**Minutes of the Special Meeting**

**of the Orinda Community Church**

**Sunday, October 25, 2020**

Fifty-four members of the congregation met via Zoom for a special meeting of the congregation which was requested and noticed in accordance with OCC Bylaws. Moderator Kurt Sunderbruch called the meeting to order at 11:08 a.m. He reviewed the agenda and the ground rules for the meeting.

**Covid Taskforce Update:** The taskforce members are Bob Winbigler, Leslie O’Brien, Trudy Garland, Lee Cruise, Janet Schwartz, David Milnes, Dagmar Slovak, and Mike Kersten. Bob W. reported they have had 2 meetings and are meeting regularly. Right now there are no large church gatherings, but there are opportunities for more people to meet. It’s not a question of what we can do but what we should do to keep everyone safe. The taskforce will investigate every possibility to move forward. Email any questions to Dagmar.

**Finances for 2020 and 2021:** Lani Shepp thanked everyone for their amazing generosity in paying up their pledges. We’re in good shape for this year; we’ll make it to the end of the year without help from Endowment. Next year’s budget has a reduction in every line except facilities. For income, 2021 pledges are shown as a bit below those in 2020. We’ll have rental income from TOPS and Holden but will lose rental income from outside sources due to Covid restrictions. We’ll lose a big chunk of loose offerings from Sunday morning services. To balance the 2021 budget, we need $20,000 in fundraising and $20,000 in “other” (“other” representing the figure needed to make the budget balance). We can get a loan from Endowment if necessary to balance the budget. Staffing includes putting Leslie in as half time with benefits. In response to a question, Anne Barr indicated the church received $583,000 as the return on investment from the sale of the Bergquist house in mid-July.

**Stewardship Update:** Bill Abriel indicated 75% of church revenue comes from pledge money. We’re all impressed with the way the church has adapted to Covid restrictions. Look for a letter from the stewardship committee in your mailbox soon. He showed the Nik Nackley stewardship video and thanked everyone for their support.

**Becoming a Creation Justice Church:** Nancy Thursby reported we need to have creation as an integral part of the entire church. Creation Justice means we’re working for all of creation to be better, the way God intended. There are 6 steps to the Creation Justice program. We started in June 2018. Nancy reviewed the 6 steps. Her slide presentation is available through Dagmar in the church office.

Responses to Zoom audience questions revealed the following clarifications about being a Creation Justice Church. Whatever board or commission we’re on, we’ll consider the environment. On big ticket items that cost a lot, we’ll have to consider all ramifications. Those in charge of the decisions will consider the environment and make it part of the decision. Our active Green Team members are: Nancy Thursby, Gail Mead, Robin Holmes, Dottie Hutch, Leslie O’Brien, Eartha Newsong, and Bob Orr. There is no reason not to approve this; there is no commitment that would be a substantial challenge; there is no financial component that needs to be considered. Each congregation can decide what to do as a creation justice church. Being this type of church shouldn’t overwhelm us. Spiritual life is a process of integrating all elements and our congregation seems to be able to do that. We have a good sense of balance and it’s heartening that an aging congregation can still stay engaged with the world. We’re in a grand experiment but it’s a hopeful experiment. In terms of who makes the decisions on the projects, the Green Team is open to everyone to connect on creation justice issues. We will be cognizant of the environment when making decisions. If the core people on the team don’t want to pursue something, they would share their concerns with the congregation. If no one wants to do it, it won’t get done. Kurt mentioned the Council still owns the budget and this will be a factor in what the Council chooses to do on B&G issues that fall under this. What’s the highest priority? We don’t have the money to address every single need. The Green Team and B&G do influence the Council’s decisions. We can also choose to do actions of justice that aren’t big cost items. Following the Qs and As, Kurt took a roll call vote. The motion to become a Creation Justice Church carried unanimously with over 50 yes votes.

**Auction Kickoff:** Gail Mead indicated the auction is up and running. There are some really great things on it so take a look. Check out the tabs at the top of the screen including the sponsor/donate tab. You can pay by credit card and even add in the credit card fees at check out if desired. Gail showed a video on how to register/sign in on the auction website. The auction closes next Sunday at 2 pm. At the end of the auction, purchased items will be available for pickup outside the church or will be dropped off at your house or mailed to you. People not wishing to purchase items can donate under the sponsor/donate tab. Or just send a donation check to the church office.

**Survey Results:** Kurt Sunderbruch’s slides on the survey are available through Dagmar. There were 56 respondents out of 200 surveys sent out. Kurt reviewed the slides. More than 65% “loved” the Sunday services and music offerings. We are fulfilling our role as prophets of M&J. Roughly 90% feel their needs are being met with the current pastoral staff (Elizabeth and Leslie). A high degree of folks felt they didn’t need pastoral care support. 40% are interested in socially-distanced events so the Covid Taskforce will work on this. Responses to Zoom audience questions revealed the following information. Leslie stated that the Women of Spirit group has from 35-77 attendees per month and includes women of other faiths. The survey didn’t cover parish callers but the care team is filled with those who need care themselves. So please volunteer so these folks don’t fall through the cracks. If interested in making calls and/or cards, contact Leslie O’Brien.

**Notification of 11/8 Congregational Meeting on Staffing and Search:** Kurt Sunderbruch mentioned that with Elizabeth now filling in as pastor, the Council did the survey to see how things are going. The Council is so encouraged by the positive survey reviews of Elizabeth that we’re moving forward, as required in the bylaws, and calling for a Search Committee (SC). This doesn’t mandate a national search. The Council is proposing that the role of the SC be to define the needs and goals of the church and compare those needs against any known candidate (e.g., Elizabeth). Then make a recommendation to the congregation on calling that candidate. The Council is putting together a list of names for the Search Committee. In two weeks, on 11/8, it will present the Search Committee list to the congregation for a vote. Nancy Thursby felt that these parameters are appropriate and the SC doesn’t need to go the full 90 yards. Anne Barr mentioned the Council has talked to the Conference and they understand our approach and are comfortable with it. Chris Mead reminded everyone that we have done a search for an AP in the past where we interviewed one candidate and then called that candidate. We only have to abide by our by-laws; we rule ourselves. We can follow the simple process we’ve laid out. We are happy with Elizabeth and we don’t have to find another candidate. Leslie O’Brien mentioned she has spent lots of time with Elizabeth and she is incredible to work with.

Kurt adjourned the Zoom meeting at 12:47 pm

Kathleen Wiegand, Clerk