**Orinda Community Church**

**Minutes of Church Council  
Wednesday, January 26, 2022**

**Council Attendance:** Anne Barr, Bill Abriel, Lani Shepp, Kathleen Wiegand, Bob Winbigler, Gail Mead, Mitch Breitwieser

**Clergy Attending:** Elizabeth Robinson

**Attendees:** Tom Norris

**Minutes:** The 12/15/21 minutes were approved by email on 12/23/21

**Pastor’s Report:** Per Rev. Elizabeth Robinson, our Advent Time was successful. We had good responses about the Christmas Eve service. The Advent Story Hour was more successful as Advent rolled out and Elizabeth would like to continue it. The Contemplative Service is oscillating with Covid. Some in the congregation are worn thin so we have care work to do overall. We are all feeling the loss of those who have died. Rescheduling the memorial services due to Covid is hard and a lot of work for Elizabeth and Anna Gregory. Writers Group, Theology and Scripture Group, and Katrina’s Reading Group are going well. We should reinstitute our Fellowship Hours. Elizabeth is checking to see if we need a widow/widower’s support group. Leslie O’Brien’s Service of Release is this Sunday, on Zoom. We’ll do an in person celebration when it’s safe to do so. She wants to meet with parents on what they need for their children/youth. Anne Barr cautioned that we not bite off more than we can emotionally and logistically support. It’s okay not to have everything covered right now. We’ll continue to work on this.

**Treasurer’s Update/Stewardship/Budget:** Lani Shepp received another $4000 pledge today and will close out the budget for the year including that pledge. She mentioned this is the first time in recent history that we haven’t had to go to Endowment for money for a staff position. We ended up with a cash surplus at the end of the year because we weren’t as active. We have money for another [Youth and Family] staff person which is a positive point. We’ll determine what we really need as we come out of Covid. We don’t want to commit to something we can’t continue to fund. The Council moved and approved updating the 2022 budget a final time to include the additional $4000 pledge. Lani will ask Craig Taatjes to do research on our solar panels. The lease expires in 2023.

**Annual Meeting Recap:** We had excellent attendance at the annual meeting and we heard thoughts and ideas from several people. We need to find new ways of communicating with our congregation. We’ve used surveys to get formal feedback but the results weren’t always worthwhile. Bill Abriel suggested focus groups and individual interviews might provide better feedback than surveys. Mitch Breitwieser suggested periodic town hall meetings focusing discussion on a specific topic may be helpful, especially just to share ideas and not necessarily to reach a decision. Some of our committees may need to change; they aren’t as well suited as before. Maybe we need some other form of information management than what we’ve been doing with committees. How do we use more resources/people that want to get involved? We need a focused way to acknowledge, interpret, and respond to our congregation’s ideas. Elizabeth Robinson mentioned she would like to start up Zoom Fellowship Hours again but have them around 1:00 pm on Sundays instead of right after the service. We decided she will set one up gearing the dialog to how we can communicate/connect better as a congregation.

**Youth & Family Position:** We have a small number of children/youth, but there’s quite an age range of infants, young children, and young adults. They have different needs. How do we now provide for them? And who will now do this/oversee this? For our short term plan, we already have a caregiver available for when we return to in person services. In addition, Mary Volmer has agreed to do the children’s moment and work with the children once a month. Perhaps we can find three other volunteers to do the same (all will be paid). Elizabeth Robinson can also help with the children’s moment. For our long term plan, Council will review the job description for a Youth and Family staff person. Finding a PSR intern to help with the youth hasn’t worked out so far but maybe an intern could oversee the project rather than working directly on our campus. We have a safe church requirement which we’re ramping up. Two adults need to be with the children at all times. We’ll need background checks, fingerprints, and mandated four hours of reporter training (reporting anything that looks like abuse/neglect).

**Boy Scouts Troop 237:** We’re open to having the boy scouts continue to meet at our church but the Orinda Rotary Club will be the troop’s new chartered organization. Liability issues and our limited staffing necessitated this change. We’ll have a rental relationship with the troop, but won’t be charging them any rent (although they will need insurance). Gail Mead is working on an MOU that she will send to the Council and to Tom Norris who will continue as the Troop 237 liaison for the church.

**B&G Update:** Tom Norris is cutting back on the amount of work he can do around the campus; he has his other work to do. He will continue to support Buildings and Grounds as a volunteer, but he would like to bill his time if he needs to perform tasks associated with delivering a B&G project.

Marcel McLain is moving into the cottage to handle some of the caretaker duties and can call Tom if he has any questions.

**At-Large Member Reports:** Gail Mead reported that Nancy Thursby has lots going on with the climate world. Creation Justice is forging ahead.

**Vice Moderator’s Report:** Bill Abriel, Mitch Breitwieser, and Gail Mead will do some strategic planning on engagement. This will include the church’s history and where it’s going. They’ll report at the next Council meeting.

**NOTE:** The Council unanimously approved Reverend Elizabeth Robinson’s 2022 housing allowance letter by email in early January 2022. Notice of the approval was sent via a 1/17/22 email from Council Moderator Kurt Sunderbruch to the OCC Finance Department.

**ACTIONS:**

Lani-ask Craig Taatjes to do research for our solar panels

Elizabeth-set up a Fellowship Hour to discuss how to communicate/connect better as a congregation

Gail-send Boy Scout Troop 237 MOU to Council and Tom Norris to review

Bill-meet with Mitch and Gail re: strategic planning on engagement; report to Council at Feb. meeting

Next Meeting: Wednesday, February 24, 2022; 7:00 pm

Kathleen Wiegand, Clerk