

## FRSUU Parish Board Notes – September 17, 2025

**Present:** Bob Higgins, Tom Himmel, Kathy Desilets, Jim Supple, Sarina Kahn Reddy, Liss Larsen, Renee Wolf Foster, Julie Menin, Jeff Bard, Leslie Lawrence, Reverend Rebecca (**Bold** indicates voting members.) **Absent:** Lori Clark, Andy Lobb

**Welcome:** Bob Higgins called the meeting to order at 6:02pm.

**Welcome, Reading, Chalice Lighting:** Rev. Rebecca struck a small singing bowl she uses in her own reflections and spoke of the strong sense of leaving the past and moving forward that it gives her. She then read two poems by Ingrid Goff-Maidoff, “When Peace Came” and “The Path to Kindness.”

**Excerpt of Covenant Reading:** Tom Himmel read Item 1 in the Board Covenant.

**News and Updates:** Bob Higgins

- A **Board/Congregational meeting** will be held on **September 28**. Bob asked all Board members to attend if possible and to let him know if they are unable to be there.
- **Leading Edge Team:** At Julie Menin’s request, Paula Cole Jones agreed we could share the slides used at our retreat. She will send a PDF file. The team also developed a covenant (attached). While the team developed the covenant for its own use, it could serve as a model for other groups (communities) in the church. The covenant provides context that will help us define relationships as a step in fully acknowledging the 8<sup>th</sup> Principle.
- Bob highlighted coming events and reminded the Board to promote attendance.
- Leslie Lawrence distributed the Conflict-of-Interest form and provided a copy of Section 1.3.3 of the Board Policy Manual which explains the purpose of signing this form.

**Extended Hours for Rev. Laurel:** Bob Higgins

Rev. Laurel is currently working 30 hours a week, and the Executive Committee would like the Board’s approval to increase her hours to full-time. Rev. Laurel’s current responsibilities include working with youth groups, adult faith formation, supervision/collaboration with Mara Flynn on connections with older kids. Rev. Laurel can do this work within her current hours, but with an increase in hours she can provide facilities oversight, including collaboration with the Grants Team and work with the new facilities contractor to be hired. This could take pressure off Rev. Rebecca.

Jim responded to a question explaining how we can afford the change in salary. We have savings from delayed hiring and due to engaging Clergy Financial for fiscal management tasks beyond the significant work that Diane Carroll does. This group specializes in working with churches and is doing our payroll now. Their contract will cost \$600/month compared to \$25,000/year that is budgeted. Budget analysis will be in the hands of the finance committee.

**ACTION:** Increase Rev. Laurel’s hours to full-time

**Motion:** Tom Himmel moved that the Parish Board approve increasing Rev. Laurel to full time immediately. Jim seconded and the motion carried without objection.

### **Approval of Committee Members:**

Leslie Lawrence asked the Board to approve the members of the Governance Committee: Tina Benik, Lori Clark, Kathy Desilets, Tom Himmel, Leslie Lawrence, and Rebekah Stafford; and the Human Resource Committee: Tom Himmel, Leslie Lawrence, Julie Menin, Hugh Martinez, and Kathy Desilets. These committees are Board chartered and require this action.

### **ACTION:** Approval of Committee Members

**Motion:** Kathy Desilets moved that the Board accept members of the Governance and Human Resources Committees as listed above. Renee Wolf Foster seconded and the motion carried without objection.

### **Finance Report:** Jim Supple

Jim stated that the books for the year were successfully closed, showing a \$5,700 surplus. He gave credit to Bart Bracken, Betsy Latham, and Diane Carroll for providing significant assistance.

- Jim reviewed the major sources of financial support for the church:
  - Pledges and other donations: 75% in total, with pledges being 69%
  - Steeple revenue (Dish, AT&T, Steeple lighting sponsorships): 11%
  - Fundraising: 4%, Endowment: 6.5%
  - FRSUU supports all staff with internal contributions
- Surplus is due to lower-than-expected staff costs and the fact that we no longer pay Barbara Owen's retirement benefits.
- Overall, we are top heavy with self-funding.
- On the positive side we did not need to take money from the Futures Fund. We received more than usual from summer services, the Owen house was sold, we repaid short term loans from congregants, and we anticipate a rebate on the HVAC project which will bring the cost of the project to about \$90,000 as planned.
- Half of the proceeds from the sale of the Owen house will go to the endowment as designated in Barbara's will. The remainder will go to operations with a focus on music and the creation of a Capital Reserve Fund and an Operating Reserve Fund. We will fund the HVAC work from the Capital Reserve, leaving \$70,000.
- We need to consider how we use funds from unrestricted gifts. This includes looking at policy and where funding for any specific project will come from.
- We are looking for the Grants Team to help with capital expenditures for the building.

**Governance Report:** Leslie Lawrence, the new chair of this committee, reported that the committee met during the summer to discuss priorities for the year and addressed the following issues:

- Where are most recent versions of key policies located? Board meeting notes and Annual Meeting notes are on the Website, HR procedures are on Leslie's computer, some committees are using a SharePoint on the FRSUU drive (particularly Finance and HR). We need to determine what should be public-facing and what should be more protected. We also need clarity on where we store data and who has access.

- Public-facing items are not up to date on the website. The Annual Report is not posted to the website and minutes are behind.
- We need to review and update the policy manual.
- Leslie and others will follow up with these items and others pending from prior years.

**Stewardship/FunRaising Team:** Renee Wolf Foster

- We will hold our annual auction on November 7. We still need contributions, especially for the live auction. We will ask people who donated last year. Silent Auction gifts are also welcome. The team will meet next Monday. Paula Renda and Tina Benik will do training on canvassing and reaching out to businesses. By this time next week, the team hopes to have all donations set.
- The team would like to move beyond immediate events and look for ways to do things that are fun and bring people together.

**Minister's Report:** Rev. Rebecca

- Staffing: We have engaged Clergy Financial to help with financial work and are still recruiting for a facilities manager. Donny Rogers is working on repairs and maintenance. The facilities manager will work on larger projects.
- Commerce Cottages are leaving and will not return. This was a trial for us and the Chamber of Commerce and did not work well for anyone. The Chamber will remove the structures when possible.
- We have secured a Holocaust survivor to make a presentation at the church.
- Continuing work with refugee projects.
- Preliminary meeting with a group looking at how to provide emergency shelter for people living outside. The group is considering options including offering a warming space, building teams to help staff a space for people needing help, and connecting them with resources. Salvation Army does this kind of work. We will know more soon. Emmaus House may provide support. Currently 12-15 people are on the streets. A total of 30 have been identified as potentially needing help.
- Annie Maurer announced that state elected officials will meet with interested church and community members at FRSUU to discuss legislative agendas for the current times.

**IMPORTANT NEWS:**

Rev. Rebecca has decided not to return to FRSUU after her sabbatical. This was a decision she made at the end of the summer after extensive prayer and discernment. She found that her work here had evolved to be too much business management and too little ministry. She will be here for this church year. She reminded us that we have excellent staff. It is the job of the Board to help the congregation to deal with this change/loss and to encourage the faith that the church can stay strong through the change.

Rev. Rebecca and Bob Higgins will send letters to the congregation tomorrow to inform them of Rev. Rebecca's plan.

The board has two Action items regarding Rev. Rebecca's resignation.

**ACTION:** Accept Rev. Rebecca's resignation

**Motion:** Bob Higgins moved that the Board accept Rev. Rebecca's letter of resignation dated September 17, 2025, in which she advises the Board that she will continue to serve full-time in her current capacity as Senior Minister of FRSUU for the current church year and take her sabbatical beginning June 2026 and continuing through December 31, 2026, but will not be returning from sabbatical, such that her resignation shall be effective January 1, 2027. Renee Wolf Foster seconded and the motion carried without opposition.

Rev. Rebecca's Letter of Agreement states, in the section on Sabbatical Leave, 3.9.5., the Minister agrees not to resign from full-time service to the Congregation for a minimum of one year following the end of each sabbatical leave.

**ACTION:** Waiver of a section of Rev. Rebecca's Letter of Agreement

**Motion:** Renee moved that the Parish Board agree to waive section 3.9.5 of Rev. Rebecca's letter of agreement. We do this in recognition of the fact that she delayed her sabbatical twice to benefit the church, her willingness to support the church in its transition by providing ample notice of her departure, and with deep and enduring gratitude for her outstanding leadership in the community. Sarina Khan Reddy seconded and the motion was passed without objection but with sadness and love.

Bob Higgins suggested that it would be helpful to have someone to monitor and respond to comments online. Leslie Lawrence and Jim Supple both agreed to do this. Bruce Deveau and James Funston have agreed to monitor as well.

**Consent Agenda:** Postponed

**Closing Words:** Rev Rebecca offered the following words: May the flame in this room in a candle burned almost to the end in a holder brought for Covid continue to bring strength and hope to all of us.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned by general agreement at 8:15pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Desilets, Clerk