

Fountain Street Church Governing Board Meeting Minutes
April 19, 2021

Board Members Present: Will Gallmeyer, , Steve dePolo, Kathleen Higgins, Win Irwin, Shellie Jeffries, Geoff Kempter, Amber Kilpatrick, Kristen Loch, Kristin Mayer, Brad Miller, Katie Mitchell, Amy Preston, James Taylor, Chip Wall, George Zuiderveen

Staff Present: Rev. Christopher Roe, Melissa Hoezee, Rev. Matthew Cockrum

Guests: Bettigail Shively, Bridget White, Bunny Johnson, Buzz's iPad, Carol Kooistra, Carole, Coral McCarrel, Gary Eberle, Jon Spaulding, Judith's iPad, Kirsten McCarrel, Kristen Lundeen, Lydia Stubbs, Pamela Schwaderer, Rose Conlin, Sherri, Tim Creamer, Todd Johnson, Tony Kroes, Wes Beck

Chip called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm. A Town Hall is scheduled for April 22 at 7 pm, monitored by Kristin Mayer. GB and FSC staff will be attending an Anti-racism workshop, 2 parts, 2 hours each. Will Gallmeyer did the call to community.

Congregant comments: Todd Johnson: I urge the Governing Board and/or Clergy to form a task force whose mission would be to explore the allegations Rev Mariela Simons submitted in her letter of resignation. This task force would examine, appraise, and evaluate the culture FSC has created during the past 151 years, along with statements, actions, or inactions made by staff, clergy, board members, or congregants that led to Rev Mariela's resignation. The task force would also create a list of proposals that could be enacted by FSC to correct any inappropriate actions.

I have been a part of five conversations since Rev Mariela's resignation and each of those discussions has quickly endorsed an opinion that it was Rev Mariela's inexperience, lack of training, and/or oversensitivity to criticism about her running of a large church of strong outspoken individuals that led to her resignation. While this may be partially true, it would be unwise for FSC to assume her claims of a hostile sexist and racist culture where she could not accomplish her responsibilities as senior minister are completely fictitious. If we expect to both attract and welcome another senior minister who may or may not be female and/or of color, we need to show we have acknowledged and investigated these claims – making adjustments if necessary.

Properties Committee: Kirsten Lundeen updated. PC has operating income of \$354,000 this year. They have identified an estimated \$87,000 worth of projects but are not spending all the money available so some can be set aside for the bell tower repair. Projects include: refinishing exterior wood doors, roof repairs, updating & refurbishing garden areas at front, renovations to secretary offices on main floor, energy audit contact, and electrical upgrades of 3rd and 4th floors in preparation for their rental to Samaritas. The big concern is the bell tower. The PC has received an estimate from the company who has always done the FSC exterior repairs, \$350,000. Grand River Builders said there would be additional fees for scaffolding rental, increasing the price to \$600-800K. This is much more than budgeted, so the PC has sent out an RFP to three companies. One unofficial estimate is \$400K. A donor did commit to paying half

of the original quote of \$350K and that is still on the table. Once the bids have been received, they will be evaluated.

Foundation Board Co-chairs (TJ Norris and Carol Townsend) suggested the communications between the FB and the PC be strengthened. Kirsten and Matt Riegler will attend two FB meetings to discuss upcoming budget/projects and then an update at the end of the year. A FB liaison to PC would enhance communications as well; Lisa Garvey agreed to act as the FB liaison and will attend as many bi-monthly meetings as possible. This will ensure everyone is on the same page.

Kirsten reviewed all the PC reports from FSC Annual Reports from 1998-2020 to see what projects are recurring in three different categories, Sanctuary, church hall, and exterior and created a document recording all of the projects so they can be compared.

Covid Coordinating Team: Peter Lundeen updated. Things haven't changed much, overall number of cases continues to climb, and the positivity rate is 13-14%. Hospitalizations are at a critical level. The reasons for the increases are a combination of factors: variant strains of COVID are infectious, COVID fatigue. Not clear when it's going to stop. Likely to take another month before we can see if it's declining. On a positive note, GR has very good community buy in and a very efficient process for delivering vaccinations. Kirsten: NYTimes COVID update included in packet. Peter: CCT recommendation is that FSC does not expand activities until the rate of infection in the community diminishes and that current restrictions should not be reduced. Best guess is that herd immunity will be reached by late this summer, but there's not enough data to know yet.

- Will: Are masking demographics/numbers the same as they were 6 months ago? Peter: Don't have explicit data to confirm that, but mask compliance is related to political leadership. But there are more variables than mask wearing that contribute to infection rates. Kirsten: new cases of COVID are in 19-35 year old adults, also in sporting teams. Some colleges are having vaccine clinics.
- Geoff: NYTimes article correlated rate of vaccine acceptance with political leanings of a state.
- Kristin M: If children can't get vaccinated, how will that affect character school? Will kids have to wear masks? Peter: Expects age of vaccine eligibility will fall and by fall could be down to 8-10 years old. Mask wearing could be a thing. More concern is what will be recommended for congregants. CDC hasn't issued updated recommendations for this situation yet.

Minutes: Brad moved to approve. Win seconded. Motion passed.

Chip mentioned the congregant comments sent to the FSC secretary email, which were included in the GB packet.

Financial Committee: Win reported. Net income is \$58K+, though a loss was projected. Not enough pledges have been received to meet budget. Need to address current lack of administrative resources to run the church and open up. FSC will apply for PPP loan forgiveness. Cash reserves are at \$125K. The Foundation has received \$137K in donations.

- Will: budget referred to was for the fully closed version -- is this the least expensive? Yes.

Amy moved to approve, Geoff seconded. Motion passed.

Duncan Littlefair Great Speakers Series: George: GB liaison to the DLGS committee. Has started moving again. Hoping to bring in some well-known, competent, intriguing speakers to present in October/November. Also bringing Dr. Barry Johnson, a local consultant, to present on May 6, followed "To see is to Love: Addressing Poverty, Racism and Sexism without Blaming or Condoning." This will be followed by a Q&A. Can be viewed by anyone all over the world at any time. Brad: recommended that, in the future, GB meetings should be on Zoom, along with services and other events, so we can reach more people.

Executive Team report: Christopher Roe updated. Report was written collaboratively with Melissa. Christopher has been working with the Religious Services committee for the summer series, they have found 15 speakers from Memorial to Labor Day. Christopher invites GB members to record a welcome for the summer services. All staff will be fully vaccinated in two weeks. Reopening plans are proceeding, looking at several scenarios so FSC will be ready to re-open whatever the circumstances. Kristen Loch is a wonderful asset to the church in organizing the Safe Church plan. Christopher and Melissa are working on fleshing out the details and it's coming together.

The church really needs to address administrative gaps. Working on 7 areas of ministry, that include worship, learning, social justice, administration, governance, care, and community & belonging. Many thanks to Melissa for all her efforts during this time. She is a rock star!

- Will: Asked for clarification about a statement regarding congregant comments about music. Christopher: Determining what music at FSC will be is delicate, nuanced, requires resources, and takes some time to pull together -- but Christopher is working on it with those invested in music at the church
- Kristen Loch: Hopes that we don't limit access to the sanctuary to only those who are vaccinated.
- Geoff: Choir community very eager to participate as soon as safe to do so. Choir meets via Zoom regularly, even testing out different ways to sing via computer.
- Christopher: Investigating what an inclusive post-pandemic church service would look like, including Zoom coffee hours

Melissa: has prepared a Google Drive repository, one folder of which contains a GB guidebook. Binders have been prepared, will be distributed when it's possible. GB members have view-only access. Send Melissa any documents that need to be added. Melissa is asking all committees to do a Chart of Work.

- George: Can we print the documents? Yes.

New business:

1. **Senior Minister motion:** Win presented a motion: I move that the Governing Board retain Reverend Christopher Roe as Acting Senior Minister of Fountain Street Church until a new Senior Minister is voted in by the Fountain Street Church Membership.

Rationale:

- Christopher knows the church and its members and has served us faithfully and effectively over the past year during difficult times. He has the experience, interest, and skills to lead us during this interim period and he will work with the Governing Board and our membership to create a stable, thriving church for the next Senior Minister.
- We know we need to address staffing issues – especially administrative tasks that are currently not assigned. This action will allow flexibility within our current budget to assist with this situation. By acting right away, Christopher can start work immediately to address our needs (music, worship services, administration, education, committees, etc.) which is especially critical as we hope to ‘potentially’ re-open in the Fall.
- The Governing Board and the Officer Committee will need to work closely to support Christopher as he works through the many, many tasks ahead. It is anticipated that support will be needed in many areas. The Governing Board will also work with the Nominating Committee on the process for the election of a Senior Minister Search Committee.

Brad seconded.

Issues raised during the discussion of the motion were:

- Does this motion mean that Christopher would be the FSC Interim Minister? No, he will be the Acting Senior Minister until we have a new Senior Minister.
- Does it mean we are not looking outside the church for an interim minister? That is correct. A search for a new Senior will be conducted according to FSC bylaws.
- This motion means that we are essentially voting on two different things: having Christopher become Acting Senior Minister and deciding not to hire an interim minister. Is there a way to separate out these two things? There hasn't been a discussion about an interim yet. There should be a more intentional conversation about an interim minister.
- Search committee could have recommended an Interim but they didn't.
- Any differences in the responsibilities of Christopher's current 30 day (or so) appointment and the Acting Senior Minister job?
- Is a different salary being offered?
- Christopher is the best interim person we can find. No one will do a better job. The point of the motion is to provide some structure for the church so we can move forward.
- The ET has met with Christopher to discuss this motion.
- Traditionally (in the UUA), the interim minister is not eligible to become the permanent Senior Minister. However, that is not in the FSC bylaws, we are not bound by that tradition.

Will made a motion to move into a closed session, Kristin M. seconded. The motion passed and the meeting moved to a closed session.

Upon the return to open session, Win re-read the motion on the floor. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Brad mentioned 3 motions he wanted to bring up, but in the interest of time, will present them at another meeting. The Officers are encouraged to discuss the motions at their next meeting; Brad will be invited to attend the meeting.
 - George: sent edits to Brad's motions, Brad sent those and other suggestions to Amy, Amy will forward to Shellie.
3. GB Visioning Strategizing session scheduled on June 5, 2021 at Chip's house, likely outdoors.
4. Kristin Mayer: Thursday, April 22 at 7 pm is FSC Townhall.

Kristin M. moved to adjourn, Win seconded. Meeting adjourned at 9:26 pm.