

**Countryside Church Unitarian Universalist  
Minutes of the Annual Congregational Meeting  
May 17, 2015**

Board of Trustees President Michael Gilley called the Annual Congregational meeting to order at 11:24 a.m. Reverend Hilary Krivchenia added her welcome to the congregation and provided a reading by David White.

The following members of the Board of Trustees were present: Mike Berry, Matt Briddell, John Conneely, Michael Gilley, Alan Greenland, Gloria Kinney, Karen Noorani, Deb Quentel, and Sheryl Skifstad. Treasurer Mary Johnson was on vacation and absent.

**1.0 Call to Order**

President Michael Gilley introduced the agenda for the day and highlighted the meeting's plan.

Cathy Maraist, Chair of Music Search Committee reported that Countryside Church Unitarian Universalist has hired Allison Vernon as Director of Music and she will be starting in July. She will be attending the Unitarian Universalist Musicians Network Conference in late July. She has extensive experience as a teacher, singer, and conductor of both instrumental and choral ensembles. Cathy Maraist referenced a statement from quoted Allison Vernon to the Search Committee: Music is most important when it touches everyone's spirit and when words and music combine to touch everyone's spirit that's best. Reverend Krivchenia thanked the Music Search Committee for their work.

**2.0 Administration**

President Michael Gilley stated the rules from the Bylaws for voting eligibility: the right to vote is limited to those who have been members for 31 days and have paid a pledge or received an exemption. Next President Gilley sought to establish a quorum. With 320 members, 20% or 64 members are needed for a quorum.

To ensure that a quorum was present, eligible members raised their hand for a physical count in the room. Members of the Board of Trustees walked through the room counting. The count was 88 members; a quorum was present at all times

**3.0 Announcement of Leadership Slate & Vote**

President Michael Gilley introduced the following slate of nominees for the Board of Trustees:

Treasurer – Mary Johnson [2-year term]

Secretary – Matt Briddell [2 year term]

Jeanie Michalec [2 year term] -- Post meeting correction: Jeanie Michalec is to serve a 1 year term as she is completing the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Matt Briddell's 2 year Trustee term.

Joy Simon [2 year term]  
Kristin Huston [2 year term]

Matt Myron moved to accept the slate of Board of Trustees candidates. Ken Bobbe seconded the motion. There being no discussion, President Gilley called for a vote. The motion carried unanimously.

President Gilley noted that the following members of the Board of Trustees are currently serving and will continue to serve next year.

President – Karen Noorani [Beginning 1st year of 2 year term, after serving 1 year as President-elect]

Vice President – Sheryl Skifstad [Completing 2nd year of 2 year term]

Mike Berry [Completing 2nd year of 2 year term]

Alan Greenland [Completing 2nd year of 2 year term]

Next, President Gilley introduced the slate for the one opening on the Endowment Committee:

Lois Phillips [5-year term]

Kay Gredell made motion to accept the slate of candidates put forth to serve on the Endowment Committee. Carol Bobbe seconded the motion. There being no discussion. President Gilley called for a vote. The vote was unanimous.

President Gilley introduced the continuing members of the Endowment Committee:

Karen Greenland [5th year of 5-year term]

Mike Berry [4th year of 5-year term]

Kay Gredell [3rd year of 5-year term]

Fran Mueller [2nd year of 5-year term]

President Michael Gilley introduced the candidates for opening on the Nominating Committee:

Debbie Lee [2-year term]

Peggy Simonsen [2-year term]

Tim Reuter [2-year term]

Kathi Hillyer made a motion to accept the slate of candidates for Nominating Committee. Marty Farrington seconded the motion. There being no further discussion, the President called for a vote. And, the motion carried unanimously.

President Gilley reminded the congregation that the following individuals will continue to serve on the Nominating Committee:

Angelina Huntsha [2nd year of 2-year term]  
Siri Laurin [2nd year of final 2-year term]  
Laura Mandell [2nd year of final 2-year term]

#### **4.0 Update on Stewardship Campaign & Budget Prioritization Process**

President Michael Gilley reminded the congregation that the Budget for the upcoming year begins each year with the Stewardship Team. Under CCUU's Bylaws, the Treasurer is charged with ensuring that the Stewardship Campaign happens. This year's theme, as developed by the Stewardship Team, was "Affirming our Future."

Gary LaBedz & Mary Johnson headed the Stewardship Team and they were joined by Mike Berry and Michael Gilley.

This year's theme was based on the five aspirations of membership. During 2015, the amount of pledge aspiration was reduced from 10% to 5% to be more realistic. President Gilley equated the CCUU aspirations to a treasure map – if you follow the aspirations you will achieve a rich spiritual life at CCUU.

Initially, the Aspirational Budget Gap was \$73,920; After the budget team realized the unlikely ability to close that significant gap through pledges, a number of important line items were removed from the budget and placed on a list for re-instatement should income support it. With these changes, the gap is now reduced to \$3000.

Gilley noted several areas of budget initiatives. There were a number of staffing initiatives that were part of the proposed budget initiatives. Countryside Church Unitarian Universalist wants to take care of our staff to retain them. Also, in fall 2014, The Board of Trustees and staff were made aware of other costs such as building masonry and associated repairs. As the Board started to look at these costs, it realized that CCUU needed to look at costs for this year and future years. President Gilley reminded the congregation of the great work done by Paul Sneddon a number of years ago regarding ongoing costs associated with replacement or repairs of building assets. And, this year the group built on that work.

President Gilley asked the Finance Committee to consider over the next five years what we need to consider that will trigger a capital campaign. Our forecasted capital repairs and replacement costs over the next 5 years significantly exceed our current capital reserves. The budget team felt that a substantial increase of our capital reserve line item for 2015-2016 could defer a capital campaign and provide an opportunity to see if there are other ambitions that come out of our strategic planning efforts that might generate more enthusiasm than building repairs.

Gilley walked the congregation through the work of the Stewardship Committee and the Budget Team. He noted that an additional \$69,000 above the current budget was needed to support the aspirations. So the Budget Team asked whether we could raise \$70,000 which is what would really be needed considering default pledges. The Budget Team was comprised of Mary Johnson

(Treasurer), Gary LaBedz (Controller), Mike Gilley (President), Sheryl Skifstad (VP), Rev. Hilary Krivchenia, and the Ministry Council (with a member from each ministry), to prioritize budget increases to determine priorities in case the full budget amount was not realized.

In the first round of budget prioritization, the Budget Team established the top 2 priorities: (1) adequately fund the Capital Reserve and (2) take care of staff with a cost of living adjustment.

As the Pledges came in, the Stewardship Committee realized that it would not get last year's budget. So, committee went into serious cutting mode, always mindful of the congregation's desires.

The budget was prioritized and cut by \$15,000. Cuts included the ministry budget and UUA denominational dues by 50%, which is not a good long term strategy. The UUA will remind CCUU to pay past owed dues when we start to pay 100% in future. Thus, dues payment is being deferred.

Gary LaBedz stepped forward to answer any questions about the budget. The Board and Stewardship Committee considers it a sign of the times that Countryside did not achieve last year's budget amount. Over past ten years Countryside Church Unitarian Universalist has used contributions from its annual fundraisers to provide funds for outside organizations. Some congregants have asked whether CCUU should use part of the funds raised to support Countryside Church Unitarian Universalist.

Additionally, LaBedz shared some statistics about pledging. Of people who increased their pledges it represented \$35,000 in additional pledges. The average pledge amount is \$1800. The overall drop in pledge amounts happened for a number of reasons and accounted for \$22,000 drop in pledges. For example, some congregants moved away or are anticipating moving and they are no longer contributors. There was a net increase of almost \$13,000 in pledges, but that was not enough to get the church to where CCUU needed to be for the 2015-2016 budget.

President Gilley noted that the membership would be voting on numbers in the Annual Meeting packet, since additional pledges came in since the materials were created.

And, as additional pledges are made through the year, CCUU wants to be doing the right thing, such as paying full amount of it UUA dues and providing for the staff, and hiring new positions that had been cut from our budget.

The team worked backwards to decide how money would be reinstated to close the gap between last year's budget and this year's and to go beyond that. The priority for spending additional money will be:

1. We forecast that we will end year in positive condition. And, that money will be applied to capital reserve. So in addition to \$10,000 allocated last year we will sweep in any above and beyond that comes in before July 1st.

2. Cost of living adjustment for staff
3. Reinstate RE materials that had been cut
4. Reinstate Kinship materials that had been cut
5. Denominational dues – listed in 2 places line 4 and 7 (in the Annual Meeting Packet) – this represents “feathering in” of money to variety of projects as money comes in.

As more money comes in CCUU can fund more items that had to be cut. Gilley mentioned that several people have spoken at town hall meeting and directly to Treasurer Mary Johnson that money from fundraisers like the Time & Talent Auction should stay in CCUU. The President noted that this is a future congregational decision and he hoped that a future congregational discussion would be able to find a middle ground. Even if money from fundraisers stayed within CCUU, many would hope that it did not go towards our operating budget as that is not sound fiscal practice.

Art Patton made motion to approve the budget as presented. Mark Huston seconded the motion.

President Gilley opened the floor for discussion.

A congregant asked how long a hunt for an interim religious educator take and where money for that post will come from. President Gilley explained that the position would be funded from Reverend Vahey’s line item.

Community Minister Dr. Reverend Scott Giles provided background on the financial status of other congregations across the UUA world. As a denomination, we are getting older. So we are aging out of the church. Further the economy hit UU demographics hard. Giles shared that at the national level no one thing this problem will turn around on its own. Instead, the national association and each congregation will have to do things differently in the future. He assured us that Countryside Church Unitarian Universalist is doing better than many other UUA congregations.

A member asked about Countryside’s plans for the North Property and whether it could be sold to help our financial condition. The North Property is comprised of the home and land on the lot north of the church building. It is owned by CCUU. As a congregation, CCUU has had a number of ideas about what to do with the property, however none of those discussed in recent years has been adequately formed and supported by human and financial resources to get carried out. President Gilley noted that this is an important question and we should all start to think about what we should do with the property. He noted that if CCUU does not have a clear path of what to do with the property it could become liability for CCUU over the years as these renters who are a source of income for the property leave. We need to have a vision that is clear. One idea presented by the Finance Committee is to consider selling it and use the money to pay down the CCUU mortgage or to put money in capital reserve.

President Gilley asked for a strawpoll of who would want to sell it today – as a means to initiate conversation. Gilley clarified that he was stating his personal opinions rather than as a member of the Board of Trustees.

A long-time member of the congregation spoke of her passion for this congregation and this church. She described that the north property had been originally purchased looking to future possibilities. She added that she has included CCUU in her estate planning. She also spoke of the financial condition not being dire here and asked us to bring enthusiasm and go out of here feeling positive about CCUU.

Reverend Hilary Krivchenia noted that this congregation has continued to grow and thrive as the UUA on a whole has had troubles. She encouraged us not to focus on this budget shortfall as a failure. She noted that the Board leadership took a step forward and created a budget of what we need rather than what we really have. This is not a failure of membership, but rather a success of leadership to articulate a budget so clearly.

There being no further discussion, President Gilley called for a vote. The motion carried unanimously and the 2015-2016 budget was approved.

President Gilley asked that everyone complete the Engagement Form related to volunteering that was handed out. Copies will be available from the church office after the meeting.

Reverend Hilary Krivchenia explained the engagement calendar. It came from a discussion of what it takes to create Sunday's spiritual service. It is not a good model to continue to ask people to volunteer. So, the engagement form represents new model of doing the basics of church. CCUU is asking everyone to make a commitment to one or two of these teams. This represents an opportunity to choose your team and measure the amount of participation by Sunday activities that you are already doing. Each team will have some training and teams will have accountability to each other. Everyone likes a team better than a committee. Reverend Krivchenia asked that everyone fill this out before they leave today; she thinks it can make a really big difference.

## **5.0 Recap of the Church Year - Presentations by Committees**

### **Endowment Committee**

Mike Berry, as a member of the Endowment Committee reviewed the definition of an endowment. He noted that while the endowment fund is young, it already has a good start. Further it is hoped that the congregation will grow the funds through both investment and future gifts. Focusing on gifts, he reminded the membership that there is a tendency to think about gifts to an endowment as legacy gifts – a share of wealth accumulated over a lifetime that we leave to organizations that mean a lot to us. But other possibilities include marking an important family event, a wedding for instance. Certainly it would be a special way to mark an anniversary, a big birthday, honor the passing of a loved one.

Second, Berry commented in response to input that the committee has gotten from many congregants about divestment from fossil fuel companies. The endowment fund to this point has been invested in a Vanguard mutual fund that maintains a balance of stocks and bonds, that screens companies for corporate stewardship, but the meaning of that is essentially honesty in financial reporting and sound management on behalf of shareholders. The Vanguard fund does not, for example, screen for things like lobbying against government incentive programs for renewable fuel research. So while the fund has an excellent performance record and has earned a fair return for us in a short time, it does have a small investment in oil companies.

The Endowment Committee is in the process of replacing this fund with a bond fund that has been used extensively in the UUA Common Fund, and a socially responsible stock index fund. These are both low cost funds with sound performance records. The stock fund notably screens not only fossil fuel companies, but other kinds of actors such as makers of cigarettes, weapons, alcohol, businesses that pollute, mistreat animals, or people for that matter, operate casinos, and various other suboptimal activities.

The Endowment Committee will share these details with the congregation, should individuals be interested.

#### Outreach Steering Committee

Matt Myren noted that from a personal standpoint he has seen the value of giving outside CCUU; this allows for an expansiveness of our hearts and echoes the Unitarian Universalist principles.

Last year CCUU raised almost \$26,000 for six organizations. The Paddle Raise was new this year to the Time & Talent event and it was very successful.

Finally, Matt Myren asked for input on where to put our funds and he called for more congregates to get involved. This year the committee will be taking on share the plate. They are asking for input. Watch for more ways to volunteer and to participate.

#### Strategic Planning hand-off to Leadership Team and Next Steps

Art Paton gave a brief history of the formation of the team and an overview of all the work the congregation has done with sharing their vision. He recognized those who have worked this year on the committee. He noted that a copy of the plan was distributed this morning. His goal at the Annual Meeting was to orient us to the document and he invited everyone to review it. It includes things that we as members in this congregation thought that we should be doing.

Today represented the formal handoff from the Strategic Planning Committee to the Board of Trustees. President Gilley stated that the Board will be working with the Ministry Council and Rev. Hilary to determine how we'll use the results of the strategic planning work to inform the next steps in the process. He noted that the plan will likely include working on a goal that is appropriate and worthy of all the work that we did.

### Living the Welcoming Committee

President Michael Gilley invited Tracy Boland, co-chair of the Living the Welcoming Committee, to step forward and remind CCUU of its commitment as a Welcoming Committee. Tracy Boland reminded the congregation of its work and its vote eight years ago, led by Jane Matthews and Jim Booth among others, to become a Welcoming Congregation. Today, the congregation and the Living the Welcoming Congregation work together to continue this mission at Countryside and in the larger community.

### **6.0 Recognition of outgoing Board of Trustee members**

President Michael Gilley thanked everyone who served this year on the Board of Trustees, including Trustees who are leaving the Board this year: John Conneely, Michael Gilley, Gloria Kinney, and Deb Quentel.

President-Elect Karen Noorani presented a small thank you gift to each retiring board member as a reminder of the work of the Board of Trustees. She also noted each outgoing member's contribution to the Board. While the remaining board members are eager to begin the work of CCUU with each new trustees, each outgoing member brought unique talents and will be missed.

### **7.0 Recognition of other outgoing leaders (Ministry Council & standing committees)**

President Gilley led the congregation in thanking outgoing members of Ministry Council and all the standing committees for their work and service:

Juli Cicarelli – Kinship Ministry  
Jeff Phillips – Worship Ministry  
Lisa Bohne – Study Ministry  
Art Mayfield - Endowment Committee  
Melanie Schikore - Nominating Committee  
Jeanie Michalec - Nominating Committee  
Lisa Hagenbuch - Nominating Committee  
Dan Yokas - Board appointed member - Nominating Committee

### **8.0 Recognition of CCUU Staff - Michael Gilley**

President Gilley led the congregation in thanking all the staff and support team for their contributions to CCUU:

RE/Office Assistant - Debbie Lee  
Congregational Administrator – Laurie Lantz  
Interim Choir Conductor – Guillermo Koster-Munoz  
Religious Education – Rev. Colleen Vahey  
Senior Minister – Rev. Hilary Landau Krivchenia

### **9.0 Closing Words --Rev. Hilary Krivchenia**

Reverend Krivchenia provided some closing words and a final reading.

## 10.0 **Adjourn**

Lisa Bohne made a motion to adjourn the 2015 Annual Meeting. Matt Myren seconded the motion. Upon unanimous hand vote, the motion passed, and President Michael Gilley adjourned the meeting at 12:50 pm.

Minutes submitted by Deb Quentel

Board of Trustees, Secretary, Countryside Church Unitarian Universalist