

First Congregational Church of Palo Alto
United Church of Christ

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING MINUTES
September 26, 2021

Next scheduled Congregational Meeting: April 3, 2022

Call to Order: Anne Campbell

Moderator Anne Campbell called the meeting to order at 11:05 AM in the courtyard. Members gathered for the meeting in the courtyard and remotely on Zoom. Anne encouraged members attending on Zoom to put any comments they wish to convey in the chat box. In-person members simply needed to raise their hands. A quorum was established. She also reviewed the steps for how members may access meeting documents, such as minutes, online on their cell phones through the Church website. The meeting was recorded to assist the Church Clerk with writing the minutes in absentia. The recording will be removed once the minutes are completed.

Opening prayer: David Howell

Pastor David Howell offered the opening prayer.

Approval of Minutes – Anne Campbell

There were three sets of minutes to approve from previous meetings: March 21, April 11, and June 6. Anne welcomed questions and comments. There were none.

Action: Anne moved that we approve all three sets of minutes at one time. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Stewardship Campaign Results and Status of Church Budget – Ben Roberts

We have received \$797k in pledges to date against a budget of \$821, which is a \$21k shortfall. On a budget of approximately \$1.2 million, the shortfall is relatively small. There are still some folks who usually pledge who have not yet pledged. The hope is that they will make up the difference. If that does not happen, we have sufficient cash to cover the shortfall with the proceeds of the forgiven PPP loans. The asking budget has already been approved. Anne submitted that we need a vote to approve a final budget.

Action: Ben moved that we approve the budget, as presented, notwithstanding the shortfall. Anne seconded the motion and asked for questions and concerns. Discussion: There was a question concerning the totals for the two PPP loans. They were \$145k and \$142k, totaling \$287k. Regarding the PPP loans, Dave added that we have depended heavily on them and continue to depend on them. Event and rental revenues have been badly hit through the pandemic. The loans have been critical for meeting our expenses. Anne confirmed that the second loan has now been forgiven and said we need to think ahead to how we stay on sound financial footing. The motion to approve the final budget, as presented, was approved unanimously. Anne applauded the Stewardship and Budget Committees for their work.

Status of Sanctuary Renovation and AV Project – Dave Howell and Ben Roberts

Dave reported that the project is progressing smoothly, though signs of the changes are subtle. One of the monitors has been put in and there are new plugs for another monitor. There is a door under the cushion on the seat behind the pulpit. It is a good thing that these changes aren't noticeable, because that was one of the objectives. We are waiting for some of the parts, including a screen. Within about three weeks, the project should be winding down. That timing will inform when we resume services in the sanctuary. The Sermon in Song is October 24th, a date that we are targeting for a return to the sanctuary with the new sound system and all the renovations completed. We remain flexible, however. If conditions outdoors are rainy or smokey, we will move in before October 24th. There have been weekly meetings with the Zoom committee and things seem to be going well. Ben reported that the renovation and AV project are being done by BEI construction.

He added that the company has been taking very good care of us, despite delays in delivery of equipment, which has been a recurrent and widespread theme during the pandemic. Ben said that Church members involved with the sanctuary AV will get some training from the installers. Going forward, we will put together a team who will make sure things run smoothly. We are looking to hire someone soon with AV skills who can run the services regularly on Sundays with the support of volunteers from the Church. Ben and Dave urged the Congregation to put forward any names of people who would be interested in the job. **Marty Dreher** asked about BEI's hiring practices as they relate to the hiring of people from marginalized communities and how they are reporting those practices. Ben said that we know that BEI has minorities represented on their staff, but we have not discussed their hiring practices with them. He felt that since BEI has contracts with Stanford, we can assume that they meet Stanford's rigorous standards on that front. Dave and Ben agreed on the importance of the question and acknowledged that hiring practices of those receiving contracts from the Church should be considered.

Closing prayer: Nancy Peterson offered a prayer.
The meeting adjourned at 12:25 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Clare Warner
Church Clerk

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