

## **Special Parish Board Meeting FRS – January 31, 2024**

**Present:** Rev. Rebecca Bryan, Tina Benik, Jim Supple, Kathy Desilets, Renée Wolf Foster, Annie Maurer, Laurie Evans-Daly, Tom Himmel, Vern Ellis, Bob Higgins, Lori Clark, Minnie Flanagan

**Absent:** Caitlin Creps, Liss Larsen

Note: This meeting was held via Zoom.

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

**Welcome/Reading:** Rev. Rebecca shared a poem, “Thinking About Your Laugh,” by Susan Glickman and shared a statement about facing up to things we need to do.

**Annual Budget:** Jim Supple

Jim discussed progress to date on the budget. The budget is still in draft form, so we are just looking to approve the goal for the Annual Campaign. Last year, we met and exceeded our goal through a pledge matching process we have used in past years. The process last year involved a small group of internal donors who agreed to pledge an additional amount that when combined would provide funds for a two-for-one match for pledges not yet submitted and increases to pledges already submitted. Jim showed us this information separately from the general annual campaign to support transparency about how we met the goal and how we plan to meet it this year.

Jim further discussed income projections included to balance the budget, such as a modest increase in the fee for steeple lighting sponsors and increased fundraising targets. All are aware that to meet this budget we need to increase energy, connection, and giving, in addition to seeking sources of funding outside the congregation. This will require a big push, but the finance committee has agreed to the plan for the campaign goal.

Renée Wolf Foster started a discussion on behalf of the Finance Committee about the pros and cons of adopting the proposed goal.

- Board members acknowledged that we would have cost increases for salaries and for utilities when we reopen the Parish Hall. We have the possibility of delaying reopening of Parish Hall.
- We will need new fundraising plans to meet proposed targets.
- We are at a point where we need to focus on goals and building congregational connections. Renée’s testimonial on the need for connection got a great response.
- Other churches our size often raise more money outside their own congregations via grants, income-generating projects, and other fundraising, and we need to look at doing this as well.
- We need to look for solutions that are both creative and practical for raising money and for congregational awareness.

- A general feeling was that we are at a point where we need to take the chance, do the needed work, and believe in our ability to raise the funds we need.

**Action: Campaign Goal**

**Motion:** Kathy Desilets moved that the board accept the Finance Committee recommendation for the Campaign goal (\$575,000), in full recognition that this is an ambitious goal requiring full congregational involvement. Tina seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

**Gift Acceptance Policy:** Tina Benik

Tina presented this policy in its third reading and proposed a revision to section VII, Restricted and Unrestricted Gifts. On page 6, the sentence on restricted gifts not otherwise contemplated within this policy will end with the phrase “will be considered by the Parish Board on a case-by-case basis.”

**Action: Gift Acceptance Policy**

**Motion:** Kathy Desilets moved that the Board accept the currently presented document (with Tina’s revision and minor technical revisions) as the FRS Gift Acceptance Policy and authorize its addition to FRSUU Policies and Procedures. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Vern Ellis, Rev. Rebecca, and the board thanked all those who have worked on this from its start with the Legacy Giving Group to its passage. The policy will enable the Legacy Giving Group to begin to seek donations.

**Reverend Rebecca Discussion About Staffing**

Rev. Rebecca told the board that during her study leave she gave deep reflection to the question of how to move forward, especially given Julie Parker Amery’s decision to retire from FRS. Points she shared included:

- The current size of the church supports the need for a second minister. We have a large congregation with increasing pastoral needs and a spiritual obligation to meet these needs. Without another minister it will be impossible to do this pastoral work.
- Most congregations the size of ours have lost significant membership from around eight percent to 33 percent. A friend told Rev. Rebecca that of the churches in our area only our church has gained members. Rev. Rebecca believes that she needs to be in the community, shaping visions and being the public face of the church.
- Rev. Rebecca proposes that we hire three-quarter time assistant minister on a year-to-year contract which we can renewed or changed over time. This minister, supervised by Rev. Rebecca, will provide pastoral coverage in her absence. The new minister would have responsibility for building congregational connections, collaborating with a team to create a program for adult faith programs, supervising Mara, and working to integrate new members. As a trained minister they would be able to do and expand the work of Julie’s position, Director of Faith Formation and Spiritual Exploration.

- With adjustments to the staffing structure, we expect to need an additional \$10,000–\$15,000 to support this plan.
- The board strongly supported this idea in view of the busyness and growth of the church and thought it was a creative approach to what we need at this point. Board members expressed hope that we could hire someone who could bring a new approach and new thoughts to the congregation, to augment the amazing work Rev. Rebecca has done. Minnie Flanagan looked back to when we lost Minister Emeritus Harold Babcock and former Church Music Director Jay Lane at the same time. We hired Rev. Rebecca who then changed our congregation for the better.

**Action: Creation of the position of Assistant Minister**

**Motion:** Renée Wolf Foster moved that the board encourage and support Rev. Rebecca in seeking an assistant minister for FRSUU. The motion, seconded by Vern, passed without objection and with great enthusiasm.

**Closing Words:** Rev. Rebecca offered closing words from Ken Wilbur which define the difference between translation (a change in surface structures, which is horizontal) and transformation (a deep change, which is vertical which is creates a transformation).

**Action: Adjournment**

**Motion:** Renée Wolf Foster moved for adjournment. The motion was seconded and passed without objection.

At 8:07pm the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Desilets, Clerk