



Spirit of Grace

ELCA UMC
Annual Meeting
Sunday, January 15th, 2023

Agenda

Quorum: 20 voting members

ATTENDANCE

OPENING LITURGY

DENOMINATIONAL MESSAGES

Message from Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton – ELCA

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

[Introduction to Bishop Cedrick Bridgeforth – UMC](#)

Message from Rev. Tim Overton-Harris – UMC Columbia District Superintendent

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

Welcoming Church Team Report – Alicia Bermes

Budget & Financial Report – Tom Hart

Additional Reports and Documentation

NEW BUSINESS

Vote on new Missional Statements & Guiding Values

CLOSING PRAYER

Pastor's Report

Beloved Siblings in Christ,

The year of 2022, and all of its twists and turns, has come to an end – and here we are beginning a new year together! Before we leap into all of the exciting and terrifying and sacred moments 2023 surely has in store for us, let us take a moment and reflect on all that has occurred within the life of our community these last 12 months.

2022 was an exciting and formative time for us here at Spirit of Grace, as we began to dream together about what our ministry will look like moving forward. We explored creative worship practices during Holy Week when we gathered in the sanctuary for a Maundy Thursday Dinner Church service. We honored our relationship to creation and our commitment to climate justice through the Season of Creation, listening to the voices of Creation and filling our Burning Bush with prayers. We formed Ministry Teams to work collaboratively on planning and implementing the ministries and projects of the congregation. We welcomed new opportunities for education with our Fall Book Study groups, as well as our monthly Living [in the] Word bible studies. We began the journey towards becoming an official Welcoming Congregation through the RIC/RMN organizations of our denominations. We resumed our practice of midweek gatherings in the seasons of Lent and Advent, and were able to do so in-person this Advent with our soup supper and study, followed by evening prayer on Wednesday evenings. And, perhaps most importantly, we gathered together in August to engage in the sacred practice of group discernment as we brainstormed how to articulate the mission, vision, and values of this congregation to our surrounding community. In all of these ways – and in all of the love, relationship, and community found through the small, ordinary moments together – we have seen that the Spirit of God is alive and at work among us, leading us into the future God has in store for us!

Unfortunately, financial troubles are the reality of many churches these days, and ours is no exception. We finished out 2022 with a budget deficit, and will likely be short on covering our expenses in 2023 unless there is a change in our giving trends. However, we still have much to be thankful for – such as not carrying a mortgage on any of our properties, and having a resilient, committed community that knows how to respond to frequent changes with grace! I have no doubt that the Spirit will guide us through this season of uncertainty, and inspire us to consider new opportunities for ministry we never would have considered otherwise.

I wholeheartedly believe in the mission and ministry of Spirit of Grace, and I believe that God has called us to be agents of change and bearers of the Good News in this time and this place. As the year begins, I invite you all to spend some time in contemplation and discernment. Why has God called you to this community – Spirit of Grace – in this time and this place? How do you understand your role in this community? What are your hopes and dreams for this little congregation with a big heart? Where do you see the Spirit moving among us recently? Who is God calling you to become in this new year? Come – let us dream together and see what new thing God is inviting us to explore.

In Peace,

Pastor Miranda Bermes-Goller

Board Chair's Report

In January Board members Tom Hart and Sharon Poynter were elected to second terms. Cindy Murahashi was elected to fill a one year vacancy.

We began 2022 with Leadership Training in February. We reviewed the Board's duties to the church through Board member job descriptions and our constitution. We participated in activities including reading, writing, and discussions focusing on the mission ahead. All members of the Board committed themselves to work for the church and to support our pastor, Miranda Bermes-Goller.

We set goals. Some were accomplished, some were not. One was to review and update our Mission and Vision or Welcoming Statements. In August the Board held an extended meeting to brainstorm ideas and followed up with two congregational sessions for additional discussion and input. Four standing committees were established: Community Outreach, Hospitality, Lifelong Learning, and Building and Grounds. Zoom and Facebook provided accessibility options for attending services and study groups. Communication has improved through reports in the newsletter and in worship announcements. Miranda received a technology grant and has upgraded our audio visual system. A Welcoming Church team is in place working toward Reconciling in Christ. In December the Board approved the budget despite reduced income for the year. Stewardship will need attention going forward. There is still work to do on our printed directory and the bulletin board. Removal of the Outreach House was postponed in 2022 by recommendation of the Finance Committee.

There is much to celebrate at Spirit of Grace. The Welcoming Church team meets regularly and the door is open for anyone to listen in or contribute. We had fall book study groups meeting in person Sunday morning and online Thursday night. Women's Spirituality meets for fellowship and study the first Saturday of the month. Men's Fellowship/Coffee meets regularly at Rosauers. Our prayer chain is active. Happy Hands meets for fellowship and support. They sold Christmas gift items in December to raise money for good causes. Outreach holiday greeting cards are sent at various times of the year. Bell Choir performed here several times. Our garden produces an abundance of produce for FISH Food Bank. Members participate by serving at FISH and we collect Food on the Fourth (Sunday) for them as well. We recently lifted our mandatory face mask requirement and we are having coffee hour once a month. We continue to celebrate Holy Communion on the first and third Sundays of each month.

In the spring we distributed \$3000 from the Duckwall Endowment Fund. \$1,000 contributions went to the ELCA Eastern Europe Crisis Response Fund, UMCOR Ukraine Advance #98450, and locally to Helping Hands Against Violence through GEM. We gave \$800 scholarships to Miyuki Gerald and Amy Fowler from the Irv Johnson Scholarship Fund.

At year's end we reviewed our work and assigned tasks for year end reports.

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 2022 were Jill McBee(chair), Sharon Pantley, Pat Moore, and Ty Sibley. Sharon Poynter was the board representative.

For the first time in several years we were blessed with leadership from one pastor for the entire year and SPRC did not have to deal with transitions. However, we did, say goodbye to Jennifer Fowler who had served our congregations ably for many years as Church Secretary. Following her departure, we were able to provide a full-time position to Pastor Miranda as she took over some of the clerical jobs. We are grateful to Jennifer who continues to act as financial secretary and to Debbie who is handling the FISH room usage. The congregation will continue to regroup and increase in size and spirituality under Pastor Miranda's excellent leadership.

In April and May the congregation embraced the topic of Safe Sanctuary by welcoming a guest speaker and participating in an on-line workshop. During the year matters of fighting discrimination of all kinds were discussed frequently.

The committee met in January on Zoom and then in person three times later in the year. At each meeting we encouraged Pastor Miranda as we saw the birth of various ministerial teams, the formation and early work of the reconciliation committee, and the meetings of several book studies and special services. In particular, we love the return to Wednesday night Lenten and Advent studies and worship. Both the church website and the new sound systems are a result of Pastor Miranda's initiative and are much appreciated. Various minor problems with the parsonage were solved with help from the building ministry. We lament the fact that children are few and that Sunday School and childcare are unrealistic at present. Progress on the new church directory is slow and we hope to get it published in 2023.

In November the SPRC conducted the annual evaluation interview with the pastor. We will be interviewing Linda Boris, our pastoral assistant in early January. 2022 was a much better year for Spirit of Grace and we hope that the congregation will continue to regroup and increase in size and spirituality under Miranda's excellent leadership.

Submitted by Jill McBee (Chair) January 2023

Building Ministry Team Report

The Building Ministry followed up on three main areas for 2023-23:

- a. Upkeep, maintenance, and beautification of the church grounds,
- b. Minor maintenance to the sanctuary building and garden shed.
- c. Minor maintenance to the Parsonage.

The general exterior maintenance of the church grounds: has been a continued mission of Scott Fitch, Donna Werhley, Craig Terry and Alan Yenne to keep the lawns watered and trimmed, and the flower beds around the church yard pruned and mulched. To this effect, the front yard areas of the Sanctuary are being replanted with bulbs purchased by Scott Fitch, and these bulbs planted during a fall church service by congregation members. It remains for the Spring of 2023 to reveal the results of this work. We will continue to plant more bulbs and hardy shrubs along the front of the Sanctuary and to upgrade the water system so that this area is adequately watered during summer. Finally, we will prune dead limbs and foliage on the front area trees.

The sanctuary and garden shed maintenance: has continued with the replacement of a broken colored glass pane in one sanctuary window, and the replacement of several ceiling tiles that had fallen loose in the sanctuary ceiling. Gutters on the sanctuary were cleaned out for fall. The garden shed was evaluated for lead paint in hopes that we might be able to fix that eyesore area behind the church. Unfortunately there is lead in the old white paint of this 100 year old building so there will be no removal of paint or scraping, simply an over-coating to contain and seal what is there. The rafter areas of the garden shed were cleaned out to remove several tons of material that should never have been stacked on the two-by-four rafters. Much of this material was hauled to the dump.

Continued maintenance of Church Parsonage at 1808 Eugene Street: The front door screen of the parsonage had been removed due to damage and was replaced with a new door this year. The gutter system was completely cleaned out and a number of leaks in the troughs and end pieces were replaced or caulked and down-spouts cleaned so that the system is functional as a drain as it should be. The front door lock was adjusted so that the door will close and catch properly and can be locked properly for security and to keep it from blowing open in the winds. 2022 Holdover item: Outreach House disposal remains on hold pending budget funding.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard McBee, for the Building Ministry, January, 2023

Welcoming Church Team Report

The Welcoming Team was formed in 2022 with the goal of helping shepherd Spirit of Grace through the process of becoming an RIC (Reconciling in Christ). This means that we hope to formally declare our intent to welcome all people regardless of race, sex, sexuality, gender, etc. It means we will engage in the work to be ready to be welcoming; to learn what it means to truly be welcoming to all. To that end, the Welcoming Team has been reading, listening, researching, and learning. We now feel prepared to begin 1:1 interviews with all congregation members. This will be an opportunity for each of you to share your thoughts, concerns, excitement, and questions. The next step will be congregational educational opportunities. Following that we will craft an inclusive welcoming statement and look for feedback. We are excited for your input on this journey!

Submitted by Alicia Bermes, Welcoming Church Team Leader, January 2023