

Fountain Street Church Governing Board Meeting Minutes October 17, 2022

Board Members Present: Steve DePolo, Win Irwin, Shellie Jeffries, Kristen Loch, Kristin Mayer, Brad Miller, Katie Mitchell, Amy Preston, George Zuiderveen, Matthew Huizing, John Willette, Jon Spaulding, James Taylor, Tim Creamer

Staff Present: Rev. Christopher Roe

Guests: Buzz Wynbeek, Carole, Joan Jung, Judith Keinetz, Ken Norris, Kirsten Lundeen, Marie Penny, Mary Peterson, Paul Arnold, Todd Johnson, Tony Kroes

Call to Order: Meeting called to order at 7:02 pm.

Call to Community: Jon Spaulding read a poem about taking right/wrong turns

Congregant Comments: Ken Norris read a letter to the board:

Oct. 17, 2022

Governing Board
Fountain Street Church

I speak to you tonight in no way also representing my wife, TJ Norris, current co-chair of the Fountain Street Church Foundation Board. But I know she shares some of my concerns about the current state of the church if not my more blunt approach to addressing those concerns.

We have been members for a relatively few years but care deeply for this church and its mission. We support it with our time, our resources and maybe most of all with our community advocacy.

I respect the members and work of the governing board, these are difficult times and you have chosen to lead us, the congregation, the church, in these difficult times. Addressing the issues confronting this church is ultimately all our duty, but this board, as our leaders, need to lead us in these efforts.

I come to you tonight driven by what I saw and heard from the members of the church's current senior minister search committee.

I have nothing but respect for many of its members and the situation they are now in. They are in a difficult position, an almost impossible position, that of trying to do what is right and please every member of this church community, including every member of this board — including those members who, I believe, will only be pleased if they have their way in such matters as religious leadership, and have shown they are willing to anonymously work behind the scenes to drive away religious leaders not of their choosing.

I watched as the last senior search committee worked and brought forward someone who I believed was a great choice for religious leaders, a person all too soon poisoned on this church to some degree by the malicious acts of a few.

I hoped that this church would have looked in the mirror, saw reflection of our our flaws in this situation. I heard talk by members of this board, and among the congregation, that steps much be taken to avoid such malicious actions in the future. I also heard talk about the need to change the burdensome way we select new religious leadership.

But it is apparent by Rev. Gretta Jo's departure and Rev. Christopher's apparent frustrations that nothing has been done and, I believe, that a malicious minority still controls this aspect of the church.

So far as I see there has been no action on either of those issues by the leaders of this church and this board, and that inaction has greatly contributed to the impossible position of the current senior minister search committee.

In my personal life, and in much of my working life, I have lived by the mantra of confronting problems directly, of making good decisions quickly and adjusting those decisions as needed, of being willing to be fail.

I believe this is well past time for this board to act in such a way. If the majority of this board feels Rev. Christopher, a very qualified internal candidate for the senior minister, is the right person to lead us now, you should so publicly state. And you should urge the search committee to put Rev. Christopher's name before the congregation for a vote.

The governing board does not choose the senior minister, but it can give the members of the search committee its opinion — and the confidence that even if such a decision draws the ire of certain members that leadership will support them.

I believe Rev. Christopher is right when he says this church needs to make many internal organizational changes before it will be in a position to survive in the future. But I also believe a strong religious leader, and that person's vision for the church, is essential in that survival.

I urge you let the congregation decide, as they should. You should urge the search committee to make a good decision quickly and start moving this church into the future.

Thank you for your time, and your work.

Respectively,

K.D. Norris

Ken Norris

FSC Thank Yous: James thanked Lydia Stubbs for the care she's given kids, returning after her departure, and the fantastic job she does.

Governing Board Minutes: Katie moved to accept the September minutes. Kristen L. seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Nominating Committee Report:

Katie updated:

- The Nom Comm is myself, Brad Miller, and Geoff Kempter from the board. Chip Wall, Jean Bahle, and Pat Eamon are congregant members.
- Names for the Gov. Bd. election must be filed with the secretary (that's me - easy enough) and "posted to the church bulletin board" 21 days before the annual meeting (per Bylaws Sec. 2.3) on Nov. 20.
- The bylaws want us to have a slate of 8 names. That hasn't been easy in recent years.
- Officers plan for the ballot mailing to go out on Oct. 29/30 to make the names publicly available 21 days before the election.
- We have 5 spots to fill:
 - 2 members are completing their second consecutive term and may not run again (Win Irwin and Brad Miller)
 - 3 members are eligible for reelection (Jon Spalding, James Taylor, Shellie Jeffries)
- We have 4 amazing people who have committed to running. Need 1 more name *at a minimum*. Have some conversations in the works and hope to have more "yes" names in the coming days.
- We also need a name for the Foundation Board. Often there's someone the Foundation recommends or whom has been suggested. I've reached out to a potential candidate and the Gov. Bd. Foundation liaison to get that taken care of.
- If anyone out there wants to run, hit me up!

Finance:

Win updated:

Income

- Pledges have slowed and are under budget by \$35,640.
- Contributions of Record are \$7,630 over budget
- Cash Plate is \$1,507 under budget
- Rental Income is now \$3,768 under budget
- Total Income is \$29,547 behind budget

Expenses

- Same as previous months – heat and electric are over budget (now \$18,411); balance is under budget.
- Overall, \$53,650 better than budget

Net Year to Date Income is \$24,103 better than budget but is a deficit of \$15,145.
Annual Budget is a \$53,342 deficit. So, we are running better than budget, but still a deficit.
Our cash reserve is \$152,403 at the end of July.
Foundation balance is \$3,594,851.

Accounts over annual budget after 9 months:

Information Services*
Governing Board Expense
Recruiting Expenses
Professional Expenses*
Pest Control
Lighting Expense*
Heat*
Music Accompanist

Gift of Property

Win announced that he executed documents to accept the donation of a piece of property in White Lake Township in Muskegon County as a designated gift to the Fountain Street Church Foundation for 'raising funds for repair of the Fountain Street Church Bell Tower.' The committee discussed contacting a realtor to help us with selling this real estate.

Geoff moved to approve the Finance Report. James seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

2023 Draft Budget

The committee reviewed in detail a draft budget for presentation to the Governing Board for the Annual Meeting. Christopher and Melissa had prepared all the accounts for the Finance Committee, apart from making future staffing assumptions for the future. Win met with Amy Preston to discuss how to best create staffing assumptions for a year that has considerable uncertainty.

Amy and Win, with input that Amy had from Christopher, added to the budget a position for a 1/2 time Assistant Minister and put another \$10,000 into the Professional Services Account. That account is \$30,000 and includes potential expenses for the Senior Minister Search Committee and the costs to engage Reverend Jody to consult and conduct workshops.

Win and Melissa reviewed the entire budget and incorporated these changes as well as making a few line-item adjustments based on the most current information.

The committee walked through the budget line by line asking lots of questions. The committee noted that the budget for income was a little aggressive but was comfortable charging the Stewardship Committee and Governing Board to raise the necessary income.

The committee also felt that we might cut back on some of the expense accounts given our positive 2022 experience but was comfortable that our current leadership (Melissa and Christopher) are careful with expenses and would endeavor to not spend budgeted expenses wherever possible.

The Fountain Street Community has work to do over the next year and it is not clear exactly where we will be a year from now.

After a full review, the Finance Committee recommended this draft 2023 budget to the Governing Board.

James asked about expense additions from Samaritas. Win says we likely have a net gain with them moving out (they didn't have the kids to need our space anymore).

Win moved to accept the budget and pass on to the membership at the annual meeting. Motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Win reminded that this isn't a FINAL budget, as there may be some tweaks in the new year.

Stewardship:

Win updated:

Fundraisers you do not want to miss 😊:

Halloween Hop – October 22nd – 7-10pm

Featuring:

- James Taylor as our DJ for the evening (get out your dancing shoes)
- Money Wall with lots of surprises!!
- Appetizers, punch, wine, and desserts
- Optional Halloween costumes welcome if the spirit moves you
- Mostly, we just want to get together and have fun – no need to dance or have a date – all are welcome!!!

We are recruiting volunteers & surprise gifts for the money wall. Huge thank you to Kathy Higgins of the Stewardship Committee for getting things organized!!

Question about whether this was kids or adults only. Kristen M. volunteered to provide childcare for those who might want to come but have kids. Kids are allowed at the dance though.

Checking to see if the tickets are easily found on the website. Kristin M. added the link to the Zoom chat.

Hocus Pocus Film Showing – 4pm October 23rd

We are anxious to fill our sanctuary with tons of kids, parents, and grandparents for the showing of this classic 1993 Halloween film – featuring Salem witches (like Bette Midler).

We will have popcorn, chips, candy, and water. Tell your friends and neighbors!

Upcoming attractions:

The committee is also starting work on our Fall Stewardship Campaign, and we would like to make it much more personal to our members with small and larger group gatherings.

October 30th – Halloween Stewardship Sunday

November 20th/Annual Lunch – Quiche Be with You Lunch

The Women’s Association and Parents’ Circle will be sponsoring this lunch to fund needed kitchen repairs and expenses. Originally, we had planned on a GB Soup Lunch, but the committee agreed this was a great opportunity. Governing Board volunteers to assist them on the 20th will be welcome!!

December 18th – Christmas Talent Showcase

Pledge Drive

We are starting the pledge drive by email this year. It will be sent with a letter from Reverend Christopher and Amy as GB Chair. You will be able to use the form to renew your pledge on-line. Follow up emails, letters and communications are planned.

After the email goes out, we plan to initiate a standing ‘Thank You’ session at 5pm every Monday. Governing Board members and Stewardship Committee members can stop by, write a few notes or take names with email/phone numbers to thank them.

It would be wonderful for the GB to be 100% pledged within a few weeks 😊!!

Bell Tower Report:

Win Updated:

The Bell Tower Committee met with Jeremy Taylor of OAK to get an update on the upcoming bell tower work. Jeremy reported that they are targeting to do the work the week of December 12, subject to weather conditions.

They will be using two cranes to do the work and need to close Fountain Street. They will begin by removing the old wood stairs between the 4th and 5th floors and replacing it with the newly fabricated

steel staircase. Next, they will be assisting Quinn Evans and Skillman with the non-invasive inspection of the tower bricks and steel anchors. Quinn Evans will also determine if asbestos is present and what abatement will be needed before the roof replacements.

After their work is complete, Restoration Inc. will begin to install the netting followed by the tarp.

It was pointed out that we need to be sure that water is allowed to drain properly and that any drain pipes that are plugged or not working need to be fixed to prevent additional water damage after the netting and tarp are in place. Jeremy agreed that is necessary.

With this information and inspection for asbestos, Quinn Evans and Skillman will finalize their specifications for the entire Bell Tower Repair Work. After that OAK and Restoration Inc can finalize an estimate for completing the rest of the project. The committee expressed their desire to get this estimate, but it was clear that this will take months to complete.

The committee discussed strategies for fundraising, whether the Governing Board will want to address any additional building/capital needs for this capital campaign, and the need for a Restoration and Maintenance Program for all our church buildings.

Geoff checked on clarification for exactly what phase of the project this is. Win clarified that we're still determining what needs to be done. Guessing it'll be March/April before we get solid answers.

Reminder! We are the WW1 Memorial for Kent County. Check out Tim Chester's sermon on the bell tower. There are people in the community who really value this building.

Win also reminded that, as we do this, consider what else we might want to do with the building... how we do the Bell Tower can inform how we raise money to maintain our building. We don't have to spend a ton to make things more welcoming.

Tim asked how and when we start that discussion. Win said maybe a town hall. Amy said maybe also loop Rev. Jody in as we move forward.

James suggested we address lighting. Often church lighting is tough to replace with old fixtures. Win said we have been replacing bulbs with LEDs. It is something we have to think about.

Staff Report:

Rev. Christopher updated:

- Lydia Stubbs has respectfully submitted her resignation as she plans to go into her official retirement. We are grateful for Lydia's collective years of service to Fountain Street Church and look forward to honoring her ministry on Sunday, October 30, following the 11:00am service.

- I am currently working with a candidate on serving in an interim capacity for leading the education programs from birth through 12th grade. I anticipate the candidate being able to overlap a week of responsibilities with Lydia Stubbs and then serve in this capacity through June 2023, at which time a more suitable and sustainable staffing plan should be in place
- I am in the early stages of hiring an organist and choir accompanist. This will likely be a challenging task, but I am hopeful that an appropriate, qualified, and committed candidate will present themselves.
- There's not enough of me right now to cover all of the bases.
- A program in support of reproductive freedoms and justice is in the works for Monday, October 24 at 7:00pm in the Sanctuary. This collaborative event, organized by Kristen Loch and supported by myself and outside organizations will be a good opportunity to demonstrate why Fountain Street Church's presence is essential to the community and what areas still need us to be active and supportive.
- There will be a church service on Monday, November 7 at 7:00pm in the Sanctuary that will serve as an "interfaith" vigil for the broader community. As a way of offering peace and sanctuary in a likely anxious moment, it is my intent to foster community in a non-political, soul-nourishing space as we anticipate whatever may come of the November 8 elections.
- The 9:30am Chapel Gathering is developing nicely, though I am not able to participate, support, and commit to it in ways that I would find acceptable or appropriate. Both spiritual gathering deserve dedicated ministry and support from me and right now that's not logistically possible. As we imagine a staffing structure that works to serve our mission, vision, and core values, I'm hopeful that figuring out ministry staffing will be a priority.

Amy asked about the Chapel point. What do we need to do as a board to making that a priority? Rev. Christopher said we need to look at how staffing supports everything... Clergy should be more ministry based, but we're also trying to plug holes and just don't have the capacity. Are we investing in the things that foster excitement and growth? Feels like we're treading on a personnel level.

Much goes back 2018/19. Jason left, Fred was on his way out. Stop gap solutions got put in place and then Mariela, Covid... we never really did the appropriate staff planning. Win mentioned we also couldn't afford the staff we needed. But we DO need a better plan.

James asked how Chapel feels about running its own show? Kristen L. answered that it's good to be back, but it's not sustainable. It would be good to see small moves forward. George checked that having dedicated money/people would be the ideal. In some ways it's too soon to plan for this, Rev. Christopher said.

Amy mentioned that Todd Johnson is holding a "I Voted" event on Tuesday Nov. 8 at church. .

New Business:

Oct. 29, 2022 Member Workshop

Kristen L. said the board got to work with Rev. Jody about the life cycles of a church in Feb. 2022. She's also been working with Rev. Christopher for the past year. On the 29th she will do a similar event, but congregant focused. This will be in person from 9am-noon, and also on Zoom (minus the interactive stuff). This will also be recorded.

Everyone invested in FSC is really encouraged to join and help determine where we are and where we're going.

Congregant Comments: None

Amy said we will get a copy of Ken Norris' letter to everyone and we will respond to him ASAP.

James said we have done a lot of work, but the congregation doesn't always know that. We need to double down on communication.

Adjourn: Motion to adjourn made by James, seconded by Geoff, and passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:10pm.