

# **First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee**

## **Minutes of Annual Meeting**

**May 22, 2022**

**BOT Members Present:** Jane Cliff (President), Ben LeFort (Vice President), Tony Panciera (Secretary), Dianna Dentino, Rollie Hanson, Patricia Geenen, Mark Miller, George Bledsoe.

### **Call to Order**

Congregational President Jane Cliff called the meeting to order at 12:50 p.m. The meeting was conducted in person with a Zoom option online. The meeting started with 58 in person and 30 online and quorum was achieved (59 people = 10% of eligible members). Total attendance peaked at 95. Closed captions were requested online, and the electronic version of the packet was shared in the chat.

### **Approval of Minutes, 2021 Annual Meeting**

Motion to approve the minutes on page 12 of the Annual Meeting Packet by Mark Chambers. Seconded by Nick DaVia. Motion passed.

### **Remarks from the President (Jane Cliff)**

Jane spoke about the “P’s” as different themes through the year. She referenced the rental apartment flooding and a boiler failure as unanticipated expenses. She emphasized that we adhered to our policies and operated within our budget. Participation numbers have been discouraging at times, but not as bad as they could be. Online has expanded our reach. Jane shared that the Board and our committees worked on gaining perspective, participating in anti-racism training in the spring. The Board is working to incorporate this into our work and governance. There were areas that weren’t perfect: youth engagement in the Board has proven too difficult with youth being “zoomed out”. The structural deficit issues continue, though last year’s congregational vote has been advancing an income generation strategy. Jane closed by thanking the congregation.

### **Nominating Committee Report (Kristine Hansen)**

Nominating Committee looked at a variety of factors, including life experience and background of potential church members, working to better represent the congregation. For the board of trustees, there are three members they are nominating for a three-year term: Amy Wilbourne, Sarah Richards, and Joe Riepenhoff.

For the Nominating Committee, they are nominating two members for three-year terms: Anne Alexander and Jason Ludkte. As well, they are nominating Jessie Moffat to a partial term.

Motion to approve the slate of board nominees by Kit Vernon. Seconded by Dale Skaggs. Motion passed.

Motion to approve the slate of Nominating Committee nominees by Tristan Strelitzer. Seconded by Nick DaVia. Motion passed.

### **Financial Condition Report (Noreen Gilbertsen)**

Noreen reviewed the completed Fiscal Year 2020-2021. Some highlights on income were very good pledge fulfillment, no Feast for Funds, interest rates on CDs, PPP loan forgiveness, and some issues with apartment vacancies. On expenses, both HR and total expenses were below budget (due to position vacancies), 14% in total. The year ended with income net operations at negative \$45,000, though a \$153,000 deficit had been budgeted. Expenses are lean and we need to focus on increasing income. Extraordinary income last year was incredible and uncommon.

Noreen went over the current year's finances (2021-2022). To date, pledges increased 3.7% over the previous year with 86% pledge fulfillment. We forecasted total income as \$822,000, budgeted at \$851,000. Interest rates on CDs went down and there were some unexpected apartment issues. Expenses are forecasted to be low by the end of year: \$958,000 (low by \$42,000). We are currently forecasting a deficit of \$136,000, having had a budgeted deficit of \$152,000.

Noreen also spoke to additional social investments being made. The question was asked around how we will sustain without the one-time investment from the Feds through PPP. The short answer is pledges.

Finally, Noreen shared next year's budget (2022-2023): The total budgeted income is \$841,000. Budgeted expenses increased 4% to \$1,042,000, with inflation expenses as well as ongoing concerns, such as the capital campaign. The budgeted deficit is -\$201,000, which is the largest budgeted deficit to date, that we're aware of. A question was asked about the scale of budgeted deficit and if the Board just felt it has to be done in anticipation to a capital campaign. A question was asked about programs being added, to which it was answered that they have not been added as much as these are our ongoing costs to continue.

### **Pledge Report (Mark Chambers)**

Mark shared it was a good pledge year. As of the last count, there were 362 pledges on file totaling \$735,635. Before the end of the fiscal year, they are anticipating a total of 411 pledges and pledge income of \$727,730. Their goal with pledge drive was to move to sustainability, so revenues from pledge can cover operations. While this was not accomplished, they did see results in 40% of members increasing their pledges and 92% of members making a pledge. Gratitude was shared for the team of volunteers who supported the pledge this year.

### **Strategic Planning Team Update (Dave Becker)**

Dave started by refreshing on the backdrop of last year's meeting and the groundwork leading up to this annual meeting. Namely, he spoke to the charge by the Board to their team, the consultant exploring growth and financial sustainability, the congregational vote to progress towards a plan to grow church income, and the focus on a special fundraising campaign. Since last year's meeting, they have continued planning and recruited co-chairs of the Special Fundraising Committee: Mark Chambers and Holly Patzer. They have also engaged with a consultant for a fundraising campaign: Klote and Associates, who center relationships in their work and campaigns.

This fall, in order to explore short and long term needs of the congregation, Special Fundraising Committee will hold small group sessions to help dream big and prioritize. A lot of questions asked had yet to be determined through the process of congregational engagement. They are anticipating the commitments will be fulfilled over a three year term.

A question had previously been asked about why the structural deficit was so big this year. Tom Briscoe, the Treasurer, mentioned that there would be unusual expenses with this campaign and that we will have to spend money to make money and we have budgeted that next year. Also, it was shared that the pledge drive will be combined at the same time as the capital campaign.

#### **Remarks from the Minister of Religious Education (Rev. Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson)**

Kimberlee shared about adaptation through the year. Throughout, we kept Religious Education (RE) going, in spite of COVID. Research shows that RE hasn't worked well overall through the pandemic and we are still feeling impacts of this, in spite of being back in person. This is a pattern across the country in congregations, both UU and otherwise. However, we see families keep coming in the doors, either returning or finding our community for the first time. We are back to being able to offer all ages RE again.

As a part of this, we are offering comprehensive sexual education for youth. There was more demand from beyond our congregation for the programming than what we could deliver. This is the only Our Whole Lives (OWL) training being offered this summer in the Midwest and will significantly expand our local capacity. We have the opportunity to rebuild RE and have been disrupted. We are planning for a full resume in the Fall.

#### **Remarks from the Associate Minister (Rev. Dena McPhetres)**

Dena has been reflecting on three questions: Where are we? Who are we? How are we? And that we are all collectively, and individually, grieving. The good news, she shared, is that church is designed for healing work. Dena invited us to take time to appreciate a variety of groups, including care workers, teachers, parents, pastoral care providers, small group facilitators. Finally, she invited us to listen to our own stories to help clarify where we are, who we are, and how we are.

#### **Remarks from the Senior Minister (Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom)**

Jennifer thanked the congregation for our congregational leadership, in all forms. She asked various leadership groups to rise to be recognized. She thanked all of them for their service. She contextualized the larger context of church: services and participation, a strong congregation in relation to the average across the country (UU or otherwise), both pledges and membership. Church is changing. Regular attendance doesn't mean 4x a month anymore. This also means we have more room for new people to join us. We want to welcome new people, to dream big, and fund those dreams to have more join our community.

Jennifer shared that next year, we'll still be in learning and repairing mode, mixed-mode meetings and rebuilding programs. We're going to relearn and rebuild together. We're currently doing twice as much work to execute in two modes. We're going to need more resources and the staff and leaders are helping us build a bridge to that new future. Our current pace of growth and learning isn't sustainable, so we need to learn how to do things differently and foster resources to do this.

Rev Jennifer also suggested that we'll have a lot of fun with the campaign and it is a sweet spot for our congregation. Jennifer spoke to her upcoming sabbatical in the spring for rest, renewal, study, and reflection. It will be a big year. It's a cultivation year, planting seeds and we'll see our big, beautiful dreams come together and flourish.

### **New Business/Comments from the Congregation (Jane Cliff)**

A question was asked around the consideration of an eighth UU principle and if we can more routinely recognize our occupation of the land of first nations people. Rev. Kimberlee shared that every Sunday in RE they do a land acknowledgement.

In regards to an eighth principle, it is a multi-year process and goes beyond just a new principle. It is being modelled to explicitly commit the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) and congregations to anti-racism and anti-oppression ideals. Members are encouraged to attend the UUA General Assembly. Amended UUA by-laws will need to be voted on at two consecutive general assemblies, 2023 and 2024. Bruce Wiggins encouraged interested individuals to stay in touch with him and Jennifer in regard to denominational affairs work.

A question was asked about the creation of an accessibility committee. Dena shared that staff was working on an accessibility team prior to the pandemic and will revamp that effort for all those who experience issues with accessibility.

Another question was asked about the goal of our COVID policy and the role of personal choice. Rev. Jennifer shared that the goal of the COVID policy is to reduce risk, both for our members and attendees, as well as reduce broader transmission and risks as much as possible. Our institutional stance is more about collective care than individual freedom, which is a different ethic than individual freedom. We continue to try to center what it means to live our faith as UUs and how it is reflected in the choices we make at this moment. Jennifer recognizes there is a cost to this. Also, she recognizes that that sacrifice means that some people who might be at risk or have family at risk have an ability to participate, who wouldn't otherwise.

A question was asked about the two services in-person, as well as online, and if we can aim to do that more efficiently. Jennifer shared the goal is to be livestreaming in the fall, because there are a lot of hurdles to get there.

Motion of adjournment by Tom Briscoe; second by Rod DePue. Motion passed. Adjourned at 3:10pm.

### **Additional Online Comments**

- There was appreciation for a multi-modal annual meeting and voting.
- If meetings will be 90 minutes or longer, please include breaks for stretching, going to the restroom.
- If only one service is streamed in the fall, please choose 11 am.
- Hybrid meetings as an option for parents was appreciated.
- Livestreaming with captions was expressed as being critical.
- A reminder was made that fall services will be live streamed (not pre-recorded).
- A comment was made requesting financial detail be provided in full detail further in advance of the annual meeting.