

MINUTES

Annual Meeting: May 17, 2020, Virtual Meeting First Unitarian Church of Pittsburgh

Board Members Attending: Martin Schmidt, President (2020); Claus Makowka, Treasurer (2020); Lynne Porterfield (2021); Scott Smith, Vice President (2021); Eleanor Mayfield, Secretary (2021); Ebe Emmons (2022); Julie Downs (2022).

Board Members Absent: Sarah Benson (2020); Sam Hens-Greco (2022)

Ex Officio Members: Rev. Constance Grant, Interim Minister

Others: Kurt Summersgill, Recording Secretary

- 1. Call to Order and Welcome (Martin Schmidt) (12:00)** Martin called the meeting to order.
- 2. Opening Words (Ebe Emmons) from “The Church Has Left the Building”**
- 3. Approval of 2019 Annual Meeting Minutes. (Eleanor Mayfield).** Motion to approve by Phyllis Genszler. Martin Schmidt seconded. Motion carried.
- 4. President’s Report (Martin) (see report).**
 - a. He thanked everyone for putting their trust in him.
 - b. He has been reflecting on what he has learned. Many people pull together to make this church run as effectively as it does. The staff, liturgists, and volunteers, as well as the Board members he has worked with have been wonderful.
 - c. COVID-19 pandemic actions: When will things get back to normal? The Board and staff will be applying safety and scientific evidence to plan our way back. Thanks to the financial officers for acting so quickly in applying for a Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan/grant. The Board is committed to continuing full compensation for all church staff.
 - d. The church’s strategic plan for this past year had two main goals: to promote a stronger sense of belonging and to establish partnerships with the community. One specific objective we set to foster a greater sense of belonging was to upgrade our exterior signage. The new sign was installed on the lawn outside the Ellsworth Ave. entrance right around the time that the church pivoted to remote activities due to the pandemic.
 - e. We have transitioned out of an 8-month lay-led ministry and welcomed an interim minister, the Rev. Connie Grant. In response to the pandemic she and other church staff have worked hard to enable us to continue worshipping virtually.
 - f. After 3 years of service on the Board, including 2 as Board President, it’s time for him to rotate off.
- 5. Minister’s Report (Rev. Connie Grant). (see report)**
 - a. “The church has left the building!” Program staff will be streaming Sunday services indefinitely.
 - b. Flower Communion will be on May 31, 2020. Congregants will be invited to submit photos of flowers. The Spring picnic will be a virtual one.
 - c. The 200th anniversary of the church’s founding will be celebrated in the Fall, whether in person or in some creative way.

- d. We are learning new ways to connect. Church staff are still here for the community.
- e. Last August (when Connie arrived in Pittsburgh to begin serving as our interim minister) now seems like a very long time ago. In these nine-and-a-half months, the congregation has changed, and the world has changed.
- f. “Getting to the Heart of the Matter (in six words more or less): A Congregational Experience”: This workshop took place on Sunday, March 1. The work of crafting a congregational covenant based on congregants’ responses to questions posed during the workshop has been delayed due to the suspension of in-person worship on March 11, but will continue.

6. Lifespan Religious Education Director (LRED)’s Report (Erica Shadowsong)

“Everything Connie said!” The year started off well. The name of the RE Committee was changed to the Family Ministry Team. The team has been reaching out to families who have not been attending services recently. The Family Social Hour has been popular. We had a good strong Our Whole Lives (OWL) program and Sunday School at the beginning of the church year, until the pandemic struck. Now there is a parent check-in. 1st–3rd grade class is meeting virtually. OWL will resume when we can again meet face-to-face. Several lifelong learning classes are continuing virtually.

7. Music Directors’ Reports

- a. **Ellen Gozion (Director of Instrumental Music)**. She invites as many people from the congregation as she can to perform at services, supplemented by guest musicians. She tries to be eclectic in the music selections, to please a wide array of tastes.
- b. **Kris Rust (Director of Vocal Music)**. Verbal report.

8. Financial Report (Claus Makowka) (see report)

- a. Financial ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic: The financial hit because of the pandemic is currently estimated to be about \$25,000. To date, pledge payments and gifts are on track. The Board intends to retain and pay church employees at full salary as long as financially possible. The primary source of income for the church is donations (78%) and here the economic impact is a huge unknown. Claus asked that congregants continue to make pledge payments and gifts to the extent that they are financially able to sustain them. The church was able to secure a PPP loan of \$71,200. To the extent that loan forgiveness exceeds lost income, the Board is committed to using the excess to support local nonprofits.
- b. 2019 church operating income/expenses: The church completed 2019 in good financial condition. Total income exceeded the budget by \$22.7K while total expenses were very close to budget, ending up \$4.4K under budget. The resulting surplus of \$42.5K exceeded the budgeted surplus of \$15.6K by \$26.9K. Even before the current crisis, the Board was expecting to use the 2018 and 2019 operating surplus to cover a planned 2020 budget deficit and a potential 2021 budget deficit.
- c. A list of Share the Plate contributions was given.
- d. Capital expenses: Several projects were listed. In aggregate, the cost of these projects was over \$60,000.
- e. Investments: Recovering from a market low in December 2018, both the stock and bond markets had an exceptionally strong year in 2019. However, with the bear market in March 2020, investment values are now back to where they were at the end of 2018.

9. Annual Report (Eleanor Mayfield)

10. Vice-President's Report (Scott Smith). Before the congregation votes on new Board members, he wanted to acknowledge those who are leaving the Board after completing their 3-year terms: Martin Schmidt, Sarah Benson, and Claus Makowka. They have all made enormous contributions to the Church and we thank them.

11. Introduction of Ministerial Search Committee Nominees (Martin). One of the final items of business for the current Board was to assemble a Ministerial Search Committee. They will be charged with creating a portfolio of the church and selecting and interviewing candidates. A total of 529 nominations were received from 170 congregants. The nominees receiving the highest level of congregational support were: Chris Beregi, Mary Denison, David Doorley, Brian Junker, Peggy Parsons, Jim Reitz, and Michael Anthony Safran.

12. Nominating Committee Report (Gretchen Aiyangar, Committee Chair; Becky Studer)

13. Procedures for Electronic voting (Martin)

a. Board of Trustees Nominees 2020–2023:

- i. Kyle Gracey
- ii. Heather Masterson
- iii. Kate Snow

b. Nominating Committees Nominees 2020–2023.

- i. Linda Fleming
- ii. Christine Milcarek
- iii. Martin Schmidt

c. Ratification of the Ministerial Search Committee

14. Musical interlude (Ellen and Kris)

15. Questions from the Congregation.

- a. How will the COVID19 situation impact the ministerial search? We'll see! The UUA recently advised that churches should plan to worship remotely until May 2021. The search committee will have to rely on remote activities for a while. The search schedule should remain the same.
- b. Ministerial search process: The committee goes through candidate portfolios, selects candidates to interview, and then presents a candidate to the congregation, who will visit the congregation and preach. The congregation will then vote on whether to call the candidate. Most candidates will not accept a call if the congregational vote is less than 90% in favor.
- c. How will the ministerial search priorities be decided and communicated? In the Fall, the search committee will conduct a congregational survey and will also host small-group meetings to enable congregants to express their priorities for the church and for a new minister.
- d. PPP: The loan amount is \$71,200. Most if not all of the loan amount can become a grant if the church applies for loan forgiveness.
- e. PPP: Why not put the surplus, if any, toward the endowments? There was a level of discomfort among Board members about accepting the money, if other non-profits are

more needy. There was agreement, however, that the church should not receive a windfall as a result of the loan. Any surplus could also be used to fund internal social justice goals. The incoming Board will address these issues as more information about the impact of the pandemic on church finances becomes available.

16. Voting Results (Becky Studer, Nominating Committee, and Eleanor Mayfield, Board Secretary). 126 online ballots and 2 absentee ballots were cast. All candidates are elected. The Ministerial Search Committee slate is endorsed with 100% of the vote.

17. Benediction (Rev. Connie)

18. Adjournment (1:13)

Respectfully submitted,
Kurt Summersgill, Recording Secretary
Approved, as amended, by the Congregation: May 23, 2021
Eleanor Mayfield, Secretary
