

Minutes from Pilgrim Congregational Church Council Meeting

Tuesday 16 Feb 2021 19:15-20:15

Present (via Zoom)

- Pastor Reebee Girash, Susan Carabbio, Doug Johnston, Jeff Bøehm, Ed Bond, Dick Edmiston, Mary Mackie, Marge Saradjian, Dave McClave, Nick Zorn, Bob Beckwith, Sarah Jane Fuller

Discussion RE: 2021-01-19 Council Meeting minutes

- Bob motioned to approve; Ed seconded. All in favor of approving.

Dave- Treasurers Report

- Dave: this was a pretty quiet month. But "quiet is good." Any questions?
- Ed: would it be possible for you to include a YTD performance report of the assets/investments (monthly up/down/etc?)
 - Dave: It seems like what you're looking for is a column at the far-right of the existing report which compares where we started as of the end of December (in this case) with where we ended at the end of January.
 - Dave: Sure! It can get a little bit complicated considering deposits "in" and interest/dividends coming "out", so perhaps we can report the total increase/decrease on a per-share basis (the list of funds in which we invest is publicly shareable) instead of our specific account? Or perhaps we can provide the CUSIP numbers for the funds we
 - Nick: Vanguard presents YTD performance numbers for all your funds at this link (after you log in): <https://personal.vanguard.com/us/InvestmentPricesReturns> and Fidelity presents YTD performance numbers at this tab (after you log in): <https://workplaceservices.fidelity.com/mybenefits/definedcontributions/navigation/dc2/inqFundPerformance>
 - Bob: Would it be easier to instead show these kinds of numbers from the quarterly Investment Committee Reports which you already produce? Our investments are long-term things anyway, not month-to-month. Dave: yes, that would be easier.
 - Reebee: Would quarterly suffice? Ed: I would prefer monthly.
 - Dave: How about I circulate – tomorrow – the quarterly investment report that Bob brings up. AND for next month, I'll calculate the percentage changes and add those to the report. Then, we'll talk about which of those things address the desires next month.
- Doug: How many funds do you have to track, Dave? Dave tends to say that the number of funds he has to track is "not a big deal", and I usually ask if we should we think about a consolidation effort of some kind where we group funds that have similar makes/models. The Council has the power to regroup these funds with a Council vote, should we choose to.
 - Reebee followed up by asking "at what point would we not know how any particular fund was established, or the purpose for which it was established?". We can consolidate or not, but do we have documentation that describes those things about our investments.

- Dave has generated such documents in the past; very few of them are donor-directed anymore. Many of them came out of a “need” either by Council or F&A in the past. We can definitely think about consolidating a large fraction of them – maybe 80% – into a general “blob of funds”.
- Ed: We may have scheduled to have a conversation about finances in May 2021, right?
- Reebee: We may not yet have enough information to really put proposals together at that point, but it is a fine idea. It might be more productive to simply say “let’s do this, and who will work on it?” at that point.
- Susan: I would suggest that we wait until we have a new Council sitting, so that we can open that conversation up to as many people as possible. Reebee: Yes, and that would only delay the conversation by a month or so.
- Doug: Perhaps we can approach the original donor families for one or more of these funds with a proposal to repurpose the fund to prepare for our our presumed “grand reopening” (like better ventilation, buying equipment for better Zoom integration or outdoor worship, etc.). Perhaps that would be more appealing to a donor than the fund remaining listed as a line-item
 - Reebee: as a matter of fact, some of the staff are having conversations about what new equipment we might need for outdoor activities or for better integration of live-streaming the service with worship

Susan- PPP Update, Pledge Update 2021

- Susan: we now have 43 pledge units for 2021, for a total of \$177,630! Got a few new pledges very recently.
- Susan recently had a conversation about PPP money with Bob/Dave. PPP money will be earmarked for what we are going to use this year. Perhaps Bob can comment on what that’s going to look like in terms of a line item.
 - Bob: we decided to not put it into income, but into the revolving reserve instead, with a notation such as “it will be used at the end of the year to help pay off the deficit from 2021”.
 - Bob: F&A’s thought behind not putting it in income is that it’s non-recurring. We may get PPP money for one more year; we’re not sure, but we’re not going to get it after 2021. It also increases the income column “up” (along with the special donation)
- Ed: Ed would like to “read into the record” something Reebee said in her sermon in Jan. “I wonder, I imagine, what more could we do to make a better future for some of our neighbors in profound human need. From a place of abundance and blessing, how many more of our neighbors could we bless?”. Ed asks himself in this time of a local, national, and international health crisis “Am I doing enough? Am I doing anything significant/meaningful to help those that are truly in need?”
 - Ed: We have been fortunate enough to “save for a rainy day, and that rainy day has come.”
 - Ed: There are over 30k businesses in MA which have closed. The employees of those businesses have no healthcare.
 - Ed, as a result, believes we should forego the second round of PPP funds.
 - This is why Ed abstained from approving the budget and why he proposes that money be left to stay in the pool for others.
 - Dick: The gov’t is going to give out stimulus money either way. Perhaps it is better (or at least just as good) for Pilgrim to accept it and inject it into the economy
 - Nick: Right, there have been stories of some businesses abusing the first round of PPP loans, and I’ve heard there will be more scrutiny on the second round (not to say in any way that Pilgrim “took advantage of” the first round!)
 - Dave: Correct. We **easily** met the criteria for the second round of PPP loans.

- Dave: another point – we won't be taking money away from any of the businesses which have closed, not to say there aren't other businesses which are currently still alive and struggling and in need now.
- Susan: The second round is certainly more stringent. 60% of the stimulus is required to be used for payroll. What if things improve and we **can** keep the PNS employees going with this second round of PPP loans? That's why I would might keep our application for the second PPP loan submitted.
 - Doug: In addition to Susan's idea, perhaps we can use the PPP money to create scholarships for kids from neighboring towns to attend PNS
- Reebee: I agree we are in a really good financial position relative to many people around us. We are in a place of abundance and have an opportunity to do good with our money. Susan's argument for possibly keeping the PNS folks on payroll was compelling and was what made her understand why we would apply for the second round
 - Perhaps we can take only the amount we would use in payroll for PNS (two full-time and two part-time employees)
- Ed: I appreciate the conversation and all the viewpoints. I have to look at myself in the mirror and ask myself if I'm doing enough. If I'm not mistaken, this is the first time we [Council] have had a conversation about what's going on in the wider world. I haven't seen us really as a group addressing this and asking ourselves what we can do
 - One out of 8 people in eastern MA is food insecure.
- Mary: I believe many people in our church are doing things individually, and I have great admiration for what Doug and those on the Mission Committee have done.
- Susan C: how about we set aside a good portion of our time aside in the March meeting to discuss what we can do.
- Dick: Following up on Lisa B's comment in the Annual Meeting, that maybe we should be doing more locally than at a distance. It's worth opening up and considering.
- Reebee: Having our next conversation in March is a good idea, especially since we'll have a new Council group. One thing we can talk about then would be – should we invite more people into the conversation, obviously consulting Mission Committee more?
- Doug: Are we recognizing enough the magnitude of the situation that many are facing in the country and the world? Should we have tried to not just meet the "same amount of giving as previous years" threshold, but instead shoot for a "twice as much" goal?
 - Doug: Like Reebee said, perhaps we should indeed consider making this a congregation-wide discussion, rather than just a Mission Committee-specific thing, similar to the Capital Campaign in a previous year
 - Reebee: Next Mission Committee meeting is Mar 8 at 4:00!

Reebee- Pastor Updates

- Chris Reaske is going to be our Guest Preacher on Feb 28
- Susan Moffitt is going to be our Guest Preacher on Mar 14
- James Ross is going to be our Guest Preacher on last Sunday in Apr 25 – He took over for as Permanent Associate Conference Minister for our region
- Super Saturdays are coming up on Mar 13 and Mar 20, with all kinds of UCC conferences which people can attend via Zoom
 - The Confirmands are joining on the 20th

- What are we going to do next with Care & Vitality (Marge and Reebee are going to have a conversation soon about that)... lots cooking for the spring
- Reebee: would the Council want to see a monthly report from Reebee, over and above the verbal that you get from me in this meeting? If so, feel free to email her.

Sarah- Ed Min Update

- We've got a lot going on for Ed Min
 - This Sunday starts the Lenten season; six or seven weeks are planned out; baskets were given out to all the kids
 - Confirmation class is doing Super Saturdays – online virtual retreat
- Reebee: Interfaith visitors coming this Sunday
- Reebee: Sometimes over the course of this last year, people have at times not known what's going on in Ed Min, so we're going to invite her to attend occasionally

Doug Johnston-Update

- Doug is a member of an ad-hoc group for social justice in Lexington. The Unitarian Church is having a program about the Electoral College: <https://fplex.org/howe/>
- They wanted to know if we would publicize the event to our congregation
- A few of the Council members wondered openly how a discussion about the Electoral College connects to Social Justice, and some discussion ensued about how they might be connected
- Reebee: I don't think this kind of dialogue will be seen as us taking any particular partisan stance; talking about politics isn't a bad thing, but being partisan is something we try to avoid

Reebee—Closing thought

- "Budgets are moral documents." (source unknown, but UU Minister Fred Small said it while presenting to a committee at the State House once)

Next meeting: Tue Mar 16 at 7:15 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Nick V. Zorn

Clerk