

Minutes of the Annual Congregational Meeting
of
Little River United Church of Christ
January 27, 2019

Moderator John Mingus observed that a quorum was met, and called the meeting to order. Chris Weakley moved that the Church Council be entrusted with the approval of the minutes for this meeting. The motion was seconded and the vote was favorable. Andrew Hunter moved that the Church Council be permitted to make technical corrections to the Annual Reports. The motion was seconded and the vote was favorable. Chris Weakley moved to accept the Annual Reports. The motion was seconded and the vote was favorable.

The Rev. Dr. David Lindsey gave the presentation of the Future Ministries Task Force (Task Force) (said committee being approved at last year's annual meeting). David cited Jeremiah 29 and compared Little River to the exiles in Babylon to whom God would make himself known after 70 years. Little River is in the minority, but there is hope. David recruited members from February to April 2018. The Task Force met in May, June, July, August, September, October, December, 2018, with a review in January 2019. The Task Force studied a wide range of topics from the mission statement, demographic trends, children and youth ministries, building and finances, social justice, climate change, and community and worship.

Major themes were building and grounds, finances, governance, and community and justice work. Bullet points for Building and Grounds: We don't want to sell, we have ongoing maintenance issues, many people in Northern Virginia won't come to a church that is not well-maintained, building was not designed for current programs and ministries, we have capacity to grow and diversify our renters.

Finances: we could bring in more income from rentals, the primary source of revenue is pledges and they are not keeping up with inflation, non-pledge income is up over past decade.

Governance: Current model is ineffective, a lack of clarity about roles, responsibilities, chain of command, under-50 population not engaged or aware of inner workings of LR, what type of leadership is needed?

Community: We have increasing number of families with young children, weekly worship attendance keeps dropping, we want to engage with each other beyond worship, we long to be more visible in the community, we want to grow.

Social Justice: Strong desire to engage, go further, ongoing concern about oppressed peoples, growing concern about environment, interest in expressing our values through our building and grounds (e.g. becoming carbon-neutral.)

Trends Observed: we are well positioned to have thriving and vibrant ministry with growing membership, we have a growing number of children under 10 years, our ministry is not

sustainable in some critical ways (e.g. financial, environmental, volunteerism, sustainable ministry is possible, but it will require real change, we need a road map to chart a different course.

The following are the recommendations in David's report: Rejoice in what is going well, ascertain causes of declining attendance, discern whom God is calling us to serve, put together a strategy/road map for where we go from here, commit to a clear, faithful path forward, and last, celebrate what God is doing here!

Extensive discussion followed David's report. Tom Morgan moved that we form a committee to first create a Governing Structure and 2) with Church Council, Pastor and appropriate boards to answer the four bullets [*ascertain causes of declining attendance, *discern whom God is calling us to serve, *put together a strategy/road map for where we go from here and *commit to a clear, faithful path forward.] Tom Ross offered a friendly amendment which Tom Morgan accepted that it be the moderator who would form the committee. Carolyn Yocom proposed periodic reporting from the committee. Tom Morgan accepted that as a friendly amendment. The motion was seconded and the vote was favorable.

David Lindsey then reported that he is delaying his sabbatical until January 1, 2020 through March 31, 2020. The purpose of a sabbatical is to provide spiritual and physical renewal for ministers. He is working with several people on a grant proposal which would award money for the sabbatical for him and for the congregation. He is considering several plans for whether the sabbatical is fully funded, partially funded or no funding. He is concerned that the workload not fall all on Alexis during the sabbatical. There will be a class in the fall on spiritual autobiography and he is hoping to find potential lay preachers from that endeavor.

Next item of business was the presentation of the treasurer's report by Robin Petrusak as Mary Summers could not attend. Robin was sorry that Mary was not there to receive thanks for her three years of dedication to the treasurer's job.

Income was received in 98% expected and actual expenses were 94% of budget. There is a carryover of \$29,500 from 2018. Expenditure savings came from 60% operations, 20% benevolences, and 20% from programs. There was a liquidity crunch in October due to a continuing lag in pledge income, but it was eventually resolved by December with enough to cover two months of expenses.

The church drew down reserves in 2018 in the General Fund (\$22k) and the Building Fund (\$40k) and parsonage reserve (\$34k) as well as experiencing market losses in other funds and in the Endowment Fund. The result, among other things, is that the expense of the roof is paid. Book value of the endowment fund at year end was \$347k and the market value is \$429k.

John Mingus moved to the elections. Jan Curtis moved we accept the ballot. It was seconded and the vote was favorable. Ballots were distributed. It was announced later in the meeting that the balloting was favorable.

Andrew Hunter as Chair of Trustees spoke about the proposed 2019 budget. The challenges of 2018 are likely to recur. Full staffing, the government shutdown, and decline in pledge income

are issues that the church faces. Budget priorities for the church are COLA increases and merit-based increases and bonuses, fund operations and programs with contingency, 20% benevolences and 10% as a base. The Trustees understood that we would be unable to meet the priorities in this budget and looked at mandatory expenses to arrive at this proposal.

The budget proposal includes, COLAs for all staff except for the Senior Pastor, who declined a COLA, programs and operations are funded at 2018 with a few exceptions, partially funded benevolences at 6.4%, inclusion of \$10k of carryover.

Unfunded priorities were highlighted: Board of Social Action and Justice designated benevolences, merit-based salary increases, funds to supplement the First Friday program, the Puerto Rico trip for the youth, funds for security enhancements and maintenance, and contributions to reserves. The total to fund these would amount to an additional \$76k.

Andrew Hunter then moved on to actions we could take during the year. Early in the year we could plan additional fund raising and change or add offerings for benevolences. Other possible steps in 2019 would be to seek donations at all events, look for savings in health care expenses, reduce the financial workload, assign managers to global budget lines, and audit and reduce energy use. A longer-term initiative would be to seek partnership with like-minded organizations.

The 2019 budget includes \$75k for a housing allowance for our senior pastor, David Lindsey, and \$50k for our associate pastor, Alexis Kassim.

Discussion followed Andrew's presentation. Patrick Martin moved we approve the 2019 budget. The motion was seconded and the vote was favorable. Andrew Hunter moved that we allocate \$10k to major repair reserves. The motion was seconded and the vote was favorable.

Mike Nagy offered the following motion: Little River United Church of Christ will procure a 4' by 6' flag of the United States and an appropriate vertical display stand. The flag will be placed on permanent display in the Atrium. The display will conform to the guidelines of the United States Flag Code. The church will be responsible for the upkeep and replacement of the flag as necessary. The flag may be moved for use in the Sanctuary, but should be returned to the Atrium when not in use. The motion was seconded and discussion followed. Brian Payne offered a friendly amendment that if we approve the motion that a United Church of Christ flag be purchased and also displayed. Mike Nagy accepted the friendly amendment. There was further discussion. Judy Moats called the question. It was seconded and the vote was passed. Drew Nettiga moved that we have a written ballot. The motion for a written ballot was seconded and approved. Ballots were distributed. After the ballots were counted, the results of the motion to display the flags were announced. The vote was 24 in favor and 30 against. The motion to display the flags failed.

Under Remarks for the Good of the Church, David Lindsey thanked the members of the Future Ministries Task Force whose names are listed on p. 41 in the Annual Reports.

A call for younger members to step up to replace aging members especially on the Nominations & Appointments committee, although it was noted that the baton has been passed already to younger members in many instances.

Moderator John Mingus indicated that he had little understanding of the job of moderator when he was elected. "I didn't have a clue," was his comment.

The meeting was adjourned by a prayer by David Lindsey at 1:55 p.m.

Submitted by,

Jean Wheelock
Church Clerk