

**First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor
Congregational Meeting 13 January 2019
Minutes**

Chalice Lighting – Board President Erik Stalhandske

Call to Order – Board of Trustees President Erik Stalhandske called the meeting to order at 1:12pm

Declaration of Quorum – A quorum was declared by Board Secretary Rick Witten

Adoption of Agenda

Moved: Colleen Crawley

Second: John Frank

Adoption of Rules and Procedures

Moved: Phyllis Valentine

Second: Jim Lee

Adoption of Waiver of Requirement for Voting Privileges

Moved: Cathie Breidenbach

Second: Jim McCargar

Adoption of February 2018 Congregational Meeting Minutes

Moved: Jim Lee

Second: Lissa Oliver

Introduction of the Board of Trustees – President Erik Stalhandske

Vice President Laura Bollettino, Treasurer Allen Duncan, Secretary Rick Witten, Hayley Boyse, Lissa Oliver, Mark Doman, Vilma Mesa, Terry Madden

Reading of the UUAA Core Values – President Erik Stalhandske

The First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor, MI has been deeply committed to liberal religious thought and action since 1865. We join together in community to encourage and inspire each other's spiritual journeys, to honor and care for the natural world around us, and to join forces in furthering social justice in the Ann Arbor area and the wider world.

2019 Operational Budget – Interim Administrator Ed Lynn

Volunteer Interim Administrator Ed Lynn briefed the congregation on the financial results of 2018, the pledge drive for 2019, and the 2019 budget.

In 2018 the congregation essentially broke even. Expenses and Income are expected to be within \$1,000 of each other once the final numbers are tallied. In addition, the congregation gave away \$35,000 through shared collections, invested \$24,000 in capital improvements and have \$24,000 available for improvements in 2019.

Since taking out a new mortgage in May of 2016 for \$1,280,000 we have paid off \$200,000 of that. At the end of the 5 year mortgage it should be down to \$900,000. The facilities have been maintained and are in good repair.

The 2019 pledge drive goal was \$1,000,000 of which \$970,000 was received. This represents a \$90,000 increase from 2018. This will allow for continued support of pastoral care, additional support for social justice, and allow us by mid-2019 to restore the congregation's share of staff medical and dental premiums to 80%. The percentage was reduced to 70% due to tight budgets around 2010. These premiums currently will cost around \$115, 000 in 2019, while the mortgage will be \$112,000, so this is a significant expense.

The floor was opened for budget questions

Laura Johnstone asked if fundraisers such as the auction bring in additional funds. She also inquired who decides how money is spent?

Ed answered that fundraisers are included in the budget projections. The Senior Minister decides how to spend the budget, however the vast majority of the funds are dedicated to fixed costs. There is only a marginal variation from year to year.

Merril Crockett asked what physical improvements need to be attended to this year?

Ed said that there are always surprises, but next big project is to redo the sanctuary. The building is 20 years old and hasn't been painted since before the very first service. Updates and repairs include the installation of a new audio system for hearing aids, at around \$30,000. Repair of one of the large windows, which has lost its argon gas, will cost upwards of \$3000. New routers will be installed to improve WiFi.

Judy Lindtot asked if there is a plan to fix the patch of peeled paint on the Sanctuary ceiling?

Ed's answer was "Yes." However he discussed the need to coordinate that repair with other needs so that while the necessary lift is rented other needs can be taken care of as well: many lights have burned out, lights along the skylights will be switched to LED for longer life, the sanctuary needs to be painted. All the repairs and improvements will be coordinated to reduce costs and minimize disruptions to services.

Edith Hough asked if medical and dental premiums are combined, or if they can be separated and how the costs break down.

Ed noted that dental is only about \$6,000 and the rest is medical.

President Stalhandske initiated a standing ovation in appreciation of everything Ed Lynn provides the congregation.

UAAA Safety Plan Update – Reverend Cassandra Hartley

Rev. Cassandra noted that a primary goal of hers is to ensure that our children have a loving, welcoming, and safe home here in our congregation. When she joined the staff, much had already been done to make our congregation safe, including interior windows in classrooms for monitoring, having at least two adults with children, chaperones for conferences, and background checks for volunteers, as well as safety policies regarding fires and natural disasters.

To build on this work, a Safety Task Force was formed consisting of Rev. Cassandra, interim administrator Ed Lynn, Welcome Ministries Coordinator Hannah Hotchkiss, SGD Coordinator Mark VanKempen, Building Manager Don Hackney and Office Coordinator Debby Cassamatta.

Since the Safety Task Force began, accomplishments include:

- Updated policies for Active Shooter Response
- Active Shooter Response and CPR training for teachers and welcome team
- Expanded scope of background checks for volunteers
- Placed Rampart tool in classrooms to secure classroom doors
- Walkie talkie system for staff and volunteer use on Sunday mornings
- Developing emergency evacuation plan for people with disabilities

Multiple shootings in faith communities underscore the need for this work.

Current projects that will require the congregation's input and support:

- 1) A parking lot ministry for Sunday mornings to greet people, assist congregants with mobility needs, and to communicate with staff and volunteers inside if they see a suspicious person approaching the building. Anyone willing to serve in this role is encouraged to speak with Rev. Cassandra or Hannah Hotchkiss.
- 2) A conversation as a whole community about whether to lock some building entrances during services. Finding the balance between being welcoming and accessible versus ensuring security and safety is not easy or obvious. The Safety Task Force will roll out plans for an information gathering process soon.
- 3) An ongoing Safety Team made up of staff and congregants. Interested members are asked to contact the Task Force.

Anyone with ideas, concerns or questions about safety at UAAA are encouraged to contact Rev. Cassandra or other Task Force members.

Senior Minister Update – Reverend Manish Mishra Marzetti

Reverend Manish expressed his appreciation for the work of Rev. Cassandra and the safety team, and noted the unfortunate need to be proactive given the reality that liberal religious communities are at risk of physical attack.

In his first 5 months with UUAA Rev. Manish has been impressed with the hard working, dedicated and gifted staff team. He also learned that our community needs more opportunities to provide feedback, in response he has implemented opportunities such as the survey in today's service and the creation of the Shared Ministries Team. He is committed to creating opportunities to deepen the dialog.

Rev. Manish walked through his Goals document, which was published in the UUAA monthly newsletter. His top-level goals include:

- Establish healthy, productive relationships with staff, key lay leaders, and key stakeholders
- Continue the creation of spiritually meaningful and engaging Sunday worship experiences
- Support the Board of Trustees in developing and implementing a vision and strategic priorities.
- Establish and support the Shared Ministries Team.

Board Update – President Erik Stalhandske

Erik read from bylaws regarding the Work of the Board of Trustees. He then walked through the Board Work Plan document, which outlines six areas of focus:

- Create opportunities for communicating and engagement with the Congregation. Erik emphasized the desire for more interactivity and communication between the board and the congregation.
- Honor our Shared Leadership through policy formulation and updates
- Address timely issues through board-led workgroups
- Engage in Monitoring sessions with different ministries and Programs
- Develop a master plan for visioning and strategy
- Provide Leadership in Fostering Beloved Community

Proxy Voting

A change to the State of Michigan non-profit statutes requires UUAA to add a Proxy Voting policy to our Bylaws. Proxy voting is a written authorization that allows a voting member to appoint another person to vote on their behalf in their absence. You cannot ensure that your proxy will vote your interest – the proxy has the legal authority to choose how to vote. Proxy voting is not absentee voting. Historically, UUAA has not allowed proxy voting, but the Bylaws are silent on the issue, so the Bylaws need to be updated. The Board will bring two proposals to the June Congregational Meeting.

Research shows that other congregations are split with roughly half allowing proxy voting and half not. A straw vote taken during the November listening session showed 1/3 in favor, 1/3 against, 1/3 undecided.

Erik performed a quick show-of-hand poll on the question “For proxy voting, where each Proxy may vote for only one other member”. The room was roughly split evenly between For, Against, and a slightly larger number voting Undecided.

Vision and Purpose Work

UUAA has had periodic reviews, including the Sankofa project, the 150 anniversary celebration, and 5 year Strategic Plans. This moment, with our new senior minister, is a fitting time to discern our purpose that will drive our short and long term budgeting, staffing and operational priorities.

The process of discerning our vision and purpose will be a collective activity. The Board's goal is to reach large proportion of congregation. Research into how other large congregations have performed visioning work uncovered three themes:

- Board-centered activity where data is collected and mission statements developed
- Pleased with 15% participation
- Consultants' processes were rigid

Members gathered at the meeting agreed with Erik that this model is not a good fit for UUAA. Erik discussed the consultant, Elandria Williams, whom the Board has selected for UUAA's visioning work. Rev. Manish has worked with Elandria in his role as UUA Board member. Elandria serves as the UUA Co-Moderator and has visited nearly every UU congregation in the US and Canada. Elandria uses a process that is flexible and radically inclusive, and was the only consultant who indicated youth involvement is critical.

Rev. Manish is on UUA board with facilitator Elandria Williams. Has offered her services as facilitator, has visited almost every congregation in CA and USA. Emphasize collaboration. Only consultant to mention youth involvement.

Visioning/Small Group Activities

Erik introduced the interactive visioning process to be done in the social hall. A motion was made to suspend Robert's Rules, which was Seconded by acclamation.

Visioning Activity

Congregants moved to the social hall where paper-covered tables were set up for members to express their UUAA Vision through drawing, writing and collage.

Reconvene

The meeting was called back to order for a Question and Answer session.

Pat Herbst noted that the Senior Minister's Goals document lists a lot of valuable work, but he is disappointed not to see pastoral care. There is too much on staff and service.

Erik noted that Pastoral Care receives a tremendous amount of attention from Rev. Manish, that UUAA has a coordinator of Pastoral Care, and that it was purposefully not listed as a top priority in Rev. Manish's first year.

Rev. Manish mentioned that the community recently invested in the position of Social Justice & Pastoral Care Coordinator, who is developing a plan that will take 12 to 18 months to roll out. He directly supports and advises the Coordinator. Rev. Manish is beginning a 10-25 year time with UUAA and it takes time to build relationships with staff and the community, and to discern what the needs are. This work will deepen and create a foundation, and this is the appropriate focus in these early days.

Margaret Pekarek, referring to the visioning exercise just completed, has thought of more ideas and wants assurance that she will have other opportunities to provide them.

Erik stated that she could be assured of that. He also discussed the "voting" aspect of the exercise, which some people were uncomfortable with, and stated that the larger goal of voting was to encourage people to circulate and look at what others had done.

Marina Brown spoke to programs related to youth in our community. Several years ago UUAA had a program to "adopt" students from the University of Michigan to build relationships with them. UUAA once had a part time position for a person who developed relationships with UM students. Currently, our high school students are isolated in their classroom and Marina would like to see them join the services periodically to build relationships with the adults.

Erik verified with Marina that she had included these ideas in the visioning exercise.

Ruth Mohr wondered if it would be good to do this (visioning work) in the context of our seven principles. Think about our principles in 20 years and broaden our perspective of what we're thinking about.

Erik responded that this is a thoughtful idea and something that will be incorporated into the process.

Merrill Crockett stated that she was unable to get around and look at everything and requested a list of everything on the sheets so we can all see everything, even the imperfect ones.

Erik responded that the process of sharing has not yet been worked out, but there is a commitment to sharing the content in some form.

Michael Rudy noted that our community has as many opinions regarding priorities as we have people and asked if a process has been developed to help people understand their ideas may not rise to the top.

Erik underscored that this will be a learning journey for all of us, recognized that not every idea will rise to the top, and stressed that the goal of the process is for everyone to feel that they were heard.

John Hagen noted that there is research which suggests it's more important to focus on short term priorities, and he stated that it's important to focus on these next two years and to establish measurable goals.

Erik expressed his agreement. He shared that the exercise today was based on the advice of Elandria, who said that for people to get out of "here and now" thinking you have to look at a longer time horizon. So this exercise was to do some "blue sky" thinking prior to developing two and five year plans.

David Owens remarked that in the visioning exercise several people suggested senior housing on our land, and he asked if that is even a practical thing to consider.

Erik recognized that our land has some tricky issues with water and requested Ken Clein speak to the question.

Ken Clein pointed out that anything is possible with enough time and money, however our septic system is sized to this building and would thus present a challenge. However, he noted, any vision is worth articulating at this stage.

Kate Warner responded to the Senior Center question by suggesting such a project would need to wait for the sewer line to be extended to our property, which will probably happen in the next 30 years. She went on to her points. Themes were evident in the visioning exercise, such as diversity and inclusiveness. She stressed that the University of Michigan population is very diverse, so UUAA should look at ways of increasing our connection with the U of M. Another observation is that UUAA is not taking advantage of technology to the extent that we could. We could broadcast Sunday services, for example.

In response, Erik noted that this is being looked at. Some barriers include copyright and bandwidth issues, but we do want to share the wealth of what people experience here and are pursuing this.

Erik entertained a motion to extend the Q&A session for 10 mins.

Moved: Phil Tuchinsky

Seconded: Pat Herbst

Motion passed by show of hands.

Bruce Gibb recounted that he has participated in a number of sessions like today's visioning exercise at UUAA before, but none of the info ever got back to us. It was not consolidated or sorted into themes so it felt like shouting into the void and he is afraid it could happen again.

Erik committed that this information will be communicated back to the congregation in some useful form.

Phil Tuchinsky spoke to amplify the same point. It's important that the congregation owns the data. It's the property of all of us. He suggested recruiting volunteers from the congregation to collect and collate the data. This is a suggestion, not a question.

Angelina Zaytsev said she's hearing a lot of talk about democracy, but also talk about diversity and inclusion. She is concerned is that democracy is not inherently an equitable machine where minority voices may be lost to the will of the majority. Is board working on a way to ensure that is not happening?

Erik recounted that Elandria and the Board are working toward the lofty expectation of reaching 80% of the congregation with some form of involvement.

Terry Wilkerson didn't feel the previous question was fully answered. Is there some way to give more weight to the voices of minority populations in our congregation to amplify them?

Erik requested suggestions for how to do that, and Terry committed to think about it and get back to the Board.

Janet Callaway observed that visioning work is a hard process, though it's also energizing. She underscored the importance of grouping ideas under a common header so that people can see how their idea is included in the larger themes that are ultimately selected.

Erik appreciated the suggestions.

Judy Lintott stressed the importance for younger voices to be heard and counted as votes.

Erik noted that Elandria would not work with us if we didn't include the youth. The Board members also recognize the importance of including our youth, and pointed out that they may provide a substantially different vision for what we can live into.

Jim McCargar distilled what he's heard as the following: Number one is the importance of communication. The second is that the process has not been laid out, but he expressed his faith that the facilitator and Board will develop a process that will ease the current discomfort. He

expressed his deep gratitude for the community and confidence that the process will move the congregation in the right direction.

Erik shared that plans for this meeting and the visioning process came together very late. For example, the agreement with Elandria, negotiated with the UUA, only received approval one week ago.

Larry Works shared his perspective on the growing need for senior housing. He is currently house-less and recognizes that there will be folks like him who will become homeless. He noted that interim solutions will be needed before the long-term vision of senior housing can be realized.

Erik expressed gratitude for Larry sharing his story.

Erik entertained a motion to adjourn.

Moved: Colleen Crawley

Second: Terry Wilkerson

The meeting was adjourned at: 2:42

Respectfully Submitted by Secretary Rick Witten