

**Asbury First United Methodist Church**  
**Church Conference**  
**January 29, 2023**

Rev. Dr. Stephen Cady introduced Rev. Ted Anderson, our Interim District Superintendent to lead the meeting.

Ted opened the meeting with prayer.

Stephen directed those watching via the live stream to Slido to send questions. Those attending virtually will be able to vote, but the votes won't officially count as a result of a ruling in the state of New York relating to hybrid meetings. If the meeting were only virtual, the online votes would count

Ted presented the minutes from the last several meetings as the meetings were entirely remote and the minutes and decisions need to be ratified at this first in-person meeting.

- The minutes from the January 2020 church conference were approved.
- The minutes from the December 2020 church conference minutes were approved.
- The decisions made at the December 2020 church conference were ratified.
- The minutes from the January 2021 church conference were approved.
- The decisions made at the January 2021 church conference were ratified.
- The minutes from the January 2022 church conference were approved.
- The decisions made at the January 2022 church conference were ratified.

Ted asked the congregation to vote on the Discipleship Project report. The report was approved.

Ted brought forward the Outreach and Volunteer and Mission Report to be received. It was approved.

Mike Mullin was presented as a Candidate for Ministry, and was approved by the congregation.

Stephen asked the members of the Nominations Committee to stand and acknowledged their work. Stephen asked for additions or amendments to the Governing Board ballot; there weren't any. Those attending the meeting in person were asked to complete the ballot for the Governing Board members. The Nominations Report was presented for discussion; the report was passed by a majority of those present.

Angie Burch, chair of the Finance Team, presented a recap of the budget. The Team provided two reports on the church finances to the congregation (in May and October) in an effort to fulfill their pledge for transparency. Any questions can be sent to [governance@asburyfirst.org](mailto:governance@asburyfirst.org).

John Ormsbee, Financial Administrator, was introduced to share information about the 2022 budget.

### **2022 Operating Budget**

- Our income has been steadily increasing 1 - 3% since 2016.
- For the first time ever, we received 103% of pledges.
- Plate offerings have improved as in-person attendance has increased.
- Personnel expense was below budget, and housekeeping services were above budget, net was \$40K under budget.

### **2023 Operating Budget**

- Showed a significant increase in congregational giving following appeals; pledges increased an average of 16%
- Assuming a large increase in grant revenue
- Plate offerings are expected to return to pre-COVID levels
- Cost of living increase for staff of 2%

Dave Kennedy asked about spending more than we have. The 2022 budget was \$181K more than we had. The budget that was just presented for 2023 is also in deficit of \$66K. To balance, we're depending on an increase in restricted funds, as well as a significant increase in grants received, and he is not sure we should approve this budget. John responded that every year, there's an element of risk with a budget. We have some contingencies to handle budget gaps and we've also seen that the congregation is willing to respond by giving more when there's a gap. Stephen added that we're not at the end of January and we've already received \$50K in grants (up from \$15K last year). We also make sure that restricted gifts are used only for the purpose they're intended.

Patrick Fulford asked (via email) how much we were able to increase staff salaries. The increase was 2%.

Ted called for a vote on the budget, which was approved by a majority of those present.

If you have questions about the budget, please contact John at [jormsbee@asburyfirst.org](mailto:jormsbee@asburyfirst.org).

Ted called for a vote on the conference-required reports: Report of the Pastor, Local Church Leadership Interface, (roles of staff and volunteers in the conference), Safe Sanctuaries Compliance Report, a report from Bob Hill (a member of our conference and connected to Asbury First). There were no questions. All of the reports were approved by the majority of those present.

The church conference was closed by Rev. Ted Anderson.

Respectfully submitted,

Deb Bullock-Smith  
Recording Secretary

**Asbury First United Methodist Church  
Special Church Conference - Columbarium  
June 12, 2023**

**Motion brought by the Governing Board:** To authorize the building of the columbarium at Asbury First.

Stephen introduced Bob Schuman, who talked about the details of the columbarium.

- Built on the southeast corner of the building.
- 136 niches to start with; each holds 2 urns of human remains.
- Expandable to almost 400 niches, completed in 2 phases.
- Self-funding, paid for by the purchase of niches and any capital gifts for this purpose

**What is the time frame to start?** If approved, they'll meet with the architects to finalize plans. Then detailed engineering and design would be completed. All of this should take about 6 months, before we have bid documents that would go out to contractors. The lead time for the niches is 36 - 48 weeks for the fabrication and delivery (the longest part of the lead time for this project).. If this is approved today, we would sign an agreement with the architects to move ahead by July 1.

**What happens if Asbury should “go away” at some point in the future?** We don't own this building or the property, it's owned by the Upper New York Conference. We trust that the members of this congregation would be just as thoughtful about what happens in that eventuality, as they have been in getting us to this place. While there's no guarantee, we trust that the future members of the congregation will make responsible decisions.

**The motion is not very specific. How much money will it take to get started? How will it be financed?** The initial build will cost about \$300,000 for the 136 niches. The final build would cost around \$500,000. This is a self financing project and there won't be any capital campaign. Bob has a list of 32 people (representing 32 niches) that are very serious about purchasing a niche. There are another 17 that are interested. We're offering the purchase of niches pre-construction for \$4500 (due by September 1), as a means to raise funds for the initial build. After that, the price is \$5000, with \$2500 down (due by the end of December). If we don't get enough money upfront, the Governing Board has agreed to allow us to borrow money to complete the first phase. In addition, we have a generous donor who has a commitment to Asbury in their will, and they have allowed us to use a portion of that, if needed, to fund this.

**Can we add to the motion that it's self-funding or add a limit to the funds that can be borrowed? It feels uncomfortable that the congregation would approve this without any limits at all.** The Governing Board felt comfortable with the numbers of very interested people, as well as the “back-up” option of using a portion of the generous gift from the donor. If we had to borrow, it would likely be short-term and would be repaid from niche sales. If approved, the

Governing Board will watch the progress on the sales, and would not feel compelled to go ahead if interest waned.

**Where would the money be borrowed from?** From our line of credit, if needed, and would be repaid through niche sales, with interest.

**Can you be more specific about the “generous gift” as far as the amount?** The gift is up to \$100,000.

**Comments:**

- It's a prudent investment that many people have expressed interest in. The risks are minimal in proceeding in the way that the proposal has been structured. We have taken on much bigger projects with more risks. This one is clearly self-funding, and any additional funds (over the building costs) will allow for the maintenance and care of the area. It's such a low-risk project with significant benefits to the church, that to make the motion overly restrictive and add any additional approvals that would slow the process and is not required.
- Many of the other large capital projects at Asbury First (the Gathering Center, the Community Outreach Center) have engaged all of us. The columbarium is for a select group, therefore it's uncomfortable to compare previous capital campaigns to this project. Maybe we can add an “if this, then that” wording to the motion.
- One of the things that made the Governing Board comfortable with supporting this project is the long lead time before we get into construction and knowing that the Board could decide on different next steps or lengthening the lead time to get more commitments.

**How many niches would have to be sold to pay for the first phase?** \$300,000 for the first phase, so 60 niches. We have possibilities of the first 32 sales, then we have at least 6 months to secure the next 28.

**Could we add “self-funding” to the motion?**

**Can we get a commitment from the board that there is good publicity on where we are 3 and 6 months from now so the congregation is aware of where the project stands?**

Beth felt comfortable that the Board could commit to a 6-month checkpoint.

The motion on the floor is to add “self-funded”; seconded. There was a call for discussion, but there was none. Stephen called for a vote on adding “self-funded” to the current motion, and it was approved by a majority vote.

The motion now reads: “To authorize the building of a self-funded columbarium at Asbury First.”

Stephen opened the floor for any more discussion, before calling for a vote. There was no additional discussion, and Stephen called for a vote. The motion was carried by a majority vote.

Those voting online (via Slido) cannot be officially counted in this vote, as NY State requires all voting to be in-person for an in-person meeting, but the online votes matter to us. Of the online voters, 88% approved the motion and 13% abstained.

The meeting was called to a close, so the Governing Board Town Hall could begin.

Respectfully submitted,

Deb Bullock-Smith  
Recording Secretary