

First Unitarian Universalist Church of Wichita
Annual Congregational Meeting
June 14, 2020

Minutes

1. The Annual Meeting was begun at 12:02 p.m. by President Andrew Davis. Because of the COVID-19 situation, the meeting was held online via Zoom. In attendance were 29 members present on Zoom and 29 absentee votes which were deemed this year to be part of the quorum of 58. This exceeded the needed 25% quorum of 28 members. A list of attendees is attached.

Andrew Davis gave the following opening remarks.

“Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this is our first virtual annual meeting. Eligible members will vote in one of two ways: through a zoom poll or through absentee ballot. A quorum will be determined by adding together absentee ballots with available Zoom voters. If you have already voted through absentee ballot, please do not vote through Zoom when it is time to vote.

This is a new experience for all of us, so I'll stop often to see if anyone wants to speak. Please take care of muting and unmuting yourself so that we can keep background noise to a minimum.

Which brings me to a dilemma. On one hand, some of us have been forced through no fault of our own to vote with absentee ballots. On the other hand, as a group we like to talk and make amendments to proposals as we see fit. It's part of the way we promote and affirm the democratic process in our congregation. So here's the dilemma: if there is a successful motion to amend a proposal or to nominate other candidates from the floor, absentee ballots are void on that question.

Normally we have three to five absentee ballots. Because of our virtual meeting this year, we have 29. I am concerned that because of the way we have been forced to hold this meeting, amendments are unfair to those who voted with absentee ballots. Yesterday, Grant Sutter expressed a similar concern and asked to make a motion regarding it.”

Grant Sutter moved: “That for this meeting only, we accept the ballot as written with no modifications.” Ellen Oberele seconded. The vote via Zoom was 35 for and 0 opposed.

Andrew continued with his remarks:

“Building:

- We repaired and painted the exterior of the building in response to the summer hail storm.

- We have continued the work of creating Betty's Place.
- We installed security cameras around the exterior of the building.
- We repaired the parking lot, which was failing in six different places, and severely deteriorated in several others.

Joe Mohr will continue to provide pastoral care through the year to those we request it. More information about his role in the upcoming year will be provided in the next issue of *In Touch*.

A COVID-19 update:

We will be discussing the possibility of phased reopening of the church at Wednesday's Board meeting. The Board's decision will be included in the Bullet Points from the Board article in the July issue of *In Touch*, as well as published in weekly updates.

At the Mid-Year meeting, we voted to accept a new, general Shared Vision Statement, with an amendment to promote leadership, but tabled action on separate vision statements for each principle until this meeting. No one who supported tabling these separate vision statements has provided me or the Board any work on this project, so we have nothing to act on. This concerns me because the tabled vision statements were produced by over 30 members of the congregation, then sent out to all congregants three times for questions and comments, and we received only two negative responses: one argued for more member involvement and the other argued for less. The Board considered this to be a tie, so we went ahead with the plan. If you are willing to work on this issue in a way that is as inclusive as the work that was tabled, please contact Holger Meyer, who will become President of the congregation in July. If no one wants to see this work through, it will be up to Holger and the Board to decide how they would like to proceed on this issue.

Personal Reflections:

- For a small church, we are an amazing church, but we aren't perfect. Luckily, we know that. As with just about any organization, most of the work in our church is **not** done by most of our members, but a minority of them. It's a handful here and two handfuls there, and occasionally, as with Ecofest, just about everyone pitches in to help those who did the heavy lifting to provide leadership. If we were a big church, we might be able to get away with this over the long haul, but as I said we're not a big church, and the people doing most of the work are getting tired.

- Every committee needs more help. Every initiative needs more support. Every goal we set for ourselves needs more people working to help us meet it. Whether it's working on Betty's Place, helping with Social Action initiatives, or making worship services work by helping write them or offering technical support while we're gathering virtually, we need you. So, if you can help as we move forward, especially now with the difficulties we face because of

COVID-19, please do. If you don't know who to talk to get involved, please contact any Board member or our office manager for a referral to the proper person."

2. Elections.

The nominees for Board of Trustees and Nominating Committee were introduced. Zoom voting was done. Ballots were filled out online and tallied along with absentee ballots that had been received prior to the meeting (2 absentee ballots were deemed invalid because they did not have a signature on the envelope as required by the ByLaws). The outcome of the election was as follows. Board of Trustees: Ned Lakin and Rachel Rutledge for 3-year terms. Nominating Committee: Lynn Kientz, Joe Lozano, and Vivien Minshull-Ford. The Co-Presidents Elect, Billie Knighton and Kirk Mitchell were unanimously affirmed.

3. Leadership and Committee Reports.

- Kay Davis presented an overview of the Worship Committee report (see attached report).

- Holger Meyer, Incoming President, spoke. This would have been a good year under different circumstances. Thank you to everyone who kept things going even though the building was closed. The electronic sign still gives us a presence. It is satisfying that we have solar panels where the excess production goes to our neighbors. The church is more than a building. Next year I will work to keep us going on the right track.

- Vivien Minshull-Ford, Fundraising Committee, said kudos to all the staff and committees who continued working through the shutdown.

- Andrew Davis announced Magda Garrett was the new church custodian.

4. 2020-2021 Church Budget.

Charles Merrifield, Finance Committee, said the stewardship campaign reached its goal and we reached \$95,000 in pledges. He pointed out that the Plate donations is less because of COVID-19.

Questions were asked and answered.

- Questions about fundraising. Ecofest and the garage sale are our biggest fundraisers. Other fund raisers are the Valentine Tea, art sales, and cloth face masks (which raised \$500).

- Question on Line 26. Most of the building repairs were paid by insurance. The parking lot work was paid out of the general fund. We have an emergency fund in a money market account and right now we have \$2,000 extra in the operation fund.

- Question about reducing debt. The 20-year mortgage has 8 years left with less than \$200,000 remaining in the principal.

- Question about Joe Mohr. He will be staying on as church counselor.

- Question on Line 13. We had to cancel rentals so that income will be less.

Charles Merrifield moved that the proposed budget be accepted and Lara Pollock seconded it. Voting was a Zoom ballot and absentee ballots. Budget was approved unanimously.

5. Each newly elected person spoke a few words.

6. Lucy Kirkham-Cochener moved to adjourn. Kay Davis seconded the motion. The meeting ended at 1:02 p.m.

Minutes by Anita Culp

Attached:

List of Attendees

Worship Committee Report

Worship Committee

This year marked our first full year operating as a Soul Matters congregation, which has given us worship resources from which we have drawn many of the parts of our services. While, we are still striving to improve the quality of the services we create each Sunday, we are pleased that so many came to the orientation sessions and joined our group of volunteer presenters.

The congregation has had an opportunity to enjoy Soul Matters services presented by our own members enabling us to consider a variety of topics and learning more about several of our members at the same time. We give our heart-felt thanks to each of you for filling the need admirably. Those who gave presentations during worship include: Joe Lozano, Debbie Wadman, Doug Wilson, Vivien Minshull-Ford, Jenny Findling, Sigrid Trombley, Holly Terrill, Annie Welsbacher, Corey Swertfager, Dan DeMott, Roxanne McKenzie, Peter Ninemire, Kent Rowe, Dania Laubach, Charles Merrifield, and Anne Bailey.

Others were scheduled to speak, but “stay at home” orders delayed their presentations. We look forward to hearing from Bruce Roby and Charlie King once we’re able to return to in-person worship, and we are told others have recently said they have ideas to share as well.

In addition, to the above, we have also enjoyed a presentation from Lara Pollock and Bonnie Till who shared slides and talked about their trip to China, and several presentations by Lara sharing sermons and the writings of her mother, Rev. Greta Crosby, in a series titled “Greta Speaks.” Andrew Davis has taken the pulpit once each month to provide original presentations, and good friend, Robert N. Minor, PhD and Professor Emeritus, from KU has visited us in person three times this year and once virtually to provide insightful homilies. We also have had an opportunity to learn much more about neo-paganism through talks done by Linda Jordan as we celebrated several important pagan holidays. Finally, we all enjoyed a wonderful service featuring the music and insights of Tom Neilson in February.

The spread of the COVID19 pandemic to the United States and ultimately to Kansas temporarily halted our progress as a lay-led congregation, but we have quickly found a solution by moving our services to a virtual (Zoom) platform and simultaneously providing Home Worship Packets to our members and friends who do not have, or prefer not to use a computer for worship. Attendance at Zoom worship has been much higher than we anticipated with at least 40 people joining services each Sunday.

We are currently working to improve the sound quality—especially for the musical portions of services, and will then turn our attention to expanding our offerings through greater participation by our members once again. The Board of Trustees recently decided to form a Technology Committee that will explore and find ways to support the efforts of the Worship Committee so that we can focus on the content of services while others who are more knowledgeable take care of supporting the technological parts of worship.

We look forward to the time when the congregation can return to our own meeting space for worship for in-person worship. Once that day arrives, we will return to creating the services we are used to experiencing, while continuing to produce alternate forms of worship for members who will still not be able to return to the church.