

## **First Religious Society Parish Board Meeting – March 15, 2022**

**Call to Order:** Holly Cashman called the meeting to order at 6:05pm.

**Attending:** Rev. Rebecca Bryan, Rob Authier, David Livingstone (Ministerial Intern), **Holly Cashman, Tina Benik, Juliana Beauvais, Vern Ellis, Kathy Desilets, Michelle Kimball, Renée Wolf Foster, Annie Maurer, Minnie Flanagan** (Note: Names in **Bold** are voting members)

**Not Present:** Jim Supple, Micah Donahue, Tim Fountain, Lucy Litwin

**Check-in/ Opening Reading and Welcome:** Rev. Rebecca opened with a reading about coming home and the board members did a quick check in.

### **LMH Restroom Changes:**

A congregant brought a concern about the fact that the restrooms had new signs that said one was for staff only, and the other, which has a urinal, was the only one available and that both rest rooms were labeled as being available to all. The board discussed response to this briefly. This was originally a matter of making a COVID-related adaptation when groups previously using parish hall were moved to the main building after the Afghani asylee family moved into the parish hall. The need for a staff-only bathroom is no longer current. Discussion focused on how we can have gender neutral bathrooms. Only the larger rest room space (with three stalls) is handicapped accessible. Also, many people would be uncomfortable walking in on someone using the urinal, which is not fully enclosed in a stall, so we need to deal with that issue. All agreed that it is good to use all capacity and that we need to allow privacy, while meeting the needs of those who are not comfortable with a gender defined bathroom. This is a painful situation for these people and creates a sense of not being welcomed. The staff will consider how to meet all needs and share their conclusions.

## **Annual Meeting Preparation**

### **Report on Nominations:**

Juliana described the changes in the constitution of the board. Because of departures of members for various reasons, and the fact that their terms are filled, we do not have three rotating positions each year. This year, the Stewardship Chair resigned, and Vern Ellis is willing to fill this role. There are no open positions for general members of the board available this year except for the youth member. Need to focus on vacancies in specific roles. There has been the following progress:

Governance Chair – (Lori Clark, Juliana, Renée, Maureen Adams) Candidate is available.

Finance Chair – Micah is stepping down as chair – a candidate has been identified.

Finance Treasurer – Prospect(s) being sought and approached.

Youth Member – Two possible candidates

Trustee is needed. Cecilia Healy is leaving the position of Trustee. The other trustees will remain.

Auditor Position is open – A previous holder of the position is willing to step in. Lori Clark, Juliana, Renée, Maureen Adams are the members of the governance committee this year.

Moderator – Lea Pearson is in her sixth and final year before needing to take a year's break in service based on the by-laws.

### **Report on votes, education**

- There are a lot of technical changes to the bylaws that will need to be voted on in the Annual Meeting. They are mostly related to creating the Stewardship Chair position.
- The gender issues will be up for discussion again.
- Another change will be to change the date of the annual meeting so that it can be held in May or June.

Juliana suggested that we should publicize the upcoming votes that will need to be covered in the annual meeting, well in advance of the meeting. Then there should be discussion opportunity for anyone interested in advance of the meeting. This was generally agreed upon.

### **Report on Congregational Conversation/Covenant Team**

The meetings that were held raised questions, both in terms of the number of sign-ups and in terms of the how the conversations went. There was not a lot of clarity about participants in some of the conversations about what was expected. The remainder of the meetings were postponed until the committee can re-think how to deliver a clear message. The first meeting had controversy (primarily two people who had different ideas about what was important and who were agitated). There were different points of view about what happened – ranging from there being some people who were acutely concerned about events from the past and who were not cooperative with the planned process, to the belief that it was all to be expected.

Some thoughts about the meeting were:

- Some people came to discuss pronouns.
- Some felt that they were being told how to have a conversation and resented it.
- The focus on the VME and its history and of the discussions held up until now did not fully capture interest and seemed too long to some.
- It was possible that people in the congregation did not see the need for this discussion of covenant and behavior.
- We have a strong core of support for core UU principles and most of the issues that arise have seen vocal majorities who are not in accord with the majority on a single issue or who do not fully understand the issue. The pronouns discussion was an example of this, but in the past, there were many other similar discussions that split in this way.

The issue of Covenant as a definition of how we deal with one another in times of conflict is bigger than the Annual Meeting. The tenor of the conversation in and after that meeting made it clear that we need to clarify the rules for everyone. Parliamentary procedure exists to move things along and allow the meeting to move forward in an orderly manner. This is necessary to assure orderly and equitable management of the issues needing a vote. We need to be very clear

about the rules of order for the meeting (Robert's Rules). It is reasonable to have limits on how often and how long individuals speak and on how amendments can be made. Having a Parliamentarian to sit with the chair in the case of possible controversy could be very helpful and would offer a voice separate from the congregation to help the chair maintain order.

In addition to managing the meeting, we may need to discuss what you do when you don't have your way. What obligations do we have to care for those who disagree with the majority or who are impacted negatively by what happens.

**ACTION:** Kathy Desilets moved that that board hire a parliamentarian to assist in preparation for this year's annual meeting and to advise the chair during the meeting to assure a fair and orderly process of discussion in accordance with Robert's Rules. Tina Benik seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

We will promulgate a summary of the rules of order for the meeting well in advance so that everyone is aware of how things will proceed.

**Report on Gender workshops:** Rev. Rebecca asked that the board encourage attendance at both Gender Workshops.

**Report on Annual Report Changes/Updates:** Rev. Rebecca indicated that the Annual Report will include the Warrant and a summary of the work of the committees and work groups. The report will have a brief Executive Summary and will use photos to highlight church activities. She suggested that a Google form would be a good format for the annual report. We need to include a list of board members and those who participated as Stewards. The last report can stand as a sample. This is in process.

**Report on Membership Database Updates:** The board has decided to determine which of those who are on the current membership list should continue to be included. The board will be informed of people who are to be removed from the membership roster. The process of cleaning up the list is complex. There are some limitations on what non-members can do – such as voting. We will need to make some decisions about how we deal with those who are supporters, especially those who have made pledges.

**Finance Committee and Budget Updates:**

Notes on the profit and loss statements are available in the board packet.

**Stewardship Update:**

Planning a kick-off meeting next week for the auction, which will be held on June 10<sup>th</sup>. We hope to have it either at the church or another venue. We need lots of people to find donations – goods, services, and donations. Some things that people might donate will be home-cooked meals. This could be a great thing to pull us together. We hope to have a silent auction, as well as a live auction.

A discussion on Legacy Giving will be part of an upcoming service. There will be a Legacy Circle - naming those who have left something to the church. The idea is that by recognizing the contributions of these folks we hope to create momentum to raise funds for the endowment, and to build out capacity to act. Lark and Annie Madden have developed a donation acceptance policy, which will ultimately need to be voted by the board. Categories of giving will be created for which will include endowment.

**Annual Campaign Updates:** There is a team of stewards and captains and others working on the campaign with lots of enthusiasm. Greg Benik's talk on Sunday was great. Raised \$390,000 through first two weeks (\$360,000 last year). We have fewer donors to date than last year, which indicates that we are getting larger contributions. Congrats to Juliana Beauvais for developing lists for solicitation, to Tina and Greg Benik for leadership, and to Renée Wolf Foster for her testimony. We have about four more weeks. We are setting April 15<sup>th</sup> as a closing date.

### **Consent Agenda**

Parish Board February 15, 2022 minutes  
Trustees February 16, 2022 meeting notes  
Governance Committee March 3, 2022 meeting notes  
DCO notes for March 9, 2022 Finance Committee meeting  
Finance Committee March 9, 2022 minutes  
February 2022 P&L Budget Report  
Afghan resettlement fund report

**ACTION:** Tina Benik moved that the board accept all items on the consent agenda. Michelle Kimball seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

### **Closing**

**Closing Words:** Rev. Rebecca Bryan ended with a brief meditation based on sending loving kindness in expanding circles.

**ACTION:** Holly Cashman made a motion to adjourn, and Minnie Flanagan seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:59pm without exception.

Holly reminded members to sign Process Check Forms.

Notes prepared by Kathy Desilets, Clerk