

**Congregational Church of New Canaan
Annual Meeting of the Congregation
Sunday, March 3, 2024**

At 11:10 am, the meeting was called to order by Senior Deacon, Dionna Carlson. The meeting was held in the Meeting House, and also via video conference. A quorum was present in the Meeting House and via video conference. Ms. Carlson led the congregation in an opening prayer and read a piece of scripture.

Presentations were distributed to those in person and were available online to those attending via video. The presentations outlined the meeting as follows: State of the Church (Deacon Report), Trustee Report, 250th Fund Request, Raymond Trust Report, Nominating and Governance Report and Word of Thanks. Votes would be taken on the following: the 2024 budget, the 250th Fund request, and the slate of nominations to the various church committees.

Deacon Report:

Ms. Carlson reported on the state of the church. Despite declining church attendance across the country, we are grateful to report a steady increase in both on-line and in-present attendance. It has been a year of transition as Associate Minister Kibbie Laird and Youth Director Erik Burns both left the Church for other opportunities. Our long-time Director of Music Ministries, Dr. Jody Davis retired, and we welcomed Michael Burnette as our Interim Director of Music Ministries. A search is underway to hire a permanent Director of Music Ministries. In addition, we are preparing for the transition of our Senior Youth Minister, Kelly Antonson, upon her graduation from Divinity School, by constituting a Youth Ministries Search Committee. Ms. Carlson highlighted the resurgence in our Youth group participation, the strength of our youth programs as we have seven junior deacons, and the trial of Sunday Evening Worship on the first Sunday of the month at 6:00 pm in the chapel. We have also initiated Ministry Teams to address the mental health challenges of our youth and to document the history of our church. It was suggested that church members reach out to the deacons if they would like to set up any new groups. Ms. Carlson closed by thanking the ministers, the church staff, the deacons, and the trustees for all of their hard work over the last year, and specifically to those retiring deacons: Doug Simpson, Steve Case, and Susanna Nichols, and Sara Bakker.

Trustee Report:

Stephanie Douglas-Parkin, representing the Trustees, presented the financial results for 2023 and the proposed budget for 2024. The Church received \$2,241,249 related to 2023 pledges versus a budget of \$2,125,000. More than seventy-five percent of our funding comes from Pledges, Bequests, and Contributions (PBC). Release of Restricted Funds accounted for 13%, and Program revenue was 8% of income last year. Rental income, derived primarily from Toddler-Time Preschool, was approximately 3% of income. Spending of \$3,291,687 was well-managed, representing 95% of the budgeted amount (\$3,465,499). Year-over-year increases were attributed to Salaries and Benefits, Parish Administration, and Missions. Spending on our buildings, grounds, and capital improvements was \$265,519 below the budget due to the deferral of capital

projects to 2024. The new playground has been completed and the major project slated for 2024 is the paving of the parking lot. Christian Formation expenses exceeded budget due to the popularity of those programs. The Restricted Funds Balance grew 11%, and 16% excluding withdrawals, which is in line with the markets. A 4.5% withdrawal from this Fund is projected for 2024.

Ms. Douglas-Parkin then reviewed the 2024 budget (see the attached Annual Meeting 2024 slides). The budget, which is flat vs. 2023, reflects a conservative approach due to unpredictability. There is a modest growth in expenses due to a staff cost of living adjustment, and the resumption of deferred spending on capital improvements.

Ms. Douglas-Parkin reported that the Stewardship Campaign's goal was to increase the number of pledging families/individuals by 5% for a total of 425 pledging units. To date, we have received 346 pledges, representing 80% of our goal and 93% of where we were at this time last year. Fortunately, we have exceeded our monetary goal. The Trustees maintain that it is important to have as many church members as possible pledge.

At the end of the presentation, Ms. Douglas-Parkin sought a motion to approve the proposed 2024 budget as submitted by the Board of Trustees. Mr. Dirk Dunlap moved to approve the budget., with Mr. Bill Kennedy seconding the motion. Ms. Douglas-Parkin opened the floor for questions and answered the following:

Questions:

A few members asked: Will we be installing air conditioning?

Answer: It is not in the current Building & Grounds budget but will be put on the agenda for consideration.

Chris Pohle: Per Slide #12, does this number represent the total pledges we have received?

Answer: Yes, and we expect to be \$400,000 positive to budget.

Ms. Douglas-Parkin called for the vote. The 2024 proposed budget was unanimously approved.

250th Fund Request:

Mr. Brian Werner, chairman of the Mission and Social Action Committee (MSA), requested three \$9,930 disbursements from the 250th Fund for the following church community partners (see slide 15) to support renovations to their existing facilities. It was noted that they had already been approved by the MSA, the deacons and the trustees:

1. Open Door Shelters
2. Pacific House
3. Pivot Ministries

Mr. Werner asked for any questions which were as follows:

Twee Haffner: Do the 3 organizations have faith-based programs and what about global children outreach programs?

Answer: Mr. Werner said he believed they did. Marianna Kilbride said that we do try to partner with groups that have faith-based programs, but it is becoming more difficult due to limitations imposed from government funding. She further stated that we have provided funding for relief to Ukraine, Gaza, and our on-going commitment to Maasai and Honduras. Mr. Andy Parkin moved to approve the requests, and Mr. Dirk Dunlap seconded the motion. The proposed requests were approved by unanimous vote.

Raymond Fund Report:

Ms. Danita Ostling presented the Raymond Fund Report. She first thanked Mr. John Crum and Mr. John Banigan for their continued service and hard work. Ms. Ostling alluded to the amended provisions made to the Fund which are more flexible than stipulated in Deacon Raymond's will but is still consistent with the spirit of his wishes, and the creation of the Raymond Fellows program. There are currently 3 Raymond Fellows: Kelly Antonson, David Stewart, and David Vargas. Ms. Ostling asked for a motion to not read the will as required by the trust.

Question: Could we make available the trust on the Church's website to be read if so desired?

Answer: Ms. Ostling will check with the Church Office.

As there were no objections, reading the full will of Deacon William E. Raymond was waived. A motion to approve was made by Mr. Paul Ostling and seconded by Mr. Kirk Carr.

Nominating and Governance:

Ms. Barbara Clayton thanked her committee and read the slate of nominees for committee and officer positions (See Annual Report page 23). A motion was made by Mr. Hoyt Davidson to approve the proposed candidates; it was seconded by Ms. Ally Dunlap, and approved unanimously. Ms. Clayton thanked all those who have served and welcomed the new candidates.

Word of Thanks:

Reverend Garner thanked Caroline Smittle, Kelly Antonson, and Leigh Engen for all their hard work to prepare for this meeting. He also thanked the Leadership Team who meets every other week. Members of this Team that will be transitioning off are Chris Baker, Barb Clayton, and Diane Bailey. Reverend Garner presented them each with a wooden cross made by Michael Abbott from the beech tree we had taken down. He then provided an update on his calls to members that have not returned their pledge cards: he has called 68 individuals and will call 40 more next week.

Rev. Garner closed the meeting with a prayer.

Rev. Garner asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion was made by Ms. Barb Clayton and seconded by Ms. Stephanie Douglas-Parkin, and unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:46 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Lauren Baker
Clerk
Congregational Church of New Canaan