

### **Follow up from the Informational Meeting on Evaluating Potential Buyers (April 18, 2021)**

On April 18, 2021 Council held an informational meeting to update the congregation on potential buyers for our church property. Council members and committee members provided written and verbal information about potential buyers for our property and about financial considerations that may influence our decisions. The written information was sent via email on April 14, 2021. All the information was also on the church's website. The purpose of the meeting was to help the congregation understand the many questions, issues, and perspectives that Council has discussed as the work continues to determine our future.

### **The following are comments made in response to the information presented at the meeting.**

#### **From Candace and Mike Lowry**

Sorry we were not able to attend the meeting...we actually thought it was also going to be zoomed so we were at home trying to pull it up!

Anyway , thanks for all the information regarding the work done by the work horses to consider sales options for our church. While we understand the most fiscally responsible decision is likely to sell to the Redevelopment Association...our hearts are with the sanctuary and the stained glass And the organ....we can't imagine what would become of these treasures if sold to a redevelopment group. Having said that, we lean toward the other church buying the property...But we understand the other perspectives...and will continue to pray that we find a solution that is acceptable and peaceful.

#### **Comments made during the April 18 Informational Meeting**

- A concern was expressed about the possibility of our church meeting in a strip mall if we sold our property to any entity that would not provide us with a space to worship.
- A reply to this concern reminded the congregation that the investigations conducted by Carla McIntire and Ken Rockwell indicated that All Saints Episcopal Church and Zion Lutheran Church, as well as First Presbyterian Church, are willing to discuss sharing their churches with us should we sell our property.

#### **Comments made during the Informational Meeting on April 18, 2021 by Ken Rockwell**

Ken mentioned an idea of sharing the building as co-owners while The Well was paying for the building in installments. He got the impression that this would not be practical.

Ken reminded us that we can be inspired by our New England history. He spoke of a church organized in Dorchester, England setting sail for America, not knowing just where they would establish their new home. We may be in an analogous situation, sailing into an unknown future hoping to find a safe haven to continue as a church. (Please note that one of the deacons from that church in Dorchester, England was Ken Rockwell's ancestor).

### **Comments made during the Informational Meeting on April 18, 2021 by Cissy Wolff**

Thank you to all of the Council members and friends who presented today. Thank you to everyone for the many hours of discussions, the multiple meetings, and the flurry of emails that have gone back and forth all year. You have dealt with some really difficult issues all year.

To give you an idea of the hard discussions that Council and others have had, besides the information presented today, Council members also pondered these questions and ideas:

- There was consensus on Council that we do not see the sale of this property as the end of this gathered community. In fact there has been hope expressed that this is an opportunity to reinvent ourselves, to gather together in a new and different way, to take the time to reflect on what church truly means to us. With the release of the time, energy, and resources to be owners and caretakers of this building, we can concentrate on the aspects of church that make this place such a unique gathered community. We can accept where we are and move forward from there.

- Carla and others mentioned the strong desire to maintain this building as a church. I do not believe our church needs this building to stay together. In fact the pandemic has proven that we can still maintain a sense of community without this building. Our church is of a size where we can essentially worship anywhere and we can gather for fellowship and meetings anywhere—homes, outdoors, rental space. Our paid staff can probably work and function in many different places.

- It was stated by the Well and Ekklesia that their desire was to maintain the sanctuary. When I questioned whether or not these churches could truly fulfill that commitment, I was challenged and questioned on why I would not trust a church to keep its word. This is why we posed the question about how their church (The Well) makes decisions. The Well has a financial board that makes these kinds of decisions. Though the pastor expressed desire to maintain the sanctuary, he does not have a vote on this board. He expresses his opinion in an advisory capacity only. We have been told that it can be written into any contract that the sanctuary must be maintained, but as a church selling to another church, would we really force them to maintain a structure that just does not work for them? And if we sold to a church, perhaps at lower than market rate, and then they turned around and sold it to a developer and reaped the financial benefit, how would I feel about that scenario? Is building preservation so important to me that I would take the chance on that scenario playing out?

- I also did not fully trust that Salt Lake RDA would not try a bait and switch where we would sell to them, perhaps at a bit of a discounted price, for affordable housing and then turn around and sell it to a developer claiming that affordable housing was not feasible. However, during our meeting with them, they gave full reassurance that if the property was purchased for affordable housing, they had an obligation to fulfill that commitment. They also alluded to possible contacts that could, perhaps, incorporate the stained glass into public art or preserve it in some way.

- As you can tell, I have a huge fear of making a bad decision and being taken advantage of. This is why I am wholeheartedly in favor of hiring a real estate broker to help us navigate through all of these potential scenarios. Also, the Salt Lake RDA recommended that we have a real estate broker on our side to make sure our interests are represented well.

- It has been stated that some feel that we would not be able to attract a pastor if we were not housed somewhere. I wonder if perhaps there is a pastor out there who would welcome the challenge of helping a church reinvent, recreate, or resurrect itself. What if we had enough money to guarantee a pastor a good salary for at least five years and that person accepts this challenge to help our small, loving gathered community renew itself and perhaps even thrive in a new way? We do not need to own a building to do that.

- How much money do we need or want any way? In Paul's financial figures, he gives us some rough estimates of how much we need to realize from a sale. His figures are dependent on continuing contributions, with a low figure of \$50,000. What if we had enough money to keep functioning as we are and all of our contributions went to Outreach projects? If we really did have \$50,000 in contributions and it all went to Outreach then we would be using 24% of our \$204,000 budget for Outreach which would be a really great thing! This made me ponder if selling for the highest monetary return would give us the most options.

- If we decided to sell for the highest dollar amount, the question was asked about what we would do with all of the money. I do not feel that there is a rush to make those decisions at this time. But there is the question of, do we become just a philanthropic organization that determines how to spend money to do the most good, and is that truly church to me?

- Mike McIntire mentioned that in selling to a church there have been discussions about partnering with that church as part of the terms of a sale. How important is theological compatibility in our decision making? If a church was equal to any other buyer, like a developer, and willing to pay full market rate, then I suppose we could not discriminate based on their beliefs. But if we decide to help a church financially to make this sale happen for them, then why would we choose this particular entity to support? What makes this group so much more worthy than others for us to give them support? Carla mentioned The Well's response to women in clergy and leadership positions. I am always curious about a church's stance on LGBTQ issues. How important are some of these issues to our congregation? When do these conversations take place?

- Mike McIntire mentioned that we do not have a clear plan for after the sale which is absolutely correct. Others have mentioned that we should first determine if we have the desire and will to stay together. I absolutely agree with this. But to this date NO ONE, and I mean absolutely NO ONE, has been able to articulate a plan to bring the question of whether or not we can stay together to a vote by the congregation. If we question our viability, our ability to stay together, what would that vote look like?

- We have a great responsibility to use the resources that God has given us in the best way possible. And right now we have a group of people who are willing to tackle these very hard questions.
- No decisions are expected from this meeting but we want the congregation to know that Council has tackled some very hard questions about our church's future

**Email sent on April 21, 2021 from Marilyn**

Hi,

I have been struggling over our decision about what to do with our church building since our Sunday meeting. It seems like we should be able to logically set out the alternatives then decide what might be the best choice. Maybe because we have so many choices it has become too difficult. Certainly, it should be within our ability to continue to gather as a community of faith. I think each of us needs to decide if we want to stay together and if we will make a commitment to attend and support this church in its ongoing form. This could make a huge impact on the path we choose.

The decision that we face asks if we want to sell our building to another church who, hopefully, will continue to maintain the church building as is and allow us to remain and worship in the building; or if we want to have the building demolished and sold so it might be developed to serve some other purpose.

My first choice still leans toward leaving the church as is, thus ensuring that the stained-glass windows and the organ have some prospect of avoiding the wrecking ball. However, in the Sunday meeting there were several comments that make me wonder if selling to another church really is the best option. Comments about not wanting to stay in the building as a tenant, potential conflicts over ideology that might eventually make the arrangement untenable; the possibility that the new owners might turn around in a year or two and sell the entire property for a profit; and that we likely would get just \$2 to \$3 million from a church group, while the sale to a developer might be \$5 million, maybe more.

Mention was made at the Sunday meeting that it would be easier to locate a pastor if we had a building. That's probably true, but we also might not find someone who would want to take on our small congregation, whether we had a building or not. We might have to settle for a series of interim pastors.

Both All Saints and Zion Lutheran have offered to allow us to meet in their facilities. This probably means meeting in the afternoon, but perhaps we could try this alternative for a while and see if it's workable. The money we received from the sale could be used to create an operating fund for the continuation of FCC (covering salaries, rental fees, and some other incidental costs). We could create an endowment for Camp Fellowship, and we could make donations to local charities. The operating fund could always be donated to a charity or non-

profit if those who continue to attend FCC decide to dissolve the association and go their separate ways.

I would like to propose also that we establish a fund for the 1892 "The Walk to Emmaus" window for the purpose of removing, storing, transporting, and re-installing this historic window in another location. This window was purchased from a New York company in 1892, transported to our previous building on First South, then moved and re-installed in our current location in 1965. We have precious little that we are preserving from the building, and I think this should be seriously considered. I realize that this may cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, but if we realize \$5 million or more from the sale, I think it's something we should do. I would propose not trying to sell the window, but trying instead to locate a church, museum, college, or collector who would pay a nominal fee and sign a contract promising to care for the window as best they can.

I have some serious reservations about the RDA plan. First and foremost is whether the neighbors will be willing to accept the zoning change. I'm also concerned about whether RDA is willing to pay market value and the possibility that the money from the sale might be tied up if the plan hits a snag. I would not be opposed to giving a large cash donation to RDA.

Sincerely,

Marilyn