

Minutes of the April 23, 2017 Congregational Meeting

The special Congregational Meeting of Towson Unitarian Universalist Church (TUUC) convened at 12:50 pm on April 23, 2017.

Forty five members signed in constituting a quorum.

I. Declaration of Conscience (George Harrison)

George Harrison presented the Unitarian Universalist Association Declaration of Conscience, which responds to the new administration's policies on immigration and treatment of other marginalized groups.

At this extraordinary time in our nation's history, we are called to affirm our profound commitment to the fundamental principles of justice, equity and compassion, to truth and core values of American society.

In the face of looming threats to immigrants, Muslims, people of color, and the LGBTQ community and the rise of hate speech, harassment and hate crimes, we affirm our belief in the inherent worth and dignity of every person.

In opposition to any steps to undermine the right of every citizen to vote or to turn back advances in access to health care and reproductive rights, we affirm our commitment to justice and compassion in human relations.

And against actions to weaken or eliminate initiatives to address the threat of climate change – actions that would threaten not only our country but the entire planet – we affirm our unyielding commitment to protect the interdependent web of all existence.

We will oppose any and all unjust government actions to deport, register, discriminate, or despoil.

As people of conscience, we declare our commitment to translate our values into action as we stand on the side of love with the most vulnerable among us.

We welcome and invite all to join in this commitment for justice.

The time is now.

While individuals are free to sign on to the statement of conscience, individual UU congregations are being urged to sign on as congregations.

George moved to have TUUC sign onto the Statement of Conscience as a congregation.

The proposal was seconded.

After some brief discussion, a vote was taken. The proposal was approved unanimously.

II. Budget Update (Anita Cox)

Anita Cox presented the status of the Fiscal Year 2017-18 Budget. Anita described the process of developing the budget and the results of the annual Stewardship Campaign. Initially, we started with an aspirational budget that included a modest cost of living raise of two percent for the staff, who have not had any raises in over six years. While the Stewardship Campaign was successful in building greater bonds of community with more than thirty canvassers, we fell short of our goal of \$301,000 in pledges. Accordingly, we adjusted the budget to cut hours of staff and associated benefits. With the cuts, the deficit will come to a deficit of \$4,000. Without the cuts, the deficit will come to approximately \$37,000.

Anita took questions from the congregation. Questions included whether a staff position was being cut or merely hours and how many pledging units were members versus friends.

III. Additional Pledge Campaign and Match (Sue Royer)

Stewardship Campaign Co-Chair, Sue Royer, presented a proposal by an anonymous donor to match pledges for those who are willing to increase their pledges for the 2017-18 fiscal year. Gray pledge increase forms will be available in the lobby for those who are willing to do so. We ask that any pledge increases be turned into the office by May 14, so that we can adjust the budget accordingly.

IV. Mission Task Force Update (Jen Larson)

Jen Larson presented an update on the work of the Mission Task Force (MTF). The MTF was charged by the TUUC Board to develop new vision and mission statements for TUUC. The MTF consisted of Jasmine Faelyn, Clare Flynn-Avallone, George Harrison, Jen Larson, Robin Sinn, and until September 2016, Barry Marsh. Rev. Clare Petersberger advised the group.

The process began in October 2015, when the Reverend David Pyle presented a sermon and workshop on mission at TUUC. Forty-two members and friends of our congregation participated in the workshop. Rev. Pyle coached the team throughout the process.

Starting with feedback from the congregation gathered at the 2015 workshop and from the Strengthening and Growing through Engagement sessions occurring in 2014-15, the MTF drafted a set of statements describing our aspirations and our actual behaviors. In March and April 2016, we presented the agreements and disagreements between those sets of statements to the Board, Operations Team, Committee on Ministries, and the TUUC Staff. With their feedback, we

crafted a handful of sample statements which we presented and discussed with the Social Action Committee, Green Sanctuary Committee, Caring Committee, Lay Pastoral Associates, Religious Exploration Committees, and past presidents.

From there, the MTF again revised the draft mission and vision statements and held 13 cottage meetings in March and April 2017 to solicit feedback from the congregation.

Currently, the draft statements are as follows:

Mission Statement

We deepen our ethical and spiritual lives by dedicating ourselves to racial and environmental justice.

Vision Statement

We are a radically inclusive multigenerational community bound by a commitment to engage each other and the wider world in a heartfelt search for truth.

Robin Sinn presented a brief synopsis of some of the comments received thus far. She noted that several people had asked why the mission statement was not more broadly worded. The reason why the draft mission statement is fairly pointed is to help the congregation focus its activities for the next three to five years and guide it in investing its resources. Ideally, mission statements should be reviewed and adjusted every five years to ensure that an organization's purpose is still relevant in the greater context. She also noted that an effective mission statement should be concise and memorable so that everyone in the congregation can know it and easily recite it.

Robin also explained the difference between a mission and a vision statement. A mission statement describes what we will do over the next three to five years to work towards making the world whole, whereas a vision statement describes what we want to be in a world made whole. The former is more about process, whereas the latter is more about the goal.

Jasmine Faelyn invited the members present to provide written feedback now.

Having no further business before it the meeting adjourned at 1:55 pm.