

# Draft minutes for the January 24, 2021 UUC Special Congregational Meeting

## 1. Call to Order

Sarah Walker, moderator, called the Zoom meeting to order at 10:34 am. Sarah provided an overview of the agenda: voting on Justin Almeida's ordination, approving the minutes from the June annual meeting, reports from the staff and board, and an opportunity for Q&A. Sarah read the poem, *Rain Towards Morning* by Elizabeth Bishop.

## 2. Appointment of Teller and Parliamentarian

Sarah announced that Rosemary Daszkiewicz will assume the role of parliamentarian and Kathleen Crompt will serve as teller for this meeting. Kathleen reported that there are 137 attendees vs. a quorum of 49.

Sarah described the voting process and referenced Roberts Rules, with links to more information posted within the Zoom chat feature. Each meeting link sent to invitees corresponds with one vote, so those in households with multiple voting members were encouraged to use separate devices for the meeting. Paper ballots were provided in advance of the meeting and were due as of today. For voting, attendees are invited to extend a motion, second the motion, discuss the motion, and then vote on it. With Justin Almeida's ordination, supportive comments may be submitted by chat. For voting, the Zoom feature for raising hands will be used. Practice/testing of this process followed. A question was raised: who is the Secretary for the meeting, and is it recorded? Answer: Dave Mentz is serving as Secretary, and the meeting is being recorded.

## 3. Motion to accept the Minutes of the June 14, 2020 Annual Meeting

Motion extended by Jim Thompson, seconded by Gayle Childers. Opened for discussion—no discussion about the minutes. Kathleen Crompt, Teller, reported the vote tallies: Approve: 145. Oppose: 4. Abstain: 4. Sarah reported that the minutes are approved.

## 4. Motion to ordain Justin William Almeida to the Unitarian Universalist Ministry

Sarah invited Jon Luopa, Sr. Minister to offer introductory remarks. Jon described that those being ordained to UU ministry must be approved by the members in a congregation. Jon described that Justin has had a deep commitment to religious service from an early age and that this was modeled by his parents. Justin and his spouse, Heather, joined the Peace Corps in Transylvania. While there, Justin encountered UUism and spent much time in discussions with the UU minister. Justin and Heather found UUC after moving to Seattle. Justin first became involved in RE at UUC as a volunteer and then as a staff member. Enrolling in Seattle University's theology program, Justin was sponsored by UUC for this program. After applying for credentialing through the UUA Ministerial Fellowship Committee, Justin passed this process with the highest possible affirmation. Justin has thus been granted preliminary fellowship from the Ministerial Fellowship Committee of the UUA. He will need to have three annual reviews of

this status before being granted Full Fellowship by the UUA. We hope that he will choose to become one of our Affiliated Ministers at UUC. Today's vote will be to affirm our decision to ordain him to the ministry.

Sarah invited people to write comments within the Zoom chat feature and asked for a motion for this item. Rosemary Daszkiewicz extended the motion and Nick Bernard (and others, simultaneously) seconded.

The vote tally was announced as: Approve: 172. Oppose: 0. Abstain: 3  
Sarah reported that the motion has passed.

#### **5. Mid-year financial report**

Mike Kasprzak, Treasurer: Regarding the state of the July 2020-June 2021 budget: The pledges declared and budgeted from last June totaled \$946K. Fulfillment of the pledges from members has been 54%, ahead of last year's pace. We anticipate meeting our budget goals for this year. Tax statements will be mailed shortly; if there are any questions, contact Byron Krystad. Most expense items are running at or below budget. The budget had assumed that in-person church activities would resume in January. Building expenses have continued, with some running unexpectedly higher. We are at the half-way point with the capital campaign. Half of the capital campaign pledges have been fulfilled. 40 pledges are in arrears; contact will be made with those in this group. When the capital campaign concludes in 2023, there will remain a balance of about \$1M. Regarding the state of UUC's investments: UUC uses Trillium Investments, a socially responsible investment fund. Mike described Trillium's investment practices around social responsibility and noted that the investment returns have been on par with market norms. UUC's annual audit was conducted in the September-November timeframe, with the outcome being "a clean bill of health". Next year's budget will be presented to the board and later to the congregation for review/approval this spring.

#### **6. Mid-year report on programming**

Janine Larsen, Director of Ministries: We have undertaken many changes and challenges in the past few years, including our moves to Meadowbrook, back to our church home for a short period, and then to remote activities. The stay-at-home period has been the biggest challenge/source of impact for us. Challenges & opportunities have included: remoteness; technology; small groups--(offering learning and connection); and worship—adding images and videos, presenting music in different ways and from different sources. Some groups have paused their activities; some programs have ended for now (e.g., covenant groups and Wellspring). The Wednesday forum, meditation, book groups, and anti-racism women's group have continued to run strong. Other offerings have included: directives workshops, Buddhism education, Exploring UU (primarily for newcomers), which included a virtual program fair. Katie Renschler has continued to lead our efforts relating to connecting stewards and social hours. We are growing our use of UUC Connect. There are also increasing numbers of people using the website and UUC Facebook page. Janine ended by thanking everyone for supporting the community.

Beth Chronister, Assistant Minister: The UUC Care Team serves to companion people during times of need and stress. The Care team has taken a more proactive stance of reaching out to people during the pandemic, particularly vulnerable individuals. All of us are encouraged to reach out to others, especially during this time.

Social Justice teams are meeting online and welcoming new members. Some of the online programming has included community action circles (using a model from the UU College of Social Justice), a reimagining public safety series, film and book studies, and community activity participation. Online advocacy is in the offing. UUC's engagement with UUtheVote has involved 120 active members. Teen Feed and Lake City Partners Ending Homeless have continued an in-person presence.

UUC's Vespers services are scheduled for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday evenings. Vespers is a smaller service with a collection of music, ritual and sharing. 19 Vespers services have been offered thus far, with 20-60 attendees per service. We will continue with these services when back in our building.

## **7. Mid-year report on religious education at UUC**

Melody Moberg, Director of Religious Education: The RE team (Melody and Aria Curtis) has needed to adapt to these times, experimenting with new approaches during the pandemic. They have been aided by the RE Visioning Team, which has helped to imagine programs and strategies for the future. Learnings about RE during the pandemic have included: kids and teens are experiencing Zoom fatigue from school; adding church Zoom activities is not appealing. RE at UUC has shifted from a Sunday program focus to serving families and supporting parents as they guide faith formation for their children this year.

Four main categories for RE offerings this year:

- Sunday programs
- Faith development for kids and teens
- Programs for parents
- Special events, including non-Zoom ways of engaging parents

Sunday programs have included children's chapel and youth chapel.

Faith development groups are new this year, focusing on shorter-term vs. longer-term engagements. However, it has been difficult for kids and teens to sign up for yet another Zoom session. Faith development offerings have included learning about UU sources through Legos, creating a Sabbath practice, learning about animals (including an animal blessing ceremony), spiritual practices during pandemic, world religions and anti-racism.

Programs for parents have included a parent covenant group, parents of preschoolers group, anti-racism book group for parents, and parents/caregivers as sexuality educators. Special events have included summer educational packets with stories and activities, adult/youth pen pal pairings, remote summer camp programming, and a youth justice team.

Starting in the fall, we have offered classes about different holidays, a traveling chalice box, a Halloween gathering (Trunk or Treat), an outside family chapel, and a sleepover at UUC. Moving forward, we will collaborate with the ministers to reinstate multigenerational services. Likely, there will be a combination of in-person and remote programs after we occupy the building again.

#### **8. Question/Answer session**

Bill McPherson announced that there will be an online intergenerational seminar in April focused on food security and climate. Contact Bill or Melody Moberg for more information. Jonathan Tweet asked, “what’s happening within the UUA that might affect us at UUC?” Jon Luopa responded, indicating that an upcoming (February) UUA Western Region assembly will showcase what’s happening within the UUA. Information/registration links will be posted on the UUC website.

John Weber asked “Who is the contact person for advocating for social justice during remote times?” Beth Chronister indicated that the Social Justice Steering Committee has started a discussion this past week of how to help people with legislative advocacy during this time. News/updates will be made available via Gateway. Bill McPherson added that Juustice Washington serves in this capacity for UU-related social justice actions. The Juustice Washington website includes information and resources for acting on issues and legislative actions.

#### **9. Closing remarks and Motion to adjourn**

Jon Luopa commended UUC for the resilience and creativity of the congregation. Jon drew upon a quote in suggesting that “the unknown unknowns are challenging during a pandemic.” We will re-enter the building as soon as it is safe to do so. We do face financial challenges, including the need to address new building expenses and areas of the budget that were reduced this year. We have incredible staff and lay leaders. Our anti-racism work needs to continue. And we need to address how affiliation at UUC can be meaningful and purposeful. Lora Poepping and Jane Saddler have agreed to co-chair the pledge campaign, supported by Katie Renschler and the Stewardship Committee.

Motion to adjourn: A motion to adjourn was extended and seconded. Sarah invited attendees to vote for the motion by departing from the meeting.