

South Congregational Church
186th Annual Meeting: In-Person and Via Zoom
Sunday, May 19, 2024

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 10:10 am by Moderator David Fries. A quorum of 48 members was needed in order to proceed with the meeting. With 64 members present in the sanctuary, the quorum was met. There were no members attending via Zoom.

Invocation: The opening invocation was offered by the Bridge Minister, Rev. Dr. Leanne Tigert.

Minutes from 185th Annual Meeting: Janet Zeller made a motion to accept the minutes from the 185th Annual Meeting held on May 21, 2023. Carolyn Kerr seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Remembering those Who Have Died: Gyme Hardy read aloud the following list of individuals who died in the past year:

Mary Lou Fuller
Doug Kilgore
Alice Pickett-Hale
Jacqueline Rochford Hartford
Patricia Knight
Alison Nyhan
Jacqueline Freese

Membership Report:

Betsy Clardy presented the membership report that is also published in the Annual Report. There was one correction to the report, to include Gail Desjardins who joined South Church during the past year. The corrected numbers are listed below:

Starting number = 482
Total increase in membership +1
Total decrease in membership -6
Total Membership as of May 1, 2024 = 477

Betsy Clardy noted that per the bylaws, members are considered inactive when we do not have their address, or they have not communicated with the church or contributed to its support for a period of two years. Betsy said that Jed Rardin reviewed the membership list prior to leaving and that 144 members were made inactive based on these criteria. After Pastor Tanya arrives, we will write to those inactive members who have an address, updating them with South Church news and asking if they want to reengage with the church.

A question was raised about the church directory and whether it reflects the membership totals. Betsy indicated that some people in the directory are not members but are active in the church, and the directory is the best way to maintain their contact information. Anyone interested in being added to the directory should get in touch with the church office.

Nominating Report and Election:

Betsy Clardy stated that the Nominating Report is published in the Annual Report, pages 20-22. Betsy said that the Nominating Report does not list everyone who is leaving a ministry, and she wanted to take this opportunity to thank departing members and to express appreciation for all of their hard work and service. It was noted that the heading in the Nominating Report should say 2024-2025 (and not 2023-2024 as published). Dave Fries also said that according to the bylaws, the Moderator term is one year but there are no limits to the number of terms that can be served.

Chris Simmers moved that the Nominating Report be accepted as presented and that we elect the officers, ministry and committee members as outlined in the report, with the minor corrections to the date and the term for the moderator. Sue Marcotte-Jenkins seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Budget Presentation and Adoption:

Fiscal Year 2022-2023:

A written summary of financial highlights for Fiscal Year 2022-2023 was distributed to all in attendance. Co-Treasurer Sue Marcotte Jenkins said that the net increase to assets was just short of \$60,000, in part due to an increase in values of invested funds of \$115,000 and also unused funds due to a clergy position that was not filled. Personnel costs were 60% of the 2022-2023 budget.

Fiscal Year 2023-2024:

Fiscal Year 2023-2024 was a time of transition and great challenges, but these challenges were met due to a successful pledge campaign with an increase in pledge units and dollars pledged, an increase in other contributions, an increase in volunteerism, and a \$60,000 legacy gift from the Leah Gray estate. Accomplishments included review of policies and procedures, a technology needs assessment in progress, repair of the roof and chancel window, and payments to the line of credit for converting the heating system.

Fiscal Year 2024-2025:

The Fiscal Year 2024-2025 budget has been named “Underpinnings for Success.” In her PowerPoint presentation, Sue Marcotte-Jenkins explained that goals of the 2024-2025 budget include:

1. BUILD THE REVENUE SIDE OF OUR BUDGET

- Create subcommittees to Giving Ministry to raise funds
- Bring “new” fundraising revenues in FY2025 to \$10,000 (at a minimum)
- Develop new approaches for raising revenues such as grant revenues

2. PERSONNEL BUDGET

- Acknowledge staff with a mixture of bonuses and COLA, merit, and equity increases
- Prioritize correcting problematic policies and practices
- Study Alison Nyhan’s diverse roles and create a staffing plan to begin to meet these needs: create a Committee for Volunteer Engagement and recruit for a part-time, paid Christian Education Director
- Work toward goal of reducing personnel costs to 50% of operating budget

3. SAVING FOR THE FUTURE

- Begin to replenish reserves for future large-scale repairs and building improvements
- Develop a reserve for technology and equipment needs
- Reduce to 4% or less the annual withdrawals from the South Church Fund and the Hoyt Music Fund for the support of operations

Sue distributed spreadsheets with projected income and expenses for the Fiscal Year 2025 budget, along with spreadsheets projecting what we will need from investments, and two plans for future savings to fund reserves for needed improvements and projects. The budget projects that we will receive 95% of what has been pledged. Expenses were high due to one-time costs

for Pastor Tanya's search and moving costs, in addition to the extension of Jed's benefits due to his application for disability. In order to balance the budget, we need to take 4.5 % from South Church fund and 4% from the Hoyt music fund. Plans to save for the future were outlined as follows:

- Plan A: sell the Community Building and transfer funds reserved for maintaining and making improvements into the other reserve accounts
- Plan B - if the building does not sell, withdraw an additional 3.5% from the South Church fund to replenish reserves for needed improvements to the church building

Discussion from members attending included the following questions:

- Who will coordinate fundraising? The giving ministry will have a subcommittee to oversee, but it will be the responsibility of the congregation to carry out, and we will be looking for volunteers.
- How does the withdrawal from the two investment funds compare to the investments? Because the market is good, we are doing well. By state statute we cannot withdraw more than 7%, but we are aiming for 4% which is well below the rate it has been growing.
- We need to do something to fix the organ. Is there an organ reserve fund? If we sell the community building, we will put more into the specific organ repair fund and there is also the Hoyt music fund. We may need to do some fundraising as well – this will be determined by the congregation once the building has been sold.
- What are the “problematic practices” mentioned earlier? The finance committee has been working very hard, meeting every week, and they have uncovered some errors such as incorrect line-item designations and an overpayment in social security for our pastor that could not be recovered under state law. Also, communication with UCC pension board needs improvement.
- What is the timetable for the job description for Alison's position? Pastor Tanya would like to be involved with this recruitment, so we will rework the job description and post shortly after she arrives. Pastor Tanya will want to understand where we are initially and while she may make changes over time, nothing will change immediately.

- A suggestion was made that we empower current committees and ministries to look beyond their ministry for additional assistance. Many people are willing to engage on an ad hoc basis, so we can tap the congregation for specific projects and needs. Also, the idea behind having a volunteer committee is that the committee can reach out to people who haven't previously volunteered.
- On Slide 8, what is the reserve for technology needs? This is intended for replacing equipment of all kinds - but in particular, we have a technology needs assessment underway and we are anticipating more expenditures to bring our technology up to date. For example, Alison's computer is at least 15 years old, and we will need computers for the new Christian Education Director and the new pastor.

There was no further discussion. Carlene Ruesenberg moved that we accept the budget as presented, and the motion was seconded by Jill Smart. The motion was unanimously approved, with many thanks to the co-treasurers Sally Bird and Sue Marcotte-Jenkins.

Update to Bylaws:

Gyme Hardy explained that the purpose of the bylaws review was to correct errors and to make the bylaws more in keeping with current practices. She said that the updated bylaws were approved unanimously by the South Church Council on April 23, 2024, and that they were posted online on April 26, 2024 for the two weeks prior to the Annual Meeting. Gyme expressed a huge thank you to Mike Gfroerer, Peggy Scott, Kayla Pingree and all of the committees that participated in the review of the bylaws. A motion to approve the updated bylaws was made by Becky Field and the motion was seconded by Richard Nelson. The motion was unanimously approved.

Appreciation: Thank you to ministries, committees, staff, volunteers, pledgers, and any and all who work to help carry out and support the mission of South Church. Council President Betsy Clardy received an extra thank you and a well-deserved standing ovation from for the many responsibilities she took on over the past year.

Closing Prayer: Offered by Rev. Dr Leanne Tigert.

Adjourned: The 186th Annual Meeting was adjourned at 10:59 am.

Respectfully Submitted, Sara Willingham