

# Newport Covenant Church, Bellevue, WA

## October 22, 2023 - Congregational Meeting Minutes – *PENDING APPROVAL*

### Welcome and Call to Order

- Pastor Merrie provided some explanations about the change in the agenda.
- The meeting was called to order at 11:49 am by Pastor Merrie Carson, Church Chair, in person at Newport Covenant Church and online via Zoom. The meeting was recorded. Logistics of the meeting were explained for in-person and online.
- Pastor Britta showed post cards that could be used to write down questions or comments now or after the meeting so that our leaders (Elder Board and Pastors) can lead well. This will help us craft good responses to questions.
- If a question is brought up now, that works well, but other questions might need to be answered later more thoroughly.
- Prayer and Opening Words/Scripture: Remarks were made by Pastor Merrie Carson, Church Chair. Pastor Merrie read Philippians 2:1-15. She encouraged all of us to have that kind of attitude to look to the interests of others.
- Go to <https://newportcov.church/life/> for the meeting agenda, ministry reports, and past meeting minutes.

### Opening Business

A quorum was established.

Concerning the agenda, Pastor Merrie let the attendees know that the vote on the pastoral search committee will be struck at this time. There will be a report on the status of that committee. She and asked for a motion to approve the agenda as amended.

**MOTION:** It was moved and seconded to approve the agenda as amended.

**APPROVED**

**MOTION:** It was moved and seconded to approve the congregational meeting minutes of June 11, 2023.

**APPROVED**

### Pastoral Reports

#### *Co-Lead Pastor Britta Burger*

Pastor Britta highlighted the NCC pastor/staff team and brought them to the front, with applause from the congregation. Pastor Paul said that Terry McBride will be our administrative assistant and will start on Tuesday.

- The discernment team was started in June, asked the question: “What does NCD have to uniquely offer children and families? Do we have someone to do that unique work?” NCC is gifted with multiple generations and with financial and spiritual wealth. What does that mean for our participation in Children and Youth ministry? The team discerned a future hope that each ministry would have their own pastor to lead, but that our current hope is that we would have a pastor for

children, youth and families. Eventually there could be directors that would serve in one age group with pastor oversight, but we still need that pastor. We are forming a search committee to call a pastor. She thanked Lindsey Laszewski and Pastor Ruby Varghese for holding our ministry in the meantime.

- Lindsey discovered in her three months that when we hire someone, we need a long-term view. We want to answer the question: “How are our kids trusting Jesus now?” That as they get to be in middle and high school, they would already know that Jesus loves them, and they can trust Him. With 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> graders, they were already asking complex questions about suffering. Our hope is that they can encounter Jesus and year by year grow closer to Jesus.
- Pastor Ruby has been here about a month. NCC has incredible teenagers, she has only just met the first initial group. She prays that we strive to grow deep relationships, and that they would fall in love with God and extend that in loving other people. Research shows the epidemic of student leaving that church across the nation. If they have five people to be in their lives, their faith will grow and stick. It can be showing up at their games, inviting them to join you in serving, or catch coffee. Several of our youth are serving in kids ministry and we see their joy about the ways they are seeing God in serving. She prays they will not dread coming to worship, but that it is like a family reunion. As we see them, greet them. Pray for the adult leaders. Pray for parents and families, to be a place of encouragement and support and to empower. Parents are the number one people they are learning about faith from. Continue to call out gifts in kids. Feed on their love for God and their world and invite them into places of service. Pray we would get beyond the walls of this building, but we’d get out where kids are at. We have several kids at Tillicum Middle School, and she now has a contact there. Continue to invest in our kids; they need to hear it and see it.

Pastor Britta discussed the Pastoral Search Committee. The names of those on the discernment committee who wanted to go forward have been given to the nominating committee, plus one or two more openings on that committee. It is our hope on November 19<sup>th</sup>, our next congregational meeting, we will have a group to vote on. Eric Cave is the conference support for our search and Pastor Britta has been in touch with him.

Question: How many people do we have below age 18?

Answer: Birth to 5<sup>th</sup> grade: 35 regular kids on Sundays; on Wednesday we have about 40 with 5 who do not attend Sunday mornings. We have 22 – 25 kids most weeks. For youth grades 6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>, there are 34 (amended from 42 as stated in the meeting) and about half are active. The most on one recent Wednesday night was 14 (6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> graders). It is hard to know about Sundays.

Question: How do the names get on the list?

Answer: If they came to NCC in years past, but we know they are in middle school now, they go on our list, but we might not have seen them in some time. Right now, we don’t have a way to know who in 6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade comes on Sunday mornings.

### ***Spiritual Formation Pastor Scott Burnett***

- Pastor Scott is involved in great ministries. Congregational Care is where deacons engage with the needs of the congregation. Getting help with meals, with moving, visiting the ill, it is on the groundwork. Thrive Groups – some very exciting things are happening. There is faithfulness and innovation which is great to watch. Some groups have been going for years and years and other are

springing up. A new group started with 28 people attending, which is bigger than some churches. The worship leadership is changing, with Terry McBride and Kerby Reichel leading for the first time this Sunday. He loves being a pastor and having the role take on the breadth and heft; being able to preach is a gift and privilege, to enter into the sacraments in the congregation with the Lord's Table and Baptisms. These are blessings to us together.

### *Co-Lead Pastor Paul Burger*

- Pastor Paul gave gratitude to the staff and congregation. 'Following Jesus Together' is more complicated – what does it really mean, with denying ourselves, and to respond to Jesus. A question that can be asked is: 'what is the strategic plan?' We want to be a discerning team together with the congregation. We desire to respond to what God is doing. We invite the congregation into that, even though it can be complicated to wait on God.

Andy Robblee prayed the pastors.

## Elder Board Report

### *Pastor Merrie Carson, Chair*

- Membership Statistics – according to the church records we currently have 160 active members and are expecting to add a few more later this Fall! Some are not active, but still get communication from NCC.
- Statistics of Sunday School have already been reported.
- Temporary Construction Easement – it was supposed to have started 18 months ago. The new King County contact is Treavor Carr, and his best estimate for clearing and grading, as they might elect to use our space for trucks, is Sept. 2024. If our property is not used for parking, then work would start in late Spring 2025. They are still in the process of finding a contractor, so the time keeps getting bumped out.
- Elder Board Discernment: Church Structure –Pastor Merrie discussed the process of discernment. She had a conversation with Dan Miller and thought about where we are at for sprinklers, windows, or other things we should be doing. Why have these things not been done before? Like single pane windows? Where was NCC 15 years ago? Why have no major projects been done for about 30 years? Usually at a home you do things about every 10 to 15 years, but what happened here 15 years? Pastor Merrie was here 15 years ago, left staff and went elsewhere. There has been a lot of difficult situations, then we called Pastor David Beck who got cancer and died. Every time there was something new, it would get shut down, as there were so many difficult things happen because you are emotionally drained dealing with so much other stuff. There were deep wounds, things that needed to be healed. When our Co-Lead Pastors came, they were wise to wait, to heal and grow. The fact that we are noticing property need now, tells we are healthy enough as a congregation to look at things that needed to be done. To answer the question, 'why are we thinking of doing landscaping?'. It will cost a lot of money, but we didn't do that 15 years ago. We have good healing; we have the ability to move forward. We have a problem with accessibility. Pastor Jane Spriggs (an NCC attendee) cannot get up onto the stage (due to her use of a scooter). How can she get from the back parking lot to front door? She can't. We need to pay attention to this now and deal with the access issues. In thinking about what we plan to do, it is not just buying new plants but there are significant maintenance things that should have been done a long time ago. Now seems to be the time the Lord would have us start paying attention to this.

- Landscaping Project Update – The project was described by Pastor Paul- the why, seeking to discern calling us in the next season. ‘Landscape’ does not allow for the complete picture, as the project includes access and maintenance. Part of this is expanding space to allow for gathering places for ministry. A bid came back, but it was high, so there was another meeting with the contractors to get the number more inline. They made changes the original plan. We do not have a specific bid as there are sub-contractors that need to bring in bids. Decking is way more expensive than before COVID. Decking is now removed from consideration. Justin of JP Landscape (a potential contractor for the work) suggested instead of decking, we use concrete with other plantings. Another thing that made the bid high, were some benches, which were removed. The bid should be closer to \$550,000 but could get to up to \$600,000. This is in large part due to accessibility. There is a switch back pathway for strollers and scooters. There are six other contractors, but many declined to provide bids, and others dropped out. Another bid is to come in Tuesday. Now, all the contractors are busy. There may be a few elements, like a bench topping, with a material that will be long lasting. We don’t want to push this through, but to discern with the congregation on what we should do. There is undone maintenance, it is accessibility, and have good access to the building, which is the main goal. They will communicate the bids when we have them.

Question: We are focused on front of building. We also have the cabins and what we do with them, which are in disrepair?

Answer: Yes, we are thinking of those things. While this is a big project, it is a part of the whole. We are still discerning what we do with those other spaces and the whole scope of our building and property. This is the initial foray.

Question: Do have a sense of the design churn?

Answer: 6B did not charge us for this past design change. We will find out and if Michael (of 6B) continues to be an advocate. We can ask Michael to continue to be an advocate if we choose to do (which would be an expense).

Question: If we are thinking about accessible – what about automatic opening doors and other aspects?

Answer: To be ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant would require many other things, like elevators, but some things like automatic doors are under consideration. Plus, some our doors need repair.

Question: We’ve talked about a handicap family restroom, for 8 years.

Answer: The older bathrooms in the middle of the church are targeted for this. We have tried to get a contractor, but COVID shut that down. This is also on the action items for the AFC.

Question/Comment: What about the possibility of grant writing for accessibility?

Answer: We will seek information about that. Kathy Close is a former grant writer.

Question: Windows, doors, accessibility – so many items! How do we prioritize?

Answer: Gary Gervais has a list that was compiled from Bill Heppner, showing all the projects and what is in disrepair. AFC (Administration and Finance Committee) is prioritizing these things. This is a

key function of the AFC. Between now and Nov 19<sup>th</sup>, we hope to have the hard numbers. Pray about this and discern as we should have more information for Nov. 19<sup>th</sup>.

Question: Where is the easement money?

Answer: It is already in hand.

Pastor Paul: Please refer to the Responsibly and Stewardship Handout

This is not a declaration but a working document. We want feedback to refine this, and obtain input from the congregation. The handout “Following Jesus Together” is a mission statement acknowledging that Jesus is the head of the church. How do we capture that Jesus is the one who leads us? We need to look at who is responsible and how are they steward. We don’t want top-down declarations, but it helps to have classifications.

The current list contains: Ministry, Leadership, and Operations. Then we have people listed with this along with the addition of Staff so we can see who is working in which area, to come along side to empower and equip. This is for points of reference.

One shift is that Women’s Ministry is part of several areas, including adult formation, etc. Concerning the Missions and Outreach team, we’ve asked them to do a lot including anything happening outside the building, like local outreach, evangelism, world mission, etc. There have been good discussions. We recommend changing the name to “Mission Support” and the suggestion is that a second team be formed called the Community Engagement Team. This would be more project based, shorter term commitments, like Sharing the Harvest (Yakima apples) and Global 6K (World Vision). Things that Amanda Moffat has been doing with intergenerational service events. We still need more conversations as this team does not exist. We propose a trial period to see if there is enough interest. We would not activate until the June 2024 meeting. For “Love Mercy Do Justice”, there is a team formed around this area, but needs more formalization. All three areas are looking beyond our own church.

Under the leadership structure – the Nominating Committee would become the Leadership Development Committee.

Another proposed shift is changing the AFC (Administrative and Finance Committee) to being called the Facilities Committee. This is not to change financial transparency, but rather recognize that the committee can then focus on the needs of the facility. Try to home in on what the committee should focus on. It is important to keep it a committee as they are all members, which is appropriate with having access to financial transparency.

Another change and an addition are potentially “Events”, which would help organize memorials, music events, etc.

We can follow up on November 19<sup>th</sup>, and we have the post cards for feedback.

Pastor Merrie said that part of the impetus for having a ministry team for “Community Engagement”, was because we noticed the new condos which will be for 59 dual families. How can we be proactive to reach out to them? That is how that thinking got started. Our Mission Team is doing a great job, but putting this on them is too much.

Question: Is Community Engagement a new name for Connections? It is now under operations. Why are connections under operations?

Answer: Operations help us with internal function, within our congregation. All of it is ministry. It could be under a ministry category, and it will still be a ministry team.

- Explanation of Proposed By-Law Changes – Pastor Merrie – some of the Bylaw's changes are related to the church structure or that things are out of date or conflict with how we are operating. The proposed changes to the Bylaws are posted by the bathrooms. As we talk, we keep noticing other things. For example, for the associate pastor search, the lead pastor is not included on the search committee, as it is not currently part of Bylaws. We have been seeking input from the conference. It is time for some housecleaning, change them to make them fit with what is currently happen.
- Church Secretary Brenda Giordano and Chair, Pastor Merrie Carson described and explained the proposed Bylaws changes.
- Please have the proposed changes in by October 30<sup>th</sup> so it can be discussed and then sent out and have the 30 days before the next meeting.

Question: Will there be another opportunity to discuss the Bylaw changes?

Answer: Yes, on Nov 19<sup>th</sup> we can discuss, but this will only be 28 days. So, we need a third meeting to allow for 30 days. That meeting would be in December. Please use the post cards for questions so we know where other conversations are needed. Send that in as a question so we can have further conversations.

Question: A person was anticipating further discussion on the Bylaws today. Further concerns had to do with needing to vote and the timing.

Answer: Please send along the questions and suggestions for Bylaws changes to Brenda, Merrie, or the Pastors.

Prayer for the congregational polity was provided by Pastor Scott.

## Introduction of Adult Formation Ministry Coordinator

*Leslie Hergert*

Pastor Scott introduced Leslie Hergert, long time NCC member, as the new Adult Formation Ministry Coordinator. There was applause. Pastor Scott is in conversation with Leslie with the job description and make it something that suits her.

Pastor Scott prayed for Leslie.

## Finance & Budget Report – Heather Niemi, Church Treasurer

*Financial Report*

Heather Niemi reported by a Zoom prerecording. Our fiscal year is July 1 to June 30, and we are in the second quarter of our fiscal year, Q1 July 1<sup>st</sup> to Sept. 30<sup>th</sup>. There was a net of \$35K of income. It is used for unanticipated expenses.

Quarter 1 – we are slightly ahead in income and spent about \$5K more on driven by payroll with a timing issue with Covenant Pensions and Benefits. We are still ahead of budget to income by \$8K.

View of last 10 years, our income is about average but above the last few years.

Average attendance grows but less aggressive and more stability. With Sunday School attendance. Overall, attendance is slightly growing from the previous year.

Status of Accounts: Undefined, King County Lease – holding

General Fund – covers operations.

Restricted – Spans years, \$615K. It is earning interest with Covenant Properties

Temporary Restricted - \$92K

Details were provided on the Restricted Accounts

Total accounts are stable.

The Annual Audit – statement on the PowerPoint. The auditors had two major recommendations.

Chris Purrier prayed for our church finances.

### Congregational Q & A

No further questions.

### Announcement

The next Congregational Meeting will be on November 19<sup>th</sup> after the worship service to vote on the Landscaping Project bid, the Associate Pastor Search Committee, and further discussion on Church Structure and Bylaws. A short Congregational Meeting will be held December 3<sup>rd</sup> after the worship service to vote on the Bylaw changes.

### Closing Prayer & Adjourn

Adjourned at 1:40 PM with prayer by Pastor Merrie. The meeting was adjourned by Pastor Merrie Carson, Church Chair.

Respectfully submitted,  
Brenda Giordano, Secretary