

Winter Congregational Meeting
First Congregational United Church of Christ of Grand Marais
January 26, 2020
Meeting Minutes

- I. Call to order. Jenny Delfs (moderator) called the meeting to order at 11:40 AM. There were 30 attendees at the meeting.
- II. Opening prayer. Rev Anne Swallow Gillis, Transitional Pastor, led the congregation in an opening prayer.
- III. Reading of Mission Statement. The congregation read our mission statement aloud together.

First Congregational United Church of Christ is an open, inclusive church that exists to worship God and practice the gospel of Jesus Christ. We welcome all people of goodwill who seek to share the love of God and honor the diversity of creation in a spirit of tolerance and flexibility. As a Just Peace Church, we invite all who seek the reign of God to join us in reaching out in healing ministry, working for justice, witnessing for peace and striving to overcome all forms of oppression. We recognize two sacraments: Baptism and Communion.

IV. Reading of Bylaws. Jenny noted that “membership is open to all people of good will who affirm the mission and purpose of this church” and declared that a 10% quorum had been met. She announced that Kevin LeVoir would serve as parliamentarian for the meeting, and that Ann Russ (board secretary) would take minutes. Jenny outlined the notice provisions for the meeting and described the materials that had been sent out, including the proposed agenda, minutes of the previous congregational meeting, proposed budget, and proposed bylaw change. An annual report was made available in the narthex before today’s meeting. Jenny encouraged all to participate in the various church groups as their interest dictated. She read aloud the Communication Agreement that the board uses at their monthly meetings.

LISTEN generously
SPEAK respectfully
CELEBRATE each other’s gifts and perspectives
CHOOSE the good of the whole church
STRIVE to be optimistic and hopeful

V. Review of the agenda. John Bottger motioned, Chris O’Brien seconded to accept the agenda. There was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

VI. Approval of June congregational meeting minutes. Nancy Star moved, Chris Silence seconded to approve the June congregational meeting minutes. There was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

VII. Financial report. A Finance Committee Report, including January-December 2019 Profit & Loss Budget by Quarter and Balance Sheet as of December 31, 2019 is included in the 2020 Annual Report. Kevin LeVoir (treasurer) thanked the finance committee members (Pete Harris, Kevin LeVoir and Chris Silence with help from Pastor Anne Swallow Gillis) for their work in producing the 2020 Budget. A copy of the 2020 budget can be found in the 2020 Annual Report. Kevin highlighted a few items in the proposed budget:

- Of the \$140,146 we may spend in 2020, about \$35,000 of undedicated funds are in the bank now.
- Budgeting for OCWM (Our Church's Wider Mission) and Per Capita (money we send to the MN Conference based on membership) are back in the budget.
- The chart of accounts (how budget information is presented) has changed in hopes of making the budget clear.

Jeff Kern asked for and received a clarification of cash assets. Jerry Lilja asked about the endowment status: The \$20,000 we withdrew in 2019 did not affect the \$85,000 book value. Nancy Seaton asked where we are regarding pledges: We are at \$77,500, with a goal of \$80,000.

VIII. Approval of proposed 2020 budget. Following the above discussion, Kevin LeVoir moved and Barb Bottger seconded to approve the 2020 Budget. The motion passed unanimously.

IX. Approval of Bylaw change allowing hiring a Designated Term Pastor Jenny summarized the rationale of the bylaw change: The UCC Minnesota Conference is advising us to consider hiring a designated term pastor rather than go through a full search committee and call process as we have done in the past. A designated pastor would be hired for a defined period (typically 1-3 years) with the understanding that if this church and the pastor were a "good fit", the pastor could then be formally called by a vote of the congregation as our next settled pastor. The board of directors is in favor of hiring a designated term pastor rather than form a search committee. The bylaw change would give us this option. Asked about the hiring committee, Jenny explained the members would be board appointed and that they would conduct interviews. Jay Arrowsmith-DeCoux clarified that the bylaw change opens up possibilities, but does not close search committee options. Anne Swallow Gillis said that, from a clergy perspective, she was not in favor of this at first, but has seen it work well in congregations who have experienced conflict. She also said that there are fewer clergy available these days, and thinks this is a good match for us. She is willing to stay beyond July for a limited time if needed. A question was asked about how the congregation would decide whether or not to call the designated pastor as a settled pastor, and Jenny talked about the regular performance reviews we have established. John Bottger moved and Nancy Seaton seconded to approve the bylaw change. The motion passed unanimously.

X. Vote of support for the Board of Directors to appoint a Hiring Committee to find a Designated Term Minister Candidate. Jeff Kern asked how the hiring committee would be chosen and Jenny explained that a call for volunteers would be sent out and that the board of directors would appoint people. Anne Swallow Gillis suggested that the Discovery Team have input. Nancy Seaton motioned, Barb Bottger seconded to have the board of directors appoint a Hiring Committee. The motion passed unanimously.

XI. Transitional Pastor's Report. Anne Swallow Gillis referred us to her written report in the Annual Report, but expanded her report by encouraging us to move forward courageously and discover "our church's story". She pointed out the two challenges she wrote about last June that she felt we needed to face in order for reconciliation to proceed: 1) loss and 2) what is our new story? We have done much work on addressing our grief, honoring the loss, listening to each other, trying to avoid who is to blame or who is hurting the most. How is our grieving together going? Are we stuck in the stories of hurt? Are we making room for new stories to emerge? She suggested that churches who are not continually re-creating themselves are usually dying, and encouraged us to think about emerging stories that might describe how this church became increasingly healthier and more vibrant. Part of our story might be what we have learned from all

this. During a certain time in our church history we were unable to handle conflict well. And then we learned to be more compassionate, respectful and forgiving of each other. We started holding one another accountable for behaviors that did not build up the church. We worked on identifying our core values, shared beliefs, our purpose and mission as a congregation.... what is God calling us to now?

XII. Moderator's Report. Jenny Delfs included a three page written report in the 2020 annual report highlighting the work of the Board of Directors. At the winter meeting she also offered a lengthy, heartfelt, more personal perspective on her time as moderator. She talked about her love for this church, the need for worship and fellowship in her life, and her belief that the church can be an important answer to the brokenness felt in the world. She lifted service, gratitude, and belonging as three messages she learned from her early church experiences. She highlighted the progress she has seen in a timeline of good work and effort building toward reconciliation and healing in the past two years. Jenny also acknowledged there is ongoing work needed, that questions and uncertainty remain; but believes we have created space where conversations can happen. She shared her gratitude for the many people who are doing the work of the church, and her faith that at our church's best we are a courageous congregation of universal welcome, inclusivity and tolerance.

XIII. Discovery Team Report Barb Bottger's written report of the discovery team is in the 2020 annual report. Jay Arrowsmith-DeCoux expanded on Barb's report with the most recent progress and findings. Among the committee's goals for the church are to have fun thinking outside the box, dreaming together what we as church can live into. It is evident from the small group activities that one of the strengths of the church has been friendships. Together we have shared moments of vulnerability as we engage in a process to build relationships and discover where we collectively want to go. Four clear values emerged after the last congregational small group activity "Exploring Core Values": trust, respect, compassion, and inclusivity. "Tying" for a fifth spot were diversity, courage, communication, children, friendship, and justice. Jay thanked the congregation for sharing themselves and engaging in meaningful conversations, and said that he and the rest of the discovery team are looking forward to continuing the discernment process of "What is God calling this church to do and be now?"

XIV. Closing Prayer. Anne Swallow Gillis offered a closing prayer.

XV. Adjourn. Jenny thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions. Nancy Star moved and Gwen Mattice seconded a motion to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 1:00 PM.