First Unitarian-Universalist Church of Detroit

Minutes of the 5/21/2023 Annual Congregational Meeting

Convening & Quorum:

Board President Scott Lehto called the meeting to order at 12:40 PM after Acting Secretary Kathe Stevens confirmed a quorum.

Scott introduced the reason for the meeting: to do the business of the congregation and to share what the board has been doing. Scott read the agenda and then led the participants in a covenant.

Reports:

Scott began with his **President's Report**. He complimented Rev. Brock, elaborating about increased communication, camaraderie, and cooperation. Scott expressed appreciation for Jody Wise, Ann Esu, Dan Secrest, Steven Curtin, and Eric Gardner. Scott thanked the committee chairs: Worship—Todd Ballou, Membership—Elizabeth Lehto, Vespers—Nancy Owen Nelson, Social Justice—Susan Matthews, Greeters—Toni Tront, and Religious Education—Maryli Secrest, as well as Kathe Stevens, Ruby Jones, and Abby Thibodeau for the newsletter and Omar Davis for coordinating Social Hour. He lauded Jody Wise for organizing quarterly Committee Chair meetings.

Rev. Brock presented her **Minister's Report**. She was enthusiastic about increased worship attendance (89 on Easter), the increase of children, and the huge membership signing (16 adults with four children). This is exciting because churches are not experiencing growth. 1st UU is building, doing something different, not cobbling together something that approximates what we had in the past. Rev. Brock expressed her love for our community because we're worried about the right things. She mentioned a joint fundraising picnic on September 23 with the Transforming Power Fund to do community grant making. She's excited to come to church every day because we're doing good things. We need to be resilient but we're a few steps ahead of what the whole world needs to learn. And we're having fun.

Treasurer Dan Wiest projected the **proposed 2024-25 budget approved by the board** on the screen. He pointed out the deficit and explained how it will be covered (money in the bank, borrowed from the trust). Dan stated that with a new minister, new ideas, and new energy, now is the right time to work with a deficit budget until we can get up to speed.

We have $45,000 in pledges to date. Last year we had only a mini-canvass, which brought in $61,000 in pledges, so the hope is we can get to $75,000 with an earnest canvass.

Scott interjected to note that Rev. Brock works full time but is paid for three-quarter time. The plan is to grow and to get new revenue but first we need to offer programs. We're making progress and the board has been brainstorming. Other congregations have, too.

One idea that's been coming up over and over is minister-sharing. This idea is being explored. Northwest UU Church in Southfield initiated a discussion. We want to make ourselves sustainable in the future.

There was a question from the floor about the noncontribution income line in the budget. Rev. Brock talked about grants. While we haven't had a big fundraising effort in this community for a while, we're exploring and hope to get at least one $10,000 grant. Another $5,000 will come through community building. Dan Wiest elaborated by explaining that our Prentis Parking lot is leased for $20,000/year but that has been cut down by $2,500 water runoff charge from the city and for $7000 in city taxes.

There was a question from the floor about minister sharing, expressing interest in the idea but wondering how creativity will come forward. Rev. Brock advised that at this point there's been one single conversation only so there's not a good sense about how it will look or if it will even work out. The one conversation included an idea for 1st UU and NW UU to share the administrator and the minister. Sharing an administrator would take a big load off the minister. The conversation also touched on an idea that Todd Ballou could direct a combined choir.

A question from the floor asked if we could do fundraising if we don't own the building. Scott felt we could by organizing with EMEAC.

Returning to the budget, Dan Wiest summarized the **expense portion**, emphasizing that we don't have building expenses. Dan expressed the hope that we can bring in enough money to pay our minister so she can afford to stay here. He pointed out that 76% of the budget is for staff.

A question from the floor asked if ministerial sharing would change the deficit number. Dan said yes, it would, but he has no numbers because we're in such an early stage of the conversation.

Bill McKnight, a trustee of the **Church Trust**, explained its history and organization. The Trust currently has $307,000; $48,000 of that is money the church could claim now, leaving $260,000 in trust.

There was a question from the floor about where deficit funds come from. Dan advised that we have money in the bank but transferred some to the trust for a better return. Another question asked how many years can we run a deficit? Dan responded about five years.

Scott introduced the **Committee Chair Reports** and invited oral reports as well. Scott read the written reports into the record. Written reports may be found on our website [ADD LINK]

There was a question from the floor about the percentage of congregants who attend online and what are the costs associated? Dan advised that about one-third of participants attend online and the cost for Zoom is $150 annually. There was a compliment on how well we're doing serving the needs of congregants on Zoom.

Glenn Maxwell was complimented for stepping up for tech when needed and for providing food for every Sunday's social hour.

Scott thanked Ann Esu for chairing the **Religious Education committee**. Ann reported orally. The committee is building a program; during Covid there were no children attending and prior to Covid we had so very few that RE wasn't provided. Maryli Secrest is doing a great job as RE Director. The committee is focused on ensuring the safety of the children in the congregation and the safety of the congregation as well. Ann noted the children were on a field trip talking about cultural values at the DIA. The goal is to introduce values to our children so they have some understanding about where they are in this world. Ann noted she first came to 1st UU when she was six, she was brought up here, and brought her children here.

The meeting then moved to a vote on a bylaw change. Scott read the following:

Motion: Change the language of Bylaws Article VIII, §2(B)(i):

The Nominating Committee shall:
Consist of five (5) members to be elected by the Congregation at the Annual Congregational Meeting; a sixth (6th) person will be elected as an alternate member to serve whenever an elected Nominating Committee member is unable to serve and resigns or is removed by the President when the member does not fulfill the responsibilities of the Nominating Committee.

To:

The Nominating Committee shall:
Consist of three (3) members to be elected by the Congregation at the Annual Congregational Meeting; a fourth (4th) person will be elected as an alternate member to serve whenever an elected Nominating Committee member is unable to serve and resigns or is removed by the President when the member does not fulfill the responsibilities of the Nominating Committee.

There was a question from the floor about the reason for the change. We do not have an adequate number of volunteers and struggled to fill the positions. Another question asked was how long the current bylaw language on the nominating committee had been in place. The consensus by longtime members was that the number had not changed in decades. **The motion was seconded and approved by vote of the congregation.**

Scott introduced the slate of officers and trustees to be elected.

President	—	Jody Wise
Vice-President	—	Colleen Dolan-Greene
At-Large Trustee	—	Nancy Shattuck

Scott noted that the positions of Secretary (Dan Secrest) and Treasurer (Dan Wiest) are appointed and have no vote. Trustee Ann Esu's at-large term has not expired and she remains on the board. Eric Gardner was nominated from the floor for an open at-large seat and it was seconded. Eric accepted the nomination. **It was moved and seconded to accept the vote by acclimation; approved by vote of the congregation**.

Scott introduced the **Nominating Committee** candidates: Lauren Acton, Elizabeth Lehto, Kathe Stevens, with Dan Wiest as alternate. **It was moved and seconded to accept the candidates as presented; approved by vote of the congregation.**

Scott introduced the **General Assembly delegates** to be elected: Glenn Maxwell and Lon Herman. **It was moved and seconded to accept the candidates as presented; approved by vote of the congregation.**

Finishing up the business of the budget, **it was moved and seconded to approve the 2024-25 budget as presented; approved by vote of the congregation.**

Rev. Brock led a visioning session, asking those attending what was the one thing they'd like leadership to focus on? Participants said:

- Community building with other churches
- Focus on elections to vote for candidates who protect social justice
- Support the synagogue downtown
- Overnight or weekend community retreat, a key part of community building is to get to know each other better; there was a comment about past church retreats at the Waterloo recreation area
- Creative endeavors that would tie into fundraising and social justice and different activities that incorporate all those things
- Religious Education
- Prioritize keeping Rev. Brock
- Interactive communication so people can be part of decision-making, with a comment that we do a good job with existing communications but could get better tools through which we would improve; there was a comment about the progress being made on a new website
- Organ repair; Rev. Brock explained $4,500 is needed to repair the organ; there was a suggestion of a musical fundraiser
- Rev. Brock asked attendees who had not already spoken to add their voice to what they would support of the topics already mentioned. Comments were ministerial compensation; creative endeavors, continue to embrace the children who are coming from the neighborhood; Vespers; church retreat; pooling resources with other UU churches

Rev Brock offered a benediction, welcomed the new members who had signed the book that morning, complimented all on a successful business meeting, and encouraged us to continue to take good care of one another and engage our imaginations.

Dan Wiest presented a gift of a Pewabic tile to outgoing Board President Scott Lehto. Scott thanked the congregation and said it has been a pleasure to lead.

The annual congregational meeting adjourned at 1:58 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathe Stevens, Acting Secretary