

## Parish Board Meeting FRS – September 20, 2023

**Call to Order:** Jim Supple called the meeting to order at 6pm.

**Present:** 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, Liss Larsen, Lori Clark.** *Note: names in **bold** are voting members.*

**Absent:** Caitlin Creps

**Welcome:** Rev. Rebecca lit the chalice and invited each of us to share something that is “on their hearts.”

### **Minister’s Report:**

**Afghan Housing Update:** A half house belonging to a friend of the project is becoming available. The property is beautiful and has plenty of space in a pleasant, child-friendly neighborhood. The rent will be set for the first two years of the lease at \$32,000, well below market rate. In addition, \$10-20,000 is estimated to be needed to remediate lead in the building. Also there will be a need for plumbing work to ensure adequate bathroom utilities.

This property would allow the Mirzayee family to remain in the school district and have easy access to volunteer assistance and friends they have in town. The family can afford \$1,500 a month for rent, based on a standard income assessment. A possible way to fill the gap for rent would be to approach donors to ask for sponsorship at a sum like \$100 a month with a declining amount over the years. Jim Supple believes that we could find enough donors (in the congregation and the community) to support the family. This would offer a housing solution and allow the Mirzayee family to continue to gradually move toward self-sufficiency.

**Music Request:** Justin offered a budget proposal for music projects for the 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary production of a CD of music highlighting our organ. (See attachments.) The Board found the recording project very attractive but given the current finances and the needs of the church, there were concerns about the cost, which it did not appear would be recovered in sales. Justin was not aware of sources outside of those mentioned in his proposal that might be accessed for funding (e.g., grants).

This could be part of the funding for the 300<sup>th</sup>, but we do not yet have a budget for the entire projects. There might be other funding for a cultural and historical project like this from grants. We need a process to determine how proposals for the 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary will be evaluated.

Current policy is that proponents of specific projects cannot raise funds through the congregation without Board approval. Currently the music project, including the recording, is an unbudgeted expense that is not an emergency, so we do not have the capacity to fund it.

### **Action: Request for financial support for Organ Music Recording**

**Motion:** Kathy Desilets moved that the Board respectfully inform Justin that we do not currently have the financial capacity to support the project this fiscal year and that policy does not allow fundraising for special projects without Board approval. Annie Maurer seconded, and the motion passed without objection.

### **Stewardship Updates:**

The Stewardship Group has been nicknamed the FUUN Committee with a nod to its work with events that build connections. This is a busy fall. The 4<sup>th</sup> Century Committee is looking at grants and other approaches to help with support for various projects. Sacred Places grant program would help with this.

- Tina is working on a planned giving program that will launch in the beginning of January.
- The Annual Campaign needs a chair and co-chair. These individuals need to be identified soon.
- Coming events:
  - November 17 we will have an auction which focuses on experiences.
  - December 8 – Cookie Walk including a craft component. We will have facility tours. And St. Paul's would like to have a gift-wrapping table.
  - Daily Muse Calendar is also in the works.
  - We are starting on Fellowship Dinners again – at least two annually.

Vern will chair the Auction and hopes someone will chair the cookie walk.

### **Finance Update: Financial Statements, DCO Report – Rob Authier and Renée Wolf Foster**

Income from pledges is high due to prepayments, and income from past year pledges is higher than anticipated. Sunday collections have not done as well as anticipated, but the most recent were for July and August. The DISH agreement is still delayed which delays that revenue stream. DISH needs a fiber path easement through Comcast. DISH has decided to use Verizon as we already have infrastructure. Supplies, repairs, and maintenance continue to run ahead of budget. \$4,000 is needed to care for trees on the property, including removal of one maple.

### **Governance: Report by Tom Himmel**

The team is still considering recruitment needs for Board roles. We need a trustee of the endowment and have had great difficulty finding someone to take this role. We also have an empty seat on the Governance Team. We hope to identify a new assistant moderator to support Lea Pearson.

The group is also exploring how governance processes work at FRS, especially about what decisions are made at the various levels of the structure – Executive, Board, and Congregation. A handout with sections of Parish Board Policies was distributed to demonstrate this. Further training for the Board on its roles is under consideration.

### **Parish Board Goals: Report by Jim Supple** (See handout 2022-23 Parish Board priorities)

Jim asked that we review the goals for Board attention via work teams that we established last year. He stressed that we need to be clear about what we accomplished last year and set our priorities for this year and determine who is responsible. Some topics may be able to be combined and some postponed. Others are in process but need more attention.

**Board-Community Relations:** Going well with team and Board involvement. Annie Maurer, who leads this team, has current plans for two congregational meetings on key Board topics.

**Covenant of Right Relations:** This was triggered by two contentious Annual Meetings and seems less urgent.

**Communications:** Does not have a convener or an active team now. Generally handled by staff. Should we create a new team or is this part of the work of current teams?

**300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary:** Team has been formed and has begun work. There is a need for regular Board updates and a budget is needed soon.

**Anti-Racism:** Current active team plans to bring a vote to the annual congregational meeting this year. Need Board update early 2024.

**DEI Policy:** Currently assigned to the Human Resources Committee but will need more involvement. No timeline for presentation to Board.

**Operationalize VME:** Could go to new 4<sup>th</sup> Century team. This should be a consideration for all groups.

**Shared Ministry:** This work is ongoing and a report to the Board should be planned.

**Governance Assessment:** Board and Governance Committees are addressing how governance operates in the church to some extent. We should keep this in view. To evaluate is not the work of the Governance Committee. We should keep an eye on this, but the assessment may need to be deferred.

**New Issues Since Fall 2022** (when priorities were established)

**Facilities Issues:** New team established – should establish updates and meetings between Board and this team.

**Future of Young Church:** 17 youth attended services last Sunday. 8 are involved in Crossing Paths Curriculum and 5 youth helpers are involved with the program. Staff and volunteers are active in this work.

**Building Accessibility Work:** How is this being addressed? AIM team with Facilities Team.

**Green or Net Zero Policy:** Green Team asked the Board to adopt such a policy and is now responding to a request for more information. Working with Facilities Team to look at cost and feasibility.

**Major Gifts Policy & Committee, Potential for a Capital Campaign, and Greater Membership Involvement:** Will be addressed by new 4<sup>th</sup> Century Initiative.

**Need for a Broader Safe Church Policy:** Needs attention as church is used for more activities. There have been incidents of vandalism and unexpected people in the church. Reminder to all – if you are the last leaving, be sure doors are locked.

Jim reminded the Board that we need to be clear about our priorities and how they are being addressed.

**Convening a 4<sup>th</sup> Century Visioning Team – Jim Supple and Rev. Rebecca**

Jim and Rev. Rebecca discussed the fact that as we have grown, we have increased our understanding of the role of service in our faith and recognized some of our challenges. We have struggled over the past few years with issues as diverse as identity (gender /race/disability /Immigration/age, etc.), the challenges of maintaining and honoring the heritage of our historic church, the connection and/or

separation of social justice issues with worship, providing direct community service, and raising enough funds to support the work we are called to do. These changes and the fact that we are celebrating the 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the church put us at a point where we would benefit from having a future-looking group to define a vision for the next century and monitor our work toward future success.

Some of this work is in process. For example:

- Tina Benik is working on a planned giving program that will launch in the beginning of January.
- The 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee is beginning to define our celebration and budget for it.
- The Facilities Team is coordinating with other groups to look at costs and benefits of various actions and advocating for building the capital needed to deal with issues that will arise with the buildings.
- We need to consider the next steps with Parish Hall when our current residents move.
- We are considering a Capital Campaign.
- Members of the Stewardship committee are working with the 4<sup>th</sup> Century Committee to identify possible grants to help with pending work. Sacred Places grant program would help with this.

**Action: Convene and Charge a 4<sup>th</sup> Century Visioning Team**

**Motion:** Tina moved that the Parish Board hereby convene and charge a 4<sup>th</sup> Century Visioning Team to develop and nurture a clear vision supported by the congregation of what FRSUU aspires to become in the coming century. This team will consider all aspects of our future vision including:

- Our relationship with and responsibility to the communities we serve.
- The future use and purpose of the land and building now known as the Parish Hall.
- The scope and goals of an FRS Capital Campaign. Goals are expected to include recommendations related to the Parish Hall, facilities major maintenance and repair needs, and future endowment growth.
- Ascertain and understand the intersection and impact of all financial initiatives Including but not limited to the Capital Campaign, Planned Giving Plan, and the Annual Campaign.
- Regularly update the Board on its work and ultimately make recommendations to the Board on the next steps of the above initiatives.

The motion was seconded by Laurie Evans-Daly and passed without opposition.

**Consent Agenda:** Since the August minutes were distributed late and there were proposed amendments, approval was postponed to the next meeting.

**Action: Adjournment**

Lori Clark moved to adjourn, and the motion was seconded and adopted unanimously.

Rev. Rebecca offered a blessing, the chalice was extinguished, and the meeting adjourned at 8:15pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Desilets, Clerk