

# Garden City Community Church Council of Trustees Meeting

1/8/2025

In Person at 245 Stewart  
And Virtually on Zoom

## *COT voting members present:*

Kirsten Bahlke	COT Chair	In-person
Cindy Campbell	Ministry Committee	In-person
Karin Melkonian	Personnel Committee	In-person
Tara Noll–Socha	Program Committee, Education	Virtual
Tim Martens	At Large- AV	In-person

## *Nonvoting officers of the church present:*

Viki Rehkugler	Information Officer	In-person
Joe Stanco	Treasurer	In-person

## *Guests*

Rev. Bonnie McDougall Olson	Virtual
Rev. John Livingston	Virtual

## *COT voting members absent:*

Robin Laisure	Finance & Administration
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The meeting was called to order at 7:45 pm.

**Approval of Minutes:** The minutes of the Council of Trustees meeting conducted on December 3, 2024 were approved.

## **Updates from previous meeting action items:**

### **New Member Sunday.**

Ministry Committee had contacted Bonnie McDougall Olson about holding a New Member Class. Bonnie collected information from Celia Petersen. The topic was tabled for later discussion and prioritization.

### **Volunteers/Openings:**

ACTION: Karin to follow up to arrange for further connection with potential volunteers in January.

Update: this is still in progress with two interested individuals (Nancy Morreale and Doug Dietrich.)

### **Proposed By-laws changes for February**

Kirsten provided Revs. Bonnie and John with an overview of the proposed changes and reasoning.

1. Remove 2/3 vote (everywhere or in certain actions)

a. Robin Laisure had been asked to look into this. She shared by email:

“The NY State Religious Corporations Law is broken down into denominations. For the UCC, I've attached two relevant statutory provisions that relate to our current day questions. I've also placed comments on the post bylaws.

- our question - whether 2/3s vote is necessary for calling and removing ministers? Answer no, majority is what the law requires.
- We must keep in our bylaws that 2/3 vote is required for amending the bylaws - that is required under state law.”

[164 Organization and conduct of corporate meetings qualifications of voters](#)

[170 Election and salary of ministers](#)

**ACTION:** The Council agreed to move forward with the proposed changes to remove 2/3 voting requirement for calling or removing ministers.

- We would be aligning with the religious corporation laws and prior versions of the Bylaws to make this change.

2. Define “member in good standing”

- This may have been targeted at defining a membership count for the UCC Metro Association per capita fees.
- There was discussion about taking a less-strict approach on “regularly participated in the worship and work of the Church through stewardship of their time, talents and financial resources.”
  - The Council discussed recent initiatives to verify membership rolls and a focus on self-identification of Active vs. Inactive for those for whom it isn't clear.
- A suggestion was made that trying to propose changes to the “member in good standing” section at this time could have unintended consequences, like deterring the latest visitors from becoming new members.

**ACTION:** Delay any change until new minister can weigh in.

3. Make Information Officer and Treasurer voting members

**ACTION:** Move forward with this proposed change.

4. Codify virtual voting

Viki pointed out that the preamble in the Bylaws contains the language “Unless otherwise provided herein, all notices may be given in writing or by electronic means and meetings may be held in person or by electronic means whereby all participants can take part therein.” It could be assumed that requiring electronic participation means requiring electronic voting.

The group decided not to pursue an amendment that explicitly recognizes the voting mechanism.

For reference, the Special Rule of Procedure for Matters Requiring a Vote

Permitting Voting In Person and by Virtual Participation adopted **9-26-2021:**

“Resolved that voting on all matters requiring a vote of the qualified voting members of the Church be conducted using ElectionBuddy or a comparable service approved by the Council of Trustees in

a manner that (i) allows both electronic (via email, texting, or other similar means) and in person voting, (ii) uses the Church's list of qualified voters (iii) uses procedures designed to prevent multiple voting and (iv) where required preserves the confidentiality of the persons voting and their respective votes(i.e. provides for secret ballots where required.)”

### **New Items**

- New Event suggestions:
  - o Thank you to Volunteers + New Volunteer Recruitment Event
    - Committee Chairs should share what their committee is doing in more of a pitch format than an update, making it more personal and interesting
    - Ideas included special fellowship in Gardner Hall with remarks and circulating at tables
  - o Staff Appreciation + Staff Acknowledgment
    - Rev. John reinforced the sentiment that the staff has worked extremely hard during the time of transition, and suggested a public thank you from the congregation, during a worshipping Sunday with a dedicated Fellowship Hour. He suggested it would be important for both Bonnie and John to be present. March 30 is a possibility.
    - ACTION: Bonnie to coordinate schedules.
  - o New Member Session
    - Kirsten suggested having that before the Annual Meeting
    - ACTION: Bonnie agreed to work on the e-blast and invitation to the individuals who want to be Members.

**Finance Report:** Joe Stanco distributed the Preliminary 2025 Budget.

- He noted that we still have not received the ERC employee credit we had been waiting for and asked that we not include in 2025 and instead acknowledge that we are operating at a \$225,000 deficit which we are taking out of investments.
- \$210K of \$214K for 2024 pledges was received.
- We have additional opportunities for building usage this year, which would bring more than \$20K in rental fees (8 weeks soccer class for summer use of Gardner Hall, Homeschool 7 children 10:30-1:30 Tues-Thurs 40 weeks.) These are not built into 2025 budget.

**Ministry:** Cindy shared that she will be stepping down from many of her responsibilities.

- No one has taken on the duty of Flowers.
- Suzanne Roche and Kristian Rhein joined the Committee recently and Cindy had a question about their term. She will work to assign the proper term ends to those members.
  - o ACTION: Viki will prepare the Committee slates.
- Cindy is looking to be Head Usher and will continue to do the Fair.

**Tech.** Tim pointed out that Livestream has transitioned to Vimeo and Doug Yasso was able to transfer all past recordings, which was a significant undertaking.

**Information Officer:** Viki shared that she will not be renewing her term.

**Education:** Sunday School resuming this Sunday, and an event for Ice Skating for middle and high school is upcoming.

**Nursery School:** Rev. Bonnie met with Cathie McCullough

- Rev. Bonnie intends to sponsor a tea with parents when they are picking up their kids as a way to get them to consider the church for Sunday School.
- Cathie said a full VBS could be achieved if scheduled for June 30 going into July 3 or June 23.

Meeting adjourned at 9:40pm

Respectfully submitted,

Viki Rehkugler