

Congregational Meeting

February 9, 2025

The meeting was held in the Worship Center and via Zoom.

- 1) **Call to order and opening prayer** by Angela Buikema, Elder on behalf of the Vice Chair of the Elders.
- 2) **Minutes from the February 4, 2024 Congregational Meeting** were made available in the congregational resource packet online prior to the meeting.
 A motion was made and supported to approve the minutes from the February 4, 2024 Congregational meeting. The minutes were unanimously approved.
- 3) **Election of Elders and Deacons** – Angela Buikema introduced the candidates and thanked them for putting their name up for nomination.
 - a) **For the office of Elder:** Jonathan Bode, Todd Buikema, Tim Lundein, Nate Plasman, Bryan Rieger, Don Slager, Tara Tameling, and Ken VanderVelde
 - b) **For the office of Deacon:** Jill Anderson, Michael Bouman, Mike de Waal Malefyt, Mike Holtrop, Jeremy Lower, Lisa VanderMolen, Steve Vander Wal, and Stacy Wiegers
 - c) Ballots were collected for counting.
 - d) Angela spoke of the new process of inviting elders and deacons to an informational session to find out more about the role and time commitments.
- 4) **Ministry Reports:**
 - a) **Elders** – Angela Buikema, Elder on behalf of the Vice Chair of the Elders
 - i) Angela thanked the outgoing Elders for their service and individual contributions they made during their tenure. Elders are looking forward to 2025 including the congregation “getting into the scripture in 2025.”
 - ii) Angela spoke of the up-close moments of being an Elder:
 - Visiting homebound members and giving communion.
 - Serving Communion to the congregation with special thanks to Jack McNamara who coordinates the sacraments.
 - Praying for the children of the church.
 - After Service prayer – which increased in 2024 in both need and openness to prayer.
 - Elders participating with the Ukrainian Church.
 - Interviewing new members and hearing their spiritual journeys and stories and working on new ways of connecting with them.
 - Learning about all the great things the ministries of our church are doing to support and strengthen our congregation.
 These up-close moments are all continuous signs of the Spirit moving within our church.
 - iii) Angela challenged the congregation to continue to build our community, grow closer to each other, deepening our faith, and remaining open to how God will use us in the coming year.

b) **Deacons** – Tom Vogelzang, Deacon Chair

- i) Tom thanked the outgoing deacons for all of their faithful work.
- ii) Tom spoke of the rewarding work the Deacons have done in the past year and the fact that they used the entire budget through discernment and compassion for those in our church. The Deacons have been able to commit to many people experiencing difficult financial situations.
- iii) Tom highlighted some of the great things
 - Helped a community member replace a leaking roof.
 - Paid medical bills for someone who could not afford them and allowed them to pay their mortgage and stay in their house.
 - Assisted individuals in staying in their apartments when they could not work due to sickness or health issues.
 - Meal trains – delivered meals to needy and suffering.
 - Many more stories of helping those in need.

c) **Senior Leadership Team** – Brian Stolzenbach, SLT Chair

- i) Brian thanked the retiring SLT members. He also introduced the two new members of SLT, Dawn Feenstra and Justin Venhousen. This expands the number of At-Large SLT members by one more as previously planned and approved.
- ii) Responsible for the business operations and day-to-day support of the staff as needed
- iii) Instituted a paid Parental Leave Policy
- iv) A memorable highlight this year was the Hearts Alaze Campaign, supported by SLT. The goal was to create a new budget that will allow us to spend less and do more.
- v) Supported the staff and pastor in the hiring of a new Director of Worship and a new Executive Director. Both were great hires and fit right in.

d) **Outreach** – Rev. Jeff Klein via recorded video

- i) Pastor Jeff spoke of his call to disciple and mobilize people to be the mission of God and building the Kingdom of God. To address why people are not mobilizing, Jeff read Eph. 2:8-9 to show us that we are called to do good works, but people do not know how to do it or do not believe it is their responsibility. Additionally, fear prevents people from getting involved in the mission of God. Aware of this Jeff has tried a lot of ways to mobilize the church. He challenged us to reflect if we are still sitting or if we are moving. Pastor Jeff expressed his desire to help us to move by offering more opportunities for us to serve.
- ii) Alpha Marriage is a new offering with 20 couples who have already signed up and some are not regular attendees of our church.
- iii) Deeper engagement with our missions partners in 2025; strengthening connections.
- iv) Mission trip planned in August to support the Vacation Bible School at Nurmay Missions in Kenya.
- v) Learning from Hugh Halter how to be better equipped to positively influence and change our city and community. We need to learn how to look for and recognize “Bread Crumbs” - signs from God and where he is leading us.

e) **Lead Pastor** – Rev. Gregg DeMey

- i) Pastor Gregg reflected on the memorial service of Terry van der Aa. Terry was the first Chair of the SLT when established in 2009. Terry had a significant influence on Gregg and the church, embodying some of the best community characteristics - enterprising yet also with a calming and discerning force within the congregation.
- ii) Looking forward to the Farmers Market every Wednesday during the months of June through October in 2025. The Farmers Market will increase our presence to the community with 30 to 40 vendors and 3,000 visitors at the curb of our church. Gregg shared his anticipation for what God will

do with this opportunity and encouraged the congregation to think of ways to participate in the market.

iii) Reflecting on the highlights of 2024, it was the year of our 75th anniversary and the Hearts Ablaze Campaign both of which shows God's faithfulness and our response to the Holy Spirit as shown in the sacrificial giving by the congregation.

iv) Gregg spoke of his vision for the In, Out and Up where the church would be growing in three dimensions simultaneously:

- Upward in personal worship and devotion;
- Inward in spiritual friendship and community connection; and
- Outward in acts of service and gospel proclamation.

The plan was to have a person who was spiritually gifted to lead each dimension. Currently we have leaders for the "Up" and the "Out" and this year we will be hiring "In" of the church with someone who will lead us in the spiritual discipleship of the church, community connection and "stickiness" of the membership of this church.

v) Pastor Gregg introduced Luke Norris as the new Youth Leader of the church.

vi) The Ukrainian Church - God doing something new for war refugees coming to Chicago.

vii) God working in Moe Pacheco who is planting a new church in Garfield Park called "Grace in Garfield"

5) **Presentation and Approval of 2025 Budget** – Joel Tameling, Hearts Ablaze Campaign Co-Chair, and Bastiaan van den Berg, SLT Treasurer

a) Joel Tameling provided an update on the Hearts Ablaze Campaign. Joel thanked the congregation for meeting the challenge of the Campaign team and sacrificially giving above and beyond what we normally do. In December we took in \$2.9 million and were able to pay off \$2 million of our mortgage debt.

b) Joel asked for prayers of discernment as the SLT decides how to manage the additional funds which the paying off of the mortgage being a high priority.

c) Joel highlighted some stats from the Campaign

- A 67% increase in giving across the congregation in 2024
- Many first-time givers
- Core giving in January was 28% above normal.

d) Bastiaan provided a historical context on factors that influenced the 2025 budget. He reviewed budgeted contributions with actual contributions from 2016 until 2024.

e) Bastiaan highlighted actual receipts and expenses for 2024 that contributed to developing the 2025 budget including:

i) The success of the Hearts Ablaze Campaign was a contributing factor in planning and reduction of the mortgage in 2024 by \$2 million, reducing mortgage expenses in 2025 by \$117,000.

ii) Added additional funds for midweek children's ministries and for Mission Trip Scholarships.

iii) IRS Employment Retention Credit for \$93,151 along with expected additional revenue of \$58K from completing security upgrades funded by a Federal grant.

iv) New Community Engagement Director budgeted to start in the Summer of 2025, and a 5% salary increase for staff.

v) Farmers Market and Grace in Garfield are in the budget but are expected to break even in 2025.

f) Each line item on the proposed 2025 budget was reviewed all questions were answered.

g) The SLT believes there is financial capacity within the congregation to provide \$4.0M in EMF contributions based on the Hearts Ablaze Campaign Pledge Cards.

6) **A motion was made and supported to approve the 2025 budget of \$4,286,176. The motion carried without opposition.**

- 7) **Drawing of Lots** – Jeff Byma, Elder on behalf of the Vice Chair of the Elders
 - a) The following individuals were selected to serve as **Elders**:
Todd Buikema, Bryan Rieger, Don Slager, and Tara Tameling
 - b) The following individuals were selected to serve as **Deacons**:
Mike de Waal Malefyt, Mike Holtrop, Steve Vander Wal, and Stacy Wiegers
- 8) Jeff Byma closed the meeting in prayer.