

**Board of Trustees Meeting  
Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Santa Rosa  
September 19, 2019**

**MINUTES**

**Voting Members Present:** Natalie Brundred (President), Sean Freese (Vice President), Michael Randolph (Treasurer), Cathie Wiese (Corporate Secretary), Larisa Ashley, Paula Hammett, Mike McGirr, John Mason

**Voting Members Absent:** Joe Como, Karen Simmons

**Non-Board Members Present:** Rev. Chris Bell, Dawn Silveira (Administrative Manager), Rev. Dara Olandt, Susan Thollaug (Recording Secretary)

**Meeting called to order at 6:33 pm**

**Chalice Lighting, Covenant, Opening Words:** Rev. Chris Bell and Natalie Brundred

**Agenda review:** Approved

**Minutes:** August minutes were approved with one correction.

**Open Mic:**

Board members confirmed whether or not they could attend and help at the October 5<sup>th</sup> Five to Thrive party.

**Final approval of this year's Board Covenant - Natalie Brundred**

After adding three points from last year's covenant, the Board approved the covenant unanimously.

**Treasurer's Report - Michael Randolph**

As of the end of August, our income is down about \$8000 for the first two months of the fiscal year. We're behind about \$2600 in pledging income, and rental income from the Glaser Center is also down. This shortfall is likely to work itself out over the coming months.

Michael presented an historical analysis covering the last four years of the congregation's monthly income. It shows a lot of fluctuation month to month each year, with some general patterns. Another graph showed that total pledging has been fairly consistent over the last 4 years, varying by only 9%. This reflects UUCSR'S plateau at about 350 members for the last few years.

**Minister's Report - Rev. Chris Bell**

Rev. Chris is working with the *Another World Is Possible Coalition* to sponsor a second Volunteer Engagement event, to be held in January at the fairgrounds. UUCSR is the fiscal agent for the coalition.

Also, Rev. Chris's house at Yulupa Cohousing sold! He'll host an open house at his new home on Humboldt St. on October 20th.

Rather than print out the Order of Service each week, a set of permanent cards will be designed to be placed in the pew racks. The card will include a typical order of service, UU principles, and UUCSR's Covenant and Vision.

Soon, it will be possible to request pastoral care via a request slip that will be in the pew racks and can be placed in a box, to better protect the privacy of those requesting/receiving pastoral care.

The TIE Group planning committee only has one person on it, which is not feasible. The Soul Matters curriculum we are now using fosters opportunities for gathering in smaller groups, either repeatedly or in one-time discussions. On October 20<sup>th</sup>, Rev. Chris will lead a "demonstration" discussion so we can see if there is interest in providing these.

#### **Sabbatical Update - Rev. Chris**

- The Sabbatical committee is coordinating a preaching schedule for Rev Bonnie Dlott (our Sabbatical Minister) and Rev Dara.
- Deb Mason (Chair of the committee) and Rev Chris will meet next week about further preparation.

#### **Administrative Manager's Report - Dawn Silveira**

Glaser Center: We have done a price comparison with other venues and we're "on point." Osher Lifelong Learning (OLLI) program's use of the Glaser Center will expand in the coming year. We are advertising for an events staff position.

Building: We are getting bids to repair the front door. Administrative staff is all signed up to do the upcoming emergency training, which is also open to the congregation.

The Board agreed that the front of the building needs attention. We need to trim low-hanging trees that obscure the name of congregation and visibility into the building, power-clean the building, and have a brighter light in front. Also, moving the large banners from the foyer to the office windows will open up the view into the lobby.

Congregation management software: Dawn will go to a church in Marin to see and ask questions about the software platform they use and we are considering. This platform works across different functional areas -

membership, budget and finances, and communications. A decision about purchasing the software is expected in the next month or two.

We'll move to an e-only newsletter soon. We will also print out a few copies to have available. This may be a weekly newsletter, with a longer regular cycle for longer articles.

### **Preparing the Congregation for Growth**

The Board had a wide-ranging discussion about how to actively engage the congregation in the ideas for growing UUCSR's membership that were developed at the Board's retreat in August. Points that were made:

We are at a fork in the road, where UUCSR's ability to serve its members and act effectively in the community will either expand or decline in parallel with the robustness of its membership. We know we are at a plateau. This is a crucial juncture. We are faced with two possibilities:

- 1) Be bold and aim high, staff for growth, and "go for it" over the next 6 years.
- 2) Face a cycle of declining participation, and fewer people to hold the institution together. We are seeing some signs of this possibility now.

The congregation is now healthy and ready to take this on this kind of growth. Growth is required to serve needs of the congregation and to extend our work in the community. Many people in this community would be drawn to our congregation if they knew (or knew more) about it.

This is an effort that we'll have to shoulder locally. We'll be a leader in promoting UUism in Sonoma Co/Northern Cal, and we will support our neighboring congregations. UUCSR as a growing congregation will in turn strengthen the UUA. We'll need a big communications outreach to tell people in this area what we're doing here.

**The Board recommends** that a portion of the dues levied by the UUA be held back in order to finance hiring a communications professional, which is essential for expanding the reach of UUCSR in our own community. The Board agreed that this push for growth will be a major undertaking and that we need both to describe the vision and first tasks required to get it launched, and draw on input from our members.

We will do this through messages from the pulpit (beginning with Rev. Chris' sermon on September 22<sup>nd</sup>), articles in the newsletter, Forums on October 6<sup>th</sup> and November 3<sup>rd</sup> (between and after services), the Town Hall on October 27<sup>th</sup>, the January Congregational Meeting, and house meetings in the first half of next year.

The two key initial steps to accomplish before Rev. Chris goes on his sabbatical: Launch the new software platform and add a communications professional to UUCSR's staff.

As we move through this process, we need to focus on how to flourish as a congregation, and make intentional and thoughtful decisions, exploring our hopes and fears, and determining the tradeoffs that come with growth. We will need to identify and cultivate those parts of UUCSR that are most important to people, determining what we want to preserve in our culture and carry forward, and what must be given up. This process needs to include everyone, not just a clique that dominates things.

We must ask ourselves, "How do we maintain connection and community when we move to being a larger church?" People come here to find community, and we can foster communities within communities. In a large fellowship there are lots more people, so the chances of finding people with whom you share interests and inclinations can be higher. Using Soul Matters, we can facilitate neighborhood groups, volunteer teams, etc.

### **Town Hall**

The Board reviewed and approved the proposed agenda.

There will be a special, SHORT, Congregational Meeting on November 17<sup>th</sup> with just one agenda item: a vote on hiring a Communications Director.

### **Review Talk to a Board Member notes**

### **Volunteering Concerns**

Included as part of the Preparing the Congregation for Growth conversation.

### **Borders & Beyond**

The Honduran family we've been supporting since early July continues to deal with a series of very difficult challenges. The father is now back in Honduras with his mother, recovering from injuries that happened while he was held for ransom. Ruth was contacted by a maternal aunt, who invited Ruth and the children to go there to live with her and her family. The Borders & Beyond group is helping Ruth prepare for that journey, by bus, with the two children, probably next week.

### **Pros and Grows (self-review of this meeting)**

### **Final questions, review of action items and closing words**

**Meeting adjourned: 9:16**

*Next board meeting: Thursday, October 17, 2019, 6:30 pm*

*Next Town Hall meeting: Sunday, October 27, 2019, 11:00 am*

*Respectfully submitted by Susan Thollaug, Recording Secretary*

DRAFT