

First Congregational Church of Woodstock
MINUTES of GOVERNING BOARD MEETING
Wednesday July 12, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. (in person)

In Attendance: Rev. Dr. Kevin Downer, Jim Nowak, Suzanne Cimochoowski, Charles Bottieri, Jennifer Duggan, Bruce Staehle , Ginny Moylan, Laura Boies (as Clerk)

Welcome and Opening Devotion

- Moderator, Jim Nowak, opened the meeting at 7:06pm.
- Rev. Kevin shared “Birthing” from “The Art of Pastoring”

Mid-Year Governing Board Review

- Handling of financials is going very well. Although we no longer have a board of Trustees, the Treasurer meets monthly with the Physical Business Leader, the Financial Business Leader and the Bookkeeper. One advantage of the new system is being able to have a more detailed discussion which would not need to take place during the Governing Board meetings.
- Give ourselves credit for transforming a system that has been in place for decades and which so far is going exceedingly well. We do acknowledge that there is more work to be done.
- We still seem to struggle to find people to volunteer/“fill slots”.
 - People may need more encouragement.
 - Members need to have a clear understanding of what the positions entail in order to be comfortable with taking on specific jobs.
 - Plan to have 2nd Hours to feature specific Ministries or Teams so congregants have a better understanding of what we’re working on and how to help.
- The current Governing Board seems to represent the congregation well and is a trusted group for our congregation.

Plan for GB 2nd Hours

- We will hold a 2nd Hour “Governing Board Spotlight” once a month.
- These meetings can combine presentations and discussions as appropriate.
- Dates and topics:
 - Sept. 10: Understanding our Church’s New Financial Structure
 - Oct. 8: Ongoing Plans for Sale of Parsonage
 - Nov. 12: Stewardship/Budget
 - Dec. 10: Bylaws Changes
 - Jan. 14: Budget Crunch
- [Ginny](#) will create an article for the Sept/Oct Share. Deadline is Aug. 23rd.

Getting GB Information out to the Congregation Are people accessing the information on the website?

- [Ginny](#) will create a “Did you know” statement for the Share.
- [Suzanne](#) will create a binder of GB meeting documents so congregants can access hard copies. The binder will be kept in the library. Add notification about this to Share.

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Strategic Planning

- Begin conversations for planning the next 5, 10, 15 years. The GB needs to clarify the possibilities for our future and discuss what direction we'd like to go.
 - Sharing of resources with area churches can help us survive and grow.
 - Combining with other churches for things like Vacation Bible School.
- Future of the Chicken BBQ
 - John Cimochowski cannot continue to lead indefinitely. Perhaps create a team to handle the various parts: staffing, ordering, etc.
- Our Regional Conference Minister, Carol Steinbrecher, could facilitate a conversation about future planning. Rev. Kevin will contact her and find out her availability to meet with the GB in the fall.

Minister's Report

- See full Pastor's Report [2023.07.12 Minstry Update.pdf](#)
- Communications: Phones and VoiceMail
 - Rev. Kevin is unable to access the Spectrum voicemail through the internal phone system. We would like to be able to use the Spectrum voicemail so we can access the voicemails remotely and forward calls when no one is in the office.
 - Google VM is an option which we could add on to Google Workspace but there is a fee.
 - Investigate the current phone system. Jim will contact Jamie Harrison to see if he has any insight.
- Communication: Wall displays and bulletin boards
 - Our walls are viewed by the people walking through our building, not just our members but visitors as well. We need to use our display spaces to communicate our values and our current work and activities.
 - We need to plan some conversation around what is on our walls and what they intentionally and unintentionally communicate.
 - Identify items that are outdated.
 - Could we re-dedicate some of the current displays to other locations?
- Stewardship Update
 - We received resources from the UCC (ie: commitment cards, graphics, bulletin inserts).
 - Bob K says we need one more person for the Stewardship team.
 - [Suzanne](#) will ask Karen Graves.

Property & Facilities Update (Charles)

- See Facilities Report [July 2023 Facilities Report \(1\).pdf](#)
- Paving is supposed to begin in August.
- Arranging meeting with real estate agent, Stepanie Gosselin for sale of Parsonage.

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- Palladian window: no delivery date yet.
- Tiny Forest Childcare is now open. A keypad lock was installed which is compatible with our master key.
- We have received an offer of a donation of a piano from the Hopkins family. They have requested that we post a plaque somewhere near the piano. Sam Lyman is in contact with them and they are determining the wording they want on the plaque. [Charles](#) will order the plaque when wording is decided.

Financial Business update (Suzanne)

- See Financial Statement [FCCW 6-30-2023 Financial Statements.pdf](#)
- Tiny Forest Childcare which was budgeted to start in March, did not open until July 5th. This was offset by nearly \$2,000 from Otis Elevator in resolving our dispute with them, plus some unexpected facility rentals.
- Plans for money from the parsonage? The funds will go into the restricted funds and will be used to specifically support strategic priorities that we believe will help us further our church's mission.
- The Preservation Connecticut pre-application is due July 14th. This is the grant we used to do the roof 3 years ago and to paint the sanctuary 2 years ago. This is a \$15,000 matching grant (that is, we have to match the \$15,000) which can only be used on the old part of the building.
 - Priorities are storm windows in the sanctuary and insulation downstairs.
 - [Suzanne](#) will write the grant application.
- An ad for the Treasurer's position has been drafted. Approximately two hours per week to pay bills online, approve payroll, monitor the bookkeeper, and work together with the Finance team. ([Bruce](#) will check bylaws to see whether the treasurer needs to be a member of the congregation.)
- Special paperwork needs to be filed with the Pension Board regarding the Pastor's annual income because we don't put the new payroll amounts into effect until February (after the budget vote at the Annual Meeting in January). Due to this problem, the Finance team is asking if the Governing Board could approve salaries in December. This could probably be accomplished by having the salaries approved *pending affirmation by the congregation* (via approval of the budget at the Annual Meeting). Additionally, the Pastor's Housing Allowance needs to be put into the December GB meeting minutes. This information should be included in the GB 2nd Hour in November.

Old Action Items Review

- Labyrinth discussions: Rev. Kevin spoke with Leslie, he is available to meet after mid-August. He also asked the Deacons to identify others who are passionate about the Labyrinth.
- Charles reached out to the Boy Scouts but did not get a response from the leaders. Mark Van der Voort said he would speak to the leaders.

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- **Charles** will give Jen access to the Facilities google account.
- GB members have been doing the Call for the Offering for the summer services: people seem to like it. Consider continuing in the Fall, at least occasionally.

New Action Items

- **Ginny** will create a GB Update article for the Sept/Oct Share. Deadline is Aug. 23rd. Include "GB Spotlight" 2nd Hours plus a "Did you know" statement to let people know where to find GB information.
- **Suzanne** will create a binder of GB meeting documents to be kept in the library.
- **Rev. Kevin** will contact Carol Steinbrecher.
- **Suzanne** will ask Karen Graves if she's interested in stewardship.
- **Suzanne** will write the grant application for Preservation Connecticut.
- **Charles** will order the plaque for the piano when wording is determined.
- **Charles** will give Jen access to the Facilities google account.
- **Bruce** will check bylaws to see whether the treasurer needs to be a member of the congregation.
- **All GB members** think about what we display on our walls and how we might want to update.

Closing Prayer offered by Rev. Kevin.

Meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm