



Board Meeting – Nov. 17, 2021

Our mission: To be a compassionate, welcoming community that nurtures spiritual growth and practices justice.

Meeting Minutes

Board: Ann Hutton, President; Kim Reid, Vice President; Greg Turosak, Secretary; Rob Harveland, Treasurer; Dave Siljeborg, Joe Lobl, Molly Dingel, Brianna Berg and Walt Rothwell, Members at Large; Rev. Luke Stevens-Royer, ex officio.

Absent: Joe Lobl, Member at Large.

Guest: Amy Nelson, director of Faith Development

1. **Call to order.** Ann called the meeting to order.
2. **Chalice Lighting & Reflection.** Walt reflected on the theme of Holding History and read from William Stafford's "Breathing". Ann lit the chalice.
3. **Motion to approve agenda and previous meeting minutes.** Rob moved, and Molly seconded, approving the agenda and previous meeting minutes. Approved.
4. **Financial reports.** Rob said assets are down a bit, and spending is higher, but that's typical for this time of year. What's unusual, he said, is that we're not getting an infusion of auction income this year, because the auction has been put off until the spring of 2022. Rob provided further details of a recent bequeath, saying that James Broadbent has bequeathed First UU \$22,374.57, which is going to the Endowment Fund. Rob also said that a recent participant in the SMT Finance Team meeting wondered about spending church dollars on the potential donor site. Ann said all interactions to date with architects have been on a gratis basis, so no expense there. She also said the only expense related to Building Our Future/Beyond Ourselves has been for a brief discussion with an attorney to better understand the impacts of a potential historic designation for our building. In response to a question from Kim, Ann said that we're expecting communications from architectural firm HGA regarding providing us a more detailed report in March 2022, including the issue of the suitability of the potential donated land for development. That communication will include proposals for costs for providing us with various levels of information. Kim said she understood that First UU will need to spend some dollars in future for the board and congregants to make an informed decision.
5. **Minister's report.** Rev. Luke said that each week recently, with Sunday services, has been an opportunity to welcome someone else back into the building. With the evolving COVID situation, he said this is still a time of change, and our church needs to be nimble, patient, curious and ready to adapt. Rev. Luke provided some specific updates: (1) COVID-related. We're considering a few changes with Sunday services: Consider moving away from registration, efforts to make sanctuary seating a little easier, upcoming survey to gauge congregants' comfort level with meeting in person. (2) Holidays. A variety of opportunities is being considered. Rev. Luke said he hopes 2022 will bring fuller in-person opportunities. Rev. Luke said that through December, we are not planning indoor coffee hours. In response to a question, Rev. Luke said consideration is being given to a vaccination requirement for attending holiday services, plus registration and no singing. Molly wondered if medical exceptions to vaccination requirement may be allowed.

Old business

6. **Building Our Future/Beyond Ourselves: NE Property Tours.** Kim asked whether Greg and George Huston could take a tour of the potential donor property with an iPad to augment the

documentation that we have. Greg said he would ask. Walt said that as discussions move forward, it's important to acknowledge that the issue isn't just about the building, but related issues such as what happens to the Memorial Garden and outdoor space. Ann said that what seems to keep getting lost is that the donors aren't insisting on this piece of property; they are saying that they feel strongly that a new building on a different site would better suit our mission, and that if the site currently offered is not accepted, then they are prepared to parlay their gift to support another piece of property. The donors will not transfer their gift to supporting staying on our current site. Discussion followed regarding possible timelines and what comes next. Ann said that in light of the recent visit by the HGA architectural firm to the potential donated site, that we are looking for their report of that site, plus their updated assessment of whether staying in our current building is an option given our mission and goals. Ann broached how best to communicate to the congregation the latest developments. She suggested congregational forums for January, February and March. The forums would include highlighting assessments about the shortcomings of our current building (as compiled by Hanneke van Duersen and posted on our website), updates by a local Realtor on what our current property may be worth, and providing more detail about assessments of our current and potential property by HGA. Rev. Luke pointed out that the BOF/BO team will be meeting before the holidays (Dec. 5). Discussion followed regarding how to structure forums early next year so as to avoid overwhelming people with information. Ann suggested that we strongly separate the stay-or-go question from consideration of the property that the donors have offered. Consensus agreed, that the focus should be on whether our current property meets our needs, allowing congregants to vote stay or go on that basis, setting aside for now the issue of the property that has been offered for donation. Kim suggested that we make clear to the congregation the question of whether our current site meets our needs or not, and what would be the cost of remodeling. Molly suggested that the question of whether we stay or go is not dependent on knowing where we might go if we don't stay on our current property. Ann agreed; the where we go is less important than the congregation deciding whether or not our mission is served by staying on our current site. Discussion turned to a request by the donors to honor their desire to remain anonymous, regardless of whether anyone knows or thinks they know who the donors are. Greg moves, Dave seconds a motion stating: **"Motion:** First UU board of directors supports the strong desire of the donors of the potential property in northeast Rochester to remain anonymous. The donors do not want personal recognition about the potential gift now, or in the future, if the gift is accepted, feeling that discussion of the property is a distraction from the larger issue facing the congregation of whether our current site meets our mission, or whether we need to decide to go somewhere else. The donors further request that if someone discovers the donors' identity, that the board and others at First UU honor the donors' request for privacy." Approved.

7. **RASA – Rochester Arts and Science Academy.** Kim and Amy Nelson, director of Faith Development, shared information with the board regarding RASA's request to lease space from us beginning in the 2022-2023 school year because they are expanding their program. RASA is looking at leasing space for their 4th and 5th grades and they may add a 6th grade. Our building has 7 classrooms available, 3 on the main floor and 4 on the second. RASA would also need to use the Commons for lunch and for PE on days when students can't go outside. Lunches are catered in, so RASA doesn't need to use our kitchen. The sanctuary might be used on occasion, but they would need to reserve it in advance. They would need a secure entrance. They will provide their own Internet. RASA currently has a 27-page lease (which it is continuing) with the Congregational Church. Amy suggested following the same lease, with an addendum. As a starting point in negotiations, RASA is suggested a \$35,000 per year flat rate lease. Installing a fire door would be their responsibility and cost. They would provide all of their furniture. They would bring in a cleaning service twice a week. Amy said there would be plenty of space for our children and youth in the classrooms on Sundays. She said we'll need to make clear with RASA that this is shared space. Amy said entering an agreement with RASA would be part of living our mission. She said it would add a lot of life to the building and make use of space that goes largely unused during the week. Amy said she has presented this proposal to church staff and explained that this should not add any responsibility to staff. Kim said the thought now is for a 1-year lease, with either party being able to suggest that it should not be renewed or that it could be re-

negotiated. Kim said RASA is not ultimately interested in buying our building; they are looking for a stop-gap solution to their space issues. Amy and Kim said that as talks continue, among the issues to address will be utilities, paying for improvements and insurance. They said they'll come back to the board in December for a decision on whether we move forward. Using our building is RASA's first choice, but they need an answer from us by the end of December. If the board approves, then Kim indicated that a lease would be finalized after Jan. 1. Amy said she'd like to get more information out to the congregation at a December forum.

8. **Shared Ministry.** Not discussed.

New business

9. **Social Justice book discussion.** Ann said that if anyone would like to facilitate a discussion of one of three books chosen for this winter to let Amy Nelson know. The three books are: Caste: The Origins of Our Discontent, by Isabel Wilkerson, Breathe: A Letter to my Sons, by Imani Perry, and Braiding Sweetgrass, by Robin Wall Kimmerer.

Other / Announcements

10. None.

Meeting adjourned.

Next meeting: Via Zoom, Wednesday, Dec. 15, 6:45 p.m. check-in and 7:00 p.m. meeting.

Reflection theme: Opening to Joy – Brianna

Respectfully submitted, Greg Turosak, secretary