

## **FRS Parish Board Meeting – April 17, 2024**

**Present:** Rev. Rebecca Bryan, **Tina Benik, Kathy Desilets, Renée Wolf Foster, Annie Maurer, Laurie Evans-Daly, Tom Himmel, Vern Ellis, Minnie Flanagan, Bob Higgins, Liss Larsen, Lori Clark, Sue Fasoli.** (Names in bold are voting members.)

**Absent:** **Caitlin Creps, Jim Supple**

**Call to Order:** Tina Benik called the meeting to order at 6:10pm.

**Welcome/Reading/Chalice Lighting:** Rev. Rebecca

Rev. Rebecca read a piece, “What We Love We Empower,” focusing on how we act with the things and people we love. The church empowers us to take care of ourselves and others. This increases the love and justice in the world.

**Minister’s Report:** Rev. Rebecca (presented in writing)

**Congregational Changes:** In response to Rev. Rebecca’s request for any questions, Tina Benik initiated a discussion of leadership change in the congregation, including the loss of many long-term members who have died or who have disabilities which limit their participation. Questions and comments in this discussion included:

- We need to be patient as we integrate new members into the congregation and into leadership. Do we need to develop new ways to promote and train new leaders? What role does the Board have in this?
- We may need a broader leadership development approach to bring new people into active roles.
- Some people have relationships with major donors which creates specific roles for certain people.
- How do we know if we are ready for votes at the annual meeting? We have taken steps such as congregational meetings, sharing notes of Board meetings on the website, and using various communications during and around services or in Justice Sunday programs.
- New staff roles are evolving and during that process it may be beneficial to define tasks that staff can and cannot do and those that the committee and task groups should manage, such as planning meetings, setting up Zoom meetings, recording business at these meetings, etc.

Some thoughts:

- Identify issues where there could be a lack of clarity in staff/congregation roles.
- Board-created committees should report to the Board on a regular basis. We should clearly identify which committees are responsible for reporting to the Board and how often.

Rev. Rebecca also gave a brief update on the Afghan family.

**Steeple Lights**

Some steeple lights are not working. These lights have been flooded and are no longer viable. This includes 28 lights on three levels. The lights originally purchased were of lower quality and now need to be replaced. In exploring this issue with American Steeple, the Facilities Team identified problems:

- The deck in the steeple tower, which Dish is using, also needs repairs.
- Windows were put in without appropriate drainage structures and are not functioning as they need to be.

This work needs to be done as soon as possible to avoid more damage and to get the lights operating. American Steeple is preparing an estimate for the work which is a multi-day effort to be done in the next few months. Costs are expected to be at least \$50,000. To pay for the work, we may need to take a bridge loan from the endowment and then raise funds to pay it back.

**Discussion:**

- We should look at opportunities for community-based fundraising.
- The Chamber of Commerce and many other local ventures use the steeple as an icon and may be willing to help.
- Is there an opportunity to get a story in the local newspaper seeking support?
- Stewardship is looking at holding fundraising during summer events – Yankee Homecoming and the car show.

**Staffing Search Updates:**

**Director of Finance:** Renée Wolf Foster

Jim Supple spoke with all viable candidates enabling the team to choose seven for full Zoom interview. Three candidates were given second interviews. The search team recommends that FRS hire Daniel O’Shea who was first choice for them and for the staff. He runs a company that helps businesses to manage their core financial functions. He is personable, and clearly understands what we need. He has identified projects we could do. There was a good connection between him and the church staff. He is smart and wants to help us look at how we can spend as little as possible. He would be brought on as a contractor rather than an employee. He will work a specified number of hours weekly and we will set a limit on what he will be paid annually.

**ACTION: To agree to the engagement of a Director of Finance**

**Motion:** Renée moved that the Board accept the recommendation of the search committee to retain Daniel O’Shea as an independent contractor whose contract will cover the work outlined in the job description for the Position of Director of Finance. Tom Himmel seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Renée reported that we hope to have Daniel on board in time to complete the budget process for the annual meeting. Michele, who has been working as bookkeeper, will complete her time with us at the end of April.

**Director of Church Music:** Lori Clark

Fifteen good applications were received. The search team did first interviews with seven and then narrowed the pool to three for second interviews. One candidate withdrew and the other two were interviewed. The search team is close to a decision.

**Governance:** Tom Himmel

Tom presented a list of items that require action at the annual meeting which will be held on June 9.

**Finance Committee:** Renée Wolf Foster

Jim Supple and Rev. Rebecca were able to reassure the committee that things are okay with the Annual Campaign, and we are expecting pledges from some regular donors who have not yet responded. The new Director of Finance will work on trends; Betsy Latham has been ensuring that income and expenses are appropriately recorded.

**4<sup>th</sup> Century Team:** Vern Ellis

The work of this committee has been ongoing over several months and it will be helpful to adopt a formal charge to the team.

**ACTION: Charge to the 4<sup>th</sup> Century Team**

**Motion:** Vern Ellis moved that the following statement be approved: The FRSU Parish Board charges the 4<sup>th</sup> Century Team with the development of a timeline and action plan for the church years 2024-2025 which outlines the team's plans and associated lay leadership related to its areas of focus:

- Budget and celebration plans for the church's 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2025.
- The target fundraising range and associated components for a Capital Campaign are based on the lessons learned from the Congregational Insight Workshops and the findings of the Facilities, Grants, and Green Teams.
- Timeline for launching a Capital Campaign
- Budget for planning and preparation for a capital campaign

The Board requests that this timeline and plan be submitted for review at the June 2024 Parish Board Meeting. Annie Maurer seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Century Team will hold a retreat on May 18 from 9:30am-1pm.

**Insight Team Follow up**

- Information from the data the team gathered is being used by search committees for Assistant Minister and Director of Church Music candidates and in other ways.
- As a next step, to deepen our understanding of the needs and ideas of the community, two meetings will be held in Parish Hall with representatives of various sectors of the community. The meetings will be held in the morning before work and at the end of the workday. Any ideas for who should be included in the invitation list should go to Cynthia Walsh.
- Tina proposed that we update the congregation on ways information from the insight research is being used. We will try to find a way to do this.

**Stewardship:** Vern Ellis

- The Annual Campaign is currently at \$115,000, about 90% with 238 pledges. We are hopeful that we will be able to meet the goal, but it is likely that we will need \$25,000-30,000 in matching funds to bring in the last pledges.
- **Dinner for 2 Anywhere in the World raffle** is on with the winner being drawn at the annual meeting in June. We are beginning to sell tickets. Advertising is through posters at various businesses and posting on Nice & Kind People of Newburyport websites. We will look for other opportunities.
- Looking at mugs, t-shirts, steeple hats which could be sold at various events.
- There is the potential for a rummage sale, but no details yet.
- FRS is a sponsor of Newburyport Pride, which will be held in the first week in June.

**Consent Agenda**

Minutes of March Parish Board Meeting

**Action: Accept Consent Agenda**

**Motion:** Renée Wolf Foster moved to accept the two sets of minutes included in the consent agenda. Lori Clark seconded, and the motion passed without objection.

**Closing Words:** Rev. Rebecca offered closing words in the form of a short poems which she wrote on embodiment with a message that we should be in the present time and see the beauty around us. The work goes on inside.

**Adjournment Action:** Lori Clark moved to adjourn, and Renée Wolf Foster seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 8pm without objection.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Desilets, Clerk