

## **Parish Board Meeting FRS – March 20, 2024**

**Present:** Rev. Rebecca Bryan, **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, Sue Fasoli**

**Absent: Caitlin Creps**

**Call to Order:** Jim Supple called the meeting to order at 6:06pm.

**Welcome/Reading/Chalice Lighting:** Rev. Rebecca sent greetings from Costa Rica with howler monkey calls. She wished us a great board meeting and expressed her gratitude for everything we are doing. It has been an extraordinary month.

**Eighth Principle Report:** Susan Fasoli

Sue Fasoli reminded us that we will be voting on the 8<sup>th</sup> Principle being considered by UU congregations. The Anti-Racism Initiative believed that adoption of the 8<sup>th</sup> Principle might be a step toward becoming an anti-racist community. Over 280 UU congregations have already adopted the new principle.

Sue also described some of the initiatives the Anti-Racism Initiative had led, including Seeing White groups, Living the Pledge groups, 1619 Series group and a Martin Luther King Day service. She also asked us, particularly as board members, to support the adoption of the 8<sup>th</sup> Principle and asked us to consider our elevator speech to explain this support.

Sue has been in touch with Paula Cole Jones at UUA who works with congregations looking for resources on the 8<sup>th</sup> Principle. Paula does a workshop called Creating a Culture of Inclusion (four hours in two sessions) to help congregations consider the issues related to adopting the new 8<sup>th</sup> Principle. Sue had a date (in advance of the vote) when we could do the workshop, but it was one of the first two days of Passover and several Board members thought that it would not be a good idea to do the workshop on that date. Also, there is a fee which would need Rev. Rebecca's approval, but she is still away. The Board suggested that we consider the workshop as a catalyst to action after the vote.

Some concerns were raised about whether there is silent opposition to this proposal in the congregation, but no one had heard significant opposition, and most felt that it would be easily adopted. We also recollected that the upcoming vote has been discussed and publicized including at a Justice Sunday which included a panel of people sharing experiences from other churches that had adopted the 8<sup>th</sup> Principle.

**300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary:** Annie Maurer and Laurie Evans-Daly

Work is ongoing, including:

- Tentative budget in process.
- Events to be held have been identified and managers have been identified.
- The book updating our church history is almost done.
- Tea at Old Newbury and a multigenerational picnic at Moseley are planned.

- A banner will be displayed across the front of the church to celebrate the anniversary. It is anticipated that prior banners can be adapted to save funds and reduce environmental impact.
- There has been limited fundraising, but not enough to support all events.

**Discussion:** We need to be deliberate about fundraising in advance of the start of the celebration and think of creative ways to raise funds. We need a budget by May so that it can be included in the budget voted on at the annual meeting.

Liss Larsen suggested that we plan to inform historic societies and other relevant groups of our planned event, and maybe send copies of the book for inclusion in their libraries. Kathy Desilets suggested that with specific budgets for specific endeavors the grants committee might be able to locate some funding.

**Stewardship:** Vern Ellis

- The Annual Giving Campaign has thus far received 171 Pledges (57% of goal) representing \$405,000 in pledged funds (70% of goal).
- Pledging is tracking about the same as last year.
- There is some speculation that people are waiting in the hopes that late pledges will be matched. This is a bit of a trap that we would probably like to get out of.
- This is an important year with the 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration starting.
- We need to look toward raising funds to build our endowment.
- The Fundraising Team is planning to revive the Dinner Anywhere in the World Raffle to run from April to June 9. We raised \$11,000 the last time the raffle was offered.
- The Stewardship Team is also looking to Yankee Homecoming opportunities as well as booths at other events such as the classic car show.
- Also looking to build the Planned Giving Team and to initiate a Capital Campaign.
- Also need to consider the online community we have now... about 30 people attend online services weekly. We should think about how we can enhance connections with these community members.

**Search Updates:**

**Director of Church Music:** Lori Clark

- Fifteen applications came in and seven were selected for individual interviews.
- The interviews are in process with three completed and the other four scheduled.
- Candidates seem promising at this point.

**Assistant Minister of Congregational Life**

- Three applicants are being considered. First interviews have been completed and all candidates seem viable. Taking additional applications on a rolling basis.

**Director of Finance:** Jim Supple

- Seventeen candidates with widely variable skills and qualifications have applied.

- Jim did half-hour screening calls with all and six were selected for interviews.
- We need to be clear about what we want. We could contract with a firm to do this work, rather than hiring an employee, but there was some feeling that we would rather hire someone.
- Semiretired folks with good skills are among the candidates.
- We plan to bring the new person in at the end of the year.

We are holding off on the Communications position due to the current workload.

**Connections Team:** Renée Wolf Foster

Twenty-eight people attended the initial meeting. Based on comments, the major problem seems to be communications, so we need to work on that as soon as possible. There are a lot of suggestions for projects, etc.

**Governance Team:** Tom Himmel

Main current issue is completing the slate of Board Members and Trustees that will be included in the Annual Meeting warrant. Most of the current Board members will continue and Andy Lobb has agreed to join as Finance Treasurer. Some members will change roles. Bob Higgins will move to an at-large position. Vern Elliss will continue as leader of the 4<sup>th</sup> Century Planning Initiative. We will not have a youth position this year as we do not have a likely candidate. Trustees of the Endowment Treasurer Ken Kenly will continue, and Bill Clary will come off this group. Tina Benik is expected to continue to serve.

The Finance/Endowment/Stewardship group was briefly mentioned as a mechanism for strategy building between the Board and the Trustees.

**Alcohol Policy Exception:** Jim Supple

Jim informed the board that Rev. Helen's sons have asked if an exception could be made to our policy of no alcohol at church functions to allow for the serving of beer and wine at the gathering after Rev. Helen's service. Rev. Rebecca would like the board to consider this. No one has been able to find a clear record of this policy, but there is a strong feeling among members of the congregation that such a policy is in place. Vern Ellis has collected policies on alcohol use from other churches and ultimately, we need to consider what policy we want to have. In the meantime, our task for this meeting is to consider an exception.

**Action: Exception to Alcohol Policy**

**Motion:** Renée Wolf Foster moved that, for the sole purpose of responding to a request from Rev. Helen's sons, we allow the serving of wine and beer at the gathering after Rev. Helen's memorial service, as an exception to the policy or practice that no alcohol is served on church property. Tina Benik seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

**Work on Safety Policy:**

We have previously discussed expanding our safety policy, which now primarily concerns children's programs. Cynthia Walsh is willing to staff the effort and Bob Higgins is willing to convene a work group. This policy development will involve some effort, but there are sufficient

concerns to justify a commitment of time. Jim Supple will work with Bob on a communication to the board.

**Discussion:**

- Maybe we should visit other churches to see how they handle this. We could also look at church policies.
- Some issues to be considered include securing the building, responsibility in a medical emergency, and planning for threats from individuals or groups.
- Liss Larsen shared that the school where she works had a safety audit by the police department; we could consider whether this is available in Newburyport.
- Betsy Latham has a friend who may be interested in helping with this.
- Renée Wolf Foster pointed out that UUA has a policy that addresses safety. Here is a link to the policy: [Becoming a Safer Congregation | Safe Congregations Handbook | UUA.org](#) This handbook and its website have many resources and examples of policy.
- Anita Wright, who is a public health nurse, may also be interested in helping with this. She has worked with Parish Friends on safety issues.
- We could post on the church website or put a notice in the Steeple to invite volunteers.

**Financial Report** (submitted in writing): Renée Wolf Foster

Renée let us know that Betsy Latham produced the financial report and the summary for this month. Renée has done a great job of acknowledging elders and thinking calmly about the budget. We need to be proactive, and we have been in some cases. For example, when we noted an increase in telecom costs, we changed vendors. We are a bit behind on this year's pledge payments and non-pledge giving is below budget. We also recently needed to renew our FRSUU domain name.

Renée discussed work that Art Henshaw did a few years ago looking at ten years of budgets and trends in fundraising, and she referenced an article she read recently about the work done on the steeple which highlighted the challenges and community support. Art's work was directed at helping the congregation and leadership to think bigger and plan, accordingly, considering the risks involved. Renée shared the article with Board members and encouraged the Board to consider these words from elders of the church.

**Consent Agenda:**

- Minutes of January 2024 meeting
- Minutes of Special Board Meeting on January 31, 2024 (reconsideration)

Note: Kathy Desilets requested reconsideration of the January 31 minutes because of edits made for clarity and completeness after approval.

**Action: Accept Consent Agenda**

**Motion:** Annie Maurer moved to accept the two sets of minutes included in the consent agenda. Minnie Flanagan seconded, and the motion passed without objection.

**Closing Words**: Jim Supple expressed his gratitude and that of the Board to the many people who sit on church teams and workgroups.

**Action: Adjournment**

**Motion**: Kathy Desilets moved to adjourn, and Vern Ellis seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 8 PM without objection.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Desilets, Clerk