

# CHANNING CHURCH

## Board Meeting Minutes

### April 14, 2009

**PRESENT:** Russ Milham, Chris Yalanis, Susan VanDerhoof, Don Mallinson, Sarah Mermin, Kim Shute, Coles Mallory, Chris Laudon, Kelly Bailey, Bill Hawkin

**STAFF:** Halcyon Westall, Rev. Freedman

**PROCESS OBSERVER:** Chris Laudon

**MINUTES:** The March Board minutes were approved with Kim Shute abstaining. The minutes for the special Congregational meeting were approved with minor changes submitted by Don.

#### **PROPERTY – Chris Laudon**

The Joseph Gnazzo Co. of Union, Connecticut was chosen as the contractor for the steeple project at the special Congregational meeting held Sunday, April 11, 2009. We are in the process of putting together the contract, which will be an AIA standard contract. We have received an endorsement by the engineer that there seems to be no question of the credibility of contractor. The engineer has also sent his ideas of what the contract should include. The contractor will do the work as specified by Structures North and John Whatney. Chris has checked with insurance company.

There are some questions that need to be resolved about the bell contract. We have to make sure we are following the requirements of Saving America's Treasures. While it does not need to be decided right now, Chris recommended that we consider adding one big bell. Adding the bell is not essential, but recommended.

Chris Yalanis has been talking to the Elks about putting in a burm. The Elks will allow parking for the contractors during the project and Channing will pay for the burm. Chris Laudon has specs to contact the contractor for the burm which should be happening in the next couple of weeks. Chris Y. is concerned that the pooling in the parking lot might be bigger than expected. We could put the burm in on our side of the property, but it would be best if we could work with the Elks.

In addition to the burm, the contractor will create a secure enclosure to keep stones and equipment safe. Some plants may have to be moved or removed in order for security fence to be erected and the area prepared for construction. Amy asked if there was someone else on the property committee who can organize the work party since it is a bigger than usual work party.

Chris L. also reported on the resurfacing of the area between the church and Channing House. For drainage it depends on what surface we choose and what money we want to spend. The least expensive and greenest is to tear it up and fill with recycled asphalt or we could fill it with gravel and pack with concrete which is more durable. Russ thinks there are more options out there and recommends Chris L. talk to them about

other possibilities. Discussion turned back to the bells and the option of hooking the bells up to an electronic panel. Coles asked that since we have such historic bells, why not have a historic rope? Chris L. agreed that there is a fine line between preservation and modernizing. This option of the electronic panel, Option #2, is what they consider to be part of the process of restoring the bells. Coles asked if the contract process had cast a wide enough net. Chris L. was confident that it had.

**MOTION:** *The board approves the Property Committee's recommendation to accept and engage in a contract with Chime Master Systems and to approve the base contract of approximately \$119,000. Acceptance of option #2 the chime stand of approx. of \$25,000 is conditionally on hold while The Capital Campaign results are tabulated and Property Committee continues its research. The board will consider the bell Option #2 upon advice of Property Committee. The President will be authorized to sign this contract after receiving due diligence advice regarding project's insurance status and related legal issues.*

The motion was made by Russ and seconded by Kelly. The motion passed unanimously.

Chris presented one last news item that our tenant in Channing House is leaving in May.

#### **CAPITAL CAMPAIGN – Don**

As of tonight's meeting the Annual Canvass is at \$149,000. The committee believes that after analysis there might be another \$10,000 outstanding and that \$160,000 is possible as a maximum goal. There will be announcements made on the next two Sundays and an email went out to the congregation and there will be follow-up calls. The end date of campaign will be the May board meeting so Coles will have a number to work with. Coles requested that it be the Sunday before the Board meeting.

Don said he received an email from someone saying that they were willing to move money from Capital fund to Canvass. There was some discussion about this and whether or not we should ask people to consider doing this to help the annual canvass. It was decided that we should not suggest this as an option. In doing so it could affect the Capital Campaign for 3 years to come. Also, if Capital Campaign information changes we could have problems with contracts.

Don presented a fundraiser for consideration. Shaw's would give us a percentage of sales of Channing members who shop there on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays if we just provide them with an address of where they should send the check. The check would be sent to us on a quarterly basis. It is up to an individual member to identify themselves to Shaw's that they would like to participate. Chris Y. said we could provide Shaw's with the address, but shouldn't promote it within the congregation. Coles said this is a slippery slope and would vote no. The topic was tabled to a future meeting.

## MINISTER'S REPORT

*This report covers the period of March 10- April 14, 2009*

### Adult Enrichment

The Venerable Khensur Rinpoche Geshe Lobsang Wandak will offer a series of teachings on the *Tibetan Buddhist practice of Lobjong or Mind Training*, Thursday evenings every other week beginning April 16th (April 16 and 30, May 14 & 28). Suggested Donation \$10 per lecture, but no one will be turned away. Channing Church will receive one-third of the donations, the rest of the proceeds will benefit the Chenrezig Tibetan Buddhist Center. On the alternate Thursdays, a facilitated discussion will be held 7:00-8:30pm in the Parish Hall.

Twelve women participated in *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven*, the two-part workshop in feminist theology that I offered on March 21 and April 12 in the Parish Hall.

Twenty-eight people attended our *Passover Seder* on Thursday, April 9<sup>th</sup> in the Parish Hall. Sally Hanchett helped me organize the event. Irene Glaser led us in the traditional songs with her violin. Pat Fairchild, Halcyon, Helen, and Rowan Westall helped set-up. Everyone helped bring food and clean-up. Special thanks to Rex LeBeau for doing the dishes!

**On Sunday, April 19, 11:30-12:30am, Jeannette Lee Bessinger**, co-author of Simple Food for Busy Families, *The Whole Life Nutrition Approach*, will offer a cooking presentation on how to build-your-own chili and the “Top 10” ways to get kids to eat their veggies!

### Capital Campaign Update

Every Channing member and friend who appears in “Rising to the Challenge—the video” granted permission for us to use their images in our promotional video. After all the permissions were secured, the video was posted on You Tube. Please share the link with everyone who might be interested in our steeple restoration:  
[www.youtube.com/channingchurch](http://www.youtube.com/channingchurch)

We hosted a lovely Neighborhood Open House to brief our surrounding community. Thanks to Betsy for the food and drink. Holly and David had the presentation boards available. Chris Laudon was prepared to offer a presentation. We had a wonderful turn-out of our own members BUT only one neighbor came to the party—Pam Giroux who had already met with Chris and I. We gave her a copy of the DVD to share. Perhaps the neighbors were worried that we would ask them to contribute.

### CROP WALK

Good news! The CROP Walk is back on! Thanks to a Lay Leader from Community Baptist Church, the CROP Walk will be held on **Saturday, May 23**.

The Social Justice Committee will host a **Hunger Awareness Dinner on Friday, May 15 at 6:00pm** in the Parish Hall. The suggested donation is \$5 plus a canned good for

the local food pantry. \$15 will purchase a solar cooker for Dafuri refugees in Chad. This will be an educational and community-building event for all ages. Please make your reservations by Monday, May 11: [green@channingchurch.org](mailto:green@channingchurch.org)

### **Denominational Affairs**

This evening **Tuesday, April 14** there is a **UU President Candidates Forum** at the Westminster Unitarian Church. A few folks from our congregation plan to attend. I hope that people will look at the candidates' platforms online, form opinions and vote so we can turn in our absentee ballots for General Assembly.

### **Greenfield Group**

I will be attending my UU Ministers' Study Group April 27-29 in Greenfield, NH. The theme of our Spring Convocation is *The Emergent Church and New Media*.

### **Rhode Island Legislative Ministry**

Eleven Channing members attended the Annual Meeting of RIUULM on Sunday, March 15, 2pm at First Unitarian Church in Providence. The legislative issues selected were Fair Taxation, Housing and Homelessness, and Marriage Equality. There will be a **meeting at Channing on Sunday, May 3** highlighting how we can participate in these legislative issues.

### **Rites of Passage**

A Memorial Service to honor the life and passing of **Lee Tolman** will be held on **Saturday, April 25 at 4:00PM** in the Sanctuary of Channing Memorial Church. Church members who would like to share stories and thoughts about Lee are encouraged to email them to Rev. Amy Freedman, [minister@channingchurch.org](mailto:minister@channingchurch.org) Cards of condolence may be sent to his daughter "Happy" at the following address: Mary MacNeill, P. O. Box 516, Linwood, MA 01525

### **Worship**

March 15, *Heart of Democracy*, Rev. Amy Freedman, Lay Leader: Beth Milham  
March 22, *Sunyata, Emptiness*, Rev. Amy Freedman, Lay Leader: Christine Ariel  
April 5, *Heaven and Hell*, Rev. Amy Freedman, Lay Leader: Maryellen Doherty  
April 12, *Easter Sunday*, Rev. Amy Freedman, Lay Leader: Norm Moore

Pat Fairchild, Sue VanDerhoof and Nancy Peresta led an Interfaith Sunrise Service at Norman Bird Sanctuary on Easter morning. Despite the cold, forty-five people attended!

### **PLEDGES – Bill**

For the Annual Canvass we are up to 105 pledges with about 30 more people to hear from. Low \$160's is best estimate for the canvass. For the Capital Campaign we have 86 responses with 3 still on hold. We have received \$96,000 to date. We could expect roughly another \$100,000 by fall. Average pledge so far for the CC is \$1400. Remaining pledges will bring that down. We have had a few pledges from people who were not canvassed.

## **FINANCE COMMITTEE – Coles**

Coles presented the budget the Finance Committee had developed. Based on the projected amount being brought in from pledges, they were forced to take a lot of things out of the budget. Changes include re-renting Channing apartment. Coles presented some budget balancing ideas and the finance committee is not recommending one way over another. Amy proposed that she would be unpaid in August. Amy suggested we should take out the rental of Channing House and put it in as a balancing option so the congregation is more aware of it.

**CHRIS Y** – asked what the fundraising potential would be for the raffle. This is a fundraiser that could raise significant funds. Sell 1,000, \$100 or whatever with a first place prize of a Prius—and other green prizes. Chris L. asked what happens if we don't sell the tickets. The contract with ticket purchaser would say that prizes would be reduced. The church does not bear the risk.

**KIM** – Asked what is our task tonight? Coles – come up with suggestions of ways to balance the budget. Kim said that she felt the paperless communication option from a membership perspective can be alienating. Many people are not computer literate.

The Board then went page by page through the proposed budget to review our options.

### **PAGE #1**

Chris Y – bring fundraising for auction down to \$10,000. Take \$4,000 out for Channing House rental

Coles – Interest rates are terrible and we will have less money to invest. We need \$50,000 to get to 2.3%. Interest should be called \$500. Knock down endowment to \$3,000.

### **PAGE #2**

Chris Y. – We could use more lay leaders for special services instead of paying guest speakers. Kelly and Sue agreed that the congregation is definitely capable of leading the needed services. Bill H. said that keeping the quality of services high is very important. Amy said even with the maternity leave we didn't use the whole \$2,000. We could put the amount needed down to \$1,000.

Chris Y – Asked if we could we solicit supplies from parents for RE. Amy thinks that is not a good idea –why are people giving to the church. Kelly said that RE does currently use wish list. Don said the choir will donate money raised to the church's canvass.

### **PAGE #3**

Finance Committee did not think it was a good idea to cut Music Director. Music is very important for services. Others thought we should have a reduction in music presented as an option. We could reduce amount for music supplies. They have only spent \$150 this year so far.

## **PAGE #4**

The \$4,000 in contracted repairs is just an arbitrary number. We can delay maintenance as much as possible.

## **BUDGET BALANCING OPTIONS**

### **Fund Raising**

The budget relies on a fall service auction to raise \$10,000. Additional fund raising would help balance the budget. A raffle and a summer B+B in member's homes have been suggested.

### **Endowment**

A 2/3 vote of the congregation can authorize use of the Endowment Fund.

### **Religious Education**

The hours of the RE Director were expanded this year. Reverting to the previous hours would reduce costs by \$8,500.

### **Summer Closing**

Closing the church in July and August would reduce our office, music, Catalyst, cleaning, and ministerial expenses. The total savings could approach \$9,000.

### **Apartment Rental**

Reconverting the rear first floor of the Channing House to an apartment would net about \$4,000 this year and \$8,000 in future years.

### **Special Services**

Reducing the number of outside speakers could save up to \$2,000.

### **Organist/Music Director**

#### **Special Music**

Reducing the number of services with music would reduce costs.

## **BOARD INPUT**

Chris Y. asked each Board member to state their preferences/opinions as to what they feel should be cut.

**AMY** - We've made so much progress in improving services and it would be best to contain it in a one or two month period. Implementing cuts in RE and music will create many problems. There are other congregations facing huge gaps and other churches have decided to close for one month in the summer.

**RUSS** – will back what comes out with what congregation decides. Not comfortable with taking money from endowment, but will do it. If we are going to do fundraising it can't be left to the Board. Before September starts we need a group of people in motion.

**DON** – Cut communication costs by using paperless communication. Not in favor of reducing RE.

**SARAH** - supports summer closing. Brings home impact of financial situation. Another \$10,000 in fundraising. Against using endowment.

**COLES** - The paperless communication option should be taken off list because it is a small item and doesn't save that much. Comfortable with anything on sheet, except cutting special services and organist/music.

**CHRIS L.** - We have to live within our means. In favor of presenting staff cuts.

**BILL** - Supports closing during the summer. Doesn't want to cut music. Means a lot to him. Janet is a special person and brings a lot to the church. He would not touch paperless communication. We could offer option of getting Catalyst via email.

*\*It was pointed out that if we offered for people to receive the Catalyst by email we would then reduce the number of paper copies being mailed and would lose our bulk rate and would have to pay for 1<sup>st</sup> class, therefore not saving any money.*

**KELLY** – Not an ideal choice but she agrees that because of construction closing during the summer is a good option. Feels strongly that if we reduce RE we must also reduce music line item. Don't need to present paperless communication, but good to work toward.

**KIM** – Supports closing during summer and increasing fundraising. Kim expressed appreciation of Amy & Halcyon's work and recognized it is hard to have their income possibly reduced.

**HALCYON** – Cutting summer services is a good option. Has less impact on programs for the year.

**CHRIS Y.** – Supports an increase in fundraising. Agrees with Chris L. that we should be fiscally responsible. Against closing for summer.

**SUE** – Supports an increase in funding and closing during August.

## **RESULTS**

1. Fundraising
2. Endowment – present option
3. Staff services are on table but would not want to have to cut them.
4. Summer services – several people in favor several people against.

## **ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS & COMMENTS**

**AMY** – We should say that we are closing July and/or August so people understand what that means. The planning that is normally done during summer will not be done; phone calls won't be answered, etc. It will be a significant change.

**DON** – Is concerned about the community perspective spending 1.2 million on steeple and then we have to close for a month or two—seems odd. Tell people we are closing due to the construction? Coles said we should be honest.

**SARAH** – Asked if it was possible to have figures for the cost of running July and August.

## **PROCESS OBSERVER**

The meeting ran 1 hour late. Voices were heard. A remarkable amount of civility. And everyone did participate.

Submitted by  
Susan VanDerhoof  
Clerk