

Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes October 24, 2023

Primary Location: 2650 North Druid Hills Road, 2nd Floor, Library 6:00 pm to 8:30 pm

OR

Secondary Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88223632519?pwd=RFdrR0dpR2dEd2ZLNjITakorTzVLQT09>

Meeting ID: 882 2363 2519

Passcode: 851147

Invitees: David Yamashita - President, Barbara Begner - President-Elect, Dave Sjoquist - Finance and Endowment, Beth Carpenter - HRC, Mary Liebs Honeycutt - Fundraising, Leta Woo - Minister Call, Herschel Beazley - TBD, Janel Dennard - Stewardship , Terry Carpenter - ARAOMC, Bryce Thomason - Director, Rev. Taryn Strauss - Senior Minister

Absent:

Notes taken by: Leta Woo

David called the meeting to order

Leta light the chalice and lead opening

Circle of Connection:

Joys and concerns

Process Observer is Leta. Yay!

By Law Change for Consideration - Dave Sjoquist

ARTICLE II. PURPOSE

CURRENT

UUCA is a community of faith that encourages and supports our individual spiritual quests out of which we act together for social justice. UUCA is grounded in the principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), valuing community, diversity, spiritual growth and development, social justice, and involvement and participation.

PROPOSED

UUCA is a spiritual community working to transform lives through courageous action and soulful connection. UUCA encourages and supports our individual spiritual quests out of which we act together for social justice. UUCA serves as a hub of engagement, honoring the diversity of belief and pursuing a more just world. UUCA is grounded in the principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), valuing community, diversity, spiritual growth and development, social justice, and involvement and participation.

Liebs - move to propose bylaw change at December meeting

Dave - second

All approve
No abstentions

Is there a timeline for bylaw changes?

There are some guidelines for providing notice to the congregation; no guidelines on how often changes can be proposed

We change bylaws far less than others; we should try and change every meeting to keep things fresh
We're proposing including our mission statement, which seems like a good timely change

Budget Brainstorming - Dave Sjoquist

Thank You messages for the month - Board

Dan and Lynnette - both spending a lot of extra time recently - David Yamashita

Next time thank Jon Black for Trunk or Treat

Next time thank Jason Delaney for ARE

Interweave folks who led pride, Serethiel Freeman, Latonya - Janel

HRC - Leta

Tony - Leta

Approval of the Minutes - Leta

Move to approve

All approve with one abstention (Beth)

HRC Policy Change Discussion - Tony Stringer and Doug Abell

An incredible amount of work went into drafting the policy change, internal discussions and discussions with other congregations

Doug - Wants to introduce board to the background of changes and the reasoning for the document provided; a possibility is a future discussion to clarify more; Tony and I are interested in any questions the board may have; HRC started back in June by meeting with Rev. Strauss, talked about looking at policy to help us be proactive in situations when someone may potentially create harm to community; existing policy 'serious breach of covenant' is reactive, something bad happens and then action taken afterwards; there may be situations that allow us to be more proactive if there's information; members of HRC attended 6-week UUA program about safe congregations around the country; what does safety mean, how do our congregations stay safe and also be free; how do we want to live in community with each other; talked to a lot of different people, there were many drafts; fundamentally look at serious breach of covenant and bring into that best practices that are reflected within our denomination, a lot of info came from the training earlier this year; policy and procedures around safe congregation team; distinguish between serious and discomfort/interpersonal; serious breach of covenant threatens safety and wellbeing of institution and staff; action and steps of a specific team, under what situation, who has authority, how it unfolds; how it inquires and assesses; how does it engage with individuals that may be involved in serious breach of covenant; try to illustrate what a serious breach looks like and how the

process would unfold; or the possibility of something occurring, addressing proactively; safeguards for person alleged to make sure they get a full hearing, provisions for outside help when needed; look at this with all eyes open, being loving and compassionate, at the same time take care of our organization and be in relationship with each other

Question about special team, if person is a member, they should be well trained; will there be a certification similar to the lay minister program? How do we make sure they get what they really need to be on the team?

Tony - By its nature, the team will be rarely utilized; we could conceive that this team may only be deployed every few years at the most; it's hard to maintain a standing team, so what we want is category of people, have them get some training so they would be ready; by its nature, this team would not function like lay ministry that remains standing, this special team really gets called into action; should not be used very often

There would be challenges to train a team and keep them for long periods of time anticipated between them being potentially called into action, the approach is more of having categories of people

Doug - key player for the special team is a board member, HRC member, and minister (depending); others would aid the team, that may be a different person depending on the specific situation

Rev. Strauss - affirm quality and rigor of the work of HRC; believe this is primary work of leadership, to ensure safety, all other roles are second to this; having these documents is so vital, when something comes up, it's always sad and heartbreaking when it comes to this; it's worse if you don't have structure or if you aren't protecting the most vulnerable people; we should be really upfront and let everybody know about the policy, be very open and transparent; more we can reassure people that we have our policies in place, the safer people will feel to be free; people are more free with their ideas and spiritual exploration when they feel safe; more free to send child to an overnight if we have policy in place; affirm and commend the work of the HRC

Very thoughtful document, a lot of time spent to make sure everything is clear

Tony - question to the board about values; around the country a number of UU congregations; as they think of creating safe communities, also adopting policies to not call the police; interesting position to take, historical roles that police have played in communities of color; some congregations are looking from a values standpoint; what would that mean to look at this without resorting to the police; question for the board to consider; spend time to think through; not making a recommendation; something for us all to think through; the document does make references to the police; there are organizations that focus on alternatives; focus on de escalation; if the board thought it was worth it, we could investigate more and report back to the board

Perhaps a section to limit calling law enforcement

Perhaps guidelines in place to let folks know when this team would be used and engaged

Tony - part of the policy is that when someone thinks there's a serious breach, minister, board president and chair of HRC, they decide whether the team should be deployed; could be a referral if it's more of a microaggression than a serious breach

Examples include person who served time in prison for child pornography distribution, was a member of congregation since childhood and expected to return without any limitations; didn't have a policy in place so had to create everything in the moment; felt punitive and specific, when that was not the intention; at the time it seemed like we didn't know what we were doing, felt culpable for actions of the other person; other time, there was a case of sexual assault at a UUCA party at someone's house; another congregation where sexual abuse from adult to child over time repeatedly, both were members of congregation, but it didn't happen at a church event; our legal system makes it difficult for a child to prosecute a sex offender, the child would need to remember dates and times which is rare; perpetrator may go to church, and if church doesn't have policy; then you default to legality; we are not the legal system and we have different kinds of authority; these are situations that arise

Tony - UUA response team, emphasize congregations don't realize level of authority we have, we are private institutions; we can refuse services to anyone we choose, we don't have the same obligation to serve everyone, runs counter to our culture of welcoming, but we do have full legal authority to bar anyone that could cause harm regardless of legality

We do have an instance here of having to remove someone from our campus

Harm happened at congregational event; there are also congregants that date each other; if harm is done; does the community have any part there? If there's sexual assault incident, does the victim have to attend church with the perpetrator?

High school had policy subject to discipline when two or more people in same location

Open question to consider how we think about harm that happens outside of UUCA activity but affects our congregants

Lean on side of bringing it up; option to take no action; better to bring it up and committee make informed decision

With regards to calling the police; if we discourage people from calling the police we might be liable; instead perhaps we can encourage people to call other resources

This would be considered a board policy, would not require a congregational vote

Board will take a closer look, have more discussion and talk with HRC more if needed

It's difficult to institute a limited access plan and have a congregant stay

Executive Report - Rev. Taryn

Happy Clergy appreciation month! Yay!

Discussed various activities completed, in-process, and in-planning

Shay taught a soulful communication class, Bryce is teaching a living a purpose-led life right now; volunteer appreciation completed;; March 15-17, 2024 is possible for a leadership conference hosted by UUCA, big budget needs, but think people would be willing to pay, trying to replace SUULE, lots of talent and interest from people; implementing Wellspring, a small group program

Grief support group in-process; also still investigating 2nd minister, struggling with volunteerism; Odyssey dinner for elders, deepen new member experience, hoping to make it to 100 new members this year

About to start new worship series - don't ghost your ghosts (multigen); Barbie's world (please dress appropriately); celebrating Diwali; big Sunday before Thanksgiving, climate hope

Culture change from evaluation to experience - hope for people to experience worship and how others are experiencing instead of evaluating and transactional; it's an experience you're having and think about it that way

Seen drop of attendance in October, could be weather, could be it's pledge season; could be the rise of COVID so less people attending; concerns of not offering what some congregants are looking for; not sure how to find out; incredible event for arts, head curator for High, beautiful incredibly inspiring discussion, only one congregant attended, in retrospect could have done on a Sunday morning; providing childcare, experimenting with time, participation is an issue

Struggling with 2nd minister because finances aren't stable; Nancy Palmer Jones is part-time minister in Gwinnett; preaching two Sundays a month there; possible to approach her about considering maybe part-time here? Gathering meeting with colleagues to think through this

Have a wonderful update from Bryce in report - movement on HVAC system, constant action on building; engage with Project Phoenix to get funds for special land use permit so we can get more rentals, likely 8 month process; recognizing incredible efforts from staff

Finance - Dave Sjoquist

September was worse than July and August using the monthly deficit (i.e., revenues less expenditures) as the measure of performance. For the year, we are not doing well. We have gone from a YTD surplus of \$24,637 on June 30, to a deficit of \$4,581 on July 30, to a deficit of \$26,983 on August 30, to a deficit of

\$61,594 on September 31. Revenues in September were \$32,022 below what was projected. YTD revenues are \$70,686, or 8.4 percent, below projected revenue. Expenditures for September were \$2,586 above projected expenditures. YTD expenditures were \$9,091, or 1.1 percent, below projected YTD expenditures. Pledge payments are below expected pledge payments; YTD we are at 94% of expected pledge revenue. As of October 20, there are 45 pledging units (14.2% of total pledging units) who have not made any payment this year; the number is down from 56 units as of September 22. Fundraising is a problem. Cash flow is a serious concern. We transferred \$31,942 from reserves last month and opened a line of credit with the bank. The Endowment Fund has made us a short-term loan, with the expected Employee Retention Tax Credit from the Federal government serving as collateral.

Differences between pledges and launch fund pledges?

Dave moves to approve finance report

Liebs seconds

All approve

Need special board meeting to go through tactics and messaging about our finances - this Sunday evening 7:30pm hybrid in-person/Zoom meeting

Dave Sjoquist will send out email about getting our input on the budget

Stewardship Committee - Janel

Over half way point, averaging 6% increase; how to wrap up campaign, finance committee needs to know total raised; once we have that number, bylaws require that we come up with budget, present to finance, they vote, then the congregation votes

We don't have enough people visiting and calling right now; Shay has letters going to people who usually pledge and to go out to new members; 189 potential first time pledgers; shift our energy to visiting and calling them; if you haven't managed to get all of your visits and calls in; reassign you with more people to visit instead of sending form letter; so far we have pledging average of about \$1400

Need to spend more time on people who have not pledged but have given

Minister Call Committee - Leta

Some questions from committee concerning language in bylaws; board clarifies understanding that Taryn is not a new minister and therefore does not require a search committee and a minister call committee is ok; also, Taryn is in fellowship and in good standing, our bylaws do not say anything about being in full fellowship; committee also asked about any funding for our activities, since the budget for this year does not include any funds for this group, there are no existing fund; the minister call committee could consider submitting a request for funds for 2024 budget

Process observation -

Did we observe covenant? Yes -

Did we remain on task? Yes, flexible items when waiting for guests to join on Zoom

How agenda demonstrate ARAOMC? Discussion about HRC work and safe congregations; especially around protecting vulnerable groups and thinking about our values in terms of how we think about contacting the police

High energy moment? Talking about food!

Low energy moment? Finances

Most meaningful part of meeting? Check-in and sharing

Process Observer for the next Meeting: Terry

Next Meeting: Scheduled for November 28, 2023

Chalice Lighter: Janel

Dinner provider: David Yamashita

Our Vision: Inspired by our faith community, we affirm these values:

- Wonder and awe
- Love and compassion
- Courageous engagement

Our Mission: Transforming lives through courageous action and soulful connection

Our 2023 - 2024 Board Goals:

1. Work to increase revenue sufficiently to support the operations of the congregation
2. Support the radical welcome and belonging teams to grow the congregation
3. Support Social Justice with one all congregation initiative
4. Support updating the UUCA Covenant of Healthy Relationships
5. Call the Senior Minister
6. Leadership Development
7. Start building the Connected Community

I. Spirit and Community

Agenda Topic	Lead Speaker	Start Time
Dinner	Provided by Beth	6:00
Chalice Lighting/Opening Words	Leta	6:20

Circle of Connection: Joys and Concerns	Beth - Start	6:25
By Law Change for Consideration	Dave Sjoquist	6:40
Budget Brainstorming	Dave Sjoquist	6:45
HRC Policy Change Discussion	Tony Stringer and Doug Abell	7:00
Thank You messages for the month.	Board	7:20

II. The Work of the Board

Approval of the Minutes	Leta	7:25
Executive Report	Rev. Taryn	7:30
Finance	Dave Sjoquist	7:50
Stewardship Committee	Janel	8:10
Minister Call Committee	Leta	8:30
By Laws	David Y.	Postponed
Healthy Relations Committee	Beth C.	Postponed
Nominating Committee	Barbara	Postponed
ARAOMC Committee	Terry	Postponed
Endowment Committee	Dave S.	Postponed

III. Closing

Process Observation		8:35
Process Observer for the October Meeting Next Meeting: Scheduled for November TBD, 2023 Chalice Lighter: Dinner provider:		8:40
Closing Words/Extinguishing the Chalice		8:45