

Council Meeting – August 3 ,2020

Meeting was called to order at 7:02 pm

Attendees:

Mary Crawford

Walter McCullough

Dave Lummis

Thomas Burke

Calvin Mew

Mary Peniston

Bayard Dodge

John Moran

Andrew Cummings

Teri Gaberman

Britta Lerner

Taffy Miller

Tara Quist

Shivanthi Edwards

Bayard read the covenant; Thomas opened up with a prayer.

A motion was made to approve the last Council minutes, it was approved and seconded.

Minister's Report

Bernard is on vacation; Thomas feels rejuvenated having also come back from vacation. Matt Schreder is working on his Eagle project and is about 2/3 of the way done. Goal is to raise \$2,000.

Treasurer's Report

- **Pledge receipts** are tracking reasonably well considering the environment we are in. While we are a bit behind last year's pace, we haven't seen as much of a summer fall-off as in prior years. This provides some optimism that pledge income is on track to meet our budget expectations.
- I'm pleased that the staff and our committees have continued to show **expense discipline**, with all committees below budget other than HR. Year to date expenses are down \$27K from the prior year. If we can sustain this momentum, it will go a long way toward reducing the \$57K deficit we had budgeted for the year.

- Our **cash situation** remains good, supported by the \$75K PPP loan we received (and expect to be forgiven). We do expect our cash balance to decline somewhat in the coming months giving the timing of our revenues and spending; if it does so, we will transfer some funds from our UCF accounts to maintain a sufficient operating cushion.
- Our **UCF investments** rebounded in the second quarter, in line with the rest of the market. We still haven't fully recovered from the first quarter decline, with our total investments down 2.3% YTD at \$1.57MM as of June 30th.
- Looking ahead, I'm somewhat cautious about the outlook for 2021. It may be challenging to sustain pledges at current levels in a tough economic environment, and it is unclear whether remote church services will have an impact on pledge levels. While we will look toward an energetic and hopefully successful Stewardship season, we may need to consider further expense discipline next year if we cannot meet our pledge targets.

Norfield Reimagined

Recap of Deacon's meeting:

- Deacons are in support of having an in-person Homecoming service at the Norfield campus.
- Due to the fluid nature of the virus, it is possible this would be the only opportunity to have an in-person service before the weather changes and the new year begins.
- We will support the staff at Norfield to ensure we are fully compliant in accordance with the CDC, State of CT and UCC guidelines.
- We suggest that Homecoming service is a combination of on site and streaming service to meet the comfort levels for all those who would like to participate.
- Deacons will work with Fellowship and staff on the planning details for service and safety measures for those in attendance.
- We suggest reaching out to other institutions such as St. Francis or Saugatuck UCC to learn about their safety practices for service.

Mary Crawford set the stage with some background on the Norfield Reimagined initiative.

Staff

The staff is concerned about safety and wellbeing of the entire Norfield community and although it is doable to hold a service outdoor for Homecoming Sunday, they are extremely averse to take those steps. There was a discussion about local church practices of in-person services.

Music

Due to the safety concerns around the dispersal of aerosol droplets, there will be no music during any services – they recommend keeping it online.

Outreach

The board is taking a conservative view and would prefer to keep services online.

CE

July 12th Meeting:

*Discussed feedback from CE parents on current programming; problems with remote learning fatigue.

*Brainstormed ideas for more engaging outreach to students during distance learning (home delivery of writing journals with inspirational/educational Bible quotes; incentives for participation; “We care for people every time we interact with them.” We agreed every outreach is important especially for our children during this time of social distancing which leaves some feeling isolated from their spiritual community).

*Continued discussion about what CE would look like if we reopened.

*Between July and August Board will devise a firm plan for CE student/parent outreach, programming and curriculum as we prepare for the new CE school year.

*Next meeting Sunday August 16th.

Trustees

Services at church need to be led by clergy, Rev Bernard does not feel comfortable leading services given the pandemic.

It is important to address the situation especially to those congregants yearning for an in-person service. Many have sought other churches and we may be at risk of losing these folk if we don't stay connected.

Members-at-large

Mary Peniston agrees that we have to be patient and wait for the right time to meet – now is not the time. We should however reiterate this to our congregation.

Teri Gaberman agreed with Mary, online services seem to be going well and given the current spread of the virus in other states, we should be patient.

Thomas mentioned his gratitude for everyone's careful consideration of the situation and echoed the sentiment that safety should be our utmost concern. Both him and Bernard have been dealing with more pastoral issues, this is a testament of trust in the Norfield community.

Tara suggested we check with the congregation what Norfield can do incremental to current services/programming, this may fill the gap. Instead of a survey, targeted phone calls may be the best method to achieve this.

Mary made a motion to continue online services, this decision will be revisited at the next Council meeting. It was noted that communication should be sent to the congregation, especially to acknowledge those who are missing the face-to-face interaction.

Racial justice ministry team

Taffy Miller has solicited Ruby Wilson to facilitate anti-racist training along with engaging two UCC members to help.

Brief discussion about the ringing of the Norfield bell.

The meeting ended with the Lord's Prayer at 8:32pm.

Respectfully submitted by Shivanthi Edwards