

**Congregational Meeting  
Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Santa Rosa  
January 30, 2022 - via Zoom**

**Meeting called to order:** 12:21 PM

**Chalice Lighting, Opening words and UUCSR Covenant:** Paula Hammett, Chair, Lay Chaplains and Board Member, and Natalie Brundred, President, Board of Trustees

**Meeting Introduction:**

**Quorum:** The quorum of a minimum of 50 people is met. There are 70+ screens, some with multiple members.

**Parliamentarian:** Richard Senghas

**Recording Secretary:** Susan Thollaug

**Agenda:** approved as written.

**Minutes from June 13, 2021 Congregational Meeting:** approved as submitted. Ellen Skagerberg asked that the July 17th Special Congregational Meeting minutes be made available for review. Natalie said she would attend to that.

**Status of Congregational Life** - Rev. Julie Brock

There are tough times ahead for religious institutions and community-building in general. What community needs more than anything is for people to show up during these times. It's your choice what happens to UUCSR. If you dig in, you're going to come through this as a healthier congregation, more poised to take on the world. This is a community of people who take really good care of each other.

The State of the Congregation is muddy, rough, and we're wading through with determination.

**Board Report** - Natalie Brundred, Board President

The Board has primarily been focusing on two things: governance structure, and communications. The Board, with the Finance Committee, has been figuring out structures of accountability and looking at our part in what happened. We're looking at what kinds of checks and balances must be put in place so it doesn't happen again.

Governance: We have been exploring a model called “Policy-Based Governance”. We’re studying the model itself, looking at other congregations, and consulting with one in DuPage, Illinois. The Board will seek your input this spring.

Communications: The Board is also looking at how we provide information and foster communication within the Congregation, including the website, newsletter, Focus list, and more. You’ll be asked to fill out a survey.

**Religious Education Update** - Era Capone, RE Director

Participation is up to 20+ kids in the morning groups alone, with even more coming to middle school and Dungeon & Dragon groups.

The kids are moving into a curriculum for 2nd - 5th grades that’s focused on UU core values. Our pre-K through 1st graders are exploring our 7th Principle. Our middle-schoolers are beginning to look at their service project, and they’ve been going to places around the Bay Area with other North Bay youth. We plan to host “Chalice Camp,” which will be open to kids from all across Sonoma County.

**Transition Team (TT) Report** - Rev. Bev Spears, Chair

The Transitions Team is a group of congregants that helps guide and facilitate the process of preparing for the next settled minister, in support of the interim minister and congregation. The team initially had three parents, three people who’d been long-time members, and three who are newer to the Congregation.

The members are: Robert Howseman, Gretchen Vap, Carol Kramer, Caroline Hobbs, Greg Ervice, Judy Ervice. Rev. Bev Spears is chair. Two parents had to leave the team, but we hope to replace them with two more parents.

To note:

The interim minister is not the one who does the work of making a healthy transition; it’s the Congregation’s responsibility.

The TT is not the Search Team. When the Search Team begins its work, the TT will disband. One or two members may go on to the Search Team.

The TT will assist the Congregation in looking at our history, honoring it and looking at issues/concerns. It will also look at the present: what are the strengths and what needs attention? Ultimately, this is about discovering a new identity.

Right now, the TT is concerned about the stability of governance systems of UUCSR. A successful transition demands a certain amount of stability in the structure.

What the TT will concentrate on is still being determined by the Board and working groups of the Board, and the Minister at this time. To start, we need a basic organizational chart that shows who can make decisions, to whom they're accountable, and where communication needs to happen.

**Appreciations** - Cathie Wiese and Natalie Brundred, Board of Trustees  
We have a small army of folks who deserve our deepest thanks for what they've offered in service to our Congregation. So, we are lifting up the names of many dedicated folks who've given so much.

Folks who kept our Office running between office administrators: Larissa Greco, Karen Aguiar, Lee Lipinski, Kirsten Olney, and Cassandra Lista.

The Building and Grounds Team, which has kept the building functioning and in good condition through the pandemic, recently without a sexton. Pam Tennant, Kirsten Olney, Fred Brewer, Jim Wolf, John Jaffray. Also, Pam Tennant, Katie Trieller, and Jami Kerr took on cleaning the entire church for Christmas Eve services.

For her many behind-the-scenes contributions: Margaret Bragger-Coston. For the work of the Glaser Center Committee: Jan Hess. For the leadership of COSM during this challenging time: Maria Praetzellis. For providing health guidance through the pandemic: the Health Advisory Team: Gretchen Vap, Veronica Jordan, Fred Brewer, Susan Bartholome, and Susan Thollaug.

For her organization of our ushers and greeters and for her unfailingly cheerful smiles and hugs: Jami Kerr. For keeping our worship services so inspiring: Worship Associate Chair Judy Withee, and Rev. Bev Spears for sharing her gifts of insight and leadership.

For keeping our music program going: Roger Corman, Alan Bell, Sally and Randy Jones, John Ray, and Robin Rogers. For their tireless efforts at the difficult work of keeping our Congregation fiscally responsible: Joe Como, Mike McGirr, Jane DeYoung, Michael Randolph, Linda Balabanian, and Kirsten Olney. For technical support for audio and zooming our services: Daniel Read, Andy Levine and John Chenoweth. For wonderful flowers: Mary Keefe and the Flower Committee.

We must also acknowledge our amazing staff: Rev. Julie, Aphrodite Bellochio, Judy Ponts (Bookkeeper), Era Capone, Michael Bingham, Roger Corman and Karen Aguiar, who's been amazing covering our office between administrators, and who will now move into the part-time Glaser Center Coordinator position. The Board has decided to gift a dinner out for the staff.

**Finance Review** – Linda Balabanian, Interim Treasurer

2020/2021 Budget: Last year's budget ended fairly well. It was nearly balanced, with a very minimal loss.

2021/2022 Budget: In January calls were made to people behind in paying their pledges. Several did not intend to continue as members at this time. Revisions were made for a "New Reality" budget.

Pledges constitute the majority of UUCSR's income. The original 2021/2022 budget estimated \$500k in pledges. The Finance Committee now estimates that \$410k is the likely amount of pledge income for the current year.

The "New Reality" budget includes a small increase in Glaser Center income, but no other adjustments in income streams. In addition, December donations were down from normal levels, and a fundraising goal of \$7500, still in the budget, is probably unrealistic. These will further reduce income.

On the expense side, we've had less outflow simply because of several gaps in employee positions. There weren't major increases in other expenses. There is no "new reality" on the expense side, it's all about the income side. We're over \$100k in our expected losses, simply because our pledges are not what we'd hoped and expected.

Kirsten Olney applied for Federal Employee Retention Credits (a pandemic program) several months ago. We expect to receive over \$100k from that program; however, it will probably come in after the end of this fiscal year.

We have limited cash reserves at this point, about 2-2.5 months of cash to pay bills. We don't have enough to cover the deficits. We're in good shape to recover, but it's going to take some time. We may be able to increase pledges - but it's going to be gradual. With the Glaser Center, it will take some years to get back to our earlier level.

A large expense on the horizon is roof replacement. We have a building systems replacement fund that will probably cover about half of it, and the Operations Committee is exploring other approaches to paying for that major repair.

Employee expenses have increased significantly, and can't easily change. This year, our pledges will fall short of employee expenses by about \$60k. We need a more sustainable way of dealing with that. We need to brainstorm ideas about how to get pledges higher, and how to grow the Congregation and get new members.

Our pledge distribution by the amount of pledged:

Pledging Households	Pledge Amount per Year	Percentage of Total Pledges Dollars
5	\$10-15k	13%
17	\$5 - \$10k	26%
28	\$3 - \$5k	24%
21	\$2 - \$3k	11%
54	\$1 - \$2k	17%
81	under \$1k	9%

25% of pledgers provide 63% of the pledges. 34% of pledgers provide 75% of the pledges. (A pledger may be one person or a couple.)

Steve Sweeney: There are two ways to deal with this situation: increase revenue or decrease expenses. We have faith in the Board and know they will take a hard look at expenses and do what's necessary to deal with them. Judy and I will substantially increase our pledge, effective immediately.

John Mason: The Congregation is at an important inflection point - we're going through a lot of change and transition and we've had some losses. Think about how we're going to have the resources to fund our dreams and hopes for this Congregation. Think about your pledge to see if you can increase it. It's a matter of everybody getting together to get through this.

Rev. Bev: This is a Congregation *worth* supporting financially. We have great potential *and* we're already there.

Joe Como: Our biggest expense is our personnel. Our personnel is *the best*. And there's no fat on the bone.

Natalie: Raising our pledges is going to be the biggest source of additional revenue, but not the only source. We encourage everyone to get their creative caps on to figure out how to raise funds for UUCSR, and put your "sweat equity" into making it happen. We'll be launching a pledge drive in the future. Please do what you can to really support UUCSR into our future.

**Elections** - Ben Ford, Chair, Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee is one of the most important yet unknown committees here at UUCSR. They look at who has the skills and temperament needed, and they look at what voices need to be heard, especially in identifying people for the Board.

Ben Ford: NomCom is responsible for nominating people for the Board of Trustees, General Assembly, and the Endowment Committee. The NomCom is Gretchen Vap, Michael Larson, Margaret Bregger-Coston, and Ben as chair. Until early January, Lee Lipinski was also on the committee.

Board of Trustees

The Board had an incredibly challenging year, dealing with transitions and controversies that none of them could have foreseen. The Bylaws require a Board of 8-12 members. Only 4 members will be continuing. NomCom decided to nominate 5 new members, for a total of 9.

The NomCom looked for people who could hit the ground running, as the majority of members will be new as they start the year. NomCom also looked for people with past institutional leadership experience and with varied and broad connections within the Congregation. We need a forward looking, high functioning Board next year.

Because of a resignation in December, the Board was reduced to 7 members, which is below the Bylaws requirement. Lee Lipinski, one of the 5 nominees for next year, agreed to join the Board immediately and to complete a term of office ending in 2023.

Motion: Lee Lipinski be named a Trustee of the Board and complete a term of office ending June 30, 2023.

**VOTE:** The motion passed unanimously.

Now, 5 Board members will continue past June 30th of this year: John Mason (in 2nd term), and Scott Miller, Tamar Murrell, Leslie Norinsky, and Lee Lipinski (in their 1st terms).

NomCom proposes a slate of 4 new members to the Board. They have all undertaken serious thought and consideration to make sure they have the time and stamina to give to the Board and the Congregation the service that it needs this year. The nominees are:

Margaret Bregger-Coston, Jan Hess, Maria Praetzellis, David Reitzell

Cassandra Lista nominated Ellen Skagerberg from the floor.

Ellen Skagerberg respectfully declined.  
No other nominations were offered from the floor.

**VOTE:** The slate of 4 nominees passed unanimously. 2 abstentions.

General Assembly

The UU General Assembly will be in Portland OR, June 22-26. It will be hybrid, so delegates can participate online or in person. About 6 delegates can represent UUCSR. There are no nominees at this point.

Motion: The Congregation assigns authority for appointing delegates to GA to the Board President.

**VOTE:** The motion carried with over 90%.

Endowment Committee

According to the Bylaws, the Endowment Committee has 5-8 members who serve 3-year terms that overlap. Terms end on December 31. We have 5 continuing members: Paul Poling, Pam Tennant, Michael Randolph, and Kirsten Olney. The NomCom is not recommending additional members at this point. There were no nominations from the floor.

**Open Forum - Questions, Concerns, Appreciations, Aspirations**

Judy Ervice acknowledged Natalie for doing an amazing job over this last year, and not giving up.

Leslie Norinsky let people know that we're doing interviews for a Music Director and also looking at finances. We're taking some time to figure out where we need to go with this position.

Mary Wagner said thank you to Natalie and the whole Board, everybody who's been working in the office, and to Rev. Julie, for seeing us through and helping us to preserve this meaningful place.

**Closing Words** - Rev. Julie Brock

**Meeting Adjourned:** 2:16 PM.

Next Congregational Meeting: Sunday, June 5, 2022

*Respectfully submitted by Susan Thollaug, Recording Secretary.*