

All Souls Church, Unitarian

Annual Congregational Meeting Minutes

December 6, 2015 - 1:15 p.m.

The Rev. Rob Hardies, Senior Minister, opened the meeting with a quote from Dorothy Day, activist on behalf of the poor and homeless and co-founder of the Catholic Worker Movement: “People say, what is the sense of our small effort? They cannot see that we must lay one brick at a time, take one step at a time. A pebble cast into a pond causes ripples that spread in all directions. Each one of our thoughts, words and deeds is like that. No one has a right to sit down and feel hopeless. There is too much work to do.”

Moderator Erika Landberg assumed the role of Chair.

Anne Bradley, Membership Secretary, announced that a quorum was present - more than 10 percent of 958 voting members.

Parliamentarian Cledwyn Jones was introduced, along with Timekeeper Dori Phelps and Secretary, Mark Matthews.

Assistant Secretary Allison Ralph showed slides giving the meeting rules, which were approved by all present in a voice vote. The Meeting Agenda and 2014 Congregational Meeting Minutes were also approved.

Opening Statements and Reports

Rob Hardies: 2015 has been a good, full year. At this time in 2014 the church was under renovation. In March, we dedicated our newly finished space. Looking beyond All Souls, we have a vision of new housing units at Columbia Heights Village on what is now a parking lot. The need for affordable housing was underscored in June when 400 people lined up to apply for two available dwellings. All Souls is also involved in a Greater Columbia Heights organizing project. Members are active in the Black Lives Matter movement and in the Reeb Voting Rights Project in North Carolina, where recent laws serve to restrict access by the poor and minorities to the ballot box. All Souls hosted UUs engaged in combating climate change.

Continuing an All Souls’ association dating from the 1940s, the church in November welcomed a group of survivors of the Hiroshima atom bomb and their families.

The past year has also seen an effort to make worship more intergenerational.

During Rob's sabbatical in the first half of 2016, the Rev. Susan Newman Moore will be acting senior minister. The Rev. Rebecca Parker, president emerita of the Starr King School for the Ministry will be sabbatical minister and theologian-in-residence.

Membership - Anne Bradley: The membership of All Souls Church Unitarian stands at 1406, up 58 from December, 2014, continuing an increase in membership since 2005. Eligible voters dropped by 2, to 956. There were fewer new members - 58 - down from 159 in 2014. However, a staff vacancy meant that new, departing, and deceased members were not tracked as well as in previous years. The arrival of Heather Kramer as Membership Coordinator will enable us to follow up with people who fill out guest cards. A new data base should help maintain accurate numbers. Chuck Shields, noting the gap between the numbers of nonvoting and voting members, asked what was being done to turn new members into voting members. (Only members who have made a contribution of record in the past year are eligible to vote.) Anne noted that the gap is not far out of line with other urban churches, although that "doesn't make it good." Membership and the Annual Giving team are working together to increase the number of contributors.

Board of Trustees - Jenice View, President: Jenice introduced Board members, adviser Sterling Lloyd, and officers. She explained the Board's intent to maintain careful communication and consultation with the congregation; establish policies and goals to guide All Souls' programs and management; and monitor the church's performance in carrying out those policies and goals. The past year's accomplishments included: the first "money talks" retreat to increase Board members' understanding of church finances; approving guidance documents for bequests; working with the Church Council on five-year goals; restructuring financial management and oversight; restructuring the Committee on Ministry; beginning a narrative budget process to give the Congregation a better idea of what the money goes for; launching the Safe Congregations policy process; launching the Committee on Right Relations; and committing the Board to engaging actively in anti-racism training.

Church Council - Erika Landberg: With 46 committees and groups, the Council is where much of the work of the church gets done, implementing the concept of lay leaders and church staff working together in shared ministry. With the leadership of the Council Steering Committee it conducts three Council meetings a year, each one drawing 40-60 attendees, and monitors progress on the Church's Visioning Goals, reporting to the Board. The Council works in partnership with the Leadership Development and Nominating Committee on ways to promote church leadership, in particular through the annual Leadership Development Course. Volunteer promotion activities include the semi-annual Find Your Ministry Fair and the EASIS (Engaging All Souls in Service) table each Sunday.

Lay leaders were asked to stand and received a round of applause.

Visioning Goals Progress - Karen King, Cledwyn Jones, and Matt Bowen: The numbers offer a mixed picture: Average attendance increased through 2013, then decreased slightly during the renovation. Diversity continued to dip, from 26 percent of members identifying as persons of color in 2011 to 23 percent in 2015. While membership has increased, voting/giving membership has remained flat over the past 3 years. As of November, 2015, we had fewer pledges for the coming year than we received at the same point in 2014. The number of people involved social justice is increasing. Forty-two people are now part of the Caring Network. There are also over 200 opportunities for spiritual growth and development.

A three-question survey to take the pulse of the Congregation drew 259 responses. It showed that 76 percent are engaged in church activities outside Sunday services; 65 percent had made a new friend they could rely on.

Asked what they were looking for from the church, 18% of respondents wanted more opportunities for families, beyond RE; 18% sought more opportunities to engage locally; 17% urged that All Souls work more intentionally at building a community; 15% favored more focus on social justice, 14%, more adult-spiritual-development opportunities, 8%, a more spiritual church, 4%, special attention paid to life's big phases.

Members of the Goals Task Force were asked to stand. Cledwyn said the task force was working to improve the accuracy and consistency of its measurements and looking for useful metrics to inform next steps. Shared ministry is a huge component. Ways need to be found to link Executive Team and lay priorities. The ET now has an annual goals process that sets clear targets.

Bylaws Amendment -- Cledwyn Jones moved approval of an amendment to permit the Board of Trustees to create rules for remote participation in meetings, as provided for under *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*.

Motion to add to Article VII of ASC bylaws:

Section 4. Remote Participation: The Board may adopt rules governing the use of electronic meetings in the conduct of its business, including meetings by teleconference, videoconference, email, and additional means not specified herein.

The motion was seconded. Points raised in discussion: Should there be a limit to the number of times remote access could be used? What is lost by not being present? Remote-access meetings are now standard corporate practice. Brian Marshall, 2014 Board President, questioned why new authority was necessary for remote attendance. He suggested Article VII of the bylaws was sufficient, and noted that Church rules can preempt Roberts Rules. The motion, he said, suggested that the past practice of occasional voting by email was in contravention of the

bylaws. Meredith Higgins Hargrave said the Joseph Priestley District uses technology that allows attendees to see each others' faces.

Libbie Buchele moved to amend the motion so as to prevent email becoming a legitimate means of conducting a meeting. The motion was seconded. In discussion, Board member Bruce DePuyt said the point of the original motion was merely to authorize the Board to begin exploring remote-access options. A question was raised about what was permitted under the District code pertaining to nonprofits.

The Buchele amendment was adopted by voice vote.

Put to a Congregational vote, the Jones motion, as amended, drew overwhelming support, with a handful of "no" votes.

Section 4. Remote Participation: The Board may adopt rules governing the use of electronic meetings in the conduct of its business, including meetings by teleconference, videoconference, and additional means not specified herein, but may not allow meetings conducted exclusively by email.

Church of the Advent Lease - Discussion: Sharon Groves described an ongoing dialogue with leaders and members of the Church of the Advent (C of A), which rents the sanctuary to hold Sunday evening services. Ultimately, All Souls would face a decision on whether to renew the lease in light of C of A's affiliation with a breakaway Anglican movement that opposes same-sex relationships and women clergy. C of A had been a very good tenant. Over three months, a small group composed of members of both churches held discussions to understand each other's beliefs. The discussions were guided by accepted peacemaking practices. All Souls participants planned to make a recommendation to the Board later in December, 2015. Given All Souls' prophetic voice in championing LGBT rights, could this dialogue "be part of the work we do going forward?" So far, the dialogue had been rich and powerful.

Rob Hardies noted that the District's marriage-equality bill had been signed in All Souls' sanctuary. At the same time, the dialogue helped to break down barriers to communication. Too often, present-day culture prevents groups with opposing views from talking to each other. He could testify to the power of the conversations held to date.

Third Century Challenge Fundraising Update - Laura Lester: As of October 6, \$9.15 million had been pledged and \$6.83 million - 74.7% - collected. Out of 733 pledges, 346 had been paid in full, and another 200 were 70%-80% paid. All Souls owed roughly \$4.2 million of the \$5 million loan taken out in 2014. We need to receive \$500,000 to \$700,000 more in pledges by March 31 to meet an April, 2016 requirement to bring our loan balance to \$3.5 million. Starting in April, 2017, current plans call for refinancing \$2.5 million as an ongoing mortgage which will have to be paid out of the annual operating budget. Temporary measures to shore up the steeple and

payments still due to general contractor Forrester amount to \$250,000, leaving \$250,000 in our First Virginia Mortgage account.

Budget Highlights - Cheryl Gray, Treasurer: While people have been giving to the TCC, core contributions in 2015 have been flat - \$100,000 less than estimated in the budget. With an increase in rental and investment income, we can expect to break even for the year. Personnel costs fell \$100,000 below the 2015 budget due to vacancies early in the year. But the church is fully staffed for the first time in several years, resulting in a significant increase going forward. Building costs and system maintenance are higher than anticipated. We're paying All Souls' full share to the Joseph Priestley District, but 75 percent to UUA.

For 2016, the \$2.01 million budget reflects higher personnel costs due to sabbatical expenses and a shift in social-justice staff responsibility; higher maintenance costs from more intensive use of the building and more systems with maintenance contracts; and a small increase in program and fundraising costs. The budget proposes reducing the UUA payment to 50 percent. Starting in 2017, \$150,000 in mortgage payments will be added to expenses. The budget projects an increase in investment income and a church auction in the spring to raise \$30,000. No income is projected from C of A, given uncertainty about renewing the lease.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the 2016 budget.

Discussion: Bob Bonner voiced concern about a nearly \$200,000 budget increase and projected increase in investment income. Over 10 years, he contended, distributions from the endowment had eroded the principal by more than \$1 million. To support the proposed budget, a 30 percent increase in pledges would be needed, he said. Cheryl agreed there needed to be a push to increase pledges and expressed hope that once people had fulfilled their TCC pledges, annual giving would rise.

Asked about socially responsible investments (SRI), Cheryl said this is part of the Investment Committee's mandate. A portion of the endowment is managed by the UUA, which adheres to a SRI policy. A second manager, The Investment Fund for Foundations, follows what the IC considers the SRI spirit.

Chuck Shields expressed disappointment at cuts in payment to the UUA. Agreeing, Bob Johnsen said some church members feel the amount should not be negotiable. Cheryl responded that the church faced a tight situation, and the growth in members meant an increase in what the church owed. Clair Null wondered about the stability of rental income given that "volatile" charter schools represented an important share. Libbie Buchele said providing Religious Education space to a charter school amounts to filling a budget hole on the backs of children, limiting what they can do in classrooms also used by the charter school. Rob responded that RE was moving toward rotating classrooms, but this was based on curriculum, not rental. Mary

Wheeler asked about All Souls' commitment to low-income housing and what had happened to the Garfinckel bequest. Katie Loughary said 15 percent of the Shively endowment income went to the Beckner Advancement Fund, which supports various community endeavors. Carol Falk recounted that the Garfinckle bequest at one time provided a home for seniors. When the donated house was sold, the proceeds were supposed to go toward senior programs. However, the Board stopped the allocation in the 1990s, reasoning that seniors benefited from many church programs.

Put to a vote, **the budget** was approved overwhelmingly, with fewer than a dozen opposed.

Election of the Board and Officers - Susan Crim, Tim Rhodes, Leadership Development and Nominating Committee co-chairs: Tim Rhodes: The committee decided on a non-competitive slate, which allowed it to recommend candidates whose skills that complement those present members. To prepare, the LDNC met with board and held a leadership social, to which everyone was invited. All nominees had been interviewed. Tim moved the election of Board of Trustees nominees Anne Bradley; Kate Saylor, and Tracy Zorpette, and invited the candidates to speak.

Anne Bradley, deputy chief of staff to U.S. Sen. Kirsten Gillebrand (D-N.Y.), said she could not do her job on the Hill without this community and wanted to "give back some of what you have given to me." **Kate Saylor**, a lifelong Unitarian-Universalist, joined All Souls when she arrived in DC five years ago. Subletting at the time, she "found a spiritual home before I had a physical home." She's eager to delve into the complexity and nuance of church finances and grasp how All Souls programs interact with the community and beyond. In **Tracy Zorpette's** absence, Susan Crim described the nominee's years as an active member -- including RE, the Caring Committee, Jubilee Singers, ushering, and New Orleans. An attorney who represents children and domestic-violence victims, Tracy has also been an advocate in the movement to prevent gun violence.

An invitation was issued for **nominations from the floor**. There being none, a vote was called and the slate was elected without opposition. Each officer nominee and one additional Board nominee were then elected without opposition after each spoke briefly:

Erin Boeke Burke, nominee for Secretary, said she had been coming to All Souls for five years and was active on the Capital Assets Planning Team and Young Souls, and also involved in the Washington Interfaith Network. She was excited to take the next step.

Cledwyn Jones, a current Board member nominated to succeed Erika Landberg as **Moderator**, described having worked closely with Erika as liaison to the Church Council Steering Committee. He also co-chaired the 2020 Vision Goals Taskforce.

Nominee for **Membership Secretary**, **Laurie Lester**, spoke of staying in touch with members and working to enable them to keep in better touch with each other.

Esther Strongman spoke for her husband, **John, nominee for Treasurer**. He was on a two-week work trip to Laos. The couple were married at All Souls in 1981. John has chaired the Audit and Investment Committees.

Two officers were elected to serve an additional year: **Reeve Tyndall, Assistant Treasurer**, and **Allison Ralph, Assistant Secretary**.

Whitney Cooper, nominated to serve for one year to complete Cledwyn Jones's term, has been involved with WIN and the All Souls Housing Corporation, as well as efforts to encourage dialogue on race and ethnicity.

Election of Leadership Development and Nominating Committee members – Allison Ralph, Council secretary, reported on the Council's recommendations. The Committee's 15 members are elected for three-year terms. Continuing members are, for 2016: Morgan Duncan, Sterling Lloyd, Thurman Rhodes, Lisa Swanson; for 2016-2017: Will Hayes, Jenifer Ambrose, Tom Fox, Jennifer DuMond, Jen Bolick.

The new members elected were Elizabeth Coit, serving in 2016, and five to serve from 2016-2018: Valerie Briggs, Mark Matthews, Kathy Mulvey, Mary Topolinski, Marta Urquilla.

A series of brief remarks were made to honor the service of departing Board members and officers.

The Rev. Susan Newman Moore delivered the closing prayer.
The meeting **adjourned** at 3:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Matthews, Secretary