



**Olivet Congregational Church**  
**Congregational Discernment Task Force**  
**May 18, 2025**  
**Presentation**

# **1. Welcome & Setting Expectations**

**Abigail**

## **2. Scripture & Opening Prayer**

# **3. WHAT is discernment?**

# 3a. Decision making vs. Discernment

## A Deciding Approach

Primarily intellectual process

We have the capacity to understand and solve our own problems

Maintaining order is important

Define, analyze, evaluate and determine

Surveys and data

Assessing risk and return

Parliamentary procedures

Majority Voting

## A Discerning Approach

God is not neutral about our mission or choices

God's will is revealed in community

Anchored in prayer and stillness

Grounded in guiding principles

Steeped in listening - Listening circles, Storytelling, Appreciative Inquiry

Shedding of our ego and biases

Indifference to our own preferences

Consensus

**Deb**

*distilled from the work of Susan Beaumont*

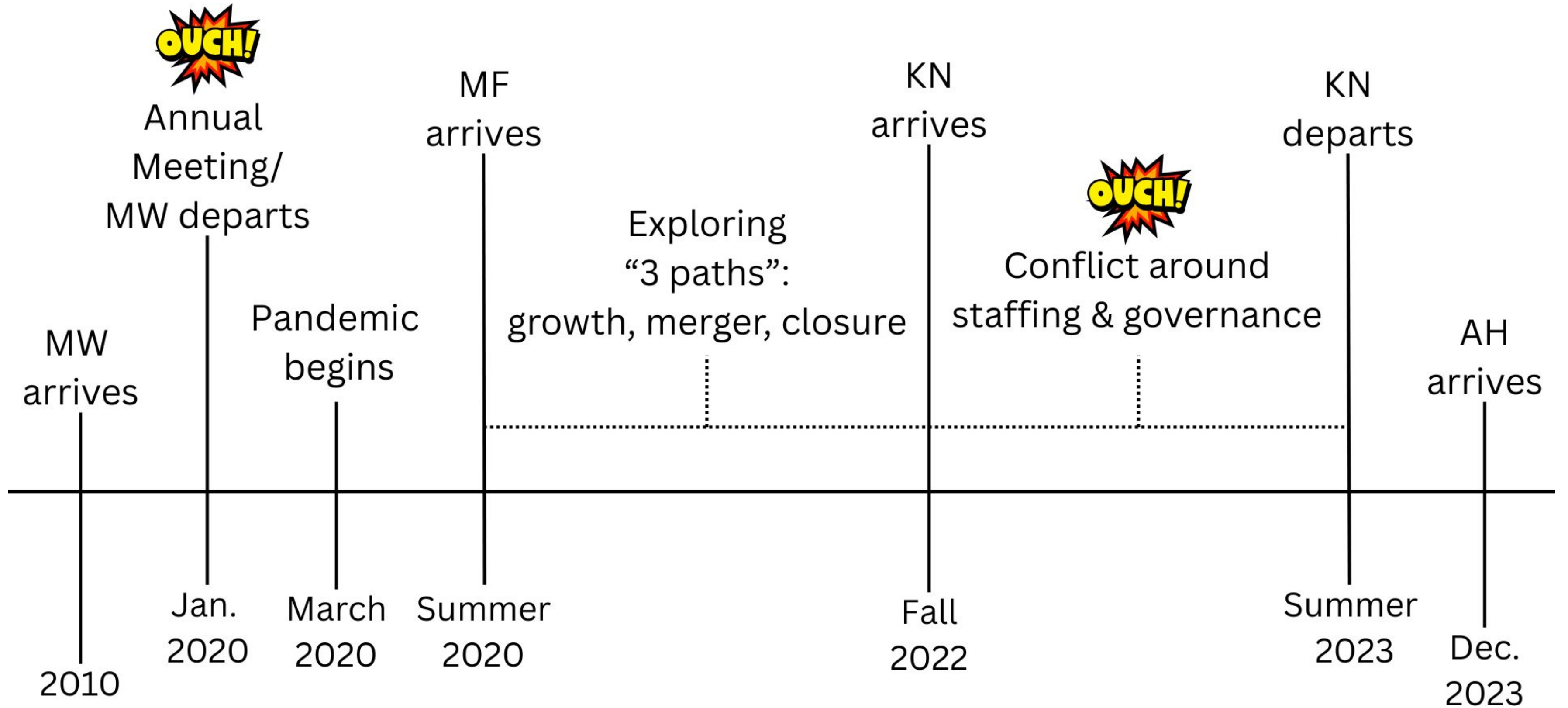
**4. WHY are we doing  
this?**

**Deb, Marcia, Abigail, Johnell, Matt**

# **4a. Recent History and Fritz Process**



# Timeline of Recent History



**Deb & Marcia**



# 3 Paths Process

Summer 2020	Michael Fritz hired		
	Interviews		
Oct 2020	Five questions – Survey Monkey		
Jan. 2021	3 Paths – Annual Report		
	Path 1	Stay as is	
	Path 2	Grow	
	Path 3	Merge	
Sept. 2021	Voting		
	Path 1		1 vote
	Path 2		2 votes
	Path 2+3	3 votes	
	<u>Path 3+3 w/ time limits</u>		<u>42 votes</u>
	TOTAL VOTES		48

**Deb &  
Marcia**

# 3 Paths Process (continued)

Sept. 2021-  
May 2022

Path 3 Exploration

Bloom

Mendota Church

St Paul UCC

June 2022

Michael Fritz's contract ends

**Deb &  
Marcia**

# **4b. Snapshot of Current Situation**

**Abigail & Johnell**



# Broader Church Context

Abigail

# CHURCH CHANGING

Membership and worship attendance are down across  
the United Church of Christ

% CHANGE	MEMBERS	AVG WEEKLY ATTENDANCE
2017-2022	-16.57%	-29.72%
2012-2022	-28.69%	-40.49%

Source

:



Abigail

# U.S. Religious Landscape Changing

- Although nearly 50% of people attended church weekly as a child, only 20% attended weekly as adults.
- Most churches see a 10-15% drop in attendance annually.
- Volunteering continues to drop, with 40% of church membership volunteering in early 2020 and only 20% volunteering by March 2022.
- 8.8% of churches were either forced (or decided) to decrease the size of their staff in 2024—despite planning to do the opposite in 2023.



**In 2022,  
71% of MN UCC churches  
had worship attendance <50  
and  
45% of MN UCC churches  
had membership of <100**



Source: The Minnesota Conference of the

**Abigail**



# Olivet Context

Abigail



# **CHALLENGES FOR OLIVET IN 2025**

**Giving**

**Membership**

**Weekly Attendance**

**Volunteer Burnout**

**Staff Sustainability**

**Abigail**

# Staff:Congregant Ratio

## Majority of U.S. Churches

1 full-time equivalent (FTE) employee for  
30-65 people.\*

## Olivet Congregational Church

2.75 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees for  
~30 people.

\*Based on data from 510 churches captured through the National Church Compensation Survey and State of Church Compensation Survey (2021-2022).

Source: ChurchSalary.com

**Abigail**

# Staff Allocation in Budget

On average,  
churches spend slightly less than 50% of  
their budget on payroll.\*

Olivet Congregational Church  
spent about 70% of our budget on payroll in 2024.

\*Based on the ratio of payroll (compensation and benefits) spending versus overall budget from 3,098 churches (2018-2022). Source: ChurchSalary.com

**Abigail**

# Considerations

**“What is realistic to expect of a church this size in terms of programs and staffing?”**

**“What does it mean to be good stewards of our existing resources?”**

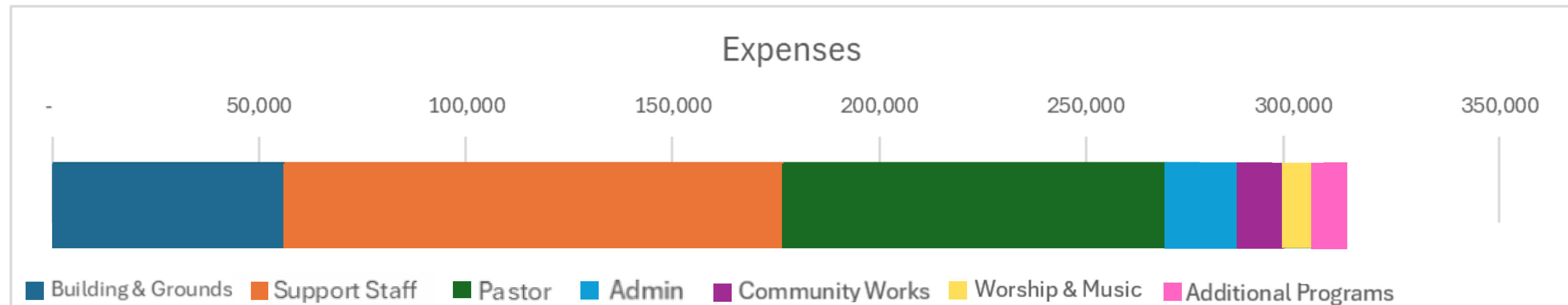
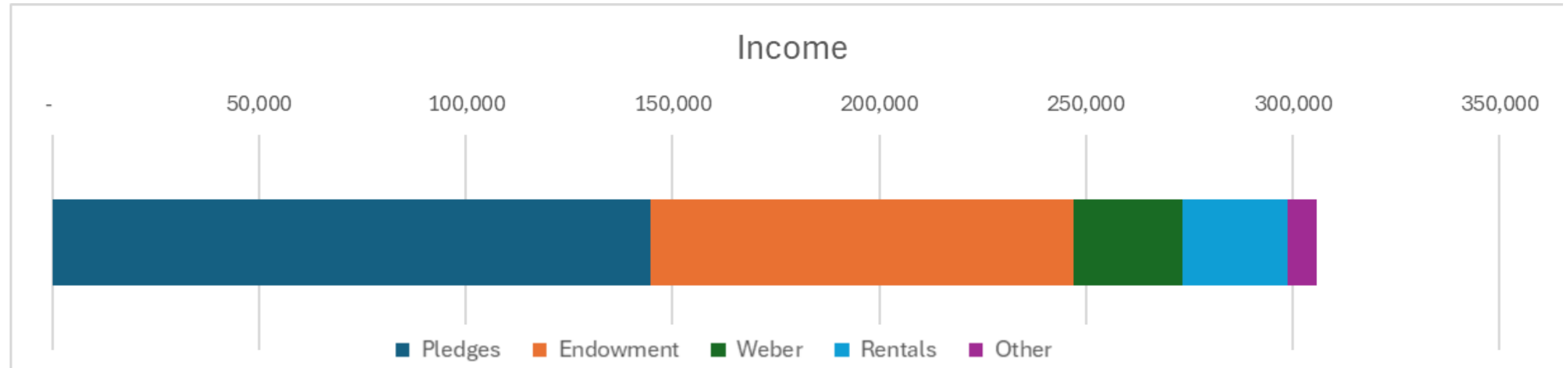
**“What role should the endowment play in our annual operating budget?”**

**“What does meaningful church look like right now given the reality of the world?”**

**Abigail**



# 2025 Budget



Johnell

## 4c. The Framing Question

Reflecting on where we are now,  
what changes in form and direction  
is God calling Olivet to make?

**5. HOW are we doing  
this?**

**Matt, Gary, Johnell, Abigail**

# **5a. Role of the Task Force & Sarah Lehman**

- **Task Force is not deciding but designing a process to engage congregation in the framing question**
- **Sarah Lehman facilitating conversation with task force**
- **Task Force facilitating conversation with the congregation**

**5b. Role of the Congregation:  
to participate fully and  
faithfully!**

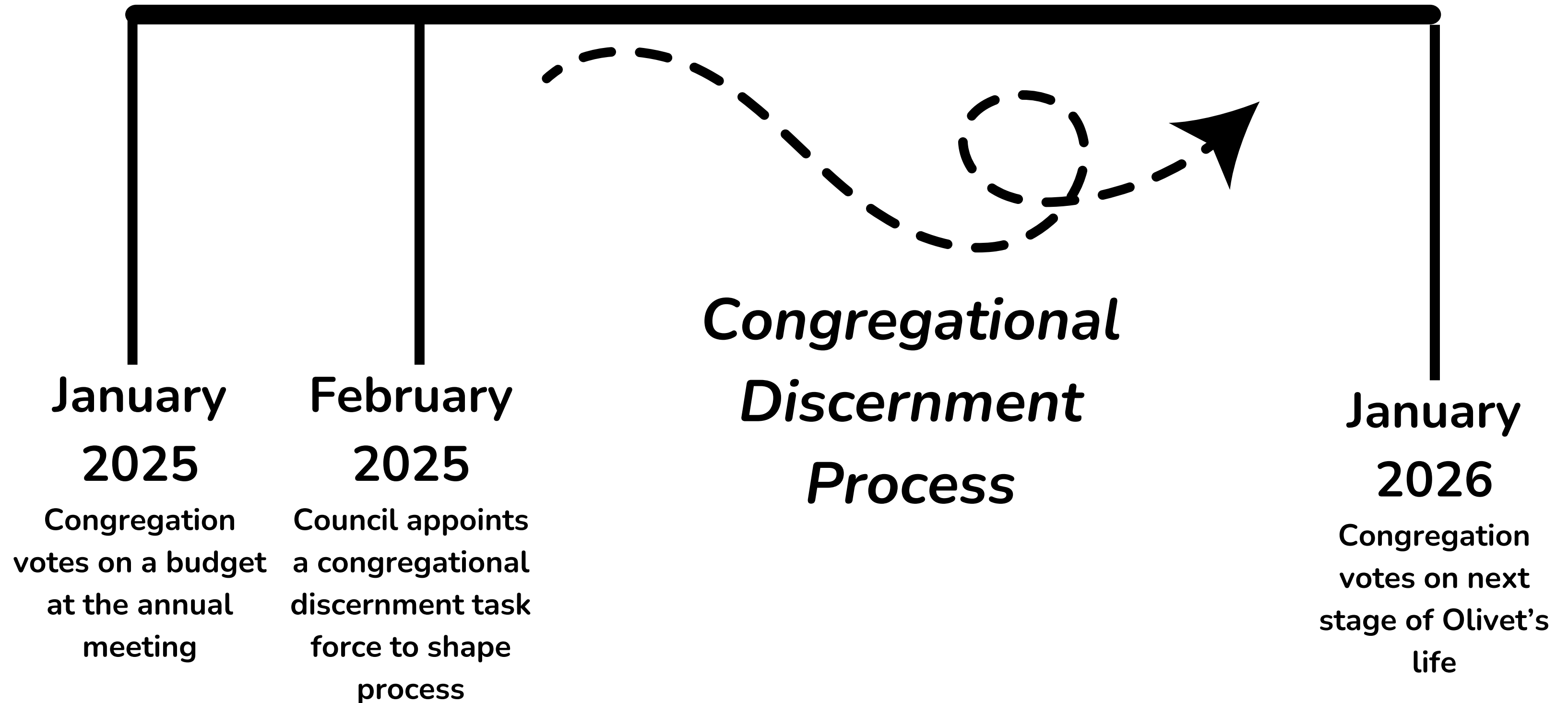
# **5c. Spiritual Dimension**



# **5d. The Task Force's Guiding Principles**

- 1. Prepare to Listen**
- 2. Lead with Compassion**
- 3. Listen with Care**
- 4. Create Brave Space**
- 5. Communicate with Integrity**

# 5e. Broad Timeline



**Abigail**

**6. Get Involved: Be sure to fill out participation form and get handouts!**



**THANK YOU!**