

Towson Unitarian Universalist Church
Annual Congregational Meeting
Sunday, June 3, 2018

12:00 noon Call to order opening remarks and with 79 active members present, a quorum was met.

Reverend Clare Petersberger led the Chalice Lighting and reading of the relational covenant.

12:02 pm Rev. Clare gave the minister's report.

I shall offer a few highlights from my written report—which means I will not be thanking by name all the leaders for whom I am deeply grateful. My apologies in advance.

Our mission is to deepen our ethical and spiritual lives together. To this end, this year, we joined with over 145 Unitarian Universalist congregations that subscribe to a theme-based ministry program entitled “Soul Matters” which offers resources for worship—including music, religious education, and small group ministry.

As always, I'm grateful to Tracy Hall for identifying music to enhance the themes and for the gifts of our Choir, vocalists, and instrumentalists. We have an amazing music ministry!

In this election year, we heard from five candidates who asked to speak at TUUC, who, on the whole, offered thoughtful reflections on our monthly themes.

Beginning June 17, our wonderful Worship Associates will be conducting worship on the theme of Creative Connections. And speaking of connections, our congregation continues to mourn the deaths of several long-time members whose lives we celebrated this year. Their absence is felt. Their memory is a blessing. Thanks to Lisa Lubomski, Chair of the Caring Committee for organizing several receptions for these celebrations of life.

And thanks to Mimi Marks, Mary Beth Brizzolara, and Len Proctor for serving as Lay Pastoral Associates to offer a listening ear in times of transition.

We had the honor of dedicating two babies; joining four couples in marriage and renewing vows for one couple.

To further deepen our spiritual lives together, this year I intentionally included more of a language of reverence in worship. The purpose of this goal was not and is not to impose or promote a particular

theology. On the contrary, it is to model the heart of our faith tradition, which since the 1500's has been, that we need not think alike in religious matters to love alike. If we really believe this—then we need to become comfortable with and even cherish different expressions of spirituality among us offered in the spirit of Love.

Next year, Soul Matters is convening clergy to work together on programming exploring a language of reverence and a vocabulary of faith in more depth. I have volunteered to serve on this Task Force with other UU colleagues.

And speaking of religious exploration to deepen our ethical and spiritual lives, it was a pleasure to work with Joyce on incorporating more classes in times for all ages in worship. Unitarian Universalism is moving away from a focus on Sunday School toward a model with an emphasis on families and programming for people across the lifespan. I appreciate Joyce's leadership in this direction---which included facilitating a UU campus ministry program at Goucher College this year.

In the fall, I facilitated an in-depth orientation for new members; in the spring, a four-session exploration of Celtic Spirituality; and I continue to meet with our stalwart Chalice Circle facilitators.

Thanks to Jason Braspennickx for Chairing the Governance Task Force. It has been a pleasure to meet, on a regular basis, throughout the year, with Jason, Karyn Marsh, Michael Magrogon, and Dan Alper on the model of governance we will be considering shortly.

My thanks to Jasmine Faelyn and the Board for their good work on a strategic plan; and to the Neil Porter and the Operations Team for their team work on issues ranging a new security system (thank you, Todd!) to the new website (thank you, Scott!). My thanks to Karyn Marsh and the Membership Committee for their intentional work which led to 28 new members; and to Robin Sinn and other members of the Committee on Ministries for their work on policies of right relations.

Thanks to Kai Aiyetoro, Nancy Hannah, and Mary Kay Baker for their dedication to TUUC and to ensure day in and day out that questions get answered, people get connected to one another, publications are created and reproduced, books are kept and balanced, and, with the help of Ms. Fefe that this building functions as intended—to welcome people and groups.

Finally, our congregation's mission is to work for racial, social and environmental justice. Beginning in July, our Black Lives Matter signs

were vandalized multiple times and the sign by our front door was vandalized once culminating in the installation of cameras. I met with officers, responded to requests from the media, and responded to angry e-mails and visits from neighbors.

Our congregation hosted a community dialogue in November and a series of discussions on the book “Waking Up White In America.” And we now have members of other congregations asking what we might do together on the issue of racial justice.

Our Green Sanctuary Committee has paved the way for partnerships with other congregations with its partnership with Amazing Grace Lutheran Church. And our Social Action Committee continues to deepen partnerships with other organizations in the wider community and educate us about them through our fifth Sunday collections.

Racial justice has been the focus of programming of The Chesapeake Unitarian Universalist Minister’s Association this year. I serve as Treasurer of this organization. I have met several times with colleagues from three local non-Unitarian Universalist congregations interested in forming a partnership—specifically to work together on affordable housing.

Last, but not least, I am exploring, with the Board, the possibility of having a half-time ministerial intern at TUUC next year. The Ministerial Intern preaches, teaches, offers pastoral care, attends lots of meetings, and advocates for justice in the wider community.

My thanks to all of you who give so generously of yourselves to nurture beloved community here at TUUC.

12:10 pm

Jasmine Faelyn gave the President’s report.

This was my second year serving as President of the Board of Trustees. It has been a productive year starting with the development of a Three-Year Rolling plan and subsequent progress toward meeting the goals set forth in the plan. Board meetings continue to run effectively with use of a consent agenda, open questions and a process observation report. I am proud of the accomplishments of the Board and the congregation. I look forward to continuing to serve in leadership roles after this year ends.

Building on strategic plans and annual plans from previous years, the TUUC Board of Trustees met in August 2017 to develop the Three-Year Rolling Plan with facilitation by Kären Rasmussen, a consultant from the Central East Region. The Three-Year Rolling Plan is a living document that is to be revised annually by adding the next year with

new goals while removing achieved goals. The Board reviews and updates the plan regularly at monthly board meetings.

This Three-Year Rolling Plan has six overarching goals:

- Develop a congregational vision for lifespan religious education,
- Address governance change,
- Cultivate a shared understanding of fiscal responsibility and attitude of abundance,
- Increase community engagement,
- Become known for racial justice efforts, and
- Grow spirituality and worship.

Goal 1: Develop Congregational Vision for Lifespan Religious Education

The Board was unable to initiate a visioning process for the Religious Education program this year. It remains on the radar for next year. The job description for the Director of Religious Education was updated to reflect the change from a 40 hour per week position to a 35 hour per week position.

Goal 2: Address Governance Change

In 2016-2017, the Board read and discussed the second edition of Governance and Ministry by Dan Hotchkiss and worked closely with Rev. David Pyle a consultant from the Central East Region who assessed the current governance structure.

For some background, Rev. David Pyle is an expert on governance and consults with numerous congregations in the Central East Region of the UUA. At the Board's request, he prepared a Governance Assessment in March 2017. In it, he reviews our current governance system, its strengths and challenges. He also provides recommendations and some advice on their implementation.

To summarize, our current governance structure is very unique. It is a compromise between different models including policy governance and portfolio boards. In essence, we have a two-board structure that discourages direct communication while encouraging conflict and confusion.

It also requires a large number of elected positions. Some roles have redundancies in their responsibilities. Few roles have clearly outlined authority. Our system has been successful in maintaining the church due to the dedicated and hardworking individuals in leadership

positions. However, it could be improved to become more efficient and adaptable to the realities of 21st century society, where many people do not have as much time for volunteering as lay leaders.

Rev. Pyle's recommendations include moving some of the Bylaws language, specifically those items that do not address the Board or the Minister, into governance policies. Shifting these would include changing some of the elected positions outside of the Board into Board appointed positions.

Recommendations also include changing the Operations Team into a Program Council to coordinate programs and ministries. For the operation and administrative decision-making and coordination, Rev. Pyle suggests forming an Executive Team, which would comprise of the Minister, the Church Administrator, and two lay people, one of which would be knowledgeable on finances of the church. Other recommendations provide more detail on what roles the Board, Minister, Program Council, and Executive Team would have in such a structure. The suggested model would provide staff more authority over day-to-day operations. The goal of the recommendations is to enable the Board to be a visionary and strategic body focuses on policymaking.

The Board of Trustees appointed a Governance Task Force to develop a proposed Governance Structure that would implement the recommendations from the Governance Assessment. Members of the taskforce include Jason Braspenickx, Karyn Marsh, Michael Magrogan, and Dan Alper. The Task force has worked diligently throughout this year to create a trial governance model. They have reported and discussed their work with the Board of Trustees regularly throughout the year.

Goal 3: Cultivate Shared Understanding of Fiscal Responsibility and Attitude of Abundance

The Board did not have a treasurer this year and was not able to fill the roll. I greatly appreciate Monica Sweidel who as Finance Council Head was providing reports to both the Operations Team and the Board. While TUUC continues to have much anxiety about finances, the reality is that our cash reserves have improved, and it is likely we can end the year without a negative balance. The stewardship campaign was fun and well run, though it struggled to meet its very ambitious goal. A Taskforce consisting of members from the Endowment Committee and the Committee on Ministries was appointed by the Board to complete research in UUA recommendations and uses for endowments in other UU congregations.

This year the Board appointed three new members to the Personnel Committee. The members are Paul Konka, Luke Williams, and John Mattingly. The Personnel Committee diligently studied the UUA fair compensation guidelines and provided recommendations that would place our staff who are all very experienced at or above 103% of their midpoint salary range. They presented their recommendations at the April Town Hall meeting stating that none of our staff is overpaid, and arguably, some are underpaid.

Goal 4: Increase Community Engagement

Over 25 new members have joined the congregation since June 2017. New member classes have been successful in engendering a sense of community and commitment to TUUC and Unitarian Universalism. There were many fun events offered this year including a very well attended musical.

Goal 5: Become Known for Racial Justice Efforts

Commitment to racial justice is specifically mentioned in the mission statement adopted in June 2017. Our Black Lives Matter sign was rededicated in October 2017. It has not been vandalized since being relocated somewhat higher in the trees. TUUC also held a community dialogue about the banners in November 2017. Additionally A Dialogue On Race and Ethnicity (ADORE) got renewed energy through a book discussion of Debby Irving's, "Waking Up White In America." Over 35 people participated in six discussions offered on the book. Mimi Marks and Darla Tewell prepared the discussion guide.

Earlier vandalism of the Black Lives Matter sign revealed some concerns regarding the safety of church property and employees. To address these fears, a camera system has been installed at the entrances of the building.

Goal 6: Growing Spirituality and Worship

Theme based ministry utilizing Soul Matters, a program to which over 140 Unitarian Universalist congregations subscribe, was introduced this year and utilized in worship, chalice circles, and some YRE programming.

Concerns regarding the uneven attendance between the two worship services remain. A discussion group has met and is developing a survey to collect congregational input to address the Sunday morning structure and schedule. The survey should be available in September.

Jasmine recognized the outgoing Board members for their service:

Sue Walker, George Harrison, and Karyn Marsh (Secretary).

12:18 pm Neil Porter delivered the Operations Team Report and recognized the outgoing Operations Team members. He concluded by honoring the outgoing Board President, Jasmine Faelyn, with a banner.

12:24 pm Monica Sweidel delivered the Finance Council's Report.

12:28 pm Marilyn Maze, moderator *pro tempore*, explained Roberts Rules, particularly with regard to the offering of amendments to motions.

12:30 pm Karin Symonds, acting chair of the Nominating Committee, presented the slate of new leaders up for election.

The Nominating Committee consists of five members: Nancy Mears, Patty Barry, Karin Symonds, Ben Gitelson, and Janet Kuperstein.

The following members have agreed to run for office this year:

Board of Trustees President – Neil Porter
Board of Trustees President-Elect – Sue Royer
Board of Trustees Treasurer – Monica Sweidel
Board of Trustees Secretary – Angela Castillo-Epps
Board of Trustees Member at Large – Karyn Marsh
Board of Trustees Member at Large – Art Starr
Religious Education Council Head – Larry Magder
Communications Council – Head Patty Barry
Finance Council Head – Jasmine Faelyn

Nominating Committee: Dominique Hall, George Harrison

Moderator – Jason Braspennickx

The Outreach Council Head position remains open. There was a nomination from the floor for Jane D'Ambrogi, who accepted.

Karin Symonds moved to approve the slate of candidates. The motion was seconded.

The congregation voted unanimously to approve the slate of candidates.

12:33 pm Monica Sweidel presented the FY2018-19 Budget for approval by the Congregation.

Monica moved to adopt the budget. It was seconded.

Discussion was held and a vote was called for at 12:45 pm.

Motion carried with 78 ayes and one nay.

12:46 pm

Jason Braspenickx, chair of the Governance Task Force, rose to present the resolution for a trial year of the proposed governance. The proposed governance will be modified for the trial year to work within the current governance structure.

Jason moved to adopt the resolution. Sue Royer seconded it.

Discussion was held.

Carol Watkins asked if after the trial year, the proposed governance would go into effect automatically.

Jason responded in the negative. The trial is to test the governance model and make adjustments to it as necessary. If the congregation approves the new governance model, then Bylaws changes will be presented to the congregation for approval.

Stephen Brown-Pearn expressed concern over the clarity of the governance structure. He also asked why ADORE had been listed on the Program Council separately from the Social Action Committee.

ADORE was listed separately on the Program Council because of the church's new mission that expressly highlights racial justice. It is not intended to mandate that ADORE be separate from the Social Action Committee.

Peter Talley asked what mechanisms are planned to poll the congregation for its sense of well-being of the church under the current governance structure.

Jason and Jasmine responded that the congregational response will be gauged through self-evaluations by congregational leaders, town halls, and cottage meetings.

Peter Talley moved that we take a vote at this meeting on the congregation's opinion of how well the governance structure is working. Marilyn Maze stated that this motion would be voted upon after she had taken all other motions in order.

Where is the fundraising committee in this structure?

It would be on the Program Council.

Rick Bader expressed concern over the pace of this process and the lack of a definitive plan for evaluation of the proposed governance over the trial year.

Quoting the Governance Assessment, Catherine Morris stated that the current governance model is working well and that there is no need to change it.

Jasmine responded that the current governance has created several instances of conflict, including conflicts over policy for a tip jar, the roles of the President-elect and the Treasurer in staff supervision, and responsibility for the budget development. She noted that the current governance model requires too many elected positions that the Nominating Committee has struggled to fill. The current lack of a Treasurer is only the latest example of that problem.

Karyn Marsh clarified that the Governance Assessment praised the intention of TUUC's current governance model in combining three standard forms of governance used in churches: Portfolio Board, Policy Governance, and Board-Program Council, but it ultimately concluded that the current governance fails to combine the best aspects of the three different governance models. Instead, the way TUUC's current governance is set up, it actually amplifies the weaknesses of each of these different models. The main problem with TUUC's current governance is that it creates effectively three governing bodies (Board, Operations Team, and Endowment Committee) directly elected by the congregation and these three governing bodies remain accountable only to the congregation through a congregational meeting, like the one today. They are not accountable to each other, which leads to conflict, confusion, and competition between these bodies. Often, each body acts as if they are independent organizations. If there is an issue, it ultimately has to be taken to the congregation through a congregational meeting.

Catherine Morris made a motion that in lieu of a trial year of the proposed governance that we use the next six to nine months engaging the congregation for intentional dialogue to review assessment report and solicit congregation's input and guidance. Her motion was seconded. Marilyn Maze called for discussion of Catherine's motion.

Speaking in favor of her motion, Catherine argued that the development of the proposed governance model was rushed and that it failed to get more input from the congregation. She further argued that TUUC is a small church and that this proposed governance is more suitable to a larger church.

Carol Watkins rose in opposition to Catherine's motion stating that there are too many elected positions under the current governance. The new model has fewer elected positions, which can empower the congregation.

Janet Schollenberger noted that in her experience as Outreach Council Head, the Operations Team did not spend time on programs as was the original intention. She supported trying out the proposed governance but noted that we should have evaluation plan.

Robin Sinn agreed with Janet with regard to the Operations Team. She was on the Operations Team and did not think it was effective at creating programming. She further noted that this proposed governance was not created by just four people on the Governance Task Force. Rather, the Board and Operations Team participated in its development based on more than a year of study and self-education on congregational governance. She favors going forward with the trial year of the proposed governance and opposes Catherine's motion.

Joe Tumbler noted that this process is a difficult one: "sausage making is hard work." He favors going forward with the trial governance, but encouraged objectors to the new governance to get involved, open meetings by GTF, and provision of progress reports.

Marti Mackenzie expressed excitement regarding new governance but thinks the congregation should have been given more input into the development of a new governance structure. She favors Catherine's motion.

Angela Castillo Epps supports the governance structure proposed by the Board and the GTF. She noted that the development of this governance model was the result of several years of work and study by TUUC's leaders who were elected by this congregation. She does not think waiting another year to gather input from the congregation would be beneficial. In her experience, most congregational members don't know much about governance in a church and don't really care. They have enough going on in their lives. She said she didn't think she could add any insight to the benefits of one governance structure over another. She advocated for trusting our elected leadership to know what is working and what is not with regard to operation of the church. The congregation should not second guess the Board. In any case, those who care will be able to provide input next year during the trial year.

Spice Kleinmann rose to support the Board's work on developing a new governance model. She said the intent behind it is good and

expressed concern that a 6 to 9 month delay may undermine all the work that has been done for the last two years.

There was a motion to call the question (end debate). The majority of the congregation voted in favor of ending debate on Catherine's motion. Marilyn conducted a vote on Catherine's motion. The majority of the congregation voted against the motion to delay the trial year.

Marilyn moved to Peter Talley's motion to take a poll of the congregation at this meeting to determine how well they felt the church was functioning. There were questions on how this poll might be conducted. The question was called and the congregation voted to end debate/discussion on the poll. A vote on the Talley motion for a poll was then taken. A majority of the congregation voted against the poll.

Having dispensed with the motions from the floor, Marilyn Maze then returned to the vote on the main motion to approve the resolution on having a trial year for a modified version of the proposed governance. A vote was taken to call the question. Debate was ended and a vote on the main motion was taken. The motion carried with 42 ayes, 14 nays, and 4 abstentions.

1:46 pm

Having no further business before it, Marilyn moved to adjourn. The motion was seconded and adopted unanimously.