

MINUTES
Special Congregational Meeting
First Unitarian Congregational Society of Brooklyn
Sunday, March 1, 2015

Present:

- **Board:** Michael Alcott (Board President), Liz Davis, Kurt Steele, Mary Most, Elaine Macken, Rachel Michael, Tom Check.
- **Clerk:** Christine Lloyd
- **Treasurer:** Mitch Major
- **Voting Members of the Congregation** – a forum of at least 30 members must be present, 30 voting members were present.
- **Staff:** Meghan 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 Chapel. All Board Members except for Jeff Muller and Devin Judge-Lord were present. Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons was present.

The Clerk of the Board requested nominations for a Moderator.

Lee Pardee was nominated by Nancy Wells and duly seconded by Connie Newsome.

Motion was duly seconded. Lee Pardee was elected Moderator. Motion carried 30 in favor/ 0 opposed. No abstentions.

The Clerk handed the meeting over to Lee Pardee who requested nominations for a Time Keeper.

Mary Most was nominated, duly seconded and voted in as Time-Keeper.

Inspectors/Counters were deemed not required. And since no one volunteered to be a Parliamentarian – Rev. Ana volunteered to find Bruce Wilde, who was busy rehearsing for a theatrical production, to resolve any major issues that occurred. (None did, so this was determined not to be an issue.)

- In lieu of the Opening Words – the Congregation reviewed the covenant and right relations of the congregation. The Moderator set out the rules of the meeting: 1) Comments limited to two minutes. 2) No one speaks twice until everyone has a chance to speak.

2. Selection of Delegates for the UUA General Assembly and UUA Metro District Meetings

Koren Manning, chair of the nominating committee, presented the slate of delegates for both meetings. The list of delegates along with their biographical information was provided prior to the meeting.

For **the General Assembly**, Koren Manning moved that the following slate of delegates be selected to represent First U at the General Assembly:

- Vonda Brunsting (General Assembly)
- Kristy Fullerton (General Assembly)

- David Garvoille (General Assembly)
- Michael Richardson (General Assembly)
- Kurt Steel (General Assembly)

The delegates, who were present, were requested to stand. The motion was put to a vote.

Motion carried: 30-0, 1 abstention.

For the Metro District, Koren Manning moved that following slate of delegates be selected to represent First U at the Metro District.

- Marisara Alcoff (Metro District)
- Lodz Joseph (Metro District)
- Lisa Kawamoto (Metro District)
- Emily Mathieu (Metro District)
- Lee Pardee (Metro District)

Motion carried: 30-0, no abstentions.

2. Presentation by the Board President on the Current Financial Situation

The Board President, Michael Alcoff, presented the Current Financial Situation to the Congregation. He explained where we currently are, how much has been received towards replenishing the endowment, and how much has been withdrawn from the endowment to date.

The following items were highlighted:

- The apartment rental situation has been remedied and all the apartments are currently rented for the year.
- The request for additional pledge contributions that was made at the November Congregational Meeting has resulted in contributions of approximately \$18,000 - \$20,000 which will reduce the additional amount we will have to withdraw from the endowment. Garnett stated that she could provide the exact number at a later date, but that it was definitely within that range. So far the Stewardship Campaign has raised \$ 120,000 in advance for the 2015- 2016 fiscal year.
- No additional amounts have been withdrawn from the endowment this year, nor appear to be required at the moment. (Although this may not be the situation at the end of the year.)
- In response to a clarifying question, a brief explanation was provided as to why the withdraw from the endowment was necessary.
 - A \$32,000 audit bill that was unexpected and had not been budgeted for in the previous year's budget. All future invoices should be sent directly to the Church Office and not the homes of individual members. (This bill has been paid and is no longer outstanding.)
 - Necessary maintenance projects created a larger than budgeted amount in particular the scaffolding for the Pinnacle repair, which was required to ensure pedestrian safety.
 - To prevent future unanticipated audit bills, the congregation is shifting from its current ACS accounting system to a new accounting system – Quick Books.
 - The financial situation has not affected any of the church programs or the staff positions.

3. Presentation on the Interim Re-Organization Plan by the Board President

Copies of “The Interim Re-Organization Plan” were provided to congregational voting members prior to the meeting. The Board President clarified that this is an interim plan, not one that figures everything out.

Per the plan, the following new positions are being created:

1. **Bookkeeper.** This is an 8 hour a week position based on our current accounting firm’s recommendation. Currently the Director of Congregational Services (“DCS”) keeps the church’s books. The Board has determined that it will be more efficient if this function were handled by an experienced and qualified bookkeeper. The Board President is currently reviewing resumes and hopes to make a selection soon. The Bookkeeper position will report directly to the Director of Congregational Life.
2. **Sexton.** This is a 24/7 position designed to meet the building/facility needs of the church. First U has four buildings in one that require round-the-clock maintenance, security and safety. A full-time Sexton would help to effectively manage these issues. Currently these issues are being managed by the Director of Congregational Services, a part-time custodian and Paul Eisenman, with no clear reporting structure or accountability in place. Amongst the duties:
 - * Regular maintenance of the building
 - * Regular cleaning of the building
 - * Safety and Security of the building
 - * Work with contractors for major maintenance, repairs, and capital improvements
 - * Sunday hosting
 - * Supervision of Part-Time Custodian

To go along with the creation of the new positions, the supervisory structure has been changed. Currently the Director of Congregational Services manages the Sexton and Bookkeeper functions. The new structure would remove those duties from the Director of Congregational Services and reduce the position to a 24 hour, as opposed to 40 hour a week position. The title also will be changed from Director to Manager of Congregational Services. These two positions would be reporting separately to the Director of Congregational Life.

The Director of Congregational Life, currently the Director of Congregational Membership and Communications Services, has been expanded to include the following responsibilities:

- * Direct supervision of DCS, Bookkeeper, and Ceremonies Coordinator (added positions and responsibilities)
- * Management of Rentals (currently handled by the Director of Congregational Services or “DCS”)
- * Systems Analysis and Implementation (added responsibility)

Position is now defined as a 28 hour position.

The Director of Congregational Life and the Sexton would report to the Sr. Minister along with the Director of Educational Ministeries and the Music Director.

* We will need to expand on salaries or work with them. This is for next year. This will avoid unanticipated costs. End the year clean, a feasible and affordable plan. The increase or additional salaries will cost the congregation approximately \$30,000. The only additional salary is the Bookkeeper.

Clarifying Q &A:*** Are we required to hire people who are not members of congregation?**

No.

*** Can we combine the manager and bookkeeper positions?**

While we could legitimately combine the two functions, it depends on the skills of the person. Also, separating the two functions would work towards an effective system of checks and balances, particularly if they don't report to each other.

*** Does the Sexton live in the building?**

Yes, this is a major part of the Sexton's compensation package – full time residency is necessary for the job.

*** Apt rentals?**

We were behind, but it was remedied and we will be okay there.

*** Does First U have a CEO?**

No.

*** Will the \$30,000 be split amongst the new positions and if so, is it enough?**

No, that's a net increase. It's not a split amongst the positions.

*** Are you considering a retired CPA as bookkeeper?**

Yes.

*** Which of positions are new hires?**

Sexton –we've just formed a search committee. Rev Ana (Staff), Mary Most (the Board), and David Thebus (Facilities). It is open to Paul Eisenman to apply for, but no guarantees – whoever is most qualified will get the job. Paul Eisenman will continue perform the position of Sexton for the interim.

*** Do we need to find a new Manager of Congregational Services?**

It depends on whether our current DCS, Rob Petrillo, wishes to stick with it, even though it will be a major reduction in hours and salary. (No longer includes the bookkeeping, rentals, and the sexton duties.)

*** Is the Bookkeeper a new position?**

Yes, Rob Petrillo is currently handling it as part of his duties as DCS.

*** Why is the sexton reporting to Ana and not director of congregational life?**

We need a self-starter that requires minimum direct supervision.

This is an interim plan, which will be in place through next year, and then we will re-assess it. It is not meant to be a catch-all solution.

4) First Forward Team Presentation of the Church's new Mission/Purpose Statement and the Underlying Goals and Strategies

Rachel Michael presented the team's findings, highlighting items mentioned in a handout that was provided to the congregational voting members prior to the meeting. Discussion was moderated by Rachel and Lee Pardee, who is the President of the First Forward Team.

The following items were highlighted in Rachel's presentation and the handout:

- The congregational purpose statement, goals, strategies.
- Leaders to implement the strategies, and time frames.

They are on track to present these items to the congregation for a vote at the next congregational annual meeting in May.

The First Forward Team has worked extensively with a paid consultant, discussed these issues with various groups, program committees, and focus groups.

Per the handout provided – the proposed congregational mission purpose statement is as follows:

The First Unitarian Congregational Society in Brooklyn inspires and empowers people, through the embrace of a loving, joyful, religious community, to work for justice in the human and natural worlds.

Congregational Goals:

- Promote collective and individual spiritual exploration, development and practice. (Leader: Nancy Witherell)
- Equip people with the skill and confidence to become change makers for justice in their communities (Leader: Rev. Ana Levy-Lyons.)
- Cultivate a caring, welcoming community that models a just and loving world. (Leader: Rachel Michael)
- Become an environmentally responsible congregation that serves as a powerful voice for sustainable living (Leaders: Sean Fischer and Koren Manning.)
- Develop and responsibly manage the resources needed to support the congregation's work and growth. (Leader: Kurt Steel)

* Congregational forum on goals is Sunday, April 12 in the chapel.

* 2 strategies will be developed for each goal.

* One of the questions we're asking: *Do we have the money, space, the leaders, to achieve and work towards these goals.*

*Once we get the information required, we will represent this to the congregation at the annual meeting in May.

Clarifying Q&A and General Discussion of the Purpose Statement

[Similar to the Board President's Q&A, Rachel Michael and Lee's responses are not in bold, while questions and comments from the congregation are in bold.]

*** Question- what have you kept or changed?**

Current mission statement is in the order of service. And it is as follows:

**We strive to be an embracing and diverse spiritual community of all ages whose members nurture, strengthen, and challenge each other to grow.*

** We gather to celebrate our shared Unitarian Universalist values while affirming our individual beliefs*

** A spirit of hope and possibility inspires us to fulfill our responsibility to the larger society by promoting justice and peace.*

** Because this congregation is meaningful in our lives and we freely choose to be here, we commit our talents and resources to live this mission.*

As you can see, it is a bit long, and we chose to come up with a more focused and direct mission/purpose statement that people could remember.

*** Question - The purpose statement seems to be narrowly focused on social justice?**

In coming up with our purpose statement, we focused on two big ideas that were obtained through the various focus groups. These turned out to be:

- 1) social justice and working towards a better world.
- 2) caring and loving community, with a focus on spiritual growth

These issues will get flushed out in the goals.

***Question: While social justice is great, I joined for spiritual growth, wisdom and truth – which seem to have gotten lost somehow?**

This will get flushed out further in the goals and you should send this concern to Lee Pardee by email or reach out to one of the focus group leaders by email after the meeting.

In May, the congregation as a whole will affirm and vote on the purpose statement, we're just presenting what we've come up.

The following were not questions but concerns/statement related by various congregational voting members regarding the purpose statement:

***This doesn't appear to reflect the main view of a church. Shouldn't it be about our spiritual life? This statement is too directed towards social justice. And it feels like it is targeted towards social justice exclusively, so it could be any organization.**

***Isn't social justice a foundation of spirituality?**

*** Then there's the question as to what we mean by social justice? People have different views of this. Doesn't the terrorist organization ISIS consider what they are doing "social justice"? How do we define "social justice" and differentiate it?**

*** Shouldn't we, as a religious organization or a church, be more oriented around community, spirituality and sacredness of the place?**

*** While you have two themes, one around spirituality, sacredness of place, and loving/caring community (the more internal theme) and the other, second theme focused on the external community and social justice, the first theme appears to be circumscribed by the second theme or serving it.**

Contact the people in charge of the goals, and follow through there.

Clearly there is a lot of questions. Lee suggested that people can email her with comments, questions, etc.

*** Justice can mean a lot of things. There needs to be a balance, since justice can cause divisions.**

***Question - Is the right relations covenant still present? Because that is one of the reasons I joined this congregation and means a lot to me.**

Yes, it is still here and it is on forms that you sign to become a member. That is not going away.

*** Congregations stand on two things- social action, justice and community. People join churches so that they can develop themselves to go forward in the world and seek justice, etc. We are here to be effective in the world. It helps to provide skills to others to make a difference in the world.**

*** This may just require sentence restructuring to obtain what we are looking for. Through a bit of tweaking, we could effectively insert more warmth in the overarching purpose statement.**

Moderator drew the meeting to a close. Stated if any goals are of interest, please go to the focus groups and contact the leaders. Email her with any questions you may have.

Meeting was adjourned by the Moderator at 2:30 pm.