

The Church of Christ at Dartmouth College

Minutes of the Congregational Meeting ~ February 21, 2016

The meeting was called to order by Moderator Tom Csatari. Megan Culp shared the news of Financial Secretary Doug Erhard's imminent retirement and thanked him for his many years of service to the church. A card of appreciation was passed for signatures and collection for a gift was taken. An Opening Prayer was offered by Tom Nordberg, Interim Pastor. Tom Csatari then asked for approval of the minutes from the June 21, 2015 Congregational Meeting. There was a motion to accept the minutes and the motion was seconded without discussion. The congregation then approved the minutes of the previous meeting by a voice vote.

Nancy Marion was invited to share a brief FY 2015 Treasurer's Report:

We ended the fiscal year with a small surplus of approximately \$1400. Pledges were down, primarily due to deaths in the congregation and members moving away. Lower pledge totals are anticipated moving forward. Lease income stayed fairly robust. When Dartmouth Medical Center departed from some of the church offices in the spring, we were able to find a new tenant (Dartmouth College) fairly quickly. We also have revenue from our endowment draw, which is 5% of endowment where endowment is a calculated weighted average of the last three years.

On the expense side, we continued to contribute a good amount to OCWM. That contribution is based on a formula--it is 15% of the previous year's revenue minus the endowment draw. We also had some savings on the expense side due to staff transition and to considerably lower fuel oil costs that resulted from the decline in world oil prices. We did have a larger than expected expense attributed to a one-time organ repair and tune-up. Our organ was installed in spring of 2005, and even low-maintenance organs need periodic adjustments.

President of the Board of Elders Steve Bensen was asked to speak to the 2016 proposed budget:

He began by thanking Tom Csatari for moderating the meeting and then went on to explain that This year's budgeting process was led by a team that included Jay Benson and Brian Edwards on behalf of the FAC, Jeff Colla and Pete Frederick representing the Board of Stewardship and Tom Nordberg. In this transition year, the group thought it was important to be as consistent with previous years as possible. They did make a few simplified clarifications in presentation. Steve reviewed the waterfall chart created by Evan Smith and distributed with the meeting materials. Despite a spirited pledge campaign and some higher pledges by many, increases were offset by some who lowered their gift amount and others that moved away or stopped pledging all together. Thus net pledges were down about \$12,000.

Other highlights:

- Leases are up about \$17,000. Steve thanked stewardship, Nancy Marion and especially Jay Benson for successfully securing rentals to fill our lease space.
- Able to continue a 1.5 % increase to staff salaries as well as continue to offer a generous benefits package. The total amount spent on personnel did not go up since we will not be funding the senior advocate position this year.
- Our OCWM contribution remains constant at 15% less the endowment draw as we have done in the past.

Tom thanked Steve for his presentation and opened the floor for questions. Jan Asmuss noted the \$15,000 increase in spending on the building and asked how this would be allocated. Jay responded with Stewardship's priorities: 1) Fix the rotting window trim on the Balchelder Lounge and apartment windows; 2) abate the asbestos and fix the floor in the hallway between the library and the Rand Room and 3) Repair the sagging drainage pipe in the parking lot. He also clarified how money in this fund had been spent in recent years and the current account balance of \$1,770. Another congregant asked about painting the entry off the parking lot. Jay said there was a long list of projects that need to be addressed and this one was on that list. Judy Csatori asked about the increased money towards campus ministry (\$500). This was explained as a move towards a more intentional ministry to the Dartmouth students funding such things as the weekly distribution of hot chocolate and other activities to encourage student involvement. Audrey Sears asked why there was no money put towards children's music. Rob explained they had a wealth of materials and that related program costs were covered by staff salaries. Bob Keene expressed his concern about our dependency on the cell tower leases. Jay responded that we are maximizing other lease spaces in the building and that the building pays for itself with leases while pledges cover personnel costs. Roger Arend expressed concern that our church is not good at asking for pledges. Tom Csatori reviewed the FAC's strategy over the past two years including targeted mailings with specific ask amounts, multiple written communications with pulpit announcements and News and Views articles. A new planned giving option has also been developed. Tom Nordberg mentioned that some churches do visitations to increase pledging. Steve Bensen then explained that moving forward we will likely keep this same budget working team together (2 from FAC and 2 from Stewardship and the senior pastor). The intention is to seek more input from all boards when creating the church budget as well as to help ensure easier access to an individual board's funds over the course of the year. There will be more engagement of the congregation in the budgeting process moving forward. The FAC will be working to consolidate and simplify some of the church funds over time.

Steve then explained that the FAC and Elders have a plan in place to accommodate for Doug's departure. Amy Tietjen Smith who has experience in financial accounting has agreed to help as a Band-Aid to assure we understand completely all Doug's work and assure a smooth transition. Phase two in the financial transition will be to review all of our accounting practices and we may hire a consultant to develop a new system. We will likely not hire another financial secretary, but rather move to a system of contracting a bookkeeper for a few hours a week while expanding the involvement of our lay treasurer. A number of similar sized churches do this and it is a model that may suit us well. This will be much cheaper in terms of personnel costs.

On behalf of the Board of Elders, Steve proposed approval of the revised covenant.

He reminded everyone of the hard work and multiple meetings and discussions that went into creating this new version. The Elders have not received any negative feedback over this trial period that the covenant's been used in worship. A motion was made, seconded and the revised covenant was unanimously approved by vote of the congregation.

Next, Steve shared the Board's enthusiasm for the proposed slate of members to serve on the Settled Pastor Search Committee. The group well represents the demographics of our church and each member brings a unique perspective and has demonstrated active engagement in the ministry of our church. He acknowledged the hard work that lies ahead and thanked them for their willingness and commitment to this most important task. The names were read and those present came to the front of the room. Jan Assmus, Jay Benson (Chair), Jennifer Casey, Emily Dentzer, Gail McPeek, Ray Sears, Amy Tietjen Smith, Evan Smith, and Tom Wilson. A motion was proposed, seconded and the search committee was approved. The committee was then commissioned by the congregation with the charge of choosing our next settled pastor.

The floor was then open for other business and Steve mentioned that we revisit a conversation introduced by Sally Foss at our spring meeting around the mailing of News & Views. The newsletter is currently mailed to all households and is also attached to Tom's weekly e-blast. David Bradley spoke in earnest for keeping the paper copies going, some congregants are not on email, others prefer getting hard copies. A few others spoke on the cost of continuing this practice if we drop below the discounted bulk rate of 200 copies. Some expressed concern over the wasting of paper and said the e-version suffices for them. The discussion ended without clear resolution and the Board of Elders will take up the matter further.

Co-chair of the Planned Giving Committee, Trish Jackson, called attention to a table of UCC materials available to members and recognized co-chair, Tom Csatari, as well as members, Barbara Blough and Bruce Smith, as available for confidential consultations. She reminded all that the easiest way to make a planned gift is to remember Christ Church as a beneficiary in one's will. In addition, the UCC provides comprehensive services and administrative support for deferred gift vehicles such as annuities that provide an income stream during one's life with corpus coming to CCDC upon death. She concluded by noting hope that future planned gifts would ensure financial sustainability for CCDC.

The meeting concluded with moderator Tom Csatari thanking Steve Bensen for all of his work on behalf of the congregation. Steve in turn gave special thanks to Jay Benson for all he does (budget, leases, stewardship, work on FAC, PC, chairing the search and mentioning that he even put the pdf together for today's meeting materials -- an incredibly valuable unsung hero!). He also called out two others who have really been asked to take on a lot these last months, Amy Tietjan Smith (Elders, PC, Search ...) and Karen Williamson (Chair of Congregational Life). At the same time he acknowledged that it would be impossible to thank all the people who are making a meaningful contribution to the life of the church. He recognized Tom Nordberg for his tireless dedication in this period of transition. His energy and vision is truly a blessing to us.

Tom then closed the meeting with a prayer.

The meeting was adjourned just after noon.

Respectfully submitted,
Steve Bensen
3/12/2016