

First Congregational UCC, Gaylord
Annual Meeting – Nov. 9, 2025 – Meeting Minutes

Call to Order by Sallie Anderson, Moderator, 11:10 am. All annual meeting materials distributed via email in advance. Greg will provide update information about the church strategic planning process supported by Convergence under Other Business.

Opening Prayer by Pastor Greg Watling.

Quorum present.

Approval of 2024 Annual Meeting Minutes. Available via email with printed copies handed out at the meeting on request. Motion to approve: Jean Sasso; Second: Don Storing. Unanimous approval.

Acceptance of Reports from Pastor Greg, Council, Reaching In, Reaching Out, and Women's Fellowship. Motion to approve: Helen Crandall; Second: Rokko Jans. Unanimous approval.

Election of Officers. Sallie announced three additions to Council confirmed after meeting materials were emailed: Sue Fuelling, Member-at-Large; Helen Crandall, Member-at-Large; Vicky Rigney, Assistant Moderator. Motion to approve full slate of officers: Joe Wambold; Second: Cindy Goller. Unanimous approval.

Installation of Officers. Pastor Greg led an installation service for all new and continuing office holders, acceptance by full congregation, and affirming prayer.

Presentation of Budget by David Schoop, Trustees Chair. Dave noted that proposed budget for 2026 reflects a 3.4% increase over 2025, including a 2.7% salary increase for church personnel. He also noted that the 2025 net income projection reflects intentional, originally unbudgeted expenses of \$2,300 for a new office computer and \$4,800 for investment in a contract with Convergence for strategic planning support. Dave expressed thanks to the many church volunteers who step forward to keep facility and grounds maintenance costs low by offering their services. He also noted that liability insurance costs continue to increase and that Trustees worked with the coverage provider and adopted new policies in order to minimize the increase. Motion to approve budget: David Schoop; Second: Becky Trenda. Unanimous approval.

Other Business: Strategic Planning update by Pastor Greg. A year ago, Church Council contracted with Convergence to help guide our church's future planning process. Convergence is a well-respected national group having years of experience in consulting with churches of all sizes and denominations in communities large and small.

- Greg provided details of the contract with Convergence and funding arrangements (\$9,800 over two years). He noted that the UCC's Michigan Conference has committed to funding a significant portion of this cost – substantially more than our

congregation contributes to the Conference through its annual OCWM (Our Church's Wider Mission) contributions.

- A **planning team** comprised of Pete Amar, Helen Crandall, Laura Hotelling (chair), Vicky Rigney, Ken Wade, and Pastor Greg is working with Convergence to guide our congregation through the planning process.
- The future-planning process has several steps, and the timeframe for completion of the process is entirely up to our congregation's determination. **Steps include:**
 1. Congregational **survey and data analysis** (including community and other relevant trends) – results **presented** to congregation in **September**.
 2. Committee member **interview of community leaders** – **currently underway** with a goal of 25-40 interviews to be completed by Nov. 21st. The focus of interviews is on understanding community needs and partnership opportunities. Ultimate goal is for our church to determine the select areas in which we wish to play a role in addressing community needs. We cannot be all things to all people, so we will need to be discerning in determining focus that matches our capacity and priorities.
 3. A **synopsis of findings** will be presented with exact timing TBD – **possibly in January** via a hybrid in-person and virtual meeting.
 4. Two **congregational engagement sessions** will follow, with Rev. Cameron Trimble (Convergence Founder / CEO) guiding one session on “state of the community around us” and another on “gifts of the church”. **Timeframe TBD** and up to us – **possibly Feb / March**.
 5. **Pulling it all together.** Ultimately, our congregation will identify top 1-3 areas in which it wishes to focus energy over the next few (2-3) years.
- **Greg thanked our congregation for its investment** in guiding him – and our church. Last year when church participants voiced a desire to provide a greater salary increase to our pastor, he indicated a preference to make an investment to support him in guiding a small church in a small town (a combination he had not previously experienced) to the future. It is his goal that we, as a church, **decide** our future, not **glide into** our future as many churches do without intentional direction.
- This **process will support us** in identifying **how we might adopt and change** in the future. Along the way we (as an entire congregation) will gain training and an understanding of language to use to talk about ourselves and **tell our amazing story** in our community.

Meeting adjournment. Motion to adjourn: Cindy Goller; Second: Rokko Jans.

Unanimous approval! Closing prayer by Pastor Greg. Meeting adjourned at 11:45 am.

Annual Meeting Summary Respectfully Submitted by

Mary Fox (Church volunteer standing in for Laura Hotelling, Council Secretary)