

Parsonage Sale Process and Communications
September 27, 2023 – May 6, 2024

The following is a consolidated archive of communications and updates to the congregation related to the sale of the congregation’s parsonage, located on the lot south of the church building.



After more than a decade of conversation, in January of 2022 the congregation approved funding to explore the sale of the parsonage. The Governing Board, Facilities Team, and Finance Team worked to clear several hurdles, including clarifying the historic lot lines with the town, identifying the implications of a sale, and laying out an approach for the sale of the parsonage.

In May of 2024, the congregation sold of the parsonage. This document includes the following communications (in reverse chronological order) that were published to the congregation through the weekly email update, in the weekly worship bulletins, and/or on a webpage dedicated to the sale of the parsonage.

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Guiding Principles

Based on your questions, concerns, and hopes; and our Core Values; we developed principles to guide us as we explore the possible sale of the parsonage and evaluate offers

- Live out our values, honor one another, act in love, practice justice, and display fairness.
- Do what is best for the church and our ministry.
- Fulfill our legal fiduciary duty and duty of care as a nonprofit by using our assets to support and further our mission to the best of our ability.
- Be transparent regarding the process while respecting and maintaining confidentiality for the current tenants and potential bidders.
- Be respectful of all voices.
- Proceed in such a manner that all feel honored, respected, and treated fairly through the process no matter the outcome.

Periodic updates

May 6, 2024 Update



SOLD!!!

On Thursday, April 25, the First Congregational Church and our new neighbor, Shelly Buurman, closed on the sale of the parsonage property. Our new neighbor has wonderful plans to restore this classic home and we can expect to see those restoration activities in the future.

The church has received the new well approval site and well drilling for our new water supply is expected to commence in the coming weeks. Once the well is drilled and installation is complete, we will submit water samples to the health department for approval, this may take several weeks.

In the meantime, our neighbor will allow the church continued use of the current water supply located on the former parsonage property. In good faith, the church has agreed to compensate for the use of the well, \$30/month to cover the cost of electricity, and the church has agreed to maintain the water treatment system during this time period.

Proceeds of the sale of the parsonage property will be deposited in high yield interest bearing accounts while the long term investment plans are determined.

Please welcome our new neighbor who will be a wonderful steward to this historic home.

April 3, 2024 Update

Parsonage Sale Closing Date Apr 15

We await the State and health authorities to approve the new well location. LaFramboise Well Drilling is under contract and is prepared to commence drilling on the front lawn of the church, once the approvals are received. We expect this will occur sometime in April.

We are prepared to close on the sale of the parsonage property following the approval of the new well location. Currently, the closing date is set for April 15, contingent upon the well site approval.

February 8, 2024 Update

Parsonage Sale Closing Date Feb 29

We have completed the land survey that designates the separation of the church and parsonage properties. Because of the planned location of the new church well and because a portion of the church's septic system resides on the parsonage property, easements are necessary. Our legal counsel has drafted the language together with the buyer.

Our tenants vacated the premises on January 15, 2024. The house was left in meticulous condition.

The new church well is considered to be a public water source, so drilling the well is not as straightforward as drilling a well for a residence. We have learned this is not necessarily a rapid process. Last month we met with representatives from NDDH, CTDPH, and LaFramboise Well Drilling to physically inspect the planned location of the well. This inspection was found favorable and we are awaiting paperwork and the permit to drill the well. We are on LaFramboise schedule, so once we receive the permit, drilling can commence. Of course, the well drillers' schedule is at the mercy of Mother Nature, too wet or too cold of conditions affects their ability to operate, thus affecting their drilling schedule.

Both parties have agreed to extend the closing date for the sale of the property to February 29, 2024. The Governing Board will provide regular updates to the congregation and more information about the process as we proceed.

December 21, 2023 Update

Parsonage Sale Under Contract

The parsonage property was placed on the market in November, including an open house held on November 18. We received two offers following the open house. Upon careful review, the Governing Board accepted one of the offers and a purchase agreement was signed on November 22, 2023.

The buyer has offered a cash offer, agreeing to our asking price for the purchase of the property "as is" with minimal provisions (completion of survey and new well for the church water supply.

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The Governing Board felt the offer met our criteria, not only financially but also our values, as it is our understanding the buyer will care for the house and use it personally, as the buyer has a connection to Woodstock and our community.

A late January closing is expected. Surveys of both the church and parsonage properties must be finalized and a new water well must be drilled for the church. These efforts are underway and are expected to be completed in January.

The Governing Board will provide regular updates to the congregation and more information about the process as we proceed.

October 23, 2023 Update

Congregation Unanimously Votes to list the parsonage for Sale

At a Special Congregational Meeting held on Sunday, October 22, 2023 following the close of worship, the congregation unanimously voted to authorize the Governing Board to proceed with selling the parsonage.

The Governing Board will now proceed with the steps necessary to prepare the parsonage for sale and list the property.

The Governing Board will provide regular updates to the congregation and more information about the process as we proceed.

October 22, 2023 Congregational Meeting Minutes

Call to Order: This Special Meeting of the First Congregational Church of Woodstock was opened at 11:03 am by Jim Nowak, Moderator.

The opening devotional: Bruce Lyman, Senior Deacon, shared a reading from Mary Moody, “We Believe the Day Is Coming”.

Quorum: Confirmation of a quorum by Laura Boies, Clerk.

32 members in person and 8 members online.

Statement of Purpose: The purpose of this meeting is to present, discuss and vote on a motion regarding the sale of the Parsonage.

Jim Nowak presented the Motion from the Governing Board: MOTION to authorize the Governing Board to proceed with selling the parsonage. Toby Bishop seconded the motion.

Discussion and Questions:

Plan for proceeds of the sale?

The Governing Board recommendation is to put the money into a fund similar to the New Century Fund and use the proceeds mainly for capital improvements.

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Will we be required to finish the well and septic prior to the sale?

There are three septic systems, one behind the parsonage that the church is connected to, one directly behind the church and one near the cemetery. It is possible to have an easement to use the parsonage septic system. Regarding the well, the intention is to drill a new well for the church prior to the sale or set a specific timetable for after the sale.

We have a fiduciary responsibility, but do we have a responsibility to choose a good neighbor for the church?

Determining who would or would not be a good neighbor would be extremely difficult. We do understand that the best offer may not be the highest monetary bid. The Governing Board intends to follow the principles and guidelines of our core values, including to be fair, just, caring, respectful and transparent in this process.

Is there a monetary guideline beyond which the Governing Board needs to come before the Congregation for approval? Can the Governing Board take the responsibility for deciding on the buyer? Does the process of handling the proceeds of the sale belong solely to the Governing Board or should that come before the Congregation as well?

The current bylaws prevent the Governing Board from selling property of the church without express permission from the Congregation. This is why this meeting was called. If the church were to call a meeting (requiring at least 2 weeks notice) for every offer on the parsonage it would severely inhibit the process of the sale. Therefore, the Governing Board is asking the Congregation to authorize them to proceed with the sale.

The Governing Board was elected and entrusted by the Congregation to make the best decisions for the church. Going forward, the Financial Team would include any possible plans for use of funds in their Annual Budget proposal which would be voted on by the Congregation at the Annual Meeting.

Concerns for Ginny and Bill as the current tenants:

They have been an important consideration throughout this process and they are in support of the sale.

Vote on the Motion to authorize the Governing Board to proceed with selling the parsonage.

32 members attending in person and 8 members attending online voted unanimously to approve the motion.

Closing Comments: Bob Kirk offered thanks to the Governing Board for continuing the work to address the sale of the Parsonage, which has been in discussion for several years, and bringing the issue to fruition at this meeting.

Closing Prayer: Debby Kirk offered the closing prayer.

Motion to adjourn: John Cimochoowski, seconded by Glenn Boies. Motion approved unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 11:29 am.

Oct 4, 2023 Update



Call for a Special Congregational Meeting of the First Congregational Church of Woodstock

A Special Congregational Meeting of the First Congregational Church of Woodstock is called for Sunday, October 22, 2023.

Roll Call will commence immediately following the close of worship beginning at approximately 10:50AM.

The agenda will be as follows:

1. Opening Prayer
2. Confirmation of Quorum
3. To consider a motion that the congregation authorize the Governing Board to proceed with selling the parsonage.
4. Closing Prayer
5. Adjournment

This is an in-person meeting that will take place in the sanctuary following the conclusion of worship.

In accordance with our bylaws, congregants who are unable to be present in person may participate in the meeting via online video or by phone.

See weekly emails and worship bulletins October 6 – 22 for details.

September 27, 2023 Update



On Sunday September 10, more than 20 people attended a Second Hour Conversation about the potential sale of the parsonage. Responses to all of the questions raised at this gathering have been incorporated into the Questions and Concerns below.

Preparation for the potential sale of the parsonage was the primary agenda item explored during the September Governing Board meeting.

The Property Team and Governing Board have:

- Developed principles to guide our deliberations and process.
- Received a home inspection report.

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- Formed a communications and planning team.
- Began planning the activities to prepare the congregation and properties for a potential sale of the parsonage.
- Launched this webpage to make it easy for you to find responses to your questions and see ongoing updates.

September 22, 2023 announcement to congregation



Parsonage Update. September 27, 2023

The following is an important update from the Governing Board regarding the potential sale of the parsonage.

In January of 2022, the congregation approved funding to explore the sale of the parsonage. In the time since, we have cleared several hurdles and are in a position to move forward with a sale. On Sunday September 10, more than 20 people attended a Second Hour Conversation about the potential sale of the parsonage. Since then, the Property Team and Governing Board have:



- Developed principles to guide our deliberations and process.
- Received a home inspection report.
- Formed a communications and planning team.
- Began planning the activities to prepare the congregation and properties for a potential sale of the parsonage.
- Launched a webpage - FirstChurchWoodstock.org/parsonage – to make it easy for you to find responses to your questions and see ongoing updates.

Preparation for the potential sale of the parsonage was the primary agenda item explored during the September Governing Board meeting. Based on the questions, concerns, and hopes that you have shared and our Core Values; we developed the following principles to guide us as we explore the possible sale of the parsonage and evaluate offers:

- Live out our values, honor one another, act in love, practice justice, and display fairness.
- Do what is best for the church and our ministry.
- Fulfill our legal fiduciary duty and duty of care as a nonprofit by using our assets to support and further our mission to the best of our ability.
- Be transparent regarding the process while respecting and maintaining confidentiality for the current tenants and potential bidders.
- Be respectful of all voices and proceed in such a manner that all feel honored, respected, and treated fairly through the process no matter the outcome.

We will call a Special Congregational Meeting to authorize the sale of the parsonage. We anticipate that the Special Congregational Meeting will take place as early as October 22.

Please review the “things to know” on the following page. You can find more responses to your questions and ongoing updates at FirstChurchWoodstock.org/parsonage.

We want to hear your hopes, address your questions, and keep you informed. Please contact Vice-Moderator Bruce Staehle, BruceS@FirstChurchWoodstock.org, who is our primary contact for congregant communications related to the potential sale of the parsonage.

In Christ, Your Governing Board

<i>Bruce Staehle</i>	<i>Charles Bottieri</i>	<i>Ginny Moylan</i>	<i>James Nowak</i>
<i>Jennifer Duggan</i>	<i>Pastor Kevin</i>	<i>Suzanne Cimochowski</i>	

Questions and Concerns

Why Sell? Why Sell now?

Selling the parsonage will help us to focus our energy and resources to strengthen the current and future mission of the church.

When the congregation acquired the parsonage in the early 1900's, a parsonage helped a congregation attract and support clergy.

Today, retirement planning, the need for respite, and tax policies make it unattractive for clergy to reside in a parsonage. Owning and maintaining the parsonage is no longer core to the mission of the congregation.

What about our existing tenant?

We are in regular consultation with our existing tenants. They are aware of the potential sale and we are and will take into consideration their interests, concerns and needs as we proceed, including the potential timing of closing dates.

What will be the list price?

A preliminary market analysis suggests the list price will be around \$375,000, after making minor repairs and addressing other items identified by a consulting realtor. NOTE: We have not contracted with a realtor to sell the property and cannot do so until the congregation votes to permit the sale of the property.

Will we accept the highest offer?

Price is one of the variables that we will consider in evaluating offers, other terms of the sale will also be considered. As a nonprofit organization, it is our fiduciary duty to seek the "best" offer. The "best" offer will be one that helps us fulfill our mission as a congregation.

What if someone with a relationship to the congregation is interested?

Potential buyers with a connection to FCCW, i.e., an "internal buyer," will have the ability to walk through the property two weeks before it is listed.

And the realtor's commission the church pays on a sale to an "internal buyer" not represented by a realtor will be 2.5%, rather than the typical 5%. Interested individuals will need to contact Bruce Staehle, who is our primary point of contact for congregant questions related to the property sale.

What are the items we must do to prepare for and sell the property?

We will not have a full understanding of everything until the property is listed and we begin to receive offers.

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We do know from our preliminary inspection that we will need to drill a well for the church and receive an easement for a portion of the church septic system that is on parsonage property.

Other questions, such as water filtration, radon, etc. are on our radar, but are unknown at the moment.

Are there any grants available?

Although the parsonage is in the historic district, we have not found any grants that could help with various projects needed to maintain the parsonage.

What is the timetable?

The exact timetable is not yet known. Things are moving very quickly to assess and address items needed to prepare the property for sale, including drilling a new well for the church.

Currently we anticipate a calling a congregational meeting on or after October 22. If the congregation agrees to sell the parsonage, the listing will likely happen sometime in November with a closing sometime in the first quarter of the New Year.

We will provide more specific timelines throughout the process.

Why do we need to list the property through a broker?

Listing the property for sale through a broker will provide many benefits to the congregation, e.g., better visibility, greater insight for setting the list price, impartial advise.

What is the "fiduciary duty and duty of care?" And why does it matter?

As a tax-exempt religious organization, the church is required to use the assets of the church to further our mission, especially as it relates to the decisions made by our officers and Governing Board members.

In the case of a real estate sale, a below market sale to a private citizen would violate these duties.

It means we need to accept the best offer to further the mission of the congregation. The best offer is not necessarily the highest.

What will happen to the proceeds?

The Governing Board, in consultation with the congregation, will determine how best to allocate the proceeds. We anticipate that the majority of the net proceeds will be put into an endowment similar to Twenty-first Century Fund, with some of the proceeds being held in reserve in case the septic fails.

What is the budget impact of a sale?

The net contribution of rental income is currently around \$7,000 a year.