

Sierra Foothills Unitarian Universalists
Board of Trustees
October 21, 2020

DRAFT Meeting Minutes

Those in attendance: Maureen Bauman (President), Marsha von Dessoneck (Vice President), Geoff Smith (Financial Officer), Rick Marshall (Secretary), Suzanne Borth, Rick Ross, AJ van Tine (ex-officio), Gary Koerner (Treasurer, ex-officio)

Marsha provided a reading for the lighting of the chalice. All those present checked in.

1. Minutes

The Board reviewed the draft Minutes from the September 16 meeting.

Suzanne moved, Marsha seconded, to approve the September 16 Minutes as presented. Passed unanimously.

2. Next Meetings

The Board discussed whether to combine the November and December meetings. The consensus was to continue to meet on the regular schedule.

The next meeting of the Board of Trustees will be Wednesday, November 18 at 6:00 p.m. Maureen will provide opening words.

The following meeting will be Wednesday, December 16 at 6:00 p.m. Rick Ross will provide opening words.

3. Board Secretary position

Rick Marshall will be moving to McKinleyville (north of Eureka and Arcata on the coast) in the near future, but has offered to serve out his term on the Board as Secretary (since all meetings are virtual for the foreseeable future). The Board considered the situation and determined that they are comfortable with Rick continuing in this position, and appreciative of his offer to do so. Suzanne offered to “apprentice” with him, to train for future coverage of the Secretary position as needed.

Maureen moved, Marsha seconded, to support Rick Marshall continuing on the Board as Secretary for the completion of his current term, even though he will have moved out of the area. Passed unanimously.

4. Thank You Notes

The Board discussed who should receive notes for their recent activities. Those working on the Fall Auction will be recognized after the November Board meeting. It was determined not necessary to send a note to visiting musician Matt Meyer, as he received compensation for his appearance. The leaders of the anti-racism book group will be recognized after the December Board meeting.

The Board decided to send Thank You notes to those who are facilitating the new Covenant Groups. Volunteers for each were determined as follows:

Person to thank	Board member to send card
Suzanne Borth	Rick Marshall
Sally Knost	Marsha
Amy Evans	Rick Marshall
Bonnie Dahl	Maureen
Andy Cramer	Maureen
Constance Day	Marsha
Jan Lowry	Rick Marshall
Cathie Tritel	Maureen

The notes should be prepared “on behalf of the Board” but with the individual member’s signature. Suggested comments to include are to thank them for their work helping to “grow community” and/or “serve our mission.”

BOARD MEMBERS WILL SEND THANK YOU NOTES AS NOTED ABOVE.

5. Commission on Institutional Change Report – AJ

The Board reviewed the report, “Widening the Circle of Concern,” specifically the section on Congregations and Communities. Discussion points:

- There is much I don’t know
- The examples were awful – can’t believe this is really happening in our communities
- Painful that it’s happening in the church I’m connected to
- The recommendations are so substantial, they could form our action plan for the next 10 years – I’m overwhelmed; where to start?
- Hospitality role-play training sounds beneficial and practical – we need resources on how to accomplish this
- The structure is so ingrained – it’s challenging to examine our practices
- We’re like a club – this becomes comfortable – more difficult to new folks to fit in
- We need to covenant/commit to each other
- Congregation centering the communal, covenantal – this is not the comfort of a social club
- Plenty to work on – good ideas here
- Would like us to display a Black Lives Matter banner at our church as a public witness
- Recent move toward “regionalization” of the UUA needs to be supported by enhancing activities at the cluster level; the latter has not really happened yet
 - Our cluster includes Grass Valley and Reno

The Board reviewed the recommendations from this section of the report and evaluated/prioritized them as follows:

Recommended Congregational Practices to Increase Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity

- Appoint someone to be a liaison to the UUA. While many congregations may have trouble supporting a full “denominational affairs” committee, a point person can monitor and make sure leaders and publications have a representative. – *Suzanne is doing this*

- Ensure that lifespan religious educators are focused on building understanding about equity and inclusion. This includes providing significant opportunities for cross-cultural immersion through partnership and also use of videos, films, and other online resources. – *Priority*
- Do basic hospitality role-playing and education each year for those involved with membership and greeting activities, including greeting, membership, ushering, worship planning, refreshment serving, etc. – *Priority; AJ can seek training/resources*
- Put money in your budget for education around anti-oppression practices every year. The amount can be small—\$500 to \$1,500 to participate in a curriculum, pay a speaker’s fee, or get a group subscription to an online course. – **ADDRESS IN NEXT FY BUDGET PROCESS**
- Add a line item for scholarships to General Assembly, and make them available to those who most need to connect around identity—Black people, Indigenous people, people of color, LGBTQ folx, and young adults and youth. – **ADDRESS IN NEXT FY BUDGET PROCESS**
- Form justice partnerships with organizations led by those most affected by the issues, and follow their lead. This is especially important when working with organizations across lines of race and class. – *We have some relationships, can deepen those. Example: local Latino Leadership Council.*

Recommendation: Covenant and commitment, not comfort, should be the binding fabrics of UU congregations and other communities.

- **Action:** Prioritize workshops on covenants of right relationship and curate models of covenants for congregations and communities of different sizes and demographic profiles.
- **Action:** Equip leadership development efforts at the Associational or regional level with information on how to facilitate needed conflict and how to promote racial equity.
- ***This area is primarily for UUA level. Our congregation can have this inform our covenanting process, which is forthcoming. “Building the World We Dream Of” can address this area.***

Recommendation: The UUA Board and the president and administration should continue to prioritize efforts to create communications channels and strengthen regions, clusters, and other structures in which congregations can live into true congregational polity, the lack of which has exacerbated conflicts and created unnecessary distractions from mission.

- **Action:** Continue to develop new channels for communication with congregational leaders, including enhanced or regular virtual convenings for those interested in learning best practices in diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- **Action:** Work to make regional gatherings and structures possible and to regularize them across the country so that there is some consistency and they can be used to provide a common framework for anti-oppression work and other needed changes. *This*

area is something we can work on post-pandemic. Possibly Grass Valley to start; also, Sac has a "SURJ" group which could be a good resource.

- **Action:** Send an annual communication to all congregations about the number of congregations, with membership data, including the number of congregations with fewer than thirty people, as this is the number of people required to charter a congregation today. Also include the number of intentional and alternative communities serving those historically unable to thrive in our mainstream congregations, such as people of color, LGBTQ people, and young adults.
- **Except as noted, this area is primarily for UUA level.**

Recommendation: The UUA Board should look at the best way to provide ongoing active governance for congregations as the current annual General Assembly system is too costly and cumbersome for many to participate, as this disproportionately affects people of color.

- **Action:** Make caucusing for people of color standard, and offer administrative support at regional and cluster events to allow more space, contact, and support for those who are often "the only one" at the congregational level.
- **Action:** Fully implement the regional system, making space for clusters of congregations interested in equity to form.
- **Action:** Convene General Assembly as a biennial gathering and on the off years, set and keep a schedule of regional meetings, with these meetings occurring at least biennially and perhaps more frequently by teleconference.
- **Action:** Ensure that regional/district staff are fully trained and demonstrate multicultural, antiracist, and anti-oppression competency to act as a resource for congregations and lay leaders in their antiracism work. Continuing education work in anti-oppression techniques should also be required.
- **Action:** Explore providing delegate status to members of alternate covenantal communities serving those less welcomed by current congregational cultures.
- **This area is primarily for UUA level.**

Recommendation: Development of a common frame of anti-oppression training and multicultural competency is needed for all regional staff, those trained to advocate for UU professionals during times of conflict, and regional boards and entities to help prevent injury and wrongdoing.

- **Action:** Begin a "Promising Practices" program to recognize congregations that have made progress in becoming more equitable, inclusive, and diverse.
- **Action:** Identify and curate anti-oppression resources that are appropriate for congregations of different sizes, geographies, etc.
- **Action:** Create methods of interaction between congregations to promote sharing of learning and promising models for equity, inclusion, and diversity work as well as models

for accountable justice work. Ensure that all regional staff are trained in this work to be able to seed best practices.

- ***This area is primarily for UUA level.***

6. Finance – Gary

Gary reported that the Finance Committee prepared a “First Quarter Review” article which will appear in the November newsletter. Other highlights of the financial reports for September (1st quarter):

- Investment account is going up
- Reserves are down slightly
- Share-the-Plate revenue continues to be low
- The overall surplus/loss is worse than projected
 - The PPP loan will address this and was an important component of this year’s budget plan
 - PPP loan “forgiveness” has not occurred yet; bank is waiting for info from Feds
 - PPP loan forgiveness will result in a one-time credit of \$21,000

The Board discussed the situation with the Share-the-Plate revenue. The language on the “Give to SFUU” web page has been clarified that contributions with that selection will be divided 50/50 between the recipient organization and the congregation. Further discussion points:

- Future tech improvements may also help
- This giving suffers from the “virtual” setting – people were more likely to contribute with the physical passing of the plate
- Should this collection occur elsewhere in the order of service (and thus be less of a distraction from the worship experience)?
- We could put the “collection” of this into the e-Beacon and separate it from Sunday service altogether
- Possibly collect for this program just once a month
- Perhaps do a separate collection for this which goes 100% to the partner organization
- The concept is that by our generosity, we “grow” both organizations
- We have changed many things during virtual church and this one hasn’t really resolved yet
- If we make a change to this, we should think about whether it will be temporary or permanent
- Some other denominations don’t even pass the plate
- We don’t get that much money from this program

It was noted that the Social Justice Committee has identified a new list of partner organizations for the coming year: Auburn Interfaith Food Closet, Nor Cal Resists, and a local environmental group.

THE BOARD WILL DISCUSS THIS FURTHER AT ITS NEXT MEETING.

7. Pandemic Recovery Task Force report

At the Board's request, the Task Force revisited its recommendations for guidance for small group meetings. Their revised recommendation is that small groups will be permitted to meet in person when Placer County has reached the Yellow tier in the State classification system. The tiers are based on the number of new cases per day and the percentage of positive tests. The tiers have a built-in two-week transition timing. It was noted that Placer County has recently moved into the Orange tier. Thanks were expressed to the Task Force members for the hard work this process turned out to be.

Marsha moved, Rick M seconded, to approve the Task Force recommendation as presented. Motion passed 5-0-1, with Maureen abstaining.

8. Preliminary Fellowship Renewal Process

The Board of Trustees, and the Committee on Ministry, have each prepared an evaluation of Rev. AJ van Tine in his first year+ of ministry with SFUU, for submission to the Ministerial Fellowship Committee of the UUA. The draft of each group's evaluation was shared with the other group and with AJ prior to this meeting. AJ commented that the evaluation felt accurate, and not surprising. He noted that he would like to get more specific feedback on his timeliness of response, so that he could follow-up on that. He also mentioned that he has some minor edits and questions. It was noted that the CROP Walk, which was described as "ongoing," was not participated in this year by the congregation. AJ thanked the Board for its work in preparing the evaluation, and the Board thanked AJ for his openness to feedback.

AJ WILL PREPARE A LIST OF SPECIFIC QUESTIONS AND POSSIBLE MINOR EDITS, AND CIRCULATE IT TO THE BOARD FOR RESPONSE.

9. Minister's Report – AJ

AJ reported that it feels the congregation has "contracted" into a core group of committed members. There are around 70 in worship on Sundays, and about 40 of those are now participating in the newly-formed Covenant Groups. The Board noted a concern about the level of involvement of the kids, both in Sunday service and other activities.

THE BOARD WILL DISCUSS THE KIDS' PARTICIPATION FURTHER AT ITS NEXT MEETING.

10. Committee Liaison Reports

Buildings and Grounds (Marsha) – no report.

Stewardship (Marsha) – the auction is this Saturday. A lot of work has gone into it, and there should be a lot of fun and some surprises. The fundraising goal for the event is \$8,000. There is some discussion about there possibly not being a second auction event this year, but that has not been determined yet. It was noted that the majority of auction donations have come from the committee members themselves.

Committee Council (Marsha) – we are soliciting feedback from the committees about the Policies and Procedures update that's getting under way.

Finance (Geoff) – discussed above.

THE BOARD WILL DISCUSS WHETHER THE FINANCIAL REPORT SHOULD BE MONTHLY OR QUARTERLY, AT ITS NEXT MEETING.

Worship (Geoff, with assist from Suzanne) – the committee will be restructuring, separating the “creative” component from the “administrative” component. Some members will remain involved in both areas, some will choose one or the other.

Adult RE (Suzanne) – Covenant Groups have started, with 40 participants. The anti-racism book study is also under way. The Social Justice Committee may use the book study as a jumping-off point for new projects in the future.

Denominational Affairs (Suzanne) – Camp de Benneville Pines (UU camp in Southern Cal) was saved from recent fires, and successfully raised funds for repairs.

Membership (Rick M) – attendance is holding steady; no new-visitor forms have been submitted recently; AJ’s UU 101 class is being revised to attract existing members and not just newcomers.

Children/Youth RE (Rick R) – no report.

Social Justice (Rick R) – committee is looking for guidance on what is being requested for the Policies and Procedures update. So far, the Task Force is just gathering input on existing practices.

Caring Committee (John/absent) – no report.

Communications (Maureen) – continuing to do their ongoing jobs.

The Board reviewed **ACTION ITEMS**, Right Relations for this meeting, and extinguished the chalice.

MINUTES PREPARED BY RICK MARSHALL, SECRETARY