

**Special Congregational Meeting**  
**Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Santa Rosa**  
**July 17, 2021 – 10 AM**  
(via Zoom)

*Recording Secretary's Notes:*

- *This record of the meeting is both standard minutes and a transcript of what members said.*
- *Speakers are identified with their full names the first time they speak, and thereafter with their first name and the first initial of their last name.*

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The meeting was called to order at 10:13 AM.

Rev. Bonnie Dlott lit the chalice.

**Meeting Introduction:** Natalie Brundred, President, Board of Trustees  
188 Zoom screens are "attending." Several have two participants.  
Attendance is well over the quorum requirement of 67 people.

The Parliamentarian is Ben Ford; the Recording Secretary is Susan Thollaug.

Many people would like to speak. Because of that, we will keep to a three-minute time limit for each person to speak. Is there any objection to this? With just two people objecting we will do this.

This special Congregational Meeting was initiated by a petition of at least ten percent of the membership, to consider a motion regarding the end of Chris Bell's ministry. I will read the motion, see if there's a second, and then invite the author of the motion, Ellen Skagerberg, to be the first speaker in the discussion.

**The motion: We the members of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Santa Rosa discharge the Reverend Chris Bell from ministry, effective June 25, 2021.**

The motion was seconded.

Robert Howseman: I raise a **point of order**. I believe the motion as stated was out of order as Chris Bell is not currently the settled minister at UUCSR,

and is therefore not subject to dismissal. The motion requires members to choose between two hypothetical actions: to retain the minister or dismiss the minister, neither of which is possible for the Congregation to enact.

Natalie B: Ben, who's our parliamentarian, would you please define "a point of order" for the Congregation and describe the process of raising and resolving a point of order?

Ben Ford: This point of order is questioning whether the motion in the agenda, as just read, is actually an appropriate motion for this body to consider. A motion is out of order if it is outside the scope of what a body can enact. A point of order takes precedence over the main motion that has been made and seconded. So we have to deal with this first. A point of order can be ruled on by the chair. Natalie has the option to rule on this point of order, either to sustain the point of order that Robert has raised, or to reject it. My recommendation to Natalie is to sustain the point of order because it is well taken, in that the motion as stated calls for the Congregation to do something which it doesn't have the power to do.

If Natalie chooses to make that finding, that is appealable by the body. Any member who disagrees with that finding, who believes that the Congregation *does* have the power to undertake the action in the motion, would then unmute yourself and say "I appeal." If that appeal has a second, then we would move to a discussion of whether the motion as Natalie read it is in order. Once we have that discussion, we would vote on whether to uphold Natalie's ruling, or to overturn it. All of that would have to happen before we go back to the main motion.

If the main motion is found to be in order, then we would return to it and discuss the merits of that main motion. The parliamentarian's role is to make recommendations to the chair based on upholding the rules of the body. I don't make rulings, I just make recommendations to the chair. I'll hand it back to Natalie now for a ruling on the point of order, whether she finds the point of order to be well taken or not. In either case, a member of the body could move to appeal the ruling of the chair. Once the Congregation votes on the point of order, there's no appeal from that — the Congregation gets to decide.

Natalie B: **As the chair, I sustain the point of order and rule that the motion is out of order.**

Ben F: The main motion is now held aside until we deal with the point of order. Natalie has ruled that the main motion is out of order. Unless that finding is appealed, it would mean that the main motion is off the table. Also, if no one appeals Natalie's ruling that the main motion is out of order, that motion would be off the table and other motions would be in order as long as they deal with the same business, which is Chris' departure from the Congregation.

Rose Saint John: **I appeal.**

Cathy Read seconded the appeal.

Natalie B: Discussion. According to Robert's Rules, only UUCSR members can speak. Within the discussion of a given question, I will call on first-time speakers first. Remember we are speaking about the point of order.

Paul Poling: This doesn't seem like a technicality. The point of order seems at the heart of this. To me, the motion that was before us seems only a line of division. The point of order seems to be sustainable. The motion asks us to do something that we can't do. We can't dismiss Chris - he's not here. We can't not dismiss him - he's already resigned. The only point of the motion at this point would be a rhetorical one, and not one that's actionable. And the rhetorical one, to me, would only be to increase the division that's fracturing our beloved community.

Richard Fung: Termination is not part of today's process because he resigned. If you look at the sequence of events there, it's not formal termination.

Natalie B: We want to limit the discussion to: is the main motion *in order*, or *not*? Not whether we agree with the main motion, or not. I want to make clear for everyone that that's the focus of this conversation.

Richard F: I don't feel that the polling petition process was official. A lot of people weren't even notified or asked about that. I'm going to pass for the time being.

Andy Laird: I agree with the point of order. The way the motion is worded is difficult because we are asked to choose between two impossibilities. I think

the point behind the motion was whether or not we would have voted, back a few weeks ago, yes or no. Natalie if you can reframe this somehow into a question of "would you have voted..." I know you can't change things in the middle of the meeting. But if we thought that the question was: Would we have voted? What do we feel about it? Not to change anything but ...

Natalie B: Andy, I'm going to apologize for interrupting and say that the question before us right now is: whether to uphold the decision of the chair that the motion as stated is out of order. If the point of order is upheld, then other motions on this same subject of Chris' departure from the ministry can be introduced. So we will have a way to do that.

John Ray: I support the point of order as stated. The main motion is out of order.

Elaine Wellin: I understand that the motion as stated is out of order, but I maintain that we need to find a way to understand how the Congregation would have voted at the moment that that happened.

Natalie B: Ok. But that's not *this* discussion. Let's limit this discussion to this point of order. That's Robert's Rules, right? We can talk about that, absolutely. We have to limit the discussion to this point of order right now.

Elaine W: Ok, great.

Ethan Foote: Thank you Natalie. I agree with the confusion over the motion and the underlying problem Robert H mentioned on the point of order. However, to my mind it's almost equally confusing that Chris already resigned in January. To ask him to resign again is a little confusing for the Congregation. And as Natalie wrote to us on July 4th, with 20/20 hindsight, she probably would have put this forth as a motion from the Board, which would have given us more time to do things in a clearer way. And I would suggest that the way I'm interpreting the original motion...

Natalie B: Ok, Ethan hold on just a second. I apologize for interrupting again. We're aren't discussing the merits of the motion, or what happened, any of what happened. All we're only discussing right now is if the motion, itself, is in order.

Ethan Foote: I support the point of order so we can make a revision of the motion that's clearer.

Natalie B: Thank you.

Ellen Skagerberg: I would like to just say that this is part of a process. The chair and the parliamentarian are our friends. They are going to try to help us through this. I don't believe their intention is to disempower anyone. I'm not particularly attached to this particular motion, and this is not our only chance to weigh in as a Congregation on these issues, so someone else might have a much better motion than this one. So if you're feeling like this is the only chance we have to address this, that's not the case. That's what this meeting was for. I rely on wiser heads. When I drafted this, it was very urgent. I didn't have a lot of time to run around asking parliamentarians how to do it the most effective way. I just came up with what was on the top of my head. First thought not necessarily best thought. So trust the process. If you believe that this motion, because he resigned — regardless of how you feel about the circumstances — if this motion seems to be out of order, you can safely vote that and the process will continue.

Cathrine McBride: I would sustain the point of order, since the Congregation can't dismiss a gentleman who has already resigned twice.

Rose St. John: I don't understand this point of order. Chris resigned as of the end of July. This has to do with a resignation on June 25th. So it is in order for us to consider the resignation as of the 25th of June — whether the Congregation votes to accept that. And the fact that he resigned as of August 1st — I don't think he has resigned in the month of July [June]. I think he's still our minister because he hasn't been dismissed by the Congregation.

Natalie B: He resigned.

Rose SJ: What I understand is it was a so-called "negotiated," and forced resignation.

Natalie B: It was not a forced resignation. It was a negotiated resignation. He resigned. He even signed a letter 24 hours later that he resigned. He resigned as of June 25th.

Rose SJ: It comes to whether we think he was pressured.

Natalie B: But that's not this motion.

Rose SJ: Yes it is this motion because if we think he was pressured, then he is still the minister until the Congregation discharges him and accepts his resignation. I don't think we accepted his resignation.

Natalie B: He resigned. It's not a matter of accepting it or not. It's a unilateral action. He resigned. He's not our minister. Our minister right now is Bonnie Dlott.

Ben F: The basis of the ruling of *out of order* is simply that Chris Bell is not currently employed by the Congregation and thus is not subject to dismissal. It's not at all about how we got to that point. If we want to talk about that, we need to sustain this point of order and move to different motions that actually address that issue.

Susan Thollaug: I support the ruling of the chair on this issue. I feel very much that there are other ways for us, as a Congregation, to come together to capture some very deep and important feelings around this issue — and this isn't it. I support Natalie on this ruling.

Robert Anderson: I'd like to **call for a vote on the point of order.**

Natalie B: Ok, good. Ben, what do we need to do to find out if we can call the question?

Ben F: Robert A's motion is a call to cut off debate on this question. That's not debatable. It goes directly to a vote and it requires 2/3 to pass. Anything that deprives people of their ability to chime in requires a 2/3 vote [according to Robert's Rules.] So now we go immediately to a vote on the question "shall we end debate on the question before us", which is whether to uphold Natalie's decision that the motion is out of order.

Pete Wilson seconded.

Susan Dickey: Can someone explain what yes and no means once the poll gets posted?

Ben F: A yes vote here means you're in favor of *ending debate* on the point of order. If that passes, then we'll go immediately to a vote on *whether to sustain* Natalie's ruling. So this vote is not a vote on whether to sustain Natalie's ruling; it's a vote on whether to *end debate* on Natalie's ruling. If you vote yes when this poll comes up, that means you're voting to move straight to a vote on the point of order.

Voting yes on the poll that's coming up is just about *ending discussion* about the point of order. If that's approved by a 2/3 vote, we'll move straight to a vote on whether to uphold Natalie's ruling or overturn it. If that vote fails, in other words if the main motion is ruled by the body to be *in order*, then we would move into a discussion of Ellen's motion. So, if we vote to end debate on the point of order, we'll move directly to a vote on whether to uphold the point of order. Only then would we be talking about the merits of Ellen's motion — *if* the point of order is over-turned.

The motion is: Shall debate on the point of order be ended?

**Question: Shall *debate be ended* on the question of the point of order?**

**Voting Results:**

**163 voted**

**YES: Over 90%**

**NO: 3% (5 people)**

**ABSTAINED: 3% (5 people)**

Ben F: Now we move directly to the question of whether to *sustain or overturn* Natalie's ruling on the point of order. A yes vote here means that you're voting to uphold Natalie's decision that the original motion is *out of order*. A no vote means you think it's *in order* and we should proceed to debate about that original motion. This requires a majority vote.

**Question: Should the ruling of the chair that the motion is out of order be upheld?**

**Voting Results:**

**165 voted**

**YES: 152**

**NO: 31**

**ABSTAINED: 5**

Natalie B: The decision of the chair, that the motion is out of order, is upheld. Now there is no motion on the floor. Does anyone have a motion having to do with the business of this meeting that they wish to introduce?

Carol Daeley: I think it's important that we have a clear, simple motion here. My view is that we wouldn't be having this meeting if the Board had not acted. So I propose the following motion that is tied directly to the Board's action. That is: **"The Congregation affirms that the Board of Trustees acted within their authority in the matter of the negotiated resignation of Rev. Chris Bell."**

John Olney seconded the motion.

Alan Bell: My question is, what actually, officially, was the Board's action? The only official Board action that I know of is that they accepted the resignation. Whether they encouraged it - that all seems to be kind of unofficial. The only official action was the acceptance of the resignation. Can someone tell me if there is something else that the Board did or did not do that we are supporting or not supporting?

Natalie B: I'm going to answer from my perspective. The Board did request that Chris resign, effective immediately. He, after a fair amount of deliberation, accepted. We accepted his resignation. We worked out the terms of his resignation. That's what we did.

Robert Carlisle: Did the Board consult the rules of our organization about how to proceed in this matter before requesting Rev. Chris' resignation?

Natalie B: Yes.

Robert C: And what are the rules regarding that?

Natalie B: The rules, according to our Bylaws, are that the only body that can discharge or dismiss a minister is the Congregation. The Board cannot dismiss a minister.

Robert C: But it can request his resignation?

Natalie B: That's right. Just as any body or person within this organization could request any minister's resignation, so can the Board.

Ellen S: I'm glad that we're moving on to something more substantive. This is good. Thank you Carol for a much better draft that will get us into the conversation that we want to have. My understanding from reading some of the EDD rules — for example if someone's employment is terminated and they apply for unemployment, but they'd resigned — from the way I read it, and I'm not an expert, from the kind of situation you're talking about where an employee is pressured to resign — you weren't just asking, you weren't saying do you want to resign? Do you want to keep going? From the way I understand it, he was not expecting the request to resign. You gave him as long as he needed which was approximately 2-3 minutes.

Natalie B: No, that's inaccurate. It was much longer than 2-3 minutes.

Ellen S: You had told me that before. That's where I got that information from. You had said 'we have a no confidence vote in you and we are requesting your resignation.' You told me at one point, 'we sat there completely silently while he went through his process and that lasted 2-3 minutes.'

Natalie B: No. It was quite a long time.

Ellen S: Quite a long time being 2 hours, or?

Natalie B: Probably about 15 minutes.

Ellen S: OK, because that's not what you told me originally and that's not what I understand Chris to have said. So that's an assumption that I'm working on which is what you had told me. In the event that an employer and an employee agree to a termination that doesn't have much choice — and that's debatable of course here. So for example — and we don't know, nobody can get in touch with EDD about anything, as we've seen — if he were to go to EDD with this resignation and say 'I was functionally terminated,' my reading of the EDD rules would say that EDD would say 'yes,' you were terminated, it wasn't a free and open choice, so he, and employees in similar situations, would be eligible for unemployment insurance. As opposed to if someone just said, like he did at the beginning of the year, 'I'm going to resign, I'm going to resign at the end of July —

that you don't get unemployment benefits because you chose to resign. In this case, the moving agency for this resignation was not Chris. The moving agent for this resignation for this resignation was the Board of Trustees.

Natalie B: I got it. I got your opinion. The entire Board disagrees with you. And I got your opinion.

Jan Prater: I'm very concerned about all these little details and I think there's a lot of people getting lost in the verbiage and the details and so I'm just going to say that I'm looking for an opportunity to undo some of what was done. And the way this is framed, 'the Congregation affirms...' well, you could vote 'no,' but it could be restated as 'the Congregation does not affirm or disaffirms or another word. Also struggling with the details of when you get to say what, in terms of these rules of order. I'm just getting that out.

Jan Ogren: I just want to speak and bring in the emotions and try to hold the larger picture here because this has been so difficult. Speaking to this motion, I know in the beginning I was trying to reconcile my view of Chris, as this fantastic minister, who did the memorial services for both of my parents and helped me through a divorce, with this Chris who was supposed to have lied and has taken money that wasn't his. And for me, I couldn't put them together until I looked at the Chris who was very brave a couple of years ago, and came before the Congregation and admitted to being an addict and went into treatment. So, I'm an addict, and I'm sober, but I know that addiction teaches us how to lie skillfully. It also teaches us how to change a situation and redirect the attention away from the focus on our behavior, so that we then become the victims of it. In Chris' first letter, he acknowledged that he used money that was not his, and he shouldn't have done it, and he admitted lying. By the second letter, he was minimizing that and making it appear as though the lie was just minor. But I have trust in his first letter, because I don't believe the Board would have done what they did over a minor matter. I know the Board and they would have so much more preferred to celebrate Chris next Saturday than to be in this meeting now and to be dealing with all of this. Lying is just very serious, and that's the vote of no confidence. I know for myself, in my addiction, if I lied, I had to take responsibility for the consequences, and on the relationship. So, I really wish that Chris had come to us for help because I think all of us would have opened our arms and helped him. But that's not what happened and unfortunately, typically for an addict, rather than taking the consequences of what they've done, they get upset at people getting upset at their behavior.

I wish there was a different way. Had I been on the Board, I think I would have very sadly and soulfully had to do exactly what you did. I support the Board and thank you for it. It was very hard. Thank you.

Dusty W: Let me start out by saying, I would really love to bring us all back together, and I think that's what Chris wants too. I think it's what we all want also. I so appreciate everything that everyone has offered and said, so I won't take my time up talking about what I agree with. It doesn't benefit Chris for us not to accept his resignation. It sounds like he'll still be able to get unemployment, he's still being paid through the end of July by UUCSR. This whole process, the motion stuff, has been very confusing to me and I want to thank the other people who've had the courage to say that, also, because sometimes it's hard to say.

Natalie B: Let's make sure that you're focusing your comments on this motion: "The Congregation affirms that the Board of Trustees acted within their authority in the matter of the negotiated resignation of Rev. Chris Bell."

Dusty W: Thank you. I think that's still a little bit confusing. It sounds like we're voting perhaps for the Board and against Chris. I'd like it to go back, I'm not sure of the wording, maybe accepting his resignation as of June 25th would do that, but I'm not sure if we can do it. I'm uncomfortable with the motion or whatever it's called.

Ben F: The motion that's before us, as Natalie just read — my reading of it is that it very carefully omits any support. That's a separate question, whether you support what the Board did. The motion is just about whether the Board had the authority to do what it did. It's not about support or not. If we extend the meeting and want to have another motion about opinions about what the Board did, we could do that.

Dusty W: So it sounds, according to what Natalie told us about the rules, that it is within the Bylaws for the Board to have taken the action that it did. Plus it benefits Chris.

Mary Wolfe: Carol Daeley, this is really a concise motion. Thank you for bringing it to us. **For clarification purposes, I would like, respectfully, to suggest we include the date of June 25th in Carole Daeley's motion.**

Ben F: Mary, you're on the verge of proposing an amendment, so we'd need specific wording. Where do you want to insert the date?

Mary W: May I try that? "The Congregation affirms that the Board of Trustees acted within their authority in the matter of the negotiated resignation of the current minister Rev. Chris Bell as of June 25, 2021."

Ben F: So that's a motion to amend the main motion that's before us. That would require a second.

Paul Poling seconded the motion.

Natalie B: Ok. Mary, let me make sure that I've got the amendment you're making correct. You included "the current minister" in your amended motion, but Chris is no longer an employee of ours anymore.

Mary W: So could we at least include his name?

Natalie B: Oh yes. How about, it would read "The Congregation affirms that the Board of Trustees acted within their authority in the matter of the negotiated resignation of Rev. Chris Bell as of June 25, 2021."

Mary W: That's fine Natalie. Thank you.

Natalie B: Paul, you seconded it. **Any objections to accepting the amendment? There are none.** So we can just accept the amendment.

Ben F: So now the question before us is **"The Congregation affirms that the Board of Trustees acted within their authority in the matter of the negotiated resignation of Rev. Chris Bell as of June 25, 2021."**

Andy Laird: I don't think we should be voting on whether the Board did the right thing or not. I think we should be voting on what we do next time something like this comes up. I think a way to do that would be to get a good gauge of what the Congregation might have done if it had voted back then. I wonder, Natalie, if you could do a non-binding poll that says "would you have requested this resignation at the end of June?" Just for information purposes. I don't think it needs to be this complicated. We're not calling Chris back, and we're not trying to confirm or reject anything the

Board has done. I think we're trying to figure out how to do it better next time, right?

Natalie B: Ben, do you want to speak to that? What we're looking at right now is this motion.

Andy: I would vote against this motion.

Ben F: Ok. To vote against this motion would be saying you think the Board overstepped its authority. So I want to remind people the motion has nothing to do with whether you support the action of the Board. The question is only whether the Board acted within its authority. So be careful not to read this motion not as a motion of support for what the Board did. The only question is whether the Board acted within its authority in its negotiations with Chris in June. Nothing about whether you support it or not.

Andy: But this motion doesn't let us support the Board and Chris at the same time.

Ben F: This question has nothing to do with supporting anybody. So if we want to get to questions of supporting somebody, someone needs to make another motion after this one is completed.

Ethan Foote: Thanks Ben, that's really helpful, although I really have a hard time understanding how affirming the Board's action is not a vote for supporting them, but I'll leave that aside. And I'm disappointed at the way this is handled. I've been through this many, many times before and to write stuff on the fly is just asking for disappointment and disaster, as far as I'm concerned. From everything I've seen, Chris was blindsided by the Board's vote of no-confidence and request for an immediate resignation. I can only imagine if I were in a similar situation, it would be humiliating and I'd be dumbfounded. As I believe Natalie mentioned in the listening circle, in this negotiated resignation he didn't say anything. And with 20 years of experience in interpreting California Code of Regulations, I agree with Ellen's reading of the EDD regulations completely, that this was, in effect, this action of requesting immediate resignation, with enticements, and asking for it to be effective immediately, was in effect a dismissal of Chris, which is not within the authority of the Board.

Natalie B: I apologize. I'm going to interrupt you again. Because I understand everything that you're saying, but to me it doesn't seem that it's addressing this motion. As Ben said, this motion is about did the Board —

Monique Pavon (side comment): He's addressing authority.

Natalie B: I'm willing for you to say no, but I just want to make sure that what we're addressing is whether the Board of Trustees acted within their authority. If I'm mis-hearing you I apologize.

Ethan Foote: As I started with, I'm uncomfortable with the language of affirming the Board's actions because it presents this dynamic supporting the Board or supporting Chris. I would much prefer to see a resolution along the lines of what you, Natalie, said: with 20/20 hindsight the Board should have sent this to the Congregation for a special meeting and my imagination of that wording would be: 'Does the Congregation accept Chris Bell's immediate resignation effective June 25 as negotiated?' But I can't see how we're going to go through this and write these resolutions on the fly.

Pam Tennant: It seems to me that it might be more accurate from my understanding of the facts that have evolved, or become apparent over time, that Chris submitted his intent to resign many months ago, and the resignation time was to be the end of July or August 1st. The Board's action only moved up the time of his resignation. Rather than ask him to resign, which he'd already done, they asked him to cease his role as minister as of June 25th — is that correct? Anyway, it seems that it's not a question of when he was asked to resign or whether he was asked to resign — he was asked to cease operations before his intended resignation. So he'd already accepted that he was resigning, it was just a timing matter. And the other issue was after Jan Ogren's comments that Chris knew that he'd either been contemplating doing something that he knew was wrong or that he actually did knowingly do something wrong. It wasn't as though he was blindsided, I don't believe, it was just that he was caught, I think.

This wasn't about accepting his resignation but just moving up the timing of his resignation.

Ben F: Can I interrupt with a parliamentary point? Our meeting was scheduled to end at 11:00 and we're well past time. Clearly there are a lot of people who still wish to speak. Technically we should have a motion to

extend the meeting. The alternative is to move straight to a vote on the main motion.

Erin Howseman: I call the question.

Ben F: Calling the question is not necessary now because we're at the end of the meeting, so debate is over unless someone moves to extend the meeting.

Natalie B: Does someone move to extend the meeting?

Rose SJ: **I move to extend the meeting.**

Barrie Noe: I second to extend the meeting.

Ben F: Barrie moved to extend the meeting until noon and somebody seconded that. So now we need to vote on that question. Or you can ask if there's objection, Natalie.

Natalie B: Is there any objection?

Ben F: Yes, there are plenty of no votes so there are plenty of objections.

**Question: Shall the meeting be extended until noon?**

**Voting Results:**

**164 voted**

**YES: 109**

**NO: 77**

Ben F: It's clearly over the majority and the meeting is extended. So now **Erin's motion to end debate on this motion** would be in order. Do you still wish to make that motion to end debate, Erin?

Erin H: Yes, I do.

Diana Goodrow: I second.

Ben F: This vote is to end debate on this motion. If we end it, we move directly to a vote on the motion itself to affirm that the Board acted within

their authority. So it's not affirming their action, it's not supporting their action, it's just affirming that they acted within their authority.

Kitty Wells: Will there be any more opportunities to get information or check out gossip of information? Here's my question while the votes are coming in: I've heard from a couple of people who have HR backgrounds that if what Chris did happened in another company, he would be walked out the door with his boxes, that moment. And I have heard other people say no, that's not the case.

Richard F: Being an HR specialist I would say yes.

Ben F: I'm sorry, but we're not supposed to be having discussion while the vote is taking place.

**Question: Shall debate on the motion be ended?**

**Voting Results: (Not captured on the screen; motion passed.)**

Ben F: **We'll move straight to a vote on the motion.**

Judy Ervice: What's the percent that needs to vote yes or no to make this legal?

Ben F: 50%

**Motion: "The Congregation affirms that the Board of Trustees acted within their authority in the matter of the negotiated resignation of Rev. Chris Bell as of June 25, 2021."**

**Voting Results:**

**164 voted**

**YES: 113**

**NO: 44**

**ABSTAINED: 7**

Natalie B: The motion carries. We voted that we could continue until noon. Do we want to now have any other motions?

Paul P: I **move that we end the meeting without further motions.**

Unknown: I would second that.

Paul P: And that we leave our painful working out of things to a different forum.

Nicoline L: I like what Andy Laird said — that we, the Congregation, should we have known both sides of the story, would we, the Congregation, have asked Chris to resign? That's what I propose. My English isn't very good, so if someone could re-formulate that would be fine.

Natalie B: Exactly. Hold that motion until we've resolved this motion that's on the floor. Paul please say the motion that's on the floor. You're the one who proposed it.

Paul: **I move that we end this meeting without further motions and pursue the working out of our painful differences in a different form than motions.**

Natalie B: Do you have anything you want to say to address that?

Ellen S: Yes. To my mind, if the Congregation believes that the Board acted within their authority to ask Chris to resign, in that case the resignation wasn't coerced, wasn't a firing. To me this is pretty clear, even though we haven't voted directly on going back into the past, would you do it the same. To me, it's clear. I looked at it and it would be 28% believe that the Board did not act within their authority, which was my premise, and 72% believe the Board did act within their authority, which was the Board's premise. So to my mind that's a pretty clear outcome. And this is the way that democracy works. So it required 10% of the Congregation to want the special meeting. We have 28% that I would say have the same concerns or misgivings that I had; 72% would prefer to trust the leadership of the Board, and assume that they acted in good faith and did what they were supposed to do in terms of how decisions are supposed to be made for the Congregation. I will support Paul's motion that we end the meeting. It's clear to me. The sad thing is that I know that more people want to weigh in with opinions. But I also agree that there are probably better ways to do that than a congregational meeting where we are making official decisions as a Congregation. Because it's pretty clear to me. I'm just very thankful to you Natalie for this, and big thumbs up for Ben because this is very complicated. We need to know how to do it better. Let's get an Adult RE class on how to do parliamentary procedure so that we can all participate.

Our Bylaws are how we determine how we're going to proceed. And we can't do it besides language. Language is the only way to do it. We can't go with the intentions of the constitutional framers and we can't go with the intentions of the Bylaws either. So let's respect our Bylaws and let's respect the democratic process as it's been revealed here today and I very much appreciate the time and the good will that the Congregation has expressed in bringing this forward.

Paul P: I just keep re-reading the end of Chris' letter and the beautiful words around ongoing pursuit of reconciliation as a Congregation. My motion to end this meeting isn't at all because I don't think that should continue. I think we need to continue that in lots of different small groups and I don't know exactly what that looks like. But that's going to take us a long time. I'm worried. We dealt with that business at hand. I'm really proud that people haven't been acrimonious and I fear greater acrimony erupting on a Zoom if we continue. And I don't think we can motion our way to reconciliation.

Linda Lambert: I will speak against ending the meeting at this time because I would ask us whether it might not be appropriate to create a motion to express our appreciation to Chris for 15 years of service.

Ethan F: Yes. I agree with Paul that this isn't the forum to move forward, but I feel that the resolutions that we've voted on today don't get at the heart of the matter and that writing motions on the fly, with my 20 years of experience, is an absolutely disastrous way to proceed in the parliamentary process. There should be groups meeting ahead of time and hammering out language for various options so that the people who are presented with it have a clear understanding of what they are voting on. I don't think the vote today reflects the issues that are dividing us and that are causing the problems, and further discussion via Zoom now is certainly not going to help that. But this isn't over.

Mary Louise Jaffray: There are a couple of points related to the process. First of all, what this process has done is really woken me up to some serious questions about the rights that we have in our Bylaws in terms of how it compares with actual laws for employee confidentiality and all of that. I don't believe that the Congregation can vote without having all of the information. So there's a conflict between not being able to share

information on the one hand, although I was amazed, and kind of shocked at how much was shared in the sake of transparency. I'm concerned about that. I think we need to look at this very carefully. The calling [of the minister by the congregation] I get, because that's public information. That's put out there by the employer. It's not related to termination.

To Ellen, there's another section if you read further in the EDD. There's the part that you mentioned about if there's duress or something that it's tantamount to *not* a resignation. On the other hand, if you read further there's another section "B" in there where it talks about the fact that if a resignation is already in place, as long as the employee is not losing anything, if they're being paid to the original date, and they haven't lost any other benefits — I don't know all of the details of what was in his severance package — but as long as they're not losing anything that they would have otherwise gotten by staying to their original ending date, it is treated as a resignation. That was in the same EDD you sent us all. I just wanted to point that out. I do feel there's lots of work to be done. I'm not necessarily ready to sit and write bylaws, but I'd love to have some input on some of the organization. Also on bookkeeping, and I feel we need a lot.

John Jaffray: I want to extend the time until noon, and I agree with having a resolution in appreciation of Rev. Chris for his 15 years.

John Mutz: Thank you Natalie. I listened to what Paul had to say about how the time has come [to end this meeting] because we've handled this part. But my concern is that with Chris' separation that no harm be done to him as a result of it. And that much of this information is confidential and private and my concern is that somehow it would impact his future employment, well-being, and his integration into another community. That's really all I have to say.

Elaine W: I agree with Linda and Ethan in that we haven't really been able to accomplish what many of us came for. And the issues that we voted on were all centered on what the Board did rather than what the Congregation thinks about what happened. And I think that's missed the mark. There's no way Chris could ever come back, but I just want the Congregation as a whole to say *something to Chris*. A message that represents all of our feelings about him for so long, something to offset the distress and ugliness in one confused month, versus 180 months of his successful tenure with UUCSR. And given this mess it's been very difficult for me to try to get that

across with a “no” to something that was completely off-mark. I’m voting now to extend, but in that extension, use the time for us to make a statement for Chris beyond these off the mark yes or no’s.

Kitty W: With all due respect to Paul and Ethan, what better place and time to have a statement come from this body? We’re in a congregational meeting. We can come together and say something about love and forgiveness and make that a statement from us. I do think we should give ourselves another half hour or so to do that.

Carol Kraemer: I feel so sad about all of this and that we’re all going through all of this. I want to support ending the meeting now with the understanding that we will be doing a lot of hard conversations going forward. I think the hard conversations could have been started in January. So, just as Jan Ogren was very sad that Chris, for whatever reason wasn’t able to reach out to us about problems he was having and he let things get to a point where he did something really stupid. And I’m also very sad that the Board didn’t reach out to the Congregation sooner. I felt it as a shock when I heard in January that Chris was resigning and with all the conversation, many people didn’t know that he was resigning. Maybe we needed a vote two weeks after he said that. Would the Congregation accept him resigning? What a wild idea. Because that’s how it hit me at the time. So, if wishes were horses... we all know the nursery rhyme...beggars would ride. So, I support ending the meeting now and going forth trusting the Board will lead us and our ministerial support will help lead us into a more wonderful and successful-feeling time.

Pat Lavelle: It seems to me that we’ve done all these other motions very quickly, and to express to Chris how we feel in terms of our empathy and our love is not a very long sentence. I don’t know why we can’t do it now.

Rose SJ: I don’t understand the consequences of either the thing we voted on today or Ellen’s proposal in terms of if this will permanently not allow Chris to be a minister again should he in 5 or 10 years he has the idea that he wants to be a minister again. He was a very, very good minister. This cloud, and this way that it took place, I don’t understand what kind of stain there is on some kind of permanent employment record, and is this a life sentence?

Natalie B: What I can say is he is not “dis-fellowshipped” at this point from being a Unitarian Universalist minister. I don’t know beyond that because he got his Doctorate of Divinity at Harvard. Ben, you may know more than I do. You’ve got so much experience with the UUA. But this does not make him not a minister.

Rose SJ: But the thing is, say he wants to be a minister somewhere else, like at a Congregational church, when they look back at his employment here, will it say that he stole money from us? Is that what we’ll say about him?

Natalie B: First, I can’t answer that question. I’m not an HR professional so I don’t know. But second, and more applying to this, we need to focus our discussion now on do we end the meeting now without any further motions. That’s the motion on the floor. You might want to talk to Linda Stabler about your question about the future.

Rose SJ: Well, I think we should understand the consequences of what we’re doing.

Natalie B: I got it. But right now we’re addressing one thing and one thing only, which is: do we end the meeting now without any further motions?

Kitty W: **I call the question.**

Multiple seconds were voiced.

Ben F: What we’re voting on is: **Shall debate on ending the meeting be ended?** If this passes, we’ll move to a vote on ending the meeting. This is not the vote to end the meeting. It’s the vote to stop talking about ending the meeting. If you want to talk more about ending the meeting, vote “no” now. If you don’t want to talk more about ending the meeting vote “yes” now.

**Question: Shall debate on the motion be ended?**

**Voting Results:**

**154 voting**

**YES: 128**

**NO: 22**

**ABSTAIN: 4**

Natalie B: This motion is about concluding the meeting. A “yes” votes to conclude the meeting without any further motions. A “no” votes to continue the meeting so we can pose and discuss additional motions.

**MOTION: That we conclude this meeting without further motions, deferring our continued work on reconciliation to other forums.**

**Voting Results:**

**157 voted**

**YES: 126**

**NO: 28**

**ABSTAIN: 3**

Natalie B: Today’s meeting had a really, really narrow focus — just this one issue. And it’s clear that we have some cracks that we didn’t know we had, some needs that haven’t been met. The Board is very, very aware of that. So is Rev. Bonnie who is with us now. So is Rev. Julie, who starts August 1st. We will be working with Rev. Julie to uncover all of the issues and to explore solutions.

It’s very clear in this meeting, that there is a lot of as-yet unspoken emotion for people. So we will make sure that we set up different ways to allow the community to speak. To allow you to speak, to allow you to process, to allow you to move through this. As the Board and Rev. Julie move through things, we’ll be transparent as we move forward. I talked with Rev. Julie Thursday night and she said, “you guys got an early start.” She said that this is exactly what an interim minister does — uncover those things that were unnoticed, unseen, so that the Congregation can forge a new pathway forward. And we are doing that. And we will be transparent about it as we move forward. I want to give Veronica Jordan, the worship associate for tomorrow, a moment to invite you to tomorrow’s service.

Veronica J: We all have a lot of feelings. I think one of the ways in which we’re going get through that is to be together in the same room and to worship together. We will be having an opportunity to begin an honoring of Chris. We will be having an opportunity to begin our pathway to healing. And, most importantly, we get to be together.

Natalie B: In closing, I just want to say thank you all for being here and participating. It is clear that this is your Congregation, and that you are

passionate about this, and that means a lot. This last month has been a time of unprecedented division for us. But as Paul said, now is the time to put those disagreements and divisions behind us, to accept the will of the community, and to move back into loving community.

Rev. Bonnie: Our closing words come from Kurt Vonnegut. "Be soft. Do not let the world make you hard. Do not let pain make you hate. Do not let bitterness steal your sweetness. Take pride, that even though the rest of the world may disagree, you still believe it to be a beautiful place."

John J: I desperately want a resolution of appreciation for Rev. Chris.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:04 PM.

DRAFT