

Minutes from Pilgrim Congregational Church Council Meeting

Tuesday 16 Mar 2021 19:30-21:15

Present (via Zoom)

- Pastor Reebee Girash, Susan Carabbio, Doug Johnston, Jeff Boehm, Ed Bond, Dick Edmiston, Mary Mackie, Marge Saradjian, Dave McClave, Nick Zorn, Bob Beckwith, Duncan Todd

Discussion RE: 2021-02-16 Council Meeting minutes

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

Dave- Treasurers Report

- Another fairly quiet month
- Mutual funds under investment did fairly well
- Any particular questions?
 - Ed: I appreciate the reports Dave sent out following last meeting, and the added column to the financial reports. Would it be too much to ask to convert that to a Year-to-Date? Dave: Sure!
- Susan C. I want to comment that the PPP loan was approved. Just for context, the federal PPP funds have not run out, so we have not taken any money that others could possibly be using. Dave – can you confirm the dollar amount the church received? Dave: \$23,349.48 for the church, plus another ~\$18k allocated to the Nursery School. The breakdown is strictly along the lines of payroll – the Nursery School has 43% of the payroll, and the church 57%. I actually applied for ~\$42k total. The federal SBA does not know how we use the money internally, so we could alter that internal distribution however we like.
 - Susan: Should the church decide to pay some of that back, that can be very easily done.

Extended Giving Conversation

- Susan: We thought it would be prudent to have a healthy, hearty discussion about our how we give – how much we give locally vs. out-of-state
- Reebee: In addition to considering our distribution, I had the impression we wanted to discuss the possibility of giving a greater portion of our abundance outside of the church
- Ed: Agreed, I did want to call on us to reconsider those things, because we've successfully saved for a rainy day, and the "rainy day is here."
- Doug: I'll provide a high-level overview of the materials which were sent out ahead of the meeting (images follow):

Pilgrim Mission Giving - Yearly Allocation						
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
United Church of Christ - Five-for-Five Giving						
- Our Church's Wider Mission - Church Council Designated	6500	6500	6500	6500	6500	6500
- - One Great Hour of Sharing	1500	1200	600	1200	1000	1500
- - Strengthen the Church	600	600	400	600	600	500
- - Neighbors in Need	1200	900	1000	1200	1250	1200
- - UCC Christmas Fund	1675	700	1771	1200	1250	1000
UCC - One Time - - - UCC-Related						
- UCC Disaster and CWS - Disaster Relief - Tornados, Hurricanes, Earthquakes	1000	1000	2000	1000	1650	1000
- Andover Newton	500	500	500	500	500	250
- LICA - Lexington Interfaith Clergy Assoc and The Interfaith Garden	300	500	300	300	450	400
Organizations						
Cambodia Cocoon				2560	3250	4820
Honduras - Esperanza	2813	18269	2000		400	
Zambia		2000	1600	2000		
Health Care Without Walls (fmr Women of Means)	2000	2000	1600	1600	1600	800
Shriners Hospital for Children		850		1000	1250	
Bristol Lodge	1281					
The Outdoor Church	700	1350	500	500	500	750
East End House	775	300	700	600	300	300
City Mission	500	500	500		310	
OUT MetroWest	500	500	500	500	500	500
YW Boston - Social Justice - Sylvia Ferrell-Jones Fund	1500	500	500	500	500	1000
Lurie Center for Autism - MGH - in Lexington	500	500	500	500	500	500
Lex Eat Together	1100	500	1500	500		
LexRAP - Refugee Assistance Program			500	600	500	500
Other Local Causes - one-time / occasional	1100	100	400	650	250	1700
Other National Causes - one-time / occasional		1500	100		1000	

Pilgrim Mission Giving - Yearly Allocation						
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Giving Totals - \$						
United Church of Christ - Five-for-Five + Andover Newton (Mostly National)	11975	10400	10771	11200	11100	10950
National (other than UCC)		1500	100		1000	
Local - Lexington and Greater Boston	10256	7600	7500	7250	6660	6450
International - Includes UCC Disaster Ministry and Church World Service	3813	21269	5600	5560	5300	5820
Giving Totals - %						
United Church of Christ - Five-for-Five + Andover Newton (Mostly National)	46%	26%	45%	47%	46%	47%
National (other than UCC)	0%	4%	0%	0%	4%	0%
Local - Lexington and Greater Boston	39%	19%	31%	30%	28%	28%
International - Includes UCC Disaster Ministry and Church World Service	15%	52%	23%	23%	22%	25%
Treasurer Operating Mission Program Actual						
Treasurer Operating Mission Program Actual	27320	40963	25904	24219	24544	25071
Church Funds = Mission Operating + Council to UCC + Steeple	14702	29657	14882	14270	14520	14520
Directed Giving - Responses to Appeals and Specific Cause Donations	12618	11306	11022	9949	10024	10551
Church Funds %	54%	72%	57%	59%	59%	58%
Directed Giving %	46%	28%	43%	41%	41%	42%

- A little context. When I did this exercise, some of the things that stood out are:
 - We've been pretty consistent for the last 6 years
 - The congregation has been very generous and responds in a big way to causes
- I added a few things at the bottom (catch-alls for one-time and occasional donations) such as the Hope Central Church, Medical Debt Rest in Peace, etc. in 2020, and a suicide prevention walk in 2019, for example.

- The section in gray is new – I’ve tried to break it down by region; I will say in advance it is not exact, but it gives a very good sense of where we give.
 - UCC 5 for 5 is largely distributed nationally, but some is local NEC, etc. but it’s grouped into “national”
 - Local: Lexington & Greater Boston causes
 - International: UCC Disaster Ministry and Church World Service
- Except for 2016, a very consistent pattern:
 - Half is national (UCC)
 - ~30% is local, and
 - ~20% is international
- Exception: at end of 2016, we gave a large amount (~\$15k) to a significant water project in Honduras which skewed the percentages to International heavily for that year
- To summarize, Doug computed the percentages (from the totals) given from Church funds vs given (matched) by the congregation
- Back in Nov 2008, we allocated \$60k among a number of causes: water in Honduras, Habitat for Humanity house in Bedford, Cambridge Outdoor Church, AIDS ALLY, etc.
 - Called “Foundation for the Future”
 - Doug shared that as an example or pattern we might be able to follow in order to extend our giving
- Ed: Why were the “Other Local Causes”/“Other National Causes” not included in the Annual Report?
 - Doug: I added those two lines to provide a better breakdown of what is national, what is local, and what is international. The goal of the AR is not to be an overly-detailed budget for Mission, but to instead squeeze in an overview and demonstrate patterns which we tend to follow. Those items felt like too much information for the congregation, but I can send Ed 16 years of that history if he likes. Plus, I was encouraged to keep the Annual Report entry to one page, knowing that there’s always the detailed budget available for review.
 - Ed: Given that number (\$1700) is comparable in size to many of the other categories, perhaps that number should be included in the Annual Report. I did a deep dive ahead of Council’s last meeting and didn’t see those values there.
- The takeaway is that despite how dramatic 2020 was, we did not **increase** our giving that year – it remained consistent
- Duncan: Question on the church funds vs. directed giving – where do the individual collections we make for the Five Plus Five, and the collections we make at Christmas – are those Church funds, or Directed Giving?
 - Doug: It’s a mix.
 - Reebee: As an example, in the case of One Great Hour of Sharing, suppose we collected \$450 from the congregation, but Mission wanted to donate a total of \$750, then we would supplement the directed giving portion (\$450) with \$300 of church funds.
 - All of the offerings are a mix, where we supplement what the congregation gives using Church funds. Most of those funds ultimately come from the Steeple Fund, and some from Operating. (Our mantra in Mission is we try to capture the essence of what the congregation wants and then supplement that.)
- Ed: The way it’s broken out (the way you have the giving totals) – does that match up with our operating Mission Program actual number?
 - Doug: *The Treasurer Operating Mission Program Actual* **is** Dave’s number.

- Doug: Dave and I don't always try to reconcile our numbers to the penny; Dave's are "Gospel" and Mission Committee's are estimates
- Dick: What's not accounted for here is the non-monetary giving we tend to also do (sending clothes to places like Honduras, for example)
 - Doug: Exactly – the Dignity Matters effort from last year is a good example
- Reebee: Observation: our total expenses are around \$263k, and our giving is in the 9->9.5% range, which feels like we are coming close to tithing. I like that number a lot, and I like thinking about how much more we can do.
- Susan: One thing that came up is food insecurity. Many of us who support our local communities are giving a lot on our own. Let's say an individual approaches Mission and says "I want to direct funds towards food insecurity", how would that work?
 - Doug: Anyone is welcome at any mission Meeting – we ask that if it's a "new" cause, come prepared with background information; a vote then happens
 - Doug: Consequently, we highlighted food insecurity last Easter; we'd like to find a local food-related cause for Easter this year; if there are others in Greater Boston, please share those, as we are trying to identify more possible recipients
- Susan: Can Bob and Dave confirm? If we wanted to shift (increase) our Mission budget, say from 9.5% to say 15%, what would we have to do?
 - Dave: Two options:
 - Increase amount Mission gets from Operating Budget (been \$5500 for years); put it to the congregation and vote on it
 - Transfer money from one of our funds (e.g., General Fund) to the Discretionary Fund (for special giving)
 - The latter would be easier but less transparent to the congregation. The former might be challenging in these times when we project a deficit
 - Doug: If we're intending this to be a one-time, I'd do it through the Discretionary Budget and be clear with the congregation as to what we did. If we intend it to be more regular, I would go the Operating Budget route.
- Susan C. asked the rest of the Council for comments:
 - Bob: I'd opt to take a one-time approach, and this is why.
 - We don't necessarily have the \$1M we think we have; for example, we can't afford to pay for a Pastor's full living expenses, and we can't even fund that fully that by selling the Parsonage
 - Many of the (47-49ish) giving units' ages are high and might not be around for 30 more years
 - Jeff: I agree with a one-time approach. I'd look at the amount we received from the SBA for a "number from which to draw", given that's also a one-time thing.
 - Dick: From Ed's previous comments, the PPP loan we received was intended to support payroll. I like the idea of weighing the internal distribution heavily toward PNS, if that helps.
 - Reebee: we are not yet seeing a lot of commitment for the fall, and it's not looking great for the number of child-days
 - One of the challenges for PNS is that it's not a full-day program; it's an enrichment program.
 - Mary: we have seen the drop in the number of children at PNS coming for several years now; so, we are not optimistic this will
 - Duncan: I can assume we will use the PPP money to offset the \$44k deficit?

- Dave: yes, it went into the Revolving Reserve and will help in offsetting the deficit
- Jeff: Perhaps we can have bigger ambitions about the space which might open up from PNS. We have space, and we have “seed money” to start using that space for something good, as other houses of worship do with their space (for example, what First Church in Cambridge does is very inspiring). Daycare? Soup Kitchen? Who knows right now?
- Ed: Perhaps a one-time donation is appropriate as Bob said. What caused me to get as interested in this as I did last month was the year I spent out at Shirley on Mon & Wed nights. It gave me a deep appreciation for the inequity in our society. I looked at our Mission budget and took out any moneys we had set aside for Honduras and Cambodia. If I’m not mistaken, over the last 4 years, the *rest* of our Mission giving has declined. We never talked about the unfolding national and global issues. There’s a lot of work to be done, and much of it is outside our neighborhood. We need to look at it in a broader sense.
- Susan C.: My thoughts are to double the ~\$6k total – as in, aim to give out an additional ~\$6k, and get the congregation’s feedback as to where it goes – perhaps towards food insecurity
 - I’d like to see our loan actually forgiven first – that money will be used toward payroll, which is its purpose, of course. After that happens, perhaps we can reconvene and discuss where to give this additional one-time amount.
- Marge: When we say “local”, we don’t mean Lexington, we represent several other communities. Perhaps if we have some sort of gift each month, we can have people who live in those communities present that gift, and who knows? We might
- Bob: I’m all for additional giving, but I’d just like to say again that I want it to be for this year, and not necessarily become a year-after-year commitment.
- Nick: I like the idea of considering, in addition to food insecurity, giving to a cause which might help struggling families cover the cost of daycare so that parents can go back to work.
 - Doug: Perhaps there is a summer “catch-up” program somewhere which we can provide scholarships for and which kids will be in need of
- Ed: I like where the conversation is going, especially because we are simply having the conversation, and I think bringing some of these ideas to the congregation will be a good thing
- Dick: Remember that even though we are leaning towards redistributing our giving heavier towards local causes, the situation is as grim elsewhere in the world, if not grimmer.
- Susan commented this conversation is great and should probably keep going in April
 - Doug: I can take it on to create a motion to discuss this more at the April meeting

Reebee- Pastor Updates

- Worship – where we’re going. A summary of the document I sent out (see **Appendix A**):
 - We have a great desire to be together again in-person and make our worship accessible to those who cannot be with us.
 - We need some HELP. When we return to in-person worship in particular, we will need more volunteers. I call on Council to ask the congregation for reliable, regular “digital worship”

volunteers (Reebee, Dot, Max, Sarah simply cannot cover it all themselves in addition to what they already do).

- Perhaps we can even pay someone, like a high-school-aged person; Mary likes this idea
- Summer worship will probably look like it has in the past, but instead via Zoom, and possibly
- Reebee has done a lot of work to procure improved live-streaming hardware/software and writing every single thing down to set up and operate it; her suggestion
 - Doug, Jeff, Nick, Dick, Duncan volunteered to be the short list of A/V “experts”
 - Nick volunteered to help write/edit the “procedure”
- Maundy Thursday is coming up; Reebee is looking for Confirmands and Mentors to do most of the readings, but do we have any volunteers from this group?
 - Ed and Duncan, possibly Jeff
- April 25 – James Ross was invited; he is the new Minister for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for the Conference
- Summer Worship
 - We’ll need to keep doing our recruiting job – we already have 3 volunteers
 - We’ll need to see how often we can get a few Council members might be willing to
- City Mission Boston said they’ve got seminarians who would preach on any number of topics

Susan—Council Roles – Moderator, Asst. Moderator, Clerk

- Marge nominates Susan for Moderator, Mary seconds the motion
 - Susan accepts the responsibility for the FIFTH and FINAL YEAR!
- Ed volunteered to be Asst. Moderator (with agreement to be helped by Dick and possibly Mike Clark)
 - The two biggest responsibilities are the Greening of the church, and leading the Personnel Committee
- Mary and Marge nominated Nick for Clerk; Nick accepted.

Next meeting: Tue Apr 20 at 7:30 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Nick V. Zorn

Clerk

APPENDIX A

Proposal for Hybrid and In-Person Worship Pilgrim Church, Spring 2021 For Church Council

***Hybrid Worship:** This is worship where some folks tune in via Zoom to an interactive and real-time worship service that is also attended in person by congregants. We are aiming for all of our sanctuary worship services to be Hybrid in the autumn and beyond. For Sanctuary Hybrid worship services we will need an additional person running equipment, and the additional equipment for this purpose.

***Outdoor In-Person Worship:** We are resuming outdoor worship services on Palm Sunday (weather permitting). We will have one afternoon service of this type per month through May. (March 28, April (?), May 16). These services, to the extent that we can manage it, will also be *Hybrid worship services*, though using a simplified equipment setup.

***Summer Worship:** We have some choices here. I'd like to aim at an outdoor (side or back lawn) service at least once per month, but with sufficient volunteers we could be outside any week that it's not raining. Outdoor worship requires volunteers to assist with setting up chairs and running the AV and Hybrid worship system. For services broadcast from Pilgrim Hall, we will have a small number of worship leaders in Pilgrim Hall and the rest of the congregation will Zoom in. *Nota bene:* we are looking for volunteers for Summer worship - for preaching and for setup. Outdoor music: there is a piano downstairs that can be moved outside. Jim Munkres has graciously offered to play piano for most Sundays, either outdoors or in Pilgrim Hall.

***Digital Worship Manager - volunteer or paid - Summer and beyond:**

Over the summer, the Zoom setup (for hybrid or online worship) will be minimal but will require a dedicated volunteer or staff person.

When we return to the sanctuary in the fall, I think we can make the kind of setup I envision work with one person completely dedicated to managing the camera and balcony computer, and some staff member management of a sanctuary-level laptop and monitor. The digital worship manager will have significantly more responsibilities than the camera operator volunteer had in previous times. In short, volunteer or paid, this person's Sunday morning will not be an experience of worship, it will be a technical role that allows other people to experience worship. This cannot be done by one of the worship leadership staff members.

At F&A we discussed attempting to recruit a pool of five regular volunteers to run the system. While I am concerned that recruiting this number of trained volunteers will be a challenge, we can make the attempt to do so. We will need Council's strong support in the recruiting and scheduling process. We have one volunteer (Derek) so far.

***Indoor Air Quality**

Doug, Bob, Dave and I attended an indoor air quality for houses of worship webinar. You can view it here. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g8hNQoHV650> Here are some takeaways:

a) we are wise not to attempt indoor in-person worship right now. To offer sufficient air quality we would need major expenditures on equipment. We'd also need to provide and require N95s, and preclude singing, etc.

b) as we plan for the fall there are several things we can do - both because of CoVid and to limit the spread of seasonal illnesses:

- 1) Merv-13 filters for Pilgrim Hall's HVAC - already ordered. Continue to use HEPA filters in PH.
- 2) In the sanctuary, open windows, use HEPA filters, platform fans and outward blowing window fans, CO2 monitor which indicates the air exchange rate in real time. Manual adjustment to windows and HEPAs is then possible.
- 3) We'll need to monitor all kinds of things and consider limiting time indoors together if CoVid remains a concern. We'll remain NIMBLE!

Costs:

AV Equipment - \$1700+

Sun protection for outdoor summer worship leaders - \$200

Air Quality equipment - 2000+

-Reebee Girash