

**Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Congregation
The Fourth Presbyterian Church of Chicago
February 11, 2024**

The 154th Annual Meeting of the Congregation of the Fourth Presbyterian Church was convened by the Moderator, the Rev. Tom Are, at 12:15 p.m. on Sunday, February 11, 2024, in the sanctuary of the Fourth Presbyterian Church. Rev. Are opened the meeting with prayer.

Approval of the Minutes

Co-Clerk Allison Youngblood determined that a quorum was present. Co-Clerk Youngblood announced that the minutes of the 153rd Annual Meeting of the Congregation, held on February 12, 2023, were available for review on the website or by calling the Pastor's Office. A motion was made, seconded, and **adopted** to approve the minutes of the 153rd Annual Congregational Meeting of the Fourth Presbyterian Church of Chicago.

Co-Clerks of Session Report

Mr. Jared Light and Ms. Allison Youngblood, Co-Clerks of Session, offered remarks and reflection. Rev. Dr. Lucy Forster-Smith and Rev. Shannon Kershner moved on from Fourth Presbyterian Church and we hired Rev. Tom Are as Interim Pastor. We returned to two services on Sunday mornings, reopened the Sanctuary on weekdays, and renewed emphasis on faith formation.

We are organizing ourselves differently by completing a member census, to give us an accurate view of our congregation, continued work on our Long-Range Plan, which will define the mission of Fourth Church in the next decade, and are developing a Financial Transformation Plan to close our structural budget deficit and pave the way for a financially sustainable Fourth Church.

These are only a few ways that staff and volunteers touch the lives of our community every single day. It takes an immense amount of time and effort to make everything happen at Fourth Church and it is a testament to the passion and skill of all involved that this is all occurring during a time of pastoral transition. This model of collaboration to leadership at Fourth is an important legacy of our former pastor, Rev. Shannon Kershner.

Coming together as a community is especially important because we have accomplished a great deal over the last year, but there is so much work that still must be done. We see membership and budgets shrinking and we struggle to reach the next generation. The question at hand is, in this new reality, how do we move forward and continue to make Fourth a welcoming, magnetic, and vibrant community that shows the world God's love. What does it mean for us to be a "light in the city" as our place in this world changes? One of the ways we are attempting to answer this question is through the work of the Long-Range Plan.

Long-Range Plan

Elder Eric Wu stated that we live and breath in a world that is continually evolving, and we recognize that Fourth Church also need to evolve with the world. A year ago, the Long-Range Planning Task Force started work on an intentional journey to help steward the congregation with the charge of identifying what God is calling us to do and to be in this transition. It is about our life together, our relationships with God and also with each other.

Elder Wu stated that we recognize and acknowledge that there have been challenges that may have had us doubting ourselves, and that there lies ambiguity in the path forward. National trends point to a broader trend of dechurching and the rise of the religious nones. We are also working to wrap our heads around the results of the member census and what that means for Fourth Church. We also recognize that at the

same time there is immense energy and desire from our congregation for revitalizing Fourth Church in our congregational life together, revitalizing not only how we are together, but our mind, body, spirit.

Elder Wu stated that we recently conducted listening sessions with the congregation as well as sessions for our Elders, Trustees, pastors, staff, and the Chicago Lights Board. We are grateful to have heard feedback from almost 400 participants and we also received over 50 emails with additional comments. Thank you to everyone who has participated.

Through your input and feedback, we have honed the strategic directions and goals from their original drafts and feel confident we are on the right path in focusing on these four areas:

1. Connection and Belonging

- the importance of building and deepening relationships in both our physical and virtual spaces, caring for each other and embracing racial equity and inclusion

2. Faith formation

- honoring the music, preaching, and liturgy of our worship and nurturing learners along their journey

3. Community Engagement

- that allows us to live out our faith by serving as a catalyst for a flourishing community through targeted, impactful programs grounded in community needs

4. And the need to emphasize the sustainability of our operations

- focusing on our staff, governance, financials, and facility

Elder Wu stated that the Long-Range Planning Task Force will share this work with the Board of Trustees followed by a presentation to Session, who will then vote on the strategic aspects of the plan: these strategic directions, the corresponding goals, and overarching progress measures.

After this review and approval is complete, the Session will embark on the next phase which is to plan the implementation of the Long-Range Plan through our structure of committees and councils and to engage pastors, lay leaders, staff and the congregation in identifying priorities for the tactics and implementation progress measures. We anticipate starting to implement at least some of the identified actions in the latter half of 2024.

There is still much work ahead and we are committed to continuing to keep you informed and engaged throughout this process. If we think about the purpose of the Long-Range Plan, it is designed to create a compelling vision of what God is calling us to do:

- A vision that clarifies our priorities and focus, including that which may be new and also that which we need to be sure to “hold onto”.
- A vision that is intended to create new energy to engage (or re-engage), our members, regular attendees, potential new members, pastors, and staff.
- and, we hope, a vision that will also inspire generosity so we can fulfill our mission.

As we move forward with the vision, we know that it’s also critical that we address our near-term financial concerns, which will be addressed through the Financial Transformation Plan. The timelines for these two plans are consistent and our work will further align as we move into implementation. It is

important for the congregation to know and remember that these two task forces are working together because it takes both inspiration and discipline to ensure the sustainable vitality of Fourth Church.

Elder Wu stated that, as we near the end of this story about our adventure into long-range planning, this story is only one chapter in the book for Fourth Presbyterian Church. We have made progress, but we are not done. Our new chapter opens with blank, unwritten pages that we are only beginning to draft together. The path forward may not seem as clearly lit, but the light in the city is still on. We thank you for your energy, your ideas, and your love for Fourth Church because that is what will drive how we move forward into our future, in relationship with God, and with each other.

Approval of the Proposed Bylaw Amendments

Elder Jenny Giblin presented a proposal for amendments to the Fourth Presbyterian Church Bylaws from the Nominating Committee and endorsed by the Session for approval by the Congregation of Fourth Presbyterian Church.

The Nominating Committee recommends amending the Bylaws as noted on the Fourth Presbyterian Church website and noted in the brochure distributed here. A motion for all three amendments will be presented to the congregation for approval.

The first amendment to the Bylaws is to codify the current practice of having two youth members on Session. Article V, Section 1 of the current Bylaws provides for only one youth Elder.

The amendment will ensure that youth Elders have peer support during their term of service and provides an additional voice for this important group of the church. This mirrors the structure of the Board of Deacons in which two youth members may be elected to serve together as Deacons.

The Nominating Committee also recommends amending the Bylaws to codify the common practice of extending tenured officers past their full term to fulfill an unexpired term created by the early withdrawal of an officer in a different class.

While the Bylaws do not currently allow an Elder or Deacon to serve past the expiry of their full three-year term, extensions have proven to be an expedient and effective means to ensure the Session and Board of Deacons have the requisite experienced and properly trained officers to continue their important work.

The Nominating Committee also recommends amending the Bylaws to codify the common practice of extending tenured officers past their full term to fulfill the unexpired term created by the early withdrawal of a Trustee in a different class.

While the Bylaws do not currently allow a Trustee to serve past the expiry of their full three-year term, term extensions have proven to be an expedient and effective means to ensure the Board of Trustees has the requisite experienced and properly trained officers to continue their important work.

Moderator, on behalf of the Nominating Committee and the Session of Fourth Presbyterian Church, these amendments to the Bylaws in Article V, Section 1 and Article VII, Section 1 are presented to the congregation of Fourth Presbyterian Church for approval.

The motion was **adopted**.

Election of Officers

Elder Jenny Giblin reviewed the process for the Nominating Committee to select individuals for election of lay leaders as officers. Elder Giblin introduced the members of the Nominating Committee and reviewed the guidelines for officers.

On behalf of the Committee, she then moved the following candidates for election as Elders:

Class of 2027

Nicholette Andrews

Kay Brungs-Laud

Teddy Chong (Youth Elder)

Karin Gambell

Kerry Grady

Cynthia Joho

Carl Lingenfelter

Justin Myers

Theresa Mintle

Mark Nelson

Kaylyn Patterson

Andrea Schwartz

Barton Trethaway

Vera Tax (Youth Elder)

Elder Giblin moved the election of the following candidates to the Board of Deacons:

Class of 2027

Barbara Charlson

Jim Garner

Patricia Kendall

Joan Leech

Andrew McMillan

Susan Meade

Barbara Psmiloulis

Kevin Reome

Judy Schwartz

Harrison Stracks

John Stracks

Janet Tobin

Darcy Traynor

Charlotte Wager

Lee Zacharias

Elder Giblin moved the election of the following candidates to represent the congregation as members-at-large of the 2024 Nominating Committee:

Justin Epps

Christiane Knapp-Andrews

Carrie Stern

Kent Stevens

Katie Truesdell

The Moderator asked for nominations from the floor Elder, Deacon or Nominating Committee. There being none, the motion to close the nominations and elect the candidates as Elders, Deacons, and Members at-large of the 2024 Nominating Committee was **adopted**.

Rev. Are welcomed all candidates elected to their offices for the coming term and thanked Elder Giblin and the members of the Nominating Committee for their work.

Chicago Lights Board

Rev. Tom Are welcomed Ms. Amanda Felt, President of the Chicago Lights Board to offer remarks. Ms. Felt thanked the congregation for supporting the Chicago Lights Social Service Center, Tutoring, Summer Day, and Urban Farm. Chicago Lights is built on relationships, and because of your partnership, thousands of children and young adults have brighter futures. 2023 was a year of renewal for Chicago Lights in reflection, growth and celebration. Our Social Service Center celebrated its 40th anniversary

while welcoming hundreds of new arrivals seeking asylum while continuing to serve our neighbors experiencing poverty and homelessness. We experienced a 75% increase in services compared to 2022. The Chicago Lights Board is grateful for the dedication of the small staff in the Social Service Center, led by Ms. Theresa Thornburg. Ms. Felt also thanked Rev. Joe Morrow and the World Mission & Social Justice Committee and Meals Ministry for their invaluable support.

Ms. Felt stated that Chicago Lights Tutoring and Summer Day continue to offer high quality year-round programming. Ms. Felt reviewed the attendance and success of the programs and thanked the volunteers and staff under the leadership of Ms. Armedia Houston. There is a great need for more tutors.

Ms. Felt stated that the Urban Farm continued to flourish with 5500 pounds of produce and hosted programs at the farm for youth. Ms. Felt stated that they will need to move the farm and are working on options for the future.

Ms. Felt reviewed the Affordable Housing proposal, which was approved by the Session of Fourth Presbyterian Church. This proposal is in partnership with Interfaith Housing Development Corporation and First Presbyterian Church in Woodlawn to create a 40-70 unit permanent housing development. First Presbyterian Church will provide the land, Interfaith Housing Development Corporation will own and maintain the building, and Chicago Lights will provide supportive service.

Ms. Felt thanked the staff, volunteers and members of the Chicago Lights Board.

Report of the Personnel Council

Rev. Tom Are welcomed Trustee Patsy Habicht, Co-Chair of the Personnel Council, to present the Personnel Council report. Trustee Habicht reviewed the membership of the Personnel Council and thanked Ms. Arlene Faulk, Mr. Jim Kulich, Mr. Marc Miller, Ms. Rebecca Dixon and Ms. Melanie Pierce for their service on the council.

Trustee Habicht reviewed the work of the Personnel Council, which is to serve as a resource for the Senior Pastor and Human Resources Department by advising and consulting on staffing needs, compensation philosophy and process, performance management, training and human resources policies and procedures.

The year of 2023 was an interesting and challenging transition time for our Fourth Church family as many of our councils, staff and volunteers took on additional responsibilities to continue the positive work of Fourth Church and keep everything running smoothly until the arrival of Rev. Tom Are, Interim Pastor. We are grateful to the Interim Pastor Nominating Committee for their work.

Trustee Habicht, on behalf of the Personnel Council offered gratitude to all the staff, clergy, and volunteers who worked extraordinarily during 2023 to effectively adapt to all of the changes and to make for a smooth transition. Thank you to the congregation for all you do in our church community to move forward into the future together.

Report of the Interim Pastor

Rev. Tom Are stated that it is a privilege to serve you as the Interim Pastor. The days ahead of us matter as much to God as the days behind us. Fourth Church is doing so much that it is right at a challenging time. It is a challenging time for many churches after the pandemic. The last time the denomination (PCUSA) showed a net growth was in 1965. Decline has been Christianity's story for many decades and Fourth Church has risen against that trend until the pandemic. The pandemic has caused many people to move or work remotely and our membership has declined. Fourth Church is less of who we were, but Fourth remains a giant in the denomination. Our budgets are tight, and the future may seem uncertain.

Rev. Are reminded the congregation that every time an angel appears in scripture, they say, “Do not be afraid.” In part, because they trust that the days ahead of us are as important as the days behind us. They trust that God, who has been our help in ages past will be our hope for years to come.

Rev. Are stated that through the Long-Range Planning Task Force, Fourth Church is setting its sights on being a church that will be courageous, faithful, and magnetic. We are not defined by the size of our membership, which influences our capacity, but our character, values and commitments remain the same and others will want to become a part of us.

Rev. Are stated that some of our income patterns have shifted, but the leadership has committed to be transparent. We need to increase generosity in order to maintain all of our ministries, or we will need to make choices and bring our ministry into alignment with our income.

Rev. Are stated that each year our average worship attendance and participation has grown, and our contributions have increased. Before the pandemic, we thought of ourselves as a Light in the City, but today our reach knows no geographical boundaries and it is possible for people anywhere who are thirsting for your voice, vision or message to connect with you and have their own spiritual journey fed and nourished through this place. Look at your past as testimony that God will be here and faithful and will work among you and continue to show up here and work among us.

Rev. Are stated that we need to use this interim time to thrive in the leadership of your next pastor. Throughout your history it has been God’s practice to bring you remarkable pastors and am confident that God will continue to do it. These are our days, let us embrace them with hope and confidence because the days ahead of us they matter as much to God as the days behind us.

The Moderator, Rev. Tom Are stated that, when we gather for these annual meetings, we are meeting as both a congregation and as a corporation. It is time to enter the corporate portion of our agenda, and Co-Clerk Allison Youngblood asked for a motion to recess the meeting of the congregation and to convene a meeting of the corporation. It was moved, seconded, and **adopted**.

The Moderator introduced Ms. Jeanne Griffin, President of the Board of Trustees.

Meeting of the Corporation

Ms. Jeanne Griffin, President the Board of Trustees, convened the meeting of the Corporation. President Griffin recognized that the minutes of the 153rd annual meeting of the corporation held on February 12, 2023, were previously approved.

President Griffin called upon Church Treasurer, Mr. Joe Sifferlen, to make a brief report.

Treasurer Joe Sifferlen reviewed the 2023 financial report and the 2024 financial budget as approved by the Board of Trustees and Session of Fourth Presbyterian Church, which were distributed to the congregation. Treasurer Sifferlen reviewed the capital and operating expenses for 2023 and in 2024. Treasurer Sifferlen reviewed revenue, expenses, the draw. The year ended with a \$1.1M deficit and have a planned deficit in 2024, but there is a plan underway.

Treasurer Sifferlen introduced Trustee Vern Broders and Elder Gary Graham, Co-Chairs of the Joint Finance Council, to discuss the Church Financial Transformation Plan. Trustee Broders reviewed the operating deficits for 2023 and 2024 and the concern for budget shortfalls in the future. Fourth Church is fortunate to receive a gift to cover the deficit over the next three years. We cannot expect that we will receive a one-time gift to cover the deficit as it is not sustainable. In concert with the Long-Range Plan, the Joint Finance Council has recommended a Financial Transformation Plan, which was approved by the

Board of Trustees and Session. This will be a three-year process plan to balance budgets, relying only on pledged and unpledged giving, program revenues and sustainable withdrawals from our invested funds, and not waiting for a one-time special gift. The goal of this initiative is to thoughtfully and faithfully examine our sources and uses of funds to balance our revenues with our expenses. The emphasis of this initiative will be on increased generosity, while we remain good stewards of our resources.

Trustee Broders stated that the Financial Transformation Plan has three primary tasks:

- Analyze the revenue patterns and cross drivers in our operation to better understand the financial effect of our activities and actions. Financial scenarios will be developed to consider a combination of increasing revenue, reducing expenses and changes in vendor buying patterns.
- Align future financial commitments with the Long-Range Plan of Fourth Church, Chicago Lights and the other affiliates. We will use the Long-Range Plan and Membership Census results to set up a strategic plan for our ministries, missions and programs. What do we need to do less, what do we need to do more and what do we need to add in the future? The alignment will ensure that future budget allocations and program investments follow the strategic directions and goals of the Long-Range Plan and considers the results of the Membership Census.
- Connect the Impact Goals of Fourth Church, Chicago Lights and affiliates at the program level directly with its program budget for 2025 and succeeding years by using subjective aspirations and objective numeric benchmarks. We will provide training for managers to better understand and manage the financial impacts of their program activities.

Trustee Broders stated that teams and the Board of Trustees will work on each of these tasks through 2024 and beyond with intention of meaningful reductions in the operating deficits each year with the goal of a balanced budget in 2028. We will report the progress monthly to the Board of Trustees and Session and to the congregation annually. We are blessed with the resources we have to take our time and get it right as we are guided by the Long-Range Plan and the Membership Census. We will build budgets to meet our ministry, mission, and program goals of Fourth Presbyterian Church while staying within our achievable revenue expectations. We are grateful to our members and donors for their support.

President Jeanne Griffin thanked Treasurer Joe Sifferlen, Trustee Vern Broders and Elder Gary Graham for their insight and work on the Financial Transformation Plan.

Nominations

President Griffin introduced Elder Jenny Giblin, Chair of the Nominating Committee. Elder Giblin was invited to report on behalf of the Nominating Committee and placed in nomination the following persons for the Board of Trustees:

Class of 2027

Joy Anderson
Steve Block
Don Brettman
Armon Haagen

Elizabeth Hurley
Alison Thomas
Nicholas VanDerSchie

Elder Giblin asked for nominations from the floor. There being none, a motion to close the nominations and elect the present slate was **approved**.

With no further business, Trustee President Griffin asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting of the Corporation and the meeting of the Congregation. A motion was made, seconded, and **adopted** to adjourn the corporate and congregational meetings at 1:15 p.m. with prayer and the singing of “The Church’s One Foundation.”

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas Are, Jr., Moderator