

Unitarian Universalist Church of Bloomington, Indiana

Seeking the Spirit, Building Community, Changing the World



Congregational Meeting Minutes

December 15, 2024

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Submitted by Regina DiLamore, Secretary

CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME

President Jane McLeod thanked everyone for attending and called the meeting to order at 12:06 p.m.

Chalice Lighting

Mary Craig, Board Member at Large lit the chalice.

Introduction of the Parliamentarian

President Jane McLeod introduced the Parliamentarian Steve Dillon.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORTS

President's Report

President Jane McLeod described some of the projects the Board has been working on over the past year. The Board approved the new policies for UUCB using the Hotchkiss Model, moving away from the Carver model. With the new model, the Board sets the mission, and the Lead Minister oversees the day-to-day activities. Essentially, the Lead Minister and the Board conduct joint planning and partnership in governance.

President Jane McLeod also shared the Board's FY 2024-2025 goals with the Congregation:

- Nurture the congregation as we grow and change;
- Support Reverend Susan Frederick-Gray, the congregation, and ourselves as we build trusting relationships around the settled ministry; and
- Implement partnership governance.

Treasurer's Report

Bill Lonnborg, Treasurer began his report by recognizing the challenging work of the UUCB Finance Committee Members:

- Bill Lonnborg (chair/treasurer)
- Kathy Gilbert
- Beth Henkel
- Ruth Sanders

Bill Lonnborg presented the income and expense report for the period of July to November 2024. A notable highlight was the strong performance of pledge income, reaching 48% of the projected annual amount despite being only 42% through the fiscal year. Plate income, at 42% of the projected amount, also demonstrated positive results.

While expenses increased by \$6,598, representing a modest 0.9% rise, this increase is well within the established budgetary guidelines. This slight expense increase is primarily attributed to expanded employee salaries and benefits. Importantly, this increase falls significantly below the threshold that would necessitate a congregational vote for budgetary changes.

Questions were raised regarding the increased expenses associated with holding two church services. The estimated additional cost for operating two services over a four-month period is \$8,500.

Andrew Appel, Chair of the Special Purposes Fund (SPF), answered a question related to an aspirational reserve. He indicated that it should be 4-6 months of operating expenses or \$250-400K.

STAFF REPORTS

Lead Minister's Report

Reverend Susan Frederick-Gray announced that she is very happy with the shared ministry.

Reverend Susan Frederick-Gray addressed the issue of increasing attendance and its impact on church capacity during Sunday services.

A Two Services Survey, distributed on December 6, 2024, garnered 295 responses. Key findings included:

- 75% of respondents moderately supported holding two services.
- 49% expressed excitement about the prospect of two services.
- 25% indicated they were not excited about the possibility of two services.

A recurring theme throughout the survey responses was a sense of grief and loss associated with the potential division of the congregation.

Reverend Susan Frederick-Gray highlighted a concerning issue: some congregants refrain from attending services when they perceive insufficient parking. Reverend Susan Frederick-Gray urged able-bodied congregants to consider parking across the street to ensure parking availability for those with limited mobility.

Since September 1st, church attendance has surged, with a 77% increase compared to the same period last year. Notably, attendance has nearly doubled on 33% of Sundays. Due to emergency egress requirements, adding more chairs to the meeting room is not a viable option.

Historically, when two services were offered, the choir was typically divided.

Reverend Susan Frederick-Gray noted that the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) suggests that a meeting room may appear overcrowded to new visitors if attendance reaches 80% of capacity. However, it's important to note that the church's current average attendance, excluding children, does reach 82% capacity.

The church will implement a trial period of two services for four months. Following this period, the number of services will be reassessed during the summer.

Director of Lifespan Religion Education Report

Stephanie Kimball, Director of Lifespan Religious Education, reported a significant increase in attendance for children and youth religious education (RE) programs, with participation doubling in recent months. This surge in attendance has outpaced the growth in volunteer support, creating staffing challenges.

The elementary class, currently averaging 17 students on Sundays, is facing the most critical staffing needs. The spirit play class is also experiencing high enrollment. The middle school class, with an average of seven students, is currently meeting only every two to three weeks due to a shortage of volunteer RE teachers. The students in this class have expressed a strong desire to meet weekly.

While some congregants have expressed interest in volunteering as RE teachers once the church transitions to two services, there is an urgent need for teachers immediately.

Stephanie Kimball emphasized that prospective teachers do not need to be Unitarian Universalist experts. The primary focus is on building meaningful relationships with children. Comprehensive lesson plans and materials are provided, allowing teachers to concentrate on fostering connections with the students.

The RE program will offer new teacher training and workshops for interested individuals. Recognizing the varying levels of commitment, volunteer teachers are not required to teach every week. A January intersession may be introduced to accommodate short-term commitments and provide additional support.

Connections Coordinator Report

Anabel Watson, Connections Coordinator, reported on the many engaging opportunities available within the congregation. This is an exciting time for both new and existing members to explore volunteer roles or experiment with different ways to connect with the church community.

She encouraged congregants to review the various church groups to gain a better understanding of the diverse volunteer opportunities available. She also suggested scheduling a meeting with the Connections Coordinator, who can provide personalized guidance on finding meaningful ways to engage with the church.

Anabel Watson then outlined several specific volunteer opportunities currently available. She emphasized that congregants should not hesitate to reach out for assistance in connecting with a specific group or finding a volunteer role that aligns with their interests.

Anabel Watson also reported that the church currently has 465 members.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Leadership Cultivation Committee (LCC) Report

Glenda Breeden, Chair of the LCC, thanked the LCC members for their work. The current committee members are:

- Glenda Breeden (chair)
- Carol McCord
- Daniel Reed
- Kathleen Sideli
- Linda Pickle (board liaison)
- Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray (ex-officio)
- Anabel Watson (ex-officio)

Glenda Breeden, Chair of the LCC, discussed the purpose of the LCC which is to recruit candidates for elected positions within the Church and provide opportunities both within and outside the Church for leadership training.

Motion to Elect Board Secretary

Glenda Breeden moved to re-elect Regina DiLavore to Secretary of the Board. The motion was seconded and carried.

Glenda Breeden then discussed the official tasks of the LCC and how they identify potential leaders in the congregation. The typical methods are:

- Engage in conversations in small groups;
- Leadership workshops;
- Outreach to UUCB groups and Inviting nominations; and
- One on one meetings.

Individuals interested in exploring leadership opportunities within the church are encouraged to join a relevant church group or connect with a member of the LCC committee for further discussion.

Special Purpose Fund (SPF) Committee Report

Andrew Appel explained that the Special Purpose Funds support UUCB's religious, charitable, educational, and civic purposes beyond activities covered by the normal operating budget. SPFC manages investments for the following four funds:

- (1) Special Purpose Endowment
- (2) Special Purpose Available
- (3) Operational Endowment
- (4) Operational Available

SPFC directs use of funds (1) & (2) and the Board directs use of funds (3) & (4). Funds can be requested by members using the link on the UUCB webpage.

Andrew Appel reported the most recent fund requests were used for:

- A farewell gift for Reverend Grant;
- The courtyard water fountain for MUUSA; and
- Shelving & carts for the Bazaar book sale.

The SPF Committee will require new members beginning in June 2026. Ideal candidates will possess strong proficiency in Google Sheets and be available to attend 4-8 committee meetings per year.

Andrew Appel thanked the members Licia Weber, Ruth Aydt, Bill Lonnberg (Treasurer), Steve Mascari (Board at-Large), Rev. Susan (ex officio)

Andrew Appel then reported that \$784,000 is under SPF management with \$503,000 for SPF and \$280,000 for operations.

Minutes and reports are available; email questions to spfc@uubloomington.org

Personnel Advisory Committee Report

The Personnel committee convened September 2023. The Committee membership for this fiscal year includes: JaneAnn Gifford (Chair), Lisa Amsler, Pam MacLaughlin (Board Representative), and Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray.

JaneAnn Gifford, Chair of the Personnel Advisory Committee reported that during the past fiscal year, the committee dedicated its efforts to revising the personnel manual, utilizing the UUA template as a guiding framework.

For the current fiscal year (2024-2025), the committee's primary focus is a comprehensive reassessment of employee benefits. This includes a thorough review of healthcare insurance options for part-time employees and an exploration of the feasibility of implementing a flexible spending program. The committee's objective is to develop well-informed recommendations for the 2025-2026 fiscal year while fully understanding the financial implications of these potential benefit enhancements on next year's budget.

Pledge Drive Committee Report

Corrin Clarkson, Chair of the Pledge Drive Committee, announced that the committee consisting of six members (Joan Caulton, Corrin Clarkson (chair), JaneAnn Gifford, Beth Henkel, Pat Slabach, and Judy Witt) will need new members next year. Corrin Clarkson then clarified the difference between the definition of pledge and fulfilling a pledge.

Pledge is a promise to give an amount of money to UUCB.

Fulfilling your pledge means giving the amount that you promised.

Corrin Clarkson discussed recent committee activities. Committee members are attending Exploring UUCB membership classes to discuss pledging at UUCB. The committee is messaging about fulfilling FY2024-2025 pledges and planning for the FY2025-2026 Pledge Drive.

Corrin Clarkson reported that the pledge drive exceeded its FY2024-2025 goal of \$645,000, with total pledges reaching \$645,542. To date, 49% of the pledged amount, totaling \$307,536, has been received.

It was noted that the operating budget for the current fiscal year (FY2024-2025) requires an additional \$26,800 to be drawn from the church's reserves.

The report also highlighted that over 100 households have not yet made any contributions towards their FY2024-2025 pledges.

The church office and the pledge committee shared that the office will send statements to any household who had not contributed toward their pledge. Please contact the office if you believe there are errors in our records or if you plan to fulfill your pledge later in the fiscal year.

BUSINESS

Quorum Report

Pam MacLaughlin reported that ninety-eight (98) members were present in person and eight (8) attended online. Attendance constituted 23% of the membership, exceeding the 15% of the total membership required to conduct business.

Motion to Allow the Board to Approve the Meeting Minutes

President Jane McLeod thanked all congregants who have been involved and invited others to become involved. She then moved to allow the Board of Directors to approve the Congregational Meeting Minutes at a future Board Meeting. The motion was seconded and approved.

FOR INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION

Belcher Property Update

President Jane McLeod provided a recap regarding the Belcher property.

- There was a private unsolicited offer of \$2.25M for the Belcher property adjacent to UUCB.
- This led to inquiry sessions with the Congregation.
- The Board decided not to pursue the option to purchase.
- IU plans to buy the property and has no immediate plans to develop it.

Expanding Our Capacity to Welcome All Who Want to be Part of UUCB

President Jane McLeod and Reverend Susan Frederick-Gray led a discussion regarding the expansion of Sunday services to two. Reverend Susan Frederick-Gray emphasized the exciting growth of the congregation and the importance of creating space for individuals seeking a community that affirms their values and families.

Reverend Susan Frederick-Gray highlighted the need to provide care, sanctuary, and a warm welcome to newcomers, particularly given the anticipated increase in attendance following the upcoming administrative transition in January.

During the question-and-answer period, the possibility of offering a different service format was raised. While Reverend Susan Frederick-Gray acknowledged the exploration of alternative service styles, she noted that implementing such changes would require significantly more resources than offering two services with the current format.

The immediate plan is to implement two services with the current format, while simultaneously exploring other service options. Regardless of the chosen format, Reverend Susan Frederick-Gray emphasized that music will be a significant investment.

The estimated cost for a four-month trial period of two services is approximately \$8,500. The church anticipates covering this initial cost through increased pledges and Sunday plate offerings.

The projected annual cost for sustaining two services throughout the year is estimated to range between \$20,000 and \$30,000. This estimate does not include the potential costs associated with hiring an associate minister or additional music staff.

The survey conducted among congregants specifically sought input regarding preferred service times for the new service.

Start-Up Weekend

Reverend Susan Frederick-Gray and President Jane McLeod led the discussion about start-up weekend which will be facilitated by Lauren Wyeth and David Pyle from the UUA. The goals of the start-up weekend are:

- Minister and lay leader alignment and how to work together;
- Identify expectations and boundaries; and
- Identify latent issues, bring forward problems and identify solutions.

The start-up weekend is divided into three parts:

1. Whole congregation and staff potluck dinner and community conversation– January 10
2. Meeting of lay leaders to discuss norms (any current, past, and future lay leaders are welcome) – January 11, morning.
3. Board and Lead Minister – January 11, afternoon.

The Lead Minister installation will be on March 30, 2025, at 4 pm.

Proposal to Change Our Name

President Jane McLeod initiated a discussion regarding the potential for a name change, noting that over 20 individuals have inquired with Reverend Susan Frederick-Gray about this possibility. The Board acknowledged the need for a more in-depth discussion on this topic in the future and will explore appropriate methods for facilitating this conversation within the congregation.

Jane McLeod invited Barry Rubin, a member of the UUCB Jewish Connections Group, to share the group's perspective on the matter. He observed that the term "church" inherently implies a focus on the Christian faith and argued for a more inclusive and welcoming name.

To gauge initial sentiment, Jane McLeod conducted a brief "temperature reading" among attendees, inquiring about their level of support for a potential name change. Specifically, she asked for a show of hands from those who are supportive of a name change, who are open to further discussion, and who have concerns. Most attendees chose one or both of the first options. Specific concerns were raised by two attendees. Jane McLeod assured all in attendance that there will be ample opportunity for further discussion before a formal vote is taken.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

Steve Mascari, Board Member at Large, motioned to adjourn the meeting, the motion was seconded and the motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 pm.

