

**Church Council Minutes 11/16/21. 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm via Zoom**

Present: Margaret Baldwin, Eric Elnes, Edward Eggleston, Christina Hellums, Kathy Sheibley, Cara Rothe, Daniel Russo, Jack Allman, Phil Owen, Ann Muir, Nan Wagner

Opening words—Margaret shared words by Vince Amlin “You don’t trust people because they’re trustworthy, sometimes if you take a chance on trusting them, they become trustworthy in the process.” She encouraged us to take a chance on each other’s worthiness.

1. Eric Elnes, Sr. Pastor shared his pleasure at being together for 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday and started a discussion about how we will celebrate Christmas this year considering the continued pandemic. Lively discussion about possible caroling plans, to shut-ins, houseless encampments or just in our portico vs in the sanctuary vs down in fellowship hall and whether to serve food, hot chocolate, sandwiches or distribute small gifts. We shared with Eric some of the church’s traditions that have been sidelined by pandemic: Posada, Tamale making party, the meditative Advent Spiral in the Kiva, caroling around the piano prior to the Christmas eve service.
  - A. Paris Hancock has already agreed to organize the Spiral again this year, whether in Kiva or in fellowship hall to increase access for less mobile congregants.
  - B. Kathy Sheibley volunteered to organize caroling for the church this year.
  - C. December 1<sup>st</sup> is Eric’s 1 year anniversary!
2. Ed Eggleston, treasurer, gave a budget report. Building rentals are still way down but pledges and unpledged donations are good. Payroll is on track. He raised the issue of the building insurance which was delayed for later on the agenda. He states our cash balance in the bank is higher than usual, but it probably doesn’t matter since interest rates are so low.
  - A. Cara Rothe, director of operations, has filed her report in the drive and can be seen [HERE](#). Discussion item: Cara is seeking permission from council to switch restroom signage to gender neutral, with available facilities listed on the signs (2 stalls, 1 stall/1 urinal) starting with the downstairs bathrooms near the Sunday School rooms/Offices. The council unanimously agreed to proceed with that and even encouraged her to make all restrooms neutral, but she plans to start downstairs and get feedback before proceeding with the rest of the building.
  - B. Our building insurance, through the UCC, is going up dramatically. She shared several options ([see her report](#)) It renews in January but the [budget](#) is being put together now. Ann Muir shared positive experiences with the UCC insurance when her church went through a fire and urged us not to “skimp.” Cara said her experiences after the flood were also positive with this insurance company. FCUCC is a historical landmark, which may dictate what we can do if/when we have to rebuild after a fire. The FOC has asked Council to make the decision on which level of insurance to adopt. Ed suggests we put the higher number (about \$52-60K) in the budget and put it up for discussion at the annual meeting. He states the 2022 budget is already 30K over already. Ann Muir states that the budget committee meets the following morning, and they will address this. Cara will clarify questions with the insurance company about historic register restrictions.

**MOTION:** Phil Owen moved “The Council recommends to the Budget Committee to insure the building to its full value with a \$5000 deductible”. Daniel Russo seconded, and the motion was passed unanimously.
  - C. Margaret reminded us of the bad trip-hazard on the stairs leading from chancel to “backstage” and that several folks have fallen. Cara will discuss with building manager.
3. Announcements
  - A. A statement from Frank Baldwin was read and accepted regarding exempt clergy. The council authorized Pastor Elnes to sign these covenants.

*From Frank Baldwin, member of First Congregational UCC Portland, on behalf of the Central Pacific Conference Committee on Ministry: All ordained ministers in the United Church of Christ, whether active or retired, are understood to be in relationship with a local UCC congregation where they hold membership, and this relationship is known as a covenant. When a retired*

*minister discerns that they may no longer feel called or able to continue in the practice of ministry, they may ask to be exempt from most of the requirements for maintaining ministerial standing. While exempt, they remain ordained UCC ministers, but refrain from pursuing ministerial positions and leadership. Four retired ministers - Norman Bengel, Bill Greene, Robert Haworth, and Frances Menlove - who are members of our congregation have asked to enter into Covenants of Exempt Ministerial Standing with us and the Central Pacific Conference of the United Church of Christ. There are no new obligations for the church, but we are asked to recognize and celebrate these covenants during our "Covenant Sunday" worship service on December 12th. Will the Church Council please concur in authorizing Pastor Eric Elnes to sign these covenants on our behalf. Frank. The Rev. Frank W. Baldwin*

B. Childcare remains difficult. Keelin Sullivan, 17 years old, wants to provide our childcare but she is a minor and the law states she must always have an adult present. Ann Sullivan is willing to be with her but prefers not to do it every Sunday. A second adult is necessary for childcare regardless of the provider's age. Ann Muir reminded us that having no childcare available when it is needed is much worse than to have no children show up when a provider is staffed. That family will never return. Christina suggests that it's important to announce that there is childcare available on Second Sundays. We will continue with Keelin providing that childcare, an adult will be on-call in the sanctuary. Margaret will create a list of rotating on-call volunteers.

4. Discussion

A. Survey results are linked [HERE](#). Additional comments linked [HERE](#). Question: How to present these results to the congregation and allow for discussion? Perhaps a breakout room after church during hospitality on two Zoom Sundays. Nan and Eric suggest a brief written summary with attached link to full survey results if someone wants to do a deeper dive into the data. Margaret, Phil and Christina volunteered to meet to clarify objective of the forums and create a summary statement. Christina said, "Extrapolating the data is the FUN part."

B. The only position open on the council is Vice Moderator. The nominating committee has been notified to create a slate of candidates.

5. Budget decision points

A. Children and Youth Ministries. There are two unfilled staff positions from last year, budgeted at \$4840/year each for Youth Ministry and Family Ministry. Council decided to combine these positions into one, recruit additional funds from elsewhere in the budget to bring it up to \$14,880/year to encourage creativity and look to the future. Eric stated that in 2022 we will commit serious time to rebuilding the Youth and Family Ministry. The Council is committed to this.

B. Art Reach has a budget of \$20,000/year. Sheldon Hurst spends a lot of time and energy on this ministry. Cara wants to increase transparency of how money is used, consider if it aligns with our mission. She will create a spreadsheet to help all understand the cash flow of this program. She expressed concern about a single individual having such complete involvement and oversight of one program. Sheldon's health and well-being is a concern. More people should be given the opportunity to participate in the Art Reach Committee. This committee might already exist, but it is unknown if they actually meet. Sustainability of the Art Reach program is a concern.

C. Salary item was deferred tonight

Eric gave closing words.

Submitted by Nan Wagner