



Spirit of Grace

ELCA UMC
Annual Meeting
Sunday, January 16th, 2022

Agenda

Quorum: 20 voting members

ATTENDANCE

REVIEW OF ZOOM ETIQUETTE

OPENING LITURGY

DENOMINATIONAL MESSAGES

Message from Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton – ELCA

Message from Bishop Laurie Larson-Caesar – Oregon Synod, ELCA

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

In accordance with our constitution, the Nominating and Leadership Committee will present a slate of nominees for the elected offices of the church. Other nominations may be made from the floor, and must be accepted or declined by the individual nominated before the election may proceed. Write in nominations will also be allowed. Elections are effective at the close of this meeting.

REPORTS

Pastor's Report – Rev. Miranda Bermes-Goller

Board Chair's Report – Shelley Oates

Staff Parish Relations Committee Report – Jill MicBee

Building Ministry Team Report – Rick McBee

Choir Report – Audrey Bentz

Happy Hands Report – Kristen White

Budget & Financial Report – Tom Hart

Additional Reports and Documentation

NEW BUSINESS

Vote regarding removal of Outreach House Building

CLOSING PRAYER

Pastor's Report

Beloved Siblings in Christ,

The year of 2021 has come to an end – a year that brought excitement and joy, tragedy and loss, hope and anticipation, transitions and new beginnings. Throughout the ups and downs of this past year, you all have been patient and faithful, waiting eagerly to see what new plans God has in store for this congregation and this community.

In the first half of 2021, you all continued to prioritize the health and safety of worshiping online via Zoom. You found creative ways to engage in worship, connect with one another, and learn about what God's Word has to teach us in these trying times. You practiced self-reflection and discernment as you formed a call committee made up of faithful and diligent members to begin the search process for a new pastor whose ministry and mission lined up with your own – then waited patiently as the work of the Spirit began to unfold.

We first met in July when my wife and I flew out to Hood River for the first time to meet you all. The connection was undeniable, the excitement was palpable, and on July 18th an official letter of call was extended. My wife and I packed up our life and moved from Minnesota to Oregon in August, overwhelmed with joy and anticipation for what our future in this community may hold. I was ordained to the ministry of word & sacrament and subsequently installed as Pastor of Spirit of Grace on August 21st. I thank God every day that I was called to this place and this community of people – and I thank you for entrusting me with this responsibility. I have loved taking the time to get to know so many of you, and I look forward to continuing these conversations and connections in the time to come.

Over the past several months, I have been grateful for your hospitality and support as I have found my footing in this new role. In August, as vaccination rates increased and COVID cases decreased, we cautiously began worshiping in-person again, taking care to put proper safety precautions and protections in place, while keeping worship accessible virtually as well. In the fall, we formed a Reckoning with Racism Team that meets twice per month to begin researching and understanding the racial history of Hood River and our parent congregations, so that Spirit of Grace can learn from this past in order to help create a better future. In November we welcomed two new members to Spirit of Grace - a promising sign of hope for our future together.

In honor of the garden ministry that is so central to the life and mission of this congregation, I would say that we are in a time of germination. We have been waiting for our time of growth, and now signs of new life are beginning to emerge. The growth process can be challenging and bring about unexpected changes - but I know that this congregation has the commitment and resiliency to endure whatever comes our way. I am honored to be a part of this journey with you, and I ask for your continued prayers and support as we enter into this new stage in our ministry together.

In Peace,
Pastor Miranda Bermes-Goller

Board Chair's Report

2021 was a busy year for the Board. Thanks to Zoom, phone texts, and emails, the Board managed to stay in contact and conduct the business of the church throughout the year. Our first order of business was to review the call description of board members and to pledge our accountability to God, the mission of the Church, and to the congregation. Our first goal is to improve communication with articles in the newsletter and a permanent record of Board minutes in the office

The Outreach House was finally vacated. Cleanup and appraisal of damages followed. We received \$3935 from insurance for water damage in the utility room. That did not cover roof and interior sheetrock damage from earlier snow load, nor replacement of carpeting. After further research and exploration, such extensive repairs to an aging manufactured home eventually led the Board to unanimously recommend removal.

Covid continued to disrupt in-person services and meetings for most of the year, but we relied on Zoom and maintained our connections. In the spring we requested and received permission for the quilting group to use the fellowship hall while large groups were still prohibited. Eventually we were allowed back into the sanctuary under UMC guidelines. Now we are closely watching infection rates in the county to guide us on in-person gathering of all kinds.

The Board approved Duckwall Endowment gifts issued in May to UMCOR. Lutheran World Relief, UNCF (historic Black Colleges) Fund, Fish and GEM for legal immigrant aid. \$1000 was distributed to each. \$800 was given to Jack Siekkinen from the Johnson Scholarship fund.

The Board was called upon by Pastor Sue to approve several reports and submissions from the Transition and Call Committees in the call process for a new pastor. In June we approved the Call to Pastor Miranda and she began as our permanent pastor in August. Board members immediately met with Miranda to assist in her transition.

Since August we have met monthly with Miranda. The Methodist Charge Conference was held in Nov with all board members in attendance. Bette Lou represented Spirit of Grace at the annual synod conference.

Respectfully submitted by
Shelley Oates and Tom Hart
Co-chairs Spirit of Grace Board

Staff Parish Relations Committee Report

The purpose of this committee is to encourage, nurture, support and respect the pastor and staff and their families in order to build and maintain strong relationships between them and the congregation and district officers beyond Hood River. We aim to help the pastor and staff set priorities that strengthen the congregation's total ministry. We are focused on both management and ambience. Your elected committee members during 2021 were Jill McBee(chair), Sharon Pantley, Rose Miller (until November), and Ty Sibley. Sharon Poynter was the board representative.

In the early part of the year SPRC was tasked by the transition team and Interim Pastor Sue Seiffert to select the Call Committee whose responsibility was to review applications and recommend a candidate for the position of pastor at Spirit of Grace. Pastor Miranda was invited for a visit in June and subsequently she was called to serve our congregation beginning in August. SPRC was busy during this time period coordinating a farewell for Pastor Sue, planning Pastor Miranda's visit, readying the parsonage, and finally welcoming Pastor Miranda.

The committee met by Zoom as necessary during this period and resumed in person meetings after Pastor Miranda's arrival. Zoom chats after church enabled SPRC to observe and listen to concerns. Although we celebrate the return of in person services, we sorely miss the social interaction of fellowship hour which is absent because of Covid.

This year we conducted the usual evaluation interviews with pastoral assistant Linda or our church secretary Jennifer. Work in the office has been faithfully and efficiently carried on by Jennifer and Linda despite the difficult circumstances and we really appreciate their dedication. We are delighted with the FISH board's new Jesuit volunteer who will be evaluated by that group.

In November we saw that a safe sanctuary workshop was held and are pleased that Pastor Miranda has plans to further our awareness with these issues with a special Sunday program in April.

In the year ahead our goal is to work with Pastor Miranda to bring normality and energy back to Spirit of Grace. We are delighted with the first few months of Pastor Miranda's leadership. We will be eternally grateful to Pastor Sue for guiding us through our transition. Hopefully we will be completely back with programs in our buildings before too long. Then the SPRC committee will strive to see the Sunday School Program rekindled, social and community outreach activities resumed, and a new church directory produced.

Submitted by Jill McBee (Chair) January 2022

Building Ministry Team Report

The Building Ministry for Spirit of Grace continued to work in three main areas this past year. They were: a. the upkeep and maintenance of the grounds, b. the follow-up to the disposition of the Outreach House building, and c. the preparation of the Parsonage for our incoming new Pastor.

The general exterior maintenance of the church grounds has been a continued mission of Dave Radley, Craig Terry and Alan Yenne to keep the lawns watered and trimmed, and the flower beds around the church yard pruned and mulched. They also have continued to follow up on the snow removal and sidewalk shoveling to keep the church open on Sundays during the winter. Debby Chenoweth was instrumental in finding an Eagle Scout who took on the project of cleaning up, replanting and bark-mulching the large church flower bed nearest Tucker road during the early summer months.

The Outreach House disposition was taken up by the church board. A decision was made to first have the insurance review the damages from previous occupancy and building age and see what our coverage would be on those areas. Rick McBee worked with two Insurance adjusters to tour and photograph the interior water and floor damage and the exterior and interior roof/ceiling damage due to snow weight and age. The board then received an small compensation for our claims and has made the decision to remove the building from our premises during the spring/summer of 2022. The badly damaged carpet and interior mess left by the former occupant was removed by Dave Radley with assistance from Rick McBee, Greg and Shelly Oats, Scott Fitch, Dottie Gilbertson, Bette Lou Yenne, and Marlene Lahti and taken to the dump. Some furniture was given to Habitat for Humanity and the rest will be removed and donated prior to demolition of the building in the coming Spring/Summer.

The preparation of the Church Parsonage at 1808 Eugene Street involved giving the renters appropriate notice through Columbia Gorge Property Management, and upon their departure doing minor touch-up painting, the removal and replacement of the rugs throughout the house. These had been budgeted for at the time of our previous pastor, Rev. David King, but not done due to his specific request. Smoke and CO₂ alarms were replaced, closet doors adjusted, and a deep cleaning of the bathrooms, kitchen and entire house was done by our rental management personnel. All of this was completed prior to the arrival of our new Pastor Miranda. Subsequently, we have readjusted the front entryway door and replaced the door knob and lock to that door as it was not functioning properly. The SPRC of the church continues to check maintenance issues which will be followed up in a timely manner.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard McBee, for the Building Ministry, January 7, 2022

Happy Hands Report

With the covid19 situation we had limited meetings this year. At present we are meeting on Mondays from approximately 10 to 11:30. We have not been able to work on many of our usual items due to many of our members unable to attend. However we have been able to send funds to several local needs within our community. We were thankful we were able to offer our items for sale after Sunday services during December.

Hopefully this coming year will provide more chances for us to gather and address more needs within our community and church.

Kristen White

Choir Report

This past year was one of sadness but ended with some joy as well.

Our choir was reduced by several singers. We miss Kathy and Leanna who are now with God and singing in the greatest choir of all. We also lost several other faithful members, with illness or fear of illness, relocation, etc.

But the joy is that we managed to gather a smaller dedicated and faithful group (with some new singers!) in many rehearsals for the Christmas Eve service and then, this service was canceled due to weather. We hope to make another try at singing as soon as everyone feels it safe with the impending Covid surge.

Thank you to the dedication of this “mini choir” as well as to God for the joy of singing and the hope we have for the future of choir participation.

Audrey Bentz and Sharon Poynter