

FUUSN Board of Trustees

Tuesday, May 8, 2018
Children's Chapel, 7:30 PM

Staff Erin Splaine, Minister Rowan VanNess, DLRE	Visitors Susan Bartlett, Operations Laurel Farnsworth, Building and Grounds Mike Foley Anne Watson-Born Jonathan Reumann Demie Stathoplos Jon Reusser
Board Cathy Morocco, Chair Eric Haas, Vice Chair Amalia Basch, Youth Brian Burba, absent Josie Greene Chris Krebs Leah Lakomski, Youth, absent Brooke Foucault Welles	
Clerk Kit Ryan	

Highlights

Discussed a report by Foley-Baker, Inc. on the urgent need to rebuild the organ.

Based on reviewing the year's agendas and minutes, genated a list of the Board's accomplishments, work to continue, and concerns to address in the coming year.

Invocation/Chalice lighting/Covenant. 7:32PM.

Staff Updates

Rowan VanNess

- Rowan recognized the good work being done behind the scenes by Dani Patrick and Beth Walton, and is glad that both are planning to stay at FUUSN for the coming year.

- The Youth did a good job with their recent Bridging service. All are getting ready for the Coming of Age service May 20. Because the older students have been busy with other activities, Rowan and the RE staff have organized activities appropriate for the broad age range of the combined K-5 classes. They are planning to build a maze this coming Sunday.
- Congregants who are having meetings in the building on weekdays often come by Rowan's office to borrow her chalice. Since that option will not be available after she leaves this summer, she has acquired new chalices and put one each in the Chapel, the Alliance Room, and the Parlor.
- The Adult Faith Development [AFD] team had its first "Reflect and Connect" quiet meditation April 22. Rowan herself had not gone, but three people present at the meeting had attended it. They reported that fifteen to twenty people had been there, and that it was a peaceful, calming time. Another is planned in May.

Erin Splaine

- Erin is spending time "doing the heavy work of preparing the budget."
- The "New to UU" session and new member potluck were both well-attended. Brooke hosted the latter and said that 15 or 16 people came to her house.
- At the upcoming Sunday service [5/13] new members will be recognized and a baby dedicated.
- Sam Foster has gotten the Realm database working well and thinks that it can handle the functions still being performed by the Icon database. The decision to transfer those functions and relevant data lies with the treasurer and the consulting members who initially set up Icon.
- Other noteworthy recent church events were Helen Lein's memorial service and Mandy Beale's ordination ceremony.
- The search for a new DLRE is proceeding. Two promising candidates have been identified and video interviews are scheduled. The Search committee now includes Susan Bartlett [chair], Bruce Burba [Youth], Andrew Morse, Stephanie Kendall, and Christine Lookner. The last has been nominated to the BoT and will have to withdraw from the committee if she is elected. Erin has one more person she wants to invite to join the committee, but has not had a substantive conversation yet.

Board Updates

Annual Budget Drive [ABD]: Our goal is \$585K. The total pledge amount as of late this afternoon was \$535,122, which is 8.5% short of the target. We are expecting additional donations from members who pledged the previous year. Even if we reach the target, the Board's goal of eliminating a structural deficit and generating a balanced budget will require some cuts. The Finance Committee discussed the deficit with the congregation at the 2017 Annual Meeting, and also discussed it in their 2017 Annual Report.

Procedural

March minutes: Chris moved to accept minutes of the March 2018 meeting pending one correction by Josie; Josie seconded; passed unanimously

Generative

Report on the health of our organ [Implications for Stewardship]. Anne Watson-Born and Mike Foley, of Foley-Baker, Inc., Tolland CT

Handout: “Organ Status” report in letter dated 4/3/18 to Anne Watson-Born from Mike Foley

Background: Foley-Baker is a well-respected firm specializing in tuning, repairing, and restoring pipe organs. Its owner and principal craftsman, Michael Foley, has been working on FUUSN’s organ for some ten years and recently re-inspected it at the request of Anne Watson-Born, our Music Director.

Mike reviewed the history of our organ. The organ was built and installed by the Hook and Hastings company of Weston, MA; many examples of their instruments are still in use. The church itself is notable as one of the designs of the architectural firm Cram and Ferguson. Although that firm’s works are considered very fine historic structures—other projects include the original John Hancock building in Back Bay, Marsh Chapel at Boston College, and the Bourne and Sagamore Bridges over Cape Cod Canal--in our case the space set aside for the organ was merely roughed out and not designed with the needs of a pipe organ in mind. This situation, Mike tells us, is quite common in New England.

The spaces used for the organ pipes was not designed for the “health” of the organ’s pipes, as they are unfinished, uninsulated, and to some extent unlit. Of the two main chambers, the one on the west side of the chancel [nearer the Parish Hall] is more subject to wide changes in temperature, air flow, and humidity, yet houses the “Swell Division”—the groups of pipes that are more prone to change pitch under these circumstances. This issue has been affecting the organ since 1911 when it was installed. From bitter experience, the Foley-Baker craftsmen know that around 20% of the pipes simply can’t be tuned. It is a tribute to the skill of our organist Carson Coombs, whom Mike praised very highly, that most people in the congregation don’t perceive any difficulty with the instrument.

Mike commented wryly that the dedication ceremony and performance occurred in early October 1911, when the weather was very likely to have been mild and the instrument’s pipes had the best chance of being in tune. Laurel noted that the windows

in the pipe space have been insulated, as Foley-Baker recommended some five years ago.

Mike continued that the organ was built when electrically-actuated mechanisms were first being used. The designs are very primitive by today's standards, and replacement parts are not available; custom-making them would be prohibitively expensive, and they would not work well with modern control systems anyway.

Overall, his recommendations are:

- 1] remove and recondition the usable pipes;
- 2] insulate and finish the pipe chambers;
- 3] reinstall pipes, putting the Swell Division in the east chamber and the larger, more stable Great division in the west chamber;
- 4] upgrade mechanisms for modern electronic controls; and
- 5] replace console. Because it will be electronic and not mechanical, the keyboard console will be much smaller and can be put anywhere, even on wheels so that it can be moved depending on the situation.

Such a project would likely mean that the organ would be out of use around a year.

Mike toured the organ with the Board and pointed out some of the organ's parts and their attendant issues. Additionally, it was noted that the openings from the pipe chambers face one another across the chancel, rather than being directed out into the sanctuary. In response to a query from Laurel, Mike confirmed that best organ sound would result with the openings and pipes facing out, not sideways. A structural engineer would have to inspect and review the building's structural plans before new openings could be created and the pipes re-oriented. But the obvious time to undertake such a project would be while the instrument was being rebuilt.

After Mike's departure, discussion continued. Replacement and relocation of the control console would free up a considerable amount of space in the chancel, a large portion of which is now occupied by the large apparatus of keyboards and stops sunk in a pit. Reconfiguration of the chancel could make possible a design to increase accessibility.

Between Foley-Baker's estimate of around \$800,000 for the organ reconstruction, and additional expenditures for finishing the chambers and rebuilding the chancel, this would be a capital project likely costing in excess of \$1 million. It can't really be done incrementally. Keeping in mind that construction costs have been steadily rising, no advantage is to be gained by delaying.

It was obvious to all that a project of this magnitude will require a concerted capital campaign. Eric suggests that Carson might be asked to put on demonstration for the

congregation, of the ranks of pipes that he has learned to avoid because they don't play well or are out of tune.

Generative

Our accomplishments as a Board; looking backward and forward

Cathy introduced this end-of-the-year exercise during her first year as chair as a way to recognize work accomplished and set priorities for work yet to be done. Board members prepared for this conversation by reviewing the year's meeting agendas and minutes. They came prepared to describe our accomplishments, decide which of our open initiatives and tasks should be continued by the next Board, and cite any surprises or concerns. In doing so, we tacitly recognize one of the year's initiatives by using the Dropbox account set up by the archiving project, which contained all the relevant documents.

Meeting attendees voiced their thoughts in turn. Josie served as scribe; the following summarizes the Board's thinking captured that evening.

2017/18 Board Accomplishments

1. Our Financial Summit in October 2017 brought together stakeholders to develop a broader view of FUUSN's financial affairs and to identify action items by consensus. First importance was given to establishing a Stewardship Council to provide year-round attention to fundraising. The second priority was more engagement in congregational care and outreach to promote member connection.
2. Created a Budget Drive Team to support the core leaders of this year's Annual Budget Drive. Meetings began well before the ABD was underway. Three co-chairs were recruited for the drive and the Budget Drive Team continued to support them as it progressed. Experience gained through this process can serve as a model for a future permanent Stewardship Council.
3. Encouraged collaboration by several financial committees to revise FUUSN's finance policies, especially around spending and borrowing from our endowment. Approved a final comprehensive set of policies and enabling By-law amendments to be approved at the Annual Meeting.
4. Developed a new Board Covenant to embody our commitment to deep listening and staying in relationship when disagreement develops.

5. Guided the congregation through a healthy process addressing a proposed resolution to change the Society's official name. Inclusive, respectful discussions allowed congregants to express a wide range of viewpoints, some quite strongly held. The final vote was close and was accepted by all without rancor.
6. Encouraged the re-energized Legacy Team, which helps members plan for including FUUSN in their estate plan.
7. Provided continuing support for the Adult Faith Formation team, which is finding ways to enhance the spiritual life of our congregation
8. Launched a Safe Congregation program, with two Board and two Ops Council members
9. Chartered the Governance Institutional Memory Committee to establish a working archive of Board and governance documents, for preservation and future access.
10. Deliberated and accepted an invitation for FUUSN to join five other local congregations in the local branch of the Refugee Immigration Ministry, which provides concrete help for families seeking asylum in the USA.

Work to Continue in 2018-19

1. Continue to develop and populate a broad-based, year-round Stewardship Council that will collaborate with other FUUSN groups to build sustainable fundraising. To this end, an early debriefing with this year's ABD team was suggested, to learn from their experience.
2. Deepen the Board's communication with the congregation, and foster outreach for congregational care.
3. Work with the music and buildings programs to explore the possibility of rebuilding the organ in conjunction with increasing the building's accessibility. Because this will require a Capital Campaign, a larger conversation with the congregation concerning its priorities will be necessary.
4. Continue to support efforts to create a fully inclusive community by the Welcoming Congregation and Multicultural Ministry initiatives. Support diversity efforts in our religious education program.
5. Support the Minister's goal of establishing a strategic planning group to prepare realistic goals for FUUSN's future staffing changes, administration, building

management and other needs. A corollary to this concrete work may include clarifying our mission and vision.

6. Continue to refine and shorten the new Board Covenant.

7. Continue to identify ways to manage interpersonal and congregational conflict.

Concerns

Many topics are brought to the Board's attention in the course of the year. It is challenging to preserve time for strategic planning and consideration of FUUSN's mission and vision. At the same time, the press of business means that topics are considered but not resolved. Establishing a mechanism for tracking uncompleted tasks and setting deadlines for decision would address this.

Executive Session. Began at 9:41PM

Close

Meeting adjourned: 9:55PM