

MINUTES
Annual Congregational Meeting
First Unitarian Congregational Society of Brooklyn
Sunday, May 17, 2015

Present:

- Current Board: Liz Davis, Kurt Steele, Mary Most, Elaine Macken, Rachel Michael, Tom Check, Devin Judge-Lord
- Current Clerk: Christine Lloyd
- Current Treasurer: Mitch Major
- Voting Members of the Congregation – a forum of at least 30 members must be present, 30 voting members were present.
- Staff: Meagan Henry, Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons, and Garnett Losak

1. Greetings and Opening Words –

The Board Clerk called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm. A quorum of over 30 voting members was deemed to be present. The meeting was held in the Sanctuary.

Nomination of a Moderator.

The Clerk requested the nomination of a moderator. Julie Bero was nominated and duly seconded. No other nominations were provided.

Julie Bero was elected Moderator. Motion carried 30 in favor/ 0 opposed. No abstentions.

The Clerk handed the meeting over to Julie Bero who requested nominations for a Time Keeper.

Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons opened the meeting with a list of the births, deaths, and marriages among members and friends of the congregation, along with recognition of board members completing their service this year.

Member deaths: Charlie King, Rosalind Depas, Ari Hoogenboom Sr., Vinny Allegrini, Donna Rubens

Family and friends of members' deaths: Judy Boals' former husband, Michael Boals, Barbara Kennedy's sister, Ruth Trumpore, Margaret Weber's cousin, Stan Hochman, Jackie Frost's father, Vance Frost, Debbie Barbieri's close family friend, Angelina Julie Nicoletti

Member weddings: James Rohrbach and Lissy DeSantis, Melissa Paul and Jason Perez, Julie Bero and Rishi Chatrath, Karen Plemons and James Reddick

Births: Sybil Marie, born to Chris Ameigh and Marie Spinney on February 28, and Madeleine Olivia Devin, daughter of Alexa Devin, born on May 5th

2) Staff Reports:

The Sr. Minister's Report was posted on the congregation's website, along with all annual reports. The Religious Education report was handed out prior to the meeting.

Report from Garnett Losak, Director of Congregational Life:

- Sunday attendance from the sermon onwards: 195 people
- (Doesn't count 75 enrolled for Sunday School, including the 15 teachers or well over 250 people on Sundays.)
- Multiple communication channels: Twitter and Facebook are both doing well.
- Current membership growth - 229 members. An overall increase of 36% in 3 years.
- 215 visitors who made themselves known. Mostly came from the web site. 15% referred by friends and family.

- 13% interested in Religious Education
- 42% interested in 20s and 30s (TnT's).
- Median age of new members: 46% are 18 to 35
All the new members pledge and heavily involved in governance.

3) The following people were appointed/elected to serve during the meeting:

- * The moderator appointed Bruce Wilde as parliamentarian and Mary Most as Time Keeper.
- * The congregation nominated and elected Pat Steele, Bob Bero, and David Thebus as inspectors of election.
- * Meeting rules reviewed. Comments limited to two minutes per person.

4) May, November and March Meeting Minutes:

- * Motion to accept the Meeting Minutes from May 2014, November 2014, and March 2015 into the record. It was so moved and seconded.
Unanimous, no abstentions, motion carried.

5) Church Elections for Board of Trustees, Officers, and Deacons:

*** Slate of the Board of Trustees for 2015-2016:**

Lee Pardee, Sean Fischer, and Roger

Motion to accept the slate.

It was so moved and seconded

Unanimous, no abstentions, motion carried.

*** Treasurer**

Mitch Major, the exiting Treasurer, nominated Mark De Solla Price, so moved and it was duly seconded

Unanimous, no abstentions, motion carried.

*** Board Clerk**

Sarah Morgan was nominated. So moved, and duly seconded.

Unanimous, no abstentions, motion carried.

*** Nominating Committee**

Ballots were handed out and collected by the inspectors.

*** Election of Deacons**

Charlie King passed away this year, so there is now a vacancy with the Deacons.

The deacons nominated Bruce Wilde for deacon. 25 years a member of this church, and a Life Long UU.

Motion so moved and seconded.

Unanimous, no abstentions – Motion Carried.

6) Changing the Church's Investment Policy to Reflect the UUA's policy to no longer invest in corporations involved in the manufacture of fossil fuels and control of prisons.

Motion to pass the New Investment Policy, which would involve disinvestment in corporations that handle fossil fuels, and invest instead in clean energy. This encourages UU's to review congregational and personal investments to ensure investments in renewable fuels.

Motion- To amend the congregation's investment policy to forbid investing in:
 "Companies that derive a preponderance of their revenues from tobacco, alcohol, firearms, gambling,
 [delete:or] armaments, prisons, or fossil fuel extraction."

So moved and seconded.

Discussion: The congregation thoroughly discussed the motion, and what it would entail. It was advised that a forum was held on the investment policy a few weeks ago, well in advance of the annual meeting.

* **Amendment #1:** Derek Pearl requested an Amendment to the Motion, wherein the employment practices of the corporations would be appraised prior to investment. Specifically fair wage practices, and benefits. A vote was called on the amendment. The motion did not carry, by a majority vote.

***Question:** What percentage of the church's portfolio is invested in fossil fuel companies?
 Mitch Major, responded that approximately 2.2% percent.

* **Amendment #2:** Where advisable the church would get more involved with shareholder decisions, and not just divest. Instead of walking away, the church would attempt to influence shareholder decisions and steer the corporation away from fossil fuels to more clean energy sources.

Discussion: This Amendment was vigorously debated. It was stated that excepting cases where the board has participated in activism, that getting more involved with shareholder decisions is often not as effective. It's difficult to change a fossil fuel company to a clean energy company, even with an incentive. And this would involve a level of commitment and responsibility that may be not be advisable or doable. As a counterpoint, it was advised that perhaps more would be achieved if the church did not just walk away from the investment, but acted to change and aid the fossil fuel corporations in following a more energy efficient path.

After additional discussion, time was called, and the Amendment was held up for a vote:

* 27 - 28, 4 abstentions. Motion for amendment did not carry.

Motion for Divestment in Corporation's that produce/manufacture Fossil Fuels and Prisons:

*45 in favor. 11 opposed. 5 abstentions. Motion Carried.

Motion #2 – regarding Investment Policy Changes, as proposed by the current Investment Committee.

To amend the congregation's investment policy to encourage investing in our energy future by adding the following paragraph:

"Modeling the practices of the Unitarian Universalist Association, invest an appropriate share of holdings in securities that will support a swift transition to a clean energy economy, such as renewable energy and energy-efficiency-related securities."

Motion so moved and duly seconded. Unanimous. Motion carried.

7.) Motion to endorse the work of the Forward First Team.

Lee Pardee presented the team's final proposed purpose statement, and the goals and strategies that will show us how to carry out that purpose statement. She noted that the goals and purpose will remain the same, but the
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strategies will change as we hopefully accomplish them and move on to new strategies—or if we feel they are not succeeding.

* Lee Pardee made a motion that the congregation endorse the purpose statement, goals and strategies. *Bruce Wilde seconded.

* No discussion.

* Motion passed with an overwhelming vote in favor.

8) Report of the Inspectors of Election:

The following people were elected to the nominating committee:

- Michael Alcott,
- Beth Evans,
- Koren Manning,
- Coco Wilde
- Nancy Witherell.

9). Presentation of the Budget.

Tom Check noted that we owe Mike Alcott a great debt for helping the congregation get on a sound financial footing, as well as Mitch Major. He announced that we have hired a new certified bookkeeper.

Tom noted that the budget is in balance for the year, with a surplus of 91 cents. He noted that we are very grateful to Mitch for his work on the budget this year, particularly on getting more realistic estimates of revenues and expenses. Expenses for next year are projected to increase minimally from this year. New staffing positions are filled with the exception of the Sexton.

He noted that we are not budgeting to contribute to the UUA and metro district, in order to balance our budget, but that if additional funds are freed up we will reinstate our contribution. Other additional funds would go to the electric budget, the Forward project, and maintenance. If pledge income increases, that money will be split between maintenance and programs.

*** Seth Faison moves to pass the budget. Bob Patterson seconds.**

* **Discussion:** In response to a question, Mitch noted that the revenue projection for the auction is midway between this year's actual results and past years' results. Mitch & Tom explained that the 'special appeal' conducted in December this year raised \$12,000, and we are planning to do another special appeal this coming December, budgeting to raise \$5,000. Tom noted that the music director's salary will be raised next year from \$28,000 to \$29,500.

David Thebus commented that he was voting against the budget on the grounds that it does not devote any new funds to implementing our goal (included in the Forward First Team's goals adopted earlier in the meeting) of becoming more sustainable and energy-efficient.

Motion passes 46 to 6, with no abstentions.

10. Endowment:

In response to a question, Mitch reported that the endowment is now \$3,898,000. He commented that our

investment company is doing a reasonable job, we have a prudent 4% draw for this year, and the previously approved additional draw has not yet been taken.

He also reported that we have given Original Blessing \$50,000, and we had taken additional funds out but will likely not give that additional money to them because they appear to be disbanding.

11. A motion to adjourn passed.