

**NEW GOSHENHOPPEN UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
CONGREGATIONAL MEETING
November 14, 2021**

Consistory President, Will Howe, welcomed the congregation to the annual meeting. The first session was held at 8:45 a.m. in person in the Sanctuary (49 people were in attendance). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, attendees were asked to wear face masks and to practice social distancing. The second session was held at 12:00 noon by Zoom call. Members who pre-registered for this session were provided with a Zoom link invitation to participate.

The meeting was called to order and the agenda reviewed. Will shared that the church's Constitution and By-Laws state that a quorum shall consist of five percent of the church's membership. It was determined that between the two sessions there was a quorum, making this an official meeting.

(First Session)

Will Howe asked Rev. Elaine Ely to offer an opening prayer. Following the prayer, the first order of business was to review the Minutes from the previous year's congregational meetings. After providing the congregation ample time to read the Minutes, Will asked if there were any corrections. Hearing no corrections, **a motion was made** by Will Howe, second by Kim Jacobs, to approve the Minutes of the Special Congregational Meeting dated July 18, 2021, and the meeting dated November 15, 2020, as presented.

Rev. Elaine Ely then presented her pastoral report. She stated that her official title was Pastor of Visitation and Confirmation. She expressed her gratitude for the fabulous Visitation Team that New Goshenhoppen has in place. During the pandemic when visiting our flock had become difficult, the Visitation Team continued their connection with our members by making phone calls and sending greeting cards. As soon as restrictions are lifted, Rev. Ely plans to visit with the shut-ins. Her other task involved the planning and coordination of this year's Confirmation Class. She reported there are three girls in the class which meets on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings. She thanked the students and their parents for giving her the privilege of working with their children. She also thanked Nonna Stankunas for her leadership and assistance with the Confirmands.

Will Howe thanked the New Goshenhoppen staff for their work. He remarked on their flexibility to continual changes this past year. He recognizes how deeply they each love this church. Will announced that Emily Hillegas had recently joined the staff as Housekeeper. Will thanked the 2021 Consistory for their dedication and leadership. Throughout the year, he appreciated their candor as they held some deep discussions over extraordinary issues. He acknowledged, by name, the following persons whose Consistory term will end December 2021, and asked them to stand:

Elders: Alex Anastas, Marsha Bieler
Deacons: Peggy Fulmer, Laura Stankunas
Trustees: Ken Vincent

Will then presented the nominees for the 2022 Consistory. If elected, the following persons would serve for three consecutive years, beginning January 2022:

Elders: Susan Jacobs, Steve Lentz
Deacons: Nancy Haines, Katie Stankunas
Trustees: Terry Vincent, Chris Weikel

Will thanked the nominees who accepted the call to serve. He said that a Deacon is needed to make a full slate. Qualifications to serve on Consistory include sound faith, wisdom and good discretion, regular attendance, and a positive attitude toward the church. You must be a member of New Goshenhoppen for at least one year prior to serving. Deacons are those who practice good stewardship. They lead the church in service and love, encouraging and stimulating the connection and care between people in the church and the community. Will asked if there were any nominations from the floor. None were noted.

A motion was made on behalf of Consistory, second by Dan Rodgers, to accept the above-named nominees to serve in their respective positions on the 2022 Consistory. Motion carried. No opposition.

Will Howe then presented the 2022 budget. He said that our budget is not just about numbers; it reminds us of how we make a difference in the world. It is “sharing the light, faith, and love of Jesus with all people.” He thanked Beverly Benner, Nursery School Director for her valuable work with the children. He noted that Nursery School is back to full enrollment (since September 2021). He commended Bev and stated that it was not easy to manage the fluctuating Covid protocols throughout the school year. Despite those challenges, the Nursery School is up and running with an extraordinary number of children this year! Will also commented on the congregation’s tenacity and dedication during these strange times; the congregation remained faithful in their viewing of the livestream services and weekly giving had remained strong! He welcomed onboard, Rev. Elaine Ely, Pastor of Visitation and Confirmation. He thanked Donna Fried for her efforts in bringing the New Goshenhoppen Camping Program back to life and also Beverly Benner for the Vacation Bible School program this past summer. He noted that Dr. Allan Birney is now fully onboard as our permanent organist; you may recall that he served as substitute organist for much of 2021.

Budget comparison from 2021 vs 2022:

	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>
Income	\$590,214	\$678,739
Expenses	<u>\$620,379</u>	<u>\$678,739</u>
Deficit	(\$ 28,450)	\$ 0

Will announced with excitement that this is the first budget that he can recall where the church wouldn’t need to withdraw money from its investments to assist with the day-to-day expenses. This is quite remarkable and largely because the Nursery School is back up and running.

Regarding income and expenses: The largest change to income is a result of the Nursery School for the 2021/2022 school year having more students, more classes, and thus more teachers. There was a 2% across the board salary increase for staff. In addition, the Personnel Committee, along with the Finance Committee, gave a salary adjustment to the Nursery School aides and the Housekeeper, after conducting a market analysis of wages. Mowing of the church grounds, parsonage, and cemetery had been outsourced to a private company since the caretaker position had gone to part-time; mowing at the New Goshenhoppen Park is handled by volunteers. Mowing expenses were higher this year primarily due to a non-typical mowing season (more rain, growth, and longer mowing season than usual). Snow removal had also been outsourced to a private company. This cost is unpredictable from year to year. Last year we budgeted \$7,000-\$8,000; this year we budgeted \$4,000. Will noted that when you combine the budgeted amounts for the part time caretaker’s salary, mowing expense, and snow removal, the total is similar to the salary we had offered a full-time caretaker.

Investment spending: The church’s investments have a goal to generate funds to invest in our congregation, the community, and beyond. In 2021, \$66,640.00 (or 3.9% of all funds) was used as follows:

\$30,000	The Goschenhoppen Meadows project—Mission, Ministry and Maintenance. The deacons will share later during the meeting what ministries have been chosen for 2022.
\$15,480	Church’s day to day expenses
\$14,400	Scholarships (Interest income is used each year for scholarships.)
\$4,000	Emergency Needs (Hendrick’s Fund)
<u>\$2,760</u>	Conservancy (park tree cutting)
<u>\$66,640</u>	Total Investment Spending (3.9% of all funds)

Will shared a slide providing an overview of the Church’s investments through September 2021. All investments total \$1.71 million (up 7% from the previous year). The investments used for the day-to-day operations of the church total \$550.8K (up 4.85% from the previous year). He was pleased to say that the investments have grown in spite of the pandemic.

Will presented a slide of investment balances which support the day-to-day church operations. The accounts that support the budget are the Cemetery Fund, the Housing Fund, and the General Account. As of September 2021, the Investment Balances totaling \$1.71 million. The following four investment funds have been designated for specific purposes: The Hendricks Fund, \$64.6 K, was derived from a bequest with the desire that this money help the less fortunate in our congregation and community. The Land Use Fund, \$137.2 K, is for the maintenance and preservation of the church land. The Goschenhoppen Meadows Fund, \$667.9 K, is the remainder of the money received after placing the church’s land in a preservation agreement. This fund affords the opportunity to contribute to ministry,

mission, and maintenance projects locally, nationally, and globally. The Hillegass Fund, \$279.1 K, had been created to provide educational scholarships to members of the congregation. Interest only may be withdrawn each year from the Hillegass Fund to provide scholarships. Note, that the original charter for the Hillegass Fund stated that it was created for mission and scholarships; however, today, we use this fund only for scholarships.

The budgeted investments (the ones used to support the church in meeting their daily expenses) are: Housing Fund, \$91.5 K; General Account, \$116.4 K; and Cemetery Fund, \$342.9 K. The Park Fund was reported at \$8.0 K.

At the conclusion of the budget presentation, Will asked if there were any questions or concerns. None were expressed. Marlene DeLong said thank you for keeping the church's finances in good order. Will thanked her for her comment and then proceeded to credit the Finance Committee for their diligence and hard work. Will Howe **made the motion** on behalf of the Finance Committee and Consistory to approve the 2022 budget as presented. Ballots were distributed, votes were cast, and the ballots were collected/tallied.

Will Howe then shared a slide regarding a proposal for allocation of the land preservation funds. He stated that in July 2021 the congregation voted to preserve the 18.41-acre parcel of land (located next to the Goshenhoppen Park and the parsonage) for \$184,100. He thanked the members of the Land Use Committee and Property Committee for bringing the idea to the Property Committee. He also thanked Conrad Fisher for his efforts in this regard. Conrad was instrumental in meeting with the Farmland Preservation Board and filing out the necessary paperwork to move forward with the preservation. Will gave a shout out to Larry Heimback for his generous monetary gift that allowed us to pursue both the land preservation and made it possible to make improvements at the park, parsonage, and church building. Will noted to date that the church had not received the total amount of the gift; however, we will likely receive it by the first quarter of next year.

Will stated that the Land Use Committee, Elders, and Consistory endorsed bringing this proposal to the congregation for their consideration:

New Goshenhoppen United Church of Christ will allocate the \$184,100 received for farmland preservation of the 18.41-acre property next to New Goshenhoppen UCC Park (parcel #57-00-00322-008) as follows:

1. \$160,000 will be placed in to the Goschenhoppen Meadows Fund to continue to fund yearly Mission, Ministry, and Maintenance projects.
The Meadows Fund current guidelines allocate \$30,000 per year -- \$10,000 for Mission, \$10,000 for Ministry, and \$10,000 for Maintenance. These guidelines will be reviewed, soliciting feedback from the congregation regarding ideas to increase the yearly allocation amount for Mission, Ministry, and Maintenance (given the above \$160,000 increase in the base amount of the Meadows Fund). Today, the Meadows Fund currently stands at approximately \$668,000.
2. \$24,100 will be allocated to purchase new windows for the Christian Education building.

Ballots were distributed and the congregation was asked to vote on the question: Do you approve the proposed allocation of land preservation funds (\$184,100) as presented? The congregation cast their vote and the ballots were collected and held for tallying following the Zoom meeting.

The next slide presented was regarding the Goschenhoppen Meadows Fund. The congregation preserved the church land for \$946,000. From the funds received, we borrowed (from ourselves) \$491,275. To date we have paid back \$254,000, leaving a balance remaining of \$237,275. There is \$137,220 in the Land Use Investment account. This account is designated for conservation and care projects for the preserved land. It was duly noted that the land preservation funds were properly invested. Donna Fried stated that the Goschenhoppen Meadows Fund currently has a balance of \$667,897.

Donna Fried made the following presentation: The Goschenhoppen Meadows project was adopted by Consistory in 2012. This is our ninth year whereby we place a notice in the church bulletin inviting the congregation to submit proposals. Each year \$30,000 is allotted from our Meadows Fund and broken into the 3 M's—ministry, mission, and maintenance.

- \$10,000 – Ministry (overseen by the Elders)
- \$10,000 – Mission (overseen by the Deacons)
- \$10,000 – Maintenance (overseen by the Property Committee)

Below are the Ministry proposals that were approved by the Elders.

\$1,500	Assisting a Member in Discernment seeking a degree in Ministry.
\$500	Toward the purchase of Journeying Through Grief Booklets which is a series mailed quarterly to member families during the first year following the passing of their loved one.
\$8,000	Organ Renovation Project Fund
<u>\$10,000.00</u>	TOTAL ALLOCATION

Below are the Mission proposals that were approved by the Deacons.

\$6,000	The Open Link , to support its' mission. The Open Link is a multi-service agency serving the Upper Perkiomen Valley. Open Link provides many services to individuals and families such as Meals on Wheels, Community Food Pantry, transportation, Back to School and Holiday programs, GED preparation, employment assistance, financial counseling, etc.
\$1,500	Women's Center of Montgomery County , to help eliminate domestic violence and other forms of abuse.
\$750	Allentown Rescue Mission – since 1900 their mission has been to feed multitudes of hungry and hurting people. They provide emergency shelter, spiritual growth opportunities, transitional housing, meals, clothing, and life skills education classes.
\$750	First Monday Community Meal was started in 2015 by a group of area churches sensing a need in the community for food, socialization, and a safe spiritual atmosphere. All are welcome! The Meal has expanded to two locations—The Center at the Open Link and Pennsburg United Church of Christ.
\$500	H₂O Blessings which provides clean water to native Americans, such as the Navajo.
\$500	Surf Side to assist folks who lost their homes in the Surf Side, Florida building collapse.
<u>\$10,000.00</u>	TOTAL ALLOCATION

Donna Fried stated that the maintenance proposal approved by the Property Committee was to allocate \$10,000 for the ongoing project to replace windows in the Christian Education Building.

All of the approved proposals had then been presented to Consistory. Checks were written/mailed to the various organizations. In response, we have received several letters of appreciation.

Donna Fried then presented a review of the Organ Campaign. In November 2019, the congregation voted to raise funds to repair the church organ. It was decided that the total repair amount, \$125,000 would be raised before beginning the project. The Stewardship Committee had plans for a special campaign; however, the pandemic put a twist on that. The project is still moving forward but currently at a slower pace. You can see the fundraising progress in the weekly bulletin. Currently, we have raised over 32% of the total cost. It is noted that funds for the project have been given as follows:

\$14,798.70	From the Estate of Florence M. Huber
\$10,000	From Larry Heimbach (in memory of his brother, Gordon S. Heimbach)
\$10,000	From the Goschenhoppen Meadows Project
<u>\$6,345</u>	Donations from the congregation & friends
\$41,143.70	Total donations
\$83,856.30	Amount we still need to raise

Larry Heimbach asked how the present organist feels about the condition of the organ. Will noted that Allan Birney, was not in attendance at this meeting to defer the question. Will said that our former organist, Jesse Oddis had prepared the estimate in consultation with Walker Technical Company. He noted that it's been approximately 30 years since the organ was last renovated. Janet Weikel questioned whether the company will hold to this estimate. Will responded that they will most likely honor it for a while but inflation may cause it to rise. Marlene Gehman said that Jesse Oddis assured us that this was a fair price for the repairs necessary; both he and our former organist, Margery Gumpy worked for Walker Technical. Bunny Cuthbert noted that the electronics behind the organ were in poor condition.

Donna Fried then presented an update on the Senior Pastor Search. Steve Lentz is the Chairperson for this committee which was organized on January 12, 2021. The church profile was completed, presented to Consistory, and validated by the PSEC in June 2021. To date they have had 23 meetings, 1 mock interview, and 1 candidate interview. With the encouragement of the Interim Associate Conference Minister for Search and Call, Rev. Dr. Susan Minasian, along with Rev. Ann Few, following our practice interview discussions, the committee decided to update our church profile to include more diversity with respect to our reference choices. Stuart Bush, Director of The Open Link, and Janice Muller, former member of New Goshenhoppen, agreed to be references replacing Rev. Ryan Travis and Rev. Cydney Van Dyke.

The Search Committee has had one candidate interview to date. The committee was hopeful; however, this person was already involved in conversation with another church and decided to take a Call with them. The committee also had interest in another candidate and had an interview planned, only to receive a notice later stating that the person withdrew from the search process and is remaining at their present church.

The Search Committee has been faithfully dedicated and diligent in the search process while working collaboratively. The members are encouraged collectively by each other's wisdom, honesty, and compassion to seek that individual who will fulfill the role of settled Senior Pastor. We thank those who serve on this committee and our congregation for their trust, patience, and continuing prayers as we seek direction from the Holy Spirit in this search.

Will Howe then asked the congregation if there were any questions or concerns that they wished to bring to this meeting. Larry Heimbach had three requests:

1. He would like to hear the church bell ring on Sunday mornings at the start of the worship services.
2. He noted that there are "Out of Order" signs on the restroom doors in the narthex entrance area. He would like to see those restrooms put back into use.
3. He asked if the wood bar used to lock the front door of the narthex could be removed and those doors be opened on Sunday mornings.

Will Howe said that his requests would be addressed at the next Property Committee meeting.

Dennis Harpel asked if the Friendship Committee could start-up "Coffee Hour/refreshments" following the worship services. Will said this request will be discussed at the next Consistory meeting.

Kim Jacobs suggested the Finance Committee set aside \$1 million dollars of the church's investments and use only the interest for the day-to-day expenses. Will said this will be discussed at the next Finance Committee meeting. He said at present the church takes 5% from its yearly investments to help with day-to-day church expenses. He reminded the congregation that the church's mission is to help others in need and not to hoard our treasure.

A motion was made by Will Howe, second by Dan Rodgers to place the meeting into recess.

Rev. Elaine Ely provided a closing prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Cindy Biehn, Administrative Secretary

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(Second Session)

Zoom Congregational Meeting – November 14, 2021

Note: 23 people were pre-registered for the zoom meeting; however only 17 people were online.

At 12:03 p.m. Consistory President, Will Howe called the meeting back in session. He reported that 49 people voted in the first session. He introduced himself, Pastor Elaine Ely, and Vice President, Donna Fried.

Pastor Elaine Ely offered an opening prayer.

The 2020 meeting minutes were shared on the screen as well as the Minutes from the July 18, 2021, Land Use meeting. There were no objections to the Minutes. Will Howe used this to help attendees practice online voting. 92% yes and 8% abstained. The Minutes were adopted.

Pastor Elaine gave her report as presented during the first session.

Will Howe recognized the wonderful staff of New Goshenhoppen and the five Consistory members that were finishing their term this year. He thanked everyone for their service. The new Consistory candidates were presented. Will asked if there were any additional nominations. No nominations. Motion to approve the 2022 Consistory nominees. 92% yes, 8% abstained. Motion carried.

The budget documents were then presented. Same as first session. Greg Dickey asked about the parsonage costs. Will Howe reported that the costs are down except for the utilities. He mentioned that it will be offered to the new pastor. New flooring is being installed and a bathroom is being remodeled. Larry Heimbach was thanked for his donation that made these upgrades possible.

The investment documents were also shared. A vote was taken to approve the 2022 budget as proposed. 100% yes. There were a total of 60 votes to approve (from combined sessions). The motion carried.

The Land Preservation update was shared next along with the proposal for how the funds will be allocated. There were no questions. Vote on the motion: Do you approve the allocation as presented? 100% yes in the Zoom call (total from sessions: 56 yes, 1 no, 1 abstained). The motion passed.

Information regarding Meadows projects was shared same as first session. There were no questions.

The Organ Fund project was reviewed. These items presented the same as first session.

Will shared information from the first session regarding the questions about organ repairs. He talked with Allan Birney between the services and Allan agrees the organ needs work. It frequently goes out of tune and the electronics inside need a lot of work. Some of the organ functions are not working. Members were invited to give to this ministry.

Steve Lentz's letter from the Pastoral Search Committee was shared.

Will Howe shared other comments from the first session regarding the bathrooms, front door bar, and the bell. Items are being directed to the Property Committee. He shared Kim Jacobs suggestion about putting aside \$1,000,000 from our funds. Friendship Committee's interest in restarting fellowship time was shared. This will go to Consistory for consideration.

Emy Moyer asked if there was an issue with getting a quorum for the meeting. Will Howe reported that we were fine. We had over 5% of our membership, which is what is required.

Doug Atno asked about the farmhouse status. Is a committee looking at its future? Property has looked at it. Cost to renovate would be around \$150,000 to \$200,000. No further discussion.

Will Howe moved to adjourn the meeting. It was seconded by Doug Atno. Pastor Elaine Ely closed with a prayer.

Zoom meeting Minutes submitted by Donna Fried.