

# MINUTES OF THE PARISH COMMITTEE MEETING

## September 20, 2023

**Present:** Lois Aldrich (virtual), Jim Bonnar, Steve Larrett, Jeff Giddings, Marc MacQueen, Viola Fairweather, Rev. Peter Connolly

**Absent:** Nicole Sykes

Meeting called to order by Jim Bonnar at 6:40 p.m.

Reading provided by Rev. Peter Connolly.

Minutes of last meeting: voted on and approved

**Treasurer's Report:** Marc MacQueen submitted the Treasurer's Report to the PC. Report accepted. Marc informed the PC that 24% of pledged funds have been received. Good balance in checkbook. Parlor work is near completion and will be paid through the Avis Clay fund. Rev. Peter Connolly suggested the church have a bi-annual meeting in addition to the annual meeting not only to update the congregation on the church's financial status but to address other matters of interest.

**Building & Grounds:** The Building & Grounds Team submitted reports for August and September. B & G has been very busy with various projects including investigating options for replacing runners in the sanctuary, Nickerson Street entrance, and the hall downstairs. Runners are old and disintegrating and are a safety hazard. The plan would also include taking steps to clean wood floors afterwards. Noted that runners could be more of a safety hazard for seniors so will need to be secured to the floor to avoid tripping over the runners.

Work has begun on making the basement entrance handicapped accessible (operated by pushing a button). Valerie Fontaine has been coordinating this project. \$4000 has been contributed by two donors toward the project, which will cost ~ \$6000. The PC agreed that the remaining balance will be paid through the Mary Fuller Fund. Concern was voiced with use of the Mary Fuller Fund as there have been many asks, and funds are gradually being depleted in that account. Need to prioritize the projects.

**Social Justice Team Report:** Lois Aldrich provided an update on the Social Justice Team activities:

Cash in the Plate: Since October is Domestic Violence Awareness month, the team recommends that half of the Cash in the Plate for October go to South Shore Resource and Advocacy Center (SSRAC) and half go to support people impacted by recent disasters. It was noted that the congregation was very generous with the previous donation in June of \$1200 for SSRAC and that having two organizations benefit from the Cash in the Plate in October would therefore be a good idea. Some PC members expressed their preference for supporting local disaster efforts. Lois informed the PC that the SJT is exploring options for donating toward relief efforts in Leominster, MA, where many people remain homeless.

Jeff Giddings received a request from Norm Grenier regarding the Cash in the Plate for November and whether or not it will be given to Matthew Mission, which has been done in the past. The Social Justice Team currently makes recommendations for the Cash in the Plate. Jeff will follow up with them.

The SJT has received a request from Middleboro Matters, a local substance abuse prevention coalition, to use space in the Parish Hall to conduct an educational event. However, the SJT is unclear as to the church's policy around use of church space by outside groups (i.e., if there is a fee, etc.). The PC suggested Middleboro Matters submit a formal request in writing to the PC detailing date, time, number of attendees, etc. Rev. Peter suggested Lois follow up with Val Ortelt on policy and fee schedules for use of space. If FUUSM is co-sponsor of the event, a request to waive the fee may be made.

Dan Hotchkiss had circulated information to the SJT regarding the need for social justice activities to balance "Charity and Change," i.e., "giving" actions (food pantry donations, clothing donations, etc.) and actions to bring about institutional change. The SJT will be following up with further discussion on this matter.

**Reports:** The following reports were received by the PC: RE, Music, and Minister's Report. Rev. Peter noted that RE registration has nearly doubled with the addition of several new families.

**Minister's Agenda:** Rev. Peter spoke with the PC about some of his recommendations regarding the future of FUUSM and the need to modernize some of our policies and practices in preparation for contracting with a new minister. He asked the PC to consider amending Article 1 of the church's Bylaws which state, *"The name of the Society shall be the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Middleborough, Massachusetts."* This name reflects the original name bestowed on the church and is rarely used by the congregation or the public. Some members prefer the term "Society" rather than "Church."

Rev. Peter suggested Article 1 be amended by adding a sentence indicating an informal name, such as "UU Middleboro," which many people commonly use when referring to FUUSM. Drafting and approving such an amendment would allow us to move forward with changes to signage. The suggestion was made that this may be appropriate for Public Relations to take on as it relates to marketing.

**Needed Committees:** Discussion around which Committees need to be convened going forward to ensure we have a solid organizational structure. These include the Personnel Committee (meets as needed; Rev. Peter will write up charter); Nominating Committee (see Bylaws (meets as needed and before annual meeting each year); and the Finance Committee, which includes Treasurer, Fundraising, Investment, and Stewardship. Rev. Peter reported that he is currently working with interested parties on reviving the Public Relations Committee and scheduling a meeting. The PC is looking for volunteers to fill committee roles.

**Mission Statement:** The church's Mission Statement is 20 years old and in need of revision. As the Governing Board, the PC agreed to be responsible for overseeing the development of a Mission Statement. The PC agreed to appoint a sub-committee to oversee the process and report back to the PC. Jeff Giddings, Viola Fairweather, Jim Bonnar and Lois Aldrich volunteered to be on the sub-committee. The sub-committee will discuss the next steps and strategies for engaging the congregation in the development of a Mission Statement. Given time constraints, the sub-committee will consider drafting a proposed Mission Statement that can be shared with the congregation to receive their input.

**Book Discussion:** PC members are in the process of reading and discussing the book *Governance and Ministry* by Dan Hotchkiss.

Meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Submitted by Lois Aldrich, Parish Clerk