

First Unitarian Society of Chicago  
Minutes of the December 2019 Board Meeting

Board Members Present: Kristin Faust, Board President  
Cindy Pardo  
Ellen LaRue  
Margie Gonwa  
Grace Latibeaudiere-Williams

Others Present: Rev. Teri Schwartz, Senior Co-Minister  
Rev. David Schwartz, Senior Co-Minister  
Beth Moss, Director of Religious Education  
Marie Cobbs, Denominational Affairs Committee  
Richard Pardo, Building Committee  
Kristina DeGuzman, Secretary

### **Opening**

Opening words were offered by Kristin Faust.

### **November Board Meeting Minutes**

Minutes from the November Board Meeting were distributed. A correction were made to Beth's second job. Cindy moved to accept the minutes as amended, and Grace seconded the motion, which carried.

### **Report from the Denominational Affairs Committee - Marie Cobbs**

Marie's report was distributed electronically, and Marie provided highlights from the report.

(1) Report on the commission on institutional change by the General Assembly: The purpose of the commission, organized in 2017, is to look at white supremacy in our denomination. The commission has released two previous reports, one in 2017 and another in 2018. Delegates from First U gave reports, attended workshops, and reported back to the committee. Alan Lindrup attended a workshop on fossil fuels and Edison Ellenberger attended a workshop on lay ministry and another on democracy, the latter of which featured Sharon Welch, whom First U is interested in having speak at a First Forum.

Marie suggested that the budget include funds to support delegates going to the General Assembly; even if the church cannot afford to pay for all expenses such as registration, transportation, and room and board, the Committee hopes that some funds can be allocated to defray costs for delegates.

(2) The Chicago Area UU Council (CAUUC) had its board meeting on Saturday, and one of the issues stressed there was affinity groups, of which there are currently seven. Affinity groups serve as a way to connect with local churches, build partnerships, exchange information, and learn about and promote events. For congregants who are interested in these topics but cannot attend meetings, CAUUC affinity groups are a mechanism for participation, as one can join via the CAUUC website and meetings are held online. It was suggested that the Denominational Affairs Committee utilize the church newsletter to promote this opportunity for denominational participation.

### **Construction Progress Report - Richard Pardo**

The distributed written report constitutes a comprehensive summary for status of construction so far.

(1) Pennington Center Windows: Pennington Center windows were scheduled to have been completed by now; two windows have been installed, but the windows slated for the northeast hallway turned out to have the wrong dimensions, and so had to be sent back and will not be installed until January. Small items remain to be completed, including a couple of broken panes, painting, finishing, and touch-up. The main windows in the RE room are completely installed.

(2) Parish House: Parish house renovations have lagged for a variety of reasons. The architect overestimated how quickly projects could be completed, which is not uncommon. The schedule at the end of the written report calls for most projects to be wrapped up by the end of January, and completely finished in February, with the exception of exterior compressors which won't be installed until April or May, when it will be warmer.

(3) Air Conditioning: In both Parish House and Pennington Center, duct work needs to be installed for A/C units. It will come down the main hallways and into the rooms on all three floors. The garden room window A/C units should not have to be installed, but it is a possibility. On the first and second floors, there should be no need for window A/C units. The church has a total of 10 portable A/C units that could be used if necessary, but they are not a part of the plan. Richard recommends that the church retain 4 or 5 of these A/C units and sell the rest to the community. One could be put in the choir room, and another in VOV library.

(4) Appliances: New appliances have just been ordered; Cindy was able to get the church a deal. The plans include a high-temperature dishwasher that hasn't been ordered yet but will be paid for by the Green Sanctuary Group; funds for this are ready. Appliances should be installed and fully functional in late January.

(5) Sanctuary: Installation of sanctuary storm windows has started. Windows have been sanded, cleaned, and recaulked in order to stop seepage. The windows above the sanctuary front door are complete, as are the three north circular windows and the rose window. From the inside, there is

no noticeable difference in appearance. Richard noted that more detailed storm window division was considered, however due to the recessed limestone detailing on many of the windows, the additional cost would have been between \$25,000-\$35,000.

(6) Electrical work: The church is running on temporary power right now. The new interface for the main power is in place, as is the exterior tubing. ComEd may connect the cables tomorrow, but as of now power is still being routed through the old power panel. The process of connecting to the new cables will bring intermittent power-loss, but hopefully by the end of January the electrical work will be done. Currently, power for Pennington Center is separately billed, and it still looks like there will be two power lines, but there should only be one meter after work is done. Kristin asked whether we pay electricity for building tenants, and Richard noted that we do, as well as all other utilities.

(7) Ramp: The Pennington-to-Parish-House ramp was supposed to start being installed on Friday, but due to Little People's Learning Center's difficult scheduling needs, the project has been delayed until after the holiday season.

(8) Kitchen and Bathroom: The Parish House is gutted and they have started putting in new walls to define the kitchen, bathroom, and lounge areas, and have begun reconfiguring plumbing. Over the next two or three weeks the new walls will go up. Selections remain to be made for flooring and other finishes.

(9) Hull Chapel: Storm windows will eventually go onto the Hull Chapel windows as well; plans had not previously factored in the need to heat-treat the glass with tempering. Installation will likely start around January 5 or 6, and may require the renting of a man-lift. If weather allows, all windows are expected to be in place at the end of February

(10) Budget: As of now, costs have been in line with the budget projections. Permanent endowment funds should not be needed at all. Although bridge loans were authorized, those might not even be necessary. From Fenn House proceeds, \$293,000 was made available by the congregation, and only \$187,000 appears to be necessary. Letters for Phase 5 of the Capital Campaign (consisting of church friends and community members/organizations) have just gone out, and the Capital Campaign committee will start making calls soon. At this point, we have 2 Phase 5 contributions. Errol has pledged \$15,000, which will either be a check or reduction in fee, depending on which is best per his accountants, and Mark Morrison-Reed intends to pledge between \$2000 and \$10,000. Additionally, Northern Weathermaker sent a check for \$250.

### **Report from the Director of Religious Education - Beth Moss (in absentia)**

Rev. Teri distributed Beth's written report, which was reviewed by the Board. Cindy noted that the pageant went very well. Kristin praised Beth's general performance. Grace is impressed with Beth's program outreach. One parent is working with Beth to start a homeschool parents' group. Rev. Teri noted that Beth is attending to what parents need now, and trying to increase

buy-in; she further noted that Beth lacks the parental volunteer involvement of 10-20 years ago, as currently there is a cultural expectation that this work will be handled by church staff, so she is reaching out to homeschooling parents, etc., for new models of engagement.

### **Interim Minister's Report - Monica Kling-Garcia in absentia**

Monica's written report was distributed electronically, as she is currently in Transylvania for her UU travel fellowship. Kristin noted that Monica has sent reports for both December and January. Rev. Teri explained that it would be helpful for the Board and the Intern Committee to know what she is doing in January, and what her classes and studies will be.

### **Treasury Report**

This is Liz Harris's last month as treasurer, and Rev. David is working with the finance committee to replace her. No one person is able to take on the entire role, so the committee found 3 people who are willing to share responsibilities: Joan Pederson, Leslie Davis, and Virginia Pace. Additionally, the church has a new bookkeeper, who is working out very well. Rev. David recommends that the Board think about what kind of financial work needs to be done and whether or not the current distribution of work between staff and volunteers makes sense right now. Liz will likely stay on the finance committee. Kristin is mildly optimistic that a new good bookkeeper who can take more responsibility and let the committee do more non-bookkeeping work, as currently the feeling is that the Treasurer position involves a lot of tedious data entry and less review work. Rev. David says the bookkeeper is moving us to Quickbooks Online, which makes reconciliation much quicker and up to the moment.

Kristin noted that there is a lot of room for productivity improvement now that we have a new bookkeeper. David added that over the last 12 months, Liz did an enormous amount of work cleaning up balance sheets, closing out accounts, and generally cleaning things up. There is an equal task in cleaning up and simplifying Quickbooks. Kristin indicated that the new bookkeeper has a great deal of contemporary accounting and consulting experience which will be very useful in updated our processes, especially if she communicates well with the Finance Committee.

Kristin believes that the planned transfer of funds from E-Trade to Bernstein has been accomplished, as all required signatures were obtained two weeks ago. In response to Ellen's question regarding how the work of the treasurer will be divided into three parts, Rev. David indicated that the Finance Committee should have an answer at the next meeting to report to the Board. Currently they have identified various functions such as reporting, meeting-organization, statement and balance sheet review, budgeting, invoicing, coordinating with finance professionals, reporting to the Board, and construction finance oversight.

### **Action Items**

Ministerial Housing: The IRS requires ministers to declare in advance how much they will be spending of their salary on housing for tax deduction. Each year they declare \$50,000, and then file for actual expenses. This declaration must be approved by the Board.

Ellen moved that the Board approve the \$50,000 for the ministers' housing expenses for tax reporting. Grace seconded the motion, which carried.

### **Ad Hoc Committee for the Dispersion of the Borja Estate**

John's written report was distributed electronically and Margie gave in-person highlights.

The Committee estimates receiving approximately \$400,000 to \$500,000 from the estate. An 80/20 split between endowment and operating funds has been the convention for bequests, and so the committee has been working on the assumption that 20% will be going to operating costs. They did not evaluate the possibility of an alternate distribution; departing from convention will depend on the list of needs and how strongly the congregation feels about each item. Cindy pointed out that a few programming items could be added for a relatively modest sum of programming money, for example a membership coordinator, and believes that the Board should consider a different split, especially given the health of the endowment, as it would be good for the congregation to see more spending on people and programming after spending so much on the physical building.

Margie noted that the Committee did speak about spending money on people. It was noted that the congregation is losing a rent-paying tenant, and some larger donors may be transitioning into retirement soon, and there there may be proactive steps we can take to address those issues, such as outreach or coordination with regional groups. The Committee also extensively discussed not just the introduction of new programming but the continuing nurturing of programming and people through leadership training. The Committee urges the Board not to think of the bequest as a one-shot deal, but more as a continuing two- to three-year commitment to developing community and leadership. Ideas in this vein included training people for the Good Relations committee, supporting attendance at the General Assembly or other leadership conferences. This first meeting was largely devoted to brainstorming and ascertaining which items people felt most strongly about in order to have a list and then start making choices based on the results. The meeting ended with each member agreeing to take one idea, flush it out, and put hard numbers onto it to take back to the Committee for debate, and then take the results of that meeting to the Board.

In response to Margie's request for additional suggestions, Kristin expressed interest in volunteer and leadership training, especially for conflict and culture, noting that she, Margie, and Cindy are meeting on the new organizational chart, and if the church wants new leadership, we need to encourage and give people assistance and support. Ellen noted that this goal is also related to the proposed membership coordinator, as membership is the first step to involvement, engagement, and leadership.

Margie also noted that the Committee is looking, not just at new initiatives, but existing events to expand and improve. Cindy noted that supporting Beth's efforts in getting kids and families engaged in social justice and activism would also do much to engage new potential leaders, and Margie noted that the affinity groups mentioned by Marie also dovetail with these ideas.

Rev. David suggested that the Board come up with a process of engaging the congregation in these decisions and setting a timeline. Budgeting starts in February with a rough budget that is then updated once pledge results are in. Ideas about congregation engagement were floated, such as a First Forum, a congregational vote, or a special meeting. Grace suggested that the Board err on the side of more information and participation by the congregation by informing them of the Committee, taking comments and questions at a First Forum, and then having the committee take that feedback and make a final recommendation to the Board. Ellen noted that a First Forum will give a sense of the congregants' concerns and issues, and if more input is needed, more engagement can be planned. Cindy suggested that the committee offer the top four ideas at a First Forum, allow people to make comments about those items, and then solicit input on items that may have been overlooked.

Kristin noted that at the previous meeting the Board had discussed the possibility of engaging an attorney to understand how to deal with the house and the estate. Kristin has found one attorney that she recommends, and requests that the Board vote on the issue at the January meeting. The attorney is named Wallace Moy, and he is a real estate attorney who was introduced to Kristin by her own long-time real estate attorney who was his former partner. He is a solo practitioner specializing in real estate. His advice to Kristin is that the congregation can either receive the deed to the house and sell it, or can have the estate sell the house and receive the proceeds. He indicated it is neater and cleaner for the estate if they give the church the deed to the house and then the church conducts the sale, as the sale costs will be borne by the church instead of being billed to the estate. The other option is to give the estate the direction to sell the house and net the fees against the sale proceeds. Kristin also noted that Margaret Huyck doesn't feel she is getting good advice as the executor of the will, and Cindy is looking to get Margaret a better advisor with more estate and real estate experience. While Margaret has an attorney, she feels this person is not particularly sophisticated in real estate and estate law, but because it is her personal attorney the situation is awkward. It was noted that if the church sells these house, we will definitely need a real estate attorney, and if the estate sells the house, the church still needs a real estate attorney to oversee that process in probate. Wallace Moy has experience doing this kind of estate sale of real property.

Margaret received 2 property appraisals which both came out to \$375,000. Kristin will request a copy of both to review. Seller expenses will be approximately 5-10%. Grace estimates approximately \$70,000 in chattel sales and cash. Kristin notes that for these kinds of matters, solo practitioners are usually more efficient than large law firms. Kristin will contact William Moy and reach out to Margaret. The hope is to have proceeds in hand by April. Cindy plans to

speak to her son who works in commercial real estate for referrals to attorneys who can advise Margaret.

### **Good Relations Committee Update - Grace**

Grace distributed her written report and provided highlights.

(1) First Forum: At their First Forum the Good Relations Committee laid out its goals, introduced its members, introduced its formational policy document, and outlined its approach to developing a congregational behavioral covenant. The Committee was pleased with the attendance and quality of questions and comments.

(2) Training: Members of the Committee will be undergoing training in the second or third week of January, including some Board members if possible. Rev. Teri noted that we need a minimum of 14 people and that additional attendees can be added for the same cost after reaching 14. Having more people trained will provide a pipeline to Committee membership for Board members and other congregants, and is part of the effort to diffuse the relevant knowledge and skills across the congregation. The Committee also found a January 14 training webinar being given by a friend of Grace's which they will try to do as a team.

(3) Ongoing Work: The Committee is currently focused on the first phase of drafting the required documents and obtaining appropriate training. The second phase will be working with the congregation to foster and maintain good relations, and address conflict that remain unresolved. This approach will hopefully be useful and valid going forward.

### **Ministers' Report - Revs. Teri and David**

Rev. Teri distributed the Ministers' Written report.

(1) Board Member Training: Rev. Teri solicited Board member availability for various training dates in January.

(2) Peace Circles: A peace circle will be scheduled for January, and the current plan is to have one per month for the next few months, and then reevaluate the schedule. Establishing dates far out in advance will be helpful in allowing people to commit.

(3) Congregational Cultural Change: Rev. Teri spoke to Keith Krohn and Lisa Pressley, who expressed appreciation that the congregation is engaging with these issues, which not all congregations do. They noted that sexual relationships between clergy and congregants were not prohibit at the time these issue occurred. Now we have a better understanding of the roles of consent and power in such relationships, so norms have changed greatly. As a result, the Code of Ethics for UU ministers is currently under revision. In terms of historical issues in our congregation, the denomination has no documentation, so the root of the cultural issues in the

congregation cannot be directly addressed. The ministers want to look at how to address a conflicted system as a whole. Rev. Teri had hoped based on previous conversations with the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center that we could work with them, but because the past clerical issues have not been adjudicated by the denomination, the Center will not work with us. Additionally, their content is very biblically based, which would likely have presented a cultural mismatch with our congregation.

Rev. Deborah Pope Lance is the foremost UU minister on these issues; she trains seminarians and is currently working with the national denomination. Her primary focus is coaching pastors in congregations facing these issues. The ministers will take her class, and she will reach out to the Faith Trust Institute. Hopefully, between the Good Relations Committee webinar, in-person training for the Committee, Board, and others, and the information the ministers are receiving, the congregation will be equipped with the necessary skills to address the cultural issues in the congregation. Kristin recognized the tremendous hours of work Rev. Teri has put into these efforts. Rev. Teri noted that the congregation might be a pioneer in creating something new, as the current generation of ministers is widely facing these issues, because past generations had considered these relationships to be a privilege of the office, whereas now we understand how damaging they can be. Cindy noted that getting congregants from that older generation to understand will be key to these efforts, and Rev. Teri hopes that the seminar she is taking will help her explain better how clerical transgressions such as these, when unaddressed by the congregation, allow other people to transgress other boundaries.

### **Little People Learning Center Update - Rev. David**

After a lot of back-and-forth, the Ad Hoc Committee formed at the October meeting decided to offer the Little People Learning Center a 2-year lease option for the upstairs space, otherwise the currently leases will terminate on June 30 for the first floor space and August 30 for the second floor. In discussions, the committee realized that having the first floor space dedicated solely to RE use was best for everyone. Although the church may suffer a short-term revenue loss, the Borja request will offset that some, and having the space solely for church use will pay off in the future. One possibility is to increase the endowment by a level that would make up for lost income.

### **Upcoming Board Events - Kristin**

- (1) As noted earlier, a Peace Circle will be scheduled for January.
- (2) First Forums: February 9 is designated as a Board First Forum which will be the State of the Church meeting, which is an annual, by-laws-specified informational meeting. Another First Forum will be dedicated to soliciting input on the Borja estate; a third will address the work of the Good Relations committee. Coffee with the Ministers will take place in the spring.

(3) Appointment of a Board Alternate: Betty Holcomb was the Board Alternate, but she is currently unavailable due to health. The Board is able to appoint an alternate, whose duties will be to come to meetings and are able to vote when members are absent. Kristin requests that the Board Members think about possible Board alternates and bring suggestions to the next meeting.

(4) Congregational Culture Issues: Kristin sent the Board Members a letter from the headmistress of the Moray School in Washington DC, which is a report on allegations of sexual misconduct by the Moray faculty. It consists of a final report and cover email, and Kristin suggests that members look at what the report says and how they handled the allegations, as it might help inform the approach we end up taking at the church. Rev. Teri pointed out that when institutions face these issues, the response is often conflict avoidance and an instinct to protect the institution's standing in the community, but in the long run, an institution is given more credibility if they had faced the issue squarely.

**Closing Words by Kristin.**

**The meeting of the Board adjourned.**

## **Ad-Hoc Committee Meeting: Plans for usage of funds from Robert Borja Estate**

Monday, December 9, 2019, 7:00-9:00 pm

### **Members in attendance:**

John Martin-Eatinger, Reverend David Schwartz, Elizabeth Harris, Margie Gonwa, Ellie Hall, Lynn Orear.

Anticipate receiving and using funds from estate in mid-2020  
Approximate value of estate may range from \$400,000 – 500,000, with about 20% of funds being available for use within the church. Other 80% of estate funds to be placed in a separate endowment account.

Ideas for fund usage:

- Transforming current physical RE space to assist Beth Moss
- Marketing & Advertising
- Information tables/booths at events throughout Chicago
- Joint speaker series hosted by 1<sup>st</sup> Unitarian and the Ethical Humanist Society
- Increase family functionality at church events
- Membership & Communication
- Creation of a Junior Board; young adults and potentially teens
- Co-coordinator for event committee
- Social Justice expansion and increased opportunities
- Senior engagement / trips & outings
- Increased RE Programming
- Outreach to University of Chicago; future UU's here and abroad
- Assistance surrounding displacement issues tied to the Obama Center
- Leadership and Congregational training
- Increased funding for current staff: retention of best, most qualified
- More in-house programming

Lynn raises concern that perhaps some of the funds may be kept as a buffer to hedge against membership instability and decreased giving.

Rev. David remarks that a growing membership does not always equal increased giving and funding, as generational ideals have shifted; young adults and millennials have different giving and charitable habits than those of our aging boomers and elders.

Culture transformation work needs to be long-term to sustain and grow our membership; if not, programs and actions may suffer and money will not have been put to good use.

Reverend David organizes ideas into (10) 'buckets', to which we all placed votes according to how strongly we felt for each issue. The (10) buckets were:

- Staffing/Compensation
- RE space
- Conflict/Culture transformation
- Signage/Aesthetics
- Membership Coordinator
- Social Justice
- Speaker Series
- Marketing
- RE Program
- Kid friendly events/ deepening family participation

We all were allowed (5) votes each; after the 1<sup>st</sup> round of voting, we came up with 6 top vote getters. This time, we were allowed (3) votes each. At the end of that round, we had 4 ideas that received the most votes:

1. Conflict & Culture Transformation
2. Membership Coordinator
3. Marketing
4. RE Program

From these 4 ideas, we agreed to reach out and explore the possibilities more thoroughly, to gain insight as to what could be attained, needed or transformed through the funds made available. We are branching out to have deeper discussions with those who work first-hand in the areas of interest. A rough plan and dollar amount for each idea will be created to present to the Board for further review.

- Reverend David will revisit Membership Coordinator ideas
- John, Liz and Lynn will speak with Beth Moss about RE Programming
- Reverend David and Lynn will meet with Good Relations Committee to discuss Conflict & Culture Transformation
- Margie and Ellie will work on Marketing

Ad Hoc Committee will conduct these meetings throughout December 2019 and January 2020, with our next Ad-Hoc meeting to be held in the late part of January.