



**Foothills Board of Trustees Meeting  
Approved Monthly Meeting Minutes  
December 17, 2020**

**Approved January 21, 2021**

**Board Members in Attendance:** Sue Sullivan, Sara Steen, Brendan Mahoney, Doug Powell, Andrea Delorey, Glenn Pearson, Debbie Gentry, Rev. Gretchen Haley (ex-officio member)

Guests: Rev. Sean Neil-Barron (Associate Minister) present until 6:20pm.

Online meeting convened at 6:00pm via Zoom with a virtual chalice lighting

**Check-in on Racial Justice board work**

It was agreed that each board member would read Chapter One of “My Grandmother’s Hands” before the January board meeting and use that material to do a check-in.

**Consent Agenda**

**Doug moved to approve the minutes of the Congregational Meeting for the 2021 Budget, the Minutes of the October 29, 2020 Special board meeting, the Minutes of the November 19, 2020 Regular board meeting and the ISAAC Fiscal Sponsorship Agreement. Motion passed.**

**Regular Agenda**

**General Board Work**

No items were pulled from the Consent Agenda.

**Monitoring**

*Item 1 - Here and Now Circle Revisioning Update from Rev. Sean Neil-Barron*

Rev. Sean provided an overview of how the pandemic had pushed the ministry to respond by forming Community Circles and as the pandemic became less acute and more chronic, ministry

studied how the church had responded and what the next steps might be. Rev. Sean reported that ministry was beginning to have an emerging vision that would have some profound implications for how the church operated as an organization and how it was being redefined. He explained ministry's plan for how the church could become an "emergent" organization where its very culture would allow people to connect with one another, where those connections would form relationships that would then form the basis of ministry work. People would then be empowered to live out the church's vision without staff and ministers becoming "gatekeepers" implementing more bureaucratic processes. Rev. Sean noted that for this to occur, the culture of the church embodied as individuals, as groups and as a whole would need to "live into" the vision and mission of the church. Rev. Sean presented a set of nine "fractal" practices (defined as patterns that when repeated, would produce the same attributes as the original pattern) that could lead the church toward this new culture:

1. Do thy inner work
2. Seek the stories
3. Serve selflessly
4. Surrender to wonder, possibility and mystery
5. Don't go it alone and don't let others either
6. Risk something that matters
7. All the work is all our work
8. Nourish the whole
9. Lean toward restoration/tend to the harm (still under revision)

At Sara's request, Rev. Sean clarified two of these practices: "all our work is all our work" and "seek the stories". Rev. Sean explained that "all of the work is all our work" was a way of thinking about fulfilling our vision and mission where each member of the church had a more holistic engagement with the work of the church. He explained "seek the stories" was about developing a structure, perhaps a small group, where it would be safe for people of the congregation to share their stories with each other as a way of getting to know each other more deeply. Doug said that in thinking about these practices, he felt they fell into two categories. One category was covenantal because we all needed to agree to operate by these rules and live in this kind of trust, surrender, courage and honesty before members would be willing to engage. The second category was to have clarity on the rules of engagement so that a group of two people could be the church in the same way that a group of 10 people could be the church in a way that the church could be the church. Doug added that these practices identified the "what to do", the "who to be" and also the agreement between each person. Sue, remembering how the church was very different in 2007 when she joined, asked if the church could simply name new fractal rules and the culture would shift or would there be specifics that would need to be addressed in order to remake the church culture in this way. In response, Rev. Sean said that the next step would be to make visible the current rules, roles and practices along with the type of

culture that currently exists to allow the church to decide if that would remain the desired culture. He felt the church had been on a very specific journey around how it has been organized over the last 10 years and presented a chart indicating the church of 10 years ago seemed to be clusters of groups and individuals that were connected to each other with no unified space or mission and vision statements that brought them all together. He felt that since Rev. Gretchen's ministry, the church began to move toward a “hub and spoke” model which brought these groups into conversation and asked them for accountability and missionality and how we would work together rather than separately. He said the next step in this emerging process would be about self-organizing. He felt, at that point, the question would be how not to rely on ministers and how the congregation itself would have the self-organizing factors which would allow it to live out its mission it had been called to do. In a self-organizing space, he felt the work of tending to that type of system would be completely different and he felt the groundwork was in place for this to emerge however it would take a new level of intention and learning that would begin this year. Rev. Gretchen added that ministry had seen the transition of the self-organizing networks as catalyzed in the pandemic. She said that as ministry looked ahead, the intent was to leverage what had happened and use it to help ministry grow toward a more abundant future that would be a better fit with our vision, rather than try to overcome and subsume it in service of going back to how we were pre-pandemic. She added that the overall question was to ask how these experiences would allow us to become the church we're called to be in the future. Andrea wondered how large the gap was between the rules that currently exist and those aspirational rules. Rev. Sean responded that there would be personal challenges for each of us which he felt might raise some conflict as more accountability was required. He felt that accountability had been sidestepped due to wanting to get along out of fear that conflict would be divisive in a way that would not allow us to coexist. He added that he felt a potential existed now for us to have a more generative type of accountability that invited us together into something deeper. Rev. Sean said that he thought fractals would be a good way to trust that as small shifts were made individually or small shifts were made in groups within the church that changing the whole church would not be necessary. He said it was ministry's intention in the new year for both the staff and the board to start using this framework as a way of engaging in our collective work and from this engagement, learning more about each practice would occur.

*Item 2 - Update from Rev. Gretchen Haley on the action plan being devised by the Ministry to enact its interpretation of our vision statements over the next year including monitoring strategies*

Rev. Gretchen felt that what Rev. Sean had just described was an opportunity for the board to engage in a linkage plan and help define their future vision based on, in part, what stakeholders were also thinking about their own discoveries during this time. Rev. Gretchen then moved into monitoring particularly around the church's current vision and the approved vision interpretation and what our plans were for the coming year. Rev. Gretchen shared the 2021 Strategic Action

Plan noting that there were two main areas: the first was transitioning the church back from the pandemic into a new post pandemic vision and secondly, to maintain the ministry and its impact of serving people in 2021. She added that in the interim, there needed to be a bridge ministry that would move us between the pandemic time into the post pandemic time and that all strategies were trying to address those two frames. She then discussed the ten strategic plans for 2021. She identified *the first strategy* of worship as the driver of everything included the worship quality, and relevance, the series development and the integration of those materials into everything the church would be doing. *The second strategy* would be to teach and embed the fractal practices. This would be both a communication and cultural shift strategy that ministry would begin to present to the congregation in February. She noted these two strategies were a large part of ministry's work in the coming year. *The third strategy* would be shifting the role of community circles to be more effective. Rev. Gretchen felt this would include some bridge strategies until something new emerged and would also include pastoral care strategies. She identified this as both Rev. Sean and Rev. Elaine's work as well. She indicated that ministry felt this would help people as these shifts occurred and hopefully helping people move into a deeper engagement. *The fourth strategy* would be creating insight driven, experimental learning communities that would explore three areas of learning and experimentation. The first area of learning would be around the idea of seeking the stories asking how ministry might embed seeking the stories into the fabric of our congregation. The second area of learning would be relational companionship and how that would become a key practice of our community which would have implications for how ministry does pastoral care and leadership development. The idea would be to have people companioned by someone who would walk with them through whatever was happening and would become a key practice of how ministry would do church together. And the third area of learning would be tending to our congregation as a network which would explore how ministry would be equipped to be distributed and self-organizing yet coherent, accountable and missional. She said there were going to be programs out of this, but those programs would be learning opportunities, so that by the end of this year, ministry would have a better understanding of the answer to these questions. *The fifth strategy*, the newcomer path strategy, would be a brand strategy and would specifically attend to how newcomers were getting integrated into the life of the community and how relational companionship would become a key practice of our community including integrating with the Sunday breakout room, BaseCamp, new classes that would be offered and some experiments from those learning communities around companioning. The measure for this would be to see more people engaged and growth in both membership and giving. This strategy would rely heavily on Amy with Sean's leadership support. *The sixth strategy* would be to move away from family ministry's Sunday programming toward a full family ministry all week. Rev. Gretchen said Eleanor would be providing the board with an update. *The seventh strategy* would be a bridge strategy going back to how we might relationally companion people. She noted ministry is working on developing this strategy which would connect people to serving, chart a newcomer path and equip and support leaders to be successful. Rev. Gretchen mentioned that Katie would work with Sean because of the huge communication

component and also because as the staff lead, she would be heavily involved in changing the staff culture around these practices. The *eighth strategy* would be a stewardship strategy around the need to develop a calendar, the tactics, and everything related to having a very robust fundraising strategy for the year. Rev. Gretchen said that the *ninth strategy* would involve her working with all of the justice teams to help them integrate and work together toward an intersectional approach, wherein the racial justice lens would be applied from every angle. She said that she had met with the climate justice team and the immigration justice team and both were on board to work together. The *tenth strategy* was being called resource development and was part of ministry's preparation for building the new building. This strategy would involve Katie continuing to develop systems and exploring how we could resource other churches and ministers with what we are doing. This could possibly grow our reach in the future. She made clear that all vision statements were addressed and as work was done to complete each category, she, Rev. Sean and Katie would keep the board apprised and then on a monthly and quarterly basis, metrics would be given as a way of monitoring the Strategic Action Plan in order to move forward on the vision. Rev. Gretchen suggested that if the board had questions, a message thread would be started on BaseCamp and if enough conversations developed, a time could be set during the next board meeting to discuss.

### Item 3 - Monthly Ministry Report

Rev. Gretchen briefly mentioned the report from the ISAAC committee and how successful Foothills had been as their fiscal sponsor.

Sara mentioned setting up a meeting with Katie for those board members interested in having her help in understanding the budget and she agreed to "ping" Katie to set up a time to meet.

Rev. Gretchen talked briefly about the new building and agreed to forward the architectural drawings to the board for review. Questions were answered about the angle of the building now being a triangle and Rev. Gretchen verified that the general contractor, Pinkard Construction Co., would be giving an initial cost estimate by mid-January and felt hopeful a congregational meeting could occur in February or early March to authorize ministry to proceed with authorizing the final design. She mentioned not raising additional money for phase one might allow a quicker phase two to happen. She reiterated that with a congregational vote, the next step would be to go into a probable three month design development stage. Once that was done, there would be permits to obtain and groundbreaking could begin in hopefully September or October. Rev. Gretchen said she would post the designs on BaseCamp for questions.

**The Board received the Minister's Report.**

Item 4 - Board of Trustees mid-year self-evaluation and discussion of board member needs for 2021-22 year

The board members agreed that the board covenant was a beautiful document; a perfect expression of our desire to be vulnerable and honest in our work we do together.

Sara then asked if a timeline had been developed on identifying sources of accountability and authority with Sue adding that she thought the second half of the year had been set aside for that task. Rev. Gretchen felt this could wait until the beginning of the new board year as the bylaws would probably encompass the remainder of this board year. Sue added that our anti-racism study would be foundational in becoming more self-aware and that this work needed to be done before the conversation around sources of accountability and authority, i.e., learning how our white culture had influenced our interactions with people.

Glenn addressed the board member needs for the 2021-22 board year adding that he, Sara and Brendan would be rotating off the board this year. Sara added that a key question would be whether Doug, Andrea or Debbie had interest and willingness to serve as President-Elect and if so, that information would be helpful for the leadership development committee. Rev. Gretchen added that as important was considering the challenges the board would be facing in the next few years and therefore questioning what kinds of experiences and skills future board members would need to accomplish those challenges. Glenn added that he would be posting that question on BaseCamp this next week and would then convene the nominating committee within two weeks and then on to the leadership development committee.

**Annual Board Goal Oriented Work**

Item 1 - Restoring Wholeness finalization and update on thank you notes

Sue began by noting some additions she had included in the longest narrative and some mistakes that were deleted.

**Glenn moved to approve the Restoring Wholeness narratives and timeline as written.  
Motion passed.**

Sara asked about writing thank you notes to those who had participated in the Restoring Wholeness work and Sue said she would include a document on BaseCamp where people could sign up to write individual thank you notes.

Sue brought up changes to the policy book that defined misconduct and set guidelines for reporting ministerial self-care. Rev. Gretchen asked if the governance committee had seen these

changes and Doug added they had and felt they were finished. Rev. Gretchen then mentioned that these changes needed to be formatted to match the other sections and Sara agreed to make those formatting changes and then bring this back to the board in February for approval.

Sue began the Restoring Wholeness discussion by the board agreeing that she, Gretchen and Sara would discuss what supplemental materials needed to be included and post this list on BaseCamp for the board to review. The board decided the supplemental materials added did not need to be approved. Rev. Gretchen and the board discussed how these materials would be accessed and it was agreed that either a password protected PDF document or password protected part of the church website would be used. It was also agreed that the password would be time limited, that terms and conditions would be included as well as including the person's name who checked out this material. Rev. Gretchen also considered writing a cover letter that stated Rev. Elaine would be reaching out to check in with the person in case they needed support. Sue agreed to reach out to a couple of congregants to ask them to review the narratives and to give the board and ministry feedback on how long they actually needed these documents and how they experienced accessing these documents.

*Item 2 - Linkage/Communications: What does the congregation need to know out of this board meeting?*

It was agreed that since most of the meeting was actually updates from ministry, no communication with the congregation was needed.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10

Minutes written and presented by  
Debbie Gentry,  
Board Secretary