

DRAFT MINUTES

Old First Reformed United Church of Christ
Minutes for the 2022 Annual Congregational Meeting
Sunday, January 29, 2023

The meeting was held in a hybrid format, with members participating both in the Sanctuary and from home, via Zoom.

Reports, budgets, agenda, slate of elections, and other information for the Meeting were all provided to the congregation prior to the meeting, online on the church's website. Those documents should be referred to for details related to actions recorded here.

Starting the meeting

- ❖ Co-Moderator of the Elders, Julie Steiner, called the meeting to order.
- ❖ A quorum was called and was present.
- ❖ Motion to give voice to non-members (without a vote).
- ❖ Hymn Sing, including “Every Time I Feel the Spirit” – “Guide My Feet” – “This Little Light of Mine” – “Bring Many Names”
- ❖ Pastor Michael Caine led the opening prayer.

Hybrid Worship Reflection: What works for you? What do you appreciate? What do you wish for? What can we do better?

- ❖ Julie asked folks to move into small groups to discuss reflections of the current hybrid worship format. How is it going? What do you like? What needs work? What do you really need when you're worshipping on Zoom?
- ❖ Notes and comments from the group reflections are compiled at the end of these minutes***

Thank you, Tech Team!! Tony Pavolini, Adam Sherr, and Woody Ulmer

- ❖ A celebration of all the hard work the tech team has been doing to make hybrid worship possible each Sunday!

Approval of last year's (2021) Annual Meeting minutes

- ❖ Julie reviewed highlights from last year's minutes.
- ❖ Motion to accept the minutes was made by Beth Walker, seconded by David Killian.
- ❖ Minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

Approval of the 2022 Annual Reports

- ❖ Janice Smith read aloud the annual report from Sanctuary Enhancement and Accessibility Committee.
 - Highlights: 97% of pledges have been received, 102% of the total pledged amount has been received.
- ❖ Motion to accept the Reports was made by Suzanne Cole, seconded by Kathy Sykes.
- ❖ The Reports were unanimously approved.

2023 Proposed Budget

- ❖ The Proposed Budget for 2023 was presented by Jonathan Vogan.
- ❖ Of note:
 - Member giving is budgeted to be down \$18K compared to 2022. This is driven by a change in the circumstances of our membership, not in a change in the membership.
 - The proposed budget will finish in the black at \$403.
 - To maintain a budget that is structurally in balance, the budget proposes a reduction in the hours and responsibilities for the Director of Music position. This would take affect May 1, and reduce the position from 20 hours per week down to 10 hours per week.
 - The staff raise is based on the prevailing wages (~4%) in the region, as opposed to the regional inflation rate (~7%). This is a \$6K difference.
- ❖ Motion to approve the 2023 Budget was made by Beth Walker (I did not hear who seconded).
- ❖ After the motion toward approval, there was an extension discussion both for and against changes with the budget. Most notably, the significant cut to the Director of Music's (Holly Phares) position and pay. Many expressed concerns about how this will impact the music program at Old First Church and choir rehearsals. Others expressed support of the budget, the additions it makes for the Outreach programs, and the budget restructuring that took place in other line items as well.
- ❖ After a lengthy discussion, Julie Steiner made a motion to vote to approve the budget.
 - In favor: 51 total
 - Opposed: 3 total
 - Abstain: 2 total
- ❖ The 2023 budget was approved as presented.

Fete Adam, Clark, Darla, Beth, Suzanne, Tony M, Winston, Corlis

- ❖ A celebration of those who are stepping down from leadership positions (Elders, SLG Chairs, Committee Directors)

Approving new appointments – Slate of Elections + extending Treasurer’s term one-year (one time extension)

- ❖ The Financial Secretary position is in transition in 2023 as Adam Sherr steps down. Jonathan Vogan’s term as Treasurer is also ending, but a transition of both financial positions in the same year may create confusion. As such, the Elders propose a one-year extension for Jonathan Vogan to stay on as Treasurer one more year.
- ❖ Motion to approve the one-year extension, made by Adam Sherr, and seconded by Bruce Conley.
- ❖ Motion Approved unanimously.
- ❖ Then Julie led a review of the new slate of leaders for 2023. Motion to approve the Slate of Elections, made by Richard Kalwaic, and seconded by Nancy Donohue.
- ❖ Slate was approved by unanimous vote.

Ending the Meeting

- ❖ Closing Hymn – “Amazing Grace,” sung by the congregation.
- ❖ Closing prayer by Rev. Michael W. Caine.
- ❖ Motion to adjourn, made by Jonathan Vogan, seconded by David Killian.

Minutes submitted by Devan Johnson, church administrator
February 2, 2023

Notes from Break-out Groups – Hybrid Worship Reflections

- We need a person to contact during the service for individual technical support. Not sure who to PM with issues. Skip spoke to feeling "disempowered" due to a lack of technical skills. Jane suggested a designated "tech support" person.
- We spoke about different quality of sound depending on device used to access.
- Bobbie said it would be nice to see more views of the congregation. Also noted that when the bulletin or hymns were being shared, it takes up most of the screen, so we can't see the congregation or speaker.
- Ibidun made a suggestion of some indication that service was over. Sometimes online, it is unclear when the service has ended and they can log off.
- Mostly, people were very positive about their experiences and very appreciative of the tech efforts.

Wish list

- Transportation like in Star Trek?
- Worry how the community feels to visitors when they come in person, because we're wearing masks and still figuring out tech. We might be less welcoming and the demographic of those who are coming in person is not the full broad range in diversity (a lot more grey hair as a percentage of the total in person than there used to be.)
- To be a zoom visitor is even harder than to be an in-person visitor. Are the zoom visitors the older demographic? Younger people might like zoom worship better, but they might not know it exists.
- Impression that younger women have been visiting on zoom, but it's hard to tell because a lot of them aren't showing their faces.
- Not unusual for someone to welcome them in the chat, if they're visitors.
- Everyone should have their camera on if possible for a portion of service.
- In person people: remember the habits of pre-covid times of how to welcome people and make sure they feel at ease, despite the masks. Bringing back hospitality is a big step.
- One thing that might help for people on zoom can see people who are reading Scripture and presenting, but thought given to get other people on camera who don't have a formal role in the worship service, so that those on zoom see up close and personal other people who are physically present in the sanctuary.
- Not seeing just the back of people's heads, see the people from the front to see people better.
- When they started working with setting up the tech, Billi had suggestions— fix the way we see people, whether they're in the front or in the seat, have an "owl" to get a 360 view
- Freedom to go all the way around, to see full picture of what's happening all the time
- One of the nice things was that when everyone was on zoom people would stick around after the service, so it would be nice if there was a set up in the sanctuary, or in the narthex or in the living room so that people in person could talk directly to the people on zoom after church, kind of like we're doing now with this meeting.
- One of the things we used to be known for is that no one would leave without feeling welcome, and we need to think about how to do that on zoom, we need to communicate to the world that comes to see us is making people feel like they're meant to be here, extend and accept who people are to be friendly with them. Might not pick that up in zoom.

1. "Impersonalize" of zoom. "Feel separated" when in Sanctuary from folks on Zoom.
2. Can we use a phone in Sanctuary?
3. "Miss folks on Zoom"
4. Zoom is a great opportunity, e.g. folks from a distance or in hospital.
5. Mid-day meeting and other Zoom-only meetings are great.
6. Computer terminal in fellowship hour?
7. Periodic 'all church' Zoom

Big Thoughts

- Hard to understand what someone wearing a mask is saying.
- Music is hard to hear on Zoom
- Hope tech continues to improve for those on Zoom.
- Masks should be optional because not consistent to take them off downstairs to eat, etc.
- Would like to be able to broadcast worship service on Facebook.
- Would like church's website to offer weekly video clips of service, especially the sermon.
- Liturgical banners/ colors for space where the flying Bible was formerly located, or historical collage wallpaper.

Q: What do you really need or want . . . ?

- Janice: Could the bulletin be on screen so that we could see it?
- Beth's Sister: It's less intimate now. Can we have cameras that are closer, maybe in the pews?
- Rae – Now we can't see the names of folks who are online (when we are in the church)
- Pat – Not sure that we should continue to devote more resources to perfecting online worship. Shouldn't we focus on enhancing worship in the Sanctuary and increasing our in-person attendance?
- We miss the art that we used to have online. How can we incorporate more art?
- The average attendance in Sanctuary now is 30 people per Sunday. We think we used to have 60 – 70 persons on average?