



**ROLLING HILLS COVENANT CHURCH**  
**Annual Members' Meeting**  
**DRAFT Minutes**  
**Sunday – May 19, 2024**

**Present:** 213; 154 members voting

**OPENING AND PRAYER**

Chairman Clyde LaGue opened the Annual Members' Meeting at 1:08 pm welcoming and thanking those that came. He kicked off the meeting by sharing the following thoughts, ending with Hebrews 10:19-25:

The Elders and I have been blessed to watch the amazing things that Christ is doing here at RHCC. We continue to see the Lord grow His church by growing each of you in the knowledge of who He is and as we live out our Mission Statement to –

“Joyfully live as the people of God by bringing the Truth of God’s Word into every corner of every life – in our personal lives, in our families, in our church, in our communities, and in our world – through the power of the Holy Spirit, in the love of Jesus Christ, unto the glory of God.”

This growth occurs through the many ministries and events that happen here each week: Sunday Services (including Spanish Ministry), Sunday classes (Turning Point, Voyagers, Jump-Start, etc.), Tuesday Life Groups, Tuesday Night Live, RAD JH & HS, Young Adults, Men’s/Women’s/Coed Bible studies, and more. We recently added a Newcomers’ Class & Lunch where people can learn more about how to be plugged into the life of the church. Hebrews 10:19-25 says,

“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” ESV

He concluded in prayer that the Lord be glorified in this meeting by all that is said and done.

**APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS CBM MINUTES**

Chairman Clyde moved to approve the prior meeting minutes of February 25, 2024. He asked for members in attendance to raise their hand to second the motion. (Members submitted their votes by ballot, which they dropped off as they left the meeting.)

(142 – Yes, 12 – Abstain)

**TEACHING PASTOR UPDATE**

Chairman Clyde informed the members that, while there is not much to report at this time, the Elders continue to work hard in the process of seeking the Lord’s will and His choice for our future Teaching Pastor. Please keep the Elder Council and this process in your prayers.

**WELCOME NEW MEMBERS**

Elder Rich Tamble encouraged all believers who attend RHCC to become members, if they have not done so yet, so that your God-given spiritual gifts can be used to encourage each other to love, to do good works, and to give God glory. He then announced and welcomed the following people as new members:

- John Austin
- Mary Austin
- Corey Michelle Eccles
- Jennifer Lynn Hansen

**FY 2024-2025 BUDGET**

Executive Pastor Sam Tabari reported on our current financial status first. He shared that the months of January and February were very encouraging to us in that our giving goals were met or were exceeded in those weeks. Unfortunately, in March and April, those trends did not continue, so the deficit grew during those weeks to now. Fortunately, our staff and leadership have been good stewards to help us manage this deficit by lowering the spending. Below are the details of our financial status up to the end of April:

Treasurer’s Report as of **April 30, 2024:**

	YTD Budgeted	YTD Actual	Difference
Revenue	\$5,146,000.00	\$4,660,399.00	(\$485,601.00)
Expenses	\$5,062,830.00	\$4,684,885.00	\$377,944.00
Difference	(\$83,170.00)	(\$24,486.00)	

As mentioned previously, this minimal deficit of \$24,486 is due to intentional good stewardship, as demonstrated by Brian Johnson, our very talented Director of Tech Ministries, and Pastor Alex. They were able to sell some of the gear used when we were in the tent (which is no longer needed), plus some extra equipment we received during the Worship Center remodel. Some of the funds gained from those sales we put toward our deficit and the remainder we put in our Cash Reserves in case we need it at the end of the year. The staff and Elders take the stewardship of this church seriously, knowing that they are accountable to the Lord primarily and to you as well, the members and congregation. Sam asked that the church join together in prayer that the Lord will supply all of our needs and seeking how He might want each one to respond, especially as we are nearing the end of our fiscal year.

Sam then presented the budget for Fiscal Year 2024-2025, which the Elders set at \$5,380,000.00, which is a \$120,000.00 reduction of last year’s. Only a slight reduction was made for several reasons. While we have had an ongoing deficit, we do hope to see improved giving trends, as new families come to the church and as we move closer to hiring a Teaching Pastor. This will have a positive impact on our attendance, our growth, and our giving. It is helpful to look at the yearly budget in terms of four major “buckets.” The first bucket is Personnel and is the largest. The next bucket includes Finance, Operations, and IT. The third is Global Outreach and the fourth is all other ministries, including Children, Students, Spanish, Worship, and others. Most budget areas stayed the same, yet some were increased and others we reduced. We added extra funds to Young Adults and Spanish Ministries, who are hoping to do retreats this upcoming year. Global’s budget was reduced from \$600,000 to \$575,000 because of some missionaries are coming to the end of their ministry and other missionaries we no longer partner with. Regarding Operations, Finance, and IT, this budget increased, since it has costs that continue to rise year after year (such as utilities, insurance premiums, gas, water electricity and other services). Jack Murray, Operations Manager, has worked hard to find many ways to reduce costs, yet keep our campus looking good and operating well. The Personnel budget also has costs that continue to rise year after year (i.e., health premiums, etc.). Even so, we were able to reduce this budget by \$300,000 by not rehiring certain vacated positions. Over the last two years, we have reduced the Personnel budget by \$1.2 million. Pastor Alex has been instrumental in this area as well, as he has been training saints and volunteers that ultimately will reduce the expense of contractors. Henry Sanchez, who was serving as Interim Director of Spanish Ministries while Pastor Mel was on sabbatical, will continue working alongside Pastor Mel as Spanish Ministries Coordinator. Henry has a real heart for the Lord and for God’s people and we are excited to have him come onboard.

Sam moved to approve the FY 2024-2025 budget of \$5.38 million, which was seconded by Jack Murray. (148 – Yes, 5 – Abstain, 1 – No)

**DENOMINATION RESIGNATION UPDATE / ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION REVISION**

Elder Bill Reichert came up to discuss our withdrawal from the Evangelical Covenant Church denomination after 60 going on 70 years. This is something that will not happen quickly; it will be a process that likely takes a year or more. This decision was not made hastily or lightly. The Elders have wrestled with it over several years, as they watched the theological divide between the ECC and RHCC grow ever wider. These issues are not secondary; they are primary and are essential to the way the church operates. Two important examples are Complementarianism (the role of men as Elders and Pastors) and Substitutionary Atonement (Jesus Christ’s death paid for our sins). The latter is essential to our faith. However, new articles brought in by the ECC are more in accord with liberal Protestantism – that Jesus is simply a moral example for us to follow in order to lead better lives. In recent years, the Church has met with ECC leaders, one being the former Superintendent of the Pacific Southwest region and the other being the current president of the ECC. Discussions with them revealed serious changes that would affect RHCC in its daily operations. We would no longer be allowed to ordain our own pastors or plant our own churches. Other former ECC churches and pastors affirmed that the all the aforementioned is

why they resigned from the denomination as well. As Pastor Steve Bunyard said, "It's not that we are leaving the ECC; the ECC is leaving us." For the time being, we have been "grandfathered in," which simply means they haven't kicked us out. Case in point, if we applied to join the ECC today, we would be denied, because our beliefs and practices are not in alignment with theirs. Therefore, there is no compelling reason for us to remain under the ECC; there is no more partnership. The decision to leave the denomination will not affect us as Rolling Hills Covenant Church. Our practices, our mission, our vision will remain the same. Shortly after submitting our resignation, we had a meeting with the ECC and the Conference Superintendent, who said they understand our position and they don't want the process be difficult for us. They informed us of one hurdle in order to be removed from membership from the ECC. Our constitution needs to be updated, specifically, Article II that states we are affiliated with the ECC. However, Article IX, which is about amending our Constitution, presents a problem. It states that "amendments to the Constitution may be adopted by a 2/3 vote of those in attendance at an Annual Business meeting of the church, provided that the proposed amendment was presented to them in written form at a preceding Annual meeting, and that Articles II, III, VIII, and IX cannot be changed." In other words, Article IX says we cannot change Article II. This is highly unusual and the ECC told us they have never seen this in any other church's constitution. Seeking help from our attorney to find a way around this, we learned that this wording even goes against CA Corporation Labor Code. We were therefore advised to begin by amending our Articles of Incorporation, which is what we present to you today, because the Articles of our constitution are subordinate to our Articles of Incorporation. We will amend our Articles of Incorporation to allow us to present and vote on a revised constitution, which in turn will allow us to remove our affiliation with the ECC. Bill invited the attendees to follow along as he read the proposed changes, which had been handed out at the beginning of the meeting. He stated that Articles I, II, III and IV were left mostly intact, while Articles V and VI have changes that are substantive, as stated below:

#### ARTICLE V

*The property of this corporation is irrevocably dedicated to religious purposes, and no part of the net income or assets of this corporation shall ever inure to the benefit of any director, officer or member thereof, or to the benefit of any private person. Upon the dissolution or winding up of this corporation, its assets remaining after payment, or provision for payment, of all debts and liabilities of this corporation shall be distributed to a nonprofit fund, foundation or corporation which is organized and operated exclusively for religious purposes which are in accord with the doctrine and faith disciplines set forth in Article II of these Articles of Incorporation and which has established its tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (or the corresponding provision of any future amendment to the United States Internal Revenue Code).*

#### ARTICLE VI

*Notwithstanding any provision of any existing Constitution and/ or By Laws of this Church, the Chairman of the Board or the Elder Board may call a meeting of the Members, giving notice of the date, time and place of the meeting, and including in the notice of the purpose of the meeting to amend or replace, in whole or in part, the terms of any existing Constitution and /or By Laws of the Church. One-third of the voting power of the Members, represented in person or by a written ballot, shall constitute a quorum at a meeting of the members. If a quorum is present, the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the voting power represented at the meeting, entitled to vote, and voting on any matter shall be the act of the Members.*

As you see, these amendments will allow us to call a future Members' Meeting to amend our Constitution, especially the Articles that do not allow us to amend other Articles, such as our affiliation with the ECC. If we pass these amendments to the Articles of Incorporation today, we will be able to meet in the future to present, vote and pass amendments to our Constitution, ultimately leading us to proceed with our resignation from the denomination. Please send any questions right now on your phones regarding any part of these amendments to [elders@rhcc.net](mailto:elders@rhcc.net) and we will try to answer them at the Q & A session coming up shortly.

At this time, I move that we adopt the changes to Rolling Hills Covenant Church's Articles of Incorporation as presented today which you have before you. Please second the motion from the congregation by raising your hand. (Many people and Elders raised their hands.)  
(148 – Yes, 6 – Abstain)

#### **ELDER UPDATES**

Elder Mike Curtis came to give a brief update on things the Elder Council has been working on other than what has been already reported on (the Teaching Pastor search, the new FY budget, the ECC withdrawal). Many ask for updates on the lawsuit. Unfortunately – or fortunately, depending on your viewpoint – there not really much of a meaningful update to give, because the legal system moves extremely slowly. Many of the hearings that were scheduled for March and April have been pushed back to June. Our attorneys continue to be very optimistic and confident, and are not really concerned by this case. Praise God for that. Nonetheless, we ask you remain diligent in prayer for God's continued protection over His church. We are confident only in His Sovereignty in this.

## PASTOR COMMISSIONING

Church Chairman Clyde LaGue made the exciting announcement that today we will commission one of our own to the office of Pastor. What are the Biblical qualifications for pastor? 1 Timothy 3:1-7 lays them out for us:

*“The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. <sup>2</sup> Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, <sup>3</sup> not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. <sup>4</sup> He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, <sup>5</sup> for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? <sup>6</sup> He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. <sup>7</sup> Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.”* ESV

To identify one who is called to be a pastor, there must be the internal, heart passion as referenced in 1 Timothy 3:1, as Paul says, "it is a noble task". The calling is affirmed if the qualifications mentioned in vv. 2-7 are not only met, but are observed to shape the life of this man more and more over time. In addition, the current elders must affirm the character, doctrine, and giftedness of this man in the calling.

Albert Mohler gives more insight in the calling of a pastor:

*“The Christian pastor holds the greatest office of human responsibility in all creation. He is called to preach the Word, to teach the truth to God's people, to lead God's people in worship, to tend the flock as a caring shepherd, and to mobilize the church for Christian witness and service. The pastor's role also includes an entire complexity of administrative and leadership tasks. Souls are entrusted to his care, the truth is entrusted to his stewardship, and eternal realities hang in the balance. Who can fulfill this job description? Of course, the answer is that no man can fulfill this calling. The Christian pastor must continually acknowledge his absolute dependence upon the grace and mercy of God. As the Apostle Paul instructs us, we are but earthen vessels employed for God's Glory. On his own, no man is up to the task.”*

I have had the personal pleasure and honor to serve our Lord alongside this man. Over the last 5 years, I have had a front row seat on the Elder board, serving together with him, and watching the Lord shape and mold him into the man before you today. He has been a faithful servant, sacrificing his life out of joy, love, and service to our Lord. He now desires the noble task of full time vocational pastoral ministry in service to the Lord and to His flock here at RHCC. We, the Elder board of Rolling Hills Covenant Church, stand before you, attest to, and provide witness of the fact that Sam Tabari has faithfully served over these past years as an Elder and the Executive Director of RHCC. We recognize that he has fulfilled the Biblical qualifications as laid out by the Apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 and affirm him in the calling of vocational pastor.

The Elders laid hands on Sam as Chairman Clyde prayed:

“Heavenly Father, we, the Elders and congregation of RHCC lift up our brother to you, as we commission him as a pastor of your flock. We desperately ask You to protect him and his family from the attack of the evil one. Build a hedge around them, Lord. We pray that as he continues to serve You as Executive Pastor, that his love and joy for You and Your people would grow and be a blessing for him. Most of all, Lord, we pray that You will be glorified in all that Sam does in service for you. We thank You, Lord, for this man. We pray all these things in Your holy and precious name, Lord Jesus. AMEN!

Please welcome Pastor Sam Tabari – your Executive Pastor of Rolling Hills Covenant Church!”

## Q & A PANEL

Sam Tabari emceed this segment of the meeting. The panel participants at this meeting were the Elders.

- This person affirms leaving the denomination, but asks the Elders to give more details about the differences and tell why the decision took so long if there have been differences for so many years.  
**A:** (Mike C.) Bill did a wonderful job explaining the main differences very clearly. As to why it took so long, I actually have the same question. There may have been some trepidation about certain aspects – one being would we have to sacrifice our property. Looking into these things, all our fears have subsided, especially since we have gotten legal counsel. There really won't be any fall out. Another aspect is that it is a serious matter, not to be taken lightly. We have been prayerfully discussing it for years.

(Chairman Clyde) For a long time, it hasn't really impacted us. Recently in the pastoral search process, people have been reading and seeing our position doctrinally and theologically, and discover that our position and that of the ECC do not connect. So now, it does impact how we are perceived. Another reason it came to the forefront was what we witnessed at the Annual ECC meetings and how rapidly things were moving in these different directions, causing us to see the need to take action.

(Bill R.) To remind you of what I said, the ECC has taken a position of penalizing churches that don't conform to the new doctrine – you can't ordain pastors – you can't plant churches. These greatly impair what we do as a church. These are real and concrete penalties – no longer abstract and removed from our congregation.

- Does Article VI mean that any matter requires a 2/3 vote or just those pertaining to the Constitution?  
**A:** (Sam Tabari) Article VI applies only to the latter (a 2/3 vote is required for a change to the Constitution through the Articles of Incorporation); in addition, the Constitution states that a 2/3 vote of approval is required for approval of anything, like our budget or minutes.
- Where or to whom do the assets of the church go in the case of dissolution, if there is a change made?  
**A:** (Bill Reichert) Bill explained that a dissolution of a corporation, in this case a church, means the original church is gone – the assets would presumably go to another ECC church – we would have to start at ground zero as a new church with a new name.  
(Mike Curtis) However, this is why we are doing what we are doing, so this situation doesn't happen. You can pray along with us that all will work out the way we anticipate.
- Is the ECC's revised doctrine on their website? How can one learn more about the doctrinal differences with the ECC?  
**A:** (Mike Curtis) Mike encouraged everyone to look at ECC's website and see what they promote and emphasize. You'll easily see what we call "third tier" subjects front and center and how they go against what the Bible teaches.  
(Sam T.) You can even search "substitutionary atonement Evangelical Covenant Church" and read that they believe the Bible *does not* teach that.
- What has the Pastoral search process looked like? What are the qualifications and specific attributes we have looked for in a candidate?  
**A:** (Clyde LaGue) We began the search process by posting on several local sites, like local seminaries, which yielded about 30 applicants. The Elder Search Team found that handling even 30 applications was too much for them alone. Therefore, we asked Kingdom One to step in and help, and they posted the position nationally, which brought forth 189 applicants. Kingdom One sifted those down to 13 promising candidates with the attributes of a Shepherd/Teacher. The EC sifted the 13 down to four by watching 100's of hours of sermons, finally paring down to just two, which is where we are at now.
- Regarding the new FY budget, can you give a breakdown of Personnel costs as was done for other areas?  
**A:** (Sam T.) Of course, we cannot publicly show individual wages, but I can say that \$2.5 million of the Personnel budget are wages alone and the remainder is the cost of taxes and benefits. In addition, the only position open in the budget is the Teaching Pastor position.
- Are there any plans to return the stage and the whole set up of the stage to the way it was before the remodel?  
**A:** (David Wallin) There are no plans for any changes to the stage. The stage is "set in stone," so to speak. We may not be able to do some of the things we've done in the past, but it is still workable for presentations.  
(Clyde L.) We could not even afford to change it if we wanted to according to our finances right now. When we did the remodel, I was always blown away by how much every little thing cost, even back then.
- Is it possible to bring back the singing the Lord's Prayer after receiving communion? (This is perhaps more of a suggestion than a question and something that Alex can consider.)  
**A:** (Sam T.) We can definitely talk with Pastor Alex and Pastor David about this suggestion.
- What is the next teaching series after Philippians and why?  
**A:** (Mike C.) The Pastoral staff is tasked with determining what is preached. They were led to 1 Peter, which will be a 16-week series. The EC affirmed their choice and are excited about it.

## **PRAYER AND RECESS**

Elder Dan Murdoch closed the meeting in prayer and concluded at 2:23 pm.

s/Jane Wallin  
Secretary to the Council