



GUM CHURCH

Our vision is to actively live the example of Jesus

GOVERNANCE BOARD MEETING

Saturday, January 16, 2021

PRESENT: Jeri Bigler, Dan DeZwaan, John Johnson, Sue Kremkow, Amy Schuiling, Ashley Forton, Kelly Goward, Shaun Skibinski, Karen Strickland, *Pastor Sherri Swanson, *Carol DeWeerd. (* Non-voting member)

This meeting was held on Zoom. Dan called the meeting to order at 9:06 am. Dan began the meeting with devotions and prayer. He shared the words of a song entitled "A Hymn of Promise" which was written to encourage hope.

Each Board member was introduced and asked to share something about themselves.

MINISTRY SUPPORT/LIAISON ASSIGNMENTS:

Reports from the Office Manager (Amy Schuiling), Missions (Mike Lee), and Trustees (Todd Potter) were sent to each board member prior to this meeting. It was recommended that staff and committee reports be requested quarterly rather than each time the Board meets.

New liaison contact assignments were made. A list of these assignments for each board member will be attached with these minutes.

Pastor Sherri summarized what to include when contacting our liaisons. A quarterly contact would be good, with a check-in this winter just to see how they're doing.

Encourage each group leader to contact all the members of their group. Could ask your liaison what their thoughts/hopes are for the future; are they meeting virtually? The purpose of these contacts is to head off any problems and improve communication.

Pastor Sherri's report:

*Pastor Sherri continues to have "Coffee with the Pastor". 10 attended the last coffee.

*New member class with three attendees is being held

*Lord's Prayer series with members sharing the Lord's prayer in other languages

*Pastor Sherri encouraged all to keep joining worship virtually;

*in early February a new study will be held based on the book Creed by Adam Hamilton

*Ash Wednesday – Pastor Sherri would like to offer a drive-up opportunity for persons to receive ashes and a prayer. Pastor Sherri will be wearing a mask and expects the people in the cars to also wear masks.

Proposed times are from 12-12:30 or 6-6:30 pm.

*Bishop has been offering online sessions to rejuvenate pastors.

*Amy has been working very hard to report all the numbers to the conference; Alex worked many hours on the music and worship during the Christmas season.



GUM CHURCH

Our vision is to actively live the example of Jesus

In summary, Pastor Sherri is looking at the year ahead as a re-building year. Who's on our team? Who's injured? Who's traded? We have to assess where we stand and increase participation. Most churches are anticipating a 20-30% decline. How and when can we get people back? She asked for prayers to re-build for a stronger church by the end of this year.

BUDGET:

SPRC BUDGET - MOTION made by Jeri that we approve the SPRC budget as requested for 2021.

SECONDED by Karen
VOTE approved by all

REMAINING BUDGET –

A discussion was held on the remaining budget. The budget for 2021 presented in Jenny's report has a large deficit. Pastor Sherri stated that she and Jenny are recommending that we move forward into 2021 knowing that we have a good fund balance and that we may re-evaluate mid-year.

MOTION made by Karen that we approve the budget as presented for 2021
SECONDED by Jeri
VOTE approved by all

RETURN TO IN-PERSON WORSHIP:

BACKGROUND:

This Board has spent much time and heartfelt effort on opening the sanctuary to in-person worship. In the meeting dated October 17, 2020 a motion was made to return to in-person "sanctuary participation" beginning with one service on November 8, 2020 with 60 attendees who have submitted a reservation and follow the in-person health rules. A soft opening was held on Nov. 1. A letter was sent to members and friends in October, 2020 that the Board was following the health guidelines provided by the State and local health officials to re-open the sanctuary. Safety measures were defined and implemented to ensure we were doing all we could to keep our attendees and staff healthy. It is felt that this experience in re-opening (albeit short) was a good practice for future re-opening efforts. No problems were encountered with having participants wear a mask. When we re-open we can follow these same guidelines.

It is felt that we have a good system in place and can return to in-person worship easily. We would continue to keep to the 20% capacity criteria, ie. 68 individuals (8 staff and 60 attendees) with reservations. During the November opening 28 attended.



GUM CHURCH

Our vision is to actively live the example of Jesus

In a recent letter from Bishop Bard he stated that “I understand the deep desire to be together, and I know the risks posed by in-person gatherings. How and when you gather should be based on reliable local community health information. Has the new strain of the virus been detected in your area? What is the positivity rate for people being tested? A positivity rate below 5% has been seen as a guide allowing more in-person gatherings. What is the case rate in your area? A case rate of over 25 new daily cases per 100,000 people is considered the highest risk level. What is the capacity of health care services in your area, such as the availability of ICU beds?

We as a Board have previously defined health measures needed to ensure our safety for in-person worship (**how** we worship); and we have used the following guidelines to determine **when** to re-open:

- *Bishop encouragement and guidelines
- *State Department and local Health Departments in Ottawa and Kent counties recommendations
- *other Methodist churches and schools closing or re-opening
- *percentage of people in our area testing positive
- *essential staff and volunteers should be comfortable with re-opening
- *percentage of people vaccinated

DISCUSSION:

Pastor Sherri reported that she continues to have people ask her when can we re-open. These people continue to be concerned about the health of our church. Regarding the Bishop’s recommendation that we be below a 5% positivity rate, it should be noted that we were at a 4.6% positivity rate when we decided to re-open in November. Unfortunately, by the time we actually re-opened the rate was much higher.

Our decisions have an emotional component in that we deliberated a great deal about what to do to serve our congregation the best. But we are totally committed to looking at the numbers in making our decisions. And this is not emotional but factual to ensure the safety of the congregation.

It was suggested that the criteria that we use for re-opening the church should apply directly to small groups meeting. Small groups should not meet before the church is re-opened. If we are using the positivity rate as a criteria for re-opening the sanctuary then this also applies to small groups.

Life-sustaining ministries (food truck, pantry, Hand to Hand) will continue to be held as no clients are allowed in the building.

We need to decide on the criteria for the positivity rate. In the past we have relied on



GUM CHURCH

Our vision is to actively live the example of Jesus

the Public Health determined levels. Pastor Sherri said she often checks online with the Health Departments and covidactnow.com regarding the positivity /hospitalization rates. Note: Alex has reported that he can be up and going faster now – he needs at least a full week.

Ashley proposed the following MOTION:

If the positivity rate is at or below 5% for two-weeks the sanctuary can be re-opened for worship. However, if the positivity rate exceeds 10% for two-weeks we will reassess the need to close taking into consideration other criteria such as ICU beds available, State and local Health departments recommendations, schools closings. If the positivity rate returns to 5% for one week we will re-open again.

SECONDED by Sue

VOTE: approved by all

NOMINATION OF A VICE-CHAIR:

Kelly was nominated and accepted the position.

Vote taken with all approving.

Thank you Kelly!

OTHER:

*Dan asked if everyone was ok with having their email addresses put in the newsletter.

*Amy would like her communications sent to her gmail account

*Ashley's email is corrected as: ahforton@gmail.com

*Re: Festival of the Arts this year

It is not known if this will be held. Do we need another fund raiser? Auction or concert? To be discussed

*prayers for Les Den Uyl

Pastor Sherri closed the meeting with prayer.

Next meeting is Wednesday, February 17, 2021 at 7pm

Respectfully submitted by,
Carol DeWeerd



GUM **CHURCH**

Our vision is to actively live the example of Jesus
