

# Central Baptist Church

## Congregational Meeting re Delegates and Solar Proposal

December 8, 2024

The meeting opened at 10:35 a.m. with a prayer led by Pastor Bruce.

David Dolce shared the status of Camp Canonicus and the Board of Ministry's decision to sell the campus. The camp has been running a deficit of approximately \$100,000 for the last 5-10 years and is expected to continue doing so for the next 3-5 years if not sold. Ten of the 64 churches in ABCORI have called for a hearing with the Board of Ministry on January 11 to argue against the proposed sale. Two delegates from CBC will attend to represent the church's interests. In response to questions from the congregation, David explained that the Board of Ministry has been approached by DEM with an interest in the property. DEM pays market value. The Board would like to see the property preserved as open space. After the sale (whether to DEM or another entity), the proceeds will go to the ABCORI Foundation. David also shared that after Church Mutual cancelled the Camp Canonicus policy, the property remains uninsured. The congregation voted to approve the delegate names put forward by the Nominating Committee: Ellen Greene, Deb Nordstrom and alternate Cynthia Leonard.

Don Carlson reviewed the rooftop solar proposal, as detailed in the fact sheet provided to members of the congregation (and attached to these minutes). He added that control of Newport Solar will be changing when a couple from Connecticut takes over. Although he doesn't expect changes that would impact the church's proposed project, the contract with Newport Solar gives CBC the ability to cancel the contract if the RI grant is not realized or *at the church's discretion* even if the RI Grant is approved.

The Executive Committee is seeking approval of the following resolution, minus the final paragraph that authorizes a Capital Campaign. That paragraph is being deleted to allow the Trustees time to assess the building's maintenance/improvement needs and design a campaign that will address those needs in addition to the replenishment of the funds expended on replacing the roof, the Church's net contribution to the solar project and the ABCORI and Bucklin Funds.

Whereas, our mission as a faith community is to bring God's kingdom to life in the community that surrounds us. We invest in a roof to provide a sanctuary where people gather to worship, grow in faith, and serve our community. We pursue solar energy as an act of stewardship, ensuring that we care for God's creation and prepare for the future generations who will walk through these doors;

Whereas, investing in solar panels in tandem with our new roof is a practical and economical way to save on energy costs for the long-term financial stability of the Church;

**We therefore resolve** to authorize the Trustees to enter into a contract with Newport Solar (or other vendor as may be appropriate) for a value not to exceed \$85,000 for the installation of a rooftop solar system, provided that such contract is expressly contingent on the approval of a grant from the State of Rhode Island expected in March of 2025 and further provided that the Church has the unilateral right to terminate the contract at its discretion at the time of that grant approval;

We authorize the advance payment of sufficient funds not to exceed \$6000 to ensure that the project is classified as a 2024 renewable energy project and is therefore governed by the rules in place in 2024;

We authorize the use of funds from the Bucklin Fund and the ABCORI Fund for this purpose, with the expectation that those funds will be replenished through: a) the application of incentives and rebates available through State and Federal programs; b) the allocation of

future energy savings in the church budget; and c) funds raised through a dedicated capital campaign;

~~We authorize a 2025 Capital Campaign to raise funds for improvements and maintenance to the physical premises of the Church, including but not limited to replacement of the roof, the Church's net contribution to the solar project described above, the replenishment of funds advanced by the Bucklin and ABCORI funds, and for other purposes as approved by the Trustees.~~

The ensuing discussion included questions (Q) and comments (C) from the congregation and responses (R) from Don Carlson, John Andrews, and Trey Posey:

(Q) Are we aware of the trend in California and other states where power companies are beginning to pull back from net metering? (R) In that eventuality, we would need to invest in a battery.

(Q) Have we assessed our priorities – are there needs greater than this investment? (R) If we keep the \$6000 energy line item in our budget and use those savings toward repaying the net payment (approx. \$32,000), after 5-6 years we will have recouped the investment -- and going forward the \$6000 we are saving annually can go to other needs.

(Q) What funds did we use to pay for the roof and how much is in the ABCORI and Bucklin Funds? (R) We had a surplus last year due to not having a settled pastor. We used those funds and money from our checking and savings to pay for the roof. We need to replenish our accounts to ensure that we have a buffer in the future. The sum total of the ABCORI and Bucklin Funds is \$135,000.

(C) I would rather have a full-time pastor than pursue this project. (R) After 5-6 years, we will have recouped our investment and energy savings after that can free up resources in the operating budget, indirectly supporting salary and other recurring expenses. As stated in the resolution, "we invest in a roof to provide a sanctuary where people gather to worship, grow in faith, and serve our community. We pursue solar energy as an act of stewardship, ensuring that we care for God's creation and prepare for the future generations who will walk through these doors."

(C) At the 7-year mark, solar installations begin to be in a power deficit. There is an increased cost as the system ages and needs repairs.

(Q) What is the lifespan of the solar panels? (R) 30 years

(Q) Who pays if installing the solar panels damages our roof? (R) Newport Solar's insurance.

(Q) The Bucklin Fund is restricted to three specific uses, which don't include solar. How are we able to use this Fund in paying part of the up-front cost of the installation? (R) While use of the income from the Fund is restricted, CBC is able to borrow against the principal in the Fund if needed, paying it back within 3 years. (The income is not available for use until an outstanding loan is fully repaid.)

(C) The congregation is not growing. Is a capital campaign asking too much of the congregation? (R) If this church's vision is to stay the way we are, then it doesn't make sense to support this project. But it makes sense if this project is considered a step in the direction of a larger mission.

(C) The middle class cannot afford the cost of electricity, which has gone up 30% in the last 3-4 years. Solar is not going to solve this – the country needs to look to natural gas, investing in increasing production.

(Q) Why can't we start a capital campaign now to pay for the roof? (R) We want to give the Trustees time to assess all needs and design a capital campaign that will address them. We expect that process to be completed by the end of January, followed by a "silent phase" of approaching major donors before

the congregation's decision in March on whether to proceed with the solar project and include that cost in the capital campaign. Anyone wishing to donate now can do so by donating to a designated fund.

(Q) How much has been "promised" already? (R) Morna and Duana are very supportive of including the solar piece in the capital campaign because Bill would have loved the idea. Among major donors, there has already been \$20-25,000 promised.

(Q) What is our risk? (R) There is no risk in voting to approve the downpayment of \$6000. If we decide not to go forward with the project, that money is refundable. Newport Solar will use the materials purchased with the downpayment in other customers' projects.

John Andrews asked if there was a motion to approve the resolution. Don Haskell motioned to approve the Congregational Resolution on the Rooftop Solar Project without the final paragraph. Pam Carr seconded the motion. By a vote of 12 yeas and 9 nays, the motion passed. Additional votes by proxy totaled 3 yeas.

The meeting adjourned at 11:42 a.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Cathy Kaiser.