

Allegheny Unitarian Universalist Church Meeting of the Board of Trustees

The regular meeting of the Board of Trustees was held via video conference with the following Trustees in attendance: Kate Tomlinson, President; Sarah-Wade Smith, Vice President; Matt Merriman-Preston, Treasurer; Donald Zeilman, Clerk; Badger Kopnitsky; and Patrick Burke.

Ex officio: Rev. David McFarland

I Gathering

Kate Tomlinson calls the meeting to order at 7:03PM, and shares words for the chalice lighting. A quorum is present at the call to order (six of six Trustees). An agenda was distributed prior to the meeting. Kate calls for additions or changes to the Agenda. None are offered. Agenda stands as published.

II Administration

1. Minutes of the April 20 meeting were distributed electronically. Kate calls for additions or changes to the Minutes. Clerk notes that Matt submitted a correction to the report of the Treasurer concerning misstatement of the deficit reported. The minutes have been updated. Minutes stand as corrected.

2. Financial Report: Matt Merriman-Preston. The financial report was distributed electronically (May 17).

- » There was an error pointed out in the long-term assets during the last meeting. These have been updated and corrected, showing that money in the endowment checking was invested as requested by the Board.
- » As FY2020 comes to a close, Matt is estimating that there will be a deficit of \$9,394. Both revenue and expenses were down about \$20,000 from FY2019.
- » After two full months of online worship, we have a clearer picture of the effect on contributions (excludes fundraising and rental). From July 1 to March 15, average monthly contributions were \$7,083.99. From March 16 to May 15, average monthly contributions were \$3,143.37.
- » Matt has prepared a preliminary budget, illustrating two separate assumptions, one that giving will be down only slightly from FY2020, and another that reflects the giving pattern of the past two months. Budget will be reviewed under Business.
- » The UUA annual program fund pledge is due by June 1, 2020. Their request for FY2021 is \$6,547.

3. Minister's Report: Rev. Dave notes that this will be his final report as minister. He has completed an exit interview with Rev. Wolfe, CE Region staff. Rev Dave will share the document with the Board, and will let the Board decide if it should be shared with the congregation. David highlights the congregations dedication to UU ministry on the North Side. David shared a final reading, and the Board shared good-byes and gratitude.

4. Report of the Clerk: Zeilman notes that membership is 68.

5. Denominational Affairs: Kate notes that there will be a leadership webinar hosted by the CE Region. Also, that the UUA had issued guidelines for the reopening of churches.

Reports accepted by assent.

III Business

1. Sunday Worship & Church Building: The UUA has offered broad guidance on reentering buildings for worship. The Pennsylvania mandates for public safety are proceeding through level change that gradually ease restriction in the county.

- » Congregation should continue to comply with the state mandates per designated level.
- » Matt notes that it would be prudent to expect that the building will remain closed for the foreseeable future, and to prepare accordingly.
- » Building use by Narcotics Anonymous weekly group: Group is larger than 25, not possible at this time, but Board will stay in contact.
- » NA regional monthly meeting: Board will allow return if group stays under 25 participants, wears masks, and observes social distancing guidelines.
- » The Board may consider producing its own set of mandates for reentering and building use.

Board consensus is to follow the mandates issued for the county (currently *yellow level*), and reevaluate the situation when the county moves to the next level (*green*). Board will work toward writing a statement on building reentry for the Annual Meeting.

2. Annual Budget FY2021

Matt shared the two high-level budget options that he prepared (*Initial Draft* and *Worst Case*). The options differ in revenue, with a difference in average monthly contributions before and after the move to online church. The "before average" already reflects a projected drop in contributions as compared to last year. The expense side for both options includes the cost for half-time contract ministry that the Board had previously determined.

The Initial Draft budget indicates an operating deficit of \$5200, made possible by the Board's previous adjustments of the contract ministry cost. The Worst Case budget indicates an operating deficit of close to \$42,000 (almost equal to the cost of ministry). Even if the projected revenue falls somewhere in between the two revenue numbers, the resulting high deficits are not sustainable. This raises the question of whether the congregation is in a position to hire the one-half time contract minister proposed.

Congregation would have to discover a way to bring contributed revenue back up to the level projected in the Initial Draft budget, but the pandemic has not only had an effect on giving patterns, but on the the ability of folks to increase their giving. Board is also not clear about the long-term effect of Rev. Dave’s retirement on participation and contributions.

Approaching this situation from a different perspective, can (or should) the congregation “invest” in ministry by funding a larger deficit from savings so that the congregation can move through this time of transition? This may be the time when we need ministry the most.

A reduction in the percent amount of ministry (less than half-time), or postponing the search process doesn’t appear to be feasible.

Following a suggestion that the Board to confer with Rev. Wolfe before proceeding, Kate states that she will contact Rev. Wolfe and set-up a video conference with the Board prior to continuation of this discussion.

Kate calls for a motion to adjourn the meeting, with a continuing meeting scheduled for Thursday, May 28. Badger so moves, Sarah-Wade seconds. **Motion Carries**

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May 28

The meeting of the Board of Trustees was reconvened via video conference with the following Trustees in attendance: Kate Tomlinson, President; Sarah-Wade Smith, Vice President; Matt Merriman-Preston, Treasurer; Donald Zeilman, Clerk; Badger Kopnitsky; and Patrick Burke.

I Gathering

Kate Tomlinson calls the meeting to order at 7:02PM. A quorum is present at the call to order (six of six Trustees).

II Business Continued

1. Budget and Contract Ministry: Kate has shared notes from the Board’s online meeting with Rev. Wolfe. Board discussion as follows:

- » Meeting with Rev. Wolf was energizing; suggestion to approach this time of transition as a time of opportunity, not of limitations or of being forced into one position;
- » Congregation should continue to partner with the other congregations in the cluster, perhaps sharing staff;
- » This may be the time to move forward with the Lyceum project in the cluster, furthering our social justice witness.
- » This is a time to build on the strengths of the congregation, not the limitations;
- » Will the Board make the decision to drop the minister search this fiscal year, or will that decision be made in concert with the congregation?

- » Should we seeking parish ministry or another form of ministry, and alone or with another cluster congregation?
- » The other cluster congregations are also experiencing the effects of online church on their finances.
- » Should we only consider hiring alternative staff (such as a social justice director) when there are funding sources that will cover the cost? Hiring of any staff by the church has significant budget implications.
- » The possibility of including ministers and dynamic speakers in Sunday worship is compelling; the congregation should continue to have a strong online worship presence.
- » Will Worship Ministry be able to program worship without additional input/help? Will continuing with online worship require a paid coordinator (quarter time or hourly)? There is more participation in online Sunday worship than at in-person worship. When will the church resume in-person worship?
- » What does pastoral ministry look like without staff?
- » Officiating for rites of passage can be assigned from within the congregation, or the congregation can approach other cluster ministers.
- » It may be advisable to roll out the FY2021 budget as a series of shorter-term budgets (three months, six months) due to the number variables and the lack of a long-term data from our current financial circumstances.
- » The Strategic Plan is 100% relevant in this situation; use it as a framework to discuss the congregation's future; continue to ground recommendations and decisions in the Plan.
- » One of the roles of interim ministry is to prepare the congregation for future ministry. What role can the congregation play in doing that work without contract ministry? What is the role of the Strategic Plan in that process?
- » Can financial resources be used to hire folks for ministry beyond worship when there is a need?
- » Board will need to connect with Rev. Tines to discuss our ongoing relationship.

Sunday Worship Recommendations

- a.** Continue rotating Sunday responsibility among congregations;
- b.** Provide strong worship when Allegheny is responsible for Sunday service;
- c.** Bring Worship Ministry into the conversation;
- d.** Present options and garner feedback;
- e.** Step up the level of care within the congregation;
- f.** Consider options for help with coordinating Sunday worship.

Follow-up: Kate will summarize the foregoing discussion and decisions. Kate will also contact Rev. Tines. Zeilman will suggest to Worship Ministry that the Board join its next meeting.

2. Delegates to the General Assembly

Both Laura Conkle and Sarah-Wade are willing to represent Allegheny as delegates. Board appoints Conkle and Smith as delegates.

3. Church Cleaning Services

Board understands that cleaning services have been suspended since March. Invoices for April and May have been submitted and paid. Zeilman to confer with Charlie Snowden to confirm that there has been no cleaning in the church since March. When cleaning is resumed, how will it accommodate requirements for sanitizing? Will there be an additional charge, and will the payments made for April and May be applied to future cleaning. Zeilman will contact Evergreen.

The county anticipates moving into the green level in June. The monthly NA group meeting will be an allowable use under this next set of mandates. The Board concurs that the monthly group be allowed to resume their meeting as long as the mandated rules are followed.

» **III Adjournment**

Sarah-Wade moves to adjourn the meeting. **Motion carries.**

Kate Tomlinson adjourns the meeting.

Next meeting: June 15, 7:00pm

Respectfully submitted,
Donald G. Zeilman, Clerk 2019–20