

Newport Covenant Church, Bellevue, WA

June 11, 2023 - Congregational Meeting Minutes – *PENDING APPROVAL*

Welcome

- Welcome and Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 12:05 pm by Pastor Merrie Carson, Church Chair, in person at Newport Covenant Church and online via Zoom with David Wirrick as Zoom host. The meeting was recorded. Logistics of the meeting were explained for in-person and online.
- Opening Prayer and Opening Words/Scripture: Remarks were made about Pastor Britta Burger, Co-Lead Pastor. Pastor Britta read Luke 6:12-13 He (Jesus) appointed twelve that they might be with him and designated them as apostles. As a church, we assess and prepare for missional living. Jesus is with God first, before he does for God. None of what we do happens well without first spending time with God. Since starting at Newport, she and Pastor Paul have sought to be with Jesus. We have done listening, discernment, who we are and how God has gifted us. After Jesus gathers the twelve, he sends them out to be good-news bringers. They were with him long enough to know Jesus well before being sent out. In this next season, we want to go out and to be good-news bringers to others. We want to be equipped, in new and fresh ways. Pastor Britta prayed for attentiveness, discerning, and listening to the Spirit.
- Go to <https://newportcov.church/life/> for the meeting agenda, ministry reports, and past meeting minutes.

Opening Business

A quorum was established.

MOTION: It was moved and seconded to adopt the agenda.

APPROVED

MOTION: It was moved and seconded to approve the congregational meeting minutes of October 16, 2022.

APPROVED

Pastoral Reports

Co-Lead Pastor Britta Burger and Co-Lead Pastor Paul Burger

- Pastor Britta highlighted some things from the past year, and then turn to what is next.
- There is a focus of 'togetherness' especially with the Wednesday night ministry, with thanks to Amanda Moffat for her organization on this. It has been a joy to see adults, youth and children gather.
- It is fun to see a nearly post-pandemic church connect and spend time together. We want to move those rhythms out into the community. We seek to do that through the BLESS series. What is God's invitation because of contact with others in my life? This is what we are looking for in this next year.
- Pastor Paul reminded people this is in the annual ministry reports. We have been discerning for almost a year, where is God moving at Newport? When they first came, they adopted "The Simple Way of Jesus" that had been established by Pastor David Beck. As they have talked and discussed the staff and congregation, our statement would be "Following Jesus Together". This can be a

witness to the world in how we follow Jesus together in unity, even in the midst of having differences from each other. It is apparent that “Following Jesus Together” is both a coming and a going. When there is a movement of Jesus, people move. Whether we are gathered here, or like Celia and Keith return to Japan, we ask, how do we Follow Jesus Together (which will be communicated broadly in the fall). The missional priorities have been apprenticeship to Jesus, also keep courageous welcome, fostering intentional community and loving our neighbor. We will keep the last three as the apprenticeship is encompassed within Following Jesus Together

- Pastor Britta thanked the congregation as they welcomed their baby and how gracious this time was for them.
- Written reports (49 pages in all) of the Ministry Teams and Committee Reports are available online.
- In looking at our present focus/stated purpose, decided to change it slightly to “Following Jesus Together”.

Associate Pastor Scott Burnett

- Pastor Scott’s title changed last September to Pastor of Spiritual Formation, and he is still in the beginner mindset of that. He has not had to think about this in terms of being a ‘pastor’ of spiritual formation. He works with Congregation Care, Thrive Groups, and with Worship, which certainly forms us spiritually. You can think of spiritual formation as a department, where you go to ‘get your spiritual formation’ – but this is not a commodity or a service, it is an experience we are all in. He tends to think of it personally, ‘how is my spiritual formation’, but it is a congregational thing. There is an interplay in our spiritual formation and as we are growing and developing, we are in relationship with others. We can help them, and they can help us. It is a key aspect for what it means for us to be a congregation. An aspect of spiritual formation is fruitfulness. It is an attribute of spiritual formation on pastors Scott’s mind. As we think of the future of NCC, fruitfulness is a lens he is looking for. A speakers said once to look for the fruits of ministry now, and sow to that place. Make it more fruitful. More than visioning where you would like to be fruitful. He sees this happening in us as a congregation. May it continue for the glory and delight of God.
- Concerning worship, it is very collaborative. He wanted to remind us of how much more robust worship ministry is beyond the music team, or tech teams, or the host, the communion servers, the prayer partners, others. It is really a glorious experience as it expresses what worship is; a collaborative thing we get to be part of making. We collaborate with each other and the Holy Spirit. It is fantastic. This was evident even during the lock down of the pandemic. We figured out how to keep doing church, as ourselves, congregationally, as Newport. It was an opportunity for blessing, and we were fruitful, and we came through it in pretty good shape. Bless you congregation and may it continue to the glory and delight of God.

Elder Board Report– Pastor Merrie Carson, Chair

Reminder of the reports that have been put together (to please read them). As an Elder Board, we listen, and we try to be a spiritual community that makes decisions together rather than being a decision-making group. We try to look and see ‘What is Jesus doing in our congregation? What we are trying to do, is say, where is Jesus at work in our church, our community, our greater community and how do we join him in that?’ At elder board meeting, we notice those things and discuss them. Business is part of that, but not all of that. We study together, pray together, and have a lot of conversation. Last

year, we talked about new things springing up. Pastor Scott talked about looking at the fields and equipment we had, and ask if this was going to work for what God was doing and growing in us now? The idea of God having new ministry spring up, new people coming, there is a lot of newness in the last year. As part of evaluating that, we looked at ministry teams and job descriptions. We discovered some ministry teams did not have job descriptions and other areas were out of date. We found some structural issues that the EB has noticed, so the congregation is up to date on what the EB has been thinking. While our bylaws allow the EB to make decisions on our own, we want the congregation involved in the conversation.

For a couple of years, we've asked what God wants to do with the temporary easement construction money. After a lot of work, doing the sprinkler system was off the table due to high expense. Soon after, we talked about some needed repair and the need to access our church for those with disabilities. They can't easily access our church. The concrete is degrading and needs repair. We started talking about revamping the front and make changes to allow for disability access. We hired the 6BWorkshop to start this process, doing many meetings with our church. They have come up with a plan so that our accessibility, the beauty and welcome of our front area was improved. Our discerning with the EB was that this is where God would have us spend some of the TCE money. We will discuss this further.

We have also been talking about evangelism. Across the street, townhomes are starting to build. There are people right across the street from us. How do we reach our neighborhood? People will come to our church and say they drive by our church every day. How will we reach out to the community and bless people?

Things you can pray for include that we'd grow as a loving spiritual community, that we'd listening to each other, we'd be loving to each other, and to pray as we come at things from different perspectives. We will be thru a season of change. There has been change and it does not seem to be slowing down. God seems to be doing things. Sometimes change is unsettling, and we don't often have enough information, so we fill in the blanks, and sometimes that is right or not right. When anxious, go to the Lord, and grow in your trust of God as well as trust of the leaders at NCC. It is easy to take anxiety out on others when you don't know what is going on. As you consider your involvement, it might mean God is calling you to change too. Merrie thought of Queen Esther, and when the Jews were threatened, her uncle reminded her that 'for such a time as this you have been raised up as queen'. As things change, sometimes our calling changes too. Is there something new, a new calling? This last year, there was a need for children's volunteers. In the last year, Merrie was called to be a volunteer under Hannah on Wednesday nights. That was a new call for Merrie. Recently she and Ron had the youth come to their cabin for a retreat, which was a new thing. God may be calling you to visit neighbors, to help serve on Wednesday night or with the children. There may be new things that spring up, and if you think 'I can be part of that', then join up. Be open to God doing new things in your life.

Restructuring Discussion

Our elder board has been discussing our ministry teams. (See slide deck on Addendum A). The main ministries operate year-round (and she read the ministries). We asked, are these the right ministries for us at this time? Do we have ministries that need to be sunsetted or transformed? We also looked at the denomination. Some teams at Newport don't match with anything with the Covenant (Creative Arts and Women's Ministry) and two areas where we don't have anything are 'Love Mercy, Do Justice' and 'Develop Leaders'. At the conference level, they had some things that Newport does not have a match.

We have noticed where we have gaps, what ministries might need to be stopped or reassigned, and new teams to be created.

Should we add “Events/Meals Team”? This has been managed by Amanda and by Susan, but it is not part of their job descriptions. What about picnics, meals like we had today. Most of the time, Susan organizes this, but that is not part of her job (or we could just not have meals together).

Should we have a “Love Mercy, Do Justice” team? The last year we’ve had a racial righteousness course, but we currently do not have a place for that. Should this be a ministry team? Like a Thrive group, or something else? Should it be added to Mission and Outreach, yet they already handle local and global ministry, as well as compassion. That may be too much for that team, which has a lot of responsibilities.

Should the nominating committee transform into a ‘Develop Leaders’ team? Should this group be expanded to be more year-round? They would also work on how to develop leaders.

What about Women’s Ministry? The national Covenant no longer has a Women’s Ministry, and those mission aspects were sent to other departments. With the conference, they have a men’s ministry (which is not a ministry at Newport). Should the quilters be part of another ministry?

Should we have a team for evangelism and include local outreach nearby our church? What we call it might be a BLESS team, maybe not evangelism.

We wonder about men’s ministry, young adults, and stewardship.

Now we ask you, the congregation, what is your sense from God on this?

We have ministry team leaders and ministry coordinators, does this make sense?

In the EB discussions, we sense the structure doesn’t feel comfortable anymore, like clothes that no longer fit. We think that God is shifting and changing us, and our structure needs to go along with this. We believe that wisdom comes not just from the EB but from everyone in the congregation.

Question: About youth – they have a ministry coordinator, not a ministry team.

Answer: We will be starting discernment teams, perhaps this will change into something else.

Question: Is there a focal point for the feedback?

Answer: We hope some things will be in place by the fall, we hope that will be the case. For the process, send ideas to the Elder Board send to Pastor Merrie, or to Brenda, or direct it to the pastors by sending feedback to Pastor Paul or Pastor Britta.

Merrie thinks God wants to lay a foundation, so people can know what they are signing up for, so job descriptions are helpful with that, and to clarifying who is responsible for what. It is important for clarity so we can move forward with what God is doing.

Pastoral Staff and Relations Committee (PSRC) Update

David Wirrick, Vice-Chair, is responsible for this committee. He has ideas on how to make this more visible. Not many people know about the committee or the process. He has three people on the committee and two more considering it. We can operate with about six, then will be ready. The primary

purposes according to the bylaws is to come along side pastors and staff and be a resource, to lift up in prayer, understand their concerns and challenges, to communicate with the congregation, elder board, and pastors. To understand what vulnerabilities and difficulties might be and have this well-functioning for the health of all.

6B Workshop Outside Landscaping Update/Vote

Pastor Paul provided an update. On Wednesday, 6B showed a mostly finalized plan for the boardwalk (connecting under the eaves between the sanctuary to the family center), the lawn, and the plaza. For the plaza, there are two options, with switchbacks for both, but one would have more gathering space and the other would have better access to all areas. What 6B needs from us is what we want them to do with option 1 or option 2. For option 1, there is access and might not have as much opposition from the City of Bellevue. Pastor Paul recommends Option 1, with an option of maximizing gathering space. Pastor Paul provided the sketches from 6B.

Question: The wood looks hard to maintain.

Answer: They use impregnated pine which is a 50-year lifespan, and we can decide on the materials in the future.

Question: Do we know the cost for these? Is that part of the process coming up?

Answer: In Option 2, it was more expensive. Option 1 was less expensive, as there are more planters. A hard number will come. You can do this for half or double. Around \$400,000 seems to be a ballpark estimate for the construction.

Question: Do we have a sense for the value?

Answer: For example, the decking, and other material costs are variable. When we have a general budget, they can do the balancing, but there will be cost tradeoffs.

Question: When there are more hardscape areas, this is the more attractive to skateboarders, and they have damaged our property in the past.

Answer: Excellent point.

Comment: Applauding the accessibility, especially for Bridge Ministries. It will be great to welcome them in to maximizing space, but not minimize accessibility.

Question: Can we have work parties to help reduce costs?

Answer: Yes. 6B has already talked to contractors they have connections with, 6B is willing to work with those things.

Comment: Can this be done in phases?

Answer: 6B answered that yes, it can be in phases.

Question/Comment: Only a portion of our congregation is here, so make sure you bring input.

With the summer, we have fewer people here and would like to do as much as we can. Two areas are planned already, and we can start on one area as phase one. The area by the sanctuary could happen rather quickly.

Question: For the construction documentation. What is the permitting process with the city?

Answer: It is a reason we went with 6B is because they are experienced with working with the City of Bellevue. There is a pre-construction meeting with the city, so it will be worked on early with the city. Michael of 6B is not overly concerned about the city, and it doesn't seem like there is lengthy process.

Question: Six months ago, it was commented that the facility is here to support the ministries. Hiring a contractor for a master plan is good too. A question is with the ministries; are currently thinking about, a master plan? Help me understand how these proposals for landscaping relate to the ministries we have and those going forward.

Answer: Landscaping is visible in creating a welcoming space. Accessibility is another area, how we reach to our community, we want to make sure someone in a wheelchair or scooter has accessibility. With youth and children, we want to be reaching, we need to be sure kids have access as well. Safety of what we have now is a concern. As we grow and diversify, we are being pinched for spaces? Could heaters be added for other gathering spots outside for NCC? Last spring, we had a newcomers meeting, we met outside with umbrellas and tables, and that got us thinking. It helps us to love our neighbors well. Amanda said that kids are getting rocks in their knees with the broken concrete. Having a table outside made a big difference for being in community. If you are ministry leader, consider how the space can be used to glorify God. This is a huge opportunity for NCC now and for the NCC to come.

Comment: If you want to, you can press concert and press it to make it look like wood; you can add things to concrete to keep it from cracking.

Answer: Very important. Please send an email about with those suggestions.

Susan – if anyone has feedback, send them to Susan's email. 6B is welcoming and wants the feedback.

Comment: We have to consider the strollers with the preschool families.

Pastor Merrie – she helps with trunk or treat, there were a lot of strollers that needed to be lifted over stairs.

MOTION: We move to go forward with 6B Workshop Option 1 to maximize accessibility of gathering spaces as we move forward with the landscaping project, knowing we can modify and adjust as needed. It was moved and seconded.

DISCUSSION: As above.

APPROVED

Finance & Budget Report – Heather Niemi, Church Treasurer

[Note: See Addendum B for the PowerPoint slide deck shown during the meeting. The notes below supplement the slide deck.]

2022-2023 Financial Report

Our fiscal year is July 1 to June 30, and we are in the last quarter of our fiscal year and there is only one month missing as the report goes to the end of May 2023. We budgeted for \$879K. The actual was \$899K (projected to include June); Actual income \$924K. We spent 24K more but brought in 45K more than expected. Had an excess of \$25K.

Slides demonstrated the expense distribution; the denomination recommendation is that we align with those. Blending church ministry and staff together do align with the recommendations. The tithes and offering trend from 2016/2017 through to next years projected. The giving flow of weekly tithes and offerings were shown; near the end of the calendar year there is a bump; our giving is primarily in December and January. Giving trends are similar to last year with an increase in online giving and a decrease with in-person giving. More dollars come in via the more traditional, in person check methods. 92% of our T&O comes from 73% of the same group of people. Our attendance, starting from 2014 to 2015, the bottom of the dip is COVID, then the increase is in the last few years.

For the landscaping, we will need to make decisions on what funds to use. We've had a bounty, from the Temporary Construction Easement (TCE) from King County and from money coming from staying open during COVID for employment. We ask, what do we do with this bounty? We've had more than \$500,000 in unexpected income. We might want to do something more expensive than that with the landscaping. Heather provided rough estimates on how we could fund the landscaping. See 'Funds on Hand'. In addition to the TCE and Employment Retention Credit (from COVID), we also have Reserve Funds with the Pastoral Housing. These are for discussion purposes, but we are looking at funds on hand of about \$950,000.

Heather provided an example only of the "Landscaping project", estimated at \$590K. She provided a 'Let's Imagine' slide. We'd also like to have 6-month \$500K fund for a rainy day, put aside, for an emergency, then if landscaping is \$450K, with a gap in funding of \$140K. The purpose of this is to imagine we are short money for the landscaping, so we can then look at other options. Do we have a capital campaign, save up, wait for another unexpected income, other (loan, put less in savings, etc.)? How do we use our resources, our facility, and our funds?

Question: Are we considering if we take bids that it might cost less?

Answer: It is just an example – in case we are short on money for the project.

Comment: Pastor Merrie – we won't be able to have any firm choices until we have more precise bids. We are trying to be transparent, to include the congregation from the beginning, rather than asking for a vote in the future without the congregation knowing what is happening.

Comment: About the blessing we've had.

Question: What about the bathroom project?

Answer: The project has stalled because we cannot find a contractor. The money is still there. With a spike in construction costs, maybe we don't have enough for funds for this.

Question: Is planting included with the options?

Answer: Yes.

Questions/Comment: Someone provided a story about a Rwanda church, where they cut down trees to build tables, and then planted seedlings. They needed \$50 to end famine in the community. Wow. Reminded the power of the western church compared to the rest of the world. A consideration also to our giving, which is the lower end of our budget.

Reserve Funds

Heather provided a slide with the outline of reserve funds as compared to the last report. The bathroom remodel has \$58K in it. It is an accountable slide.

Benevolence Funds – average balance is about \$10K/month, which fluctuates. These funds are primarily spent on healthcare, rent and housing.

Repair and Replace Funds

We stopped contributing to this in COVID, we have restarted giving to that, and have been spending. We don't want it to grow, but to use it so we don't have more costly fixes in the future.

Preschool Funds

Anticipate a \$10K loss to run the preschool. Their savings will cover this. The primary drivers were a lower enrollment. Tracey has been actively and carefully managing her budget. There is strong enrollment for next year. They anticipate a mild profit for next year.

Audit Report

There were fewer findings from past years, only a few suggestions. The audit report is not yet published. The team of pastors and staff and lay volunteers have been working hard to close the gaps. This year's audit is a testament to that hard work.

Questions: Does attendance include live stream?

Answer: Yes, it is live attendance plus online and a multiplier (1 viewer multiplier is 1.9)

Comment: Thanks to Heather for her clear communication.

2023-2024 Proposed Budget & Congregational Approval

MOTION: It was moved and seconded that the congregation approve the budget for 2023-2024 as presented today and at the townhall.

DISCUSSION: (at the townhall and today)

APPROVED

Leadership Changes and Blessing – Pastors Paul and Britta, Merrie Carson

Pastor Merrie gave words of appreciation to those who have agreed to be nominated and the hard work that is done by so many volunteers.

Staffing Update

Pastor Paul said that Hannah Chung will be leaving, and Lindsay will be going on with a lap over in August. Amanda will be continuing through 2024 with the intergenerational position. Meaghan Jones resigning with her last day in the office on June 23, 2023, but will continue working remotely for preparing communications. They will need to find someone to be in person at the office to answer the email, the phone and in-person. We are seeking God's will for positions with Children's Ministry and Youth Ministry by forming Discernment Teams. This was also announced in the Next@Newport.

Two different discernment teams will be working: 1) what NCC has to offer and what the youth need for youth ministry and 2) what NCC has to offer and what the children need for the children's ministry. Typically, there is not an assessment of what a congregation will offer, they just look for a 'person' to be a youth leader. This is a different approach. What is NCC uniquely gifted to offer youth and how do we as a congregation minister to our youth? Then, if we hire or call someone, they will be partners with us to work with the needs of our youth. Same with our children. Please consider belonging to the youth and/or the children's ministry.

2023 NCC Ballot

Nominations from the Floor: None.

Ballot from Nominating Committee

Church Chair: Merrie Carson for 2nd 3-year term

Elder Board Secretary: Brenda Giordano for 2nd 3-year term

Children & Families Ministry Team: Jim Giordano for 1st 2-year term

Congregational Care Ministry Team: Vacant for 1st 2-year term

Creative Arts Ministry Team: Jim Brenden for 2nd 2-year term

Administration and Finance Committee: Dan Miller for 1st 2-year term

Administration and Finance Committee: Gary Gervais for 1st 2-year term

Administration and Finance Committee: Mark Gardner for 1st 2-year term

Nominating Committee: Janet Gardner for 1st 2-year term

Nominating Committee: Vacant for 1st 2-year term

Auditor: Dave Bunnell for 1st 2-year term

MOTION: It was moved and seconded that the congregation have a voice vote for the whole ballot as presented along with voters online (via Zoom) who would be provided with instructions.

DISCUSSION

APPROVED

Vote on the Ballot

Question: Are the Zoom people having a chance to respond?

Answer: Yes – they also agreed to the above motion.

MOTION: It was moved and seconded that the slate of nominees be voted in.

DISCUSSION: none

APPROVED

Thank You to Outgoing Leaders

Lindsey Laszewski (Adult Ministries), Carrie Koperski (Children & Families), Mel & Janet McIntyre (Congregational Care), Jamilie Kheriaty-Lewis (Women Ministries), Janet Gardner (AFC), David Lyndon (AFC), Sue Noon (Nominating), Karl Lewis (Audit)

Prayer for new and outgoing leaders (EB); Chair Pastor Merrie Carson prayed for outgoing leaders; Pastor Paul prayed for continuing leaders; Pastor Britta prayed for new leaders.

Closing Prayer & Adjourn

Adjourned at 2:24 PM with prayer by David Wirrick. The meeting was adjourned by Pastor Merrie Carson, Church Chair.

Respectfully submitted,
Brenda Giordano, Secretary

Addendum A



NCC Ideas on
Structure Merrie FOR

Addendum B



NCCYearEndMeeting
-2022-23_Treasurer R

Addendum A – PowerPoint Slides from Church Treasurer – June 11, 2023