

First Unitarian Church, South Bend
Meeting of the Board of Trustees
November 11, 2020

Present: Gail DeSomer, Kay Azar, Melanie Smith-Guillaume, Howard Berberick, Elena Wake, Becky Lindstrom, Anne Mannix, Bert Dodds
Absent: Rev. Chip Roush
Guest: Peg Faulmann, Rich Wallace

The meeting is called to order at 7:03 p.m. by President Melanie Smith-Guillaume

I. Introduction

- A. Chalice Lighting
- B. Check-in
- C. Covenant
- D. Approval of Minutes from October 14, 2020 Meeting
The minutes of the meeting are accepted without correction. Motion to accept made by Kay and seconded by Gail.
- E. Set Agenda

II. Reports

- A. Minister: Rev. Chip is absent tonight
- B. President: Melanie reports having gotten a text from Rev. Chip last night and reports that he is okay but not able to be at the meeting. She is not able to say why he is absent but to have faith that he will be back in due time. All express concern but more would be intrusive. We will contact the Worship Committee to make sure that they have what they need for the upcoming service.

Things to date have been successful with the Town Hall and the Halloween party for the kids, and we have adapted to the situation we are in. We have been able to come up with some really creative adaptations. We need to look ahead to the holidays, when we know people will be alone, and many are grieving. Families need to be supported. Melanie has spoken to Rich Wallace about how we can include our families and the children. Gail DeSomer did a great job on the Halloween bags and we thank her for that effort. We did get a number of videos from the families but will not make them public to keep things private for the families.

- C. Treasurer: There were not big concerns over the past month with the exception of the deficit. Last month it was \$11,000. This month it came out to \$13,000, so the rate of growth has slowed down. Elena created a chart comparing 2020 with 2019 and found the trend to be quite similar. We tend to have peaks of income in January, April, and then in August. We get the financial reportable months after what has actually happened. So what we get in January is what happened in December. This is understandable, as people are getting tax donations ready. The spike in August from July is likely due to the new fiscal year. She is not sure why the spike is in April from March, but it is suggested that people are getting tax refunds, and using those to pay their pledges, or because of the stewardship campaign, they are reminded that they need to get their pledge in.

So the deficit may be coming from all the small donations we are missing like loose offerings, and bigger items like the auction, which was supposed to be in October. We still expect some big pledges to come in after the first of the year. While all that is

reassuring, we still have a deficit of \$13,000, and its expanding at twice the expected rate, which is still a concern. We will have the PPP money, but that will get used up very soon. We have some cost savings from decreased utilities, but that is offset by the larger fixed expenses, insurance, office, payroll, etc. The revenue lost from the loose offering is greater than the savings from things like cleaning, pianist, etc. We have done some small things but need to look at managing the building for savings.

We do not have a functioning Building Committee that is looking at these things rather than the Board. Kathy Vetter is no longer involved but there has not been anyone to fill the void, aside from David Mayfield helping out by fixing things. Howard reports that he spoke to Kathy V., and that she is coming in on Saturdays, but finds there is not much more that can be done to save money as the heat is already set at 55 and most of the electrical equipment that can be unplugged, has been.

There are already some problems with water smelling bad because no one is using it, flushing toilets, etc. Several people volunteered to come in regularly and do that. The bigger need is to find a group to be the Building Committee. Could it be the COVID Committee as this is all due to COVID? We know what needs to be done but there is no plan for who will do these things, and no follow-up. Perhaps that is something the COVID Committee can do as a stop gap measure, but we really need to build a community of people who will take care of this. It is suggested that perhaps Ian could come by weekly and do some of the necessary tasks for a part of his usual pay for cleaning. Howard, as the liaison to that committee, will talk to Chuck Leone. In the meanwhile, we should check with David Mayfield and Kathy Vetter to see how often the building is being checked on and what, if anything, they are doing. Some other possible choices to ask to be on a permanent committee include Rich Mah, Eric Morgan, John Bentley, and Marilyn Shaul.

D. Committee Reports

III. Old Business

A. Financial Situation

1. Actions to address deficit: See above discussion
2. Managing building for savings: See above discussion

B. Need for a functioning Building Committee: See above discussion

C. Extend time the building is closed: A discussion on this was tabled until we could get a report from the COVID committee. We will not be open through January and any further decision will depend on the recommendations of the committee.

D. Date to start a new members' group

E. Feedback on Halloween and Town Hall – The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive for both.

F. Electronic Giving: Anne Mannix reports that the Vanco link is ready to use and asks that a few people try it to make sure it works and get rid of any kinks before we make the link active to the congregation. This will allow people to give money during the service as a loose offering, making it like we are passing the basket in a humorous way, and listen to music for a short time, while people can contribute without it disturbing other parts of the service. Vanco will also allow for people to text money to the Church. We will be up and running this Sunday or the 22nd.

IV. New Business

A. Planning for Holidays

1. Thanksgiving — Food Delivery? Zoom gathering? Rich Wallace points out that many of the younger of our congregation feel Thanksgiving is kind of offensive and prefer to refer to the holiday as Indigenous People's Day. There is no interest from the families with children. He would prefer we just move on to what we need to do for Christmas.

Whatever we do for Thanksgiving needs to be done and arranged quickly as we only have 2 weeks. Elena suggests we use Chip's usual Thursday group. It might be better if we not do a dinner around Zoom but gather at another time earlier or later than meal time to get together. Becky offers her Zoom account to manage and host the gathering. With 10-12 people, it could be done in one big group or split into smaller groups with more people than that. We could do it from 10:30 to 11-11:30. Becky, as facilitator, requests access to host on the church's Zoom account as it gives her the ability to break into small groups. Gail suggests one big group might be preferable so folks feel like they are part of something bigger.

2. Christmas —

- a. The Care Committee is going to send out poinsettias like we do every year to about 16 people.
- b. Elena asks Rich to comment on past efforts his family had to host Christmas dinner. He said it had been well received and well attended but would not be possible this year. The discussion focuses on how to best meet people's needs to meet via an online platform like Zoom.
- c. RE: what can we do as a follow-up to the successful distribution of bags for Halloween? We can follow-up with stockings.
- d. Casie Center stockings: Rich will follow-up with MaryBeth Dickey about that. It may be a matter of asking people for monetary donations to make that happen. Kay suggests the possibility of handing out stockings to folks in the congregation with a list of suggested items, ask that they fill the stockings and deliver them to the Casie Center themselves. Or, ask them to fill their stocking with one thing in bulk that can then be distributed among the stockings, as it is easier to buy one thing in bulk. There are a variety of options for filling and distributing. The RE committee meets this week and will make a decision on how to best proceed.
- e. The RE committee will also decide the best way to do stockings for our children. Rich will send out an email to let us know what he needs us to do
- f. Christmas Eve service: Rev. Chip has asked the RE Committee and families to think about what they would like to see for the Christmas Eve service. Families and children especially, seem to be Zoomed out and not wanting to do things where they just sit and listen.

One possibility is for everyone to have a candle and turn the lights out during the service as that is pretty traditional, especially for Silent Night.

Rev. Chip certainly has some ideas for the service. He typically alternates between readings and songs. The service is usually shorter because there are a lot of kids. It is likely best not to change things a lot so the children have a sense of continuity that is really needed about now. It would be nice to have Chip at the church with a Christmas tree. Doing that now and occasionally throughout the year keeps people connected to the Church and the space. We will need to see how Chip is doing and what he needs.

Another idea, either for Christmas Eve or the next Sunday service, is for people to have their favorite ornament and break into small groups to say why it is their favorite. While this isn't something we would do when we are in the Church during the service, we can take advantage of the fact that people are surrounded by things that are meaningful to them and that they could share with others.

It would also be nice if people could be in front of their Christmas trees during the service so we can all see the lights. It is also possible to do this in the small chat groups after church and with the kids participating.

- g. Ginger Bears will be handled by the Stewardship Committee this year
- h. Bazaar is being incorporated into the online auction.

- B. Schedule date for February Board Retreat: We will have our regular Board meeting as scheduled and a second meeting on Feb. 24th to go over goals that we set and see if they need to be modified in any way. We will need to get ready for another Town Hall, the Stewardship drive and Annual Meeting.
- C. Should we do an auction item for a lasagna dinner? The logistics of doing a lasagna dinner could be overwhelming. What about a lasagna raffle so the price would still be low and you would get a chance to get the kit and caboodle. We could look at getting the meal from a restaurant in town, possible Politos or someplace like that. So we will raffle a lasagna dinner for 4 or 6. Could that be part of the Auction Chirp in January? We could each donate some towards it. We want the tickets to be very affordable to be more inclusive. Looking at no more than \$5. Kay will do the research.
- D. Mapping Tool - Could this be of use to us? How? Phone Tree? Location of members by zip code? Other? This was not discussed.
- E. Next month's agenda item: When to schedule Town Hall Meeting, January or February.

Meeting adjourned at 9:01

Respectfully submitted,
Kay Azar, Secretary Board of Trustees