

FRSUU Parish Board Meeting – April 16, 2025

Present: Tina Benik, Tom Himmel, Kathy Desilets, Jim Supple, Laurie Evans-Daly, Vern Ellis, Bob Higgins, Sarina Kahn Reddy, Andy Lobb, Lori Clark, Liss Larsen, Renee Wolf Foster, Reverend Rebecca.
Note: names in **bold** are voting members.

Call to Order: Tina Benik called the meeting to order at 6:05pm.

Opening: Rev. Rebecca read a quote from “The Old Interior Angel” by David Whyte.

Parish Board Covenant: Jim Supple read Section 5 of the board covenant discussing self-care, community building, and coming prepared/focused to board meeting.

Minister’s Report: Rev. Rebecca

- Staff have positive attitudes and work together well.
- Stating plans for next year.
- Feeling refreshed after a good time away.

Shanties: Rev. Rebecca agreed to install these as a gesture of community support at the request of the Chamber of Commerce. Chamber has been positive in response to dealing with safety issues (nails sticking out on inside walls). One of the shanties is available to FRS free of charge. Others will be rented for \$500/month and congregation members have the first opportunity to ask for these. This is a one-year commitment.

Peace Vigil on Fridays: All are encouraged to attend these ongoing weekly vigils which are open to any interested person. The response has been good. A variety of people, many of whom are from outside our congregation, have participated.

Communications/Staff Change: A former colleague of Rev. Laurel will manage some of the tasks left by Kate’s departure in cooperation with Diane Carroll.

Finance Update: Jim Supple

- Betsy Latham, Bart Bracken, and others have been helpful in working on budget.
- Good energy on pledges and contributions continues. On plan for pledge collections.
- Ahead of the goal on Sunday collections and on Budget Rentals (\$10,000).
- Overall, \$30,000 to the good.
- Tina thanked Jim and those who worked with him for the fact we have a clear view of how things are going financially, with reliable figures and good outcomes. We are ahead on operating cash at this point.

Annual Campaign: We are currently at about \$520,000 in pledges (about \$70,000 below goal).

- We will do a match again this year, which will be announced soon. Some people have begun to hold off their pledge until the match is announced.
- The committee is acknowledged for their on-going work on this. Bart is especially appreciated for his work in maintaining and sharing records and for his good contact with stewards.
- We are still hopeful that we can reach the campaign goal. Some good-sized pledges from past years are still outstanding, and we are expecting to hear from these folks and to benefit from the match.

HVAC (Lower Meetinghouse) Update:

The Facilities Team provided information on three approaches. One is dependent on a Mass Save rebate which would make it affordable. This process of applying for the rebate is complex and requires more upfront spending than we have available. Board members familiar with the proposals said that none of the options will significantly change operating costs or carbon footprint. Also, the heat pump proposal is only for the Lower Meetinghouse and has a projected 15-year lifespan where our old system lasted 25 years without extraordinary care. The price differential among the projects is not huge. The goal is to make a recommendation to the board in May.

We do not expect to be able to complete any of the proposed actions for the summer. We need a stop gap since we have summer staffing and activities. Nick Place will investigate what we can do in the short term with the current vendor.

Thanks for all for their continued engagement in this challenging project.

Capital Campaign Update: Lark Madden

To establish a goal figure, we need to look at essential components of the Parish Hall revitalization (these include lift or elevator, HVAC, other accessibility needs) and determine costs as well as other construction expenses. This is in process. Once this baseline is established, we will look at what else is possible.

Governance: Tom Himmel

- **Candidates for Election**

- **Parish Board:** Tom Himmel reported that there are three open Board positions. Jeff Bard, Leslie Lawrence, and Julie Menin will be nominees. Tom is moving from his position as Governance Chair to start a term as a member at large of the board. Vern is stepping out of his position, which had previously been filled by a youth member. We will leave this position vacant to be filled in the next fiscal year. Leslie will take the position of Governance Chair. All the other nominees are incumbents.
- **Trustees:** Kim Kenly will move from Treasurer of the Trustees to a regular trustee position. Jim Major will take the role of Endowment Treasurer.
- **Other Vacancies – Auditor:** We will continue to seek a person willing to take this position. Joe Brouillet, who is stepping down from this position, has held it for a long time and is currently working on the audit.

- **By-laws Change/Warrant Items**

- **Congregational Approval of Expenses:** A change to the by-laws is proposed to raise the level of expenditure requiring congregational approval from \$7,000 to \$20,000. The \$7,000 figure has been in place since at least 2012, and with inflation, the limit can create inefficiencies for relatively routine spending. Also, for similar reasons, it may be useful to revise the level of expenditure, for which a 20% quorum is required, from \$25,000 to \$35,000. Jim Supple suggested we might set a percentage of the annual budget at which an expenditure must have congressional approval.
- **Land acknowledgement:** Seek congregational approval of committing FRSUU to move forward to study the content that would be part of a historically accurate land acknowledgement.

Stewardship Committee: Renee Wolf Foster

Renee met with Tom Himmel and Bob Higgins to discuss definitions, roles, and responsibilities of the Stewardship Committee. The by-laws define the committee as being responsible for all fundraising. The Annual Campaign, Planned Giving/Gift Acceptance, and Capital Campaign have independent leadership and their own workgroups, so that the role of the Stewardship Chair is mainly to check in.

Renee suggested that the other parts of the responsibility of the Stewardship Committee could benefit from rebranding with more emphasis on fun and connection, and with more planning and organization, such as defining all planned events well in advance of the time they are held and making a calendar that shows planning times and who is needed to work on the event. The chair of the Stewardship Committee would have an overall view of all fundraising, but their role would mainly be to recruit workers and leadership for specific efforts and work to maintain morale and interest. This approach would limit the need for ponderous and frequent meetings of the full committee and allow people to meet to plan things they are interested in and to figure out how to bring in others. Note: After this discussion, Renee, who had been considering leaving the role of Stewardship Chair, decided to retain the position.

4th Century: Laurie Evans-Daly

Things are moving along well. May events planned:

- Coming of Age for Young Church youth – May 4
- Rev. Rebecca's Book Launch – May 4
- Drag Performance – May 18
- Garden Party – May 18

Consent Agenda: Kathy Desilets

ACTION: Review of minutes from March 19, 2025

Motion: Lori Clark moved to approve the minutes of the March 19, 2025, meeting. Sarina Khan Reddy seconded, and the motion carried without exception.

Closing:

Rev Rebecca urged the Board to celebrate doing things in their own time, remembering that our work is sacred, and feeling the connections. Feel it all – friendship, challenges, teamwork, visions, and go lifted up, connected, and being the light.

Adjournment: A motion for adjournment was made by Kathy Desilets. The motion was seconded and carried without exception. The meeting was adjourned at 7:55pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Desilets, Parish Clerk