**First Congregational United Church of Christ**

**Church Council Meeting Minutes**

**October 18, 2016**

**Members present:** Al Horn, Moderator; Peace Young, Assistant Moderator; Bill Sweeney, Secretary-Treasurer; Ross Runkel, Past Moderator; Margaret Baldwin, Christian Logerstedt, Members-at-Large; Michael Ellick, Senior Minister; Elizabeth Durant, Assistant Minister. **Others present:** Cara Rothe, Business Manager; Frank Baldwin, Ted Heid, Sandy Hill.

Moderator Al Horn opened the meeting at 5:00 p.m. Peace offered a prayer.

**E-vote:** Minutes of the September 20, 2016 meeting were approved by e-vote on September 27, 2016.

**UCC General Synod Resolution:** **Motion:** Margaret moved, Peace seconded, and Council unanimously passed a motion that First Congregational UCC endorse the attached resolution "A Call for the United Church of Christ to Advocate for the Rights of Children Living Under Israeli Military Occupation." This resolution will be come before the next UCC General Synod in June 2017. Al will prepare and send appropriate information to the congregation.

**Treasurer's Report:** Our net liquidity was approximately $1,344,000 at the end of August, and $1,346,000 at the end of September. We expect to be ahead of our budget at the end of the year: budgeted minus $3,729, expected surplus of about $18,000. Revenues will fall short for building rentals and weddings; there was an unbudgeted bequest of about $45,000 and an unbudgeted gift of $15,000. Expenses were reduced due to a vacancy in the Assistant Minister position, and Rev. Michael spends less than is budgeted.

**2017 Preliminary Budget:** Bill explained some highlights of the Budget Committee's preliminary 2017 budget proposal. It has net income of minus $52,717 (the 2016 budget was minus $3,729, and the amount forecasted for 2016 is a surplus of $18,286). The proposal includes cost of living increases of 1.7 percent, a $15 minimum wage, an added youth teacher ($10,000) for the joint youth program with First Christian Church, a financial audit, a $6,000 increase for the Facilities Manager position, and an additional $10,000 for major building repairs.

Bill suggests following our accountant's recommendation to delay the audit until 2018 (cutting $10,000). He also suggests creating a building fund of $45,000 per year for major repairs; this should be taken from our reserves for a period of five years, with any unspent amount being kept in the fund. Although last year's mandate was to break even, we have more than $1 million in our investment portfolio – more than is needed, and maybe not a moral amount. We should not spend just to reduce our reserves, yet we can afford to spend in order to grow the church.

Other observations from members and guests: We cannot cut our way to prosperity; we need to support programs that promote growth. The Budget Committee has scrubbed the budget and taken items out, so more cuts would hurt the church. Just balancing the budget means cutting more items or growing revenue. We regularly take 4 percent from reserves each year, which is less than the amount by which the reserve fund grows.

**Motion:** Ross moved, Peace seconded, and Council unanimously adopted the following motion:

The Church Council supports using the Reserve Fund to supplement annual income to help maintain our building and fund programs that will grow the church's ministry, by:

1. Creating a separate Building Fund within United Church Funds.
   1. Set up the Building Fund by transferring $45,000 from the Reserve Fund this year. Transfer $45,000 per year thereafter from the Reserve Fund into this fund, with review in 3 years.
   2. Use this Building Fund money to pay for items in the "Building-Major" budget category.
   3. If money is left in the Building Fund at the end of a year, the money will remain in the fund until needed.
2. Continue our practice of transferring 4% of the 12-quarter-average value of the Reserve Fund from the Reserve Fund to the operating budget.
3. The ministers will identify programs that will grow the church's ministry. With the approval of Council, additional funds will be transferred from the Reserve Fund to the operating budget annually to support these programs.
4. Within the next year, the Council will identify a Prudent Minimum floor for the Reserve Fund. We will keep the Reserve Fund balance at or above that amount.

**Church Archives:** We have approximately 17.5 linear feet of archival material. A memo from Cara listed the following reasons to move our archives to a professional archival repository: The archives are currently stored in a room where there are constant climate changes. These conditions are damaging to old papers and photographs. The archive room is too small for the amount of archives it contains; therefore, items are stacked and stuffed in ways that are not conducive to preservation. The cramped nature of the space makes organizing documents impossible, and therefore, not very useful. Not accessible to the public. The room is rarely accessed by members or staff. The church could use another office space for volunteers or other staff, as all other annex offices have now been rented. (This last item is not so much a reason to act as it is a side benefit from moving the archives.)

Jan Gibson and Monica Wheeler have contacted Al with concerns about removing the archives from the church building. They feel the archives should stay in the church building.

Observations from members and guests: Jan and Ray Gibson spent years collecting, organizing, and preserving our archives. Four historians reviewed the archives and said that they were well organized until about five years ago, and that they are well taken care of in acid-free containers. They are stored in a room that is too small to work in, and that heats up when the lights are on. If moved to Oregon Historical Society or Portland State University, many of the archives the archives would be digitized and originals would still be accessible. It's important that we be able to borrow items for display in our building. OHS already has some of our archives; they are stored in Gresham, and can be made available next door. There is some concern about OHS's financial condition. At PSU the archives could be used for teaching, the books will be in their building, and could be used by a demographic that might come to church.

**Motion:** Peace moved, Bill seconded, and Council unanimously passed a motion that the archives should be moved to a third-party location. A decision on which location to select was tabled until the next meeting.

The meeting closed at 7:14 p.m. with a prayer by Rev. Michael.

Submitted by Ross Runkel

***A Call for the United Church of Christ to Advocate for the***

***Rights of Children Living Under Israeli Military Occupation***

*WHEREAS* the General Synod of the United Church of Christ has repeatedly called for a just settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, for an end to prolonged Israeli military occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza, for the upholding of principles of non-violence, and for the protection of human rights; and

*WHEREAS* the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which the State of Israel has ratified, calls on states to “Treat every child deprived of liberty with humanity and respect for the inherent dignity of the human person, and in a manner which takes into account the needs of persons of his or her age,” to use arrest and imprisonment of children “only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time,” to give detained children “prompt access to legal and other appropriate assistance, as well as the right to challenge the legality of the deprivation of his or her liberty” and “the right to maintain contact with his or her family through correspondence and visits,” and in no case to subject children to “torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment,”; and

*WHEREAS* UNICEF in 2013 determined that the “Ill-treatment of Palestinian children in the Israeli military detention system appears to be widespread, systematic and institutionalized” and that this ill-treatment of children includes the use of blindfolds, hand-ties, strip searches, physical violence, verbal abuse and intimidation, denial of access to lawyers and parents prior to and during interrogation, and failure to inform children of their legal rights, such as their right to remain silent; and

*WHEREAS* subsequent update reports to UNICEF’s 2013 report have found that the situation has changed little for Palestinian children arrested by Israeli forces in the occupied West Bank; and

*WHEREAS* the United States Department of State in its annual country reports on human rights practices has, since 2007 in each annual country report on Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, included data and information on ill-treatment and torture of Palestinian children in Israeli military detention, denial of fair trial rights in Israeli military courts, and other grave violations against children committed by Israeli forces and settlers; and

*WHEREAS* Defense for Children International – Palestine and other international, Palestinian, and Israeli human rights organizations regularly publish reports confirming Israel’s widespread and systematic ill-treatment of Palestinian children arrested in the occupied West Bank, ill-treatment which includes heavily armed Israeli soldiers invading children’s homes and arresting them in the middle of the night; failure to notify parents of the reason for arrest or the location of detention; denial of access to lawyers during interrogation; failure to inform children of their rights; the use of position abuse, threats, and isolation by interrogators to coerce confessions; the use of solitary confinement for interrogation purposes; acceptance of confessions obtained by coercion or torture as legal courtroom evidence, even those confessions written in Hebrew and not understood by children coerced into signing them; and the routine transfer of Palestinian children out of the occupied Palestinian territories to prisons inside Israel in violation of international law; and

*WHEREAS* Israeli forces have held an average of 201 Palestinian children in custody each month since 2011, and this number spiked dramatically in late 2015 so that by the end of February 2016 the total had increased to 440, the highest number at any given point since the Israel Prison Service began releasing data in 2008; and

*WHEREA*S the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act specifies that no military assistance be given to any country that “engages in a consistent pattern of gross violation of internationally recognized human rights” and on at least eleven previous occasions the U.S. has withheld assistance from countries based on their human rights violations;

*THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED* that the Thirty-First General Synod of the United Church of Christ:

*CALLS ON* the State of Israel to guarantee basic due process rights and exercise an absolute prohibition against torture and ill-treatment of detained children, ensuring that, from the moment of arrest, all operations and procedures are carried out in accordance with international juvenile justice standards, specifically the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and *REQUESTS* the General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ to communicate this call to the Prime Minister of Israel and the Israeli Ambassador to the United States, noting that among the practices in Israel’s military detention system that require change are the use of nighttime arrests in the child’s home, physical and verbal abuse, blindfolds and restraints, strip searches, solitary confinement, coerced confessions and confessions written in Hebrew, as well as the separation of detained children from their parents and legal counselors (including the transfer of Palestinian children to prisons within the State of Israel that their parents are not permitted to visit);

*CALLS ON* the government of the United States to adhere to its own established law – in this case, the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act – by withholding military assistance from the State of Israel due to its practices of arrest and detention of Palestinian children, requiring Israel to guarantee basic due process rights and exercise an absolute prohibition against torture and ill-treatment of detained children, ensuring that, from the moment of arrest, all operations and procedures are carried out in accordance with international juvenile justice standards, specifically the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and *REQUESTS* the General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ to communicate this call to the United States Senate, as well as the President, the Vice President, and the Secretary of State of the United States;

*CALLS* *ON* the United States Senate to join with 194 other nations in ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child so as to bring stronger international pressure to bear on Israel to comply with the Convention’s provisions, in particular Articles 37 and 40 of the Convention governing the treatment of children held in detention and *REQUESTS* the General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ to communicate this call to the United States Senate, as well as the President, Vice President, and Secretary of State of the United States;

*EXPRESSES* gratitude to Global Ministries of the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) for its advocacy on behalf of children in Palestine and the State of Israel;

*ENCOURAGES* continued partnership with U.S. and global ecumenical and interfaith partners, as well as with Palestinian and Israeli organizations that are advocating for the rights of children and providing educational, social, and psychological support for children and their families adversely affected by the occupation; and

*CALLS ON* all settings of the United Church of Christ to learn about the plight of children in Palestine and the State of Israel, as well as to support implementation of the resolution from Thirtieth General Synod entitled “A Call for the United Church of Christ to Take Actions Toward a Just Peace in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” using as an implementation guide the document “Promoting a Just Peace in Palestine-Israel: A Guide for United Church of Christ Faith Leaders,” produced by the United Church of Christ Palestine Israel Network.