

**Board of Trustees Meeting
Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Santa Rosa
October 17, 2019**

MINUTES

Voting Members Present: Natalie Brundred (President), Sean Freese (Vice President), Michael Randolph (Treasurer), Larisa Ashley, Paula Hammett, Mike McGirr, John Mason, Joe Como, Karen Simmons

Voting Members Absent: Cathie Wiese (Corporate Secretary)

Non-Board Members Present: Rev. Chris Bell, Rev. Dara Olandt, Dawn Silveira (Administrative Manager), Laura Blum (Bookkeeper), Linda Stabler (Human Resources Committee Chair), Susan Thollaug (Recording Secretary), Jeanie Bates, Sybil Day, Rose St. John, Lois Bell, Linda Balabanian, Rob Carlisle.

Meeting called to order: 6:35 pm

Chalice Lighting, Covenant, Opening Words: Rev. Chris Bell and Natalie Brundred

Agenda review:

A report to the Board on the Glaser Center should be submitted each month. Dawn will incorporate it into her Administrator's report.

Minutes: September minutes were approved as submitted.

Open Mic:

1) Five UUCSR members read and submitted statements about the nascent plan for growing UUCSR. An additional statement from Helga Lemke was read. These members requested that the Board ensure that the growth plan be considered carefully via a participatory and transparent process that's not rushed. The group requested, in particular, more information and discussion around financing for the plan; staffing certain positions with volunteers vs. paid staff; and UUCSR's relationship with the UUA. Board members and Rev. Chris unanimously thanked the group for their input and welcomed working with them on a consultative process that includes all members who wish to participate in developing a plan for UUCSR's growth.

2) Rob Carlisle said he would like to volunteer as interim communications coordinator until a staff person can be hired. Rob's offer will be an agenda item for the next Board meeting.

Sonoma County Declaration: Rev. Chris Bell

The Interfaith Council of Sonoma County has developed a human rights-focused statement titled "United in Kindness", and individuals and organizations are asked to sign it online (<http://sonomacounty.ca.gov/Human-Rights/News/United-In-Kindness-Project/>). UUCSR is being asked by the organizers to endorse the statement. The Board unanimously approved the endorsement. The Congregation will be invited to sign as individuals.

Senior Minister's Report: Rev. Chris Bell

Rev. Chris has been talking with members about the growth plan, gathering input.

Sabbatical plans are moving along well. Bonnie Dlott will meet with the Worship Associates in December and preach in January. The Sabbatical committee is editing a brochure about sabbatical ministry, including the preaching schedule.

Administrative Manager's Report: Dawn Silveira

Income from the Glaser Center is projected to be down significantly this year, by about \$46k. Our budget target is \$74k. There will be a marketing meeting at the end of this month to plan additional outreach for the Glaser Center. We're not getting as many inquiries as previously. The Center competes with nine other venues, and our prices are in the ballpark. There may be a significantly expanded agreement with Sonoma State's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) program, starting *next* year.

The Glaser Center's property tax bill went from about \$4k to \$11k/year, apparently based on renting to entities that are *not* non-profits in combination with a re-assessment of the property. Dawn said that the Glaser Center Committee is looking into the advisability of limiting rentals to non-profits. The Board agreed that if there would be a net benefit to limiting rentals to non-profits, the Glaser Center should adopt that policy.

Dawn is ready to move ahead with purchasing new software to replace PowerChurch. She won't proceed until she gets input from the informal technical committee advising her on this major decision.

A technician will have to come from Sacramento to repair the front door fob key system, as it's a proprietary system.

The new printer/copier doesn't work well with many of the computers in the office. IT support for the office depends on volunteers, which isn't always timely or adequate, and in turn can hang up important work and waste people's (including other volunteers') time. For some roles, using volunteers just doesn't make sense. When a lot depends on timely response, we need to have someone with a certain level of professionalism.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: Linda Stabler & Board Members

Treasurer's Report: Michael Randolph

Glaser Center income is down, and pledges are down. Pledge projection numbers came out of PowerChurch, and we don't have confidence in that program.

The property tax hike came out of the blue. The staff is pulling together information to appeal the steep increase. The Congregation had requested a reduction in assessed value during the recession, and this recent assessment reversed that consideration, and then some. The Glaser Center has only rented to non-profits since July.

Discussion: Results of October 6th Forums

Taking into consideration the feedback from the October 6th forum and input received at the Board meeting, we need to explain the Board's reasons for recommending the growth plan. We are hoping that the Congregation will explore *how* shall we grow, not *whether* to grow.

Underneath, this is about positivity vs. scarcity. What's the purpose of the organization fundamentally? The basis of the whole conversation is what we all believe. We want to spread it wider in the world. We're not just talking about sustaining UUCSR as an institution. It's because we believe it will change people's lives, and in turn, change the world for the better. We need a reminder about why we're having this conversation.

We need to think about how to engage people around the issues involved in growth. What additional processes are needed? This is a visceral experience, not just a rational discussion. Growth can be abstract. We could do house meetings during the sabbatical. Smaller, informal groups, coffee talks, can be helpful. More process and more relationship-building.

Not everyone thinks growth is positive. Some people don't see there's a need for growth over the long haul. We need to explain the communications needs, and why we need growth. We need to talk about attrition. We can't stay static. Simply from a financial perspective, only with growth is UUCSR

sustainable. The direction that we're going, with costs going up, income going down isn't sustainable. It's shrink or grow - we're not going to have the same people and same costs as we did a few years ago.

We're supposed to be clearing the path for the future. Maybe "growth" is the wrong term — these are plans for future needs. The concept we're talking about is *sustainability*, anticipating our needs, based on current needs.

For some people the UUA dues issue seems to be the lynch pin, and that's why they have doubts about the growth plan. But they are separate things.

We're too big to rely on volunteers. That's not well understood by the congregation. The crisis in volunteerism isn't apparent to many. Things can appear ok for a while, and then fall apart because the underlying issues aren't addressed.

At this point, we need to take the first step rather than locking in the 5-year plan. We do think the initial step — hiring a communications person — is the likeliest to promote growth. We need advertising and a deliberate effort to grow.

Town Hall

UUA concerns expressed by some will need to be addressed, including that we may need to use our dues to help cover our deficit this year.

We need to professionalize certain quadrants - we're already at a level where we must. We've missed the chance to talk about this in the Congregation. Certain things need to be done by staff now. It's not for lack of asking that we don't have more volunteers. Some volunteers in major positions have burned out. Also, people get trapped in roles.

At the outset, we need to convey a better understanding of the context for the growth proposal, the current state of affairs, the unsteadiness in pledging. What are the conditions that led the Board to move in this direction? Start with community building: turn to your neighbor. What do you value about this Congregation? Maybe in sections, led by Board members.

Then get down to the foundation - why is the Board proposing this growth plan? These are the actual facts of the current situation:

- Finance
- Music Coordinators
- Office
- Glaser Center
- Volunteerism

The Board will not proceed with a growth plan until the Congregation has given its input via a participatory process. This is the beginning of this conversation. There will be more. The shape and scope of that engagement is tbd, and will be based on suggestions from the Congregation.

We're talking about a lot of need out there. We have something to offer - people are hungry for this. We start from that place.

Borders & Beyond: Ruth and family are in Houston, are dealing with new challenges, and are in touch with the B&B team here. Our financial support for the family ended with the Ruth and her children's move to Texas and Manuel's move to a safer town in Honduras. The B&B team has been reflecting on their intensive engagement over the summer. The team is pausing, and will be meeting soon for further shared reflections. A lot has been learned, and they expect to begin visioning next steps soon.

Pros & Grows

Review Talk to a Board Member notes: deferred.

Volunteering Concerns: covered in discussions above.

Final questions, review of action items and closing words

Meeting adjournment: 9:15 pm

Next board meeting: Thursday, November 21, 2019 6:30 pm

Respectfully submitted by Susan Thollaug, Recording Secretary