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Pastor Aaron | Teaching Elder  
A.J. Woods | Clerk of Session  
Nathan Simpson | Treasurer  
Justin Sparks | Nom. Com.  
Chair & Search Com. Chair

NOMINATING COMMITTEE | JUSTIN SPARK - CHAIR

**It is my understanding that Session has changed the nominating process. Is it true that we will no longer offer nominees (for the future Nominating Committee) from the (previous) Nominating Committee (Nom. Com.) but from the floor of our Annual Meeting?**

*Pastor Aaron* – the nominating process has changed a lot in the last five years and has become an arm of discipleship within the church. The function of the nominating committee, typically, how it goes, we have two ruling elders – one of those chairing the nominating committee, a Deacon representative, and then the Nom. Com. from the year previous nominates four At Large members of the congregation – this is to give equal balance to the nominating committee. That is to the purpose of accountability so that the current leadership doesn't keep cycling itself or the image of itself. **And so, the question is are we going to keep doing it that way or take nominees (for the Nom. Com.) from the floor?**

*Justin Sparks* – Session previously did vote to have it open to nominate people to the Nom. Com.. This year was the transition year, and we do apologize that we didn't get that announced early enough. We understand that you can't really nominate somebody right away. But next year, we will make sure that it is announced and make sure people understand that they have the ability to nominate someone to be on the Nom. Com..

**Does that mean that the committee will NOT bring a slate of [Nom. Com.] candidates and hope that the congregation will nominate somebody for the committee?**

*Justin Sparks* - I believe so. Yes.

And again, this is an opportunity for the congregation to have a say in who their leaders are. This is Jesus' church, and we (the leaders) want to be connected to the congregation. And a direct connection is through the nominating process.

**Will the committee be limited to three (leadership) and four (at large) or is there an unlimited number of nominees?**

*Pastor Aaron* – No, we will keep it to those numbers. I believe that if you look at our polity as Presbyterian. The nominating committee is one of the hall marks of being Presbyterian. The Presbyterian government, unlike the other two forms of church government, is bottom up. The strength is from a strong congregation. And that makes a strong denomination. Whereas [denominations like methodist, episcopal, Lutheran, etc] are top down and congregational is just its own thing. We are Presbyterian which is bottom up and we want to equip and enable the congregation to make these calls. Now part of that is that you have freedom in the Book of Order. The Book of Order is very broad in how you define this and that can create challenges. And you can tell that there are things that we need to better define as a Session and Congregation.

FINANCES | NATHAN SIMPSON - TREASURER

**It is my understanding that we have restructured how we are doing finances. Can you give just a brief [explanation of] how finances are operating now? Maybe from the point of view of reimbursement?**

*Nathan Simpson* – If you look at what we budgeted for this year, 2025, verses last year, it is quite a bit lower. That was to try to be more financially responsible. To make sure we are shoring up and we're not spending money on stuff we shouldn't be – not to say we have been irresponsible with that in the past. We are going to have things that we have not budgeted for. So, when it comes to spending money there are things that are in the budget that Session has approved, that this is what we are going to spend money on this year. And there will be things that we didn't anticipate, or they cost more money than expected. If there is money that needs to be spent - typically from Session, Deacons, or staff – that money will be spent as it has been budgeted. But if there is anything that isn't within those groups that needs to be spent for the church, or if there is something that hasn't been budgeted for initially, there is a new form you can fill out a head of time. So instead of being reimbursed, we would like for that to be approved ahead of time. We are asking for two weeks' heads up. If you don't have that kind of time, we will work with you. But two weeks allows us to get you an approval or denial a head of time. So instead of spending money and coming to the church for reimbursement, we would like to get that ahead of time.

## **Is there a certain [monetary] threshold for that approval?**

*Nathan Simpson* - Anything that is not in the budget needs a form and approval.

*Pastor Aaron* - So again, these are things that we are still working on policies for. One of the discussions I had with Jodi last week. She said "if somebody in Pioneer Clubs wants to buy [supplies] and they bring me a receipt." I said "your over [in charge] your budget and now what your budget is. We have a category called authorize spender, you can give people freedom so you don't have to authorize everything." But it's all in an effort of being transparent and being good stewards of what God has given us.

If you look at our 3-page budget. The first page is very different than the last two pages. The first page is a bunch of round numbers. The second two pages are not round numbers. Because the second two pages are what we actually know what we are going to spend on things. We are going to have occasional ministry cost that you just don't know what that is going to look like. The example we always go to is: we propose five kids are going to camp. But what if twelve want to go. Will we cap it at five applications. No, we will then come to the congregation and explain that we have this much but we would like to see this much in order to make this happen – this is passive fundraising essentially. Can we make this happen together. Which is different than the operating cost, where we know how much the lights are going to cost. The heart behind it is to be shepherding in all areas.

*Nathan Simpson* - To add to that, the accountability and clarity to what is going on. When I look back to when I became treasurer in November, I was having a hard time putting together what money we had spent, what was in the budget and where things fit. We want to essentially have an audit trail. Here is something not in the budget, how much money was spent, what it went to, etc. Now we will be able to keep track of those things.

## **I know last week you mentioned the different accounts, if we want to make a donation to a specific area is that where it stays or will it move between accounts?**

*Nathan Simpson* – The intention is that it will stay there. There is an asterisk there that says it can be moved around. But the intention is that we will NOT move those funds. But it is there as a guideline. So, let's say we have four accounts set up and everyone feels strongly about youth ministry and puts all their offering in the Youth Fund and no money goes to the Ministry Fund. We don't want to feel forced, if we have a surplus of funds in one and need them elsewhere. There is a catchall policy that Session can approve to move funds if they are over the giving\* goal for that account.

## **Would my money go back, when available, to where it was originally donated?**

*Pastor Aaron* – This is something we have been kicking around, and not to put Pam Vaughn (deacon) on the spot but she did bring this up, like a lot of these things, these are moving targets. We are trying to come up with a policy on how we cap those funds and how we report regularly about those funds. It would be my hope that we would give a tracible account of what is in those funds and a little bit of a narrative on how money is going in and out. Just so you know what the money is being spent on and so [the congregation] knows what is going on. We also want to avoid "people buying a seat at the table." So, say someone puts \$50,000 in the Building Fund – you can easily use that money on the building – and then they put \$50,000 in Deacons Fund. That's great too but, are we going to spend that much in there when we have a need somewhere else. So, we are trying to come up with a policy on how we report that. And so, you can see maybe we are low in this account and you have a guideline on what to give too.

*Nathan Simpson* – To wrap this up. I don't have a great answer, right now. But it's a good point that you bring up and we will work through that.

*Pam Vaughn (Deacon)* - Can I clarify that no money is going to move to another account unless it is over budget. So, say that we are over on the Youth budget, but the furnace is broken and it's a \$5,000 fix. Then if we don't have heat in the church, then youth can't do their thing. So, it's not like money will be taken away unless there is an overabundance.

*Daphne Berge* – I would hate to see that the money is not replenished.

*Janine Miller* – I was thinking that we were going to do some kind of cap and once they reached a cap, any donations specified would be put somewhere else. I would like to see that it wouldn't be pulled out of a specific fund. I think if you pull something out you need to be very transparent about it. "We're pulling money out and it will be put back in." I think the transparency needs to be there. If we don't, we will get into situations like we have very recently, and we don't want to do that.

## **How do other churches handle this?**

*Pastor Aaron* – That is something we need to research. Overall, we hear the concern, even before we started making these changes were present. It's an enduring topic and something that we are aware of. We want to steward God's money and what is given well. Ultimately, authority does rest in Session on how we are going to do that. And if there is a sincere desire, we invite the individual to come to Session and advocate for something like that because that is the place to do so.

*Aaron Baldauff* – It was asked, "how other churches do this?" I can give you a couple of examples from Presbytery, and it's often based on church size. In churches of 200 members or smaller, budgets are often rigidly controlled and there is often not a lot of space for agility. So, if you have something that you want to spend money on, it takes a lot of time and it often doesn't happen. It stays pretty stagnant. Larger churches have a business office. That is staff that control their budgeting and expenditure. It allows them to be more nimble. But what we are finding across the Presbytery is that two of these larger churches had to close their business offices because there was a lack of transparency and

because they were losing money. Their business offices were not being upfront about how they were spending money and because they were shifting money around in not clear places. So, they have had to reduce their staff and go back to budgeting in a more transparent manner controlled by one or two people.

I like where we are going. I think transparency gives the church visibility into what is happening which gives us space to be a little more nimble. I understand concerns too because people feel strongly about what they give.

*Pastor Aaron* – In the time that I have been here, I've seen absolute transparency when it comes to...someone gives a gift, we will be talking to them. Jane has always been very helpful with that. Reporting with her has always been very upfront. A lot of theoretical situations can emerge we are doing our best to report.

### **How many funds will there be?**

*Nathan Simpson* – There is five accounts.

- We have our operating budget, which is our basic bank account.
- Manna Food Pantry – That one is kept separate because while it is managed by the church and the work is done here, it is not a Presbyterian Church exclusive effort. There is a lot of community and other things contribute to that, so it is kept separate so that it doesn't get confused. Manna Food Pantry money and church money are not overlapping at all.
- The Good Samaritan Fund, which is predominantly controlled by the Deacons. It doing Good Samaritan type things like: rent, utilities, etc. Especially around the holidays.
- Ministry Fund – Things like discipleship, Sunday School, contributions to YoungLife, and supporting our missions.
- Youth Fund – Anything youth related. Pioneer Clubs, Children's Church, Camp, etc.
- Building Fund – Projects or repairs. Keeping the building in working order.

These have always existed on paper but it was getting a bit confusing. So now these are actual accounts at the bank. The Building Fund and the Good Samaritan Fund – because they are managed by the Deacons – are actually one bank account but managed separately. Everything else is its own actual bank account with it's own money in it right now. This is a way to have transparency and also so we aren't moving money between account. It is very clear what is in each account.

### **Will there be a cap for each of these?**

*Nathan Simpson* – We would like to create giving\* targets for these. We do not have those set yet. But the idea is to have a target for all of them. Based on what we expect we will need for the year. We will communicate that. If we exceed our goals, then it is a way we can encourage giving to other areas.

*Pastor Aaron* – I like how these are called giving\* targets. In the past it was like “please tithe and offer.” And really the offering would just go to the general account because you didn't know what was there. I have had people come to me and say “what can I give to?” The answer was just whatever was on my mind at the time. But now it is clear. There will be giving\* targets – that we are in the process of working on – and you will be able to see the health of these accounts. Your tithing is keeping the world spinning and your offering is clear to where it is going – and in literal accounts. These were accounting lines and now actual accounts which allows for accountability and transparency.

### **Are these funds on the drop-down menu online?**

*Nathan Simpson* - Yes. Those are active now. We are still working out if you are putting money in the offering plate, how to designate where that is going to go.

### **What happens to funds that go into the operating account that are over your spent budget (at the end of the year)?**

*Pastor Aaron* – We praise God! Honestly, in the six years I've been here, I have watched this congregation exceed its proposed budget every year. I'll tell the story again; I was at the finance team meeting, my second year here, when Larry Hill said “we would be doing our congregation a disservice if we didn't propose a budget of \$300,000.” And I heard some of the largest gasps. Now we're over \$400,000 and this congregation is generous. And I think that is a demonstration as to what the gospel is doing, and I praise God for that.

### **What is the funding goal for our future Associate Pastor?**

*Nathan Simpson* - It is one of our goals for this year, setting up a fundraising team to address that. We will have a committee to understand what our goals are, how we achieve that, what our timeline is.

*A.J. Woods* – If anyone is interested on being on that team, please see one of us (Session member).

\* Wording changed after transcription for greater clarification.

**On the blue sheet we have three things, but it is supposed to be a Shepherding Plan and we had Associate Pastor, Associate Pastor fundraising, and sabbatical. What is happening for the congregation? Is that still happening with the Shepherding Plan?**

*A.J. Woods* – It is inside each of those. With the Associate Pastor, we are looking at the depth of our congregation. The depth of reaching more people. To get discipleship to more of our congregation. And he (Pastor Aaron) needs more help. If you were here last week, he (Pastor Aaron) expressed himself that he needs help with that. That ties into the sabbatical as well. The investment of our pastor will in turn invest in our congregation. It is investing back in our pastor. Most pastors have a 5-7 year (a sabbatical at 5-7 years of ministry) sabbatical. It is not just a break. Reinvestment back into him. It is for his study, his family, his kids. And bringing his passion back here. It reinvigorates our congregation. The fundraising team – obviously we've talked about funds a lot today and the change in funds – but the fundraising team will be paramount for our shepherding plan. So the congregation is interwoven in each of the three.

*Pastor Aaron* – The Shepherding Plan is an annual strategic plan. It effectively does a couple of things. It keeps our congregation moving and our leadership moving. The natural tendency of the local church is to let a whole year slip by and you wonder what is was accomplished. For example, back at the Covid year we had a Shepherding Plan. We had made it in October 2019. At the end of the year of Covid you would expect that we didn't get much done as a church. But we were able to review our Shepherding Plan and saw that God had accomplished that entire plan and we completed our very ambitious five-year plan. And all of that was accomplished. It was jaw-dropping.

The Shepherding Plan is also designed, since we don't have long-term committees, it gives us ad-hoc work as Session members. Who is overseeing each task (or section of the Shepherding Plan). You will see that the Shepherding Plan is very directed towards your Elders, Deacons, and your staff. But A.J. is right that the congregation is absolutely involved. As it's said in our New Members class this is a partnership in ministry that we are all a part of.

Let me say something about the Associate Pastor. Over the weekend I had a member reach out to me and said "what are we doing about Bible studies, small groups, and maybe there's people that want to transition back and forth, how are we keeping track of that? Maybe this would be helpful." My only reply was "Yes, that would be helpful." That is a lot of work, a lot of systems work and communication, a lot of work that needs to be done on internal growth. Another, former Elder, asked me "how is discipleship going at FPC?" My response was, and this is not defeatist, "as good as it can be." There a depth that we are not reaching right now. We need someone who is educated, qualified, and trained to do it.