

Asylum Hill Congregational Church

Board of Deacons Meeting Minutes, March 10, 2022

Attendance: Moderator Tory Chavey, Vice Moderator Earl Exum, Marjorie Berger, John Bourdeaux, Jim Grigsby, Laura Harker, Africka Hinds, Christina Hollister, Chloe Horton, Claudia Lindsey, Debbie Mosebach, Glenn Olson, Paul O'Mara, Lila Pierce, Tom Pringle, Brent Robertson, Debbora Sutherland, Jane Torrey, Frank Virnelli, Dayl Walker, Wanda Williams-McCormack

Staff: Tobey Aubert, Helena Carvalho, Catherine Magnusson, Pastor Jordan Rebholz, Rev. Tracy Mehr-Muska, Jack Pott, Rev. Erica Thompson

Moderator Tory Chavey opened the meeting at 6:04pm.
Claudia Lindsey led us in prayer.

Consideration to adopt Consent Agenda

Consideration of Minutes of February 10, 2022 Diaconate Meeting

Claudia Lindsey motioned to adopt amended Minutes. Wanda Williams-McCormack seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Reimagining Church Report/Update

Rev. Erica Thompson reported that *Reimagining Church* has taken quite a different path than what was planned, as the church and the world are not as far out of the pandemic as hoped, and in person worship was delayed. The other ten participating churches are experiencing the same and some have dropped out. There is still discussion around this and Rev. Thompson quoted Lila Pierce "...we need a homecoming..." Others shared that they need to be reintroduced to their spiritual home, to be able to return in healthy ways. One idea presented is to engage the larger congregation to have some of these same important conversations in small groups. There has been disappointment and lamenting about what the church community hasn't been able to do, but out of it has come good conversations. Rev. Thompson thanked all those who were a part of this, for their work and conversations – Brent Robertson, Africka Hinds, Lila Pierce, Gary DeLong. Andi Lloyd from Yale Divinity School will join us at the April Diaconate meeting for further discussion of *Reimagining Church*.

Financial Update (Helena Carvalho, Claudia Lindsey)

Ms. Carvalho and Ms. Lindsey provided an update on AHCC's financials year-to-date and January reflection. Contributions coming in at a steady clip. Forecasting surplus for rest of year and look forward to the same expectations as we continue through the year.

Boar's Head – Jim Grigsby shared that the full budgeted amount was spent on marketing as is done every year. He reported sold out in-person performances and several live stream tickets. When the event was cancelled, most people said to keep the money so that it was basically a

break-even endeavor. Mr. Grigsby added that Boar's Head is alive and well and raring to go in 2023.

Moderator Report (Tory Chavey)

Consultants for Development and Operational engagements - The church has engaged with a development consultant to advise on AHCC's stewardship and fundraising efforts and an operations consultant to assess our infrastructure. The consultants are at an information-gathering stage and their work will continue this spring.

Nomination work for new committee members for the upcoming year – Vice Moderator Earl Exum, Rev. Erica Thompson, and Moderator Tory Chavey have taken up this work and asked for assistance as there are several committee chairs will be leaving their roles at the end of this term and replacements are needed. AHCC's Annual Meeting is May 22, 2022, and leadership would like to have people in these new roles and voted in at the Annual Meeting.

Banner Group (group to discuss/determine church's outdoor banners) – This will be on next month's agenda with revised guidelines.

Senior Minister Report (Rev. Erica Thompson)

Connect Four Initiative - Shout outs and gratitude to all those who were a part of making this happen. The end result was as intended, to connect people to people.

New Website – Thank you and a big shout out to Rhonda Mitchell and the staff for the new website. Rev. Thompson encouraged people to take a look and see all the great new features and to communicate any feedback to Rhonda Mitchell who will ensure that these concerns are addressed. Staff is excited about additions that will roll out with this project including an AHCC app, and lots of other exciting things that are coming.

COVID Protocol Update – Clergy and staff are in conversation and will be changing in-person worship COVID protocols. The Diaconate and congregation will be notified as changes are decided upon. Moderator Tory Chavey added that Deacons may meet in person as for the April meeting. Deacons will be advised.

- Road Map Update – At the end of March, the congregation will receive either electronically or via snail-mail, a Road Map update to communicate what programming has taken place to support the initiatives outlined in the Road Map.
- The update will include the report completed by the Neighborhood Task Force to be presented in an abbreviated, digestible form, emphasizing that the core theme of this work is about relationships.

Pandemic Reflection – Rev. Erica Thompson asked the group to reflect and share what has held them together these past two years within the church. She reminded the deacons that Pastor Jordan Rebholz and Rev. Tracy Mehr-Muska have *only* served at AHCC during the pandemic. Many shared their positive reflections and comments, and Moderator Tory Chavey suggested

that others who have further reflection may email/share with Rev. Erica Thompson after the meeting, via email or other method.

Sabbatical – Rev. Erica Thompson shared what sabbatical is, and what it is not.

- *What it is:*
 - A part of the minister’s contract and the church’s commitment
 - Extended leave, break, timeout
 - Time for a leader and their family to reconnect and to be
 - A time of reflection, evaluation; time to renew focus, and vision
 - Time to get off the treadmill, to recharge
 - Preventative maintenance
- *What it is not:*
 - A year-long or extended vacation, or sick leave
 - Used to pursue other opportunities.
 - A time to catch up on chores, nor is it a miracle cure.
 - A failing on the part of the pastor.
- Rev. Thompson’s sabbatical will be from May 22 – Sept 11, 2022, excluding a two-week trip to Germany for the Passion Play with AHCC that was delayed as a result of the pandemic.
 - Pastor Jordan Rebholz shared that Rev. Erica’s last sabbatical was eight years ago, and she is contracted for sabbatical every five years, but was delayed first due to the hiring of the clergy staff and then the pandemic.
 - Pastor Jordan Rebholz and Rev. Tracy Mehr-Muska have both known about this plan since they were hired, and have prepared for it. The preaching and worship schedule for the summer is complete, allowing now for planning of events and other initiatives.
 - Pastor Rebholz offered an invitation and request to have patience and grace around this next chapter, and expressed excitement around getting to know members of the congregation better, emphasizing that this shared experience will make us stronger as a church.

New Business

Stewardship – Glenn Olson shared that the greatest gift would be to complete the campaign by the annual meeting on 5/22/22. He and the Stewardship Committee are excited and inspired by the Road Map with a theme of emerging, about what has happened in the last two years and where the church headed, with commitments to increasing participation in many ways, as everything the church is able to do is a result of a successful stewardship campaign. The annual campaign will kick off on April 24 with a goal of ending on May 22. Moderator Tory Chavey will be asking each of the Deacons to contribute to the campaign.

Moderator Tory Chavey reminded the group that the next Deacon’s meeting is April 21 (the third Thursday in April) as April 14 is Maundy Thursday.

Rev. Erica Thompson shared that a Ukrainian student will be our guest and in conversation with us on Sunday, March 13, in worship.

Closing Prayer

John Bourdeaux closed the meeting in prayer.

Meeting adjourned at 7:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Christina Hollister

**Asylum Hill Congregational Church
Statement of Activities - Cash Basis
For the Seven Month Period Ending January 31, 2022**

58%

| | FY 2021-2022 7/1/21 - 6/30/22 Budget | FY 2021-2022 7/1/21 - 1/31/22 Actual | FY 2021-2022 % of Budget | FY 2021-2022 7/1/21 - 6/30/22 Forecast | Notes YTD / Forecast |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|--------------------------------|--|---|
| Ordinary Revenue | | | | | |
| Contributions | \$ 900,000 | \$ 503,810 | 56% | \$ 835,363 | 67% of budget with prepaid contributions, assumes YTD activity and FY20 and FY21 average activity |
| Gifts/Donations | - | 38,592 | 100% | 38,592 | donations to offset unbudgeted expenses, includes Boar's Head donations |
| Program/Event Revenue | 133,481 | 7,064 | 14% | 46,481 | reflects Boar's Head tickets transferred to donations |
| Rental Income & Reimbursement | 105,000 | 82,211 | 78% | 105,000 | |
| Other Revenue | - | 123 | 100% | - | |
| Endowment Draw | 745,296 | 372,648 | 50% | 746,598 | updated with audited actuals |
| Total Revenue | 1,883,777 | 1,004,448 | 53% | 1,772,034 | |
| Ordinary Expense | | | | | |
| Adult Education | 2,341 | 140 | 6% | 2,341 | |
| Children & Family Ministries | 9,114 | 2,242 | 25% | 9,114 | |
| Communications | 29,545 | 10,243 | 35% | 29,545 | |
| Member Engagement | 1,996 | 3,732 | 189% | 3,732 | offset by donations for Advent box |
| Membership | 5,501 | 1,645 | 30% | 5,501 | |
| Music and Arts | 177,998 | 69,205 | 39% | 112,998 | Reflects Boar's Head cancellation |
| Office | 126,000 | 83,630 | 66% | 126,000 | reflects increase in legal fees associated with basement flood |
| Outreach | 146,300 | 8,320 | 6% | 151,500 | Includes Angel Tree gift cards, offset by donations |
| Personnel | 1,255,115 | 663,793 | 53% | 1,255,115 | expense of security added and offset by postponed increases in staff hours |
| Plant | 331,200 | 194,864 | 59% | 306,200 | reflects omission of security contractor |
| Capital Depreciation | 55,000 | 32,083 | 58% | 55,000 | |
| UCC Allocation | 18,000 | - | 0% | 18,000 | |
| Women's Spirituality & Fellowship | 8,390 | - | 0% | 8,390 | |
| Worship | 6,233 | 1,219 | 20% | 6,233 | |
| Youth Education | 7,976 | 6,639 | 83% | 7,976 | includes Youth Lounge update, and supply restocking |
| Total Expense | 2,180,709 | 1,077,756 | 49% | 2,097,645 | |
| Net Ordinary Income | \$ (296,932) | \$ (73,308) | | \$ (325,611) | |

| Adjustments | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|--|------------------|--|
| Add: FY 2022 Contributions Prepaid in FY 2021 | | 100,282 | | \$ 100,282 | contributions paid in previous years, but intended for this year |
| Add: Off-budget support | 83,278 | 66,032 | | \$ 66,032 | updated with audited actuals |
| Add: Outreach Support | 140,000 | 140,000 | | \$ 140,000 | |
| Add: Operating Gift | 67,428 | 67,428 | | \$ 67,428 | |
| Adjusted Net Income | \$ (6,226) | \$ 300,434 | | \$ 48,131 | |

AHCC and the Asylum Hill Neighborhood

Potential Areas of Connection and Involvement

-proposed by
the AHCC Neighborhood Vision Task Force
February 2022

Background: For the last ten months, the newly formed Neighborhood Vision Task Force has been in conversation with other AHCC members, surveyed many others and participated in meetings pertaining to the Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association's strategic planning process. We have identified goals and actions included in the neighborhood's strategic plan that might be ones where AHCC might want to support or even champion. In reviewing the list of possibilities, the Task Force considered the AHCC Road Map. In other words, we looked for actions where AHCC could:

- Nurture and engage our members
- Be a catalyst for increased justice in our community
- Achieve greater impact in our world

There are a number of ways that AHCC can help "increase justice" for our Asylum Hill neighbors and "achieve greater impact" on our shared neighborhood. Additionally, church members, both current and future, can undertake these efforts as a way to "nurture and engage" one another. The destinations in the AHCC road map are clear. How we get there, however, is also very important. There are several principles that have guided our work to date and that we ask the larger church to embrace, including:

- Recognize that neighborhood residents know their neighborhood best
- Seek ways to get to know and support them in building the "Beloved Community"
- Demonstrate humility and hospitality as we build relationships with our neighbors
- Wait patiently for the Spirit to reveal what paths to pursue

The Task Force is eager to meet with neighborhood leaders to explore a range of potential collaborations. Before doing so, however, it is important to make certain that the leadership of the church understands what the Task Force has proposed, has opportunities to shape and prioritize the final list of possibilities, and recognizes the potential financial, staffing and organizational implications for AHCC.

Key Questions:

1. To what extent is AHCC able and willing to make its physical space and technology available to additional outside groups? The neighborhood is interested in identifying venues for various efforts, from showcasing its performing and visual artists to providing space where less privileged residents could go for computer and landline access.

2. To what extent is AHCC able and willing to dedicate and/or increase staff to support its neighborhood initiatives? In addition to the building and technical staff required to support more outside activities, many of the potential ways AHCC could serve the neighborhood involve the engagement and deployment of volunteer mentors and tutors and trained. To strengthen our member engagement capacity, AHCC would need to assign or hire staff to identify the skills and interests of our members, connect them to potential volunteer opportunities, and find ways to nurture our members spiritually as they serve others.

3. To what extent is AHCC able and willing to make financial investments? In addition to the costs of providing more staff to support outside activities and a more robust member engagement program, the church should consider making a significant capital investment to establish itself as a leader in the environmental sustainability movement. From solar panels on the roof, EV charging stations in the parking lot and/or to investments in off-site solar farms, AHCC could make a powerful statement about its commitment to preserving God's creation.

4. Organizationally, what changes may be needed to support an expanded neighborhood outreach effort? Who will be in charge of planning, overseeing and evaluating these efforts? What staff will be added or reassigned to support them? To the extent the church decides to address climate change, how will this neighborhood outreach effort intersect with those efforts? How will this effort be integrated into a larger restructuring of our governance?

5. If AHCC were committed to invest space, staff and resources toward these activities, what would need to be true to call those investments a success? Of course, this question could also be asked of the overall Road Map for AHCC. How will we know we have reached our destinations or that we are at least getting closer? What metrics will be used to measure our progress?

Possible Options for Expanding AHCC's Involvement with its Asylum Hill Neighbors

The proposed actions listed in the pages that follow come largely from the neighborhood strategic plan that Asylum Hill residents and stakeholders developed over the last 12 months. They seem to be ones that church members could get excited to work with our neighbors to address. To assist church leaders to evaluate which ones to pursue, we have organized them into two categories:

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- **Lower Investments:** actions requiring low investments of money and low to moderate investments of time
 - **Higher Investments:** actions requiring at least moderate investments of money and/or time, and possibly substantial levels of both.
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Actions Requiring Lower Investments

Arts & Culture:

- *Ensure that AHCC events are included in any Asylum Hill promotional efforts*
 - *Promote AHCC as a venue for theater, dance, music and exhibits*
 - *Promote Arts and Spirituality Retreat, Boar's Head and other annual events more widely in the neighborhood*
 - *Explore ways to offer fun, hands-on creative experiences for both neighborhood youth AND church youth together*
 - *Continue support for the Hartford Creative Contest, encouraging church members to participate, promote and donate to the effort*
 - *Working with Voce, Voices of Hartford, Boys and Girls Club and others, actively support formation of a neighborhood youth chorus. (See below for a description of how this could also be a candidate for Higher Investment)*
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Employment:

- *Leverage member connections to area employers (e.g., Jim Grigsby's connections to the 100+ member Aerospace Components Manufacturers "ACM" association) to register in centralized job posting.*
- *Make AHCC available as job fair site.*
- *Enlist AHCC members to serve as trained mentors and coaches for job-seekers, guiding them through the search, hiring, on-boarding process and even beyond.*

Economic Development:

Enlist AHCC members to serve as possible advisors to new, struggling and growing businesses.

Environment:

- *Inform AHCC members and others by publishing articles and sharing educational materials on the web and in the newsletter*
 - *Consider working with Sustainable CT, the Garden Club of CT, the CT Valley Garden Club and others to help fund and plant a pollinator garden on church grounds*
 - *Conduct energy audit of our own building through the HES program of Energize CT*
 - *As recommended by UCC and as practiced by UU of West Hartford, establish Green Committee, or Green Sub-committee for Justice in Action, to oversee this and other green initiatives*
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Human Services:

- *Identify a church member to volunteer to participate in Human Service Leadership Council being organized as a way of sharing information and forming partnerships. Ensure that area funders (United Way, Hartford Foundation, etc.) are part of the Council.*
- *Working through the Outreach Committee, consider how church can continue to support our neighborhood nonprofits as well as support the targeted goals of Roadmap 2024.*
- *Working through Justice in Action Committee and GHIAA Core Leadership Team, advocate for more government support of proven services that meet residents' social, health and economic needs*

Youth Services

Working with the Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association, increase youth and family engagement with such groups as the Boys and Girls Club, Hartford Youth Scholars, Hartford Promise, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, and others.

Housing:

Enlist AHCC members to serve as volunteers to work with NINA, Rebuilding Together, Habitat for Humanity in maintaining properties and in building houses for both new and struggling homeowners.

Actions Requiring Higher Investments

Environment:

- *Work with Sustainable CT, The Hartford and others to set up and fund a system for composting food scraps from AHCC and the surrounding neighborhood*
- *Work with PACE (People's Action for Clean Energy) to install solar energy and heat pumps at our building*
- *Secure State funding to establish EV charging stations in our parking*

Note: Upfront investments could be recouped in part by energy conservation grants, users of the charging stations and by savings in heating costs. [Note: many of these now offer funding structures that avoid “significant” upfront investments.]

Public Safety/Quality of Life:

Commit to holding church services on a regular basis (e.g. monthly, quarterly) in conjunction with other faith groups in Sigourney Square Park– perhaps on Saturdays? Could combine with park clean-up days that youth could spearhead? Combine events with food and entertainment.

Youth Services:

To serve an increased population of young people in the Asylum Hill neighborhood, trusted organizations will need significant funding to which AHCC could both contribute and act as a lead fundraiser.

Additionally, AHCC could consider taking a leadership role in helping Voce develop a new program, an Asylum Hill Neighborhood Youth Chorus. We estimate that an annual budget of \$200,000 will support needed musical and administrative staff and public performances of the chorus. AHCC could consider making a substantial ongoing contribution to this budget as part of our Outreach funding.

Working through Outreach Committee, AHCC would need to examine current grant-making policies, priorities and practices.

Recommendations:

The Neighborhood Vision Task Force recommends that AHCC leaders consider the following:

1. Establish parameters on how far-reaching AHCC's outreach to the neighborhood will extend. That is, provide guidance on key questions raised in this report.
 2. Dedicate enough staff to increase the church's capacity to oversee existing and expanded outreach program.
 3. Encourage existing committees (Art & Music, Justice in Action, Member Engagement, Outreach, etc.) to review this report and to determine if and how they will choose to respond.
 4. Participate in conversations with leaders from the neighborhood association to discuss how the church might work with AHNA and other organizations in Asylum Hill to address some of the neighborhood's strategic priorities.
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Friends, we look forward to hearing from you after you have been able to reflect on the questions and possibilities presented here.

The AHCC Neighborhood Vision Task Force

Jim Grigsby, co-chair
Brent Robertson, co-chair
Dean Amadon
Ted Carroll
Abby Charamut
Sandy Wood Forand
Nancy Kirchmyer
