

Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on Sunday, January 26, 2025

In Attendance:

Joe Whitehead	Liza Whitehead	Judy Monarca
Susan Vardon	Judy Berge	Wendy Anderson
Denise Hendricks	Henry Quartey	Dorothy Annan
Chris Maxfield	Kevin Laitenberger	Heather Laitenberger
Julia Steinis	Jo-Ann King	Joe McWilliams
Marie Cameron	Art Kuhl	Johanna Fitzpatrick
Tricia Joles	Wanda Borysewicz	Shannon Spence
Dave Spence	Jess Joles	Mary Brady
Jim Brady	Lorelei Whitehead	

- At 11:30AM, Pastor Jess offered an opening prayer in thanks for the pot luck FEAST which was enjoyed by all – thank you all for bringing the fabulous food!
- Pastor Jess asked if anyone would object to Kevin & Joe co-leading the meeting, everyone was happy with this suggestion.
- Joe spoke for a few minutes about how thankful he is to God and to our church body for the vibrancy of our ministry and expressed that this meeting is a celebration of how God has faithfully provided for His church!
- Kevin spoke about our exciting new Annual Meeting format. No more motions and seconds. No more Robert’s Rules (which we never quite understood anyhow). We will instead prayerfully move forward in a Spirit-led Unity.
- Both Joe & Kevin led us in prayer of firstly thanking the Lord for his sure, faithful, steadfast love & provision and asking Him to give us guidance & wisdom as we celebrate and plan the ministries of this body.
- We viewed a beautiful video presentation of “2024 Year in Review” --- thank you, Shannon for preparing this excellent deck!
- The children were dismissed to the Nursery --- thank you, Lorelei for caring for our little ones while we conducted our meeting.

Committee/Ministry Reports

Prudential – Kevin

- Read through 1 Chronicles 29:14-17
- Thanked the Lord for how He’s sustained BFCC this past year.

- Thanked those who served on the Prudential Committee in 2024 – Dave, Laura, & Mark.
- Kevin also thanked this church body for their time, talents & treasure, giving & pitching in support of the ministries, building/plant.
- Kevin also thanked Marie for all her time and effort on providing all the numbers as treasurer.
- Kevin reminded us that while we have often been stretched thin, the Lord has & will continue to provide. We'll save the budget discussion for the end of the meeting but in the meantime let us carefully consider the new budget and if we are able & willing to support it.
- We brought on a paid Sexton / Janitor in 2024 and so far it is working out very well.
- Come see Kevin separately if you have any questions or concerns, he's always available to talk.

#### Community Outreach Ministries – Johanna

- Thanked all those who support our many/varied outreach ministries.
- Gratefully announced that some anonymous person just fixed the sharing shed door and another anonymous person just donated \$7,000 to be used for our food ministries!
- We saved some money this year by purchasing our food delivery groceries using gift cards purchased through the Raise Right program – how smart!
- We welcome Laura Roessler into leadership of the Community Outreach Ministries and look forward to working with her!

#### Christian Education Committee – Johanna, Heather & Shannon

- Thanked the teachers and helpers for working in our Sunday School. Always looking for more volunteers so if you are feeling called, please contact us, we'll train you.
- We are looking to get the kids more involved in the Community Outreach Ministries. Stay tuned for new ways to do so.
- Heather mentioned that we are continuing to try to do more Children's sermons upstairs and we welcome any feedback/suggestions people may have on what they'd like to see.
- Grateful to have such an active and growing Sunday School program.
- Any questions or concerns, come see us, we're always here to talk or help.

### Kid's Camp – Tricia

- Tricia explained why this particular outreach is so powerful & concentrated. We directly served 80 kids at Kids' Camp, which means approximately 60 households were also exposed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and only the Lord knows how many more people were later impacted from there *as the Gospel goes forth*.
- Thanked all the leaders and staff for their hard work and dedication. Tricia is also deeply grateful to the people from Gloucester MA and others who help us staff Kids' Camp – we couldn't do this without them.
- 2025 Kid's Camp is "Expedition Norway" and it features some fantastic music!
- We are especially looking for the "triple thick, large, cardboard box" to help us construct a Viking Ship for our sets this year.

### Women's Bible Study Ministry – Wendy Anderson

- Our written report fully details our past studies, but Wendy highlighted a particularly impactful study we did this year "When Forgiveness Doesn't Make Sense" by Dr Robert Jeffres. All those who participated were grateful for the instruction.
- Wendy showed us three current & upcoming study books (all books available FREE at the front of our worship space, please sign up to join us):
  - Name Above All Names by Alistair Begg and Sinclair Ferguson
  - Jesus Keep Me Near the Cross, a collection of essays edited by Nancy Guthrie
  - The Prince and The Prodigal by Jill Eileen Smith
- Please note that in order to simplify, our Thursday evening meals are now "bring your own" where we each bring a bagged dinner of take-out, leftovers, a simple sandwich or what have you. Coffee, Tea & Selzers are provided but everything else is BYO.

### Prayer Ministries – Wendy Anderson

- One-on-one prayer care is available in the choir area immediately after worship service each Sunday. Our prayer care volunteers are happy to privately pray with and for you and keep your intentions confidential if you so desire (please let us know!).

- We also hold a group intercessory meeting after fellowship coffee time on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of each month (except last week only because the heat wasn't working - we'll be back at it on 2/16).

#### Board of Deacons – Judy Monarca

- One of our top priorities for 2024 was to clean up the membership rolls, which we accomplished.
- We also created the MVP Team (“mission, vision, purpose”) who have been very engaged and working hard on revitalization steps in the church. We are grateful for the wise counsel of Brian Prue in getting this going.
- Mission Highlights Include:
  - Adult & Teen Challenge \$135 plus much more in product sales
  - Support of Diana, our World Vision sponsored child \$468/year
  - Operation Christmas Child 72 boxes collected
  - My Sister’s Place Bin – full to overflowing several times over!
- Pastor Jess taught us (through the scriptures) about the biblical role and function of a Deacon. It’s interesting to note that Deacons are described, but not prescribed in the Bible. So please know that any and all of you are called & welcomed to serve the body without formally being on the board of Deacons!
- This is Judy’s “swan song” as she’s leaving the board to focus on leading and serving through our hospitality ministries (specifically fellowship coffee hour). Please consider bringing goodies in for all to enjoy after worship. Special thanks to Chuck LaCroix for proving the packaged baked goods which are always at the ready in case no home baked goodies show up on any particular Sunday.
- Julia asked who is making the decisions and how are they made on the Board of Deacons? Judy asked for clarification. Julia wanted to know if Pastor Jess wants to change something, do the Deacons vote on it? Judy responded that it would depend on exactly what was being proposed but generally, YES the Deacons discuss and agree on significant changes before implementing. But without knowing the specifics, Judy can’t answer in any more detail. After some encouragement from Kevin for us all to be open & honest about what’s on our hearts, both Julia and Jo-Ann expressed their objections to no longer reading the prayer cards aloud during our worship service. Art agreed, he liked hearing all the individual prayers read aloud and they missed that part of the service. When asked if praying over these items afterwards, during prayer care, satisfied those needs, Art said it did not. And when asked if he still submitted prayer cards, he mentioned he

does not (but he does still pray for these at home). More discussion ensued, many mentioned that just because these prayers are not being read aloud, does not mean they are not being prayed for and heard by God. Art also asked where the candles went (why they aren't back in place?) and expressed his dissatisfaction with not saying the Lord's Prayer during worship. Marie agreed that the Lord's Prayer should be brought back. Jo-Ann then reminded us that this is a congregational church.

- There is a plan afoot to get a prayer list email sent much earlier in the week.
- A spirited & sincere discussion ensued about why these changes were made. Henry, Chris, Liza, Shannon and Pastor Jess all spoke on prayer, sitting at the feet of Jesus (listening to His word) and about our need to streamline and revitalize our entire ministries, including the worship services.
- During this discussion about traditions, specifically the Lord's Prayer and candles: Marie had mentioned that Pastor Dave had done a sermon on the Lord's Prayer. Jess was familiar with that sermon series and cautioned us on just reciting the prayer without giving true thought and consideration to what the words mean and the intention behind them, noting Matthew & Luke even phrase it differently. Pastor Jess read from James chapter 5 about the prayer of a faithful person. Henry read from the bible and mentioned that the Lord's prayer was meant to be a guideline but if we were to restrict ourselves to only reading it as it is written then we could miss out and limit ourselves to what the Spirit of God is trying to move us to do. Shannon mentioned that we have heard this feedback and we have incorporated the Lord's Prayer into our Sunday school welcome packets along with a prayer insert on How to Pray. We do realize the importance of teaching our children & families how to pray and offering them various tools and guidelines to help them - prayer is paramount. Maybe we can consider trying to do more with it outside of a Sunday worship service in other venues, like home groups or seminars after church? Shannon also quoted from "Anatomy of a Revived Church" by Thom Rainer, Chapter 2 - Overcoming the Traps of Tradition, "Tradition is not evil. ...traditions can carry generations of positive messages and legacies... Where traditions often become a fixation or obsession, they often become issues of idolatry. They become more important than sharing the gospel message, reaching people, serving the community, and making changes to make a difference."
- Chris also gave a brief background on his own experience with the Roman Catholic church and how he came to be a member here. Chris wants to be a part of this body to help us revitalize, he feels that is why God called him

here. Reminding us to focus on the body of Christ and how we are all parts, we need to do our piece but remember who is in control, God. He also asked if we had each done our spiritual gift assessments.

- Denise reminded that the Love of Christ must be our motivation in all things.
- Joe and Shannon both assured those with concerns/objections that they are loved, and have been heard/sincerely considered. But also know there are other factors to consider as well, that play into the changes to our worship service.

Wendy Anderson offered a Prayer of Thanksgiving.

We all viewed the video trailer of the book “I Am a Church Member ... Six Attributes that Will Make All the Difference”

- Pastor Jess highlighted the statistic that Millennials are the largest population group in America but less than 15% of them are Christian. We must reach these lost people with the Gospel of Christ!
- Henry gave his testimony about how he and his family first came to BFCC (through our welcome bag ministry), how this book completely blew his mind and changed his perspective on what a church member is and should be. He encouraged us all to pray for our leadership (government, work, church, homes, organizations, etc).

#### Ministry Coordinator Update - Shannon

- **MINISTRY UPDATE/SPIRITUAL GIFTS:**
  - 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 “There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.”
  - "This verse reminds us that ministry is diverse and encompasses various roles and gifts within the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit distributes different gifts to believers, and each person has a unique role to play in the Kingdom of God. It emphasizes the unity of purpose within the diversity of gifts, as all service and work is ultimately inspired and empowered by God. Ministry is not a one-size-fits-all endeavor, but a collective effort that relies on each individual's unique contribution." (Reference: 25 Bible Verses About Ministry (With Commentary) - Scripture Savvy)

- Feedback Requested: Looking to gather feedback as we develop our plans for 2025 & beyond. How are we doing? What do you need more/less of to help you serve or be served here?
- BFCC MINISTRY COORDINATOR SURVEY: Please consider taking 5-10 minutes to fill out this form or speak with us about your overall church experience here: [BFCC Ministry Coordinator/Admin Survey \(2025 Planning\)](#)
- Spiritual Gifts Assessment(s): Reminder to fill out one of more of the Spiritual Gift Assessments (see attachment). Contact Shannon for the printable version or go online to fill out one of the 2 online surveys.
  - [Spiritual Gifts Survey - Take the Survey - FREE Spiritual Gifts Survey](#)
  - [Spiritual Gifts Assessment](#)
- REVITALIZATION: Jess gave a sermon back on October 20th about the lifecycle of a church, we are in the Revitalization Stage. Reminder of what revitalization means...
- EXCERPTS FROM ... "Anatomy of a Revived Church" by Thom Rainer
  - Thom Rainer defines revitalization as the process of making changes within a church to improve its health. Explanation ...
  - "Revitalization is a process of change that can help a church that is declining, plateaued, or dying.
  - Successful revitalization involves acknowledging problems, being humble, and being willing to change. "
- MY TOP TAKEAWAYS FOR US THIS YEAR ARE....
  - CHANGE OR DIE: "If given a choice between life and death, most people and leaders choose death if life requires substantive change" (Page 3, Anatomy of a Revived Church by Thom S Rainer)... "They choose traditions over change. They choose comfort over change. They choose preferences over change. Ultimately, they choose death over change." (Page 10)
  - Make it God-centered, not self/human-centered. "Any human-centered change is headed for failure. True change in our congregation must be rooted in the truths of the Bible, saturated in prayer, and empowered by God alone." (page 11). Quote from Alicia in the book, "It's amazing how God can change our desires when we let Him change our hearts." (page 112)
  - Take responsibility. "Choice of blame & denial...Dying churches blame others. Revived churches accept responsibility." (page 17)
  - PRAY: "Pray for God to direct [you] in a positive way...[Allow] Hope [to/will] replace fear, Obedience [to/will] replace blame, and blame [to/will] transform to words of hope, encouragement, ministry, and possibility." (pg 26)

- ONCE YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'VE GOT A GOOD HANDLE ON THESE, THERE ARE MORE HELPFUL TIDBITS IN HIS BOOK AS WELL, I HIGHLY RECOMMEND READING IT IF YOU WANT TO JOIN US IN THIS CHANGE PROCESS.

We took a 10 minute break to eat, visit restrooms, & contemplate/pray ... and reconvened.

### Budget Process – Kevin

- A few important considerations about this budget:
- We've moved from "Budget Driven Ministry" to a "Ministry Focused Budget" please note the difference carefully and prayerfully.
- We've moved to a holistic budget which seeks to accurately reflect the actual income and expenses of this church. This means that expenses that historically/traditionally have been donated "on the side" will now be tracked through the budget. Please support all our ministries through donations, being sure to make your contributions to the general fund. So, for example, the budget now includes all Kid's Camp, Mission and Community Outreach expenses.
- We must commit to support this whole budget; It's all or nothing. No more cherry-picking your favorite projects/ministries. We must come with both hands open, giving our time, talent, treasure and most of all prayer! to the wholistic ministry of this body.
- We have to hold ourselves accountable to meeting the financial needs our church ministry and all that encompasses, even the less fun church building and salaries stuff.
- Kevin mentioned that we would look to meet again in the June timeframe, before summer, to review where we stand with the budget and our giving again. If we are not meeting our budget needs we may need to decide on a different approach.
- This budget is LEAN. Be assured we've cut as much as we possibly can without significantly damaging our ability to carry out ministry. There is no fat here.
- To properly fund this budget, our congregation's giving must increase by 70%.
- Dave explained that if the congregation doesn't faithfully support this budget, expenses WILL "fall off the edge". Do not vote in favor of this budget if you are not willing to actually support it.
- Kevin asked if anyone would prefer closed/secret ballot voting. No one responded so we proceeded with a verbal vote. Kevin asked "Do you approve and will you support this budget?"



- All were in favor.
- None were opposed.
- Budget approved/passed.

#### Nominating Slate Process – Kevin

- Yes, there are lots of vacancies. This is by design and as necessitated. We're going to move forward in faith and trust God to supply the needed workers to continue ministry. We will be significantly less committee-driven and much more ministry focused.
- Since Kevin is the lone/only Prudential member, he will suspend meetings and instead use that valuable time to get tasks done. He will continue to report back to Church Council to keep us informed on budget, finances and projects. He will continue to rely on the help of the usual suspects (Dave, Henry, Joe, Jess, etc.) to work on projects together.
- In a similar fashion, Shannon noted that instead of CEC holding monthly meetings – she & Johanna will share the Superintendent position and Heather will serve as Assistant Superintendent. This will nicely use our time to actually cover the Sunday School tasks without the need of hours of meetings about it.
- The Nominating Committee is inactive.
- Kevin asked if the congregation approves of the Nominating Slate as presented and explained?
  - All were in favor.
  - None were opposed.
  - Nominating slate approved/passed.

Being no other business, we adjourned with a prayer led by Pastor Jess at 2:20PM.