

There is a motion before the congregation: **Shall Council proceed with the steps necessary to sell all or part of the real property of First Congregational Church?**

Thank you so much to Marilyn Felkner, Marvel Leader, Spencer Krichbaum, and Jeanne Hansen for sharing their thoughts on this motion. If you would like to share your thoughts with the congregation, please contact any member of Council or the church office. The comments from the congregation, along with other information on this motion, will be on the church's website www.firstcongregationalslc.org under the NEWS tab.

From Marilyn Felkner

I'm not sure exactly what council is hoping to get in way of a response, or if council just wants to know if I would vote "yes" or "no."

I put together a few of my thoughts on the dilemma facing us, and while I do agree that it's the people not the building that makes the church, I think we're a really tired people. We may not have enough positive spirit left to survive selling the church building. In my own way, I'm fairly pessimistic about our chances for the future.

I understand that the building is a huge drain resting on the shoulders of just a few individuals. I do wonder though, if there's a way that those who want to share the building with us could take on some of that responsibility? Anyway, for better or worse, attached are some of my thoughts on this matter.

With love,

Marilyn

The Lord's Free People and the "Can do" Spirit

I closely align with Carla and Marge in my sentiments about our church. If there's a way we can stay in our church and share the space and responsibilities with the Ekklesia Church members, then I think that's an avenue we should consider. I would love to see a shared church arrangement succeed and provide us with a way to stay in the building we have now.

I don't hold out much hope that the group of us that remain active in our church life would be able to either build a new, smaller church or successfully own or occupy a rented space. There are only about fifty or so of us, and I don't see any path where we would be able to purchase land, build a small church, and continue on as a smaller congregation located "somewhere" else. I'm afraid even purchasing a small building would eventually result in us confronting the same issues we have now.

I think many of those who are still active in our church have served exceptionally in the past. Many have served as moderators (some more than once). Others have served on various boards for years. We have individuals who've worked extensively with camp, the Sunday School program and the PF groups, outreach programs, and much more. It seems to me that many of

us have lost our enthusiasm and “can do” attitude. There are just too few of us and too much demand as we try to press our remaining members into service.

In one of the small group sessions that I attended someone suggested that we could start a fellowship group, if the church were to close. Someone suggested it could be called the Faith and Freedom Fellowship. I think that’s a very clever idea and a good name for it. I certainly would like to see us be able to gather occasionally for socializing and perhaps a hymn sing-along, or a prayerful gathering. I’d even be happy to host the fellowship occasionally at my home.

I hate to end on a pessimistic note, but I don’t really see a path where we remain the First Congregational Church of Salt Lake City if we sell the church. Without the church building as our anchor, I don’t think there’s enough positive energy for us to gather together in the future as anything other than a fellowship group.

Marilyn Felkner

From Marvel Leader

We received the packet from the council. We would vote yes on the proposal. We feel that like others our focus of necessity has been on the material aspects of the church and as such have neglected some of what we feel are the more important matters. As to long time plans we have ambivalent feelings. We love our Christian family and treasure the relationships we have formed there. But our age and stage prohibit us from participating and supporting as we always have and we hesitate to suggest action that we would be physically and financially unable to do our part to support. Committing to serve the on boards or in active positions isn’t practical for us. We will support any action or position that is decided on and certainly our prayers are with those who have to make these decisions.

We are still in Arizona and will not be coming home for the holidays. Our family doesn’t want us to travel with such an increase in Covid cases. So guess we’ll just “have” to stay here in the sunshine! Good luck and we appreciate all that you are doing.

Marvel

From Spencer Krichbaum

The following are my thoughts on the selling of the FCC building. First this is not the first time I have been part of a congregational church selling a building. The first time was when I was very young and we moved into a brand-new subdivision. The minister remodeled his home by knocking down the wall between the garage and the living room. I liked this smaller church. But shortly thereafter they brought some land and built a small church at the top of a hill. And the same problem occurred then it is now. The church membership kept getting smaller and smaller and they ended up selling the building and disbanding the church. Maybe I am cursed. You can call me Spencer the church killer.

I will vote to sell all or part of the real property of First Congregational Church. I don't think of a church as just a building. Jesus did not preach in just one building or one location. The way I look at it is how I look at work. When I first started working I had to go to the same building every work day. But when I retired a couple of years ago they allowed us to work from home if we wanted. And if didn't retire I would have bought myself a small trailer and moved to a different location in the local area to do my work. One day I might be in a park the next day maybe up in the canyons. As long as I had cell service to access the network I could work anywhere I wanted. And I think our church could hold it services anywhere within the valley. We could even move around. After a couple of months, we could move to a different location. And we don't need to meet in a "Church". I would love, if it is permitted and we could afford to rent, to hold services in the Orangerie building in Red Butte gardens next to the University of Utah. Instead of having stained glass windows we would surrounded by plants. And it would be great to be able to stroll around the garden after the service. Or maybe we could even take the church on the road trip every summer.

Okay these are my thoughts. You can now return to your normal pandemic schedule.

Spencer

No animals were harmed in the making of this email. However, there were several electrons that were extremely agitated.

Some Positive Thoughts from Jeanne Hansen

As a Third Generation Member of First Congregational Church, here are Some Positive Thoughts for the Future of FCC.

Named after my Great Aunt Jeanne Bos Neeleman by my Mother, Joyce Byjlo Denny. We all started attending the Gothic Architecture FCC on Second South and Fourth East.

In 1965, we were thrilled when the doors opened at the FCC on Foothill Drive. A Modernist Architecture Church with plenty of space. This style is coming back as witnessed in the Arcadia Heights neighborhood across Foothill Drive on Wasatch Drive. The property values continue to rise and many out-of-staters are moving in remodeling the homes. They enjoy the convenience and quick access to our beautiful mountains. There is no hurry to make big moves during a 100 year Pandemic. Our area of the city is desired and valuable.

I do believe we should modernize our church service to appeal to a younger faster paced congregation and friends. In "The Nature Fix: Why Nature Makes Us Happier, Healthier and More Creative" by Florence Williams talks about the importance of getting out and away from our tech devices. FCC is located in a perfect place on the way to walking, hiking and skiing on the Greatest Snow on Earth.

I propose that we become less formal and more approachable, a respite on the way to the outdoors. Come as you are promoting "Morning Brew" at the back of the Sanctuary or in the

Narthex. A complementary cup of coffee, tea or water. Make it easy for people to come and move in and out of the service freely. Any food would be still served downstairs after the service. A donation jar could be there. Shorten the length of service, as we do now.

Still enjoy lovely organ and piano music with the most beautiful stained-glass windows on Foothill Drive. The choir could be in black & white attire. Save the formal robes for the special holidays. Especially on the First Sunday, Camp Sunday, some guitar music would be great!

On Nov. 23, 2020, PBSUTAH on 7 presented a new look at "The Pilgrims" based on the journal of William Bradford. By the end of the Winter of 1640, 400 years ago, they were down to 50 Settlers. The Indians saved their lives by burying corn in the ground which they found. The first Thanksgiving wasn't until 1641. One of the Pilgrims Biblical sayings was, "Wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I." We shouldn't worry too much about numbers during a 100 Year Pandemic. Our church survived one 1918 Pandemic and success followed.

I am alright with selling part of our large property on the south side. We have plenty of parking on the north and west sides of the church. I propose that the funds from the partial sale could go towards a remodel of Stoyer Hall under the Sanctuary for a new Fellowship Room for coffee hour. Faster to get to and we will lose less people after our service.

It has been a long term goal of mine to create an outdoor living space for us, west of the church, it would have a great view of the Garden of Grace. A portable fire element would give us the Evening Vespers feeling of Camp Fellowship. People are more likely to share experiences and stories in dim light around a fire. People driving by on Foothill Drive would see a warm inviting atmosphere.

Incorporating the Indoor and outdoor experience is inviting to members and guests. Good light always brings an uplifting experience to others. It seems more welcoming.

Best wishes for the coming year!

Jeanne Hansen

In the spirit of simulating the discussions that would happen if we had in-person meetings, the following email exchange is being shared. These emails, along with other comments from the congregation are on our website www.firstcongregationalslc.org under the NEWS tab.

From Charlotte Ovard (11-14-2020)

After I received the November 5th , 2020 letter regarding the question of proceeding to sell all or part of the real property of FCC, I was first of all surprised to be receiving it at all, but also sad to hear how exhausting the decision has become to the congregation. I awoke to thoughts about it this morning and decided to scribble them on an attachment included in this missive (***this copied at the end of this conversation***).

I realize how wearisome the question and efforts have become. After serving three years on the Christian Education Committee and feeling the strain of working hard for a church which might be disappearing soon and wondering if my efforts were even worth the trouble, I felt like I could easily relate to how many you may be feeling. The ever-present threat of closing the doors certainly had a place in my decision to stop attending. It was my observation that issues which were decided, often kept coming up again and again resulting in a constant state of worry. I feel that once a decision is made that a motion should be made to not revisit the issue again for 5-10 years or whatever is practical.

I am pretty sure that the attachment included is already a business model which has been considered and discussed, but I thought I would send it to a few of you on the council and others anyway - I didn't send it to everyone because that would require a lot of looking up of emails in the directory and at present I am trying to clean up the 33 years of neglect to my home and paperwork which of course is the side-effect due to employment. Cissy, you are so right, I don't need to keep all the stuff from work!!

I don't need a response unless you feel so inclined. Sorry I didn't take the time to make it pretty. Much of my chart is based on the remarks and views from the Council's letters regarding the motion.

Love and continued prayers,

Charlotte Werner Ovard

Response From Cissy Wolff (11-14-2020)

Thank you so much for your response. I truly appreciate the love and prayers that you have for this special place. Did you want your email and attached idea/model shared with the congregation? My original idea was to share people's comments with the whole congregation (via email) in much the same way we would share ideas during an in-person meeting. Hopefully this will stimulate questions, concerns, comments that will help people make a decision on the motion. Let me know your thoughts on sharing your comments.

I have thought about your comment about having a statute of limitations on resurfacing an idea. I think in this instance (selling the property of FCC) we have never officially voted on a motion like this. I have no idea what the congregation will decide on this motion, but hopefully, the results will give a very clear direction for Council.

Thanks again for responding and let me know what you think of sharing your thoughts with the entire congregation (through email). Cissy

Response From Cissy Wolff (11-14-2020)

I have been thinking of your idea of co-owners of our property. To implement this idea, do you envision that the congregation would need to vote YES on the proposed motion and then Council (and the congregation) could find people to "buy into" our property and be owners with us? The congregation would need to vote YES to more fully investigate this option as one of the many possibilities for a buyer. If the congregation voted NO then the possibility of finding buyers to be co-owners would be off the table. Is that how you interpret things working? Let me know your thoughts. Cissy

Response From Charlotte Ovard (11-14-2020)

My thoughts were that perhaps the Bylaws would need to be changed to be able to include additional owners, but Bylaws may not be legal document which would have to change. When I served on the Board of Directors for the Humane Society of UTAH our President was an attorney so when we sold our old building he may have taken care of the legal particulars. We also changed a few of our Bylaws around that same time to avoid or clarify things such as conflict of interest.

No, I don't think FCC should sell the building - my thoughts were more in line with arranging or changing FCC to legally be able to have joint owners. I have no idea how the ownership of the property is currently and legally set up.

If joint ownership were possible - sort of like having a community building for different congregations- it could preserve the building and its heritage for FCC and lessen the stress of moving out and distributing assets, and avoiding other moving chaos. Once renovations were completed, scheduling for the congregations would be the only major chore.

It sounds like sharing the building with other congregations is working out for FCC now, I was only suggesting a more permanent and financially stable situation for FCC and perhaps other (acceptable to FCC) Christian congregations.

If joint ownership is not a good suggestion, renting space to congregations or for special events might be lucrative enough to hire a building manager and let that person worry about the building's maintenance, cleaning and repairs.

Sincerely,

Charlotte

Response From Cissy Wolff (11-15-2020)

Great thoughts, Charlotte. As we read the bylaws, it requires approval by the congregation to sell (or lease) the real property of FCC. I interpret that as requiring approval to sell by the congregation and then Council (and others) finding the most suitable buyer, perhaps the scenario you envisioned of co-ownership. Final buyer would be approved by the congregation.

Another question for you. If our church shared our space, either through long term leasing or co-ownership, how important is theological compatibility? If a group did not support the ordination of women as clergy, did not support women in the highest lay leader positions, or did not support gay rights (including same sex marriage) should we enter into a long term partnership with them (leasing/ownership)? I do not think this is necessarily an issue on a month to month rental but could it and/or should it be a consideration for longer term partnerships? I am really interested in hearing your thoughts.

Also, let me know if you want your thoughts shared with the whole congregation. Thanks so much for responding. Cissy

From Charlotte Ovard (12-18-2020)

Hi Cissy,

I am sorry that I didn't respond to your earlier email. Apparently, due to all the junk email I receive, I must have missed your message.

If you would like to share my comments that would be okay with me, but I would not like to receive negative comments or responses directly.

My views are based on the possibilities of choices. If the property is sold, all choices (or most) will disappear. At the moment, FCC still has options for their beloved building, if FCC sells all control will be given to others who may not have a love for its heritage. Heck, I am still grieving the loss of the Murray Smokestacks which have been gone for two decades now. In other words, if I were a voting member of FCC, I would be voting against any plan to sell the property.

I remember a few of my first visits to FCC and I remember a sense of peace and the love of what felt like religious tradition. I remember Diane F-B explaining to me the tradition of Congregationalists and its history with the Pilgrims. I reveled in the candle lighting on Christmas Eve with a lump in my throat as we sang Silent Night. The memory still arouses in me the emotional celebration and sentiment of the birth of Our Lord.

As a former Mormon, I grew up in the tradition of sharing our Meeting House with four wards sharing the space. All members of the four wards shared 2 chapels and the expenses of upkeep of the building- and each congregation had probably 300-400 members each. Of course, all members were of the same religion, but if FCC wanted to co-own or rent space I think it would be doable if co-owners and/or renters are all Christian communities with the same goal of Christian worship.

I wish you health and happiness and a wonderful Christmas season.

Love, Charlotte

From Kurt Ovard (12-18-2020)

Charlotte shared this conversation with me and I felt it spark a response from me. At my age, I have experienced being discarded more than once myself. This is how it seems to me. Some portion of the congregation is willing to discard the history of faith contained in the current building/property. It is a history every bit as valid as the dominant faith. Please acknowledge that history with more than a toss in the bin.

Kurt

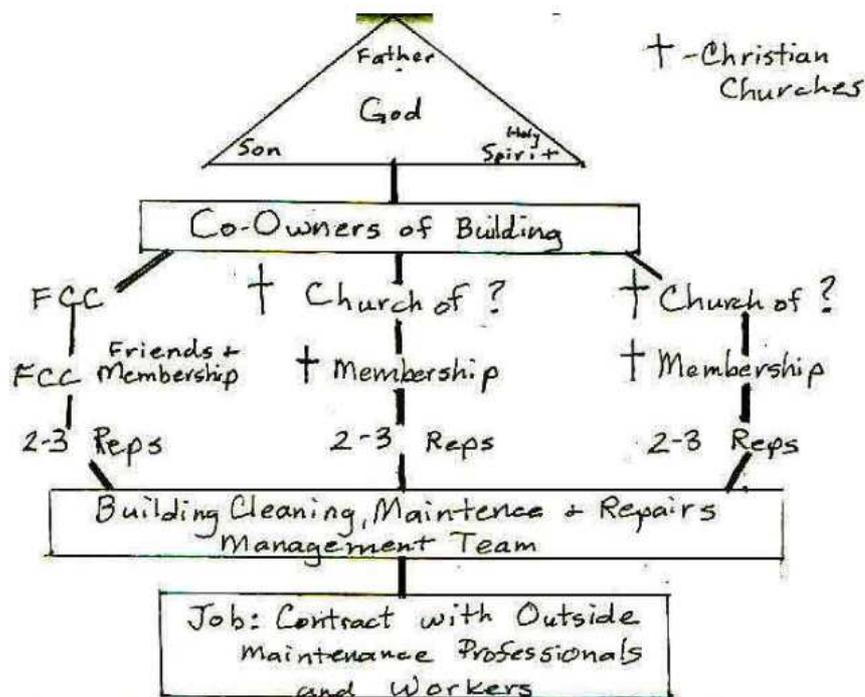
From Charlotte Ovard (12-20-2020)

In reviewing the attachments, I forgot to answer your question about women and others' life style choices. I think if other possible church groups moved into the building, I feel it is doubtful that it would be much of an issue - or at least I hope that would be the case. It may require a by-law or policy change to define where FCC stands on possible controversies. If interested parties were to take issue for certain controversies, it would be likely they would look for property elsewhere. My stance is Love thy

neighbor as thyself, but if a pointed agenda comes with an interested group in the use of the building that may require clear decided boundaries or clear definitions or policies. When I was a Mormon, we had a convicted sex offender who served as a ward clerk. He was not allowed to interact with any children. I am assuming the Mormon Church had some kind of liability protection. Sorry I cannot answer your question better, but I am fairly confident that FCC has protection against injury on their property.

Sincerely, Charlotte

BELOW IS OUTLINE OF CHARLOTTE OVARDS IDEAS



Needed to Implement:

- Change By-laws to include Co-Owners
- Find or offer 2 or more † Churches to purchase co-ownership of FCC Building to share ownership + expenses.
- Make applicable changes to By-Laws.
- Complete the Downstairs sanctuary.
- Enlarge + expand the small chapel, if possible.
- Reassign room usages to accommodate the other churches so each has their own office

- Other comments:
- Erect a cross on the outside of the building.
 - Design a background for the cross inside the sanctuary so it can be seen + not camouflaged by the other wood.

Comments from Ken Rockwell

This idea of co-ownership actually has some precedence in our history. Namely: Independence Hall! It was built as a joint project by the Protestants of diverse background, the place where they all gathered for worship. Though the first ministers were Congregationalists, those in attendance represented diverse traditions, and they stayed until they could establish their own congregations with a different denominational identity. Before they built new church buildings, they stayed at Independence Hall, and may have held separate services. So it's possible our building could become a new Independence Hall, home for more than one tradition, so long as they could arrange time-sharing in a manner acceptable to all.

--Ken R

Comments from Blaine Simons

I vote no on the sale of the building unless and until the membership has determined where we go (in terms of the present church activities) where we go and what do with the congregation if we sell the building and, if we sell what do we do with the money. I have not seen any discussion regarding these concerns. So, for now, I vote NO. Blaine H. Simons