

Conversation with Session Series

Topic: Follow-Up to Annual Meeting and Moving Forward with Designated Pastor Search

Date: February 18, 2017

Present:

Elders: Patric Donaghue, Wendy Hurley, and John Thomassen

Congregation Participation: 10 Congregants

Topic addressed: Financial capacity to support a Designated Pastor

Given our currently budgeted pledge support of \$80,000 (down from \$171,000 in 2016, \$220,000 in 2015, and \$252,000 actually received in 2014), we currently can only support a half-time Designated Pastor position for the next 2 years. There was concern expressed about our ability to grow the church back to what it was before the recent turbulent transition with only a half-time Pastor. Although there is reason for optimism that the bad times are behind us and our congregation is stabilizing for a much hoped for rebound, Session is forced to deal with the current fiscal situation. The idea of hiring a pastor yoked to us and another congregation was considered and can be explored. Pastor Hodong was received well as a stabilizing, spiritual, and peaceful presence from which to build going forward.

Topic addressed: Pastor Hodong's continued presence

Pastor Hodong has been received very positively. There was discussion about his continued presence in the congregation. His current contract extends to 03/31/2017 as half-time Temporary Pastor. He has agreed to another Temporary Pastor half-time contract until 08/31/2017. As he is looking for a full-time position, in this contract, Session has agreed to allow him to leave with one month's notice after starting on his new contract, if he were to accept a full-time position prior to 08/31/2017. Although it is believed his preference is for an inner-city congregation, it is unknown if he might agree to some other type of arrangement with us in the future if it were possible and offered.

Topic addressed: Improving Church finances

There was much discussion as to ways the Church may improve its current financial situation. Caution was expressed to view the current situation as typical in transitional times for most congregations. We were particularly hard-hit given the recent challenges surrounding Pastor Janet's unsuccessful recent tenure and the circumstances of her ouster. This compounded an expected decrease in pledges and attendance with a crisis in confidence for our future. Doing the good work of the Church and communicating that with our members was seen as paramount. Suggestions for communicating the good work of the Church included frequent Deacon updates to their sectors, and a general and perhaps monthly Deacon update to the whole congregation. The latter may also include interesting activities of members both inside and outside the congregation (with their permission). Session weekly emailed updates, use of the website and Facebook pages, and more frequent Gleam editions were also suggested.

We also explored ideas to decrease cost of utilities and insurance. We discussed increasing income by marketing the building for Day Care, or other business use to generate rental income. Raising funds through organized events was also discussed. This included a Harvest Dinner, Chicken Bar-B-Que,

Farmer's Market stall or Garage Sale. We may even consider using proceeds from the Spaghetti Dinner for our operating budget too.

Topic: Using Jim Fraser bequest to make our building facility more inviting and conducive to growth

The possibility of using Jim Fraser's bequest, with its limitation to be used for our building only, was discussed. It was suggested that this gift not languish unused when it could begin to be used to grow the congregation by improving its current attractiveness, functionality and marketability to our community. The idea of external improvements like placement of one or more crosses, a dedicated path for meditation, or special uses for our one acre wooded parcel was suggested. Internal improvements to the sanctuary, hallways and classrooms was discussed. The possibility of building a smaller chapel or other building extension was considered. The possibility of setting up a task force with people from buildings and grounds committee and worship committee was suggested for this purpose and to glean specific cost-effective proposals. One congregant offered to cover the cost of the proposed plaque honoring the Jim Fraser bequest. This will be followed up by Session.