

First Universalist Church, Unitarian Universalist
Auburn, ME
Board of Directors
Meeting Minutes
December 7, 2022

Present: Ed Bell (member-at-large), Anne Perron (President), Claire Hebert (member-at-large), Jane Pentheny (member-at-large), David Das (Clerk), Rev. Jodi Hayashida (*ex officio*)

Guests: Tricia Griffin, Joan Chandler, Angela Foss, Levesque, Linda Greathouse

6:35: Anne Perron called the meeting to order.

Jane Pentheny read the Mission Statement; Ed Bell read the Vision Statements.

Sharing by members.

Gratitude expressions: Nicole Rush, Ben Whitman, Pam Weeks, Sharon Kinsman, Diane Chasse, Charles Nero.

Finance 101 with Ellen O'Brien, Treasurer: Ellen gave a concise overview of church finances:

- Members of the Finance Team and their responsibilities.
- Finance systems: smooth electronic process; looking to expand use of Breeze; in-house bookkeeper works well.
- Review of the Balance Sheet (where our money is; how much money we have; the different accounts; liquid vs. non-liquid accounts)
- Annual budget
- Where we are now: budget vs actuals.

Ellen highlighted the basic challenges facing us:

- Income (pledges and gifts) is down. We are 42% through the budget year. Pledges are at 31.3%; Gifts are at 29.9%.
- \$15000 per month required to run the church; income averages \$9000 per month.
- We can crash and burn on this.
- We need to increase the income line; belt tightening (while good) will not resolve the budget gap.
- We need to get pledges back on track.

- Giving is a leap of faith. Pledges and gifts represent a belief in the history and the future of the church.

Minister's Report: Rev. Jodi highlighted three topics:

- Staff will transition to gmail accounts; will use Google Drive for storage. Need to work with Ben Whitman on a policy for Google Drive access.
- Need to develop a new Communications Policy for the church
- Discussion of an idea proposed by Peter Floyd to refit the first floor of 159 Pleasant St into income generating transitional housing. After much discussion the board came to the unanimous conclusion that the majority of the congregation is not in a place to deal with this right now.

Consent Agenda: accepted by the Board thereby approving the November 16, 2022 meeting minutes, the Minister's Report, and the Treasurer's Report.

Vice President Position:

Anne Perron moved to appoint Linda Greathouse as Vice President of the Board of Directors. Seconded by Jane Pentheny. Unanimous approval.

Small Group Discernment Process: Using Anne Perron's list of topics and questions culled from emails and social media:

- Discrete questions can be addressed in FAQ format.
- Difficult issues to be addressed through careful listening in small groups.
- Make the small group experience welcoming and positive.
- Board will hammer out details (including schedule) through email conversations.

Sparking Church Life: Anne Perron introduced the fine metaphor of using "ether" to restart the church engine. What could that "ether" be? A contradance in the new year?

January 4, 2023 meeting agenda items:

- Invite co-chairs of PSDIC Steering Committee. Discussion topics to include: cost sharing (invite Ellen O'Brien); communications covenant; weapons policy.

8:45: Adjournment

Respectfully submitted,

David H. Das (Clerk)

Minister's Report 12.7.22

This minister's report is for informational purposes. I am not asking for action at this time.

Admin: Claudia has, we hope, finally addressed the issue of the phone and answering machine working only sporadically by purchasing a new phone and switching us to voicemail. We have all fingers and toes crossed that this will solve this ridiculously long-lived problem!

-Staff would like to request that we drop our professional email addresses that go through bluehost and instead switch to gmail addresses for each role. This will give staff, and therefore the congregation, access to multiple googledrives. We have wanted to move away from using dropbox, which has always been problematic, for storage for many years now. Googledrives for each staff member means the music library can be stored online and accessible, admin files can be stored and access can be controlled through the admin email address, and all ministerial files can be stored online with access controlled. So, for example, the minister can keep limited access agreements online and confidential but also keep all the policies in a folder that anyone can access with a link. It will address our standing storage/access issues and cost nothing to do so. We are proposing an early January switch over. **The creation of these googledrives would require a policy around access to those drives- what information should be accessible to all church members, which church leadership roles need access to more confidential information, etc.**

Policy work- it is clear that there is a need to review or create a few different policies at this point: 1) the above policy on access to congregational information, 2) a significant redo of the communications policy, and 3) the creation of a policy that reflects what we are learning about the demands of sharing church resources that addresses such questions as a) at what point does a request to share resources need to go to a congregational vote b) are there hard and fast parameters that can/should be created around sharing resources to guide discernment *before* a vote.

Committee on Ministry: The new COM, composed of Mary Kay Weisenberger, Bill Frayer, and Mary Sylvester, met for the first time this past week. It was a strong start and we are meeting weekly for a brief stretch to begin to sort out the purpose of the COM at this time and how it should function. Helpfully, we have two resources to turn to as we begin that discernment- a resource from a while ago that, among other things, maps out clearly the difference between a Committee on Ministry and a Ministerial Relations Committee, and a resource from the district that just came out in the most recent newsletter that addresses how COMs might want to function now. As part of that initial conversation, we discovered that Mary Sylvester has consulting experience and shared some resources that may be useful for us as we continue to work on the small group discussion process for the congregation. She's also agreed to be available for discussion with the board if that is helpful.

Unhoused community members- I want to note that yesterday we had an unhoused couple who frequents the drop-in center settle in under the bushes in hopes of sleeping there out of the rain. Peter and I explained that they could not stay and Anne reaffirmed that hard reality later in the day. I just need to note, from a moral and human standpoint, how absolutely stomach churning it is to serve as the tool of state violence against some of the most vulnerable people in our society. Because it needs to be said at this time, we all understand that people can't stay on church property for all the reasons we've talked about these last months. And as the weather turns worse we know snow and wind would be deadly to anyone who tried. And still. Auburn is still zoned for no shelters. The city is no longer planning on building the micro-shelters which, however inadequate would have at least been something, and the cops continue to clear out encampments no matter how hidden they are, including employing tactics such as slashing tents so they no longer offer protection. **We may have an interesting proposal to *begin* to consider tonight, though I'm not sure I'll have enough info to share. If not, I'll lift it up next month.**