

Board Minutes - October 19, 2020

Board members present: Amy Preston, Brad Miller, Chip Wall, Katie Mitchell, Paul Arnold, Shellie Jeffries, Steve Depolo, James Taylor, Jean Bahle, Kathleen Higgins, Kristin Mayer, Win Irwin, George Zuiderveen, Will Gallmeyer, Geoff Kempter

Staff present: Rev. Christopher Roe, Melissa Hoezee, Rev Mariela Simons-Pérez

Guests: Bunny Johnson, Buzz Wynbeek, Carol Kooistra, Kirsten Lundeen, Patrick Eaman, Peter Lundeen, Sharon Morley, Tim Creamer, Todd Johnson, Meredith Bradley, Gary Eberle, Jerome Nickels

Rev. Mariela provided the call to community by reading excerpts from our church history and quotes from our former Ministers.

Congregant comments: Kirsten loved the Sunday service. Sharon dittoed.

Covid Coordination Team (CCT) Report: Peter noted the substantial increase in the Covid trends and does not recommend that we change our current status of having the building closed. Kirsten added some information on a State of Michigan Start Map which indicates that Kent County and specifically, the Grand Rapids area, is still at high risk. Chip asked about opening up for only smaller groups. Peter suggested that groups of up to 10 might be admissible if they were in well ventilated rooms. We need to do a better assessment of our air exchange capabilities. Kristin asked about walking back any of our current rules and Peter does not think that is necessary at this time. Rev Mariela said that the staff is constantly assessing the risks along with current and future protocols.

Meeting minutes: George noted that Gretchen did not attend the meeting. Jean commented that not all guests had their last name included and Paul responded that the full names do not always show up on the Zoom listing. Brad moved to accept the minutes and Win seconded.

Motion carried.

Financial Report: Win referred to the extensive written financial report. In short; income is short but expenses are also less. Pledges are slow in coming. The status of the PPP loan is still pending. We think we can now apply for loan forgiveness. Our savings were moved to Midwest Capital so we could earn better interest. Chip asked about the impact of the recently distributed pledge statements. Melissa confirmed that the statements had the desired effect. George asked if there was anything that was the most concerning in the financials. Win noted that Summer income is always slower and is confident we will catch up.

Geoff is worried that many Fountain Streeters are having a hard time staying connected and hoping that there may be more bridges we can use to keep people connected. Chip asked how the Choir is dealing with the building closure. Gary said that the Choir is meeting by Zoom twice a month and exploring a virtual Choir option. The Choir is very interested in hiring a full time Music Director for 2021. Kathy is concerned that we are lacking the frequent communications that we were getting when Virginia was employed. She asked if our new Minister, Greta will be able to fill that void.

Win moved us back to the financial report by noting that one line item, the Senior Minister's recruiting expenses was over budget because we did not put in moving expenses that were needed. Win moved that we accept the financial report. Geoff seconded. Motion carried.

Win reported that we did not get a financial audit but did get a financial review. Hungerford made five recommendations which the Financial Committee reviewed and agreed on a course of action. Hungerford will be rehired to help us investigate remedies for their recommendations. Chip asked why the church is not being able to provide supporting document for some liabilities. Win responded that there was a small issue with specific funds where the balance sheet was not matching correctly and that issue will be investigated. George asked if this financial review was par for the course and Win assure us that this was a fair review with only minor issues. Win moved to accept the financial review. George seconded. Motion carried.

Win stated that the operating budget for 2021 is being reviewed by the committee and the staff and will be available for the Board to review at our next meeting in time to present to the congregation at the annual meeting.

Staff report: Christopher stated that we will be having virtual worship until at least Dec 31st. The staff is open to reevaluating this. Technology issues are still plaguing the virtual offering and a lot of effort is being put to improving this experience. The staff is sensitive to the issue of lack of communications. Our new staff member Greta will help put together a communication plan to improve the situation. Rev. Mariela stated that the number one focus of the staff is the worship services. She said 500 people viewed the YouTube service. She is concerned that we do not have the cameras and lights that are needed. Part of Greta's job will be to help get people to feel connected. Mariela stated that we are also transitioning our web site as well as our database.

Geoff asked about the plans for our youth programs. Christopher said that Fountain Club was to be a pilot program for in-person activities but that is now going completely virtual. He said that another plan was to have an on-line "Engagement FSC" library of resources for families that was going to launch in September but that is now delayed. Mariela noted that it is difficult to communicate plans when the Covid situation keeps changing.

Paul asked about the plans for this year's annual report. Christopher volunteered to take the lead on this. Paul suggested that we need to reach out to the various groups and committees to get their reports. He recommended a communications committee be formed to help coordinate this effort. Mariela said this was part of Greta's job. She will also be helping coordinate volunteers. Christopher also noted that the annual report may be more like a magazine with editorial content. Chip asked Kristin if the Communications Committee that she is a part of could take part in helping craft the annual report. She was hoping to get more clarity of what the role her committee is since it was originally created to facilitate Board communications and not Church communications. Jean commented that she sent in a two paragraph statement for the annual report last year and suggested that other committees do the same. James asked what the Board can do to help with the current technology challenges. He suggested that volunteers are available to help. Mariela said that the staff will regroup after this Sundays service to see how to make the broadcast services work better. She said it is difficult to have a good quality broadcast without extra lighting which would block the view of anyone sitting in the sanctuary. Chip said that he and Amy have asked the staff of their technology upgrade needs.

George is concerned about the tight time-frame to get the annual report ready. James thinks that pdf copies are all that are needed. Shellie wanted to know about the asterisks on the "snap shot" benchmark metrics on the staff report. Christopher replied that it refers to the number of view on the YouTube broadcast and not actual attendance. He will update the report to explain this. Will asked if the number referred to all videos and Christopher said it was only for the Sunday service. The Wednesday service will have its own metric. There is also a plan for a Planned Parenthood Zoom program that is in the works. It will be a Saturday and Sunday event that will be free for FSC middle and high schoolers. Shellie asked about Greta's start date. We are told that she started last Tuesday and she now lives in Grand Rapids.

New Business: George asked about the survey that was talked about at the last Board meeting. Kristin said that the survey of how congregants feel about coming into the church was drafted but ran into some technical issues and Covid conditions have changed. George suggested that the survey would be a good way to communicate to the congregation even if the Covid number are still too high. Chip suggested that the Communications group freshen the survey up. Paul suggested that the survey should go out within a week to reassure congregants that their input is important. George is sure we could word the survey to not imply that we would open up if it is not safe to do so.

Kristin would like to make the Communications group more of a standing committee with better defined roles and responsibilities. Amy said that a Standing Committee would be a by-laws change. Kathleen noted that Greta would be good to be on this committee. Jean said that this committee and Greta would have to work together to work out specific responsibilities. Win noted the the original charge of the Committee was only to deal with Board communications, not church communications. Geoff thinks we should continue to discuss this and put it on a future

agenda. Paul related that the by-laws do not require a change to have the Board form a committee to help do the work of the church. Christopher urged the Board to take time to take care of ourselves and others as we go into the next few challenging weeks with the pandemic and the coming election. He thanked the Board for its work. Win moved to adjourn. Geoff seconded. Motion carried.