

First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor
Congregational Meeting May 31, 2020
Minutes

Prior to starting the meeting, Vice President Laura Bollettino noted that Board of Trustees President Erik Stalhandske would be absent from the meeting, and invited Secretary Rick Witten to read a statement of explanation from Erik. The statement explained that Erik has injured his knee and just underwent surgery. His statement (Appendix A) included words of gratitude and praise for outgoing Board members. Rick appended to the statement his appreciation of Laura's leadership and partnership on the Vision Leadership Team.

Laura then mentioned the extraordinary circumstances of the meeting, and oriented the congregation to the technology being used for this first ever remote Congregational Meeting.

Declaration of Quorum – A quorum was declared by Board Secretary Rick Witten

Call to Order – Vice President Laura Bollettino called the meeting to order at 12:09 pm

Adoption of Waiver of Requirement for Voting Privileges

Moved: Barb Cherem

Second: Bob Hospadaruk

The motion passed.

Adoption of Rules and Procedures

Moved: Dixie Hibner

Second: Pete Mooney

The motion passed.

Adoption of January 2019 Congregational Meeting Minutes

Moved: Reese Havlatka

Second: Paul Morris

The motion passed.

Introduction of the Slate of Candidates – Leadership Development Team Chair Dixie Hibner
Dixie provided an overview of the process for selecting candidates for the Board and the Leadership Development Team (LDT), then announced the candidates.

Candidates for the Board of Trustees: Vice President Laura Johnson, Secretary Rick Witten, Kathy Edgren, Glenn Harris, Gregg Peterson

Candidate for the LDT: Dawn Salo

Motion to Elect the Slate of Candidates

Moved: Glenn Kime

Second: Ken Clein

The slate was elected unanimously.

General Assembly Delegates – Vice President Laura Bollettino

Following UUAA's practice, Laura presented the names of the Delegates to the General Assembly, which will be held remotely for the first time.

Delegates:

Laura Bollettino
Dixie Hibner
Bob Hospadaruk
Laura Johnstone

Barbara Lynn
Ed Lynn
Kathy McLean
Lissa Oliver

Erik Stalhandske
Margie Teall
Rick Witten

Finance and Operations – Senior Minister Manish Mishra-Marzetti, Acting Administrator Ed Lynn
Rev. Manish acknowledged the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic. One of those challenges to Operations was the cancellation of the spring auction, a significant fundraiser. He noted, with praise, that Ed moved very quickly to take advantage of the "PPP" government financial assistance opportunity, which was a significant benefit.

Ed provided a high-level overview of UUAA's financial status. While revenues are down due to the pandemic, the PPP loan of \$147,300 at a nominal interest rate will carry us through June of 2021. The rules are uncertain, but a significant portion of the loan is expected to be forgiven, thereby making it a grant. While pledges have been holding up, there have been revenue reductions (auction, script, rental) as well as additional costs, such as video and other equipment to support virtual operations. The mortgage is being paid down. At origination in 2016 it was \$1,280,000, the principal has been paid down by more than \$300,000, with another \$70 to \$80 thousand to be paid this year.

Manish pointed out the difficulty of predicting the future situation, so he and Ed are proceeding with caution. He went on to praise the staff team's efforts to adapt to this unanticipated situation, as well as the entire congregation in holding the community together.

Virtual operations are expected to continue through August at a minimum, at least until the Covid advisory team provides guidance on how to reopen in some way. More than 90% of congregants who participated in the Covid survey indicated a desire for a cautious approach to church operations. More than 55% indicated individual health concerns related to heightened risk related to the coronavirus. In light of the special risks of a significant portion of the congregation, everyone needs to pay special attention to inclusiveness in all small group activities. More than 90% of respondents rated virtual access as essential or important.

Ed spoke to a program involving a summer intern team from the U of M Graham Sustainability Institute, in which the team will evaluate the UUAA facilities. An analysis will be conducted and reported on what it would take to make UUAA's buildings and grounds carbon neutral. This work will continue with the knowledge that the congregation will return to using the facilities, and that carbon neutrality is in line with our expressed values and vision.

Rev. Manish reviewed staffing plans. UUAA's staffing level is already lower than in the previous fiscal year. Manish will evaluate the impact of virtual operations on the staffing plan. He anticipates the need for a nimble and iterative approach that adapts to conditions as they develop. Initial plans will be announced in the coming weeks.

These challenging times also present opportunities. Our facilities limit in-person participation to 500 to 600 people on a given Sunday. Our virtual programs have reached an average in excess of 2000 interactions each week, with the past week reaching over 3000. These connections are global in scope, with 5% being in Canada. The data shows that UUAA is a leader in the UU community, and that our Vision matters. Rev. Manish shared with excitement that UUAA's Vision will guide us into justice leadership in our region and world. He cited our work, including:

- \$14,000 to the Washtenaw Interfaith Coalition for Immigrant Rights (WICIR) fund to support our immigrant community
- Interfaith Action Coalition provided temporary housing to an asylum seeker released this past week from detention
- Restorative Justice of UUAA worked with Washtenaw County to provide \$2800 to support the incarcerated in our community, people especially vulnerable to Covid-19.

Rev. Manish closed by expressing his gratitude for being a part of the UUAA community. The virtual floor was opened for questions.

Kate Hutchins asked about the metrics comparing the online audio of in-person services vs the virtual YouTube services.

Rev. Manish noted that he doesn't have the exact metrics, but can share that the demand for the video services is exponentially higher than the audio services.

Vision 20/50 Update – Beth Hospadaruk

Beth, who served on the Vision Leadership Team, noted that she missed being together in the Sanctuary, then introduced a video overview of the Vision 20/50 project. Beth then reviewed the findings of the Vision 20/50 final report, "A Congregational Vision".

Beth highlighted the top findings of the Vision work by listing the three Vision priorities: Climate Justice Work, Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression Work, and Radical Welcome to diverse seekers, including outreach to our youth and elders. In addition, Beth listed the three Foundation Areas identified in the report: Strengthening our Beloved Community, Strengthening our Financial Stability, and Strengthening our Communications.

The Vision 20/50 report includes goals for each of these priorities, which are intended as an invitation to the congregation to participate in action planning. The Vision Leadership Team is recommending that the Board create a team to oversee an Action Planning phase. It is the Board's responsibility to revisit, adjust and update the document – with the congregation's involvement – in the coming years.

The Vision priorities do not limit the activities of the congregation in any way. Rather, they are intended to provide a lens through which we can focus our efforts for greater efficacy. The report is not presented for adoption by a congregational vote, but rather is a document of what was learned from the congregation through the process.

Beth closed by announcing that the Vision Leadership Team, along with our consultant, Elandria Williams, will be presenting a workshop at General Assembly in June, titled "Visioning and Governance can be Inclusive, Equitable, Co-Owned."

Beth thanked everyone who participated in Vision 20/50, which includes hundreds of congregants.

Mission, Vision, Purpose – Laura Bollettino

Laura presented the draft Mission, Vision and Purpose statements, which were developed by Vision Leadership Team and Board members, UUA staff, and UUAA staff. See Appendix B for these statements. The congregation was invited to review and comment upon these statements.

Question and Answer – Laura Bollettino

The virtual floor was opened for questions.

Beth Hospadaruk made a statement of thanks to Rev. Lindasusan Ulrich, who is departing UUAA, for her service at UUAA. Lindasusan's time at UUAA meant a lot to Beth personally and she wishes her well.

Ruth Pinkus shared a historical fact from her long association with UUAA regarding the four month waiting period imposed on new members before they are allowed to vote. This bylaw dates to 1968 when there was a "terrible fight" that split the congregation over whether to fire the minister. The faction who wanted the minister fired recruited friends from the community to join solely for the purpose of voting on that issue. The motion failed nonetheless. In the wake of that vote a committee was formed to re-write the Bylaws. Ruth, who is now 77, was the Youth Representative on that committee and is the last committee member left at the congregation. The four month wait was included to avoid such a situation from being repeated. The committee knew that "a time would come when nobody would understand it and everyone thought it was useless." Ruth wanted to pass that bit of our history along.

Kathy Muha asked a procedural question regarding the Vision 20/50 report. As a co-chair of a committee, Kathy wondered when and how to move forward. The Mindful Eating team wanted to work with another group on an initiative, and wanted to know if it was ok to proceed or if they should wait.

Laura answered that yes, they should proceed now, that there is no reason to wait. There will be action planning in the fall to create plans, but there is no need to wait.

Rick agreed and said there was no intent for the Vision report to hold the congregation back from proceeding.

Sally Preston asked if any thought was given to including the Social Connections Moments and Sharing the Collections in Sunday Services as a way of sharing the Social Justice connections with the congregation as a whole.

Rev. Manish said yes, and that timing would need coordination with the Worship Team. They would welcome the Social Justice Connections and would love to see that emerge in the virtual era. There is a long lead time required for the coordination that would be involved.

Charlie Pekarek: Can the Martin Luther King, Jr. print be returned to a place of prominence in the front hallway to demonstrate that we are a welcoming congregation to people of color.

Rev. Manish noted that he is in his second year at UUAA and is learning on the fly. He doesn't know the history, for example, of the Black Lives Matter poster in his office window, or the rainbow flag in front of the church. This is the first he's heard of the MLK poster. He noted that lay groups own these issues and encouraged Charlie to take that up with other congregants and that the Operations staff team stands ready to do what the congregation wants.

Priscilla Spencer asked if any of the many viewers of the on-line services have reached out to inquire how to become more a part of the community.

Rev. Manish stated that he loves that question. Online services have presented an unexpected opportunity, and he has directed the staff team to look at how to take best advantage of this exposure. We need to work against the assumption that one has to be local to be an involved member. This is a new issue, and Rev. Manish has yet to even raise this with the congregation. We need to think about how to get the message out that people can join us from a distance. This requires an intentional creation of opportunities for this to happen.

Time for the meeting expired, but there were questioners still in the queue, so Laura entertained a motion to extend the time for 10 minutes.

Moved: Spencer Thomas
Second: Edie Croak

The motion passed.

Susan Randall asked about the process for approving the draft Mission, Vision, and Purpose statements.

Laura J responded that the congregation needs to look at the draft statements, and the Board will create a process for review and approval in the fall.

Seeing no more questions, Laura thanked the presenters, support team and congregation for their participation.

Laura entertained a motion to adjourn.

Moved: Cristi Cardinal

Second: Bobbi Coluni

The meeting was adjourned at: 1:38pm

Respectfully Submitted by Rick Witten, Board Secretary

Statement from Erik Stalhandske

I'm sorry that I cannot be joining you for this meeting. I sustained a rupture to my quad tendon this week that has required surgical intervention, and am now in a full leg cast and just beginning recovery. I'll be in a cast for two months and then begin the slow work of rehab. It's disappointing, as I lose a summer of swimming, biking, and hiking. However, I'm grateful that I have excellent insurance, great healthcare nearby, and a tremendous support network of family and friends.

For this event, our Vice President, Laura Bollettino, will run our meeting. Please be generous with us, your volunteer elected leaders, during this experiment of a meeting.

Let me take a moment to thank our departing board members for their efforts over these last two very busy years—Mark Doman, Terry Madden, and Vilma Mesa, your services and engagement have been much appreciated.

A special recognition is in order for Laura Bollettino, who is leaving the board after two years as a trustee at large and two years as vice president. Laura has been an absolute rock and a critical partner in our work. It has been a delight to work with her, calling upon her wisdom, clarity, and sense of humor. Thanks, Laura.

Rick added:

If I may, I would like to take a moment to underscore Erik's praises of Laura. She and I have worked closely together as co-chairs of the Vision 20/50 project for the past year, and I have to say that it's been an absolute pleasure. Laura shaped both the process and the outcome of the project, with steady and positive leadership. And she was always willing to deliver the funny in our pulpit presentations.

On that note I want to quash the rumors that she and I orchestrated Erik's injury so that we could have one more chance to do our schtick for the congregation. It simply isn't true.

In all seriousness, Erik, my heart breaks for you. I know how much joy you get from being outdoors, hiking, biking and swimming. I'm so sorry that you're going through this, but I also know your deep sense of optimism and ability to focus on the positive. On behalf of the congregation and myself, may you rest well and recover quickly.

Mission

UUAA: Grounded in love, lifted by hope, centered on justice.

Vision

We are a liberal religious community, grounded in love, committed to justice and sustainability within our congregation and beyond.

Purpose

The First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor is a community of religious seekers and social justice activists. In living our principles, values, and covenants out loud, we serve as a wellspring of love and hope, a place of radical welcome, where people of diverse racial, cultural and spiritual backgrounds feel connected and valued, where all can join forces to heal our ailing planet and end oppression in all of its forms. We gather to create and experience beauty, transformation, and enrichment through moving religious experiences, inspirational music programs, and spiritual growth opportunities for all ages. We draw from the world's many love-centered belief systems that ask us to envision a better world.

Throughout our more than 155-year history in Ann Arbor, we have experienced the power of collective action in our hands-on social justice work. We joyfully serve as a valued resource for other UU congregations and for community organizations in southeast Michigan.