

Newport Covenant Church, Bellevue, WA

June 13, 2021- Congregational Meeting Minutes – *PENDING APPROVAL*

Opening

- Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at approximately 12:35 pm by Merrie Carson, Chair, via Zoom. The meeting was recorded, and minutes were taken from the recording.
- Opening Prayer: Pastor Britta Burger
- Opening business. A quorum was established.

MOTION: It was moved and seconded to adopt the agenda with the change that Pastors Britta and Paul would be moved down in the agenda.

APPROVED

MOTION: It was moved and seconded to approve the congregational meeting minutes of October 2021.

APPROVED

[Note: there was no motion to approve the congregational meeting of the call of Pastors Paul and Britta Burger from January 2021. This will be addressed at the next congregational meeting.]

Pastoral/Staff Reports

- Associate Pastor Scott Burnett:
 - Scott discussed how challenging it has been to work remotely and do congregational meetings via Zoom. He reviewed the past year and how we learned how to be a church during COVID. One aspect is that our homes and cars became places of worship. We had a service where we dedicated them as places of worship and appreciating them in a new way as sacred spaces.
 - He gave thanks for the tech team, the music team, and the Connections team for the virtual worship, for the outdoor worship times, and for more recently as we have opened the (physical) church again.
 - He has recognized our 'holding together' as an act of resistance especially as opposed to what is happening in the world. We are learning unity without uniformity, and conflict without contempt, all of which he loves and blesses the congregation for. We have also walked through grief and have walked in step with the Spirit.
 - Pastor Scott recognized the changes in the last year: new church chair, new church administrator, and new co-lead pastors. By the grace of God, it has been characterized by goodness.
- Co-Lead Pastor Britta Burger
 - Pastor Britta noted NCC as being place of grace and hope. They chose Hebrews 10:23-24 "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds." They want to honor: the staff with Amanda Moffat serving the teens and young people and her development in seminary and in leadership; Pastor Scott Burnett they honor with the holding of his hope and shouldering intense responsibility; Susan Beck with her dedication as administrator, as well as her wit. They have been honored to work with Diana Ponten in her work as receptionist, and April Kim with her work at the preschool and now with her resignation. They noted a special thanks to those who served on the pastoral search committee and that process, which was a gift.

Co-Lead Pastor Paul Burger

- Recognizing this platform can be cumbersome, congregants are urged to watch the reports from the ministry teams that are on the church web site.
- To highlight a few areas from the past year: For children's ministry, navigating this past year has been hard for kids in particular and we are proud of our families during the pandemic. Several events were held including at Easter and the weekly open gym. Ministry during COVID is hard! For youth ministry, there was a lot of Zoom fatigue. Starting in January, Amanda Moffat worked with the youth volunteers to do more in-person work with the youth. The confirmation of five students was a great accomplishment. Amanda has engaged the youth in their heart for service with Jesus as the ultimate servant.
- For missions and outreach, they had significant impact and have worked with Bridge Ministries, Cascades Camp, and Vision House to make sure these ministries were sustained financially. India for Christ, Jubilee Reach, and KidReach were other ministries that mission and outreach worked with in the last year.
- The women's ministry quilters group continued on during COVID and blessed many with beautiful quilts the last few weeks. There were two women's online teas with Ruth Hill over Christmas which raised \$2000 for Covenant Care Missions to help stop human trafficking and the Spring Tea with Pastor Britta (a wonderful speaker).
- The preschool and creative arts had many challenges because of COVID. The preschool needed to close for the year. We celebrate April Kim for her work and decision to leave the preschool. The creative arts team is anticipating more events this next year. There were two KidsPlayers performances virtually, a huge amount of work, with thanks to the parents, the Banks (Sue and Darryl), Lisa Loomis and especially to Byron Ponten, who did a significant amount of work to have these performances happen with his excellent video editing.
- All this shows that ministry does not stop when we cannot meet in person!

Elder Board Report – Merrie Carson, Chair

Reflecting on things we are grateful for:

- This congregation has talked about and lived intentional community as a value which she has seen specifically with the caring ministry of pastors, and the deacons who Merrie mentioned all by name. She is also thankful for all the ways we have figured out how to get together during the pandemic, specifically the Thrive Group members, some meeting in person, and some on Zoom as well as the Bible studies, and coffee hour on Sundays. Many other committee meetings, gatherings, and congregational meetings where we draw together intentionally.
- Thanks was given to Pastor Scott Burnett and Hilary for their online work each Sunday morning.
- We had seven new members joining us this year.
- May 16, 2021, we started worshipping in person again, which was an emotional experience.
- Merrie was grateful to participate in the celebration of the goodness of God through our leaders as she participated in staff reviews.

- Pastor Scott has been a rock of support for our congregation. Interim Pastor Erika Haub blessed us preaching in Matthew despite many family problems. Amanda, Susan, and Diana were especially noted. Diana will be missed as receptionist. Ministry team leaders and their committees have continued to meet, like the AFC. Thanks to Bob Hibbard for leading this group faithfully (he is now going off as his term is completed). The Elder Board has come together as an intentional spiritual community, much more than a group who makes decisions for the church. This difference in emphasis has made a big difference. She is very thankful to Gary Anthony as he leaves the Elder Board after fulfilling his time. The pastoral search committee also grew into a community of sharing of hearts in deep relationships with David Wirrick as the chair.
- She is very thankful for the provision of God for our financial needs. God has been good to us! Money has come in unexpectedly from the Temporary Construction Easement from King County, as well as tithes and offerings. Some churches have suffered financially, but we have an abundance, also because of careful spending from Church Administrator Susan Beck and our treasurer, Heather Niemi. People are intentionally committed to being part of Newport and that includes financially. We had a gift given to upgrade the windows in the sanctuary. We are also thankful to have found the hole under the sanctuary floor and that we had the money to repair it.
- In addition to the challenge of COVID, there was the challenge of Mercy Haub's cancer (teen daughter of Interim Pastor Erika Haub), just on the heels of Pastor David Beck's illness and death. Our congregation rallied around this family with meals and prayers.
- She is very grateful to the tech team for doing all kind of new things to accomplish worship online. Byron Ponten, Roy Ward, Darrel Banks and others made it possible for us to do livestream and worship online as well as online Bible studies.
- Ways to pray: For our congregation as we get reacquainted with each other; exploring new opportunities for ministry and new ways to do things as God has expanded us; for the Health Team as they transition out of their responsibilities but may need to be reactivated (in case COVID cases rise again); for Pastor Paul and Pastor Britta for their support to Merrie and the great working relationship on the staff team.

Finance & Budget – Heather Niemi, Church Treasurer

Heather shared her screen with finances and budget. Heather echoes her gratitude for the group effort it takes in putting together the budget and stewardship efforts. She shared 2 Corinthians 3:5 “Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God.”

- In the 2020-2021 budget cycle in which we are in the final month, a \$0 budget was planned, i.e., we plan to spend everything we budget. The actual spend was about \$100,000 less than anticipated, due in great part to Church Administrator Susan Beck's work with reduced costs for utilities for the building (because of the pandemic) and additional savings in the delay of hires and volunteers filling in roles that are usually paid positions. Income came in above expected, about \$40,000 more than projected, so the net income was \$156,000 and this money will go to savings. In most years, our income from tithes and offerings is about 80% of income with other sources making up the rest. Those other sources were zero this last year, so income came only from tithes and offerings. For next fiscal year, we anticipate a more 'normal' year.

- Attendance has remained steady during COVID, perhaps with a small uptick.
- Online giving is through Covenant Giving. In the past, there were about 20 reoccurring gifts. With COVID, there is a significant adoption of online giving, nearly doubling that. Online benevolence gifts also increased. 96% of our tithes and offerings come from 60% of our committed givers. We still see many gifts (60%) come in by cash or check.
- Expense distribution for next year; the majority (62%) is spent on personnel with 23% going towards operations. Next are Missions, Children & Youth, then Activities & Worship. Recall that that Amanda Moffat's (Children & Youth) budget comes from the personnel, not Children & Youth, so the actual percentage amount spent in this area is greater than reflected in the pie chart shown.
- For AFC/Facilities, no significant projects were done in 2020-2021 other than the gift of the double pane windows and the repair of the floor and carpeting in the sanctuary. The AFC is considering how to spend dollars from the King County Easement.
- For Benevolence, as money has come in, it has also been given out. The average balance is usually about \$12,000. During COVID, Rent/Housing, Healthcare, and Automobiles were the biggest areas.
- The fund for Repair and Replace remained static in 2020-2021 as during the pandemic no further funds were added to this. The funding of this will be restarted. The balance is currently at \$70,000. It is expected that money from the King County Temporary Easement will go into this fund in the next year. The target is that a minimum of 1% of tithes and offerings goes into this fund.
- The audit report looks good, and the small list of recommended changes continues to shrink. This reflects the great work that Susan Beck has done as Church Administrator.

Congregational Q & A:

Q: There was a question about percentage of salary increase.

A: This coming year it represents 65% of our total expected expenses; the denomination recommends 30-60%; however, church ministry is recommended to be 20-40% by the denomination with ours at 6%, but with our situation, staff makes up much of the ministry expense, so overall we fall within the recommended guidelines.

Q: An observation was made concerning the facilities expenses; it looks the same from last year.

A: Last year we thought facilities expenses would be 23% of the total spending, but it was actually only 18%. We have projected a spend for 2021-2022 similar to 2019-2020 as a baseline since 2020-2021 was so unusual. Some areas where savings occurred were with telephone and Internet as contracts were renegotiated with better pricing by Susan Beck, but other areas have gone up or been added and so there was no net change.

Q: Concerning the temporary easement dollars, will they be part of the budget or handled through a restricted fund?

A: Through restricted funds.

Q: With respect to the other income groups (the rental of our facility by Disciples Community Covenant Church or DCCC, etc.), what are the plans for these groups to be back on board for contributing income?

A: For DCCC, they will start paying rent again at \$1200 for the first six months, then \$2400 for the last six months for a total of \$21,600 for the upcoming budget year. This will be similar for the Korean Community Church of Seattle, Bible Study Fellowship, miscellaneous groups, and King County Park & Ride. Google (for parking) asked us to pend their contract. There will also be income from the preschool.

Q: How does Bible Study Fellowship use our facility (since the men's group moved to another church)?

A: It is the men's Chinese speaking BSF group that meets at NCC.

MOTION: It was moved and seconded to approve the budget as presented

APPROVED

Leadership Changes:

Dan Miller, Vice Chair of the Church, presented the slate of nominees from the nominating committee (listed below). Dan thanked the nominating committee. He asked for any nominations from the floor. There were none.

MOTION: It was moved and seconded to close nominations and cast a unanimous ballot.

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Elder Board:

Dave Wirrick - Elder at Large, 2nd Term

Bill Creel - Elder at Large, 1st Term

Ministry Team Leaders:

Carrie Koperski - Children & Families, 2nd Term

Mel McIntyre - Congregational Care, 1st Term

Jim Brenden - Creative Arts, 1st Term

Administrative and Finance Committee (AFC):

Janet Gardner - 2nd Term

David Lyndon – 1st Term

Nominating Committee

Sue Noon - 2nd Term

Auditor

No candidate at this time. They will work on an appointment.

Dan thanked those who have filled their terms, specifically Gary Anthony, who has served on the Elder Board for six years; Janet McIntyre was thanked for Congregational Care; Chuck Royalty for Creative Arts; Aaron Reinvik as auditor; Bob Hibbard for his leadership on the AFC; April Kim who is leaving her position as director of the Preschool. Dan prayed for the new leaders and those who have served their terms.

Words of Hope from our Pastors

Pastor Scott Burnett: The word that has come to him is 'newness'. He reflected on his yard; some of the thriving plants have come from stumps that he uncovered from a thick layer of dirt and mulch and other plants squirrels planted. There is a lot of newness at NCC, some we planted, and some are surprises. Some things we thought were gone but they are coming back. It is delightful and sometimes hilarious. This is offered as a word of hope to delight and smile at newness; to be led by the newness that appears.

Pastor Britta Burger: As we venture back into a new reality, it can feel like holding hope can be feeling like you are holding nothing; a grief and an emptiness. The word is to not set aside emptiness, grief and loss, but to allow the emptiness to be the space where newness comes in.

Pastor Paul Burger: We have a continued invitation to be a people who are prepared; but are not overly planned. We have hopes and plans, but as the last year has shown, that can all be changed. We want to be intentional, not passive, but not overly planned.

Closing Prayer by Pastor Scott Burnett

Adjourned at approximately 2:20 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Brenda Giordano, Secretary