

Sierra Foothills Unitarian Universalists
Board of Trustees
December 16, 2020

Meeting Minutes

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

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

1. Finance

Financial reports had been distributed ahead of the meeting, and were reviewed. Things are looking good. We expect to receive news on the PPP loan being “forgiven” any day now. The Finance Committee is starting to think about next year’s budget. There will be more information to follow regarding the stewardship drive, and Board members’ role in it. Calling on members will occur by Zoom or phone, not in person.

2. Minutes

The Board reviewed the draft Minutes from the November 18 meeting.

Suzanne moved, Marsha seconded, to approve the November 18 Minutes as presented. Passed unanimously.

3. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Board of Trustees will be Wednesday, January 20, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. Rick Marshall will provide opening words.

4. Thank You Notes

The Board will send Thank-You notes to the leaders of the anti-racism book group (Kara Kreutz and Tricia Caspers).

RICK MARSHALL WILL SEND THESE THANK-YOU NOTES.

The Board discussed thank-you gifts for the staff and will give them gift cards from Trader Joe’s.

MARSHA WILL ARRANGE FOR THESE GIFT CARDS.

5. Commission on Institutional Change report

The Board continued its review of the report, “Widening the Circle of Concern,” specifically the section on Living Our Values in the World. Discussion points included:

- Environmental justice will be a good way into anti-racism work, due to our past focus; it will be an accessible way to reach other congregation members who haven’t engaged in anti-racism work yet
- Climate change impacts those who live in poverty to a greater extent, which disproportionately affects BIPOC

- This is an opportunity to converse with those in our community to partner in work they're doing
- The ongoing use of the term "theology" was discussed. It can also be thought of as "ultimate reality" or "values" which are systematically developed. Board members found the use of the term to be interesting framing for the report.
- There was mention of a "Promising Practices Congregations" recognition at General Assembly – how are these practices made known outside GA? This is actually a recommendation that has not taken place yet.

The Board discussed potential specific connections of this section of the report to our local congregation.

- Partnerships within the community (e.g., for climate justice) – we have done similar partnerships with local indigenous groups in the past
- Finding the theological underpinnings regarding people at risk – the parallel between caring for the earth and caring for other humans
- Faith basis for justice work – our shared values as UUs – we can explore how each person's individual theology informs their justice work
- "Internal work" such as anti-racism is justice work
- All types of justice work (internal and external) can and should be done together – it is not a binary choice of one or the other

6. Share-the-Plate

Some of the program changes discussed by the Board last time have already been implemented, others not yet. Last month, most of the revenue came in on the same day of the remarks from the recipient organization's (Sierra Streams) representative. We are trying to consolidate the message more – focus the attention on one Sunday each month, with the program otherwise highlighted in the e-Beacon and the post-service slides other times. It was noted that the Grass Valley congregation is doing very well with their Share-the-Plate program.

MARSHA WILL OBTAIN MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE GRASS VALLEY CONGREGATION'S APPROACH TO SHARE-THE-PLATE, AND REPORT BACK ON A FUTURE AGENDA.

MARSHA WILL CIRCULATE THE RECENT NEWSLETTER FROM THE GRASS VALLEY CONGREGATION TO ALL BOARD MEMBERS.

There was discussion about the new "text-to-give" option. It was noted that the instructions which were sent out are not in sync with the actual sequence when using the system. (This information has been provided to Gary Koerner.) Work to simplify this system is still in progress. It was observed that providing more options for ways to give is not simplifying the process – what's needed is to generate more enthusiasm for giving.

There was discussion about whether the "ask" would be better coming from the minister or from a lay person. The consensus was that the optimal approach would be to have a representative from the recipient organization offer some remarks (similar to the recent presentation from Sierra Streams). If the organization is not able to send someone, a representative of Social Justice would be the next choice. This would also be good for increasing awareness of the SJ committee and its work.

7. Feedback on CYRE programming

CYRE Chair, Bill Boyce, was going to contact the CYRE families by phone (as opposed to some sort of online “survey”). There is no news yet on the results of this. It was noted that the CYRE Committee feels they are in touch with the needs of the children and youth, and are somewhat overextended to take on more work like a survey or other form of outreach. What is the issue that is trying to be addressed? Perhaps a Board rep should speak directly with someone from the Committee (rather than through the minister and the DRE). The original concern stemmed from low attendance at the 9:30 gathering time on Sundays. It was noted that some children come regularly and it is a valuable time for them. Others do too much else on Zoom and are not interested in pursuing this offering from the church. The desire from the Board is that we not keep doing the same thing if it is not working. It was reported that the Youth gathering had 8 in attendance last time. They will be changing their format somewhat, to focus more on community.

REV. AJ WILL GATHER SOME ATTENDANCE FIGURES FOR A FUTURE AGENDA ITEM.

8. Minister’s Report

Rev. AJ is continuing to improve ways by which he connects with people in need of pastoral care.

9. Committee Liaison Reports

Buildings and Grounds (Marsha) – no report; things are fine at the church property.

Stewardship (Marsha) – committee is developing a theme for the next campaign. Training for those canvassing will be held in late January/early February. They are also working on determining what the monetary goal for next year should be.

Committee Council (Marsha) – next meeting is February 3. Marsha will send a reminder.

Adult RE (Suzanne) – finished the Fall programs. Committee is an excited, mighty group.

Denominational Affairs (Suzanne) – information has gone out about registration for General Assembly, which will be a “virtual” event again in 2021. There is a potential opportunity to get more involved in the District’s “Chalice Lighter” grant program; we will need to identify someone to be our congregation’s “champion” for this if we pursue it.

Worship (comments by Rev. AJ, due to technological challenges for Geoff) – recent gathering of the Worship Associates Circle was a success, and will continue on the 1st Wednesday each month.

Membership (Rick M) – attendance in Nov. 2020 averaged 58 (2019 average was 90; down one-third). Attendance figures attempt to account for multiple people sharing screens on Zoom. Plan to ask committees/groups to submit attendance numbers for non-Sunday-service events as a means of gauging participation. This will be discussed at the next Committee Council meeting. There have been no new visitors, nor attendees at the “Chat with the Minister” offerings. Will be working with Social Justice and Adult RE on community outreach to attract new visitors. Working on the transition to new Google tools.

Children/Youth RE (Rick R) – parent forms have been transitioned to Google Suites. They will be training people to be adult supervision (such as for Sunday mornings or Friday evenings) by use of a video which they are creating.

Social Justice (Rick R) – will be looking at the Share-the-Plate recommendations soon. Rick R will have info on this topic next month.

Caring Committee (John) – there are 9 on the committee and they are inviting more. There is a positive response to the calls. It was noted that one person who is a Friend of the congregation (not a Member) had not been called. The group will now start including the Friends in the list of those to be contacted. The committee is continuing to refine the “script” for the calls to help it feel like more-natural conversation.

Communications (Maureen) – the committee recommends that we continue to support advertising in the Auburn Journal, which was agreeable to the Board.

10. New Business

John noted that our printed Directory is out-of-date and asked if the information could be maintained current in an online form. This information is available on the church website, in the “Member Resources” section, which is password-protected. It was noted that the new congregation software “Breeze” will also help with this function.

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

MINUTES PREPARED BY RICK MARSHALL, SECRETARY