

*First Parish Church*  
*United Church of Christ*

**Date:** November 19,2018

**Present:** Fred Merrill, Moderator; Dee Deranian, Facilities; Cathy Pottle, Member-at-Large; Margie Ives, Stewardship; John Bartel, Member-at-Large; Anne LaDuke, Assistant Moderator; Cathy Zylinski, Personnel; Joe Weaver, Missions; Becky Fleury, Treasurer; Pastor Deborah Roof; Anne Marie Merrill, CE; Reni Harnden, Diaconate

**Guests:** Paul Lindemann; Bill Armstrong; Harry Carter, Pat Crowell, Ryan Lehoullier; Faye Chary

**Opening:** Pastor Deborah

**Minutes:** Motion made by Becky to approve minutes with minor changes, second by Anne Marie and all in favor to accept the October minutes.

- I. **Rehabilitation Update:** Paul Lindemann updated us and states there are no major issues to report. The Steeple is coming back this week! The Steeple will be built in front of the tower over the next few weeks. Anticipate completion this spring.
- II. **Finance:** The finance committee was invited to discuss the budget.
  - a. **Balance Sheet & Analysis** – Becky reports the Capital Campaign money continues to trickle in. She also added a donation line item for the elevator as people are specifically donating to this project.
  - b. **Balance Sheet:** The Phase two capital campaign balance is ~51K . However, this is pending an invoice for ~ 44K for the steeple work. When she receives the go ahead from Larry Krantz she will pay. At that point we'll have used up the phase 2 funds. There will be 2 more invoices after that and we will not have those funds. Paul indicates we should get a payment from LCHIP grant. Also expecting 5-20K in private donations this month. Committed to covering the cost of the tower.

Friends struggling with how to pay for bricks needed to fill in the gaps, supplies and portion of the benches for delivery in Spring.

**c. Budget:**

Went through each line-item and compared to last year – bottom line says we're okay. Projects pledge ~11K low; plate a little higher than anticipated. May have a surplus but likely we'll break even.

Pat Crowell reports she would like to resend status statements to people regarding their pledge for the capital campaign. Many she knows plan not to complete their pledge. Also, pledge status as of 11/18/18 – 42 pledges, last year we had 73. Currently the general fund has \$149,439; Mission \$1,2943; music \$260; phase 2 campaign \$3,600; historical preservation \$1240, historic preservation; we are approximately \$86,000.00 short to balance the budget.

## **2019 Draft Budget:**

Personnel requested change in staffing & a 3% increase for Pastor, asking for \$750/week for substitute Pastor - not asking for a full time Pastor pay as we won't need to pay benefits. Increasing admin assist to 30 hours; pretty much same as last year – There aren't many places to reduce expenses.

We will hold another discussion following worship for the 2019 budget status on December 9<sup>th</sup>. Fred or Anne will make announcement at Worship. Fred will write a Newsletter by Tuesday.

## **III. Recall Meeting Results:**

The task force met (Anne, Cathy Z., Deborah; Cindy) w/ Reverend Slater and started the communication process and dialogue . They will be meeting again Monday – no actionable items to report. The relationship we have in council is what we want modeled in the Congregation. Sunday there was Q & A with Reverend Rankin. Hearing a lack of unity and don't have a common vision. It is felt we need a strategic plan w/ common mission & values.

## **IV. Pastor's Report:**

Special Note: Pastor Deborah challenges council to come to church 15" early to speak/greet several people before worship starts.

Pastor's Report      November 19, 2018

"We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them." Albert Einstein

The **worship service** on November 25 will be "café church". The Deacons will provide various breakfast refreshments which will be available starting at 9:30, along with a hot beverages. The worship space will be set up with tables and chairs. People can enjoy breakfast while we worship and pray together in community!

**Wonder Wednesday** continues to be a blessing for those who attend. We received a "thank you" card from Ernestine, who used to play for our service! She has since moved to Arkansas. It was a testimony to the power of our Wednesday night Wonder Worship Services that someone would thank us! To be sure, when we walk in the light, when we pray together and when we consider the Gospel message, we bless whoever comes to join us.

Dani Allen played for us in October and we are very grateful. She played out of the songbooks that Dani and Debbie donated to the church quite a few years ago. Debbie unearthed them when she was doing inventory.

**Music Program:** Interim Debbie Gline Allen and I have similar theology regarding music in worship. Psalm 100:1, 2: "Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come into his presence with singing." The Bible is full of references of followers praising God in song and with instruments. We are working together to teach songs to the congregation, as well as inviting the congregation to join in singing, even during some anthems. We also envision inviting those who play instruments to offer their musical gifts. On Sunday morning the choir will rehearse in Currier until 9:15 and then go downstairs to continue rehearsing – allowing Currier to be open to the early arrivals. You may have noticed that during worship the anthem is now right before the children's time. This is an intentional move so that our Christian Educators may sing in the choir. And you may also have noticed that when the children go downstairs, Debbie leaves, as well. Rather than a separate "children's choir", we are encouraging all of the children to sing together. So Debbie goes downstairs when the children go down and she teaches all of them to sing. She has reported to Deacons that this is working very nicely.

These are the beginning steps toward a music program that is inclusive, instructive, intergenerational, and diverse.

**Adult Faith Formation** on Tuesday evening is reading the Bible together. We are reading the Book of Acts. I commend this book to all leaders in the church, even if you cannot attend our conversations. Acts describes the early church. It is a young church finding its way. We, too, are finding our way as culture shifts under our feet.

I heard one particular lament on October 21<sup>st</sup> at the Congregational meeting that has given me pause. People miss their friends. **“Where are all the people who used to go to church with us?”** The unfortunate reality is that this downturn in church attendance is cultural and it is widespread. It is not just here at FPC and it is not because of any one pastor. It is an overarching systemic issue in our country today. If you find this hard to believe, do your own poll at your place of work. The statistics I found indicated that in recent years, there’s been a 15 percent drop in regular church attendance. People no longer feel obliged or honor bound to go to church for one thing. For another, churches used to attract families with children. In today’s culture sports have taken over the Sunday morning timeslot. It used to be that there was no competition for what to do on Sunday morning. Today, it’s not the case. What can churches do? Churches need to get creative and they need to try new things. One article said: “Churches need to be get better at communicating why belonging to a community of faith is better than worshipping alone, and then they have to prove it to be true in their own communities. It is one thing to say that community is better than religious isolation, but it needs to be demonstrated. As Jesus says, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). Experts also say that churches need to operate **within their communities** in a way that makes them thankful the churches exist.

## **V. Round Table:**

**Member-at-Large:** John stated that tomorrow is a transgender day of remembrance – keep that community in prayers. John feels we need to readdress the by-laws. Fred indicates we will need a special meeting to do this. Cathy Z. states we need to look at progressive discipline, the Call and By-laws. Fred states this needs to be done thoughtfully and thoroughly after the annual meeting. Should also be in conjunction with the structure committee.

**Stewardship:** Margie reports sonshine soup kitchen sent out information about their fundraising; Margie also states that it is amazing that Cathy Pottle continues to do the Sugar Plum Fair for so many years! Kudos to her!

**Member-at-Large:** Cathy Pottle reports she is glad the Sugar Plum Fair is over. Would like to follow up with complaints (i.e. parking issues).

**Facilities:** Dee Deranian – Not much going on. Emergency exit signs up, trimmed trees in playground; a potential large expense – need new oil tanks inside – it is within the budget – approximately \$5K. Will use Batcheldor’s Fund.

**Clerk:** Linda suggests putting minutes out as public document.

**CE:** Interchurch youth group – next one in December – Atkinson is hosting; advent workshop looking for help, looking for donation of greens, working hard on the pageant this year, carols before church.

**Treasurer:** Becky - follow up on fair – thanks to Liza Duffy donating the mixer machine – challenge to move, not easy. Need 3 good strong people to get the mixer back.

**Missions:** Joe Weaver reports the Thanksgiving Basket project had 16 families. He has a trunk load of food to donate to various organizations. The Angel tree program is next. The plan is to do both adults and children. Zimbabwe – the container we filled 2017 – hasn't made it to its destination – held up because of the transition of leadership in the country. Just recently released, but not made it to the people.

**Personnel:** Cathy Zylinski reports Michelle Guerrin is now the official Administrative Assistant – Office hours have changed a bit; we don't offer any benefits to our employees and there should be more consideration to this. Randy Brown would like to join personnel board. Cathy moves to add Randy to board, second by Becky all in favor.

**Assistant Moderator:** Anne LaDuke announced you can buy La Carretta gift card and money raised will be donated to The Friends of the Meetinghouse.

**Guest:** Ryan Lehoullier discussed events leading to recall and lead to some inactive members wanting to be reinstated just for the vote. We need to consider establishing criteria to do so. We also need to improve the documentation about when and how we reach out to people to guide us on this. Three members are off diaconate.

**Stewardship:** John moves to vote on one simple bylaw change regarding the pastor recall procedure. Remove statement Becky seconds for the sake of discussion. The majority feel that we do need to review the by-laws but it needs to be done carefully and thoughtfully. We need to do so, but not reactionary. They should be looked at by position, not just related to the person in the position. We have a sense of urgency to improve the by-laws. There will be a motion made during the first council meeting after the annual meeting to form a committee to review the bylaws.

***A vote took place and only 2 were in favor of bringing this request to the***

**Stewardship:** Margie – asked if anyone reached out to Harry after his resignation. Fred did reach out via e-mail.

**Paul Lindemann:** Paul announced the "Friends" board includes 5 people – 1 seat termed; he will need another recommendation for the board.

**Moderator:** Fred announced the discussion for sabbatical will be on the top of the agenda next month. We need to focus on the good things we're doing in the Congregation.

**Pastor Deborah** – anonymous cards received in the office wishing FPC a Happy Thanksgiving w/ \$100 gift on behalf of Pat & Dick Plouff. The second card from Ernestine praises FPC as an amazing group and a welcoming place! Good things are happening at FPC!!!

Pastor Deborah closed in prayer.