

Annual meeting Minutes
January 21, 2024

Attendance:

Liza Whitehead	Joe Whitehead	Lorelei Whitehead
Debbie Hogestyn	Marie Cameron	Wendy Hopkinson
Mark Hopkinson	Johanna Fitzpatrick	Mark Swanson
Wendy Anderson	Laura Hall	Julie Steinis
Jo-Ann King	Chuck LaCroix	Wanda Borysewicz
Art Kuhl	Martha Berge	Kim Majkner
Rob Majkner	Tricia Joles	Shannon Spence
Dave Spence	Judy Monarca	Dorothy Annan
Henry Quartey	Jess Joles	

Meeting was called to order at 11:40 AM. Pastor jess offered an opening prayer and asked for nominations of a meeting moderator. Judy Monarca, seconded by Julia Steinis, nominated Joe Whitehead. All were in favor, none were opposed, motion passed.

Joe Whitehead asked all in attendance to please sign the attendance sheet. He reminded us that only members in good standing, per our constitution and bylaws, are eligible to vote. However, everyone is welcome to ask questions/participate in discussion.

Old Business:

Shannon Spence moved to accept the minutes from last year's annual meeting, prepared by Marsha Culik. Johanna Fitzpatrick seconded. All were in favor, none were opposed, motion passed.

Review & Discussion on Committee Reports:

Church Council: Pastor Jess thanked all the committee chairs for their service over this past year – Kevin Laitenberger, Judy Monarca & Johanna Fitzpatrick. He also thanked Shannon Spence, Marie Cameron, Wendy Hopkinson, Wendy Anderson and Liza Whitehead for their contributions & perspectives on church council business in 2023. There were no questions or comments on this report.

Pastors Report: Pastor Jess noted that this report is not exhaustive, and does not detail things like funerals, hospital visits, counseling, firehouse chaplain duties, etc. There were no questions or comments on this report.

Office Admin / Ministry Coordinator Report: Shannon Spence explained that since Tracey Balanca left the office administrator position in 2023, we are covering all essential duties with a team made up of Shannon Spence, Judy Monarca, Liza Whitehead, Lorelei Whitehead, Kevin Laitenberger, and Pastor Jess. If you know of duties and functions that are being missed, please let Shannon know!

We need your feedback on how to best communicate with you... please fill out our Communication Preference Questionnaire (the QR codes found on the tables will take you to the Google form). Liza Whitehead added that we are frequently hitting our maximum allowed "sends" on our free MailChimp account, so it is important that we clean up our e-mail roles to avoid additional expense.

Shannon also encouraged everyone to take a spiritual gifts questionnaire. Pastor Jess added that it is very useful in discovering your spiritual gifts (which may or may not be the same as your natural talents).

Lastly, Shannon expressed her desire to get our proverbial shiP in order now, in the hopes of growth in the future. She would like to investigate and evaluate church management software options sooner than later. There were no other questions or comments on this report.

Christian Education Committee: Johanna Fitzpatrick started by thanking all of our CEC committee members, Sunday school teachers, helpers, nursery attendants and Superintendents for their hard and dedicated work in 2023. Johanna explained that, besides nursery care, we now hold one combined class in the fellowship hall on Sundays. This new method seems to be working well. Shannon Spence informed that she also sends family connection emails at the beginning of each new curriculum unit. There were no other questions or comments on this report.

Bible Study Ministry Team (BSMT): Wendy Anderson shared that we are a joyful, growing, thriving group! She is confident that the Lord has been clearly guiding us in our studies... we even tackled the book of revelation this year. As Nancy Guthrie said (and we quote) *"We can't be casually or tentatively committed to Him in a way that will enable us to have everything we want in life -- with just a little Christ added in. It's not about asking God to bless our decisions and what we want; But inviting Him to plant His desires within us. Either we believe that Jesus is who He says He is, or we don't; -- there's no middle ground. No 'waffling' or 'maybes'. No 'Jesus plus'. No 'build your own Jesus'."*

While we are usually mostly women, she also wanted to make clear that men are always welcome as well. Chuck LaCroix testified to what a blessing it's been for him to attend our Bible studies and highly encouraged other men to participate!

BSMT also leads our prayer ministries which include one-on-one Prayer Care after worship each Sunday and a corporate/group prayer meeting on the 3rd Sunday of every month.

Please come check us out, either Bible studies or Prayer Meetings - you won't be sorry and we promise you will learn a lot! There were no other questions or concerns on this report.

Board of Deacons: Judy Monarca explained that her written report is mostly self-explanatory but has a few things to add ... The deacons will make a concerted effort to clean the membership rolls (and church directory) in 2024. We are also looking for volunteers to host fellowship coffee hour, as three deacons in rotation are currently covering it. Missions are going well as the congregation has been very generous. However, we did come up significantly short in our support of our World Vision sponsored child in 2023. Deb Hogestyn asked if the congregation was made aware of this shortfall. While the mission was communicated/promoted, we did not publish the fact that we came up so short. Liza Whitehead suggested that we get bolder and more explicit about our needs when facing a significant ministry shortfall. Tricia Joles asked if we were ultimately able to make the payment, Marie Cameron responded that yes, we did, but had to take it out of the deacons budget.

Judy announced that we will hold an all-congregation meeting in February for the purpose of 1) looking back at God's faithfulness in the past and 2) vision casting where the Lord is leading us in the future. Stay tuned for more details coming soon.

Lastly, Judy wanted thank Lois as she exits the board of deacons and wishes her all the best in SC. She also expressed how much we miss Marsha Culik who is thankfully doing well in TX. Both are tireless servants of the Lord and leave a hole in our ministries. There were no other questions or concerns on this report.

Community Outreach Ministry Team (COMT): Wendy Hopkinson expressed how well the holiday shopping event went in November. Instead of families having to pick toys/gifts from a written list, they came to our church in person and handpicked toys for their children. Over 20 families "shopped" (free of charge). They also give us a "wish list" for needed items that we

didn't have "in stock". This wish list populated our giving tree program. Overall it was a smashing success and we definitely want to continue with this new method in the future. The level of "personal interaction" was key! The United Day School has agreed to give us use of the fellowship hall on the Friday of veteran's day weekend in 2024 so we may do it this same way again.

Wendy read several beautiful/moving thank you cards sent from the recipients of our outreach ministry help. What a joy to hear!

Wendy encouraged folks to get involved with outreach ministries. You can pick and choose where and when to serve. The best way to get involved is to sign up to hear about opportunities to help. You are not committing to serve indefinitely, and we will certainly train you!

Julia Steinis testified that she has a family member who receives outreach ministry fresh food services and it is a huge help and relief to her. Julia also asked if it's OK that she fix the sharing shed flag in the parking lot. Everyone agreed that absolutely YES - she should go for it! Wendy clarified that everyone is empowered to help where they see a need. Please read the instruction signs on the food shelf at the top of the back stairwell to help us restock the sharing shed as needed. Shannon Spence added that children love getting involved in serving with COMT.

Wendy continued that in 2024 we are looking to spruce up the sharing shed and reactivate the welcome bag ministries. We currently have 50 bags on deck that need to be delivered soon. We are looking for bag assemblers.

Liza Whitehead asked about the COMT financials. Please be bold and explicit about your upcoming shortfalls! Wendy felt that they had enough funding in place to get through the first half of the year but will definitely experience a financial shortfall in the second-half of the year. Shannon reminded everyone that they can set up recurrent donation payments via PayPal or directly from your own bank account. There were no other questions or concerns about this report.

Memorial Fund: Liza Whitehead indicated that all information is as stated in the written report. There were no questions or concerns about this report.

Clerk's Statistical Report: Liza Whitehead explained that we are well aware that our membership statistics are grossly inaccurate. Again, the Board of Deacons endeavors to clean up the membership rolls in 2024. There were no questions or concerns about this report.

Endowment Report: Marie Cameron thanked the committee members for their service. She noted an important correction to her written report. Please amend the dates to read 2023 (not 2022) on page 21. These were simple typos. There were no questions or concerns on this report.

Raise Right (formerly Scrip) Report: Marie Cameron gave an overview of what the program is and how it works. She noted that the current 2.6% fee for credit card transactions is going to up 3% effective 2/1/24. But the best way to use the program is to connect to a bank account (which only costs 29 cents per transaction). We no longer "stock" cards, so please use "e-cards" or "ship to home" cards only. Contact Marie for an invite to the program and our organizational code to get started. Wendy Hopkinson noted that we are going to soon purchase our Walmart gift cards through Raise Right to buy the Fresh Food for our outreach – nice idea! There were no other questions or concerns on this report.

Prudential Committee Report: Dave Spence thanked, in addition to those mentioned in the written report, Kevin Laitenberger who was absolutely KEY in accomplishing many of the Prudential tasks this year.

Prudential needs more members & volunteers, please come see us if you're interested in serving. We only have 4 people on the nominating slate for Prudential today. . Julia Steinis asked about the Nominating Committee ... why did they not fill the slate? Liza responded that while we technically still have a Nominating Committee (due to the Constitution & Bylaws), they are not active in any way. Each committee is seeking it's own new members as they see fit.

Dave detailed what accounts are used for what purposes. We thankfully received 2 large capital fund in December (one was earmarked for the very expensive elevator inspection). Overall, we've been spending down on our balances over the last several years. We've basically "broke even" this year. We almost had to ask for an Endowment withdrawal in 2023 but was able to avoid doing so at the last moment. We'll see how 2024 goes.

Pastor Jess reminded us of God's faithfulness in these (and all!) matters, that He owns the cattle on a thousand hills and will not let the gates of hell prevail against HIS church! Wendy Anderson noted that we will continue to lift BFCC up to the Lord in prayer for HIS provision in HIS way(s).

Julia Steinis asked if the Prudential Committee was aware of the chipped paint on the black columns/pillars in the fellowship hall. They were not aware, they will look into this. There were no other questions or concerns on this report.

New Business

Proposed Changes to the Constitution and By-Laws. Joe Whitehead read the rationale and proposed changes directly out of the warrant/call. Wendy Anderson moved that we accept the changes as presented. Seconded by Wanda Borysewicz. Joe opened discussion ... Shannon Spence asked about a possible future scenario where we have more people than needed wanting to serve on committees. How would we "make room" for new people if existing committee members can serve indefinitely? Both Joe & Dave Spence responded to the same effect: If/When that happens (and we pray it does! What a wonderful problem to have!) we can cross that bridge. Also remember that congregation will still vote on any/all nominations so they can still exercise discretion of who gets elected. No other discussion being desired, Joe called for a vote. All were in favor none were opposed, motion carried. Joe charged Liza the clerk to make the approved changes & publish the revised Constitution and Bylaws as soon as possible.

Nominating Slate: After much discussion, several corrections were made to the slate, as follows ... Pleas strike / remove Mike Teixeira from Endowment and Lois Tallberg from Assist Treasurer as neither are able to serve. Add Joe Whitehead to Endowment (in Mike Teixeira's slot/term). Add Lisa Swanson & Johanna Fitzpatrick to Pastoral Relations. Move Wanda Borysewicz "up" to Assistant Treasurer. Add Judy Johnson & Judy Monarca as Assistant Treasurers/Alternates. Please add the following corrected phone numbers: Mark Hopkinson – 203-910-2934. Judy Monarca – 203-217-3658. Shannon Spence – 203-232-1386. After all these corrections were hashed out, Johanna Fitzpatrick made a motion to elect the slate AS AMENDED, seconded by Deb Hogestyn. All were in favor, done were opposed. Motion passes. Liza will publish a corrected slate ASAP.

Auditor's Report: Art Kuhl explained what an honor it is to audit the books. He finds this work interesting, challenging and satisfying. He gave great kudos to Marie Cameron for being so organized, detail oriented, and faithful in her treasurer duties. We are blessed to have her! There were no questions or concerns on this report.

Deb Hogestyn, seconded by Judy Monarca, moved to accept all committee reports. All were in favor, none were opposed, motion carried.

Budget: Marie Cameron explained that this year, we've greatly simplified the income side of our budget. This basically calls out "this is the amount we need to meet our budgeted expenses". Liza asked about the Sexton's position. Dave Spence replied that YES, we are looking to hire a paid Sexton again. Liza Whitehead moved, seconded by Shannon Spence, to accept / approve the budget as presented. All were in favor, none were opposed, motion carried.

Joe asked if there was any other new business?

Marie asked that we add "2023" to the cover page of this annual report booklet. Liza will add this, along with the other corrections agreed upon today, and re-publish a revised version ASAP.

Pastor Jess encouraged everyone to attend our February 25th "Vision & Direction Meeting" where we will (from a ministry perspective):

- Look back at how God has been faithful
- Consider where God has us right now
- Look forward to where/how God is leading us into the future.

Please help us have helpful conversations about these purposes Sunday 2/25 after worship service. We'll provide lunch & childcare. Please be in prayer about this meeting! Lastly, if you have concerns, problems or unresolved issues with our ministries - please see Pastor Jess or any Deacon as we'd be happy to meet with you privately beforehand.

Joe Whitehead expressed our great thankfulness to God for Pastor Jess and the whole Joles Family for their ministry here! A round of applause ensued.

Being no other business, Deb Hogestyn moved, seconded by Shannon Spence to adjourn. All were in favor, none were opposed, motion carried. We closed at 1:50pm.