

First Congregational Church of Woodstock

MINUTES of COUNCIL MEETING

Tuesday, Dec. 14, 2021, at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom

In attendance: Rev. Dr. Kevin Downer, Bob Kirk (Moderator), Laura Bond, Charles Bottieri, Suzanne Cimochoowski, Carl Davis, Jennifer Duggan, Tom Duggan, Debby Kirk, Christina Manuilow, Alexandra (Sam) Lyman, Bruce Lyman, Leilani Nixon, Jim Nowak, Kathy Packard, Tom Singleton, Bruce Staehle, Charlene Swanson, Paula Wilmot

Welcome

- Moderator Bob Kirk opened the meeting at 7:03 pm.

Opening Devotion

- Rev. Kevin shared Isaiah 11:1-9, "The Peaceful Kingdom".

Clerk's Report (Laura B)

- Minutes of last month's meeting were shared via email. No amendments or corrections were suggested.
- MOTION: to accept the clerk's report as written. Carl D/2nd Sam L. Motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report (Carl D)

- Budget is on track for the year although personnel changes and maintenance issues have affected the budget, they have balanced out. Bottom Line: We are in excellent shape finishing out 2021.
- The carry over for 2022 will be reviewed by the Trustees.
- The Trustees have recommended an increase in Rev. Kevin's compensation package. Rev. Kevin would like to designate a set portion for housing allowance.
- MOTION from the Trustees: To approve an increase in the amount of the pastor's compensation that is to be treated as a housing allowance for tax purposes, from \$24,000 to \$26,400 annually, effective January 1, 2022. Motion passed unanimously (with Pastor abstaining).
- MOTION: to accept the Treasurer's Report. Paula W/2nd Bruce S. Motion passed unanimously.

Pastor's Report (Rev. Kevin D)

- Full report can be viewed on our website.
- Staffing Update
 - Communications Coordinator: Jessica Weaver Boose has agreed to act as interim (Tuesday and Thursdays) through the beginning of February. We will continue to look for a permanent hire. During this time Jessica will discern whether she would like the permanent position.
 - Music Director: Maria Sangiolo-Jessurun has accepted the position as part-time music director and will begin after Christmas.
- Calendar

- Schedule is very busy this month.
- Jan. 30th - Guest preacher, Rev. Emma Brewer-Wallin, SNEUCC Minister for Environment and Economic Justice is preaching, with 2nd hour conversation.
- Communications deadlines are outlined in the Pastor's Report.
- Annual reports should be in by the next Council meeting.

NEWS BRIEFS

- Bob K shared appreciation for:
 - Lynn & Carl D for the Community Kitchen meal this week, and for Charles B's help as well.
 - Jen D and Lynn & Carl D for gathering and transporting all the Christmas gifts to TEEG.
- Charlene reports the Evaluation Team completed the 2nd six month employment review of the pastor.
- Deb K shared appreciation for Christina M for organizing the Christmas caroling Dec. 12th.

OLD BUSINESS

- Stewardship (Paula W)
 - Pledges are within \$500 of goal.
 - Thank you notes are in process.
 - Pledge sheets are going to Suzanne C to be recorded.
- Nominating Committee (Deb K)
 - Currently working on filling openings for next year; results will be shared at the January Council meeting.
 - If anyone has a suggestion or is considering a new position please contact Deb or Bob.

NEW BUSINESS

- Feasibility Study for the Sale of the Parsonage (Sam L)
 - Trustees would like permission to move forward in researching the feasibility of selling the parsonage.
 - Carl D reports that the previous task force did not get a favorable outcome from research and work done with the town hall.
 - We may need a variance on zoning and we will probably need to pursue legal counsel.
 - Consensus from Council: proceed with research, forming a task force if needed.
- Policy for Naming Angels on our Angel Board (Sam L)
 - Sam searched Trustees records for the criteria for naming "angels" and could not find clarification.
 - Discussion of this topic included:
 - Does the "Angel Board" accomplish its intent? Do we need the "Angel Board"?
 - This type of recognition can inadvertently and unintentionally lead to hard feelings. We risk "exclusion by inclusion".
 - The "Angel Board" only acknowledges financial contributions, not donations of time and work.

- Is there another way to make the “Angel Project” needs known?
 - Sometimes people make donations for projects which are not “Angel Projects” and these are not acknowledged on the board.
 - Trustees were encouraged to review this further and bring it back to Council at a later date.
- Preparations for Annual Meeting on Jan.23rd, 2022
 - Lunch & Crunch: Trustees propose meeting on Zoom
 - Due to COVID we may not want to eat together, we may not even be meeting in person if case numbers increase.
 - Charts are easier to review on the computer screen.
 - Proposed brief coffee hour, then return to sanctuary for budget meeting (provided we are still meeting in person).
- The Year in Review (Bob K)

Discussion included:

 - Rev. Kevin has been with us through all the ups and downs.
 - By and large we have been kind to each other, and patient.
 - Recorded services, although a challenge at first, led us to relate to each other in a different way (ie: comment bubbles on Facebook).
 - Experiencing the joy of gathering together and looking in each other’s faces when we sing the Alleluia at the end of the service. (Looking forward to holding hands and seeing smiles again.)
 - “Finding Meaning in the Message” which helps us have meaningful conversations and deepens our relationships with each other.
 - Our growth with Bible Study meetings.
 - Our perseverance and resilience, and our personal and spiritual growth through another year of this pandemic.
 - “We Are a Beloved Community of Friends in Christ.”

Meeting Adjourned @ 8:35pm

Closing Prayer: Jen Duggan

Scribe: Laura Bond