

**Annual Meeting of the Membership
Birmingham Unitarian Church
Meeting Minutes
May 21, 2023**

This Annual Meeting was held virtually on the Zoom internet platform. The Zoom polling feature was used for voting on motions.

Welcome and Call to Order – Donna Larkin Mohr

- The Zoom polling feature was used to confirm that the chair could be heard with 97 voting yes.
- The meeting was called to order at 1:13 PM. Donna used a gavel donated in memory of George H. Meyer to commemorate his role as parliamentarian at annual meetings and in appreciation for his donation to the General Endowment Fund.

Invocation and Chalice Lighting – Rev. Mandy Beal

Quorum Count – Donna Larkin-Mohr and Cynthia Osterhage

Attendees were counted. A quorum count was declared.

Reading of BUC Covenant – Mary Gawel-Ensroth

Motion to Proceed as Usual – Donna Larkin Mohr

- Craig Stroup moved that we proceed as usual.
- The motion was approved using the Zoom polling feature with 99 voting yes, 1 voting no, and 4 abstaining.

Meeting Covenant and Rules of Procedure – Donna Larkin Mohr

- Donna explained that Robert's Rules of Order would be used during the meeting with the Zoom polling feature employed to conduct voting on motions. She asked that votes only be submitted by those who are currently members of BUC. The Zoom polls would be displayed on the screen, and screenshots would be taken of the results. Keith Ensroth would function as Parliamentarian.

Minutes from the 2021-2022 Annual Meeting – Donna Larkin Mohr

- Refer to page 43 of the 2022-2023 Annual Report.
- Craig Stroup moved that the minutes of the May 22, 2022 Annual Meeting as published in the 2022-2023 Annual Report be approved.
- The minutes were approved using the Zoom polling feature.

Service and Leadership Recognition – Steven Dearing, Rev. Mandy Beal, Shannon Snideman, Craig Stroup

- Refer to page 41 of the 2022-2023 Annual Report. Five congregants were recognized for their service and leadership.
- From the Co-Directors of Music – Craig Stroup
- From the Minister – Janet Brown
- From the Executive – Craig Spangler
- From the Director of Religious Education – Nathan Schreck
- From the Board of Trustees – Barb Eschner

Nominating Committee – Cynthia Osterhage

- Refer to page 37 of the 2022-2023 Annual Report.
- Cynthia informed everyone that voting had closed at 1:00 PM and that the results would be reported at the end of the meeting.

Social and Environmental Justice Council – Jane O’Neil

- Refer to page 32 of the 2022-2023 Annual Report.
- As chair of the Environmental Action Team, Jane reported that the team had focused on implementing the items in the Environmental Sustainability Plan. The plan had been created in the 2021-2022 church year and had been approved by 96 percent of voters attending the May 2022 Annual Meeting. Specifically, action was taken on water mitigation and native plantings. Ice abatement with more environmentally friendly solutions was not implemented. And work continues to devise a funding strategy for solar panels.

Treasurer’s Report – Diane Slon

- Refer to page 8 of the 2022-2023 Annual Report.
- Utilizing a slide presentation, Diane stated that BUC’s current financial situation is relatively stable. The 2022-2023 fiscal year is forecasted to end with expenses \$15,000 over budget, due mostly to

- lower-than-expected rental income and the cancellation of Fall Rummage along with higher-than-expected expenses for the building and grounds.
- Upon the recommendation of the Budget and Finance Committee, the board approved the budget for the fiscal year of 2023-2024 with an estimated \$64,000 deficit, reflecting a decline in expected revenue due to lower membership pledges and decreased rental and rummage income.
 - Including the upcoming church year, BUC will have experienced deficit budgets for five years. Some of those losses have been covered by funding and tax relief to businesses from the Federal CARES Act. The remainder of these funds will be used to cover the upcoming approved budget deficit in the 2023-2024 fiscal year. There will be no more funds available from the federal government.
 - BUC's cash position is strong and is projected to have approximately \$200,000 in uncommitted cash at the end of fiscal year 2022-2023. Those funds will be used to cover the upcoming fiscal year's deficit and any unknown expenses.
 - The number of households pledging to BUC has declined by approximately 25 percent. This decrease impacts not only pledge income, but also results in less fundraising dollars, plate collections, and endowment donations.
 - Maintaining the BUC building and grounds will cost an estimated \$100,000 to \$300,000. Maintaining the building is important to attract potential rental income.
 - Diane concluded that BUC must look for new solutions to ensure stable and balanced budgets. She ended with a call to action asking members to give of their time, talent, and treasure. She made a special appeal to those individuals who have not yet submitted their pledges for the current Stewardship campaign.

President's Remarks - Donna Larkin Mohr

- Refer to page 5 of the 2022-2023 Annual Report.
- Donna highlighted some aspects of the Board of Trustees Report including the work of the Policy Governance Task Force, whose work is expected to conclude at the end of the calendar year.

- Donna also thanked the volunteers who worked on the Article II Task Force and the Board officers who helped and guided her in her role as board president.

Article II Discussion and Vote – Donna Larkin Mohr

- Donna explained the UUA General Assembly delegate process. Based on membership numbers, BUC is eligible to send six delegates from the congregation to the General Assembly. These delegates can choose to attend as business only participants and be able to take part in the business portions of the General Assembly without having to pay the usual conference fees.
- Craig Stroup put forth the following motion: “Based on the proposal to amend Article II of the UUA Bylaws and Rules, as this proposal stands as of January 20, 2023, and considering no possible future amendments, do you approve that we charge BUC’s delegates to vote in favor of the proposed changes to Article II of the UUA Bylaws and Rules?”
- A vote of “yes” would approve the UUA moving forward with the proposed amendment to Article II. A vote of “no” would not approve any additional work to change Article II now and for the next two years. And a vote of “abstain” would indicate that the voter is abstaining from voting on the proposed amendment and is recognizing that the abstention will not affect the charge to the BUC delegates in any way.
- Mary Jo Ebert and Keith Ensroth explained how the discussion on the motion would proceed. Anyone wishing to express an opinion could use their laptops to indicate a green dot speaking in favor of the amendment and a red dot speaking not in favor of the amendment. If anyone was using an iPad or phone, they could click on the “raise your hand” icon. Should all else fail, one could just raise their actual hand to be recognized to speak. Each speaker would be allotted one minute to speak. Utilizing this process would enable speakers to take turns speaking for and against the amendment. Everyone was reminded that this process was taking place for discussion purposes only. The vote on the amendment would take place afterwards.
- A procedural question was asked as to how BUC delegates would be instructed to vote at the General Assembly once amendments were put forth. Donna answered that BUC delegates will vote as the congregation votes at the annual meeting and that those delegates will have the

latitude to decide what they feel reflects the wishes of the congregation if amendments are made to the proposed changes.

- The following comments were made concerning the amendment:
 - The most important thing we are doing today is deciding if the language will draw future generations in the same way the principles and sources drew us.
 - UUism is grounded in reality; yet the proposed values do not include science.
 - Science and reason; the right of conscience and freedom of belief; the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society; peace, liberty, and justice for all are the values that drew us to Unitarian Universalism. They are even more important in today's world. But these values – with the exception of justice – are either absent from the new value statements or significantly moved to the background.
 - The changes to Article II were poorly drafted. It appears that there was a lack of carrying forward the value of some of our key principles and a lack of any explanation of what the deficiencies are in the current principles and sources and how the new values and inspirations are supposed to address those deficiencies. Instead of making changes to the current Article II, the Eighth Principle should be adopted.
 - Change is necessary, but not all change is good. For example, when Karl Marx's views were put into practice, the effect was disastrous. Bylaws exist to set up ways to govern, and principles should exist in a preamble, not in a constitutional document.
 - The current article is valid. There is no clear statement as to what is wrong with the existing Article II. Many important words have been omitted.
 - Historically, the UUA has struggled with guidance. The current guidance is fifty years old. The process needs to be focused on the future. It is time to move forward.
 - The changes to Article II point out the importance of love, while the current language avoids the word love.
 - BUC needs its best talent to work on resolving its financial issues rather than spending the next year focused on the amendments to Article II and building coalitions with fifteen other churches to get those amendments passed.

- Using the Zoom polling feature, the motion was not approved with 32 voting yes and 71 voting no.

Results of the Election – Cynthia Osterhage

- Cynthia announced the results for the Board of Trustees: Andrew Schreck, President (one-year term); Tony Kubien, Vice President (one-year term); Craig Stroup, Treasurer (one-year term); Amy Smalley, Secretary (one-year term); Julia Pulver, Trustee (one-year term), Diane Slon, Trustee (two-year term), Claudia Kocher, Trustee (three-year term), Tanya Nordhaus, Trustee (three-year term), and Brian Schandavel, Trustee (three-year term).
- The results for the Stewardship Committee were Bob Clement and Paul Vachon for two-year terms.
- The results for the Nominating Committee, all two-year terms, were Janet Brown, Tom Cranston, Heidi Kapsokavathis, Marilyn Mast, and Paula Olson.
- Cynthia thanked the remaining nominees for the Nominating Committee and reminded them that should circumstances come up that necessitate a committee member having to leave, the remaining nominees might be called upon to serve, as has happened in the past.

Issues Arising for the Good of the Congregation

- Craig Stroup expressed gratitude and appreciation to Cynthia Osterhage for her work as chair of the Nominating Committee, to Donna Larkin Mohr for her work as president of the board of trustees, and to David Uricek, who managed Zoom for the meeting.
- A question was asked to confirm the location of the BUC Constitution and Bylaws. The document is on the BUC website.

Craig Stroup moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved using the Zoom polling feature.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Gawel-Ensroth, Secretary