**First Unitarian Church, South Bend**

**Annual Congregational Meeting**

**May 19, 2024**

**I. Call to Order** at 12:30 p.m. by Bill Stevens.

**II. Quorum Verification** attested to by secretary Florence Klečka.

There were 54 members present, 5 via Zoom, and 8 assigned proxies, for a total of 67.

**III. Opening Words** by Rev. Chip Roush

**IV. Approval of May 2023 Annual Meeting Minutes** by Bill Stevens.

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the May 2023 meeting by Chuck Leone, seconded by Jim Curlee. Motion carried. The January congregational meeting minutes were omitted from the annual report, and will be approved at the next congregational meeting. The draft version of the January minutes are on the website for review.

**V. Minister's Report**: No comments or questions were presented.

**VI. Update on Transition**: Bill Stevens reported that the transition from having a full-time minister to hiring a contract minister has begun, and will be a long process. The church will need to define its characteristics, needs, and goals to determine what to do next. The Board has gathered information from the UUA, and will begin asking for input from the congregation this summer. Those interested in serving on a search committee should talk to a Board member. David Wistreich asked for the difference between a settled minister and contract minister. A contract minister is hired by contract for a predetermined, finite period of time, vs. a settled minister, who is called to a congregation indefinitely. The UUA recommends that smaller congregations (120 members or fewer) use contract ministers. Karen Heffernan suggested we ask for guidance from Meadville.

**VII. Treasurer’s Report and Operating Budget** David Mayfield

David Mayfield noted that the main change from last year’s budget is due to the transition from a full-time minister. We expect to have no minister from August 2024 to at least January 2025, if not much longer. He also reiterated that the Ministerial Discretionary Fund will need to be addressed by the Board, as it is currently administered by the minister. It is outside the operating budget funds.

Pat Littlejohn moved to approve the budget. Byrd Tetzlaff seconded.

Discussion included the following points:

* R/E will need a paid coordinator in the next year or so; Gail deSomer commits to volunteering in this unofficial capacity until she becomes Board President in 2025.
* Budget preparation is difficult, and the Finance Committee and Board should be commended for the work in preparing it.
* Rev. Chip has received notice from an anonymous donor that they pledge up to $5,000 to reduce this year’s deficit. Much rejoicing and thanks ensued.

Motion to approve the budget passed.

**VIII. Endowment Grants** Chuck Leone

See p. 25 of Annual Report for details. The Endowment Committee recommended three requests for funding:

Worship Arts asked for $2,000 for maintenance on the sanctuary grand piano

Building Committee asked for $3,700 to insulate the attic above the sanctuary

The Board asked for $2,500 in planning/consultation expenses for our transition period

These amounts are less than the total amount allowed for this year, $15,868.85, and recommends that the balance of $7,668.85 be used to seed the “Burn the Mortgage” campaign. Francisco Gomez-Dossi moved to approve requests, David Wistreich seconded. Motion carried.

Discussion included the following points:

* More people should be aware of the application process for endowment funds.
* More frequent applications would be more flexible, rather than needing to apply by March 1 for funds that become available in July, only once a year.
* Leadership training is a possible use of future funds.
* There is a group at IU South Bend that might help with fundraising.
* An anonymous donor has agreed to match funds toward paying off the mortgage.

**IX. Elections**

The Nominating Committee presented the following slate of officers for the Board:

Gail deSomer, Vice President

David Mayfield, Treasurer

Fern Hamlin, Secretary

Francisco Gomez-Dossi, Trustee

Eli Williams, Trustee

The following members will remain on the Board next year: Chuck Leone, President; Dan Holm, Trustee; Jeremiah Cox, Trustee.

The motion was made to accept slate as presented. Motion carried.

The Nominating Committee presented the following slate for the Endowment Committee:

Barbara Williams (exp. 2027)

Vicki Stevens (exp. 2026)

Janet Bogar (exp. 2025)

The motion was made to accept slate as presented. Motion carried.

The Board of Trustees recommended the following slate for the Nominating Committee:

Bill Stevens as past Board president (exp. 2025)

Megan Sulok (exp. 2026)

Karen Dickson (exp. 2025)

Melanie Smith-Guillaume as alternate.

No opposition or nominations from the floor. Slate approved as presented.

**X. Church Name Change** Barbara Williams

Barbara Williams summarized the steps taken to determine the congregation’s readiness to change the church’s name (see p. 18 in Annual Report). At its last meeting, the Board determined that if 2/3 of the eligible members voted to change our name, then a ranked ballot would be distributed. Francisco Gomez-Dossi so moved.

Discussion included the following points:

* The D/B/A (doing business as) designation is a simpler way to rebrand an organization.
* Market research should be conducted first to determine if a name change is necessary, and also what name would be agreed on.
* The main agreed-upon changes would be to remove the word “First” and to add the word “Universalist.”
* The issue should not be rushed, and can be brought up again.

A show of hands was counted, including proxies and Zoom attendees. Out of 67 eligible voters, 45 were needed for a 2/3 majority. The total was 44. Motion failed. Much discussion followed, making it very likely that this issue will indeed be brought up again.

**XI. Review of Committee Reports** Bill Stevens

No questions at this time.

**XII. Volunteer of the Year Award** Bill Stevens

Bill read the following: This year has been a roller-coaster ride in many ways, sometimes terrifying and dangerous – and sometimes lots of fun. We are exceedingly grateful for the participation of everyone who has given of their time, enthusiasm and gifts to make this a welcoming and enjoyable place to be, where people can make connections and grow as spiritual human beings. We see people wearing T-shirts advertising UUism and what this congregation stands for. We have tied the previous record for the number of new members in one year. The current deficit is considerably less than predicted a year ago. We have brought back or introduced several new events for members and the general public, which have gotten good reviews and requests that they continue.

Our Volunteer of the Year has gone above and beyond the call, spending many, many hours in meetings, fundraising, marketing, being part of the tech crew at the back of the sanctuary, and countless events. So thank you, Dr. Louise Williams, for all you do for this church.

**XIII. Adjournment.** Bill Stevens invited a motion from the floor to adjourn. Motion carried.

Minutes respectfully submitted by:

Florence Klecka

Secretary, Board of Trustees