

Fountain Street Church Governing Board Meeting Minutes February 20, 2023

Board Members Present: Cele Badgerow, Steve DePolo, Matthew Huizenga, Shellie Jeffries, Geoff Kempter, Tony Lanninga, Kristen Loch, Kristin Mayer, Katie Mitchell, Amy Preston, Jon Spalding, James Taylor, Tim Creamer, John Willette, George Zuiderveen

Staff Present: Rev. Christopher Roe

Guests: Carole, Sherron Collins, Pat Eaman, Tony Kroes, Kirsten Lundeen, Brad Miller, Jack Petiet, Buzz Wynbeek

Call to Order: Meeting called to order at 7:00 pm. (“new SM, new trend, starting on time”)

Call to Community: James read a short poem he wrote, “A New Day Dawns.”

Congregant Comments: None

FSC Thank You: Tim thanked the Search Nominating Group for coming up with a list of candidates for the Senior Minister Search Committee. Thanked the SMSC for putting their names on there, including those who did not win, as that can be difficult.

Governing Board Minutes: Katie moved to accept the January minutes. Tony seconded, motion passed unanimously.

Finance: Tim updated:

The Financial Statements included in the packet do not show the budgeted numbers as we have not approved a budget at this point. In comparison to January of 2022

- Income is down \$9,729 with pledge income down to \$88,200 from \$103,367.
- Expenses are down \$6,835 with Admin/Program staffing down \$4,229 reflecting a smaller staff.
- Unrestricted cash on hand is \$182,337. As of 12-31-2022 it was \$144,836. This increase reflects the large amount of pledges being paid in January along with 2023 pledges paid in 2022 being recognized January.

James moved to accept the financial report. Jon seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

2023 Proposed Budget

The differences between the budget approved for presentation to the Congregation in November and the one in the packet this month are:

- This budget reflects \$550,000 in pledge income while the earlier version was based on \$600,000 in pledge income. The other revenue numbers are the same showing budgeted income of \$676,500.
- The expenses in this budget are down \$14,182 from \$759,103 to \$744,821.
- The budget deficit went from \$32,603 in the earlier version to \$68,322 in the current version.
- The Admin/Program Staffing went from \$198,699 in the earlier budget to \$168,540 in the current version. This is partially due to Lydia Stubbs no longer being on the staff. It also only includes the expense of having Katie on the staff only thru the end of April. There is nothing in the budget at this point for a Youth Education Director beyond that point.
- Worship staffing costs have increased to \$230,200 from \$194,650. This reflects the new contract approved for Reverend Christopher. Included in this is an amount for an Assistant Minister on a part time basis for the second half of the year.
- Last years budgeted deficit was \$53,342. Through the frugal spending of our staff and a few positions left empty after staffers left we ended up with an actual deficit of \$8,121.
- We did budget a \$10,000 cushion in the Professional Services line item reflected in the Total Leadership/Training expenses.
- We have increased the amount budgeted for Utilities Expense from last year's budget by around \$11,000. We expect savings from not having renters on the 3rd and 4th floors but also are seeing increases in rates. We will keep a close eye on this line item as it has been very volatile in past years.
- There are \$50,680 in expenses that are building maintenance related which we considered moving to the Properties Committee budget. We propose to lessen the deficit of this budget by \$18,360 by having the Properties Committee covering the amount we have budgeted for our handyman. That would bring the budgeted deficit to \$49,982.

Cele expressed concern about the lack of an education budget. Also budgeting for a loss... is that normal? What do we do when the PPP money runs out? Tim said we historically adjusted income - didn't actually hit it. And is our administrative cost too high relative to other spending?

Tim moved to approve the budget for 2023. Jon seconded. Discussion

James noted that covid gave us a break from budget discussions. Now we are faced with very real questions about the building and how to grow the church through families/kids. This budget is why James joined the board.

Kristin M. said that how we budget is a statement of priority. A zero budget for kids means we don't think the kids are important.

Amy said we always find a way to pay our utility bills... why not this? Rev. Christopher can you rework this in the budget? I'm uncomfortable passing a budget that looks very different from the one we presented at the annual meeting. Should we call a special meeting to inform the congregation? RC agreed to take a look, even after reworking this before this.

Tim said we've been shrinking for 15 years, and it hasn't worked to increase basic funds.

Kristin M. said she recalled sitting at the potluck recently and talking. There are way more liberal church options. Katie noted that there are also sport/etc. communities for families that we're competing with. It's not enough to just be the liberal church in town.

Geoff said this is an essential service and we have to make this investment.

RC said it's worth revisiting earlier conversations about the life cycles of a church. Eventually they move toward death, and that includes a lot of money for administration. That's where we are. When you have very few ppl managing the ministry and a LOT of energy going toward the "maintenance." This isn't just about numbers.

Kristen L. said no education budget is setting us up for the death of Fountain Street Church. Tim said we also have the building itself.

George asked about the vision for the Assistant Minister we might have. Can we have a clergy person who can also do education?

RC said we don't want to just plug a hole. The PT minister would look more at whole church programs, welcoming and the like.

Cele made a motion to table the vote on the 2023 budget and direct the Senior Minister, with a subcommittee of GB members, to present at least two balanced budget alternatives for the GB's consideration at the March 2023 GB meeting.

- **12 in favor**
- **2 opposed**
- **1 abstention**

Motion passed.

Oversight: Steve updated:

We were tasked with addressing how members interact with each other, taking it beyond a matter of feelings to a matter of policy. This is the first reading of these two sections of proposed changes:

1) POLICY GROUP No. 1 FSC GOVERNANCE

FSC Member Expectations

1. Being a member of Fountain Street Church is a privilege.

2. FSC Members strive to treat fellow members and nonmembers with dignity, respect, and fairness within the church building and in group settings. They want to act with integrity and honesty as members while favoring opportunities to promote diversity and equity within the church.

3. Members interact with curiosity about the world and consider issues with an open mind. They actively listen and while they may not always agree, they try to find common cause and interact appropriately and responsibly as good stewards of the reputation and serenity of the church.

4. After time for reflection, any cause for concern should be brought up thoughtfully with the Board Chair or Senior Minister who will consider whether a response is appropriate.

Discussion:

Tim noted that there's nothing here on treating staff, but we do have separate policies for that.

Shellie asked if the OC considered adding some sort of language about what to do if ppl break this.

John W. brought up that the word privilege suggests that it's something that can be revoked. But do we want to use that kind of language? Steve thinks of it more like a privilege to be cherished. George said maybe it's a privilege and responsibility? Also weren't we going to have a covenant come from the membership? Amy said the timing is a bit coincidental, but tomorrow's workshop is going to address some of this. We want both components.

Shellie suggested changing "want" in #2 to strive/seek...?

Steve asked if we could get behind this? General consensus that, after the required additional readings, this is something we can suggest. Steve asked RC about what churches do? RC said this is something else that should come from the ground up. SM guidance would be helpful, but the ppl need to direct the larger conversation.

Logistics talk on tomorrow's workshop.

2) POLICY GROUP No. 3 FSC

FINANCIAL POLICIES

E. Asset Protection

~~5. Make on its own authority any purchase of greater than \$20,000.00.~~

5. Make any purchase of greater than \$25,000 without Governing Board approval. If the total purchase is over \$25,000, the Officers Committee will take their recommendation to the full Governing Board for approval.

~~6. Make any purchase of over \$10,000.00 without sealed bids.~~

6. Make any purchase of \$2,500.00 or more for any purpose without three written bids while considering the following factors in reviewing bids and awarding contracts:

- Minority bidders will be encouraged to bid.
- Cost
- Best value
- Bidders previous record of performance
- Evidence of material/service quality and availability
- Proof of insurance where applicable
- References

~~7. Make any purchase of over \$1,000.00 without confirmation of competitive prices.~~

If multiple bids are not obtainable or even desirable on a project costing \$2,500 or more, a justification for single sourcing will be written and submitted, with Senior Minister approval, to the Officers Committee of the Governing Board for discussion and approval before the work is contracted.

G. Interest and Service Group Designated Funds (foundation or board)

1. Funds raised and managed by Interest and Service Groups are designated for the sole use by the related group. For efficiency and security, the designated funds will be centralized in a FSC bank account and assigned on the church balance sheet.
2. The purpose of each designated fund will be clearly outlined and reviewed annually for appropriateness by the FSC Finance Committee. The church finance manager will keep accurate records of income and expenses for the designated funds.
3. The Finance Committee will annually approve the individuals and staff authorized to spend from each designated fund.
4. When an FSC Interest and Service Group is dormant by recommendation by the Finance Committee for more than eight years, the Governing Board has the authority after due diligence to authorize closure and transfer the related designated fund to a similarly aligned fund or the General Fund.

H. Cash Reserves

1. The church will maintain cash reserves in a prudent manner to be used in the case of emergency or temporary budget shortfall.
2. This cash reserve fund will be maintained at a minimum of \$50,000 and no more than 25% of annual budgeted operating expenses.

3. If the cash reserves fall below the minimum amount, the Senior Minister and FSC Finance Committee will meet with the Officers Committee within two weeks to make budget adjustments to bring the fund back to the necessary amount within 3 months.

4. If the cash reserves exceed the maximum, the Senior Minister and FSC Finance Committee will meet to make budget adjustments to maintain the cash reserves at an appropriate level with a preference for allocating excess revenue to increasing the maintenance fund.

Discussion:

Jon said that \$2,500 is really low. Kristen L. said the intent is also to make things smoother. Suggested adding a line for when we NEED to get multiple bids, or at least make every effort.

Tim asked if we can vote after the next reading. Yes, we can.

James mentioned that there's also a difference between retail goods and services. Retail is less negotiable, but services have more wiggle room. Jon said this is called "price reasonableness."

Discussion on involving experts in these conversations.

James suggested less time before looking into dormant funds. 8 years seems like a long time, especially in our current situation. Tim noted that some years ago we cannibalized dormant funds. Tim and Steve specified that this was not an automatic process. But, Steve said, groups need to \$h*t or get off the pot (heh). Cele said 3-5 years is reasonable.

Define cash reserves? We do not currently have a specific definition. It fluctuates throughout the year. How do we determine the exact number? We've definitely been in the red, and only because of the pandemic did we get out. So, we'll likely end up there again.

Win had also talked about not just leaving cash reserves sitting in a checking account. Should we move it somewhere to make more money?

Cele noted changing "revenue" to "cash."

Stewardship: Tim updated:

Currently, we have pledges of roughly \$515,000. Our goal is \$550,000. The stewardship committee is meeting bi-weekly to work on ways to increase both our pledge income as well as develop other sources of income.

We are very open to ideas on what we can do to raise funds. Our situation is no different than many other churches both in the area and across the country. We are working on making it as easy as we can for people to contribute, recently adding a QR code in the order of service to scan to be able to donate on your phone.

We will continue to meet as needed to keep working towards our income goal.

Staff Report:

Rev. Christopher updated:

Seven new members in the last week or so. Maybe 5-10 in the next few weeks.

Meetings with former members, some creeping back in here and there.

Just need a formalized welcoming process. Not to mention the education program. Katie Bush is not staying after May. That was always an interim position, and meant to take a good look. Visiting families are echoing some of the concerns. We're not at rock bottom, but we aren't flourishing.

Friday night we'll hold a vigil - Ukraine One Year Later. Changed flavor a little, more community wide than it was originally going to be. Very outward facing.

Spending a lot of bandwidth on the building itself. Water heater, elevator, sewer issue.

This is every church. Local churches are all having these problems.

Old Business: None

New Business:

GB did meet on 2.11 to vote on Rev. Christopher's new contract, then the next day he was voted in. RC has one copy, the other copy is going to the secretary.

Bell Tower

Topic at March workshops will be about the Bell Tower. We're getting questions and lots of discussion.

We have documentation and Bill Brenner's letter. Amy revisited backstory on what we've done so far with Quinn Evans and Owen Aimes Kimble. Significantly more damage/structural issues than expected. Got it in check at that point. Sent \$45K quote for further investigation on how to fully restore. We thought we'd paid that, but the response is that the original didn't include the additional damage detected.

Even just the scaffolding to do the work is over \$300K. If we hear 6 months, it's likely to be longer. So the OffComm wanted the GB to discuss approving the \$45K for additional work to get the final info needed for a final quote by the end of April. IS this going to give us options beyond a full restoration?

Right now, after any significant weather event, we have to send someone up there to assess damage. We've already put over \$300K into this. The longer we wait the more dangerous this gets. Huge liability. We want to be transparent with the congregation about why we're spending all this just to start the work. We want to be able to tell ppl what we're getting for our spend.

Tim asked how much our hands are tied because of being a historic building? It's hard to say... So far we have not found solid help in this (answers or funding). Tony asked where we've looked for money. The thing is, we can't go out and ask without some sense of how much money we'll need. The Bell Tower is definitely looking into this. Other churches are also facing these issues with city historical groups.

Discussion on documentation from companies

Steve asked if we'd get a quote/budget for simply removing the tower. Kristen L. reminded us that we want to take this to the congregation.

Kirsten Lundeen mentioned that we got \$400K for the diagnostics. Rev. Christopher clarified that someone gave *up to* \$400 for the whole project. Also, we've only gotten half of that money. At the time of the donation, that number seemed more in line with reality.

Amy said we need to vote on this. George asked what if we don't vote on this? Most likely, kicking it down the road and taking a risk. RC mentioned that the whole building might have some of this issue. It feels like this expense is necessary. Tim said approve now or meet RIGHT away. But, they're likely to not change anything. Really, what are our other options? Amy said it'd be foolhardy to think we wouldn't encounter this again. We NEED this initial quote.

James moved to accept the \$45K quote. Tim seconded. Motion passed unanimously. The March congregant workshop - put it on your calendar because we will discuss this.

Congregant Comments: Tony Kroes commended us for bringing the tower issue to the congregation. Would also be interested in the historical statutes. Do we HAVE to return it to how it looks? We think, yes. Ppl didn't even like the color of mesh we put up. Ideally, we'd lay out our three options for the membership.

Tim mentioned that part of the document cost is presenting the info to local preservation. We can't get rid of the historical status. Geoff said Fed designation has no teeth.

Adjourn: Tim moved to adjourn. Jon seconded. Motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9pm.

I love Irish culture, I love celebrating it. I also love spring and observing the equinoxes and solstices. So I'm reading this.

The Pagan Origins of St. Patrick's Day

I. E. Kneverday

Why Do We Celebrate St. Patrick's Day on March 17th?

Because that's when the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Ireland observe it.

It was added to the Catholic Church's official liturgical calendar in the 1600s...

[But] as early as the ninth and tenth centuries, there *were* Catholics in Europe (mostly Irish) who celebrated the feast day of St. Patrick...

Which then begs the question...

Why did those very first Irish revelers celebrate St. Patrick's Day on March 17th?

Because according to popular history, that's when St. Patrick died. March 17th, 461 CE.

Only we don't know (and most likely will never know) with any certainty on which day Saint Patrick actually kicked the bucket.

Perhaps even more unfortunately... later biographers and hagiographers would give the saint a retroactive glow up—turning him into a sort of superpowered wizard who scared away snakes and defeated druids with a magical staff—making it hard to distinguish Saint Patrick fact from Saint Patrick fiction.

Which leads us to...

Was St. Patrick's Day Pegged to the Spring Equinox?

Given the unreliable accounting of his life's story, we don't know for sure that Saint Patrick died on March 17th.

But what we *do* know for sure is that the 17th of March is conspicuously close to the Northern Hemisphere's spring or vernal equinox, which in any given year will fall on the 19th, 20th, or 21st day of March.

And... our ancestors have been celebrating the equinoxes, both vernal and autumnal, for thousands of years.

For many cultures, the *spring* equinox in particular marks not only the changing of the season but also the beginning of a new year.

[Ireland has a 5,000+ year old burial mound in County Meath]...

On the spring and fall equinoxes, the morning sun illuminates [its] passage and chamber, bathing the chamber's backstone (which is adorned with solar symbols) in golden sunlight for nearly an hour.

The spring equinox? Clearly important to the pre-Celtic Irish.

Important enough perhaps that the Irish Celts continued to celebrate it and, in the wake of Christianization, the Church felt it necessary to peg the feast day of Saint Patrick to it.

To quote Newgrange.com:

The early Christian church in Ireland incorporated pre-Christian spirituality and festivals into the 'new religion', it is conceivable that the Spring Equinox festival became Christianised and rebranded as Saint Patrick's day.

The Spring Equinox is the beginning of the 'light' half of the year where the sun is strongest and the days are longer than the nights. Saint Patrick brought the 'light' of a different sun, the son of God to Ireland, the adaptable Irish Celts may have simply rebranded the Spring Equinox festival to Saint Patrick's Feast day.

