

First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin, Congregational Meeting Minutes
Sunday, May 16, 2010 at 1:30 p.m.
First UU Church of Austin, 4700 Grover, Austin, TX 78756 in the Sanctuary

Welcome and Call to Order

The President welcomed the church members present and called the meeting to order at 1:32 p.m. She introduced Eric Stimmel, current Vice-President and nominee for President, Kae McLaughlin, who had agreed to serve a partial term as Treasurer and who was nominated for a first full term as Treasurer and Chris Jimmerson, current Secretary and nominee for Vice-President. She expressed appreciation for their service in the past year and expressed confidence in them for their roles in the upcoming year.

The members of the congregation reviewed the agenda for the meeting and the Rules of Order for the meeting (Appendix A, Pages 1 and 2).

Motion: Richard Halpin – Adopt the Agenda and the Rules of order
Second: Phil Hastings
Discussion: None
Vote: All Affirmative

Reading and Lighting of the Chalice

The Minister read the opening words and the President lit the chalice reminding all present that the work done at Congregational Meetings is part of the holy work of the church.

President's Update

The President gave a "State of the Church" update during which she provided the following assessments and updates:

- The church is in good shape and making amazing progress. We are on track financially with actual expenses slightly lower than projected so far.
- Margaret Roberts has given the church the wonderful gift of her photos of our church life.
- A large contingent of church members will be representing the church at the UUA General Assembly this year.
- We are moving forward with the work we outlined with Dr. Steinke. Many people attended one of the Bridge to Our Future sessions. The information from those experiences will be the basis of our values, mission and ends that the new board will draft in June.
- The special plates that we have been doing have had excellent results for the benefiting non-profit organizations.
- Through a recent opportunity she had experienced that allowed her to compare what our Social Action has been doing for Freeze Nights to the practices of another liberal church, she had come to realize our actions are radically different than others. The quote from the person with whom she had spoken was "You guys are hardcore".

Discussion and Action Items

Proposed Bylaws Change Regarding Membership: The Vice-President presented a proposed change to the bylaws (Appendix A, page 11) that would change the requirement for voting membership from contribution of record within the last 18 months to within the last 12 months. The change would more closely match the practices of other UU churches and could affect Fair Share calculations and staff salary mid-point calculations. The requirement had been set at 18 months in the past to assist church members who needed to make their contributions on a schedule greater than every 12 months for tax purposes. However, the Executive Director had researched the matter and found this was no longer the case.

Motion: Richard Halpin – Amend the bylaws as proposed
Second: Beverly Donoghue
Discussion: None
Vote: Affirmative – 83, Negative – 1, Abstain – 0

Second Vote on Grammatical Changes to the Financial Assets Management Policy (FAMP): The Treasurer thanked Jacob Williamson and Vicky Bailey-Miller for assisting with check in for the meeting and noted that there were 84 voting members present.

She explained that the proposed changes to the FAMP (Appendix A, page 18) were corrections for grammar, clarity and the like and did not involve policy-level changes. They had been approved at the last Congregational Meeting. Changes to the FAMP require two votes at regular Congregational Meetings, so this would be the second vote.

Motion: Phil Hastings – Approve the proposed changes to the FAMP
Second: Mike LeBurkien
Discussion: None
Vote: All affirmative

Vote on Board Slate and Nominations Committee Slate: The President presented the slate for the next board year that the Nominating Committee had put forward (Appendix A, page 27). They included the following:

President	Eric Stimmel
Vice President	Chris Jimmerson
Ex-officio Past President	Nell Newton
Secretary	Klondike Steadman
Treasurer	Kae McLaughlin
Trustee 2010-2013	Eric Hepburn
Trustee 2010-2013	Susan Thomson
Nominating Committee	Tyler Anderson, Mike LeBurkien and Linda Buehlmann

The President asked that the nominees stand and be recognized by the congregation. She noted that the congregation elects three members of the Nominating Committee and that the board appoints two members (this year the board had appointed Sandra Ries and Amy McFadden).

The President asked that current board members who were at the end of their terms also stand and be recognized by the congregation for their service.

Motion: Richard Halpin – Approve the board slate and nominating committee slate
Second: John Keohane
Discussion: None
Vote: All Affirmative

Motion: Richard Halpin – Thank the current and new board for their work and for their dedication to the church
Second: Beverly Donoghue
Discussion: None
Vote: All Affirmative

Settled Minister Search Committee and Interim Minister Search Task Force: Michael West noted that the board had named the following church members to the committee about three weeks ago: Sharon Moore, Maria Nehring, Jill Wiggins, Lynda West, Jill Smith, John Franks, Dale Whiteaker-Lewis, Michael Kersey, Gary Bennett. The committee has been researching churches who have experienced the search process recently for best practices, looking at forums to gather feedback, documents, forms, etc. They have also been examining what means might be best for communications with the rest of the church.

He also gave an update on the interim search, noting that several good candidates had been interviewed and that he expected to be able to report back later in the week. The members present recognized the members of the task force for their work – Kae McLaughlin, Nancy Bene, Brian Miller, Ken Pfluger and Gillian Redfearn

He gave the following timeline for the settled minister search:

- Summer 2010 – the committee will gather information from the church community and begin putting together elements of the packet of information that will go to interested ministers.
- October 2010 – the committee will assemble the packets and submit information to the UUA.
- Around October 30, 2010 -- the UUA will release the information through the online system. Shortly thereafter, the committee will learn which candidates are interested.
- Through the end of 2010, the committee will review candidates and develop a “short list”.
- Winter 2011 – the committee will check references and begin going to neutral pulpits to see the candidates give sermons and to interview them.
- March to May 2011 – candidating week where the top candidate will be in the pulpit at First UU Austin, after which the congregation will vote on whether to call the minister or not.

Investiture of Board of Trustees: The Interim Minister led the newly composed Board of Trustees and the Congregation in an Investiture Ceremony.

Investiture of Settled Minister Search Committee: The Interim Minister led the members of the committee and the Congregation in an Investiture Ceremony.

Motion: Richard Halpin – The Congregation expresses our extreme gratitude to Rev. Janet Newman for her excellent work with the church over the first year of our interim ministry.
Second: Beverley Donoghue
Discussion: Thunderous applause and a standing ovation.
Vote: All Affirmative

Covenant of Healthy Relations: Nancy Bene led the members present in a reading of the proposed covenant (Appendix A, Page 29). The members present recognized the excellent work of the Transition Team – Jim Burson, Michael Kersey, Sylvia Pope, Margaret Roberts, Nancy Bene and Sharon Moore, who had worked with Rev. Newman and the Congregation to

develop the covenant. Some questions about punctuation style, wording, etc. were raised; however, the meaning of the covenant was affirmed by all present.

Motion: Eric Hepburn -- Adopt the Covenant of Healthy Relations, authorizing the Transition Team to work with Secretary of the Board of Trustees to resolve any wording, punctuation, etc. issues, as long as the meaning of the covenant remains the same.
Second: Beverly Donoghue
Discussion: None
Vote: All affirmative

In response to several questions asked by congregation members, transition team members provided the following information:

- The covenant will be reevaluated periodically as we live into in the future. It should be considered a living document with the potential to change as we evolve.
- To put the covenant into practice, the Interim Minister and the team have discussed several ideas such as exploring individual phrases one at a time during services.
- New members are not currently required to sign the covenant; however, the Membership Committee will take this up again now that the covenant has been adopted.
- To make sure there is a structure to bring the covenant forward into the future, the transition team will remain accountable for now and address it with the new minister.
- Beyond adopting the covenant at this Congregational Meeting, we will continually seek to have the Congregation reaffirm the covenant by addressing it during worship services.
- Members should feel free to talk with the Transition Team for other questions or ideas.

Update on Solar Panels: Marcus Barnes gave a brief update on the solar panels (see Appendix B for details) and noted that the panels had produced 16.7% of the church's energy in the prior year. He also noted a need to clean the panels periodically.

Other Business:

Motion: Beverly Donoghue – Thank the following for their terrific leadership through challenging times:
Sheila Gladstone for her steady, strong and compassionate leadership through such a difficult event in the life of the church.
Nell Newton for her excellent leadership in leading the church forward in the past year and her terrific way of working with people.
Rev. Janet Newman for her quiet passion and nudging us in the direction we needed to go.
Second: Chris Jimmerson (and practically everyone else attending)
Discussion: Thunderous applause
Vote: All affirmative

The President thanked Paradox Players for their outstanding contributions to the life of the church and noted their gifts to the church:

- Contributed all of their net revenue in 2009 – nearly \$20,000
- Paid for the remodeling to create the new mail and copy room
- Installed much enhanced lighting in Howson Hall, which improves the quality of their productions but also greatly benefits the Forum and other events in Howson Hall.

With no further business to conduct, the President thanked her beloved community for their wonderful work year round, after which she adjourned the meeting.