

Asbury First United Methodist Church
Annual Church Conference
January 30, 2022

Due to COVID 19 restrictions, normal in-person requirements for the church conference and voting by written individual ballots is suspended for the purposes of this meeting. All voting will be online through Slido.com, and only members are able to vote.

The meeting was called to order by Rev. Ted Anderson, who opened the meeting with prayer.

Rev. Dr. Stephen Cady asked everyone to participate in a trial vote (a practice question) using Slido, our online voting tool.

Deb Bullock-Smith volunteered to be the recording secretary for the meeting.

Candidates for ministry: Mike Mullin was offered as a candidate for ministry.

- 134 voted to approve; 6 voted to not approve, and 5 abstained.

Bequests:

- Vevera Estate: \$225,122.44 - 149 voted to approve; 1 abstained
- Keenan Estate: \$48,866.20 - 149 voted to approve; 1 abstained
- Doerner Estate: \$63,634.16 - 149 voted to approve; 1 abstained

Nominations Report:

By Discipline, we are required to vote for the Board of Trustees, which is our Governing Board.

Valerie Benjamin (Class of 2024)

Angie Burch (Class of 2024)

Chuck Hanranan (Class of 2023)

Ike Jordan (Class of 2024)

Joe Stankaitis (Class of 2023)

Cory Tylenda (Class of 2025)

Beth Wilkins (class of 2024)

All of the above candidates were approved. Per NYS regulations, all ballots are kept in the church office.

Vote to accept the full Nominations Report:

146 voted to approve; 1 voted to not approve; 5 abstained

Pastor Parish Relations Committee: Dr. Joe Stankaitis, chair, spoke, with appreciation about the work that our ministers and staff have done during COVID to keep our congregation engaged in our ministry. With all of the social isolation in our community during this time, the stress levels are high and mental health for many has suffered. If anyone has a concern about any of the ministers, please reach out to Joe. That is part of his role as the chair of the PPRC. We hope to support our ministers as much as possible, as there has been a mass exodus of ministers over the past 2 years in our denomination because of the intense stress in their roles.

Finance Committee: Angie Burch, chair, spoke on behalf of the committee and presented the budget.

- We have adjusted the report this year to adhere to Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP). Some of the labels have been modified to reflect these updated principles. “Releases from Restriction” and “Excess Income/Releases/(Expenses)” are not perfectly comparable, but all other line items are comparable on a year-over-year basis.
- 2021 Operating Budget Results: giving lagged behind the budget (and 2020) levels through early December, then rebounded. December donations were \$80K more than any previous December.
 - Year-over-year giving is showing steady growth.
 - Designated revenue was \$74K above budget due, in part, to a \$50K donation received in December. We also received some pandemic-related grants in 2021, which are not expected to continue in 2022.
 - Expenses were \$49K over budget due to contracting services for housekeeping required more hours than budgeted and there were unanticipated tech and computer upgrades.
- **2022 Operating Budget:** assumes slower rate of growth in congregation giving and plate offerings are expected to stay below pre-COVID levels.
 - Staffing - covers incremental cost of healthcare and 3% cost of living increase; fills vacation Outreach position (reporting to Pat Dupont), keeps the Minister for Christian Formation (Rachel Dupont), and adds a part-time Communications position.
 - Total 2022 budget: \$2,350,000
- **Question:** How did we do in 2021 against our plan? The overall budget was \$80K over for income. The expenses were \$45K over the plan.

Vote on the 2022 Operating Budget: 127 voted to pass the budget; 3 voted against.

Vote to receive the 2021 Annual Reports: 129 votes to receive them; 1 abstained.

Questions from the congregation:

- How many members in the Asbury First congregation - 2300 to 2400; more people watching the services than ever before.
- What expenses do the PPP (Paycheck Protection Program) funds cover in 2022? They were received and used in 2020, and forgiven in 2021. They were used for personnel and payroll expenses.

The meeting was called to a close with the singing of the doxology.

Respectfully submitted,

Deb Bullock-Smith
Recording Secretary

Asbury First United Methodist Church
Annual Church Conference
January 24, 2021 at 12:00 pm, via Livestream

The Rev. Dr. Stephen Cady called the meeting to order at 12:00 pm and began the meeting with a prayer.

Electing a Recording Secretary: Stephen announced that Deb Bullock-Smith was willing to take minutes for the meeting. Those present voted unanimously to elect Deb Bullock-Smith as Recording Secretary.

Meeting Materials and Voting: Stephen directed the congregation to the information about the candidates for the Board, as well as to slido.com (keyword #Asbury), which we will use for questions and answers as well as voting. Since we are all watching via the livestream because of the pandemic, we will ratify these votes when we are able to meet in person again, since there is no provision for this situation in the Discipline.

Recommendation for Candidates for Ministry: Mike Mullin, is currently serving as our Minister for Youth and Discipleship, but was removed from the process of candidacy earlier this year. We are re-recommending him for ministry. The congregation voted to approve candidacy for Mike.

2020 Nominations Report and Vote: Stephen presented the 2020 Nominations Report for approval. This report is virtually the same as last year because we're working to come up with a new more efficient governance structure. There's a group of people who have been working, with the guidance of a consultant, Dan Hotchkiss for the last year and a half, under the co-leadership of Valerie Benjamin and Dawn Riedy, who shared an update from the Governance Task Force.

- Working towards goal 7.3 from the Dreamscape (Our structure and systems are organized in a missionally effective way.)
- Currently have 95 committees, task forces and groups; process to get things done is not always efficient, effective and often takes time to work through
- Group is proposing a smaller governing board, smaller number of committees and would empower the ministers and the staff to make decisions, based on Asbury First's mission, values and goals; we would be doing the same work that we're doing now, but just with fewer meetings!
- Val and Dawn will be meeting with groups in the coming months to provide a more in-depth explanation. In addition, there will be town hall meetings in the spring, followed by a Church Conference when all members will have the opportunity to vote to approve the new structure, with the intent of starting in September 2020.

Those present voted to approve the Nominations Report.

Trustee Ballot: Ballots were distributed to vote on the members of the new Governance Board. After the ballots were collected and tallied, all of the board members presented were elected, with each receiving 90% or more of the total votes.

2021 Budget and Vote: Al Swett, Chair of Finance, presented information about the 2021 budget. First, he thanked David Strong and Dick Moncrief for their time and effort in putting together reports and the final budget, and to Dave Kennedy for his volunteer work in the finance area.

We are essentially carrying over the 2020 Annual Operating Budget to 2021.

- Our campus is still only partially open, because of COVID-19 restrictions
- Ministers and staff continue much of their work remotely
- Sunday services will be via livestream only

In addition, we will implement a 3% wage and salary increase to address equity issues and increased benefit costs. We are also planning a .5 FTE (full-time equivalent) for the financial operations.

Challenges in 2021:

- We have lost a major “tenant” on campus, and other property usage income
- There was an increase in Conference Ministry Share payment
- Creating budget and managing finances during uncertain times

For our reporting purposes again this year, we have aligned our money with the mission/ministry areas, allocating operational expenses to those areas. Our 2021 projected income is \$2,139,000. The projected expenses are \$2,139,000.

Nominations Report: Available for download from our website, includes the nominees for the new Governing Board, the committees of the board, as well as the teams, although the report is not exhaustive. It has been difficult to pull this together this year since we have not been able to see everyone in person, and everything this year is new!

In many cases, for ease in transition, we have asked the previous chair to either remain as the chair for this time, or to remain on the committee for consistency.

Stephen, as the Chair of the Board, formally presented the Nominations Report to the congregation for a vote.

Questions (received via Slido):

- ***Is it likely that the District Committee on Ministry will accept Mike if we recommend him? What about the doctrinal issues he has with them?*** Stephen feels it is unlikely that the DCOM will recommend sending Mike forward, but recommending him again will allow him to meet with the board, which he was not able to do before they discontinued

his candidacy. There are some doctrinal challenges, but they are not unique, and if he was in front of a different DCOM board, he would have been allowed to move forward.

- **When will we be able to go back to in-person worship?** The leadership of the church and the COVID-19 task force is continuing to monitor the situation and will communicate changes as we get closer to being able to be in person.
- **How much of the Conference Ministry Shares are spent on administrative costs?** Stephen didn't have that information available at the moment but can provide it later.
- **The finance presentation doesn't tell what we are spending money on. How much of that is for conference facilities and staffing?** It is divided out into ministry areas (Outreach, Worship and Arts, Youth and Discipleship, Congregational Care). We have provide the numbers to those who are interested – email dstrong@asburyfirst.org
- **In the 2021 budget, have we used up the \$26,000 surplus?** We had a \$46,000 deficit (cumulative), and that \$26,000 surplus was used to balance the 2021 budget.
- **How much money came from the Payroll Protection Program?** We applied in April and it ran through June, and helped cover extra expenses during the beginning of the pandemic and make sure that we could cover payroll during that time. We are waiting to hear if that loan will be forgiven.
- **When will the General Conference meet?** It is scheduled for the end of August, 2021 to the beginning of September for 10 days. It is questionable because half of the delegates come from outside of the US. Travel and visas may be more difficult still because of the pandemic. It may be delayed, or it may be changed to a virtual meeting (which could be challenging because of varied access to internet).
- **Is a directory available?** We are hoping to have an online directory soon, but we can provide you with a printed directory, if you request one through the office.
- **Where are retired clergy in the new governance model?** They are essentially in the same place. If they are affiliated with Asbury First as their Charge Conference, they will be affiliated with Asbury in the same way under our new governance model. You will see updates from some of them in our Annual Report.

Voting was opened (via Slido):

Governance Board: all candidates were elected with a vote of 98% or more

Mike was approved for candidacy.

The budget was approved with a 98% vote.

Building Committee Update: Chuck Hanrahan, Chair of the Building Committee, provided an update on the 1040 projects, including sanctuary lighting, HVAC, electrical updates and Fellowship Hall updates. The vast majority of these infrastructure projects have been completed.

Better Together Update: Patrick Fulford, Co-Chair of the Better Together Committee, provided an update on the Capital Campaign. At the beginning of the campaign, the committee promised not to begin a project until we received 100% of the pledges required to complete the project.

The Outreach Center, Phase 2 of the campaign, requires \$4.5M, and we have \$1M left to raise to break ground. Our efforts to raise the last \$1M will be focused on 3 areas: a UR Well campaign, grants, and pledges from the congregation.

Question: *How do the final total costs for Phase 1 and the Outreach Center compare with the dollar amounts originally budgeted?* For the Infrastructure part of the project, the costs came in a lot higher, mostly due to increased building costs (pandemic related). The same is true of the Outreach portion of the project. We do have contingencies built in, and we have done our best to estimate the true costs.

The meeting was adjourned by Stephen at 12:56 pm, with prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Deb Bullock-Smith
Recording Secretary

Asbury First United Methodist Church
Church Conference Minutes
December 13, 2020 at 12:20 pm

The Rev. Dr. Stephen Cady called the meeting to order at 12:20 pm and began the meeting with a prayer.

Stephen talked briefly about how members are able to vote on the governance proposal using Slido.com. There is no provision in the Book of Discipline for virtual voting. However, the Council of Bishops, and District Superintendent have recommended that all Church Conferences be held virtually during this time. Our voting today is provisional. When we are able to be in person again, we will vote to ratify this and any other votes that have taken place in virtual Church Conferences during the pandemic.

Why are we doing this?

- In 2015, our dreams were distilled into the Dreamscape - our mission, vision, values and goals. Goal 7.3 – Our structure and systems are organized in a missionally effective way.
- Guided by “Inside the Large Congregation” by Susan Beaumont and “Governance and Ministry” by Dan Hotchkiss
- Workshop by Dan Hotchkiss attended by 80 people from Asbury in October 2018
- Church Council commissioned the Governance Task Force
- Members of the Task Force: Val Benjamin and Dawn Riedy – co-chairs; Al Swett, Beth Rice, Mary Worboys-Turner, Chuck Hanrahan, David Strong, Deb Bullock-Smith
- Governance Task Force members represent:
 - the last 3 chairs of church Council
 - 2 current Trustees
 - chair of Finance
 - 2 staff members
 - 1 member of Staff Parish Relations Committee

Stephen introduced Valerie Benjamin, one of the co-chairs of the Governance Task Force, who spoke about the governance model that has been developed, the feedback the group received through presentations to the leadership committees, 2 Town Hall meetings, and numerous conversations.

- This proposed governance structure follows the policies and requirements of the Book of Discipline.
- The Board will provide strategic and executive guidance for the Senior Minister
- Mechanisms are included for transparency for the congregation
- The Board members are representatives of the congregation and will make sure that they speak for the opinions and concerns of the congregation
- Diversity of perspectives will be represented on the Board.

Voting was opened on Slido. Stephen announced that we would abide by 2/3 majority vote and asked for only members of Asbury First to vote.

Do you support the provisional adoption of the new church Governance Plan as detail on the Asbury First website (asburyfirst.org/governance) until such a time as we are able to have an in-person vote to formally approve it with any necessary amendments?

- 166 voted yes (89%)
- 20 voted no (11%)
- These numbers include 7 people who were having difficulty voting with Slido and emailed their votes in.

The Governance Plan passed.

If people have additional questions or concerns, they are invited to let Stephen and the board know so we can address them.

The official Church Conference was closed.

Stephen opened the State of the Church portion of the meeting, asking for questions to be submitted via Slido or questions@asburyfirst.org. He offered the following updates:

- The General Conference of the United Methodist Church was supposed to meet in May but was delayed until August or September 2021 because of the pandemic. At that time, delegates will vote on The Protocol that will allow for the full inclusion of LGBTQ persons in the UMC. If that vote passes, congregations that cannot abide by allowing LGBTQ persons to be fully participating in the denomination can vote to leave the UMC and start a new denomination.
- The ministers and staff have committed to continue the work of racial justice personally, in the congregation and in the community. The Racial Justice Advocacy Team, under the leadership of David Carr and Brennon Thompson, and staff leadership of Rev. Jackie Thompson, has done great work so far. Watch for updates from this group in the future. Thank you to all who took part in the 21-Day Equity Challenge through the Greater Rochester United Way.
- A lawsuit has been brought against the church through the Child Victim Act. The abuse occurred many years ago at the hands of then senior minister, Ray Fedyke. More information is available in the June 9th statement on our website. Unfortunately, Stephen is unable to share further information as they continue the process of mediation. We continue to pray for the survivor as well as for the congregation.
- Financial outlook: We are grateful to those who are able to sustain their contributions to the church throughout this year. While contributions have been lower because of the

pandemic, we have been able to keep our expenses low as well. The COVID Relief fund has generated over \$70,000 in donations that have been used to help those in need, and those needs continue. We were able to take the PPP loan, which helped us to sustain our staffing levels. We have done our very best to hold our budget flat year to year. Thank you to those who have pledged to sustain their giving through 2021 and those who pledged to increase. This will help to offset those who, for various reasons, have had to decrease their pledges. We have recently learned that Epilepsy Pralid, who has used our space for the last few years, can no longer sustain being in another location. We are facing the loss of that income, and other space usage, as well as an increase in the apportionment, for a total of about \$100,000. We are working to adjust our budget to accommodate these reductions in income and increases in expenses.

- At the Church Conference on January 24, 2021, more information will be shared about the capital campaign progress. We have raised over \$340,000 through grants from 11 foundations. The need for the Outreach Center is now more acute than ever and growing. We will do a final push in the new year to close the gap, so we can break ground in the fall.
- We are 9 months into COVID and are still not able to be present in the same space as a congregation. In the year ahead, we hope to be able to welcome everyone back into our worship space, but we don't know how or when. Once we are able to worship together in person, we will look for ways to continue to include those who worship with us virtually and are considering adding monitors in the sanctuary (in tasteful ways) such that we can share the worship space with those who are worshipping virtually.

Questions from the congregation:

- What is Mike Mullin's status? In the Spring, Mike Mullin was removed from candidacy with the United Methodist Church because the District Committee on Ministry didn't feel that his theology aligned with the UMC. He has been in the process of appealing that decision, and we have been advocating on his behalf. As of right now, the only difference is that he does not use the title "reverend", but still has the same role as minister for discipleship and youth.
- Why vote on the governance plan now? We are facing some challenges as a congregation and are in need of a different way to work on those challenges. The Task Force has been working on the new model for 2 years and were just preparing to bring it to a vote in June, when the pandemic changed everything. The vote of affirmation today allows us to begin implementing the new model as a trial run.

Stephen welcomed questions and suggestions about any of these topics and invites conversation to promote better understanding among all of us.

The meeting was adjourned at 1 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Deb Bullock-Smith
Recording Secretary

**Asbury First United Methodist Church
Church Conference Minutes
January 19, 2020 at 12:30 pm**

The Rev. Dr. Stephen Cady called the meeting to order at 12:30 pm and began the meeting with a prayer.

Electing a Recording Secretary: Stephen announced that Deb Bullock-Smith was willing to take minutes for the meeting. Those present voted to unanimously to elect Deb Bullock-Smith as Recording Secretary.

Continuation of Candidates for Ministry: Mike Mullin and Kathy Thiel were presented as continuing candidates for ministry. Until each is commissioned, we vote annually to approve continued support for their candidacy. Ian Urriola has decided to withdraw his candidacy as a protest for the denomination not allowing LGBTQ persons to be ordained. Because of the possibility of the divide in the UMC and the potential for this policy to change after the May General Conference, Stephen suggested that, although Ian didn't request it, that we keep him in this group of candidates for ministry. The congregation voted to approve continued candidacy for each of the three candidates.

2020 Nominations Report and Vote: Stephen presented the 2020 Nominations Report for approval. This report is virtually the same as last year because we're working to come up with a new more efficient governance structure. There's a group of people who have been working, with the guidance of a consultant, Dan Hotchkiss for the last year and a half, under the co-leadership of Valerie Benjamin and Dawn Riedy, who shared an update from the Governance Task Force.

- Working towards goal 7.3 from the Dreamscape (Our structure and systems are organized in a missionally effective way.)
- Currently have 95 committees, task forces and groups; process to get things done is not always efficient, effective and often takes time to work through
- Group is proposing a smaller governing board, smaller number of committees and would empower the ministers and the staff to make decisions, based on Asbury First's mission, values and goals; we would be doing the same work that we're doing now, but just with fewer meetings!
- Val and Dawn will be meeting with groups in the coming months to provide a more in-depth explanation. In addition, there will be town hall meetings in the spring,

followed by a Church Conference when all members will have the opportunity to vote to approve the new structure, with the intent of starting in September 2020.

Those present voted to approve the Nominations Report.

Trustee Ballot: Ballots were distributed to vote on the Trustees for the class of 2020 (all of the existing Trustees were presented in the class of 2020, because of the pending new governance structure). After the ballots were collected and tallied, all of the Trustees presented were elected, with each receiving 90% or more of the total votes.

Compensation Report: Beth Rice, Chair of Church Council, presented the staffing and compensation report on behalf of Pam Reynolds, Chair of Staff Parish Relations Committee, who was unable to be here today.

- **Staff additions:** Dr. Carl Johengen, Director of Music Ministry, Dale Griswold, Property Care Team Member, seeking an intern to work in communications, assisting with graphic design.

The total compensation package, which includes salaries and benefits for all staff is \$1,232,000. This includes maintaining all current positions and a 3% cost-of-living increase, as well as covering the increase in health care costs. This will also allow us to maintain a full-time Director of Music and add a Finance/Accounting assistant. We will vote on this compensation package as a part of the complete budget.

2020 Stewardship: Cory Tylenda, Chair of Stewardship, presented a Stewardship update. So far, for 2020, we have received pledges of \$1,087,311 from 431 participating households (or pledging units). 135 households have opted to give via EFT (electronic funds transfer), which provides dependable income throughout the year, while saving processing/data entry time for our staff and volunteers. Dick Moncrief, Financial Administrator, answered a question about the total number of households in our membership. We have about 800 giving units/households who give during the year, and he estimated that we have a total of about 1300 giving units/households in our membership.

2020 Budget and Vote: Al Swett, Chair of Finance, presented information about the 2020 budget. First, he thanked David Strong and Dick Moncrief for their time and effort in putting together reports and the final budget. He also thanked David Kennedy for his hard work (along with Dick) to create a new accounting system within our software, to make budgeting and ongoing accounting more streamlined.

In 2019, our expenses ended up within 1% of the budgeted amount (which equates to about \$10,000). We are optimistic that our pledge numbers are reasonable, and with years of experience, this has been true.

For our reporting purposes this year, we have aligned our money with the mission/ministry areas, allocating operational expenses to those areas. Our 2020 projected income is

\$2,190,000. The projected expenses are \$2,178,000, representing Worship and Arts, Outreach, Discipleship, Congregational Care, and Conference and Connectional expenses.

A question was asked about how many new members we typically have each year. Stephen answered that last year we had 60, but our hope is to increase that number, with the lofty goal this year of getting 200 new members in celebration of our 200th year as a congregation.

Another question was asked about how much we draw annually from the endowment. Stephen answered that we draw 4.5%, based on a 20-quarter rolling average.

Someone else asked about the availability of year-over-year reports. Al suggested looking at the complete information available in the annual reports, or contacting Dick Moncrief.

Those present voted to approve the budget, including the Compensation.

At this point, those present voted to close the formal Church Conference, to move on with updates from the Capital Campaign and the Building Committee. The vote passed unanimously.

Better Together Update: Stephen introduced Morgan Dornsife, Director of Development, sharing that after 4 years at Asbury First, she will be moving on to a position in development at RIT at the end of January. We are grateful for her hard work with Stewardship, the Capital Campaign, communications and more, and wish her well in her new role. She will be missed! Morgan presented an update on the Capital Campaign. To date, we have raised \$5,074,000. Our spending is on track for the 1040 projects, totaling \$2,143,000. We are so grateful to Chuck Hanrahan for the countless hours he has spent making sure the projects are on track and on budget.

Phase 2 of the Better Together Campaign has raised \$2,681,000 toward the new Outreach Center. As we committed at the beginning of the Capital Campaign, we won't break ground until we have pledges for the amount needed to complete the project, and we have about \$600,000 left to raise.

We have raised \$200,400 so far in grant funding and are continuing this work, having received a \$75,000 grant within the last month. Donor solicitations are continuing, and in December, we secured a pledge for \$100,000 from a donor. In addition, during the last capital campaign, we asked the Bishop for relief from a portion of our apportionment and dedicated those funds to the campaign. We're working on this again this time and are encouraged by the feedback we've received.

Building Committee Update: Patti Crawford, Trustee, provided an update from the Building Committee. The organ restoration and enhancements are progressing, and we hope to have the organ back by Easter. We had hoped to have it up and running before Christmas, but opted to wait until all of the 1040 construction work has been completed, rather than risking damage to the organ caused by dust from the projects. The Fellowship Hall projects that began in July are now 80% completed, including asbestos abatement and infrastructure work. The contractor

work is expected to be completed by the end of February. A huge thank you to Chuck Hanrahan and David Strong for their focus on assuring that the work is done, and done correctly.

The meeting was adjourned by Stephen at 1:32 pm, with everyone singing the doxology.

Respectfully submitted,

Deb Bullock-Smith
Recording Secretary