, and the need for continuity for full understanding of these issues, there was interest in selecting Tina Benik as Vice Chair/Chair-Elect. Because board terms are set at three years, a congregational vote will be required to extend Tina's term to allow her to serve as chair in the next year. There is a precedent for extending board member terms when there is a specific need. As we consider leadership development, we may need to look to the time people serve.

### **Action: Election of Vice Chair**

**Motion:** Tom Himmel moved to elect Tina Benik as Vice Chair/Chair-Elect with the understanding that a warrant question will be extended at the next congregational meeting to extend Tina's board term for a year to allow her to take this position. Seconded by Minnie Flanagan and passed without opposition.

**Board Development:** Tom Himmel distributed a list of expectations for board members. This year, cursory training was offered for new board members because the leadership believes that the full

board would benefit from looking at the role of board members more deeply. This includes the need to understand policy governance. The staff and minister carry out the day-to-day business of the church, and the board's role is to develop high-level policy and to provide advice and guidance. Leadership will distribute the Board Policies for review.

**Action: Approval of members of the Governance Committee as required by the by-laws.**

**Motion:** Tom Himmel moved to approve the members of the Governance Committee, including, in addition to himself, Lori Clark, Bob Higgins, and Kathy Desilets. The motion was seconded by Jim Supple and approved without opposition.

The HSC committee is looking for new members from the board and beyond. Last year's group included Leslie Lawrence, Julie Menin, Kathy Desilets, Jim Supple, Hugh Martinez, and Rebecca Brodish for DEI.

**Finance Report:** The year ended with a small surplus instead of the deficit that was expected. This was achieved in part through a significant effort to collect past pledges for the past year. We have closed out the past church year. Historic Items were added to the budget at an audited level.

The financials for last year (July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023) were closed by July 31. After the end of July, all expenditures and income will be attributed to the following year. The committee would like to have an annual report to the congregation of the results of the prior year. They also propose that we consider the possibility of establishing a line of credit which would enable us to cover any immediate financial need. Approval of the line of credit would require a congregational vote. There was also a proposal to create a new bank account to segregate money for some specific projects from operating funds and a motion relating to a disbursement from the Bailey Fund.

**Action: Segregation of non-operating funds**

**Background:** Rob Authier and the Finance Committee recommend that the Afghan Resettlement Fund be separated from the church operating checking account, as should the 300th Anniversary Fund.

**Motion:** Renée Wolf Foster moved that we should set up a segregated funds checking account under the same parameters as our operating account at Newburyport Bank for this purpose. Tom Himmel seconded, and the motion passed without opposition.

**Action: Disbursement from the Bailey Fund**

**Motion:** Renée moved to approve the disbursement from the Bailey Fund of up to \$10,000 for the following facilities expenses, per allocation approved at the June 11, 2023 Annual Meeting and as reviewed by the Facilities Team.

- a) \$5,383.16 to replace Steeple light fixtures (Rockingham Electric Supplies).\*
- b) \$4K-6K to conduct a structural analysis of existing church roof framing by Annette Dey Engineering (\$145/hour for 27 – 40 hours plus \$500/site visit).

\*Expenses beyond \$5K allocation will be applied to the regular Repairs and Maintenance line #8217.

The motion was seconded and passed without opposition.

**Stewardship/Fellowship:** Vern reported that there is a lot of work going on with the Stewardship/Fellowship group. There are plans for an experiences auction in the fall. The Stewardship Committee will be early on the agenda of the next meeting to allow a more comprehensive report.

**Action: Consent Agenda**

**Motion:** Minnie Flanagan moved to approve the minutes for April and May of FY 2023. Tom Himmel seconded, and the motion passed without objection.

The next meeting will be September 25 from 6-8pm.

Reverend Rebecca reminded us that we are loved and part of a sacred community.

**Action: Adjournment**

**Motion to adjourn:** Tom Himmel moved to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Renée Wolf Foster and passed without opposition. The meeting was adjourned, and the chalice extinguished at 7:07pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Desilets, Clerk