

First Congregational Church United Church of Christ (FCCUCC) of Colorado Springs
Minutes of the Council Meeting
December 12, 2019 Gregg Library

Council Members in Attendance:

Connie Brachtenbach (Moderator)
Paul McNeill (Vice Moderator)
Adam Gibbs (Worship & Spiritual Life)
Lisa Mason (Secretary)
Wayne Bland (Outreach)
Polly Strovink (Treasurer)
Lynne Stefoni (Care & Fellowship)
Laura Pfender (Education)

Council Members Absent: None

Ex Officio in Attendance:

Rev. Jacque Franklin

(Minister of Pastoral Care)

Ruth Roland (Director of Financial Ministries)

Ex Officio Absent:

Rev. Heather Haginduff (Lead Minister)

Guests:

Eric Ridings- Leadership Cultivation Committee (LCC) / Chair for Human Resource (HR) Committee
Deb Beunting (LCC)
Steve Kern
Nancy Henjum
Del Hokanson, David Acton, Emily Bond- staff,
Rich Law- Just Peace Team

Meeting called to order - 6:21 pm

Dinner provided by Lynne. Prayer thanks to Lynne.

HUMAN RESOURCE COMMITTEE

- Eric Ridings referenced the HR Committee's work on the Employee Handbook.
 - This had been handed out to Council.
 - Eric mentioned some changes but summarized that benefits regarding health care have been reviewed and agreed upon.
 - There were a few corrections and changes which Ruth has and will provide, regarding when employees can take holidays (pg 7) and then how employees can take Sundays off if they are normally required to work Sundays (see page 9).
 - Jacque asked if sabbatical was covered in this document but it was explained that sabbatical is covered under the call agreement rather than under the employee handbook.
 - Eric said that Ruth passed along staff feedback that they were generally pleased with these updates.

MOTION: Wayne moved to approve the updated Employee Handbook with the given changes. Lynne seconded. The motion was approved via voice vote.

- Many thanks were given from Council to Eric as HR chair and it was asked that he pass those thanks along to the rest of the Committee. (Due to scheduling challenges, Rich Law went next, followed by Eric again.)

JUST PEACE

- Rich Law gave a full report of the data collected from the congregation during the Nov 17 Business/Informational meeting.
- There were 172 congregants in attendance.
- Main focus: give the congregation clarity on the Church's current financial position and gather feedback from the congregation.
- Rich's function was to gather the responses from the congregation in order to collate those and then see what steps would be useful in moving the congregation forward.
- Rich noted that though the data document requested people put their names down, slightly more than 30 out of 268 did not put names down.
- Rich handed out a summary and he had previously sent out all 268 comments.
- He handed out to Council the "Public" comments which were the summary comments of step 4 from the 1,2,4 process that was used to create these comments.
- Issues of trust came up a lot (Rich chose to place those comments under the Leadership category- he explained it was just what he chose and that choice was flexible).
- Rich thinks the Church should see the public feedback but not the feedback that congregants put their names on. Rich thinks safety is imperative for all, staff included.

Next steps:

- multiple thoughts and comments from those present: The 2020 budget is a pressing need so feedback regularly and often will be important.
- People want clarity, transparency, and they don't want to wait.
- There was also a request to put informational charts in color.
- The location of where to hold these sessions is difficult, the Sanctuary holds many but doesn't easily allow for group process work; the Founders' Room is, at times too small and the acoustics are very difficult.
- The Church wants more Q & A opportunities - they really want to wrestle with these topics.
- The topic of leadership, as arose from Nov 17, is a more difficult topic to figure out but Rich recommends we use the "Conversation Café" format to create a format that focuses on a safe environment for communication.
- The "Living Room Conversations" format (more training on this will be available in May at La Foret) starts with wide open topics, you share what's on your heart but the other side just listens. No response is given- you just listen.

- People say they felt heard and respected.
- Size is important-only 8-10 people at a time. (This will make scheduling challenging.)
- Based on the above, two-tracks were recommended: one track would be budget/finance informational sessions and the second track would be “what’s vitally important/what’s on your mind” track.
- It was suggested, of the list of responses, let’s tackle the easy ones/the low hanging fruit first.
- Regarding the tougher ones, we should tell the congregation which ones are tough and that we are wrestling with it.
- There’s lots of pain being expressed but by all appearances no-one wants to trash anyone in order to just trash them but there is a legitimate desire to blame someone or something so that it can then be fixed.
- What does it look like in a meeting if you ‘set the table for all who hunger and thirst’.
- Tonight’s conversation of “what was done vs how was it done”.
 - Rich believes the answers to the problems in this church are solved in community.
 - Educated guesses as to the health of the church- i.e. If the doctor says you have cancer, I would want to know what kind of “dis-ease” are we in.
 - We may need to do an independent audit of “who we are and how we are doing”.
 - Deb B didn’t understand the format of the meeting being: we presented the budget but then we talked about trust and our feelings, etc.
 - Nancy H felt the format was clear.
 - It was asked if we can send out a quick summary of these comments by Rich.
 - Nancy suggests congregants need to know worship attendance data.
 - Steven K- two mistakes increased the appearance of obfuscation: website said Council meetings are closed (mistake number 1), and minutes haven’t been posted since June. Many thanks were given to Rich for his work.

HR COMMITTEE

- Eric continued with more information regarding the updates to the Employee Handbook.
- He highlighted the sections on employee violence, security of communications, employee discipline procedures (where there was basically no previous procedure).
- Regarding a “Drug-Free” workplace - criteria were delineated in order to establish what would be the appropriate behaviors for the workplace.
- Those criteria were that alert and rational behavior was needed which then implies that obvious impairment is not allowed.
- An employee grievance policy, with remedies, has been added.

- How to deal with unfair labor practices or harassment has been addressed.
- The Performance Reviews practice has been changed.
- A change in how the Lead Minister is evaluated (not by the whole Council as was done in the past) has been added.

MOTION: Paul moved to accept the changes recommended by HR Committee. Adam seconded the motion. The motion was approved by voice vote. Council stated, again, how much they appreciate HR's work.

The approval for the November minutes was deferred for one week due to lateness in getting the minutes out for review. The minutes will be approved via e-mail vote.

MOTION AS OF DECEMBER 18: Polly moved, via e-mail to accept the minutes. Wayne seconded. The motion was approved by e-mail vote

OUTREACH (WAYNE BLAND)

- Wayne reported that MG&O announced a special request to assist ESM and FCCUCC was able to basically double everything that ESM asked for.
- A \$4,000 contribution was gathered from the Church and MG&O sent another \$1,500.

EDUCATION (LAURA PFENDER)

- Laura announced we will hold a sendoff celebration on Jan. 12 for Del Hokanson due to her recent resignation.

FINANCIAL (POLLY STROVINK)

- Polly sent out financials (she thanked Ruth for generating those).
- Polly also sent out, via e-mail, the correct language to request the housing allowance for clergy.
- The housing allowance is a tax-free part of called clergy's salary.

MOTION: Polly moved that Pastor Jacque's housing allowance for 2020, \$43,000, be approved. Laura seconded the motion. The motion was approved by voice vote.

MOTION: Polly moved that Pastor Heather's housing allowance for 2020, \$40,000, be approved. Paul seconded the motion. The motion was approved by voice vote.

DIRECTOR OF FINANCIAL MINISTRIES (RUTH ROLAND)

- Ruth reported that Income for the first 11 months of 2019 was just above \$864,000.
- \$878,000 is what was in the budget so Income is under budget by about \$14,000.
- The expense of salaries are currently under budget by about \$25,000.
- Total expenses are at \$788,000.

- Budget had expenses expected to be at \$867,000 so right now we have about \$76,000 more in income than expenses YTD so we are currently in the black.
- Ruth also reported that the Stewardship Council is focused on and supportive regarding the Annual Appeal.
- We will establish a February calling night for Council.
- The Theme for the appeal will be- "*what shall I bring*" with David Acton putting forward the musical piece, "In the Bleak Midwinter".

MODERATOR (CONNIE BRACHTENBACH)

- Connie reported that, based on the schedule already being full with Advent coming up, there is a distinct possibility of a December informational meeting may not be held.

EXECUTIVE SESSION called by the Moderator.
Council voted unanimously to go into Executive Session.

Adjourned 9:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Lisa A Mason, Council Secretary

Lisa A Mason, *Council Secretary*

Connie Brachtenbach, *Council Moderator*