



Minutes of the Congregational Meeting November 15, 2020

Roll Call

Congregation members joined a Zoom meeting.

Participants were asked to rename themselves with first and last name.

Participants were asked to enter names of all participating on one computer as the 'Participant Name' in Zoom.

Participants were instructed how to vote if multiple persons on the same zoom session had different votes from each other.

84 participants counted by Zoom.

Catalina Ontiveros called roll to create a full list of participants.

All participants other than Carrie were muted. Participants are asked to use the chat feature to communicate.

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Council President Carrie Escamilla at 12:20 pm.

Opening Prayer

Pastor Paul to give opening prayer

Approval of Agenda

Carrie shared the agenda as a screen share.

It was moved and seconded to approve the agenda. Cat launched a Zoom Poll for the approval. The agenda was approved unanimously.

Approval of November 2019 Bi-Annual Meeting Minutes

Carrie asked for any changes to the minutes from the participants. There were no changes suggested.

Moved and seconded to approve the minutes as presented in the annual report. Cat launched a Zoom poll for this motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Election of New Congregational Council Members – 5 Adults

Adults nominated before were introduced: John Bost, Tony Endozo, Mary McCoy, Ron Mixon, Ben Setzer.

Nominations requested from the floor. There were no nominations made from the floor.

By the constitution, if the number of candidates is equal to the number of spots on council to be filled then the election of these persons may be called.

Election of New Congregational Council Members – 1 Youth

Youth introduced and asked to say hello: Isabella Freeman and Avery Corley.

Nominations were requested from the floor. No extra nominations were received.

Carrie reminded participants how multiple participants on one device can 'split' their vote. She announced the dial in number for those who wish to vote by phone.

Cat launched a Zoom poll for this election. The poll was closed, but the results will be announced later to allow for phone in votes.

Approval of 2020-2021 Fiscal Year Budget

Staff and family members left the main meeting and entered a 'breakout room ' in Zoom so that they would not be present for the budget discussion.

Carrie shared a copy of the budget through a screen share. She then discussed details of the proposed budget.

The budget is for \$595,193 income and \$595,193 expenses, a balanced budget. There is a 2.5% decrease from the previous fiscal year.

Carrie discussed the pattern of giving during the time in which the congregation was not holding in person worship. Some reductions in income have been seen, but the those have not been evenly distributed among all sources. Simply Giving has remained even. The biggest reductions were in free offerings. Based on reductions in giving during the summer, the Finance Committee considered various scenarios. These ranged from a 25% to a 10% reduction in income other than Simply Giving. Different groups and departments were asked to look carefully at their budgets and propose savings where possible. The final decision was to project a 10% reduction in income, other than Simply Giving. With the budget savings proposed for expenses, there would still be a deficit of \$15,000.

To have a balanced budget, the council approved to include in the proposed budget an increase to other income. This \$15,000 adjustment represents a potential need to "borrow" from our undesignated cash on hand. The term "borrow" is used, because it is our hope that once we return to in-person worship and COVID-19 comes less of a concern, we will replenish these funds back into undedicated cash on hand.

To clarify, the undedicated cash on hand represents surpluses in cash from previous years which have built up to approximately \$140k. At a minimum, we always want to have about \$65k on hand to account for unexpected expenses or the loss of our renting tenant. This leaves \$75k of undedicated cash on hand. The \$15,000 would be borrowed against that amount.

Carrie asked for questions about the proposed income budget for 2019-2020. There were no questions from the floor about the income side of the budget.

Carrie then presented the expense side of the budget. She mentioned several specific reductions incorporated into the proposed budget:

- Benevolence – Our Synod pledge was reduced by 5% or \$3,042. This decrease is a result of the projected decrease in our income for giving.
- Facilities – Increases of \$1,200 in Utilities and \$3,200 in Maintenance & Repairs. In addition, there is a new line, “COVID Related Response”. This new addition of \$5,855 represents costs directly associated with COVID-19 such as cleaning and equipment purchases.
- Administration – An increase of \$5800 to account for fees associated with our Simply Giving program, offset by a reduction in budget for office supplies
- Personnel - Staff were given a 4% increase distributed based on merit increase recommendations made by the Personnel Committee. This amount also accounts for the elimination of an Outreach Coordinator from the previous year and a pay adjustment for our In-Reach/Sunday School Coordinator.
- A decrease \$8,308 for benefits was also budgeted to account for Pastor’s Paul’s wife moving to Medicare as her primary insurance. There were slight increases in staff benefits due to rising survivorship benefit costs. There is also a decrease of \$118 to that account for payroll withholding taxes.
- Programs – Based on the submitted budgets from our ministry areas:
 - Faith Formation – \$9,250 reduction
 - Worship and Music - \$7,300 reduction
 - Fellowship \$1,000 reduction
 - The remaining reductions are in Congregational Care and Stewardship.
- Notable reduction due to COVID/suspension of in person worship are:

- \$1,500 each in youth activities, youth scholarship and transportation
- \$1,400 in Sunday School supplies
- \$1,000 in VBS supplies
- \$1,000 in Fellowship directly attributable
- \$3,000 in printing cost for bulletins
- \$2,000 in equipment maintenance
- \$1,000 in worship scholarship

Questions were requested about the proposed expense budget for 2019-2020?

Carrie discussed that Council approved operating on a continuation of last year's budget because we could not hold a congregational meeting in Spring.

There was a question about whether the budget numbers, particularly Faith Formation would be sufficient if we do begin in-person youth activities. Mary McCoy answered that we believe that the budget will cover expenses until July 2021 when the next fiscal year begins.

There was a question about our income and expenses in the first few months of the year. Both income and expenses were down. The budget seems to be close to the actual experience. Mary provided numbers for income and expenses. At the end of October we are behind by \$5,300 (income minus expenses). However we usually do not pull even until later in the year in normal years. We do seem to be in good shape. We have received 92.5% of budgeted income so far. Expenses have been down about 85%.

Increases in utilities were based on last year. The problem is that, even though we are not meeting for services, the staff is still present so utilities are still being used. Also some music groups are using the building to record performances for support of the recorded services.

Is it reasonable to assume that Simply Giving would continue at the same level? Many people are retired and might be changing their contributions since they are on fixed incomes. Mary McCoy responded that we have not seen changes in current users of Simply Giving. There has been a drop in 'envelope giving'. We

had two real bad months, but most months have been ok. October has been down again.

Approval of this budget would include approval of using the undedicated funds as proposed in the budget.

It was moved and seconded to approve the budget as presented. Gina Crittenden launched a Zoom poll to solicit voting on the motion.

The budget was approved as presented: 99% approved, 1% did not approve, one abstention.

The staff members and their families were readmitted to the main meeting from the breakout room.

Informational Items

Update on Re-opening of in person worship services

Carrie discussed the congregation's response to the Covid crisis. This included the organization of the COVID-19 Task Force and the survey that the task force to query the congregation.

The task force used guidelines from the CDC, ELCA, Southeastern Synod and our Insurance provider. They looked data from the nation, our state, our county, and the surrounding counties. Using all this guidance, they made recommendations to the council and the council unanimously voted to approve these recommendations to use as their guide to safely reopen the church.

Carrie named the members of the Task Force and thanked them for their contribution: John Bost, who served as the chair of the task force, Paul Christiansen, Gina Crittenden, March Duclos, Beth Ebert, Ken Eggers, Tony Endozo, Donna Garges, Ron Mixon, Janice Swinford and myself. This was no easy task and a task few people might feel called to serve with.

There were over 200 responses to the survey. Carrie discussed an overview of the results of the survey. She then discussed the report created by the task force. The report was accepted by Council and has been used to guide decisions.

Another survey was sent out recently to find what the members of our congregation are thinking currently about returning to in-person worship. Only 31% felt comfortable about returning for in-person worship. About 30% said 'maybe' they would be comfortable. 39% said they would not be comfortable returning to in-person worship. On a second question, 26% of respondents said they would volunteer to help with putting on services. Open-ended responses reported some folks in at risk categories; some concerned about the resurgence of COVID-19; some are waiting for vaccines; some reported that there were too many restrictions; some pointed out that comes churches are open; some said that they want to see services held in person as soon as possible.

Carrie asked for [questions](#)^[BS1].

Is there concern about members moving to churches that are open? We have not seen anyone request to transfer their membership to other congregations.

Carrie further discussed the significant number of congregation members who are in high-risk groups for COVID-19.

Why are bathrooms being monitored? Some churches are not opening bathrooms at all. Physical distancing is difficult in most restrooms.

We are here to love and care for each other. We want to provide the safest environment possible.

Communion numbers have varied from 57 (today) to 98. The average number would be in the 70's.

Is there a way to share questions and responses in the practice sessions? We think there is some way to see a chat transcript, we will look into finding and sharing that. Carrie summarized some of the issues raised: the budget total; where were the decreases in expenses; about the resumption of in-person worship.

Outdoor worship was queried. Some special services have been held outdoors (confirmation and a funeral). There is discussion of the possibility of outdoor services for the holidays. We still would have to social distance and take precautions.

We have not discussed but decided not to implement 'drive-in' services. Pastor Paul does not see how that would improve on what we now offer with in-person communion and recorded services. Pastor suggested people try the communion if they have not yet.

Results of youth nominee to council

Izzy Freeman was elected as the youth representative to council.

Thank you

COVID task force

Staff of the church

Those who helped set up this meeting: Cat Ontiveras who hosted this meeting and the practice sessions; Donna Garges who managed communication with the congregation, including e-mails and physical documents; Pastor Paul who participated in practice calls and has been very supportive of the efforts; Gina Crittenden who helped organize the meeting.

To the newly elected members of the council.

Thanks to those who have participated in this meeting.

Pastor Paul thanked Carrie for her service this year. She has spent a great deal of time and effort serving the congregation having taken the Council president's job not having any idea what this year would bring.

Closing Prayer

Pastor Paul offered a closing prayer.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded. The motion to adjourn was approved unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:25 PM.