



## May 17, 2020 Virtual Congregational Meeting Minutes

### **1:00pm- We Begin in Covenant**

- ⊕ Call to order and welcoming Christian Harden
- ⊕ Chalice lighting: *UUCA Covenant of Healthy Relationships* Jen Bain & David Spierman
  
- ⊕ Appointment of Process Observer (Sha'Ron Glass) Christian Harden  
-Sha'Ron Glass appointed without discussion.

### **1:08pm- Our Democratic Process**

- ⊕ Review of Meeting Protocols
- ⊕ Appointment of Co-Parliamentarians  
-June Lester & George Macon appointed without discussion or opposition.
- ⊕ Appointment of tellers and determination of quorum (Nominating Committee)  
-Chris Martin and Barbra Begner appointed as tellers without discussion or opposition.  
-**Quorum**- 20% quorum required. 586 current voting members. Minimum of 118 voting members in attendance required.  
-**Quorum achieved**: 162 voting members confirmed in attendance via Zoom video and telephone conference.

### **1:27pm -Decisive Action**

- ⊕ Approval of Minutes of December 8th, 2019 Congregational Meeting. Sean Golan

#### **BOARD MOTION:**

- Sean Golan moves “that we approve the minutes of the December 08, 2019 Congregational meeting published on the UUCA website.”
  - No Secunder needed.
- Motion Passes: Minutes from December meeting approved without discussion (96% yea 4% abstain).

- ⊕ Election of Trustees, Officers, Nominating Committee and Stewardship Co-Chairs Christian Harden

#### **Trustee Slate**

- Jennifer Thilo -President for - 1 Yr. term
- Sean Golan - President Elect -1 Yr. term
- Jason Delaney - Finance Trustee - 2 Yr. term
- Allen Lee - Trustee - 3 Yr. term
- Maureen McAndrews - Trustee - 3 Yr. term
- John Merkel - Trustee - 2 Yr. term

#### **Nominating Committee Slate**

- Carl Pelizza -Member - 2 Yr. term
- Laura Yamshita -Member - 2 Yr. term

## **Stewardship Co-Chairs**

-Barbara Begner -Co-Chair - 2 Yr. term

-George Macon -Co-Chair - 2 Yr. term

### **BOARD MOTION:**

- Christian Harden moves “that we approve the minutes of the May 17, 2020 Congregational meeting published on the UUCA website.”
  - No Second needed.
- Motion Passes: Minutes unanimously without discussion (all nominations unopposed).
  - Mary Moore- Raised virtual hand- technical issue resolved by providing zoom conference call phone number.

### **⊕ Approval of Proposed Bylaw Revision**

### **BOARD MOTION:**

- John Duggar moves “to amend Article XIII-Section B.1 (b) as described in the mailing to congregants”.
  - By-Law Amendment as summarized in Mailing:
- Current Bylaw:  
Article XIII- Section B.1 Additional Minister(s)- Section (b) Additional Minister(s) shall be in fellowship with the UUA.
- Proposed Change to By-Law:  
“Article XIII- Section B.1 Additional Minister(s)- Section (b) Additional Minister(s) Additional Minister shall be a minister in fellowship with the UUA or shall be a credentialed clergy in another tradition who also holds Aspirant or Candidate status for fellowship with the UUA.”
- Rationale for change:  
Broadening the pool of possible minister applicants in order to increase access and diversity of candidates the Senior Minister can choose from. The Aspirant or Candidate Status requirement maintains the standards of conduct and vetting etc.

### **1:58pm - Discussion**

- Time limit for Discussion: 30min total, 2 min/person
- Discussion Ends at 2:26pm

### **MOTION: Larry Vogeler moves “to call the question.”**

- Secunder: Sha’Ron Glass
- $\frac{2}{3}$  of voting members in favor attendance required
  - Motion Passes: Question called.

### **Question Called- Vote on by-law change:**

- $\frac{2}{3}$  of voting members in favor attendance required
- **PASSES-** Congregation Votes to approve by-law change.
  - Margin: 93% (145 Ayes 12-Nays).

## **2:07pm - Mid-Year Report from the Finance Trustee**

Jason Delaney

1. Staff Position Searched Completed
  - a. Director of Lifespan Education staff position filled by Laura Beth Brown (she/her).
  - b. Membership and Social Justice Coordinator staff position filled by Beck Schillizzi (they/them).
  - c. Acting Director of Finance and Operations position filled by Bryce Thomason (he/him).
2. COVID-19 Global Pandemic forced UUCA to halt in-person worship in March 2020 and move to entirely online You-Tube streamed worship and Zoom meetings for other offerings.
3. Budgeting Process Overhauled
  - a. Thanks to Gary Youngblood, Travis D. Vaughn III, & Bryce Thomason.
4. Revenue
  - a. Revenue exceeded expenses in the first quarter in all three months (Jan-March).
  - b. No Project Phoenix funds drawn to cover operations as of yet.
  - c. Pledge payments and increased giving will reduce the need to draw down money from the sale of Cliff Valley Property to cover operations.
5. Expenses
  - a. Expenses less than budgeted. Partially due to added staff reducing the need for consultants.
6. Paycheck Protection Program loan obtained.
  - a. We are cautiously hopeful we will be able to satisfy the requirements to have this loan forgiven depending on whether Congress changes the program.

2:30 pm (Stretch Break & Blue Boat Home Interlude)

DeAnn Peterson

## **2:35 pm - Project Phoenix Report**

1. Coxe-Curry financial Feasibility Study Completed.
  - a. Cost \$47,000.00.
2. Early Estimates from Architect (Collins, Cooper, and Carusi) place cost of renovations of building at \$4.5 Million
3. Capital Campaign Goal set at \$2.5 Million (\$2 million is already in hand and reserved from sale of Cliff Valley)
  - a. Ellen Battey & John Guyton selected as volunteer Capital Campaign Co-Chairs.
4. Raymond James Account currently has \$2.55 Million dollars
  - a. \$2 Million set-aside for building
  - b. Remainder set-aside for operational costs such as lease in current space, if needed.
5. Land Development Plan (LDP) submitted to DeKalb County & under review.
6. Landscape Master Plan under development
7. Permanent Sign cannot be constructed until LDP is approved by DeKalb County.
8. Next Steps:
  - a. The Design Development Phase will begin with more detailed estimates on cost of possible renovations.
  - b. Landscape Master Plan to be completed.

- c. Capital Campaign.
- 9. Thank you to all those who have served on the Project Phoenix Committee and sub-committees

**2:45pm - Endowment Fund Report**

Eric Pohl

1. Separate 501(c)(3)
  - a. Mission: set-up for long term investments in UUCA.
2. Funded via bequests, Birthday Club (contribute your age), memorial gifts, and direct donations.
3. Suggested language in will for a bequest:
 

"I give to the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta Endowment Fund (Tax ID 23-7085616), and 501(c)(3) corporation, \_\_\_\_\_% of my estate, for its general purposes." A fixed dollar amount can also be used.
4. Total current Assets aprx. \$985,000.00.
  - a. Some losses due to conservative investments which have fallen due to the market volatility.
5. Currently 79 known Legacy Society Members.
6. Total donations last year: \$38,607.00
  - a. Includes 128 Birthday Club Donations.
7. Normal Year up to 3% of total funds available as grants for UUCA projects.
  - a. Last year Project: Restoration of antique Steinway Grand Piano.
  - b. Endowment plans to support Project Phoenix in the coming years.
8. Endowment Fund Board (\*=new members)
  - a. Eric Pohl, President
  - b. Mary Crawley, Secretary
  - c. John Guyton, Treasurer
  - d. Godfrey Oakley
  - e. David Sjoquist
  - f. DeAnn Peterson
  - g. Kay Golan
  - h. MaryAnne Gaunt\*
  - i. Judy Shaklee\*
9. Thank you to Ron Franks and Laura De Castro for serving on the board for 6 years

**2:53pm - Minister's Report (1:40:25)**

Annual Vision of Ministry

Reverend Taryn Strauss

9 Months since Rev. Strauss began as Acting Senior Minister

**AVOM #1**

Manage our UUCA cultural transition by leading the Congregation to coalesce around a shared and aspirational vision for our future.

- Convened an amazing Committee on Ministry to help strategize, support, evaluate and plan the ministry of UUCA.
  - Jason Delaney, Chair
  - Isha Lee
  - Leta Woo
  - Hildegarde Grey
  - Shawna Floyd
  - Bruce Gaunt

- Supporting current & new staff by (very time intensive):
  - Clarifying the appropriate job descriptions,
  - Increasing Administrative leadership and improving administrative processes
    - Improving the onboarding process for new staff, and helping them integrate onto the staff team and into the congregation.
  - Securing the finances for the right level of expertise and experience, hiring the right fit.
    - Securing PPP Loan (thank you Bryce Thomason!)
  - Hiring dedicated, passionate, and experienced staff
    - Bryce Thomason -Acting Director of Finance & Operations
    - Laura Beth Brown - Director of Lifespan Religious Education
    - Beck Schillizzi - Membership & Social Justice Coordinator
    - Chelsea Green - Children's Chorus Director
- Thank you to all staff for an amazing year of growth & renewal!
  - Don Milton III
  - Bryce Thomason
  - Nicole Pressley
  - Laura Beth Brown
  - Beck Schillizzi
  - Gary Youngblood
  - Ayanna Kafi Stringer
  - Travis Vaughn
  - Bo Gaison
  - Douglass Terrell
  - Elisabeth Schreibfeder
  - Chelsea Green
  - Amazing Childcare Staff
- Developed & Planned worship themes that meet the congregation's needs:
  - Sept- "Liberating Our Dreams"
  - Oct- "Mystic Activism"
  - Dec- "Be a Refuge, Be a Beacon"
  - Jan- "Some Walls Must Fall"
  - Feb- "The Virtues of Humanism"
  - March- "Monsters and Villains"
  - mid-March-present: "How We Thrive"
- Create opportunities for congregants to express themselves and their faith in worship
  - UU Moves movement choir, led by Elizabeth Field
  - Invited additional UUCA members to give the "reading" portion of the worship service
  - Planning a portion of worship called "How I UU," on hold until we meet in-person
  - During COVID, we've invited families to lead the congregation in the Movement Prayer that is a regular part of children's worship
  - As we are able, we invite members to contribute skits to add to the dynamic online worship. This creates many hours of extra work for our A/V volunteers, so it's not always possible
- Lead Stewardship Campaign

- Goal to raise \$690K for the stewardship 2019 stewardship campaign.
- Recruited this year's Stewardship Co Chairs, Leta Woo and Kay Johnson.
- Developed House Party centered strategy for Stewardship.
- Surpassed stewardship goal for 2020 by securing \$732,660 in pledges.

**AVON #2:**

Support diversity and inclusion, especially around economic differences in our congregation, to build beloved community.

- We institutionalized our ARAOMC learning process by making the first Sunday of every month a focused learning opportunity on becoming better allies and activists against intersectional oppressions.
- Focusing on honoring and celebrating diversity in worship in as many ways as possible.
- Recruiting excellent preachers and ministers of color to offer pulpit supply in my absence, and using liberation theologies and queer writers of color as sources of worship.

**AVOM #3:**

Chart a path toward leadership, from visitor to leader.

- We completed a successful hiring process of a new Social Justice and Membership Coordinator with a great search team:

Maureen McAndrews, chair  
 Ginny Sjoquist  
 Carrie Angus-Ramos  
 Ana Apostolou  
 Bert Pearce  
 Natalie Snedden

- We were proud to hire Beck Schillizi as our new Social Justice and Membership Coordinator!
- Beck worked with Marycallie to start a new class, Beyond Inquirers, for newer members who had already completed Inquirers but want to learn more.
- Committee on Ministry discussing what a UUCA leadership school could look like, courses to develop stronger leaders (and followers too).

**AVOM #4:**

Forge community partnerships.

- Rev. Strauss joined the inaugural board of trustees of the Georgia Interfaith Public Policy Center.
  - They are planning interfaith lobbying days for various issues such as anti-death penalty, anti-hate crime, and potentially medicaid expansion.
- Rev. Strauss convened a clergy support group.
  - Senior clergy in our neighborhood:
    - Rabbi Josh Lesser at Bet Haverim,
    - Rev. Matt Laney at Virginia-Highland Church,

- Rev. Angela Shepherd at St. Bartholomew’s Episcopal Church, and
    - Rev. Patrick Fulhauber at N. Decatur United Methodist Church.
  - The group has become close and seeks ways to collaborate and support one another.
- Rev. Strauss invited to join Just Dekalb.
  - A faith-based social action organization working on housing equity and other justice issues in Dekalb Co.
  - Rev. Strauss was planning on bringing Beck Schillizi and other UUCAers into the group before the pandemic.
- Started researching our Prison Ministry with some members at UUCA who answered the call to serve as UU prison chaplains.
  - Suzanne Wilson completed preliminary research, we need to find the right jail/prison who will allow us to meet with inmates.
- Beck and Rev. Strauss met with Megan Vesey at New Sanctuary Coalition to join a coalition of congregations who will support a person living in sanctuary at Virginia-Highlands Church.
- Beck also attended an immigration advocacy day at the GA capitol in their first week in their position.

### **Response to COVID 19 “The Great Pivot”**

- The week of March 10, after consulting with colleagues and conscious, I made the executive decision to close the building to congregants and to move to livestream worship.
  - The move was seamless, and we were better prepared for this transition than most congregations, because we are lucky to have an incredible, skilled A/V team who had already live streamed our worship for months before the pandemic.
  - Deep & heartfelt Thanks to our dedicated and talented volunteer AV Team:
    - Michael Dangerfield
    - Pasha Souverin
    - Jeep Hook
    - George Macon
- New Priorities for Staff
  - Seamless, consistently excellent online Sunday worship with live chat feature.
  - Wednesday evening online check in/social hour on Wednesdays followed by livestreamed Vespers with a live chat feature so people can offer joys and sorrows.
  - Pastoral/Community Care via phone calls and cards using our database and directories.
    - Please let Rev. Strauss know if you would like to participate in making calls to fellow congregants.
  - Creating easy, consistent avenues for generosity and giving to UUCA during this time, adding a paypal feature.
    - UUCA.org/give
      - PayPal option for giving implemented
        - Thank you again to Bryce!
  - Procure the PPP payroll protection funds from the United States government.
- After a month of onboarding new staff and becoming comfortable with the new priorities, we’ve added a few more:

- Add weekly Adult RE Course offerings
- Add Family Worship and Children's RE course offerings as requested by families. We now offer weekly k-2 RE, YRUU weekly gatherings, 2nd-4th grade classes, and 5th-8th grade are still in the works
- Zoom social hour after worship services
- Establish neighborhood care circles for all UUCA members
  - Will take time & volunteers to build framework & connect congregants in similar Geographic areas.
- Opportunities for the choir to stay connected
- During the COVID response, our community's spiritual needs are great, and our ability to respond to those needs are more coordinated and organized than ever before.
- Our trends in both worship attendance via livestream and financial contributions are positive.
  - Over 402 unique devices connected on Easter Sunday, resulting in perhaps up to a thousand people who participated in that worship service.
- We are receiving feedback from congregants who stopped coming long ago that they are now returning to UUCA as well as new congregants who are finding us from all over the world.
- We have been called to be that extraordinary light of support for one another, to nurture our spirits, love courageously, and work for justice.
- Now, more than ever, this is our time to shine.

#### Priority Volunteer Opportunities

- Social Justice Core Team
- Personnel Committee
- COVID-19 Response Leadership Team
  - Study options for whether Tree House location is still necessary.
  - UUA Issued recommendation that congregations plan to not meet in person again until May 20201.
  - Working on evaluating what makes sense for UUCA.

#### **3:19pm - Board President's Report (2:06:26)**

- Lean not to your own understanding
- The Power of We

(Sha'Ron notes that a Zoom Troll infiltrated the congregation's Zoom meeting to spout nonsense & hate in the chat. Beck working on minimizing the Troll's interruption)

- Thank you to fellow Board members.
  - Jennifer Thilo- Compassionate, Wordsmith
  - Sean Golan- Insightful, Brave
  - Jon Duggar- Thoughtful, Honest
  - David Spearman- Humorous, Techie
  - John Johnson- Straightforward, Sincere
  - ShaRon- Transparent, Genuine
  - Jen- Skillful, Vigorous
  - Jason- Passionate, Purpose
  - Bryce- Endurance, Dedication
- Board Accomplishments 2019-2020 Year
  - Established blueprint for Healthy Relations Team.

Christian Harden



- Established blueprint for ARAOMC Council.
  - Implemented a bylaw to establish the Stewardship Co-Chairs.
  - Improved budget forecasting and reporting practices/templates.
  - Completed Feasibility Study for new building.
  - Continued with Donuts and Discussion.
  - Facilitated three members to attend Southern Unitarian Universalist Leadership Experiences (SUULE).
  - Three board members participated in Small Group Ministries.
  - Facilitated a member to attend the Mountain Summit.
  - Sponsored & Hosted two Project Phoenix Town Halls for community engagement around the new building @ 2650 North Druid Hills Road, Atlanta, GA.
  - Moved all the board's work to Teamwork for security and collaboration.
  - Communicated with the congregation at least twice a month via the Weekly Update.
  - Online presentation of the Feasibility Study and Action Plan to move forward with 2650 renovation.
  - Supported the Whitney Young Jr. Society Worship Service
  - Moved the board meetings from in person to Zoom
  - Engaged our congregation to participate in the General Assembly.
    - UUCA delegates are:
      - Ayanna Stringer
      - Jim Kelly
      - Frank Casper
      - Karen Reagle
      - June Lester
      - Sekayi Stringer
      - Tony Stringer
      - Amelia Shenstone
      - Beck Schillizzi
      - Sean Golan
      - Jennifer Thilo
- Open Question:
 

What form of woundedness in Atlanta is UUCA uniquely poised to heal?

    - The Board recommends that healing the wounds of poverty be integrated into the Senior Minister's Annual Vision of Ministry to focus and guide programming at UUCA. The Board also recommends that awareness and direct action efforts concerning poverty be the priority for the coming program year.
  - Thank you:
    - Received encouraging support from past presidents- Paul, June, Amelia, Melissa, Erin, Carol Ann, Lyn, Ellen & DeAnn
    - Received tremendous support from staff and so many volunteers.
    - The best to Rev. Taryn Strauss, Jennifer Thilo, Sean Golan and to the UUCA Board, Finance Committee, Project Phoenix, staff and volunteers!

- Peaceful Transfer of Gavel
  - Expect Twists!
  - Congregational Reminder: Remember the presidents are people too. Instead of asking more of them please offer your support and encouragement to them as people.

### Leadership Transition

- Thank you Christian!
  - The Board selected these words to describe your leadership during these time:
    - Steadfast
    - Passionate
    - Patient
    - Principled
    - Fair
    - Even keeled
    - Thoughtful
    - Generous
    - Focused
    - Forward Thinking
    - Tenacious
    - Wise
    - Impactful
    - Astute
    - Thorough
    - Organized
    - Devoted
    - Kind
  - Rev Strauss described you as “Beautifully Unique and refreshingly honest. A wonderful leader for these trying times”
- Gifts to former President Christian Harden:
  - Gift card
  - Watercolor Painting of a view from The Mountain.
- New President’s words to congregation: I am honored that you have chosen me to be your Board President, especially in these times. I am excited at the potential for growth and how full of love our community & staff are.

Jennifer Thilo

- **Special Thanks**

- Thank you Don Milton III for showing up in so many ways and doing so much for this congregation! Not all ministers are as lucky as I am with a Music Director so thank you for all that you do.

Rev. Strauss

### 3:22 PM - Closing: Observer’s Insights 2:17:01

Sha’Ron Glass

- Preface process observation:
  - The questions work better for in-person and we may need new questions for our current situation.
- Did we observe our covenant?
  - Yes

- Did we remain on task?
  - Yes
- How did the questions and presentation demonstrate our commitment to Anti-Racism Anti-Oppression, and Multi-Culturalism?
  - By-law revision demonstrated this commitment
- What was the high point?
  - The finance meeting
- What was the low energy moment?
  - The end as we are all now suffering from Zoom-fatigue.
- What was the most meaningful part of the meeting?
  - Passage of the By-law revision.

**Extinguishing the Chalice and Closing Words 2:20:20**

- Personal note:
  - I leave the Board today having served five years with a host of exceptional people. Thank you UUCA leaders both past and present for your wisdom, your vision, passion, & love.
- Closing Words by T.S. Elliot
  - What we call a beginning is often the end, and to make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from. We shall not cease from exploration and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time. What we call a beginning is often the end, and to make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from.

Jon Johnson

**3:37 PM - Adjournment**

- Bill Withers “Lovely Day” Played as Zoom exit music.

Christian Harden