

Minutes Annual Congregational Meeting

Grace United Church

Sunday February 11, 2024

The Meeting was held at Grace United Church in the Sanctuary and via Zoom. Having achieved a quorum, the Meeting began at 12:01 pm.

Chairperson: Leslie Veldman, Chair of Council.

Secretary: Cecily Chiles.

1. Opening Prayer- Pat Morrison
2. Constitution of the Annual Congregational Meeting. There were 45 participants in person and 1 Zoom screen, with quorum. A procedure was described for casting a personal vote on Zoom.
3. Motion to allow adherents to vote on all matters.

No adherents of Grace United church identified themselves, no motion was made.

4. Approval of the Agenda.

MOTION to approve the agenda as printed in the 2023 Annual Report [moved by Gord Walkling/seconded by Bryce McGarvey].

Discussion: - None

- Motion carried

5. Approval of the Minutes

Minutes of the Annual congregational Meeting held on Sunday, February 12, 2023

MOTION to approve the minutes from February 12, 2023, Annual Congregational Meeting. [Al McLean/John Cooke]

Discussion: none

- Motion carried

6. Approval of the 2023 Annual Reports of Council, Committees, Groups and of the Financial Review Committee, excluding Finance and Nominating Committees.

MOTION to receive the 2023 reports. [David Murray/Al Shaw]

Discussion: Leslie Veldman reports that a financial review was conducted of the records for the calendar year 2023 by Laura Black and Gord Walkling. A report by the Financial Review Team will be presented at the March 2024 meeting of Council.

Summary of findings: The Financial Review team found the books to be in order and approves the accuracy and integrity that the financial team exercised in supporting this aspect of Grace's governance structure in 2023. Thank you to members of the Finance committee for their excellent work. Financial review team members are available today to answer questions. – Motion Carried.

MOTION to approve the 2023 reports, excluding Finance and Nominating Committee.
[Joanna Catterson/Marion Staples]

Discussion: None

- Motion Carried.

7. Approval of Finance Committee Reports

a. Review and approval of the 2023 Financial Report

- 2023 Financial Results were presented by Paul Cooper
- Deficit (\$18K) was lower than approved 2023 budget (\$24K)
- Rental income (\$42K) and interest income (\$22K) continued strong performance
- Congregation contributions to Outreach initiatives continued to be strong
- Reserve fund was able to support the 2023 deficit
- Givings were below budget in 2023 and lower than in 2022
- Deficit of \$18,285K will be covered by the reserve fund which will bring the reserve fund down to approximately \$43K.

MOTION to approve the 2023 financial report as presented at the meeting.
[Bruce Davies/Chris Cooke]

Discussion:

Numbers shown on the screen differ from those printed in the Annual Report. Those posted on the screen are the official record, the annual report numbers were based on estimates before the final numbers were received.

Asked for an explanation of the assets with Sarnia Community Foundation. Entitled to withdraw a certain amount every year, growth accrued has been re-invested into the funds in May every year. These funds are designated for specific purposes, Council could decide how to use interest from SCF funds. Legacy fund GIC interest was directed to the operating budget to help balance the budget. Total assets with SCF is approximately \$70K.

In the Annual Report, page 47, there is an estimate for the legacy fund interest 2023 budgeted, but no actual number reported. Finance proposed a change for

the allocation of legacy fund interest to support the operating budget and reduce a large projected deficit. Previously, legacy fund interest remained in the legacy fund. It was shown as a separate line item in the proposed 2023 budget to ensure the proposed change was profiled. In subsequent views, all interest - legacy fund plus ongoing RBC money market interest - was consolidated in one line.

Interest in 2023, line in table on page 47 of Annual Report, where does the interest reported come from? Primarily from Legacy fund interest and from some the Money Market fund. Special funds are all invested together, including a Money Market fund. These special funds are shown as a single line reported as 2023 Interest. The decision of Council was for all interest to go towards the Operating budget.

- Motion Carried

b. Review and approval of the 2024 Budget Proposal

2024 Budget Proposal, presented by Paul Cooper

- 2024 forecasted to be a challenging year. Striving for a balance between costs and income with the desire to have a balanced budget.
- Significant increases in specific cost areas (e.g. Salaries at 6.3% and insurance at 15%)
- Proposed budget balances need to reduce/eliminate deficit while funding priority ministries, an example is maintaining or increasing committee budgets
- 2024 budget deficit proposed at approximately \$13K
- Budget includes a 5% increase in givings versus 2023 actual (this has been achieved in the past). This is a challenge for the congregation
- Congregation support is required to enhance special events (\$5000)
- Manse rental has increased to \$500/month
- Other revenue increase or cost reduction items are included in the proposed budget
- Commitment to M&S in 2024 was reduced to \$7000
- The proposed deficit of approximately \$13K can be partly covered by the Reserve fund, the remaining deficit would be covered by the Legacy fund. Council to review the question of what the minimum balance for the Reserve fund should be.

MOTION to approve the 2024 budget as presented with proposed deficit of approximately \$13,000 [Bryce McGarvey/Jim Wicks]

Discussion:

- Concern was expressed that contributions to M&S are reduced in the operating budget. Suggested that the M&S line be replaced on the envelopes so that

members can direct contributions to M&S. Recommended that the congregation be advised of the change in contributions to M&S. Encouraged people to go the M&S website and review how those funds are used. Paul Cooper suggested a follow-up on this discussion at Council regarding contributions to M&S. Directed donations to M&S can still be made using the envelopes.

- Asked for clarification whether the speaker was recommending that a dedicated M&S donation option be put back on the envelopes. Ensure that members know that they can donate directly to M&S through the envelopes, and through the office and directly through the United Church of Canada. Ensure that the congregation is made aware of the change in how contributions to M&S are made and how members can make directed contributions.
- Special appeal events for M&S happen at Grace 2-3 times every year. Those funds go directly towards M&S in addition to the proposed amount in the 2024 operating budget. Members may contribute additional funds at the time of those events.
- In the Annual report, Outreach Committee report, page 49, lists actual numbers of what was given to M&S during the specific appeals events in 2023.
- Is there any discussion on raising rental fees for user groups in the church? There have been some discussions, but no decisions have been made.
- Motion Carried, with 2 abstentions.

Jim Wicks gave a visual presentation to help the congregation understand the costs and revenues associated with Grace United Church. Opportunities for members of our faith community to help Grace achieve a balanced budget were discussed; these included participating in fund-raising special events, inviting new members, personal givings.

Discussion:

- It was recommended that a version of this presentation be made available to everyone in the congregation. Emphasize the points of actions that members can take. A recorded video of the presentation will be made available through the website.

8. Nominating Committee Report

a. Removal and Election of Trustees

The removal and election of Trustees requires congregational approval.

MOTION to approve the addition of Joanna Catterson to the Board of Trustees

[Chris Cooke/Al McLean]

Discussion: none

- Motion Carried

b. Election of Officers

Al Shaw, chair of Nominations committee, thanked everyone who contributes their time and efforts to the running of Grace United Church. Al Shaw presented officers for 2024 as follows:

Council Chair: Marion Staples

Council Vice-Chair: Tory Walko

Secretary: Cecily Chiles

Trustees: Joanna Catterson, Bruce Davies, Pete Melanson, Neil Holloway, Ray Phillips, Kenji Marui, Pat Morrison.

Regional Representatives: vacant

Treasurer: vacant

Financial Reviewers: Laura Black, Gord Walkling

MOTION that nominations be closed. [Chris Cooke/Bryce McGarvey]

Discussion:

Since Treasurer role is not filled, are there legal concerns? Someone else within Finance committee will have to pick up the work in the absence of a Treasurer, or the work will not be done. Council continues to search for a Treasurer.

Has the current treasurer resigned? No formal resignation has been received by Council. The Treasurer indicated a year ago that he would like to be released from the role in 2024. Council will need to follow-up to confirm who is filling the role of Treasurer.

-Motion Carried, 1 opposed

MOTION to approve the slate of nominated candidates for office, as presented. [and granting Council power to add as needed until the next Congregational Meeting] [Ian McGuinness/Jim Wicks]

Discussion: none

-Motion Carried

- c. Election of Governing Body 2024 Council and Council Committee members are listed in the Annual Report 2023.

MOTION that the elected 2024 Council and Council Committee members be those names printed in the 2023 annual report as listed with each committee report, with additions to Christian Development committee to include Margaret Billings and Marilyn Barros [Al Shaw/David Murray]

Discussion: Committee members are listed in the annual report. It was pointed out that only one person is listed on the CD committee. Pat Morrison advised that there are 2 who have stepped forward to join the CD committee. Margaret Billings and Marilyn Barros will join the committee.

-Motion Carried

- d. Election of Nominations Committee

As the Nominations Committee is an Ad Hoc committee of Council, its membership requires annual appointment.

MOTION to approve the slate of candidates Pat Morrison and Leslie Veldman and granting Council power to add as needed until the next Congregational Meeting [Chris Cooke/John Cooke]

Discussion: None - Motion Carried

9. Ministry and Personnel Committee

John Cooke presented the annual staffing appointment on behalf of M&P Committee.

- a. MOTION - that Grace UC request Region 7, Antler River Watershed, to extend Pat Morrison's appointment for the period of July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025 [John Cooke / Gord Walkling]- Discussion: none

-Motion carried

10. New Business: None

11. Introduction of Incoming Chair- Marion Staples- introduced herself and gave an outline of this year's theme, *Growing through change*.

12. Appreciations:

Leslie Veldman: the past year the theme has been *Grace flowing through hope*. Leslie thanked the staff, Kenji, Pat, Curtis, Lori and Marque for all they do for the members of Grace. Lori, has been a valuable partner to everyone on Council; Lori will be missed and we wish you the very best in retirement. Leslie thanked all current and past committee members who have played a vital role in the development of the church. Thanks also to committee workers and volunteers not on committees, you time is a gift and has contributed to many of the successes over this year, including the gym wall, re-starting soup luncheons, youth re-starting Community Living dances, the Resonance retreat weekend. People are encouraged to join committees and bring new ideas and energy to the work in the church. Christian Development welcomed two new members to continue ministry to young people.

Thanks to the choir for their leadership in Worship.

Incoming chair, Marion Staples, thanked Leslie for chairing Council through a year of change. Her leadership with teamwork created an encouraging and enjoyable Council. Marion thanked Al Shaw for his contributions to Council as Vice-chair, Chair and Past Chair.

13. Meeting closed at- 13:10

14. Closing Prayer- Pat Morrison