

MINUTES

Board of Trustees: April 21, 2021, Virtual Meeting First Unitarian Church of Pittsburgh

Board Members Attending: Scott Smith, President (2021); Julie Downs (2022); Lynne Porterfield (2021); Eleanor Mayfield, Secretary (2021); Sam Hens-Greco (2022); Lee Carnes (2022); Heather Masterson, Vice President (2023); Kate Snow (2023); Kyle Gracey, Treasurer (2023)

Board Members Absent: None.

Ex Officio Members: Rev. Constance Grant, Interim Minister

Others: Pat Schuetz, Temporary Recording Secretary

Visitors: Claus Makowka

1. **Call to Order (7:01) (Scott)** Scott called the meeting to order.
2. **Opening Words (Kyle).** “A Character All Our Own,” by William Ellery Channing.
3. **Welcoming guests (Scott).** Scott welcomed Claus.
4. **Announcements (Scott, 7:05)**
 - a. There will be a Special Congregational Meeting on Sunday, May 2, to vote on calling the Rev. Dr. Kate Walker as our settled minister.
 - b. The next regularly scheduled Board meeting will be on Wednesday, May 19, 2021, at 7:00 p.m.
 - c. The Annual Congregational Meeting will be held on Sunday, May 23.
 - d. This year the outgoing Board remains in session an extra month to allow a transition period for the incoming Board, whose term begins July 1. Newly elected Board members will be invited to attend the June Board meeting. The new Board will elect its officers in July.
5. **Consent agenda (Scott, 7:09) (handouts)**

Approval of March 17, 2021, Board meeting minutes. Moved by Scott, seconded by Julie. Approved unanimously as submitted.
6. **Absentee and proxy voting options for the Annual Congregational Meeting (Eleanor, Claus, 7:11)**
 - a. Eleanor noted that since the Bylaws allow amendments from the floor at the annual meeting, the Board needs to be prepared for them. She introduced Claus to explain the options for those voting absentee or by proxy.
 - b. Claus noted that the absentee ballot has to be printed before the meeting and thinks the fairest thing is to include the amendments as originally proposed, with a warning that the wording may be changed at the meeting. He has created a document (posted inDropbox) that describes three options and recommends the third: That the ballot include all the questions up for a vote (elections and amendments). Votes and abstentions for each amendment will be counted as marked on an absentee ballot, even if the text of the amendment is modified during the meeting. Members should be cautioned to abstain rather than vote on any amendment if they have a concern that the amendment might be changed in a way that might affect their vote.

- c. The election will be run using Election Buddy. At the Special Congregational Meeting in November to approve the revised Bylaws, proxy voting was cumbersome because it required those voting as authorized proxies to use multiple devices. The process could be simplified by having multiple ballots with a unique link for each item for each member, thus requiring only a single device. Claus observed that the proxy form will explain the process, so it will not be possible to change the process at the meeting.
 - d. Scott noted that Nancy Latimer will manage the meeting and troubleshoot the Zoom technology.
- 7. Update on logistics for Sunday, May 2 Special Congregational Meeting (Scott, Eleanor, 7:22).**
- a. Scott is working with Brian Junker to plan the meeting. He will open the meeting and introduce search committee member Mary Denison, who will propose the motion to call Rev. Kate. A quorum comprises 107 members (40% of members eligible to vote); approval of 90% of those voting is required to call the minister. Scott observed that compared with the Bylaws meeting in November this will be a simple vote.
 - b. Connie noted that the meeting will be set up with a waiting room as a precaution against Zoom-bombing, and Nancy will let people in. Julie suggested that she disable the waiting room after the meeting starts; Eleanor agreed that she must either do that, or continue to monitor it closely, as members whose connections drop will need to be readmitted.
- 8. Update on Board and Nominating Committee nominations (Heather, 7:26)**
- a. Nominees
 - i. Board of Trustees: Amy DeChicchis, Bob Mitchell, and Rob Schwartz.
 - ii. Nominating Committee: Sue Oerkvitz, Melody Platz, and Bob Sullivan.
 - b. Heather reported that Eleanor should have biographies for all of the nominees by May 3. Eleanor confirmed that the biographies will be posted on the church website.
- 9. Vote to approve members of Endowment Committees and Annual Budget Drive Committee (Heather, Scott, 7:20)**
- a. Nominees
 - i. Music: Corey Layman
 - ii. Social Justice: Delia Parks
 - iii. Children and Youth: Jamie Kunning
 - iv. Campus Ministry: Nomination postponed until the committee is active again
 - v. Budget Drive Committee
 - 1. Madeleine Darnell, Eleanor Mayfield, Lynne Porterfield, Al Schwartz, Scott Smith (new members)
 - 2. Ward Kelsey, Maria Lauro (continuing through 2021)
 - 3. Heather will continue as Board liaison along with Kyle as Board Treasurer.
 - b. Motion by Scott to approve the nominees; seconded by Kyle. Motion passed unanimously.
- 10. Technical correction to Bylaws (handout) (Eleanor, 7:31) (handout)**
- Eleanor explained that a typographical error in the section on calling a settled minister (Article IX), requires that the reference to Article IV, Section 3 be changed to Article IV, Section 4, and approved by the congregation. She said she thought it was unlikely that this technical correction would attract an amendment from the floor.

- a. Motion by Eleanor, seconded by Scott, to approve the amendment. Motion passed unanimously.
- b. Eleanor suggested that this vote be separated from the vote on proxy voting which someone might want to amend. Kyle noted that bylaws have been passed in combination in the past and it would be simpler. Eleanor agrees, and will discuss it with Claus, who had left the meeting.

11. Revised Governance Manual (Kate, 7:35) (handout)

- a. Kate noted that Ebe Emmons had headed the governance task force until her resignation from the Board. She noted that the changes to the original governance document are too extensive to be easily tracked; however, she will provide a copy of the existing Governance Manual to any Board member who requests one. She asked that Board members read the draft revised document and send her feedback before the next meeting. If necessary, she will reconvene the task force, which consists of Scott, Claus, Connie, and Lee.
- b. Scott noted that the process components of the manual have been removed, so that what remains is mostly policy; the process manuals still need to be developed.

12. Discussion: Reimagining Fundraising Taskforce (Scott, 7:40) (handout)

- a. Scott explained that after the Board voted to repay the PPP loan, he did some existential thinking about what it meant for a church to raise funds. He said that Heather has offered to serve with him on a task force to consider the issue, if the Board empanels one, although he noted that the Board may prefer to wait until Rev. Kate arrives, or to redefine the mission of such a task force.
- b. Kyle supported the concept, with the proviso that the charter include fundraising other than the annual budget drive; he suggested that it handicaps the Church to have invested so much in a single fundraising tool.
- c. Kyle also recommended the task force not require full consensus before bringing suggestions to the Board. Scott agreed and will revise the proposal. He intended that the task force consider new avenues for fundraising throughout the year, including projects that will involve and bond more members of the congregation. He views fundraising as a vehicle for creating congregational life.
- d. Lee wondered if we had enough qualified people to serve on such a task force; Scott affirmed that there are many.
- e. Heather said she hoped that the task force could come up with ideas to present to Rev. Kate early in the fall. Scott asked Connie whether it would be more appropriate to wait for Rev. Kate to initiate the work; Connie agreed with Heather that the work need not wait for the new minister.
- f. Scott moved that the Board authorize the creation of a Reimagining Fund Raising Task Force per Scott's proposal as revised in this meeting (e.g., to include fundraising strategies beyond the annual budget drive), with Scott and Heather as co-conveners. Sam seconded; the motion was approved unanimously.

13. Minister's report (Connie, Scott, 7:51) (handout)

- a. Interim minister appraisal
 - i. Connie noted that the UUA requires the Board to perform a two-year interim minister appraisal. She has provided the form in Dropbox.

- ii. Scott asked if this issue could be included in agenda for the June Board meeting; Connie said she thought it could be. Scott said he envisions about a half-hour discussion, with or without the incoming Board members present.
- b. General Assembly voting member assignments
- i. Connie requested that members to let Eleanor know if they want to serve as delegates, so they can be confirmed by the Board at the May meeting. She noted that the Church is entitled to 6 delegates this year. Kyle is interested, and Lynne will serve if needed.
 - ii. Scott asked for a notice in the weekly email newsletter; Connie confirmed that the notice would appear.
- c. Transition plans
- i. Connie is officially minister until July 31. Her last Sunday in the pulpit will be June 13. She has arranged speakers for Sunday services for the second half of June and the month of July.
 - ii. Scott asked about pastoral care during July. Connie said that the pastoral care team will be available, and that she will be available in an emergency.
 - iii. Connie has spoken with Rev. Kate and is working with the search committee to have things in place for her. Connie will be here for Ray Schinhofen's memorial service on May 1, the date of which had been set before Candidating Week was announced.
- d. Safe Reopening Task Force recommendations
- i. Connie reported that the task force has made a detailed analysis and recommendations for reopening the church. She suggested a motion to follow their recommendations as well as guidance from the UUA. The plan would extend the building closure through August 31 and would prioritize opening for Sunday services, contingent on public health criteria being met.
 - ii. Scott noted that there was no provision for partial reopening before Ingathering in September, and wondered about the feasibility of small gatherings. Connie replied that the UUA recommends against partial reopening for reasons of equity and inclusion.
 - iii. Eleanor noted that the Board is planning to exclude children and possibly their parents in the fall anyway, and wondered why, in principle, small-group meetings might not be allowed. Connie noted that parents won't bring children because it would compromise their ability to go to school. She suggested that by year end they might be eligible for vaccination, and noted that vaccination status may become the standard for admission to other venues, such as university campuses.
 - iv. Scott asked if the task force thought their job was finished. Connie replied that they do not; they are developing procedures for reopening, considering such issues as coffee hour, cleaning, rentals, and weddings. She noted that two weddings are already on the calendar, for September 8 and October 1; the clients have been advised that if the church isn't open their deposits will be refunded.
 - v. Julie wondered if criteria for reopening would be published so the decision didn't seem capricious. Connie suggested that there were too many moving parts to publish criteria, but that it's helpful to the staff to have a tentative reopening date.
 - vi. Julie asked about the future of live-streamed services. Connie reported that the technology committee plans to continue them, and that proposals are being prepared to acquire the necessary equipment for hybrid services, with people attending both in

- the sanctuary and remotely from home. Julie asked if this had been communicated to the congregation. Connie didn't think so but agreed it should be done.
- vii. Kyle asked if the task force would entertain ideas for activities in the church building that could start before the church reopens for Sunday services. Connie didn't think so. Kyle wanted his objection noted, and recommended the Board itself pursue the issue and develop its own criteria for partial reopening. Connie said that the task force has considered the issue and does not feel comfortable with partial reopening. She suggested that to ignore their recommendation was to disrespect their work. Kyle disagreed, noting that the Board recently rejected a recommendation of the Finance Committee with respect to repayment of the PPP loan; he noted that the Board has ultimate responsibility for the reopening decision. Connie said that it would be appropriate to ask the task force to reconsider, but that their advice should carry the weight of expertise.
- viii. Scott asked what activities Kyle was considering. Kyle suggested hybrid activities to improve inclusion and consensual meetings of vaccinated members; he noted that this had worked for meetings of the Ministerial Search Committee. He suggested that church-sponsored activities could take place off church grounds.
- ix. Eleanor noted that ventilation is now regarded as a more important public health consideration than cleaning; Connie confirmed the task force is aware of that. Eleanor suggested giving consideration to a "soft reopening" beginning with small groups (e.g., covenant groups). She saw possible value in introducing small groups into the building before opening it to everyone all at once. Connie said safety and inclusivity concerns argue against this, and noted the need for security staff to be present if the building is open.
- x. Sam observed that the EECM shelter meals, which are currently being prepared offsite, could probably now be prepared safely in the church kitchen. He suggested thinking creatively about ways to use the church building before a general reopening in the fall.
- xi. Scott favored a general reopening in the fall aligning with the start of the church year, but suggested that it occur a week before Ingathering to shake out any problems. He also thought that, depending on public health criteria established by the task force, small groups could meet in the church in July or August.
- xii. Scott moved as follows: "Following a recommendation from our Safe Reopening Task force and guidance from the UUA, in consideration of the mission and the values of our church, and with safety and inclusivity our primary goals, we prioritize Sunday service with in-person attendance as the first step in reopening. With that in mind, we plan to extend closure of the church building and grounds through August, 2021."

Necessary gatherings, typically of up to 10 people, may be permitted at the minister's discretion, with appropriate protocols for building security, distancing, and sanitation. If the current situation changes, including such factors as vaccination rate and significant and sustained reduction of the spread of disease, this date may be adjusted.

The Safe Reopening Task Force will prepare a report to the Board, prior to its May meeting, that answers the following questions:

- What objective and subjective criteria do you think would need to be achieved for at least a limited (e.g., adults only) resumption of services?
- What types of church-sponsored activities, on church grounds and off, indoors and outside, do you think would be feasible prior to the resumption of at least limited in-person services?
- What objective and subjective criteria do you think would need to be achieved for these to occur?"

Kyle seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

14. Quarterly Treasurer’s Report (Kyle, 8:40) (handout)

- a. Kyle reported that the budget is generally on target. The bank balance is down because we repaid the PPP loan, but a “decent amount of funds remain.” An unusual level of pledge prepayment has inflated the year-to-date income figure, but he expects the anticipated deficit to appear by the end of the year.
- b. The Finance Committee, principally Claus, has been working all year to update financial policies and procedures.
- c. A small discrepancy in Giant Eagle gift-card bookkeeping is being investigated.
- d. The Investment Committee reports that investments are doing moderately well. The committee is looking at ways to align the church with socially responsible investing.

15. Building and Grounds update (Sam, 8:47)

- a. Committee report.
 - i. The committee is trying to come to grips with maintenance of the geothermal system and is also looking into solar panels and energy-efficient lighting.
 - ii. The Welcome Desk has been built; Sam will distribute a photo.
 - iii. The shed rebuilding project has been completed under budget.
 - iv. The rain garden project has been shelved for fear that the required excavation might damage the geothermal wells. Jim Pashek will talk to the Women’s Alliance, which had donated money toward the rain garden.
 - v. Martin Schmidt is handling a ceiling repair. A bid has been received and approved.
 - vi. Martin Schmidt has reached out to the next-door neighbors about the Morewood-side property wall. Sam noted that the church has a contentious history with these neighbors. Martin is looking for the survey document. A follow-up meeting is scheduled for this Friday.
- b. Sam reported on tonight’s meeting on the Ellsworth Avenue Corridor bike lanes proposal (aka the Shadyside Connector).
 - i. About 150 people attended, including eight from First Unitarian. Rob Schwartz was recognized for a comment; he noted a 2017–18 church survey about the need for parking and suggested a change to the proposal.
 - ii. Six proposals have been put forward, four of them involving Ellsworth. One is no parking end to end on Ellsworth. Second is making Ellsworth one-way, preserving some parking. The third and fourth are making Ellsworth a “neighborway” by installing speed bumps, traffic diverters, etc., in which case bikers would share lanes with calmer traffic. It was noted that 6,000 to 7,000 vehicles a day currently use Ellsworth.

- iii. Many attendees wanted to eliminate parking. Rob suggested an alternate bike route that would avoid all three churches on Ellsworth; of the three, ours has the least off-street parking.
- iv. The next meeting is scheduled for May 5. Sam will ensure that there is a general announcement to the congregation. He thinks it would be worthwhile to reach out to our City Council representative, Erika Strassburger, to find out what process is going to be followed.

16. Appreciations and Aspirations. (All, 9:04)

17. Adjourn (Scott, 9:07)

Respectfully submitted,
Pat Schuetz, Temporary Recording Secretary
Approved by the Board: May 19, 2021
Eleanor Mayfield, Secretary
