

Fred Balfour (President) called the regular monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees (BoT) to order at 6:30 pm on Tuesday, December 19th, 2023.

Trustees Present: Fred Balfour (President), Don Barber, Tom Coakley, Valerie Graves (Clerk) Megan McCormick*, Margaret Nichols (Vice President), Rene Rogers*,

Ex- Officio Members of the Board: Emily Richards*, Walt Peck*

Trustees Absent: None

FUSIT Members & Guests: Michelle Waffner*, Matt Hare*

* - indicates that the individual joined by zoom.

Handouts:

Each handout will be included below the related agenda item.

Agenda Item # 1: Welcome and Chalice Lighting

Fred Balfour lit the chalice and Tom Coakley read a selection.

Agenda Item # 2: Congregational Communication Period

Topic: ■ 20231219_Report_December Monthly_Stewardship Team.pdf

Matt Hare: In recent years, the stewardship team has encouraged people to increase their pledges by 10%. The report showed new pledges, new and returning pledges, pledges that increased, pledges that stayed the same, and pledges that decreased with the average for each of those changes. The average increase for those who increased was 13% but the same percentage was more than 33% the year prior. When pledges decrease, they tend to decrease by a larger percentage - more than 30%. Some households decrease to \$0 and that accounts for a loss of around \$23,000-\$27,000. New pledges are relatively small, but when the church loses long time pledges a large amount is lost - losses have been more than gains. Stewardship will have to work hard to encourage pledging. There are 100 households in the congregation that do not have a history of pledging.

Discussion:

- The budget shows around \$310,000 budget and the number in the report is around \$296,000.

Response: In May and April the Board talks to stewardship about what is put in the budget. Stewardship is working throughout the year to meet the budgeted goal. The

budget is correct, but it is also correct that the church should not expect more than the \$290,000.

- There is one person who gives \$20,000 - has that money been received this year?
Response: Yes
- Some of the households that are at \$0 could be in the report twice.
- In the last paragraph - it is written that the best we can expect is \$300,000-310,000 this year. Does that mean this year, the church year of 2023-24?
Response: No, that is the projection for 2024-2025
- Has stewardship gotten a return call from the UUA stewardship consulting?
Response: No, but we will try again.
- It is a tough time of year to get responses.

Agenda Item # 3: Changes to Agenda

- The list of consent agenda items will also include the resolution to establish an ad hoc strategic planning committee with Don Barber, Rene Rogers and Susan Sultan as members.
- The treasurer's report will be reviewed during the team and committee monitoring section of the meeting.
- The Finance Committee report is not in the Board folder, but will be included in the agenda.
- There will be a 10 minute exec session after the meeting.

Agenda Item #4: Visioning Question

The visioning question agenda item provides a time when the Board does not have to make decisions, but can share ideas and inspiration.

This month's question: What does generosity look like?

Discussion:

- Money is a resource that people can share, as well as their time. Generosity can also be showing that you care.
- Generosity is something that requires a sacrifice, but the term is often used in the context of money and time.
- It has to do with being looking beyond one's self and own interest and considering other people and their interests.
- Paying it forward.
- In times of upheaval, which we seem to be in, it can get hard to get people to think outside of themselves because they are focused on survival.

- Generosity can also be generosity of spirit - There are some people who are able to see things in a positive way and recognize the good in people regardless of their mood or situation.
- Sometimes generosity is as simple as a hug - For example, my wife is not walking well now so we are readjusting who does what in our old house. We have grandkids coming and the standards for the house are high. So I have to stop and give a hug. Generosity often has some return benefits.
- Sometimes it can set up a circle, where you get something back from those that benefit and then it feels good to continue.
- There is a difference between generosity and kindness. Where does kindness become generous? Kindness is giving of yourself. When there is a bit of sacrifice it becomes a generosity.
- Material giving is often thought of as generosity, but the way we interact with the world around us and how we assume best intentions is also generosity. We covenant to listen deeply and to give each other and offer the grace to try again when we fail.
- Generosity has to be in tune with what the person needs, not just what we want them to want or what we want to give.
- Generosity is exuded by all those on this screen - for all the time effort and cognitive effort we give to the board.
- Generosity is stopping in the middle of what you are doing and helping.
- There should be a T-shirt for Michelle Waffner (church administrator) that says "let me drop everything and work on your problem."
- An example of paying it forward would be to jump someone's battery and then instead of taking money, asking them to pay it forward. Hopefully that generosity spreads.
- There was a story in the news about a Starbucks where one person paid for the coffee of the person behind and it kept going through the line.
- It is hard to be generous if someone is not okay with where you are. Capitalism makes it hard to feel like you have needs met - there is a need to keep up with everything.
- Generosity requires trust and faith that the future will be okay.
- This conversation makes me think of our longer task of the culture of involvement - this is the seed of that - what prevents us from giving our time and what allows us to.

Agenda Item #5: Consent Agenda

Consent agenda items:

- [12192023_Resolution_Reduce Liability Related to Alcohol Being Served on Premi...](#)
- [20231219_Resolution_Establish 2023-24 Budget Team_Board](#)
- [FUSIT P&L BvA 11.30.23 condensed for public distribution.pdf](#)
- [12192023_Report_December Treasurer's Report_Treasurer.docx](#)
- [20231219-Resolution-Appoint Scott Grover co-chair FinCom-Board](#)

- [20231121_Minutes_Draft Meeting Minutes_Board](#)
- [20231219_Resolution_Establish Strategic Planning Committee_Board](#)

Motion: A motion was made by Margaret Nichols and seconded by Tom Coakley to accept the consent agenda.

The motion passed.

Agenda Item # 6: Monitoring Function - Review of Team and Committee Reports

Handouts: [Team and Committee Reports Folder](#)

Treasurer's Report - Walt Peck

The current financial statements did not give any red flags. They are similar to last year and where they are expected to be. There are lines in the budget that we will have to do work to increase. Rentals are going well. There are no new cash sources - but a group from finance is working on that. A deficit is expected, given the one-time cash carry over of money accrued over the last few years because of lower expenses. Last few years we have budgeted for things that we didn't have, such as a sexton, and an assistant DRE, so there were cost savings. We did not have a minister for a year and there was a gap in time before the current ministry was set up. There is a deficit for this year because the pledge campaign came up short. The budget was established before the total pledges came in. So, the budget had to be adjusted to be in the black without cuts. Money has been moved from times when we did not have expenses to be used when needed.

Other Team and Committee Reports:

Discussion:

- Adult RE asked that trustees consider presenting.
- The engagement and outreach coordinator is resigning - would it be possible to get a close out report about what happened while she was here and any updates to the job description for her successor?

Response: She is planning to stay through January. She is leaving because of a job offering. She has enjoyed her work with the FUSIT community. The last meeting would be an exit interview about any advice she has for the next person in the role.

- If a volunteer stepped in, it would be good to know what is already in process, and could be worked on until the job is filled again.
- Can MVT share the job description so that everyone can help with recruitment?

Response: There may be an internal candidate for the position.

Response: OAT has the job descriptions.

- MVT has said this month and last month and the letter from Matt Hare also said that they would like a statement from the Board about ministry plans for the coming year and beyond. The Board will need to work at the next meeting on a statement for MVT and stewardship.
- There was a meeting last night with MVT for an early review of the financial committee report. It was important to show them before the report was public. There will be a meeting with MVT next month and Margaret Nichols and Don Rakow will set up the agenda.
- From the OAT team -
 - FUSIT did end up finalizing a contract with Shearwater for FUSIT serving as a 501c3 - the total is around \$2000.
 - Also the city of Ithaca has a green new deal funding source - BlocPower - City GND is looking to transition fossil fuel heating systems with heat pumps. They have decided on the Annex - there is funding available and OAT will look into it. If they go ahead, the contract will come to the board. There is some urgency to move along so the funding does not disappear.
 - There have been thefts in the building and people in the building during Sunday. The hospitality team will need to be more vigilant about the doors. The doors should be locked during services, except the garden entrance. The people in the parlor should be aware of that entrance.
 - Could someone stay at the garden entrance through the service?
Response: Yes - it needs to be monitored.
 - Do we have cameras?
Response: Oat is deferring to a recommendation from the reconstructed Safety Team.

Agenda Item #7: Finance Committee: Three year Revenue Projection Report - Fred Balfour

Handouts:

- [20231214b_Report_3-Year Revenue Projection_FINCOM v1.1b Page 1p.pdf](#)
- [20231214b_Report_3-Year Revenue Projection_FINCOM v1.1b Pg 2p.pdf](#)

Finance Committee Chair Nathan Fawcett is dealing with health problems. Scott Grover has agreed to be an interim co-chair assisting Nathan through June. The report was shown as a spreadsheet. The congregation was informed that churches were traditionally funded by pledges but that is changing. Outside income sources were highlighted and a line was included for new outside source revenue. One example was a commercial kitchen that could be rented to food trucks for their food preparation. There are files of what other churches are charging and also data from the Varna community center so that we can do a competitive analysis of rental

rates. A list of projects were shown with information about what the status is and what they require for investment.

A pamphlet for planned giving from Democracy Now was shown to Board members as an example of something the stewardship team can look into.

Discussion:

- Where can this document be found?
Response: The document was sent over email. The finance committee does not want to spread it widely. It will end up in the Board folder for reading by anyone who has the link. But it should not be downloadable or changeable.
- Can the material be watermarked with “draft”?
Response: Yes.
- The demand for rentals is important. The prices being charged are not important if they are not being rented.
- There has been Input from the downtown Ithaca alliance that there is a constant need for one-person offices.
- The endowment forgiving loan is not income - it is reduced expense.

Action Item:

All Board members review the finance report.

Agenda Item #8: Development of a Staff WellBeing Action Plan - Megan McCormick

Handout: [📄 20231219_Resolution_Staff Wellbeing Initiative _Board](#)

The action plan was born out of concerns about staff overwhelm and wanting to take care of staff. There are things that are good organizational practices for the wellbeing of staff. This is the bones of a possible process, but the foundation of the plan is the co-creation with the people who are the focus of it. There are always thoughts about what should happen first.

The plan was briefly shown to the personnel committee and they were curious about why a resolution was needed. They thought this was something that we should already be doing. The timing also needs to be acknowledged. This could be seen as something that should be happening yesterday and is well timed to happen now because of the new structure and level of stress on staff. At the same time, launching something like this could seem like a bandaid/distraction from something that needed to happen to support staff wellbeing. The timing matters. We do not want to launch this proposed plan if it feels like just another thing to give attention to at a time of a lot of stress.

The plan should be led by the people who are the focus and led by their needs not by their efforts - It should be made easy for them. The personnel committee cares deeply that staff feel

supported and have what they need. They are willing to be part of this plan, but might be outside of the scope of that committee.

Discussion:

- The key points include timing. Maybe this would be better to develop after the Board statement on staffing and ministry plans. We need to be sure not to burden the staff.
- This would require data collection and data processing and working to put together a plan.

Motion: A motion was made by Don Barber and seconded by Tom Coakley to adopt the staff wellbeing action plan.

Discussion:

- There should be a motion to table the plan - MVT would like to table it.
- An email went out that said it would be tabled. It would not be good for the Board to go against what was communicated to MVT.
- MVT asked for this to be tabled - they were made aware of the plan at the meeting yesterday. The Board care and concern is appreciated and it is clear that this is coming from a place of concern, but MVT feels that being empowered by the Board as the group that is overseeing ministry and staff, would like time to look at the plan, consider it, and bring ideas before anything is resolved.
- The development of a plan felt urgent from the perspective of the Board because MVT had brought up concerns about staff wellbeing multiple times.
- MVT was asking for information for what the plans are for next year.
- This plan can be discussed next month. The expectation that the Board is going to tell MVT the ministry plans for next year is unrealistic at this time. The Board needs to go through revenue and financial statements and work through the budget. The Board and finance are working hard to come up with funds to keep things as they exist right now, but they cannot predict expenses. We do not have the pledges as the firm foundation. The Board does not want to go through the process in a silo, they will engage MVT and OAT. If the request is to know the ministry staff for next year - The Board cannot confirm that plan until April or May.
- MVT wanted to know the timeline and what to expect. That was helpful.
- Makes sense that the resolution might feel unhelpful because it doesn't answer other questions. But there are other things that we should be doing. But it needs to be the right time for all of you (staff). None of this is good if staff and MVT are feeling like it isn't the right time. The first step will rely on sitting down with staff individually and finding out what the needs are.
- The staff wellbeing plan and the information about job futures are different things, but MVT would like more time to sit with this material. .

Motion: A motion was made by Fred Balfour and seconded by Margaret Nichols to table the previous motion.

Discussion:

- The first step has MVT and staff engaged, If there is no buy-in, then the resolution has to be tabled.
- MVT was struck by the fact that the plan involved MVT from the third step of the process. Response: The chart does not reflect everyone involved. The chart reflects who is responsible and it was better for MVT not to be responsible for some early parts of the plan. It can be amended to be more clear.

The motion passed.

Agenda Item # 9: Adoption of Amended Board Policy Book (BPB) - Don Barber

Handout: [20231219_Discussion Items_Amended Board Policy Book_GovCo](#)

Many of the past discussion items are highlighted in yellow. Part of the process should be to adopt those changes and move on. There are ten items that could take a little time to be discussed. It could be done tonight or online through Slack, over email, or in the document itself.

Discussion:

- If we can move quickly - it would be good to finish this tonight.

Each item on the list was reviewed:

- Section 1.3.4 - accepted.
- Section 1.3.6 - Language will be inserted to reference the bylaws.
- Section 1.3.8 - Communication Committee - is this a permanent committee?

Discussion:

- Should the communication policy committee be in this document at all?
- Was the committee ad hoc?
- Does the committee currently exist?
Response: No - there is only the Board liaison.
- The committee should be kept in the BPB.
- The committee should be removed if it doesn't exist.
- If the committee is in the BPB it needs a charge - Is there one?

Response: Yes. the communication committee advises the board.

The review of the document continued:

- Section 1.5.3 - The social justice council will be removed because it doesn't exist. The social justice leadership team is active instead. The red text in the section was viewed in the BPB and included some wording improvements.
- Section 2.6 - Should include MVT - the change was accepted.
- Section 3.6.1 - Add endowment to the budget team - the change was accepted.
- Section 3.6.1.2 - The vision of ministry (VoM) and Budget must be in alignment and developed together.
- Section 4.2.3 - The word "all" will be removed.
- Section 4.3.3 - The annual review of teams is done by MVT and the analysis is provided in writing.

Discussion:

- For every team in FUSIT MVT has to write up an annual evaluation? That is a lot of work. Is this a full scale performance review?
- In the past teams haven't been asked to put together goals for the coming year. This addresses that. Teams should have goals and they reflect on how they did.
- MVT could facilitate the process
- The review information could be in the team's end of the year report and MVT could prompt teams to make sure it is included.

Motion: A motion was made by Don Barber and seconded by Fred Balfour to adopt the Board Policy Book as amended.

The motion passed.

Discussion:

- The changes that will be made to the document before adoption are in the handout and in the document itself.

Agenda Item # 10: MVT and OAT Meetings on Finance Committee Revenue Projection Report - Fred Balfour

The report was received enthusiastically by MVT. It was also shared with OAT and reviewed earlier in the meeting with the Board.

Discussion:

- Oat did go through the report and questions were put together. All the activities will require more time from the church administrator and possibly the sexton as well. Response: Finance is aware of that and will review the proposals with Michelle for her input.

- Kathy Hopkins gave the contact information for an individual in rental management who could take a portion of the income to manage the rentals and take care of issues that arise.
- What were the ideas from the congregational conversation?
Response: The ideas that show up on line 17 mostly came from those conversations. Interestingly there seems to be an interest in recycling sales. There were also a number of constructive comments. If we did everything, it would be great but a big lift of volunteers.
- There are notes and reports from both congregational conversations - there was a wide open sense of let's look at this and work on this.
- We didn't want people to come out with doom and gloom, and they came out with a sense of ideas to work on.
- The summary of the congregational conversations about revenue generating ideas will be in next month's Board folder. The Board will need to talk about fundraising at the next meeting.

General agenda items for the coming month:

- Staff wellbeing initiative
- Fundraising
- Goals for the new year
- Auction revenue and new projects needed to fill that budget line - the Board needs someone to take the lead on that.
- What are the plans for ministry?
Response: Straight talk about the process might be enough, but maybe the deep question could be related to the ministry plans for next year. Some folks would love to know we are going to have a settled minister so the Board should talk about the reality of that at some point.
- Winter Open Question
- The Board policy book calls for someone who speaks for the board. The Board needs to discuss who that should be.
- There was an email about Reverend Peaches and was responded to and will be forwarded to MVT.

Agenda Item # : Closing Words

The closing words were read by Tom Coakley.

Meeting adjourned at 8:42 pm.

Minutes taken by Valerie Graves, 12/19/2023.