

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Meeting Minutes

September 14, 2021 – 7:00-9:00 p.m. on Zoom

- Members: Heather O'Connor (President), Barb Chapman (Vice President), Salem Macknee, Doug Shier, Becky Wilkes, Caroline Sherman, Joe Swain
- Ex Officio: Reverend Thom Belote (Minister/Chief of Staff), Andrew Wright (Treasurer), Bill Poteat (Assistant Treasurer), Anna Reine (Secretary)
- Guests: Glenn Davis, Jay Johnson, Rae (Aline) Dawson
- Absent: Bianca Rodriguez (Past President)
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Chalice Lighting

Andrew Wright read the poem "Hope/Desire for World Peace," by Sajia Alaha Ahrar. Heather read the mission statement and covenant.

Consent Agenda

The Board approved the following items

- **Approval of Agenda with the addition of the Annual Auction as a discussion item**
- **August meeting minutes**
- **Committee on Ministry 2021 plan for Minister's evaluation**

2022 FY Final Budget Discussion and Approval

This item was tabled until next month's meeting because the Board members only received the latest version of the budget on the day of the meeting. Andrew pointed out that he and Dana still have a few things to finish up this fiscal year, so this would still allow the budget to be voted on in the meeting immediately following the end of the fiscal year

Long range maintenance plan

This item was also tabled until next month's meeting to give the Board members an opportunity to look over the Maintenance Reserves Plans. It was suggested that this could be discussed with the Finance Committee before next month's meeting.

HF and Finance Committees Recommendation

The Board went into closed session to discuss the Finance Committee's recommendation for increasing the minister's salary to be more in line with the UUA's recommendations for congregations of Community Church's size.

Following the closed session, Barb made a motion that:

- Rev. Thom's salary will be increased over the next two fiscal years until it is consistent with the midpoint salary that the UUA recommends for the minister of a Midsize III congregation. In FY2022, the ministerial salary will be increased by half the amount necessary to match the Midsize III guidelines, an increase of roughly 4.4% from its current value. In FY2023, the salary will be further increased until it matches that year's UUA recommendation for the midpoint salary.
- In addition, in FY2022, Rev. Thom will receive a \$2000 contribution towards his sabbatical, to be used at his discretion.
- When the finalized budget is presented to the Board at the October meeting, it should reflect this increased salary.

Salem seconded this motion, and the Board unanimously approved it.

Notes on closed session:

- *The issue under discussion was the proposed increase in the minister's salary until it matches the midpoint of the UUA's recommendations.*
- *Recently, Bill pointed out that there are risks to having put off the increase in Rev. Thom's compensation for as long as we have and that it is part of our fiscal responsibility to give credit for his hard work.*
- *This discussion did not happen this past year because Rev. Thom requested that it be delayed to prioritize making sure that the rest of the staff's salaries would be increased to be consistent with the UUA's recommendations for their positions.*
- *Heather pointed out that Thom has tirelessly and selflessly advocated for his team before his own salary needs. He has done tremendous work prior to and throughout COVID and we are so very pleased with his leadership. The Committee on Ministry's survey and their report on the congregation's responses also points to universal approval of Thom's leadership.*
- *A meeting of the Finance Committee and some members of the Board developed the suggestion that the minister's salary should be increased over the next two years up to the midpoint recommendation for the minister of a Midsize III congregation. For FY2022, this would entail a 4.4% increase of \$4100. It was also recommended that an additional one-time \$2000 contribution would be made towards Rev. Thom's sabbatical, to be used at his discretion.*
- *Andrew explained that we have previously ensured that Rev. Thom's salary was in line with the midpoint recommendation for a Midsize II church, but we have grown into a Midsize III church, so there's now a gap between Thom's salary and his recommended salary.*
- *Rev. Thom's current salary is \$93,583, which is about \$8000 below the Midsize III church midpoint recommendation. The proposed \$4100 would about half make up this difference.*
- *The budget currently has a deficit of around \$25,000. To eliminate this deficit through pledges, around a 5% increase in pledges would be needed, which is not outside the range of past increases in pledges over a year. Andrew is in favor of the proposed*

increase to Thom's salary despite the deficit, since we have some time to make up the increase in pledges.

Round table comments:

- *Doug: Thom is largely responsible for increasing the size of the congregation and should be rewarded for that. He was also gracious about adjusting his plans and deferring his sabbatical when the coronavirus became a concern.*
- *Joe: Joe was part of the committee that looked into this and is in support of the suggestion to make up half the difference this year.*
- *Salem: She concurs that Thom went above and beyond this year, which allowed the congregation to stay engaged. At the meeting with the Financial Committee, she had wanted to immediately bump his salary all the way up in a single year, but she acknowledges that Thom would probably not support this.*
- *Becky: She agrees that this is reasonable and needed.*
- *Merry-K: She says this is absolutely appropriate and has her full support.*
- *Barb: She supports this. She does raise the point that these sorts of decisions shouldn't be made with a particular person in mind. If our minister's salary gets too far below the midscale recommendation, it would make it very difficult if Thom left and we had to advertise for a new minister because we wouldn't have a competitive salary. Furthermore, if we had to advertise at a significantly higher salary, the congregation would wonder why we would be needing to pay an unknown new minister more than Thom was being paid.*
- *Caroline: She concurs and thinks we should keep to the policy of keeping positions compensated fairly. We are making a commitment in the future about something where we don't yet know the exact number, and we're committing to make sure we cover this.*

End of close session

Nominating Committee/Board Election Update

The Nominating Committee will nominate Jay Johnson, Glenn Davis, and Nathan Kosiba for the Board. Glenn and Jay attended this meeting as potential future Board members. Glenn is interested in the Vice President position. The committee will make an announcement of these nominations to the congregation, and at that point, other members can also choose to run.

Stewardship Task Force Update

Barb thinks that the Stewardship Task Force is close to winding up.

Bonnie Nelson and Barb have been working on a plan for revisioning what's currently the Endowment Committee. Major bullet points to discuss with Endowment Committee include:

- Asking the Endowment Committee if it's willing to morph into the Legacy Committee. The Endowment Fund would be under the Legacy Committee.
- In addition to the Endowment Fund, the Capital Fund (established by Board policy) and possible other funds in the future would be under the Legacy Committee
- What would be Legacy Committee's responsibility? The Committee would have a responsibility to meet with senior member/donor contacts in the congregation. Committee members would undergo a training with Thom for making "pastoral visits." The Committee would be responsible for making these visits, recruiting others from

outside committee to make pastoral visit, and distributing and filing donor intent forms. The Legacy Committee would also coordinate with Finance Committee, the Board of Trustees and the people controlling Capital Fund.

- What if Endowment Committee members aren't interested in becoming part of Legacy Committee? We know there's support among at least some members. However, anyone who's not interested in being on the Legacy Committee could still stay on the Endowment Committee until their term expired.

The fundamental purpose of this fund is to ensure the continued existence of our church through catastrophic events.

Discussion

- Doug raised the point of continuity. While it's good to make contact with people who intend to leave money to the church, we need to make sure that the committee doesn't lose track of this information as committee membership changes.
- Merry-K asked about the intent of "pastoral visits." Barb clarified the misnomer, explaining that these kinds of "donor visits" are caring visits that help us stay connected with senior members of our community and that give them space to share what's important to them about the church. Anyone making such a visit would need to be trained on how to do this well. Thom explained that when we hired Mark Ewert as a consultant during our financial campaign, he reminded us that every visit to ask people for long-term gifts to the church is a "pastoral visit." Merry-K expressed that she had been concerned about making sure we don't come across as asking people for money when they're at a particularly vulnerable time, but she was reassured by the comments about the training that would occur.
- Glenn asked about clarification of whether this is referring to all "pastoral visits." Thom clarified that these aren't visits done when someone is actually ill. This is simply one aspect of coordinating the way that we do stewardship. These forms are handled confidentially and are typically end-of-life gifts.
- Jay asked about what the stimulus for these visits is. Thom clarified that this is completely separate from the Caring Committee.
- Barb offered to talk to Jay and Glenn offline to get them up to speed about Stewardship Task Force.
- Merry-K pointed out that when new people are confused, this may indicate that congregation will also be confused by the terminology used.
- Doug asked if there will be a Stewardship Committee that would interface with other financially-oriented committees. Barb said yes, that's the proposal.

Day of Service Update

When Rae first volunteered to take on the role of leading the 2022 Community Day of Service,, she had a couple of conversations with Mary-Beth Powell and Bill Rote about what the position entails. The Master Committee will be especially important because she doesn't have a co-chair. Her core skills are analytical, but she'd love to have someone help out who is great at fun and clever communications. Mary-Beth and Bill's schedule for Rae involved attending the September Board meeting to confirm the date of the Day of Service.

Proposed date: March 5, 2022

Proposed theme: Baseball “Knock it Out of the Park” (proposed by Bill)

Master committee members: Katie Heineman, Cheryl Diegel, Melva Okun (maybe), Bonnie Gilliom, Mike Gilliom, Rita White. The first three are returning master committee members who can pass on knowledge about how this has been done in the past.

Discussion

- Heather expressed that she loves this idea. She will talk to Rae privately about how she can best support her.
- Thom said the theme is a home run and a grand slam!
- Joe raised a concern about whether there might be a Carolina-Duke game on this date. After further discussion, it was determined that this this is probably not the case, although the final schedule hasn't come out yet for home games. Additionally, a Duke game wouldn't conflict with a daytime event like the Day of Service.
- Barb let Rae know that she will have a Liaison from the Board to her committee. This role may not be assigned yet for this year, so the Board will get back to Aline Rae and let her know who this will be.

Minister's Update

Staff pulse check

The staff is doing very well. They're busy but energized, particularly to be seeing people in person again. Glenn Mehrbach is over-the-moon about doing choir rehearsals again. Marion was so excited to have the first youth group meeting of the year. The first in-person staff meeting was today, and they were able to have an in-person meeting.

Covid/weekly live services

Thom is confident that we're doing the right thing.

- 170 people attended 4th of July service. With the delta variant in August, attendance has dropped to closer to 115 people per service. People were very pleased with the outdoor Water Communion service.
- We started livestreaming on August 15 and Dana has helped to streamline. We hired a youth from the Greensboro church, Logan, as a consultant on livestreaming, and he has been instrumental in helping us get the right equipment. Thom thinks that livestream numbers will increase from their current numbers (which are in the twenties and thirties).
- There's been a return to virtual coffee hour, in addition to the in-person coffee hour. There have been about 20 people at the first two virtual coffee hours.
- The staff is analyzing the building use policies and protocols. Marion and Kat have put together a very good protocol for how they would handle a covid outbreak. Thom is now putting together something similar for Sunday services and other church programs.
- We'll continue to have only a single service until delta breaks, at which time we'll consider moving to two service. Offering quality virtual services is difficult to coordinate with offering two services.

Discussion of work load

- Thom says that the hybrid approach is somewhat like ministering to two congregations.

- Barb expressed concerns about how much work this is requiring from Thom. After the in-person service, he uploads the video to YouTube, adds timestamps, etc., which typically takes until around 3:45
- When Glenn Merhbach put together the videos for entirely virtual service in the past, he was sometimes finishing at 2 am/3 am Saturday to make sure service was posted by Sunday. It was an all-day effort, and there's a lot of work behind the scenes. Thom says he feels that the amount of time and work put into this during the pandemic was part of why we're in a good place now. Some other churches even bought the rights to use our performances of hymns from the virtual services because they were so well produced.
- Barb suggests that maybe people should say two good things before saying any critical things. People need to understand that they're being a little hard on staff.
- Heather asks if we should ask for a volunteer that can help. Thom says right now he would rather not. He would consider the notion of hiring a tech guru. At the moment, all of the staff are doing extra things.

Sabbatical

- Thom has written a contract for a stand-in sabbatical minister and offered it to Rev. Alison Eskildsen, who is one of our newest members and was on the pulpit on Sept. 5. Alison has expressed her willingness to fill this role.
- Thom had been planning to take a sabbatical in fall of 2020 but will take his sabbatical in January-March of this year. We have \$21,000 in Ministerial Transition Reserves, and one of the purposes of those funds is for ministerial sabbaticals.
- The overall cost will be around \$10,000.
- Alison's responsibilities will include nine Sunday services, pastoral care and emergency visits up to a certain number of hours (with an additional hourly rate for any work above this set amount of time), and 3-4 meeting per week. She won't be working fulltime during this period but she'll be around enough for it to feel like ministerial coverage.
- Merry-K, asked how livestreaming and recorded services will happen when Thom's on sabbatical. Thom says we have 3 months to figure this out.
- Thom will run the sabbatical contract by Heather and the Board will confirm it via email rather than waiting until the next meeting. It will be officially ratified at a future Board meeting, allowing it to be included in the minutes, which is good for archival reference. (Andrew also says that it is possible for the Board to delegate signing of a contract.)

Auction

- Thom was unable to find someone to take over from Don and Susan as auction chair. He asked Cathy Cole, who said no and that this is a job for someone who is retired, not someone who works full-time.
- Heather put an ad in the email announcements or order of service to see if anyone would volunteer to shadow Don and Susan for the rest of this year and/or take it on next year.

Check in

Process Evaluation

How did you feel before vs. after meeting (what changed for you)

- Barb says that Heather did a wonderful job of preparing the agenda in a way that allowed the meeting run smoothly
- The meeting caused Doug to feel proud of the church
- Glenn and Jay expressed gratitude for being able to attend

Chalice Extinguishing

Andrew read a poem by Sajia Alaha Ahrar “Instead of Hate, May Love Rain Down”.