

**Congregational Meeting
Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Santa Rosa
June 9, 2019**

MINUTES

Meeting called to order at 11:10 am: Natalie Brundred, President

Chalice Lighting and Opening Words: Rev. Chris Bell, Senior Minister

Meeting Introduction: Natalie Brundred

- Quorum: 90+ members were counted, exceeding the requirement of 69.
- Parliamentarian: Richard Senghas
- Recording secretary: Susan Thollaug
- The agenda was amended to include the Assistant Minister's Report, and approved by the Congregation.
- Minutes from the January 2019 Congregational Meeting were approved by the Congregation without objection.
- Announcements:

Rev. Chris asked meeting participants to adopt the practice of standing, and giving their names and congregational roles (if applicable) when speaking from the floor.

Naming Room 545 - VOTING ITEM: Richard Senghas, Naming Policy Task Force

We didn't have a formal process for choosing a name when the idea of naming Room 545 arose a couple of years ago. So, we developed a policy and the Congregation approved it in June 2018. We're applying that policy for the first time to approve a name for Room 545.

Proposed names were submitted to Gretchen Vap over a several-month period. The policy task force reviewed all submissions and sent the full list to the Board with a recommendation. Today the Congregation is being asked to ratify the Board's recommendation: "Founders Room."

VOTE: The proposed new name "Founders Room" for Room 545 carried unanimously.

Assistant Minister's Report: Read by Rev. Chris Bell

Highlights of this year include: leading UU outreach to SRJC, and a regular gathering of a 20's & 30's group on the first and third Thursdays each month at the UU. About 10 young people are consistently involved in that group, which has been developing over the last 5 months. Preaching about once a

month and leading non-Sunday services, including Yom Kippur and a UU Passover Seder. Developing a ministry, "Borders and Beyond", to respond to the U.S./Mexico border crisis, in collaboration with a network of faith communities that's providing help to asylum-seekers. About 40 people in the Congregation are interested in supporting this ministry. Providing assistance with special needs, including pastoral care and hosting the North Bay Organizing Project annual meeting. She also meets weekly with Rev. Chris for reflection and visioning about UUCSR.

Director of Religious Education's Report: Jen Freese, Director of Religious Education

Religious Education (RE) is a big container holding many different aspects of the life of the Congregation. The most visible part of RE is faith formation for children during the 9:15 service. There is also the UU parenting group, led by Barb Kezur, for parents and guardians. There's a youth group for teens. RE provides child care on Sundays for infants and toddlers. And the Our Whole Lives (OWL) curriculum on human sexuality will be launched in August.

Last August, 50+ children and youth registered for RE, and a few more have joined since then. Attendance on a given Sunday ranges from about 20 - 35 kids. Jen expects more children in the coming year, which starts in the fall.

Over the last year, we've used the "Tapestry of Faith" curriculum from the UU. It's tends to be a fairly traditional Sunday school model. This coming year, we'll switch to "Soul Matters," which is a UU curriculum for the entire Congregation. This will allow aligning of themes between the sanctuary and religious education, and it supports intergenerational connection.

The RE program is growing beautifully. We expect it to keep blossoming next year.

Administrative Manager's Report: Dawn Silveira, Administrative Manager

Dawn noted that the new Directory has some mistakes. She asked members to please call or email her. She will get a new version out in a couple of months.

Dawn's current foci are: Learning UUCSR culture, getting a new phone system, improving marketing and advertising to increase use of the Glaser Center, updating our website and creating a better picture of what we are doing at UUCSR, and creating new systems for document storage and business processes, including better ways to process money.

A top goal for Dawn's first two years is to set up a better, smoother pledging system and data system. She is working with the staff and Board, looking at software improvements.

Dawn's 5-year plan includes having a Communications Manager on board to move the Congregation into the future we anticipate, and to relieve the current volunteers.

Treasurer's Report Year-to-Date: Michael Randolph, Treasurer

This update is based on data through April, with two months to go in the 2018/19 fiscal year.

So far, we've taken in about \$500k. This is under our budget projections for the year. We've taken in \$377k in pledges, \$43k below the budgeted amount.

Our Year-To-Date expenses are also well below budget at this point. Employee expenses, utilities and equipment maintenance are running below projected. Around 75-80% of our budget is for personnel.

We have two months to go in this fiscal year. Some big expenses are coming up in that period, including member note payments totaling about \$10k. This year we will not end in the black but we don't yet know how far in the red we'll be. The last two years produced substantial surpluses, which will cover this year's shortfall. We intend for the 2019/20 budget to be balanced.

Endowment Fund Presentation: Reid Stinnett, Chair, Endowment Committee

The mission of the Endowment Committee is to ensure the long-term financial well-being of the Congregation. Many people don't realize that it's possible to give a bequest to the UUCSR Endowment Fund even if you haven't yet expired! Whether you've passed away or not, in some cases there may be tax benefits.

The committee is working to increase the number of people in the Legacy Circle, who've formally arranged to leave some funds to the Endowment Fund upon their passing. During fiscal year 2018-19, the committee achieved its goal of growing the Legacy Circle to 100, and is aiming for 115-120 members by December 2019.

The holdings of the Endowment Fund were near \$250k before Gail Alford's huge bequest to the Congregation of \$200k last year, bringing the total value to over \$450k at this time.

We have a very diversified portfolio: 60% in stocks; 40% in bonds. Our long-term rate of return (ROR) is in the neighborhood of 6.5-7%. With 2% inflation, it's structured to have a real ROR of 4-5%, which is healthy. We look in depth at social responsibility at least once a year. Our portfolio uses "sustainable" stock funds, and we aim to be very well diversified. Willow Creek Investments manages our Endowment Fund essentially pro bono.

Endowment Fund Distribution for 2019-20: Reid Stinnett

No distribution will be made out of the Endowment Fund for the coming fiscal year because of the downturn in the stock market at the end of 2019. If the Fund makes over 5% in earnings in a calendar year, the Congregation can take a distribution of 5% (maximum) for the next fiscal year (July 1- June 30), to be used for special projects.

**Use of Endowment Funds to Pay off Member Mortgage Notes:
Michael Randolph - VOTING ITEM.**

The Member Note Program was created in 2010 as a means of paying off our original mortgage with small loans. We have paid those notes out of our operating budget at \$47k per year.

Because of Gail's huge contribution of \$200k and growth in the fund, a substantial amount will remain in the Fund after paying off our mortgage.

It makes sense for our Congregation's financial health in the near and the long term.

The benefits of this proposal include saving \$18k in interest over the next 5 years, freeing up about \$47k for the next 5 years. It will relieve pressure on fundraising for operations, and we'll be able to depend almost entirely on pledges and Glaser Center revenues to fund our operations. We will own our building outright. And paying off the mortgage lays a foundation for a capital campaign for remodeling upstairs. We could possibly fund at least part of that by issuing new member notes.

VOTE: Use of Endowment Funds to Pay off Member Mortgage Notes was unanimously approved.

Presentation of the 2019/20 Budget: Michael Randolph - VOTING ITEM

Projected total income is \$615k. That's composed of: 80% in pledges, 12% from Glaser Center rentals, and the rest is a mixture of small things. We've had an increase of \$25k in pledges due mostly to the Stewardship Committee's huge effort this last year. We're projecting just \$3k for donations. There will be no service auction during this coming fiscal year.

The Glaser Center is a focus of our administrator, Dawn, who has an aggressive plan for increasing rentals going forward.

On the expense side, \$442k is for employee-related expenses (about 71% of our budget.) Operations are only about \$37k. UUA/PWR Dues are 5% of our budget. Our building systems replacement fund was increased to \$17k from \$15k. A lot of work was done this year to figure out a general replacement schedule. We need to get this up to about \$19-20k in the future to take care of big maintenance items in a timely way. Health care costs were increased by 10% over last year, and we hope that will cover increases. And, based on the vote just taken, payment of member notes will be eliminated from the upcoming budget, saving \$47k in expenses.

We have no interested party in having a pre-school here at this time. We haven't pursued this because we became aware of implications of space usage and impacts on our congregational activities.

The Finance Committee will look into earthquake insurance on our (commercial) building. It's probably very expensive, and fortunately, the building is especially strong as a theater.

VOTE: The proposed 2019/20 budget was approved unanimously.

Nomination and Election of Nominating Committee Members: Ellen Skagerberg, Chair of the Nominating Committee - VOTING ITEM

The Nominating Committee is charged with nominating members for the Board, the Endowment Committee and the Nominating Committee.

Nominating Committee nominations: Mark Sowers for a second term, and Michelle Murphy and Bev Spears as new members. These three are presented as a slate.

VOTE: The three nominees were approved unanimously.

Advocates for Social Justice (A4SJ) Report: Elaine Wellin, Chair, Advocates for Social Justice

Elaine listed the many activities the Advocates have engaged in this past year, including such projects as starting the "Eco Desk", creating panels showing our diversity, ongoing monitoring and suggesting responses to homelessness, women's issues, and the sanctuary church movement, among others. Organizing MLK "A Day On, Not a Day Off" activities, participating in NBOP's work on several fronts, including the Rapid Response Network to witness ICE actions in Sonoma County, support for rent stabilization and just cause eviction policies, and more. The Me Too group showed the film "The Hunting Ground," participated in art projects expressing the impact of sexual

violence for women and men, and placed a banner in front window. And MUCH more!

Proposed Change to Bylaws: Natalie Brundred – VOTING ITEM

The change would amend the by-laws to allow distribution of the annual report at the October Town Hall meeting.

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously.

Board Report: Natalie Brundred

The Board began the year with three major foci:

- 1) Our fiscal future: We focused on this year's challenges to meet our near-term obligations, and planning for longer-term fiscal health.
- 2) Upstairs: We've done everything we can do at this point. We have a sense of the costs involved. There's been some creative thought about the project.
- 3) Fostering intergenerational connections: Several activities were tried; some worked and some didn't. The cake auction, mystery pen pals, and games night have all been successes.

A great deal has been accomplished this year: Rev. Dara started a young adult ministry, which is growing. Almost every major staff position has turned over in the last couple of years. The Initiative to fund the budget by increasing pledges was a great success. Our first Town Hall meeting happened in October. Room 545 was finally named.

Looking into the future, Rev. Chris will take a shorter sabbatical, February-May 2020. Deb Mason is the chair of the sabbatical committee, and the sabbatical minister has confirmed.

Appreciations - Honoring Members Who've Gone Above & Beyond: Cathie Wiese, Board of Trustees

Cassandra Lista, John Chenoweth, Barbara Kezur and Bud Willis were lifted up as special honorees for their service to our community. We also recognized three people who are retiring from the Board of Trustees: Gretchen Vap, John Jaffray, and Gretchen Paradis.

Open Forum:

Several comments/questions were noted to be followed up by the Board or appropriate staff:

Closing Words: Rev. Chris Bell

Meeting adjourned about 1:00 pm.

Upcoming:

Town Hall Meeting: Sunday, October 27, 2019 1:00 pm

Next Congregational Meeting: Sunday, January 26, 2020 11:00 am

Respectfully submitted by Susan Thollaug, Recording Secretary.