

Spring Semi-Annual Congregational Meeting

Sunday, April 18, 2021

First
Congregational
Church of
Anchorage

Annual Reports



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2021 Nominating Committee's Report

Jim Munter & Kathy Means

First Congregational Church draft Officiary for 2021-2023 as of April 11, 2021

Church Staff, Officers, and Chairs

Senior Minister	Rev. Jacob Poindexter	Life and Learning
Moderator	Paul Wasko	Outreach
Vice Moderator	Kathy Means	Worship
Clerk	(Vacant)	Fellowship
		Stewardship
NACCC Delegate	TBD by Council	

Ministries

	Term Ends 2023	Term End 2022	Youth Rep. (opt.)
Life and Learning	Barb Widtfeldt (Vacant)	Marcie Errico Deb Stauffer (Vacant)	
Outreach	Marilyn Lee Vivian Pike	Sandy Skaggs Eric Johnson	
Worship	(Vacant) (Vacant) Sally Janis Louise Smith (Vacant)	Jane Reamy Kathy Means Amana Mbise Erin Binek Sue Hanas	
Fellowship	Craig Valentine Elizabeth Kachline	Kate O'Dell Sharon Higgins	
Stewardship	Vivian Pike Dennis Stauffer Jack Reamy	Jeanette Dillon Kathy Means Kate O'Dell	
Financial Sec. Treasurer Deputy Treasurer		Sue Hanas Fermen Dillon Craig Valentine	

Church Staff

Senior Minister	Rev. Jacob Poindexter	Administrative Assistant	Krystal Poindexter
Choir Director	Lori Wasko	Sexton	Scott McClure
Handbell Director	Caroline Valentine	Wedding Coordinator	Julie McClure
Organist	Caroline Valentine	Nursery	Vacant

Notes:

1. **Bold font** means standing for election at Semiannual Meeting April 18, 2021.

Fall 2020 Semi-Annual Meeting

Minutes for approval

First Congregational Christian Church of Anchorage
Fall Semi-annual Congregational Meeting
Sunday, November 15, 2020
Immediately after the worship service via Zoom

Minutes

- I. FCC Clerk Kate O'Dell stated that we have a quorum
- II. Moderator Lynn Barber called the meeting to order at 11:33 am.
- III. Rev. Jacob offered the Opening Prayer
- IV. Approve Agenda
 - Lynn noted that the date for the Spring semi-annual Meeting needs to be corrected to April 18, 2021
 - Cathy White
 - **Motion:** Add to the agenda the following items; seconded. Passed by unanimous consent
 1. Use of our property long-term by unauthorized persons
 2. Sanitization system for our church
 - Kate requested the text for adding these items to the agenda.
 - Sharon Higgins
 - **Motion:** Add to the agenda: Approval to finish upgrading all of the church lighting with LED bulbs; seconded. Passed by unanimous consent.
 - Agenda approved as amended by unanimous consent.
- V. Approve Minutes: Spring Semi-annual Congregational Meeting, April 19, 2020
 - Approved as distributed by unanimous consent
- VI. Reports
 - Stewardship Ministry: Approval of the 2021 Budget
 - Jim Munter thanked the committee that has been working on it since spring
 - Budget is about 4 ½% larger than last year's
 - Based on past history, current conditions, and their best guess as to what we will need for 2021
 - Jim noted that people answered the request to increase their pledge by 3%
 - Question: How did we do this year?
 - Treasurer Fermen Dillon – We are going to end 2020 with a balanced budget.
 - The Stewardship Ministry report constitutes a motion to approve the 2021 budget as presented; it does not need a second. Passed by unanimous consent.
 - Sharon: complete the replacement of our light bulbs
 - We have some money left from the previous fundraising, but not enough.
 - The Stewardship Ministry has found that replacing the bulbs resulted in significant savings, which is a strong rationale for finishing the project.
 - **Motion:** Approve expenditure up to \$8,500; seconded.
 - Claudia: Have the health aspects of LED lights been considered?
 - Sharon: Yes. They're much better than when they were first introduced. We can choose the color.
 - Passed by unanimous consent

Fall 2020 Semi-Annual Meeting

Minutes—continued

- VII. Presentation on beginning the Open and Affirming (ONA) Process (attached to these minutes)
- Chris Walker introduced Jenna Amber to provide the opening statement
 - The Outreach Ministry has reviewed and approved the ONA process for consideration by the congregation
 - This is not for discussion at this time as the process provides many and varied opportunities to ask questions and consider all points of view.
 - Cathy White
 - Discussion of our position as a church for dealing with people who are using our property— how we can support them without enabling them
 - Regarding the current resident of the van in the lower parking lot – Jacob gave an update: she is actively working on finding another place
 - Jacob will pay to have the van moved out of his Minister’s Discretionary Fund
 - **How** we interact with those who are homeless is an “incredibly complex” topic. It’s a discussion which we will need to have at some point.
 - **Given** the conditions caused by the pandemic, homelessness in Anchorage is likely to become an increasing problem
 - Lynn pointed out that this has been discussed in Stewardship and Ministry, so all people are welcome to come attend those meetings
 - Consideration of the sanitization system for when we are able to resume in-person gathering
 - Lynn explained that this has been discussed at length in various ministries.
 - Cathy suggested we adopt the system that ASD is using.
 - Lynn requested that this proposal be submitted to the Stewardship Ministry for consideration
 - Cathy will do that
- VIII. New Business
- Approve date for the Spring Semi-annual Congregational Meeting: Sunday, April 18, 2021 as set when this Agenda was amended.
 - **Motion:** Approve the date as amended; seconded. Passed by unanimous consent.
- IX. Announcements
- People complimented Lynn on a well-run meeting.
- X. Rev. Jacob offered the Closing Prayer
- XI. Adjournment: **Motion:** Adjourn the meeting; seconded. Passed by unanimous consent.
- Meeting adjourned at 12:07 pm

Respectfully Submitted,
FCC Clerk Kate O’Dell

2021 FCC Clerk's Report

Kate O'Dell, Clerk

Weddings:	0
Baptisms:	2
Funerals/Memorial Service:	1
New Members:	2
Members dropped through request, audit, and death:	4
Members as of 04/15/21:	114
Quorum for April 2021 meeting: (20% of members)	23

Proposed Welcome Covenant

Krystal Poindexter, Miguel De Marzo, Jenna Amber, Dave Barber, Eric Johnson

First Congregational Church of Anchorage is an open and affirming Christian community joining together in service as people learning, growing, and acting in faith. In the spirit of Jesus, we commit ourselves to justice and equity by welcoming and celebrating a diversity of age, ability, race, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, family circumstance, socio-economic status, and national origin. As an inclusive congregation, we seek to be a safe place to grow, free from judgment, where wounds can heal, and differences can expand our understanding. We invite all who are searching for God's presence in their lives to worship with us. We welcome you to participate in the life, ministry, and leadership of the church.

Senior Minister's Report

Rev. Jacob L. Poindexter

Alright everybody, lets make two lists about this past year. The first list consists of things you learned to do, or never did before. The second list consists of things you forgot how to do. I'll wait. I have no doubt that everybody learned something new, even if it was learning that spending so much time by yourself is not good for your emotional health.

I have learned how to make basic videos and edit them. I have also figured out how to send a signal from the sound system to a computer so that ... electricity goes loud. I have even learned how to feed myself while working at the church without fellowship snack leftovers! It has truly been a period of new self-understandings. The things that annoy me seem to be more present, but I have also found many more quiet moments, which has created new patterns of patience.

Most days I think that my first list of things I learned is longer than the second one of things I forgot. But as I continue to transition back into former patterns I am discovering that the second list is growing. I forgot what it is like to worship with people in the same space. During the Good Friday service it was difficult to know where to look without looking at the lens of a camera. I have forgotten what it is like to shuffle and pace around the narthex with acolytes waiting to process into the sanctuary on Sunday.

There are so many routines of communal life that are forever unspoken and unnoticed. These unspoken practices are also easily forgotten when not regularly acted out. I think this list of forgotten rituals is longer than I realize. Some of them may be gone forever, and perhaps for some, good riddance. But some are long cherished and I don't even realize I miss them yet, even after a year.

There will be plenty of rebuilding and re-familiarizing with what it means to be a gathered community in one place. I am keeping an especially keen eye open for the hidden gems of communal ritual that have lain dormant, waiting to be awakened. Perhaps that is also a list we should be making.

Blessed Easter,
Rev. Jacob L. Poindexter



Moderator's Report

Lynn Barber

It has been an amazing, but also challenging, totally pandemic church year, much of it involving the Zoom application. Most amazingly, Reverend Jacob Poindexter has managed to keep us all connected for our regularly scheduled ministry and council meetings using Zoom. He and Krystal Poindexter have somehow, week after week, created and used their technical expertise to provide meaningful, well-presented Sunday worship services where we could see and hear each other and worship together, almost as if the pandemic did not exist.

Our church ministries – Worship, Stewardship, Outreach, Fellowship, and Life and Learning - have been most diligent in performing their assigned tasks in a socially distanced way. Representatives from each of these ministries have met online and reported regularly to the Church Council and have also kept all of us informed through FCC newsletter articles.

Throughout the pandemic, even in the summer when they would usually take a break, both the vocal choir and handbell choir have continued to meet virtually and to record music, using the Acapella app, to share with the congregation in Sunday worship services. Great thanks are due to directors Lori Wasko and Caroline Valentine, to the choir members, and to our Worship Ministry.

In addition to their normal financial management, our Stewardship Ministry has worked with our Hospice renters to repair parsonage problems. Extra donations by members enabled the church to help others who have been adversely affected by conditions during the pandemic.

Although few members have spent much time in the church building this year, Scott McClure has continued to care for it in our absence. On the church grounds, Jim Walker's initiative and herculean labors, with the help of others, have created various edible landscapes and raised garden boxes at FCC.

Our Outreach Ministry in addition to work on our congregation's help of those beyond our church, approved a process for our church to consider becoming an Open and Affirming (ONA) congregation. This process has involved weekly Zoom meetings of those interested in learning about what it means to be open and affirming of all persons without regard to sexual orientation or identity, and then the drafting of a covenant to be voted on at the spring Congregational meeting.

Our Fellowship Ministry has figured out ways to get together virtually, such as game nights and afternoon teatimes on Zoom, and our Life and Learning Ministry has continued to connect the young people of our church in creative ways.

During this year the Dancing Owls Learning Center became a legal nonprofit entity with its own board of directors that includes three FCC members, and now awaits the lessening of the pandemic and reopening of UAA education.

The pandemic has inspired many FCC people to be creative in previously unimaginable ways. We are now trying to imagine a non-pandemic world and are slowly beginning to find ways to get together in person, socially distanced on the pews or outside, and of course, masked.

Worship Ministry

Kathy Means, Chair; Amana Mbise; Erin Binek; Sue Hanas; Claudia Kniefel; Paul Wasko; Sally Janis; Louise Smith; Dave Barber

This past year will long be remembered as the year we learned to cope with Covid. Last March 2020, we were suddenly informed by the municipality to shut our doors and stay home to suppress the spread of the virus. There was a lot of confusion at first, but we learned how to shop online for groceries online, make masks, and wash and sanitize our hands frequently. We lost a dear member of our church early on, Jim Walton, to the deadly virus. We were unable to visit our dear members and friends in church and other places.

Right away Jacob got to work setting up a forum so that members and friends could worship online and maintain contact with each other. He started using the application Zoom to broadcast services, taking extra time to help people set up their computers at home. Caroline Valentine and Lori Wasko purchased the application Acapella and started using it to produce handbell and choir pieces, which members could record from home. Krystal set slide shows so that people could read scripture and sing along to hymns from home, and sat behind the podium Sunday mornings to make sure the services went smoothly. All of the services are recorded so people can watch them later on the church's website (fccak.org). We have learned a lot this past year how to still reach out to people while staying safe.

In the meantime, the Lectio Divina (bible study) group meets online and we have many great discussions. Creating Liturgia (soup group) has focused on sending cards to members and friends during the holidays, and your Worship Ministry has met online to ensure that Jacob, Krystal and Caroline receive our support and encouragement to continue on providing worship as close to normal as possible (without a congregation).

A year later, we have survived the worst of the pandemic—not that there still aren't infections, but that our hospitals have learned how to deal with the symptoms and there are fewer deaths. We can begin to resume our activities, including returning to certain church activities, with precautions and social distancing. The handbell choir is meeting again, and we are allowing certain small groups to use the church. The municipality has allowed churches (and restaurants) to open up again. Soon we hope to have in-person services, while still providing remote access for people who can't attend. One positive thing out of this experience is that we can connect with friends and family from all over on Zoom. Jacob's mother regularly attends, we can attend while vacationing or in our second homes, or if we are sick or shut-in.

We are maintaining most of our Worship Ministry responsibilities in this new way. Many thanks to our members who have stayed with the church, but if you know of anyone who we need to contact, please let us know.

Stewardship Ministry

Sharon Higgins, Chair; Jeanette Dillon, Kathy Means; Vivian Pike; Dennis Stauffer

This has been a year like no other. It has forced us to look at the world in new ways. We have been forced to learn and use new technology to communicate. We thank Rev Jacob for his ability and leadership.

First Congregational Church is moving cautiously in hopes of safely meeting in person in the near future. Our members and friends have generously continued to support the church with their pledges and loose offerings. Because of this, we are fiscally sound.

The repairs of the parsonage have been completed. The remaining lighting project will be completed in the near future.

As always, the meetings of the Stewardship Ministry are open to all.

On a personal note, my time on the Stewardship Ministry will end at the Spring Semi Annual meeting. It has been my pleasure to serve as chair and will continue to support the work of this Ministry.

Life & Learning Ministry

Marcie Errico, Chair; Deb Stauffer; Barb Widtfeldt; Peggy Kreuzenstein

This year of worshiping online has been challenging for our youth program which normally focuses on personal interaction in our faith journey. While our online Christmas Pageant and Easter parable readings were well received, we look forward to the future when we can meet for more than spring planting, summer trail hikes, and fall harvest processing.



Fellowship Ministry

Kate O'Dell, Chair; Sharon Higgins; Craig Valentine; Elisabeth Kachline

The Fellowship Ministry has struggled for the last 12 months with how to keep members of our faith community connected and supported at the level we enjoyed BC ("Before COVID-19"). For most of that time, all of our gatherings were online in one of the Church's Zoom rooms.

Monthly Fellowship Ministry meetings – This is one innovation that we will continue with either wholly or as a hybrid setup (in person plus virtual). In the winter, when getting to in-person meetings is often difficult or downright dangerous, we can conduct our business and brainstorm ideas for future events while staying warm and safe.

Family Game Night – once we decided that Farkle was a game that could be played while we were all in a Zoom room (thank you Claudia and Bob Kniefel for teaching us how to play and serving as emcees), it was a welcome escape for an hour of friendly competition and lighthearted banter. When we're able to gather again face to face, we can have hybrid Family Game Nights with players joining in a Zoom room while others are around the tables in Cary Mead Hall. This will enable us to play other games, e.g., those that require pieces to move around a board.

Afternoon Tea on Wednesday and Friday afternoons – this has been the most successful virtual gathering until recently. Elisabeth Kachline has often made notes on the wide variety of topics and submitted them to the Daily Updates. It illustrates our faith community's amazing talents, interests, and curiosity. For the last few Afternoon Teas, fewer people are joining, maybe because almost everyone is now fully vaccinated and able to resume socializing in person outside their small "bubble." We are considering whether to continue with this event, perhaps holding it only once a week.

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper – Yes, this was another virtual event, and by all accounts, it was fun in its way (that is, not the same as gathering around the tables in Cary Mead Hall). Everyone shared what kind of pancakes they were having, and some fun facts about Shrove Tuesday/pancakes enlivened the conversation.

In October, the Fellowship Ministry organized a Jack-o-Lantern Decorating Contest and invited participants to bring their entries for in-person judging outside on the Church's lower level. Since this was a new event for the Church, we had few entries. Mostly, we all were enjoying being able to see more than each other's upper torsos in a Zoom room. However, this will probably continue to be an October fellowship event, especially when we can hold the judging inside and be able to enjoy a little socializing afterward.

Finally, during the last weeks of Lent, once we were able to provide in-person access to the Church, a Fellowship Ministry member staffed a table in the foyer

Fellowship Ministry, continued...

to open the doors for anyone who wished to spend a few moments sitting and reflecting in the Sanctuary. Only one person accepted the invitation, but we may add it to next year's events, especially since the restrictions will not be as tight on who can be present at any one time.

For the coming year, we are discussing how the Fellowship Ministry can weave its mission into the Church's goal of turning our grounds into an edible landscape. The idea would be to create a variety of ways people can come together to work, play, and socialize outdoors while enhancing our connections with each other and to our natural environment.

Outreach Ministry

Chris Walker, Chair; Sandy Skaggs; Marilyn Lee; Vivian Pike

In spite of Covid19, Outreach Ministry has remained active in many areas:

We were unable to have a Brunch for Grandfamilies at Christmas or in the spring. However, we are in contact with the Volunteers of America, (VOA) their host agency and are looking forward to a Christmas Brunch this December. We are also discussing other ways that we can assist with this program.

Our new student, Luis, at the Panamerican Institute is doing as well as permitted with the unreliability of electricity and internet access. His best subject is English! Our youth group wrote to him and sent photos of Alaska.

Books for Shungnak School. We sent 2,807 books to the school which was limited on the amount of in-person time in school in the fall but opened again for full time instruction after Christmas. They plan to have "Book Festival" in the fall.

Open and Affirming (ONA) has been meeting, learning how other churches have become more inclusive, and are developing a covenant of welcome.

Outreach received a generous, anonymous gift of \$1000 at Christmas time which was divided between Bean's Café, Children's Lunchbox, FISH, Clare House, and Hospice.

Members and friends of Outreach called all folks in the church directory to check if anyone has any needs that we could assist with.

Again, Outreach sponsored comfort caps for cancer patients and neonates at Providence and warm winter clothing for Beans' Café.

We re-evaluated the agencies that we support financially and will continue to support Panamerican Institute, Children's Lunchbox and added Anchorage Hospice and Advocates in Residence (AIR). Grandfamilies (now Kinship Families Programs) will still be supported as well. Donations to FISH can still be left in the Narthex. We will still sponsor comfort caps and warm clothing for Beans' Café by donation of items from the congregation.

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Member of the National
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Serving the NACCC

Year Round Delegate

Sharon Higgins

Board of Directors

Claudia Kniefel

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