

Minutes Approved by Church Council

First Congregational Church of Woodstock
Minutes of Church Council Meeting #10
8 December 2020, 7 p.m., via Zoom during pandemic

Present: Rev. Dr. Kevin Downer, Family Ministries Director Lisa Haupt, Moderator Bob Kirk, Clerk Alexandra (Sam) Lyman, Treasurer Carl Davis, Laura Bond, Charles Bottieri, John Cimochoowski, Lisa Haupt, Debby Kirk, Leilani Nixon, James Nowak, Lisa Nowak, Kathy Packard, Rev. Debra Pallatto-Fontaine, Jeff Perkins, Tom Singleton, Bruce Staehle, Alicja Wisnosky, and Carl Wisnosky.

1. Welcome: Moderator Bob called meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.
 2. Opening devotion, Rev. Kevin offered a reflection on the Christopher miracle, that in all we do, we engage and perform with love. The story of Christmas includes the “messiness of the manger.”
 3. Clerk’s report, Sam:
Minutes of November 10th meeting accepted by emailed approval from quorum of members. Thanks to those who took time to read, correct, and approve.
 4. Treasurer’s report, Carl Davis:
No drastic changes; amazing COTH result of \$9000 is “icing on the cake.” In response to question about year-end projection, we should be ~\$20K to the good. Windham Association dues not yet billed or paid.
MOTION: To accept report. Tom S./Carl W., unanimously accepted, no abstentions.
 5. Pastor’s report, Rev. Kevin:
 - Rev. Kevin requests that letter be sent to Windham Association to confirm that he is a member in good standing of our congregation, in preparation for his installation at date TBA. Clerk to send letter to Deb Hubbell, registrar.
 - Planning conversations have been fruitful, with follow-up issues & questions identified:
Outreach - food insecurity, interaction among members.
Music & worship - coordination to plan proactively; structural and organizational strategies are on the way. Kirks attended all three sessions, noting good energy and dedication, with gratitude to Rev. Kevin for organization and leadership.
 6. “News Briefs”:
Several reports were sent via email.
Trustees, John:
 - Work resumed on employee handbook, draft begun with Rev. Jocelyn. Elements to be added include performance appraisals, goals & objectives for each ensuing year. Kevin to meet with staff, utilizing experience from his previous church posts.
 - Corner office, nicely cleaned and repainted by Charles and Carl W., is now secure space for personnel records, treasurer’s and trustees’ files. Access is limited. Laura asked if deacons could have allotment of space in room as well, with reply affirmative.
 7. Old business:
COTH, Deb:
 - Fair was tremendous success with pre-orders, 26 sponsors, Silent Auction at \$2500+, masks ~\$900; 46 volunteers assisted in over 100 spots. Online publicity and social media were a big help. Note for future: E-commerce/credit card payments would enhance purchase activity. Huge thanks to Deb for engineering the whole affair.
- Re-opening for in-person worship, Bob:
- Sub-committee appointed: Alicja, Carl D., Debbie P-F, Rev. Kevin ex officio; thanks from Bob to all for agreeing to serve. Clarification of charge: administrative and advisory, not

policy-making. Debbie suggests reviewing SNEUCC materials to update church council on protocols; State of Connecticut is another resource. Use of church building by outside groups is included in committee purview. In emergency, who changes policy? moderator, Rev. Kevin, one senior trustee. MOTION: To charge the sub-committee on re-opening to research, advise, and monitor the recommendations of council that cover use of the church building during the pandemic. Tom S./John, unanimously approved, no abstentions.

Stewardship campaign, Carl W.:

- Winding down; 46 pledges resulting in \$140K. Holding firm, awaiting further income, preparing for annual report. All thank-you cards sent.

8. New business:

Minister's compensation, Bob:

- Approval of housing allowance must be done before start of each new year, on advice of CPA. MOTION: To approve package of \$80K for pastor, to include \$17K in housing allowance for the year 2021. Carl D./John, unanimously approved, no abstentions.

Date of annual meeting, Bob:

- Moved to fifth Sunday, January 31st, to give trustees as much time as possible to craft budget proposal. MOTION: To set date of annual meeting of the church for January 31, 2021, to allow for adequate budget preparation time. John/Tom S., unanimously approved, no abstentions.

Proposed slate of officers and board members for 2021, Bob and Deb:

- Good progress on filling board positions, with follow-up continuing.

Budget for 2021, John:

- Minister's package is complete. Where do we go with worship tech needs, facilities aspects, family ministries? Some unknowns prevail in fundraising projection, COVID influence or lifting of same. December 14th is next budget meeting. How should congregation be included in deliberations, in line with past Lunch & Crunch meetings?
- Rev. Kevin suggests multi-level communication, informing congregation by January 3rd of trajectory - "some uncertainties, but here's where we're headed." Aim for transparency; use website as tool, then send info prior to January 17th. Skip January SHARE to concentrate on broadcasting budget prep info.
- Rev. Kevin to consult Ellen B. about deadline for annual report, which will be posted on website, mailed to those without internet.
- January council meeting set for January 19th, Tuesday.

Rainbow flag, Bob:

- Flag has been taken over a dozen times. What to do? Discussion included mounting in a high, inaccessible place; ("It's theft, so shouldn't the authorities be involved?"); set a surveillance camera; what if the perpetrator is dangerous, and what would we do if he were identified? Program began two years ago, so keep the flag flying as is. "This is who we are, and we stand our ground." (Bruce S.)
- Options for action: Write again to *The Villager*, Deb to contact pastors of other O & A churches about signing (EWCC, Westfield, Thompson). Mount a camera as a deterrent. Invite the perpetrator in for conversation, if he is identified. Post testimonies by members of the church on Facebook about what the flag means to them. Bruce Lyman chimed in on Zoom to give Leslie Sweetnam's perspective: people have stopped to say how much the flag means to them, and we can replace it as many times as we must. MOTION: To accept several modes of action, including letter to the editor, change of flag location, surveillance camera, videos on Facebook in support of the flag ministry. Tom S./Debbie P-F, approved unanimously, no abstentions.

9. Adjournment

MOTION to adjourn meeting at 8:35 p.m. John/Lisa N., passed unanimously. Closing prayer by Sam.

NEXT MEETING: 19 January 2021, Tuesday, 7 p.m. by Zoom.

Submitted by A. Lyman, Clerk 15 December 2020