

UUFSD Congregational Meeting
January 30, 2022 Congregational Meeting
Amphitheater 11:30 am

No votes were required for this Congregational Meeting. It was established that we had a quorum of at least 40 of our 196 members present.

President Liora Kian-Gutierrez called the meeting to order and introduced the 2022-1-2022 Board of Directors: Brenda Post, Vice President, Angie Knappenberger, Cathy Leach Phillips, Louise Garrett, our secretary, Chris Butler and Livia Walsh. She introduced Sarah Miller, Treasurer.

The following summarizes the reports given during the Congregational Meeting.

Treasurer: Sarah Miller

Having completed our financial cottage meetings just over a month ago, no official Treasurer's report was presented. Sarah commented that we were in good financial shape right now and members could find our most recent financial reports attached to the January Board Meeting Minutes, posted under "Governance" which is under the "Contact" menu at uufsd.org.

Sarah highlighted one aspect of the cottage meeting conversations - that many members discussed the importance of increasing volunteerism, and that this would not only help reduce our costs, but build community engagement and a sense of ownership. She shared that this year, in March, we are going to hold a "service drive." This will be akin to the more familiar pledge drive that will be held the following month, but the service drive will focus on where the Fellowship and your fellow members could use help. So in March, anticipate someone reaching out to you with ideas for where you might be able to pitch in.

President: Liora Kian-Gutierrez

1) Update on the Board's goals:

Goal #1: You just heard from Sarah that the first part of this goal has been completed. We held cottage meetings to educate congregants about our financial situation. This is the first phase of the FY22-23 budgeting process and part of the Board's commitment to gain member input into the budgeting process routine, while also increasing awareness, engagement, and transparency.

Goal #2: This goal's outcome is to renew our community by having heartfelt discussions about what matters to you. Our original plan was to facilitate these sessions with our own volunteers. After being introduced to an amazing resource, we have decided it would be better to have these sessions facilitated by Dr. Frank Willey. Dr. Willey is a retired UU Minister, a practicing mental health professional, and has experience doing Organizational Development in non-profit organizations. The **What Now? Conversations** will be small group meetings to talk about where we have come from, where we are now, and what we'd like to see in our future. We expect to begin these meetings in three weeks and conclude by mid-March. The **What Now? Conversations** can be in person (COVID status allowing) and remote via Zoom. You will hear more information very soon about how to sign up for one of these small group conversations. Once all sessions have

been conducted, Dr. Willey will be providing us with themes and recommended next steps for healing and moving our community forward. We could not have found a better person to lead this process. Please join us to co-create our future. We are listening. And we can't do this without each and every one of you. This goal is being led by our Vice President, Brenda Post.

Goal #3 As you all know, our DRE, Alison, is moving on to new adventures. With her departure, we need to redefine our RE program. Together, we will define the current and future vision of RE. RE families will be invited to join in this task force that will be facilitated by an experienced UUA representative who has helped other UU churches when they needed a review and future planning of their RE program. We are seeking a diverse and inclusive task force. In an effort to gather participants and knowing how busy families are, we will conduct this task force via zoom. I know that with your input, we can plan a new vision for our RE program. We are also consulting with other UU Churches in the Pacific Western region who have already done this. We have the unique opportunity to learn from the experience of others from our region..

Goal #4: The Board will continue to revisit decisions about gatherings based on current COVID conditions in our area. UUA provides guidelines, but these are not absolutes, and each congregation is encouraged to make decisions based on their particular situation, with vaccination rates being a significant factor. Since we have the ability to meet outdoors and have the requirements that all 5 years and older who come to our services are fully vaccinated and we all wear masks, the Board has agreed that we can continue to meet in person in our beautiful amphitheater. Services will continue to be live-streamed for those who cannot attend in-person. For the safety of everyone, no food or drinks will be served until the transmission rate decreases significantly.

In case of rain or inclement weather that would prevent us from meeting in the amphitheater, the service participants would livestream the service from Founders' Hall and the audience will be virtual. In these cases, you will be notified via text at least one hour before services.

We hope you have been pleased with our monthly board letters to ensure transparency about the workings of the board. We welcome your input by sending us an email to let us know if we are being transparent enough - feel free to email board@uufsd.org

Let us celebrate what we have accomplished - getting back to in-person services (when we can). We are also looking forward to the new equipment to enhance our virtual experience. I recently learned from many other Presidents at UU Churches in the Western Pacific and some have not had an in person service in two years.

The Nominating Committee is one of the congregation's most important. It is responsible for identifying and considering potential new Board Members, who will ensure effective implementation of UUFSD's mission. Our Nominating Committee is Wenda Alvarez, Cheryl Close and Susan Hahm. And the chart in front of you illustrates the committee's near-term objective to identify: 4 prospective board members **for your election consideration at our Annual meeting in June.**

- Three of the positions will be 3-year terms. One is a 2-year term.
- In accordance with our bylaws, 4 members of the current board, who will have served less than a full 3-year term, are eligible for additional terms.
- Cheryl, Susan and Wenda look forward to your questions and ideas. You can contact them at nomcom@uufsd.org

You will also be pleased to learn that in addition to our many hard working committees, the Social Justice Committee has two new programs: Gun Violence Prevention led by John Post and Climate Action led by Sarah Miller.

I'd like us to thank Chris Lehman who has returned as our Choir Director. She will be with us through June to give us time to move forward with next steps.

Dream Builders Update - Chris Faller

Planned Giving Committee/Endowment Fund - Mark Tuller

Vice-President: Brenda Post

If you attended Rev Jo's Installation this fall you heard Reverend Sarah Gibb Millspaugh use a beautiful metaphor to liken our congregation to nature, wild canyons, and talk about our congregational culture as being like soil. She asked us - during a time of COVID, Ministerial transition, racial justice upheaval, staff departures, virtual services and more - what kind of a congregational culture will we collectively nurture? The question beckons us forward.

Sarah said, and I quote, "A good culture for a congregation, like the soil of a wild canyon, doesn't have just one recipe. The elements of the soil vary from place to place, even within one canyon. We can be a multicultural congregation, a "community of communities" as Paula Cole Jones describes us. The thing that makes the congregation work, culturally, is that the soil is life-giving. Collectively, how do we nurture the culture of UUFSD to bring life to our mission and actualize our transformative power in the lives of all who participate?"

Sarah continued... "We can learn a thing or two from composting. Spiritual composting. When we engage in spiritual composting, we are turning the garbage of the past into life-giving lessons for the future."

And let's be honest, we have created our fair share of garbage, like most spaces where humans gather, where we gather with all of our grace and beauty, and all of our flaws.

Precious beings are, or are considering, leaving our community because of how they perceive us and who they have decided we are. And many of us here today have our misgivings about how things are going. In the spirit of the true naming of things without blame, I will attempt to capture some of the different experiences that folks are having:

- Some feel, based on our lack of diverse membership and our struggles during the 8th Principle vote, that we will not be anything other than a group of older, privileged white folks who don't like change
- Some feel that we no longer want to support the UUA tradition of providing an amazing religious education experience for our broader community's youth
- Some feel that we don't treat staff with the love and respect that they deserve
- Some have bought into divisive and negative narratives that lack the balance that comes from knowing more about the other person's point of view
- Some no longer feel spiritually uplifted here, and are distancing themselves from our minister
- Some of you sitting in this amphitheater right now are or are considering looking for a new spiritual home elsewhere

This saddens me deeply. This is not the congregation I joined. I do not believe this defines who we are now, nor does it define who we can become. Our perceptions become our reality, like the parable about five blind people describing different parts of an elephant, no one person has the whole story. Yet we cling tightly to our own version of the "truth."

At the same time I know the above perspectives exist, I am uplifted by the knowledge that many of us have a deep love for this place and for each other and believe that the basic goodness of ourselves and our UU principles can carry us through this time of change.

So we can either view this time as a failure in our collective development, or we can view it as an inflection point, an opportunity to deepen the foundation of this community, to collectively define who we want to become. We have made it through some tough times, and there may be more tough times to come. We have both the ability and the responsibility to rebuild in healthier ways, to listen, to be open to the different experiences that people are having here, to heal together. The **What Now? Conversations** with Dr. Willey are a call to action. A call to put your energy and your attention on this community. We believe that together, we can do this, and our work with Rev. Frank Willey will be the beginning of that journey. It won't be the end...as those of us who have worked on culture change journeys before

know it is a multi-year, multi-pronged process. So I am asking each of you to sign up for a meeting when the schedule is posted, to participate, to share what is in your heart and on your mind. We need to hear from you.

I'll leave you with more of what Rev. Sarah Millspaugh so eloquently described as the work ahead of us: "The compost must be turned over and stirred regularly with a pitchfork in order for it to do the work of transformation. For us, this means turning over memories, events, and experiences in our heads. Talking, and listening with others. Telling our story until we understand the experience in a newly empowering way. Noticing and claiming our own parts in the messes of the past, gaining insight into how we might do things differently in the future."

Please join in the healing.