

## **Church Council Minutes**

May 19, 2020

Members Present: Phil Owen, Margaret Baldwin, Anne Sullivan, Carter LaTendresse, Kathy Sheibley, Daniel Russo, Avena Ward, Edward Eggleston, Cara Rothe, Alice Forsyth (guest) and Paris Hancock

### **April Minutes**

A number of members of Council had not read them yet, so we agreed that an e-vote of April's minutes will be sent out in the near future.

Kathy asked for a quick confirmation that we had agreed last month that she be the liaison to the Clean Air Committee. We all remembered this to be accurate.

### **Update on the Search Committee**

Margaret shared that the committee was busy reading 27 profiles, winnowing some and becoming excited about several outstanding candidates. They meet weekly and hope to be in the interview stage in two weeks. They have worked through the Conference thus far (for candidates) with the assistance of Cameron. Zoom has enabled everyone to be present at every meeting!

### **Peacemaking Report**

Carter has placed his notes in the May folder. The Peacemaking Survey is ongoing and will be used to get a better understanding of how the congregation relates to its mission and how to progress in its work. Carter hopes to hold a "Peacemaking and Spirituality Workshop" similar to the Storylab model. We have signed on to "Home Is Here" campaign formally now. This upcoming Sunday may feature a three-minute video highlighting the life of Salem teacher with DACA status as our modern testimony. Jane has sent out an invitation to join her in advocacy regarding immigration issues. Transition Projects has reduced service to 45 residents (60-80 normally), so we have reduced spending on the food budget. Tim Pollard is the contact for TPI Inc.; meals are prepared at home by volunteers, then dropped off at the door to employees and heated there on the third Saturdays on every month. Soul Box Project has a "Wear Orange Weekend" June 5-7; this virtual event may include reading off the names of gun violence victims. 111, 408 Soul Boxes have been folded thus far. The Pride Parade has been postponed and Spare Change this month will go to purchasing Life Straws.

### **Council Calls to the Congregation**

Daniel shared that Leslie would like us to know that the best way to contact George is through Facebook Messenger. Phil asked about follow-up. We agreed that we should definitely continue to check-in with people who seem to be struggling as well as forwarding this information to

Andre. Avena noted that the "Call to Care" group has a fairly large group of people, mostly older members, who they are in communication with. She asked that we let them know of any members who may need their support also. Anne offered that we may need to revisit our outreach since the stay-at-home order/advice is continuing longer than originally expected. Margaret only knew one person on her list, so perhaps we should re-sort before another round of contacts.

### **Coronavirus Safety Task Force**

The most recent discussions of this team have revolved around the questions when will we open and what will that look like. It's complicated in such a large, open space, but when we do we'll have staff at the door, hand sanitizers and masks available and, perhaps, gloves. We want to be thoughtful about not exposing our staff to risk. Cara continued that the museum aspect of our church makes it difficult to track people when inside; also, several of the groups who meet here are anonymous, but we have been requested to track names of people in the building. One idea was to ask groups to enter through the annex and meet only when Cara or Andre are present in the office. Cara requested any ideas on solving these tricky issues to be sent to her. Janet will be meeting with the Worship Team to discuss opening up dates. The Unitarians are waiting through the rest of this year. Perhaps a combination of virtual and in-person services might be possible. Phil added that he would prefer to stay closed until after the second wave hits in order to avoid opening and then closing again. Cara said that most progressive churches are being cautious about opening up.

### **Outreach**

Daniel shared a letter, penned by Margaret, which will be sent to a dozen or so congregants who don't have access to our online services and meetings.

Cara noted that we are providing employment opportunities for some members and staff in the form of work parties/building projects. Cara shared that people responded quickly and, for one, the cleaning was a spiritual experience as well.

Anne asked about food insecurity for any members. Cara responded that Janet hasn't received any requests yet.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Edward reported that pledges are ahead of schedule and expenses are below budget. Our United Church Fund (the reserve) is healthy though we may have to draw some from it eventually. Cara added that some churches are struggling with tithing, but we're doing really well with pledges.

Edward noted that he is concerned about revenue loss from renting the building if the shut down continues through the fall.

Phil asked for an update on the adjustment request and response from last month's meeting (adjusted rate for PAC). Anne answered that they did not respond but that they paid their rent. Cara will reach out again in July.

The Financial Oversight Committee will meet in June.

We agreed to extend staff salaries beyond May for Steve, Janet, Grant, Cara and Andre. Cara will speak to our part-time employees that we will give them as many hours as we can, though the jobs may be different than their normal tasks. She's willing to get creative to keep our people employed. This will go into effect in June while the rest of May will continue as per our previous agreement.

### **Business Manager's Report**

Cara and Jim Sikkel recently walked through the basement thinking about the possible use of space there as a temporary immigrant shelter. They believe a shower could be placed where a urinal currently is, the paint closet could become a kitchenette, and a former bookkeeper's office could hold cots (it is rented out presently to the roofers for \$350). Anne asked about how we would create physical boundaries downstairs and that we should place the cots elsewhere, so that we don't lose that rental income. This space would be for 48-72 hour shelter only at this time.

Cara shared with us the future Park Block Plan. In this plan the front of the church becomes a pedestrian way, except for school busses who are given the spot directly in front of our church. We would lose approx. 50 parking spaces and the loading area for Sundays and special events. A number of us were concerned about the bus parking blocking our view of the park blocks and others' view of our beautiful church. There are a few other questions as well: noise on Sunday mornings, additional restrooms in the park blocks, places for the homeless to be, etc... Cara will take our questions to the planning team's representative. Cara emphasized that there are also benefits to being part of the Green Loop Plan (art and nature in the middle of the city!)

### **Leave for Janet**

Daniel will speak with Janet about bereavement leave when appropriate. We brainstormed possible guest ministers to help support Janet (Janet has already been in touch with several people for this purpose). Phil mentioned that he really likes the continuity of one replacement minister- perhaps from Pulpit Supply. Anne will reach out to the Worship Team to discuss this matter.

Respectfully submitted, Paris Hancock