

A Thank You Letter to Our Congregation

As I reflect on our congregational meeting on November 17, I am left with gratitude for all those who participated with their heartfelt comments and expertise. As the vote proceeded, I noted that many of the people who were voting “no” are people that I consider good friends. Some of them are on the Board of Finance. I was aware that the Board of Finance unanimously concluded that a “no” vote for geothermal was their recommended more cautious way for the church to proceed. These friends are people whose opinions I respect immensely and I have always appreciated the work the Board of Finance has done for our church.

As I approached the vote, I was ambivalent. I have always been financially cautious. As a self-employed professional, I had to put away funds for 4 college educations, retirement, and weddings. Pam and I are very attuned to maintaining a balanced and conservative financial life. However, I am very distressed by the new administration’s disregard for climate change. Our church has always been in the forefront of taking progressive initiatives. As members for over 40 years, Pam and I have been part of possibly five capital campaigns. I suspect there were people who left our church because they felt there were endless capital campaigns. But I would agree with several of the speakers “our church always finds a way to make things happen.”

Over the years there have been many social and institutional issues that our church has acted on issues such as inclusive language, opening affirming inclusion, Family Promise MetroWest, home for handicapped adults, For His Children, partnership with the AME Church, Village Table, solar panels, Memorial Path, major church renovation, relationship with the WCC, endowment for our Pastoral Residency, to name a few. When Ms. Hille spoke of her hopes for the future during our meeting, she represented the voice of the young. As the chair of the Memorial Path Churchyard Committee in giving my recent witness, I was aware of the past members of our church. I have come to think of our church as “holy ground” that all of us stand on during our life’s journey as members. I am closer to the end of my journey than many other church members. I decided to vote for geothermal as my affirmation of our congregation’s goals. We are doing our small part to prepare our church and community for a better future. I voted in favor of geothermal as a gift to the future members of the church, to my adult children who were raised in the church, and to my grandchildren. The idea of many of us trying to frontload our pledges is a good one.

I am especially thankful for all the work that church members did to bring this information forward, Mark Lenci and the Board of Properties, the entire moderator team who all individually showed their commitment and level of expertise in presenting the facts, the Energy Committee who has been constantly working for “greening oof our church” for over a decade, our professional staff who always give us spiritual guidance and foundational support in our life’s journey as members of the Village Church that we call “home”, and especially the Board of Finance who always care for our church’s financial issues and provide expert guidance through the financial matters year in and year out

After the meeting I spoke with a church member my age who said they had no knowledge of the topic but had used the resources provided by the church to investigate and decide. That member voted for geothermal for many of the same reasons that I did. We all want to leave our church in a better place. I know we have daunting financial issues looming in the present/future. I hope that the Board of Finance will continue with their constant assessment and creativity to maintain a steady financial path for our church. Their expertise is critical to our church's future and they have my immense respect for their knowledge and commitment. In voting for geothermal, I am not turning my back on the other important components of the capital campaign: the endowment for youth education; outreach including Village Table; greening of the Weston Campus; and Properties reserve. We need to keep all these goals in sight as we proceed over the next 3 years. God makes more of us together than we can do apart.

I hope that if Ms. Hille is a member of our church in 30 years that she can stand up in a congregational meeting and say, "I was present at the congregational meeting 30 years ago when our church boldly voted for geothermal despite the significant concerns that it was not the fiscally cautious way to go."

Peace and thanks to all our congregation,

Craig R. Stirrat