

Annual Church Member Meeting 2021

Looking Ahead

Thank you for that Jodi. And thank you Jodi and Jamie for the incredible leadership you have demonstrated during this most unpredictable of years. As Governing Board chair, Jodi turned lemons into lemonade at every turn. It was a challenge and a privilege to serve as the GB vice chair during 2020. It gave me plenty to do during the shut down!

I can't thank Glen enough for his innovative and creative leadership. He stepped up to the challenges and has never slowed down. He just keeps coming up with new ideas for ways to worship, learn and keep the church family in touch. During a time when we have most needed our church, he has been there with an inspiring sermon. I've also come to rely greatly on Paul. What a steady and optimistic presence he has. He works diligently to research not one, but several solutions to any challenge, then allows the Governing Board to choose the way. I appreciate Paul's attention from the small details to the big picture of the church's finances.

I am looking forward to serving as GB chair. I am excited to begin the Strategic planning process. I plan to continue the monthly Governing Board Update in the First News, as a way to share GB business with the congregation. I will hope to again meet our church budget. I plan to be involved in the safe progressive reopening of First Community. I will get it done with help from my new Vice Chair, Alice Finley.

Not only is Alice a lifetime member of First Community, this is her second time on Governing Board. As the Executive Director of the

Upper Arlington Education Foundation, she comes with the non-profit experience that will be invaluable to First Community.

I am also looking forward to working with Jason Milligan, who is continuing as our church Treasurer and Chair of the Finance Committee. It is very helpful to have someone as experienced as Jason in this role. Jason became our Church Treasurer in 2019, after being a member of Stewardship Council for 3 years, chairing it for two. He is a member of Circle 92 and has been a church member for 8 years.

I would like to welcome our new governing board members: Tricia Baxley, April Howe, Deb Humphrey, Doug Torrance and Andrew Wildman and to thank you for committing to serve as our new GB class. You are a very talented group and you will be a great addition to the enthusiasm of our current Governing Board.

My other teammate for 2021 is Pam Shisler, who as you know is chair of the Strategic Planning committee. Despite rescheduling it for the 3rd time, we know we have the right facilitator in Rev Sarai Rice. Whether in person or on Zoom, we plan to start the Strategic Planning process this March. The Strategic planning team will be asking the congregation for feedback, so please look for this opportunity to contribute your ideas. The Governing Board will use these responses to create our vision and goals. This prioritization of our energy and our assets will then guide our ministries and missions over the next 18-36 months. We don't yet know the direction this planning will take us, but the process is in place to discover it.

Within First Community, there is probably no better time to really look at what's working, what's not, and as Jamie Greene said last year, "rather than just maintaining, what do we need to change so that we can help FC excel?".

I believe that in 2021 First Community will excel! Now that we have been catapulted into the digital age with FC's "out of the box" online worship and learning opportunities, we will continue to benefit from a media presence. Now families and friends can worship together across geographical boundaries. Those snow birding in Florida can still attend First Community. And as our schools have now discovered, there doesn't need to be anymore "snow days", a remote option for worship will always be available. As convenient as it's been to watch church from home, not everyone has joined us. Many of our church members haven't or aren't able to benefit from our online church. In my world of physical therapy, we are aware that with high tech, comes the need for high touch.

To many of us, that means reopening the church, just as soon as it is possible, while protecting our church family. To be able to see each other, then sing together and finally to shake hands and hug, will be the best celebration of all. It is also possible that 2021 will bring even more celebrations. The new Tail Feather rental cabin at Akita should be finished and ready for use this spring. The Sanctuary dedication and Capital Campaign Celebration may finally occur this year. We hope for the completion of the organ with dedication to follow. I am hoping that one of the hats I wear as GB chair in 2021 is party planner!

After celebrating the financial success of 2020, it is my goal that in 2021, we will continue to be fiscally responsible and look to meeting our budget once again. Glen, Paul and our FC staff have proven to be good stewards of our pledge dollars. And I owe a huge thank you to all of you and our other generous members, who fulfilled their pledges and contributed even more to make sure that First Community could support our missions and ministries.

Our missions and programs have and will be needed more now than ever, as those in our church family and communities may experience joblessness, housing and food scarcity issues. Heart to Heart, the Trading Post and the Refugee Task Force will all need the support of our time and donations. Reopening Akita and fully opening the Mary Evans Child Development Center and First Community Preschool will provide socialization opportunities that have been greatly missed. Relating our missions and ministries to First Community will promote the recognition of our One Church. This could result in membership growth, which will further broaden the interest in our church programs and missions.

We need to share the welcoming and inclusive theology of First Community, to make an impact on 2021. In the best book I read last year, Caste, Isabel Wilkerson writes, “It is not enough to be tolerant. You tolerate mosquitoes in the summer, a rattle in an engine, the gray slush in winter. You tolerate what you would rather not have to deal with and wish would go away. It is no honor to be tolerated. Every spiritual tradition says love your neighbor as yourself, not tolerate them.” First Community is already positioned to help. With a belief at First Community that “acceptance transcends tolerance” we owe it to our communities to start the healing by living it. If we can love God and love our neighbors as ourselves. If we can each listen to and find some common ground with each person placed in front of us. If each of us, individually, helps to live out the vision of First Community – having a socially progressive community fostering inclusiveness, diversity and service that makes a positive difference – then we will make a difference! This ever changing world needs First Community to anchor us to the things that matter most. May we actually, each individually, agree to differ, resolve to love and unite to serve!

