

**First Parish Unitarian Universalist – Canton**  
**Minutes of the Parish Committee**  
**December 11, 2024**  
**7:15 PM on Zoom**

**In Attendance:**

**Kitty McGregor**, President  
**Dave Williams**, VP-Administration  
**Larry Cotton**, Treasurer  
**Debbie Radovsky**, VP-Member Services  
**Don Seaman**, Member-at-Large  
**Bette Wells**, Member-at-Large  
**Rev. Dr. Michelle Walsh**, Minister

**2024-25 Parish Committee Guests:**

**Rev. Dr. Clyde Grubbs**

**Absent:**

**Jonette Nagai**, Clerk

**Call to Order and Chalice Reading:** The meeting was called to order at 7:15PM. Bette lit the chalice and gave the following chalice reading:

**The Chalice is a Symbol**  
by Debra Faulk

A chalice lit in our midst is a symbol of our liberal faith,  
A faith built on the foundation of freedom, reason and tolerance  
A faith sustained by acts of kindness and justice  
A faith that demands the living out of goodness  
A faith that requires thoughtfulness  
A faith of wholeness  
This tiny flame is the symbol of the spark of all this within each of us.

**Consent Agenda:**

The Parish Committee (PC) unanimously voted to approve the minutes of the November 13, 2024 meeting after minor changes suggested by Michelle to the original draft.

**Ministers' Thoughts and Concerns:**

The first topic addressed was the revised Dignity Fund policy drafted by Michelle. Both Larry and Kitty reviewed and provided input before it was circulated to the Parish Committee (PC) members. The policy includes language that the Treasurer is obligated to communicate to the PC any issues that arise in the administration of the fund. Disbursements from the fund are limited to members and active friends. After some discussion, the PC approved the policy. The next step will be to move most of the balance in the Dignity Fund checking account to a money market fund so that it can earn some interest while still allowing for easy transfer into the checking account when the need arises for a disbursement.

As part of a response to varying levels of angst we are experiencing as a result of the incoming administration, there was a discussion around publishing a Statement of Conscience in the Canton Citizen. One possibility is to take out an ad once a month which would also serve as part of our outreach to the broader community. Although the budget includes \$750 for publicity, almost \$500 has already been spent. Kitty asked that the PC explicitly approve spending some amount over the budget for this item. If we are willing to purchase a quarter page ad for several consecutive months, the cost would be \$346.50 per ad including color. One of the ads would be \$446.50 per ad if we wanted color; black and white ads would be \$346.50.

Two proposals were voted on: 1) to dedicate the Christmas eve collection to be used to pay for an ad in early January with a Statement of Conscience instead of for the Dignity Fund; and 2) to allow for expenses up to \$2,000 over the current budget for monthly ads in the Canton Citizen. The first proposal was adopted by a vote of 5 for and 1 against; the second was unanimously adopted.

There was a discussion around limiting the number of hybrid Zoom services due to volunteer fatigue. In December, both the service on the Sunday before Christmas and on Christmas Eve will not be on Zoom. The PC was on board with this.

**President's Concerns:**

The Police Department is proposing a number of projects that could potentially impact the church. First, they are asking for the town for money to put up a fence to separate their property. Second, they are proposing a shooting range behind their property to be used by the police. After some discussion, it was determined that additional information was needed, but there was discomfort expressed at having a shooting range next door.

There have also been several recent incidences of demonstrators using church property to park and gather. Kitty proposed putting up signs that make it clear that the church is private property, and no trespassing is allowed. The police chief has indicated that it would make it easier for them to respond to a request for help in handling trespassers and that they would respond to a such a request. A motion was passed unanimously to put up these signs.

Clyde did question why the onus is being put on us to deal with a problem which shouldn't be our responsibility since the trespassing is occurring as a result of people demonstrating against the police. However, Debbie noted that it is inevitable that a time will come when we will also need outdoor surveillance cameras and metal detectors given the world we live in.

Don, Larry, Carol, and Michelle will be attending a security training course at a local synagogue.

It was noted that someone has been breaking into the clothing donation shed. Signs will be put up there along with an alarm that will be triggered by motion inside the shed.

Finally, Kitty took some time to stress the importance of thinking about and acting in ways that will preserve and strengthen Unitarian Universalism and our church. This could involve a shift in focus or approach. She included the Mary Oliver quote "tell me what do you plan to do with this one wild and precious life" as part of the agenda to describe this concern. We will need to figure out ways to talk and support each other as things get tough. She noted that the Statement of Conscience is a good start.

#### **Treasurer's Report:**

This morning, there was a meeting of the "Finance Committee" (Larry Cotton, David Bryant, Carol Smith, David Biggers, Dick Mezger, Kitty McGregor, and Michelle) to talk about bookkeeping processes, the process for submitting reimbursement forms, etc.

Larry noted that we are more or less on track with the budget. It looks like pledges are close to 50% and expenses are in line.

Kitty and Debbie gave a shout out to Michelle for the excellent Interfaith Thanksgiving service.

Michelle asked for clarification about Footnote 5 on the financial reports.

Michelle also asked for clarity as to whether the affirmation about the housing allowance allocation was for the church's fiscal year and that no reaffirmation was necessary for the coming calendar year.

#### **VP/Ministry Reports:**

**Vision Ministry** – There was no update for the Vision Ministry. However, David did note that Larry provided information necessary for the Stewardship campaign and that he has started working on the Stewardship campaign for the coming year. Dave proposed keeping the Stewardship campaign separate from the Legacy Giving campaign. Michelle provided the board with a link to UUA materials on Legacy Giving campaigns. Lastly, a decision was made to postpone the next internal Vision meeting until January by Michelle and Kitty to which there was no objection.

**Membership/Friends** – Debbie reported that she has winnowed down the list of people to contact to confirm membership status details to approximately 8. She then asked who would be printing and sending out letters to these people since she doesn't have the necessary equipment. It was decided that Carol would help generate the letters for Deb's signature. In terms of timing, Michelle noted the need to confirm membership for the January UUA certification, publishing the membership directory in February, in addition to the stewardship and legacy giving campaign needs so the letters need to go out soon.

**Congregational Life Ministry** – Don was only able to give a brief update since he had to leave. He has been working with Nick Foray (sp?) on the church audio which should be remediated before the holiday services but noted that one belt pack appears to be missing (Unit 5). Don will ask Unity whether they might know where it is. For upcoming speakers, Don will be finalizing details for the February 15<sup>th</sup> event with Liam and is working on a number of other programs for 2025. He's also been attending CDEI meetings, but needs to be added to their mailing list so that he is kept up-to-date when meetings occur. Neither he nor Michelle were able to make the CDEI meeting this past Monday.

#### **Miscellaneous Items:**

Kitty and Debbie will be handing out flyers at the train station.

Kitty will be talking to her accountant to follow up on what might be the impact of the church incorporating from a tax perspective. Michelle noted that an alternative would be to get an IRS determination letter. It is believed that the Ministerial Fund may have such a letter; Kitty will continue working on this issue and also follow up with Tom Hanold for details regarding an IRS determination letter.

Debbie decided to look into getting grants for the church and signed up with a company who does this sort of thing. Unfortunately, they would be looking for an additional \$1,500 to do the actual work. Kitty suggested that Debbie speak with someone from the Braintree Church since they have a lot of expertise in getting grants. Also, Michelle noted she has forwarded information related to procuring grants multiple times to members of the PC and Vision teams. Clyde also reminded us that the UUA regional staff can help.

#### **Next Meeting of the Parish Committee:**

In general, Parish Committee meetings are held on the second Wednesday of the month at 7:15pm on Zoom. The next meeting will be Wednesday, January 8<sup>th</sup>.

**Closing Words:**

Michelle read a reading (#191 by Steve Abbott) from the book “Lifting Out Voices; Readings in the Living Tradition” by the Unitarian Universalist Association:

The time has come. We must defend our dream. Proclaim **this** as what is best in us. Where would we be without our variant love? The world would shrivel, die. Without surprise, boredom would be the sole master of space, and summer joys would perish under constant snow.

**Adjournment:**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:18PM.

**Open Follow-up Items from previous meetings:**

- Get IRS determination letter for tax exempt status before January 20, 2025 or State recognition. (Kitty)
- Send thank you note to driveway vendor. (Kitty?)
- Work on planned giving project. (Kitty, Dave, and Debbie)
- Kitty and Carol Smith to work on rental rate charts and process for one-off rentals
- Dave Bryant, Kitty, and Debbie to work on contract language and policy for long-term rentals.
- Draft up formal policy for handling in-kind donations for approval of PC at next meeting. (Larry)

*Minutes prepared, and respectfully submitted, by Jonette Nagai, Parish Committee Clerk*