

CHANNING MEMORIAL CHURCH

Board Minutes

Thursday, January 7, 2010

Present: Jim Freess, Russ Milham; Ruth Jernigan, Chris Laudon, Jake Smith, Coles Mallory, David Pedrick, Sarah Mermin ; Chris Yalanis and Sue Vanderhoof had sent regrets for being unable to attend.

STAFF: Rev. Amy Freedman, Halycon Westall

PROCESS OBSERVER: Ruth Jernigan

MINUTES: The December minutes were approved, subject to a minor correction noted by Russ.

MINISTER'S REPORT

Amy notified the Board that she would be ending her ministry at Channing upon the completion of the current Church year, June 30. She has loved her work and the congregation at Channing; she feels that she is departing on a positive note and with the Church on a solid footing. As a personal decision, the time has come for her to seek other ways to pursue her ministerial calling while balancing motherhood with a less demanding professional role. The Board agreed – expressing great appreciation for her service, leadership and kindness – and supported her decision. Meanwhile, she is committed to serving the congregation fully through June. The Board was the first group of the congregation to be notified. Amy distributed a letter that was to be mailed to the entire congregation the following day, with further announcement by her at the Sunday service.

Coles proposed that the Board call a special meeting, without staff, to begin the search process for an interim minister, leading to a new settled minister in due course. He suggested, as well, that we seek the assistance of a consultant for this process, such as through the UUA. There was brief discussion about various considerations regarding an interim minister, but the topic is referred to the future, special meeting. There was a consensus that an interim ministerial period would bridge the time required to engage a new, settled minister. No date was set for the proposed special meeting.

PROPERTY

Chris L reported that the bells have been installed and are operational. This completes the Steeple Project, other than minor finish jobs, removal of the protective covering on the front windows and the scaffolding and similar final clean-up. The bells will now require an interested, organized and committed group of individuals to be trained and available to play them. A leader will need to be appointed for this function. Dennis Greene and Janet Grant were suggested as initial organizers for this.

The Property Committee will bring a proposal to the Board for approval of signage to recognize principal donors to the Steeple Project. Leaders of the capital campaign, especially, are being consulted for producing the content of the proposed list of foundations and individuals

who should be recognized for their significant support. Sign design and materials will be decided accordingly. Chris noted the existing plaque that thanks the original donors of the bells.

Russ noted that the bells can't be heard inside the sanctuary, apparently due to the massiveness of the stone structure separating them. He suggested a microphone to speakers in the sanctuary.

The driveway and parking modifications have been substantially completed. These are for six new parking places behind and a driveway in front of Channing House. However, the parking lot has not been set away from the rear fence as required for backing from the last space, per the plans. Corrections are now weather-dependent.

Arrangements are being made for corrections and upgrades to the electrical system in several locations. Jake requested urgency in replacing the dishwasher in the Parish Hall, needed especially for the Soup Kitchen program. Libby Houlihan should be consulted about the Soup Kitchen's needs.

Restoration of the west transept stained glass window is in progress. Its wood frame is in need of work before re-installation. Grant writing is needed for further sanctuary projects, as well as drainage and landscaping. Jake said he would remain on the grant writing team, and expected the Dennis will, as well. Further stained glass restoration and the possibility of upper ceiling restoration are among the future capital projects that are desired when funds are found.

A meeting of the Master Plan team is scheduled for January 8. The intention is to update the seven-point plan presented in 2008 for congregation discussion during the spring, leading up to re-affirmation of its general direction at the Annual Meeting.

A lawsuit has been filed against Channing by a guest of the Channing House apartment who claims an injury due to a faulty railing at the apartment entrance. Communication about this matter has been channeled to our insurance company through Chris Yalanis, with Michele Dubuc's administrative assistance.

TREASURER

A financial report was distributed by e-mail prior to the meeting. Operating finances are proceeding satisfactorily. The reporting of capital campaign contributions of both cash and stocks has been scrutinized for accuracy and is now nearly fully verified. With a few final invoices outstanding, bridge financing currently totals approximately \$200K. Once the final payment from Save America's Treasures is received, together with some pledges that are overdue and expected, and the remaining invoices are paid, it is expected that the final loan principal for the Steeple project will still be about \$200K. This amount is consistent with the total of future pledge payments over the next two years and later, and was planned for since the beginning of the project.

As soon as Dennis Greene receives notification that the Steeple Project is completed, including removal of scaffolding and window covering, he will issue the request to SAT for final payment. That is expected soon, with payment possibly coming in February. Russ is also getting written statements from our contractors that they have paid all their bills so that Channing will not be exposed to secondary responsibility for them.

As an important source of operating revenue, Jake urged that Channing be more proactive soliciting weddings. We currently advertise in wedding publications, web site, etc., but Jake recommended committing funds to enter such things as the Newport's wedding show in February. There was no action toward that show at this time. It is understood that this year's wedding income is likely to fall short of budget, which the Finance Committee will monitor.

CANVASS TIME LINE

Jim Frees reported on planning for the Canvass. The Canvass Committee is in the process of being formed. A theme will be developed once the Committee convenes. Planning meetings are scheduled in January to mid February. Canvasser training is scheduled for February 14 and 20. A leadership event is planned for Feb 28, and a kickoff event, such as a spaghetti supper, on March 6. March 7 is planned as Canvass Sunday, and a hard close of the campaign is planned for April 3. A luncheon celebration will be scheduled soon thereafter.

There was discussion about the difficulty of establishing a campaign goal dollar amount while budgets were being estimated with some uncertainty. Jim proposed not having a specific goal. Sarah and David disagreed, encouraging some basis of building on prior years' actual pledge revenues, and recognizing that it would be difficult to maintain existing programs if there were any reduction in budget. David suggested that there should be some sense of whether pledging should gain, hold or retreat, based on sense of fundraising potential among the membership. As a minimum, an increase in pledging by some percentage of, say, 5%, would allow existing activities to be maintained, following a tightly squeezed budget in the current fiscal year. An assessment of changes in the membership rolls might give some guidance. Coles offered to develop a status quo budget, keeping program delivery as is, but allowing for areas of unavoidable cost increases. Jake drew attention to seeking contributions of time and talent, as well – not just money.

Jim, Halcyon and one other Channing member are scheduled to participate in a stewardship training seminar in February. The Canvass Committee will ultimately be responsible for making its decisions and plans about how to conduct the Canvass.

STEEPLE & BELL CELEBRATION

Sue Vanderhoof has volunteered to chair the committee for this event. John Burnham will assist. Chris Y may have some responses from the Catalyst notice (but was not at this meeting to discuss them). After some discussion of calendar conflicts, it appeared that May 2nd would be a good date for the event.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Russ requested that the Board do a debriefing of the Christmas Eve candlelight service at another time.

ADJOURNMENT:

At 9:00

Minutes recorded by David Pedrick