

**Board of Trustees Meeting
Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Santa Rosa
November 21, 2019 6:30 pm**

MINUTES

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

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

Meeting called to order: 6:34 pm

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

Agenda review: Town Hall review moved up to first topic on agenda.

Minutes: Minutes were approved with one correction.

Open Mic: Robert Howseman is working with Mark Sowers on improvements to the front of the breezeway.

Debrief of the Town Hall Meeting:

The Board agreed that there isn't a consensus in the Congregation yet about how to move forward on increasing membership, and there are many sub-topics to research. Nothing is off the table at this point. We have time for a full conversation *and* we must focus and make decisions over the next few months in light of what we learn. Ideas that were voiced in the Board meeting were:

We don't have an ongoing program to welcome new attendees now. Following up with people who've decided not to continue with the Congregation could provide useful information. We might want to consider combining outreach, communications, and retention into one staff position, or membership and/or volunteer coordination.

UUCSR has a lot to offer that many people need and want, but it's not well known in the community. Young people will be reached largely by electronic media, and we must improve our electronic interface.

Possibly hire a communications professional for a short period, then turn over the ongoing work to staff/volunteers. The Board is looking at staffing arrangements in other congregations, and reaching out to get information about their approaches, staffing structures, and job descriptions. UUCSR has a relatively small staff for the number of members we have.

The Board and Administrator will work on posting volunteer openings Glaser Center foyer. Information about when and where committees meet should be posted, plus a contact person. This information could potentially be posted on an app. Contrary to some misconceptions, parents of young children do volunteer - lots! There's a need to differentiate those functions that need professional staff vs. volunteers. Increased numbers of volunteers at UUCSR would not, in itself, make us a more successful congregation.

Given our fiscal situation this year, we may have to reduce the amount of dues paid to the UU to meet our own current obligations, apart from hiring a communications staff person.

This process will unfold as we go. A lot has been revealed, and we need to learn a lot more. Fiscal realities may slow the plan but doesn't have to derail it.

Member Meetings

The Board discussed how to facilitate the Congregation's participation in planning for our future, using a combination of house meetings, forums, coffee klatches and Congregational Meetings.

Tentative Schedule

December 2019: Research & Volunteer Recruitment

January 2020: Congregational Meeting, including possible presentation of revised 2019/20 budget.

February/March 2020: Neighborhood-Based House Meetings

The context and rationale for starting these meetings should include the fires, which naturally motivate getting together in neighborhood groups.

We need to paint a picture that will stimulate folks to think about what they want the Congregation to be.

There could be two meetings in each neighborhood: the first for dreaming/visioning, and the second for how we make that happen. The conversations would cover what we want to preserve, add, and potentially let go of. What comes out of these conversations would be very valuable guidance for the Board. A set of questions will need to be written in advance.

Organization of House Meetings

We'll need to recruit a large number of people to bring it off, and have someone(s) to lead the effort. Neighborhoods will have to be defined and group leaders identified. We should consult with Alan Proulx and others who've organized house meetings in the past. Sean will put our members into a map using Google Maps.

April: Planning our Future Forum(s)

We will summarize input the Board has received to date, share the Board's perspectives, and gather more input toward finalizing a plan.

May: Budget Forums, Presentation and discussion of the Congregation's fiscal year 2020/21 budget.

June: Congregational Meeting

- Potentially take a formal vote on a multi-year plan for membership growth, communications, etc., and financing of the plan, if the Congregation is ready.

Other ideas

On selected Sundays, Board members could host coffee klatches (after services) to facilitate informal conversations about growth issues. They could focus on a "question for the day."

The message Rev Chris gives from the pulpit to "go talk to people you don't know during the social hour" could have very positive benefits and help newcomers feel at home (if people actually do it).

We could incorporate a "New Member Integration Team" and have two potlucks per year to help people get to know others.

The Board will need to think about whether June is a realistic goal for finalizing a plan for future growth. It may be enough to deal with the Congregation's finances in the coming months. We won't lose sight of our longer-term planning, and the work we've done to date will carry over.

We should be talking about maintaining the quality of our Congregational life as we grow. We need to invest up-front, otherwise, we'll face a degradation in the quality of our experience as a Congregation as growth happens. Our purpose isn't growth for the sake of growth, but to include more people in this valuable experience — but we have to maintain it, or people will be unhappy and leave. The experience is going to change with growth. People are feeling that now and, understandably, some want to keep what's familiar. But growth is part of our goal — bringing more people in. UUCSR saves lives. Continuing to share the message is a core part of what we do.

Purchase of the church software is on hold now, and we need that to help answer the question of why are pledges down.

There's a lot we can do now, including a modest advertising effort.

Minister's Report: Rev Chris

October's fires and power outages triggered a lot of anxiety and stress for many people in the Congregation. We are looking at how to make the building most useful to congregants during emergency periods.

UUCSR is a main driver of the coalition that will put on the Community Engagement Fair January 19, 12-5pm.

Administrative Manger's Report: Dawn Silveira

Dawn is focusing much of her attention on making Glaser Center customer service top notch, reaching out to past customers, and drawing in new ones.

The key fob system for the front door has been repaired. It will be a few more weeks before the new Sonic phone system is up and running.

We continue to make improvements to the front of our building to give passers-by a better sense of who we are and what we do here. The trees have been trimmed, and a monitor screen was donated that will reside in the front window and display content about UUCSR.

Glaser Center Report: Joe Como

The projected revenue for 2019/20 has bumped up from \$28k to \$42k. We may get to 75% of the budget target of \$74k. A marketing meeting is scheduled for next week. A new brochure is in development. The website will include a Spanish-language page.

Treasurer's Report: Michael Randolph

This October was an outlier: \$50k was expected in pledge income, but only \$28k was received. October is generally a robust month. We'll have a better idea soon of whether this was a true dip, or if it will be made up in November. The fires may have had some impact.

We are appealing the property tax hike. If we win the appeal, our property taxes will rise from \$4.5k to \$5.5k instead of \$11k.

Talk to A Board Member Notes

The Board member doing "Talk to a Board Member" on Sundays could greet new people as part of the "job."

A Board member (and perhaps others) could host a Coffee Klatch one Sunday per month (in lieu of carrying the sign) to welcome new attendees and give them a chance to ask questions and get connected.

Our listing in the Press Democrat

A member suggested we change our notice in the PD to make it catchier. The Board voted to leave the listing largely as is.

Pros and Grows

Final questions, review of action items and closing words

Meeting Adjourned: 9:14 pm

Next board meeting: Thursday, December 19, 2019 6:30 pm

Next Congregational Meeting: Sunday, January 26, 2020 11:00 am

Respectfully submitted by Susan Thollaug, Recording Secretary