

Draft***UUCM Congregational Meeting Minutes***Draft

2/18/18

The congregation gathered in the Sanctuary and in Emerson Hall

The meeting was called back to order at 12:06 pm, Council President Tricia Jalbert presiding

A quorum check was called. Forty-nine (49) members were present with quorum threshold of 30 members. Quorum was certified

Sanctuary Improvement project

Tricia asked for further questions regarding the Property Committee presentation. None were forthcoming

Barbara Smith moved:

We renovate the front of the Sanctuary for safety as presented at this meeting

John Shonle seconded this motion

A point of order was raised as to discussion of the Motion. Tricia pointed out that discussion had occurred during the presentation and that she had asked for further questions and discussion prior to Barbara's presentation of the motion.

Graham Smith moved the question

The Motion was approved unanimously, no abstentions

How decisions are made

Rev. Carol next addressed the meeting. She has noted that there is a lack of clarity as to how decisions are made. She has been working with the council to develop concrete processes for decision making. We often desire consensus, but it takes a long time for decisions to be made. Things can "stall out" during the process. There may be a better, more efficient method. Handout given. She referred to the outline she has provided.

The outline is as follows.

Rev. Carol reviewed the outline with examples including the recent creation of the teen room and the above Sanctuary Improvement proposal as examples of how proposals can be brought to the leadership and decisions can move forward. She addressed issues of Committee independence, committee financial planning and the past, current and, possible, future structure of the Council.

With regards to Council, Rev. Carol raised the idea that Council be divided into two distinct bodies, one body responsible for "operations", the second body would operate as a "Board". The "Board" would be

responsible for “long range planning, visioning and fiscal responsibility”. This would be similar to the “Board” of other not-for-profit organizations.

Carol introduced the idea of the RACI (Responsible, Accountable, consulted, Informed) process. She noted that sometimes communications are suboptimal. A better “feedback loop” may be helpful to getting decisions made. The RACI rubric may be helpful to facilitate and codify communications within the congregation. She opened the floor to ideas, suggestions, feedback regarding these ideas.

Discussion

Nancy Baker: Would CDC be recruiting for the 2 different Council/Board bodies?

A: Yes, peoples’ interests and strengths would be considered regarding which body they would serve in.

Ellen Groh: 2 questions:

- 1) Has the division of the council already occurred?
 - a. Not yet.
- 2) How would you decide that the whole congregation needs to be part of the decision making process?
 - a. More clarity around vision and identity may be needed to answer that question. Get a better idea of where the congregation as a whole is on values. The Council does not always know when to bring something to the whole congregation. Look through the lens of vision, values, UU values. Carol opined that the Council should represent the ideals of the congregation and that, ideally, the congregation should know that the council will make decisions bearing in mind the values of the congregation and would bring to the congregation those questions for which the input of the entire congregation would be needed.

Cathy: Would a bylaws change be needed?

- a. No, the Bylaws would remain the same. The functions within Council would be split in a more structured manner but the overall function of Council, as per the Bylaws would remain the same.

John Shonle: Can one person be in both parts of the council?

- a. Yes and no. Council will occasionally meet as a whole but meetings of the subsections of Council would also take place.

Cammie Opre: What about “projects”? Under which part of “Council” would projects fall

- a. Projects fall under committees and groups of committees working together. Such projects are more operational than policy.

Nancy Baker Suggested that the terms be different for the two different bodies. It might be wise that the term of a member on the “policy” and long-range planning side of “Council” be longer than those of members of the “operational” or day-to-day part of the Council.

Bylaws proposal

Mark Schwartzberg presented a possible Bylaws change as follows:

To ensure that any minister called by the congregation will feel comfortable that her or his ministry will begin with solid support from the congregation AND to impress upon members the importance of participating in the vote to call a new settled minister, the Council suggests the following bylaws changes to **ARTICLE VII-The Ministers**

Current wording:

- A. The minister(s) shall be called or discharged by vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the members of the Congregation present at a business meeting legally called for that purpose after a majority of the Church Council has filed with the Clerk a written recommendation of such action.
- B. All ministers of the Congregation shall have fellowship with the Unitarian Universalist Association.
- C. The terms and conditions of the Minister's(s') employment shall be contained in a written contract. Such terms and conditions shall be voted upon by the Congregation and made a part of the record of the meeting at which such employment was voted.
- D. The minister(s) shall fulfill the responsibilities as stated in a job description mutually agreed upon by the minister(s) and the Church Council.
- E. The minister(s) shall be ex officio member(s) of all committees.

Proposed wording

- A. The minister(s) shall be called by a vote of ninety-five percent (95%) of members of the Congregation present at a business meeting legally called for that purpose after a majority of the Church Council has filed with the Clerk a written recommendation of such action. For such a vote, the quorum requirement will be 60% of current members of the Congregation.**
- B. The minister(s) may be dismissed by vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the members of the Congregation present at a business meeting legally called for that purpose after a majority of the Church Council has filed with the Clerk a written recommendation of such action. For such a vote, the quorum requirement will be 60% of the members of the Congregation.**
- C. All ministers of the Congregation shall have fellowship with the Unitarian Universalist Association.
- D. The terms and conditions of the Minister's(s') employment shall be contained in a written contract. Such terms and conditions shall be voted upon by the Congregation and made a part of the record of the meeting at which such employment was voted.
- E. The minister(s) shall fulfill the responsibilities as stated in a job description mutually agreed upon by the minister(s) and the Church Council.
- F. The minister(s) shall be ex officio member(s) of all committees.

Discussion

Bob Baker pointed out that in his time here he has not seen 60% of the membership at a meeting.

Graham Smith noted that at the conclusion of the search process we will have only one option as to a new minister. The choice will be to accept that person or not. We do not need point A because it will

turn out to be unanimous anyway. Fred Dyke further noted that if a given minister did not receive at least a 95% vote, she or he would not accept the call. Susan Deschenes agreed with Bob Baker that it would be difficult to get 60% of members at a meeting. Ellen Groh agreed that 60% meeting participation would be difficult to reach. The fact that the search committee will return only one name for consideration may not guarantee universal acceptance of the candidate. It may be a good idea to have a higher threshold for such a vote. John Shonle raised a concern regarding the accuracy of the membership number. Mark Schwartzberg noted that efforts are ongoing to update the membership rolls and ensure their accuracy. Tricia reminded the congregation that this suggestion and working come from the UUA. As the bylaws currently stand, a small percentage of the congregation could call or dismiss a minister. Cammie Opre raised concern that using a very high vote threshold for calling a minister could allow a small number of people to block the vote. Linda Higgs wondered whether we could somehow define an “active” member (as opposed to a “member” who, for example, has moved far away but still wishes to be on the rolls as a member but does not participate actively in the congregation) and then require that the vote require 95% of active members. Kristin Rounds further wondered if the quorum could be defined as 60% of “active” members. Jackie Davis wondered whether we could incorporate remote participation in meetings (electronically) thereby allowing those people who find it difficult to attend the meeting physically could still participate. Mark Schwartzberg noted that this would require a bylaws change. Al Landeck asked if we know the highest-level meeting participation we have had so far. Have we ever met 60%? Could we be setting ourselves up for a situation in which we could not actually call a minister because we would not meet quorum. Amy Conley then wondered if a method could be developed to allow for “proxy” voting. Time for the discussion was called. Tricia offered to extend time for the discussion which would necessitate an extension of the total meeting time. There was no interest in this.

Yard Sign Proposal

Elise DeMichael reviewed the history of Linda Goodman’s Yard Sign proposal. The top vote getter, determined by poll of the congregation is:

“Lover Your Neighbor...your black, brown, immigrant, disabled, differently religious, LGBTQ, fully Human neighbor” ...

Council is thrilled when someone comes to council with a passionate proposal.

Tricia asked for volunteers for a task force to work on a task force to deal with signs.

Cammie Opre, Jamie Ferrier, Scott Bennett, David Wheeler, Linda Higgs and Jan Woodman volunteered

A number of those present expressed interest in having a copy of this sign for their own use.

White Privilege Action Group

David Wheeler reported that he participated in the program at the Methodist church on white privilege (white supremacy). On **March 31st** there will be a follow-up meeting to discuss what should be done moving forward. Members of the group were asked to bring a friend to the next meeting, specifically a friend of color.

Symbols in the Sanctuary

Council has realized that this topic has not moved forward. Tricia recapped the previous discussion which occurred at annual meeting 2 years ago and what small changes have occurred since. Council is hoping that there are members/friends who would be willing to work as a group to look into this issue.

Dona Eaton, Betty Sweeney, Bob Baker, Jamie Ferrier, Amy Conley, Cathy Haight, Fred Dyke, John Shonle,

John Shonle asked about the peace dove. Tricia offered this would be for the workgroup and Council to discuss. Carol advised a deliberative process moving forward regarding all questions including this one of the replacement of the Peace Dove. Cammie wondered if an informal poll might be useful to determine if people have a problem with the symbols as they stand. Mark Schwartzberg pointed out that prior to hanging the multicultural banners this year, the symbols in our Sanctuary were only Christian ones. This is fine, but does it really represent who we are and how we wish to be represented? Rev. Carol pointed out that it is about augmenting our foundation within the Judeo-Christian tradition. Tricia Jalbert observed that, even with the wonderful wayside pulpit, people driving by don't necessarily know what we stand for. We can help let people know who we are by including representations of our ideas and principles throughout the building. Ellen Groh asked, what is the question before us, the purpose of the group? Tricia responded that the "project" is to look at this issue and to bring a proposal to the congregation.

Indigenous Peoples day

Congregants were asked to volunteer to petition the Town of Milford to change "Columbus Day" to "Indigenous Peoples' Day".

Jamie Ferrier, Cathy Goldwater and Anne Sobel volunteered.

Endowment update

Alan Shirey presented an update on the status of the Endowment.

1) How is the Endowment doing?

As of the end of January 2018 the Endowment is valued at \$771,000. This is a combination of the Betty Winberg bequest and very good market returns. This represents a doubling of the value of the Endowment since this time last year. There is \$751,000 in the general fund and \$14,000 in the "building" fund.

The endowment is divided into 2 funds. The "general" fund, available to be used by special vote of the congregation for any purpose and the "building" fund, the monies of which may only be used for building issues. Money may be transferred from the "general" fund to the "building" fund by vote of the congregation.

2) What happened to Betty Winberg bequest?

We were gifted almost \$317,000 from the Betty Winberg Trust and Estate. We are expecting approximately \$50,000 more once the estate is finally settled.

3) How can the endowment help UUCM?

Since the fund has reached a value which is 2 times the value of the operating budget, we can now use the endowment to support the operating expenses of the congregation. This would come from income to the endowment. For this year, the amount that the Endowment could contribute to operations is \$24,000

4) What are the trustees working on?

Working on changes to the governing document of the endowment

1. Change from using "income" as a basis upon which to calculate the potential amount to be distributed to operations to using a "smoothed average" of principle as the basis for the calculation.
 - a. Using a "smoothed" average will help to avoid the volatility that can be seen in "income" (as determined by market returns)
2. Institute an annual audit by an independent agent with results going to Council
3. Acknowledge requests for anonymity from out Benefactors.

Once there is consensus among the Trustees, there will be congregational meetings to discuss the changes followed by a congregational vote to approve any changes (perhaps at the annual meeting)

5) How can I get information?

You may ask any of the trustees.

There is also Information is posted to the website. This information is updated every 2 months.

In closing, Tricia reminded congregants that they will be contacted by a member of Council or of the CDC to get their input on whom to appoint to the ministerial Search Committee.

Graham moved to adjourn. Alan Shirey seconded

The meeting adjourned at 1:20 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Schwartzberg, councilor at large