

**April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023 Quarterly Congregational Meeting Minutes**

1. Meeting called to order by President Frank Chan at 10:40 am
2. Notice of call was read by Mary Childs, NCC Clerk
3. Motion to approve the 1/29/2023 minutes made by Carol Donovan, seconded by Lew Meier. Jane Barth has requested that the language on page two regarding the Prayer Shawl group reflect that it was not part of JEF at that time (but is now). No other corrections. Motion is approved by voice vote.
4. With the congregation's approval the order of meeting agenda has been adjusted and item four is now an opening Prayer offered by Pastor Eric Elnes.
5. Governing Board Report: COVID update, recent quarter's events reviewed as well as upcoming events during the next quarter. See Tidings, weekly Wednesday Note, Sunday email, as well as Facebook posts for the many faith formation events, studies and activities offered. Attendance statistics for the last 12 months was presented. Easter Sunday service attendance was 193, our monthly average has increased by about 25 participants.
6. First Quarter Financial Report is up to date as of the end of March 2023. See report: For income: pledges are ahead of the budget, and we are behind on fundraising and loose offerings. Local direct expenses are over as we are over electric by about \$2,000 and have paid some annual subscriptions early in the year. Still looking to be reimbursed by Quick Books as they charged us twice. \$10,000 was used to purchase a U.S. Treasury I-bond to supply seed money for the roof capital campaign. Reserve is actually at about \$80,000 considering that we have set aside money for one month's payroll. Treasurer, Liz Buhler provides a monthly summary of the church's finances in the Sunday announcement. All are invited to attend the Financial Resources Team meetings on the second Monday at 7:00 pm.
7. Business:
  - a. Motion to approve Gail San Juan as the Financial Resources Ministry Team Leader: made by Peg Herzberg, seconded by Liz Buhler, discussion and thanks for Gail volunteering, Voice Vote: passed unanimously.
  - b. President Frank Chan shared the timeline regarding the need for pastoral coverage after Pastor Stephanie's resignation last year and decision by the Governing Board (March 2023 meeting) to offer a part time Associate

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Pastor position to Rev. Kaleigh Corbett-Rasmussen. Motion made by Juanita Durham, seconded by Ocean Pellett, to approve the appointment of Rev. Kaleigh Corbett Rasmussen as our Part-Time Associate Pastor for Congregational Care. Discussion and Vote by Count of members: In favor: 68 in person, 13 on zoom, Opposed: zero in person, zero opposed on zoom, 81 members voted: Comments of gratitude shared by Rev. Kaleigh Corbett Rasmussen.

- c. Settled Pastor Search Process:
- UCC: Rev. Isaac Lawson, Area Conference Minister, South Central Region: shared the process for calling a settled pastor as part of the UCC guidelines. UCC does not appoint a pastor for us, but will provide a process of best practices to guide us towards our next pastor and covenant partner. (See website for tools described) Five Phase process: Search and call website with introductory video and resources for each phase: ministry wealth, preparing for the search, discerning, completing search, completing ministry wealth. Question regarding pool of candidates: could be between 5 and 80 depending on factors. (full time, livable wage, location).
  - UMC: Rev. Wanda Santos-Pérez, Seacoast District Superintendent: shared that process for calling a settle pastor: contact by staff parish committee and looking at the church profile and church data, as well as demographics, what kind of leadership, will then look to find the right match for NCC, income range, self-identified priorities of NCC, and based on the pool of candidates, goals of the Church as well as the potential pastor candidate, once appointed there is a follow up process across four times in the first year. Question regarding appointment: the UMC will appoint once we have gone through the process. Question regarding current timeline for UMC's work after we finish our work: Process starts in December and continues through May. It would be difficult to start now in that it would take a while as the current process will finish up by July 1, most start in December and it takes months to a year. Question: this would mean we would have an appointed pastor by July 1, 2024. Question: We will be ready to call a settled pastor in a few months, not ready to call today. Question: Where is the New England Conference regarding calling a pastor in adhering to the book of discipline? NE Conference has determined to be non-compliant regarding excluding LGBTQIA members. Contract of current Interim Pastor ends on December 1st 2023, is there a way to have mid-year appointments will need a few months to find the right fit.

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8. Next two congregational meetings are scheduled for: July 16 and October 22, 2023.
9. Voices of the Congregation: shared by Ron Johnson, Nan Rigdon, Pam Stevens, Marsha Swan, Brooke Stutzman, Rev. Kaleigh, Rev. Eric, Frank Chan, Jen Datum, Peg Herzberg, Stephanie Chan, Margaret Holmberg, Rev. Isaac, and Lynne Floyd.
10. Motion to adjourn made by Juanita Durham, Liz Buhler seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned at 12:21 pm.
11. Benediction offered by Pastor Kaleigh Corbett-Rasmussen.

Respectfully Submitted by

Mary Childs, Niantic Community Church Clerk

## Summary of the Voices of the congregation

- **Ron Johnson** shared additional points to the UMC process where the start is typically in December as the Annual Conference is in June.
- **Nan Rigdon** asked if we alternate between UCC and UMC, the wording is to balance the settled pastor position not including the associate pastor. And why have we did not start this process sooner.
  - There is no hard requirement to alternate between UCC and UMC, the wording is to balance.
  - We are working on Church time scale, a search committee found our interim pastor, Rev. Eric during the fall of 2022. We need to give our interim pastor time to help us find a settled pastor; it has been a busy time and we still need to update our profile (50+ pages) and solicit participants to serve in the search committee roles. For reference, the last two settled pastor searches took two years each.
- **Pam Stevens**: once a search committee is formed may we hold a special congregational meeting before July?
  - Yes, we expect a special Congregational meeting in June to decide whether we seek a UMC or UCC settled pastor.
- **Marsha Swan**: question do we as a congregation need to be open to have a second interim pastor on December 1<sup>st</sup>.
  - Yes, realistically we will have a gap.
- **Brooke Stutzman**: wondering what we will do differently than last time. How can we ensure we are more honest with ourselves of who we want to be and who we are as a church, to better let a pastor know what they are getting.
  - Yes: the committee will work to put that profile together and will incorporate our old profile, self-reflections, and openness to look at ourselves in the mirror and see who we are.
- **Rev. Kaleigh** spoke to the process of UMC with a lot of care, compassion and thought goes into the process the conference takes action on when appointing.
- **Rev. Eric** read **Frank Mirecki's** comment from Zoom regarding whether we could look to other denominations that could flow through our pulpit.
  - Yes, UCC opens its pastor opportunities to several denominations.
- **Frank Chan**: UMC timeline: submit pastor request in the fall, process works to appoint by April and finalize in June to start in July. UCC timeline: submit local church profile and receive profiles from candidates through the UCC conference. It is an open process with no set time frame (past two searches have taken two years each).
- Can we decline a UMC appointment and start over again.
  - Yes, we will have to wait for UMC to go through the process again.

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- Are we restricted to alternate between UCC and UMC?
  - No, we are not.
- **Historian (Jen Datum)** reported that the concept of balance comes from our Terms of Union. It is on purpose meant to be broad to give the Church flexibility.
- **Stephanie Chan:** discuss today, next week off site meeting, what's the timeline?
  - We are aiming to staff the search committee within the next month, work on the Local Church profile, and call a special congregational meeting in late May or early June to discuss and make a determination.
- **Brooke Stutzman:** in terms of a search committee looking to volunteer her husband. Is there a way to inform people of exactly how much work is involved?
  - UMC requires less work on the search committee while UCC is open-ended.
- **Ron Johnson:** recommend that people speak with folks who served in the previous search committee, such as Peg Herzberg, Kathy Kern, Ron Johnson and John Whritner.
- **Peg Herzberg:** We need to realize that the search committee will need to be balanced with UCC, UMC, and NCC with three people from each of those denominations: quite a few have already committed. If you are interested, please do not delay.
- **Margaret Holmberg:** Will the Congregation have input to the profile?
  - Next Saturday at the offsite meeting but no decisions made, just information gathering, and the search committee will develop the local church profile. The Congregation will have access to the profile after it is finished and before it is submitted. Members are encouraged to contact search committee members to provide their input.
- **Ron Johnson** reassured that the search committee will solicit input from our congregation for this profile.
- **Peg Herzberg:** last profile utilized the Holy Cow survey, and we also did cottage meetings. Took all of that information on a spreadsheet and results to share this important input.
- **Rev. Isaac Lawson:** I would say to allow this place of discernment and not to rush.
- **Frank Chan:** If the congregation would like the president and vice-president to reinstate office hours, please make a request.
- **Frank Chan:** The offsite meeting on 4/29/2023 is an idea generation opportunity with teams of 5-7 people which is a working session and proceeding will be posted. No decisions will be made. Will be used for brainstorming. People are encouraged to join the ministry teams as there are current openings.
- **Lynne Floyd** asked if the congregation will know who is on the search committee?

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- Yes, the Governing Board appoints the Settled Pastor Search Committee, and the Church commissions it.
- **Brooke Stutzman** wanted to know if the congregation will need to approve of this committee?
  - Yes: the Governing Board will vote to appoint this committee.
- **Peg Herzberg**: once the governing board appoints that team then the congregation will have opportunity for input.