

FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH
Congregational Meeting Minutes
Date: January 27, 2019

Call to Order: Board of Trustees President Dan Schneider welcomed the congregation and called the meeting to order at 11:36am.

Adoption of Agenda: Dan reported the following changes in the meeting agenda: Carrie Spiess will not be part of the team presenting the Financial Report (presenters will be Dennis Finney and Dick Miltner); and Gary Gebhart will report for the Endowment Fund instead of Dave Wallace. Lee Meyer moved and Joy Haupt seconded the adoption of the proposed agenda with changes. Unanimous approval.

Approval of Minutes: James Powell moved and Jorge Vila seconded approval of the minutes of the September 23, 2018 congregational meeting. Unanimous approval.

Registrar's Report: Linda Miltner reported that the following six members were attending their first congregational meeting and establishing their voting privileges: Barbara Dickerson, Stefan Marks, Amber Seely-Marks, Patty Kelly, Scott Kelly, and Robert Wells. Linda reported that Robert Wells is the newest member to sign the membership book and Linda is sad to report the death of Kathy Arnold. Linda further reported that five members, who have been inactive for over two years, will be moved to an inactive status. This brings the current active membership is 288.

Minister's Report: Rev. Connie warmly greeted her congregation and advised the members that her first six months were not only busy, encouraging, enlightening, and fulfilling, but presented certain challenges that she had anticipated. A healthy worship calendar has been planned through June 18, 2019, classes to develop Worship Associates have been planned, and Rev. Connie would also like to initiate sermon talkbacks.

One of the overarching programs that Rev. Connie introduced to the members of First Church is "Opening Hearts". Opening Hearts is an anti-oppression and multiculturalism initiative and is a joint project of the Minister and Board of Trustees that was rolled out to the congregation last fall. Rev. Connie acknowledged the time, talent and energy of Patricia Rohrer, David Johnson and Linnea Lose for their commitment to the launching of this program. Opening Hearts is a multifaceted program made up of five sub-teams focusing on the following areas: Ableism/Inclusion; Classism; LGBT; Racism; and Multiculturalism. So far, sermons have been delivered, listening groups have been formed, books have been identified, and resources have been distributed to begin to bring First Church members into the core of this program. Although this is hard work, members have seen struggles and successes with each of these issues and this has further reinforced their deep commitment to building a better world.

As part of Opening Hearts, Rev. Connie is planning a multi-media event on micro-aggressions for February 10, 2019.

Rev. Connie continues to work with her Committee on Ministry (COM) and her mentor regarding her Preliminary Fellowship work, which is a multi-year renewal process, to complete her ministerial credentialing. She plans to attend a new minister's conference in Boston in April and there will be additional classes to be taken and books to be read.

Rev. Connie reported that she continues to work on the FY20 Canvass, Heart & Hand Auction preparation, began working on the budget process with Finance Committee, and met with staff to assess their concerns. Rev. Connie reported that she is making plans to attend the UUA First Year Minister's Seminar, the MidAmerica Regional Assembly, General Assembly, and the annual meeting of the UU Religious Professionals of Color as these activities are part of her ministerial duties.

Board President's Update: As a first year Board President, Dan reported that he has made some observations of the congregation: the congregation is aging and this impacts pledge contributions, balancing budgets, leadership, building maintenance, and program development; we are changing as a congregation, membership is growing, and attendance has steadily increased; and lastly our neighborhood, city, and world are changing.

- **Board Goals for 2018/2019 Updates:** Dan reported the following updates on the 2018/2019 Board Goals:
 1. **Create a process to review and discern our congregational mission and vision** – the Board and minister have decided to use a tool called *“The Nested Bowls – the Promise and Practice of Good Governance”* to ask the congregation to think about values, mission and ends as it relates to First Church and the data will be reviewed by the Board and minister to be able to articulate the congregations core values, the mission of the church and the what ends to achieve. This work will be done in four workshops during the month of April and Dan will report back to the congregation at the May 19th Congregational meeting.
 2. **Support Rev. Connie during her first year of ministry** – the Board has been able to support Rev. Connie by providing logistical support, staff development support, worship support, budget development support, building assessment and management, technology evaluation and upgrade support, facilitating local connections, and preliminary fellowship support.
 3. **Create a process to establish a Committee on Shared Ministry as an ad hoc committee of the Board** – Board and minister has agreed to postpone working on this goal and carry it over to the 2019/2020 church year.

4. **Create a process to establish an Anti-Racism, Anti-Oppression, Multiculturalism Team for the congregation** – with the time and talent of many volunteers, **Opening Hearts** was rolled out in the fall of 2018 and the program was built on five platforms – Ableism/Inclusion, Classism, Racism, LGBTQ, and Multiculturalism.
 5. **Continue Bylaws revisions** – a Bylaws revision ad hoc group has been re-established and the work on Bylaws revision was kicked-off with a mini-retreat on December 2, 2018. Board members agreed that the Bylaws are out of date and need to be re-written. The ad hoc group has agreed to meet monthly and report back to the Board on their revisions.
 6. **Create a process to establish a Conflict Resolution Program to implement the Covenant of Right Relations** – Rev. Connie has agreed to take the lead on this goal and as of this date program details are still being developed.
 7. **Work with Social Justice Committee to establish social justice priorities** – the function, roles and responsibilities of this committee are being evaluated and the role of the Board and minister are being looked at as social justice projects are being prioritized.
- **Recognition and Appreciation:** Dan reported that he would like to use the Congregational platform to thank First Church members for their time and talent that impacts the operations of First Church. Dan recognized Tom and Karen Rohrer for their continued work in many areas of the workings of the church, but specifically the work they did with Kroger to secure the donation of a beautiful, new and much needed refrigerator. Dan also recognized Gary Gebhart for his work as a Board member and specifically his role as Board liaison to the Building & Grounds Committee (B&G). With the help of Gary, B&G has been able to save more than \$1,000 by exploring natural gas providers and securing the best possible deal with a new provider.
 - **MidAmerica Regional Assembly, St. Louis, April 5-7:** Dan reports that he and Rev. Connie plan to attend this meeting. Keynote Presenter will be Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) President Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray. The theme of this year's assembly is Intersectionality. Twenty-eight years ago, Kimberle Crenshaw coined the term "intersectionality" in a paper as a way to explain the oppression of African American women.
 - **General Assembly, Spokane, Washington, June 19-23:** Dan reported that General Assembly (GA), the annual meeting of the Unitarian Universalist Association, will be held in Spokane, Washington this year. There will be some limited funds available for scholarships and members are welcome to donate funds for additional scholarships. The theme of this year's assembly is *The Power of We*. Attendees will explore the

power, possibility, purpose, struggle and joy of finding the path forward together as Unitarian Universalists.

- **Unitarian Universalist Council of Greater Cincinnati:** This group is made up of all the UU churches and fellowships in Cincinnati. They meet quarterly and it is a great place to get to know other local UU's and learn the work they are doing in their churches.

Financial Reports:

Operations Budget Report: Dennis reported that as of December 31, 2018, midpoint in the budget year, the YTD total for pledges was \$219,823 vs YTD budgeted of \$192,975 which is 57% of the annual pledge budget. Dennis reported that the pledges are on track for the end of the second quarter. Other revenue include plate collections, donations, fund raising, building rentals, and miscellaneous revenue and are all on track for meeting the budgeted revenues. Dennis reported that expenses are tracking on budget at 52%. Overall, the budget is in good shape. This is the time of year that the Finance Committee begins to look at the budget for the upcoming church and the Canvass Team begins to organize its campaign to start in March for the next church year. Dennis reminded the congregation, that pledges and donations are the backbone of our church budget.

Treasurer's Report: Dick reported that as of December 31, 2018, PNC Bank assets were \$215,102. Of these assets, \$128,072 is restricted funds, leaving \$87,030 in unrestricted General Fund for operation. This balance gives the church roughly 2.34 months of operating revenue in the bank. The bulk of the restricted assets are bequests and donations for a total of \$55,942 and Dick believes that some of these funds might be used for current capital projects.

Capital Budget Report: Dick reported the capital budget activity was: FY18 carryover of \$33,555 coupled with \$68,219 in revenue (H&H Auction and Endowment Fund distribution) for a FY19 Capital Budget of \$101,774. With mortgage and anticipated capital project expenses, the total expense for FY19 is \$71,774 and this leaves the \$30,000 emergency safety net carryover intact for FY20. As of 12/31/18, the total capital expenses (6 months) were \$43,740 (\$19,320 for mortgage and \$24,420 for capital projects) leaving a 6 months balance of \$36,485.

Capital Project Updates: At the December, 2018 Board Meeting, Dick outlined several capital projects that were identified as priorities by the Building & Grounds (B&G): roof repair \$17,000, HVAC unit replacement \$9,200, concrete sidewalk on north side of building \$11,000, a freezer \$700 for a total of \$37,900. With input from the Finance Committee and B&G and in order not to totally deplete the capital budget with these expenses, Dick advised the Board that these expenses could be covered with bequests and donations from the Treasury. The Board agreed to this transaction and authorized that these capital projects go forward and the expense would be recovered from the Treasury. Chuck Schneider asked a question about how

large donations were handled and Dick assured him that there are procedural guidelines for this. Jorge Vila asked how many years are left on the current mortgage and Dick advised the members that there were 9 years to go.

Dick thanked the finance team partners (Operations Manager Carrie Spiess, Finance Committee and Chair Dennis Finney and Board President Dan Schneider) for all their dedication, guidance, and responsiveness to the financial needs of First Church.

Endowment Fund Report: Gary Gehbart reported that as December 31, 2018, the net assets of the Endowment Fund were \$1,030,613. Planned contributions to the Church for the FY2020 (July, 2019 to June, 2020) will be \$43,896. The planned Endowment Fund contribution to the Church for FY2020 continues to be the second largest source of revenue to the Church after members' pledges.

The distributions for FY2020 include the following: Historical Building Account was \$30,537 (go to capital budget); Restated Building Account was \$7,823 (go to capital budget); Outreach Account was \$2,159 (for Social Justice Projects); General Account was \$2,811 (go to operating budget); and Religious Education Account was \$566 (support Family Programming Committee's operating budget).

Gary reported that Legacy Society enrolled four new (David Wallace, Alice Schneider, Beth McGrew, and Betsy Wones). The Trustees have prioritized their work for FY19 and recruiting new members to the Legacy Society will be one of their main focuses.

Froehlich Estate Report: As General Counsel for First Church, Steve Olden reported that First Church is one of the beneficiaries of the Phil and Doris Froehlich estate; however upon their deaths it was discovered that the Froehlich's had been swindled out of \$500,000 - the bulk of their estate - by unscrupulous financial planners. First Church was to receive 50% of the estate assets. First Church, with approval from the Board of Trustees, decided to sue the financial planner and others who convinced the Froehlichs to convert their existing assets into annuities with a company that then went bankrupt. First Church hired The Blessing Law Firm as their attorney and a case has been filed and placed on the Court of Common Pleas, Hamilton County. The original trial date was set for February 25, 2019 (First Unitarian Church of Cincinnati vs Louis Randall Siciliano, et al), but Steve now reports that this date may be moved to April. Steve also reported that mediation has been offered to both sides, but at this point, the defendant is still requesting a jury trial. The Blessing Law Firm discovered that Mr. Siciliano was insured and these are the funds that will be tapped in the lawsuit. The deposition and discovery work has been completed. Steve advised the members that since any settlement needs to be approved by the Board of Trustees, at the January 9, 2019 Board Meeting, the Board agreed that the serving President of First Church Board of Trustees has full authority to enter into an

agreement to settle the claims against Siciliano, et al. The Board hopes that this will prevent any further delays. When asked by a member if there was any criminal liability in this, Steve advised the congregation that this case is a civil matter and will be settled in civil court. Dan and Steve will continue to meet with The Blessing Law Firm to ensure that this case comes to completion.

Adjournment: At 12:35, Dan adjourned the January 27, 2019 Congregational Meeting.