**First Unitarian Church of Providence**

Prudential Committee Meeting Notes

November 11, 2020

**ATTENDING:**

**Prudential Committee**

Michael Cappelli, President

Cheryl Bartholomew, Past-President

Odile Mattiauda, President-elect

Roberta Groch, Treasurer *(absent)*

David Francis, Assistant Treasurer

Claire Rosenbaum, Clerk

Tiffany Reed, Stewardship Liaison

Edie Warren, Personnel Liaison

Beth Armstrong, Strategic Planning

Louise Sloan, Community Life Liaison

Greg Kniseley, Social Justice Liaison

Elizabeth Allsworth, Spiritual Development Liaison

**Church Staff Attending**

Liz Lerner Maclay, Minister

Cathy Seggel, Director of Religious Education

Nancy Forsstrom, Church Administrator

**Guests**

Dr. Jim Cowan

Cynthia Rosengard

Nicholas Aaron Friesner

**Meeting was held remotely via zoom due to COVID-19 Emergency.**

**6:53 - Gathering**

Opening Words – (Louise Sloan) “The Low Road,” by Marge Piercy

Chalice Lighting & Covenant Reading

Call to Order – 6:59

**7:00 PM Minutes:**

October Minutes (Michael / Cheryl) – Approved with one abstention

**Reports**:

* **7:01 PM Minister (Liz) –** Liz reported in alignment with goals set with PruComm.

**Goal 1. Increasing strength, programs and fulfillment through the pandemic.** New programs focused on self-care, reflection, justice, anti-racism and anti-oppression, pastoral care and small group ministry. Joint group with First U and Bethel AME group is established, addressing race and racism, along with theology, identity and selfhood. Roger is very engaged with the Lay ministers, Soul Circles Buddy program. Food pantry partnership with Bethel AME may resume weekly distribution. Sunday service viewership had declined in the early fall, but increased recently. Michel recruited tech team. They are working on learning and refining the tech involved in virtual services. Bethel AME partnership is using the “Merciful Conversation in Relationship” curriculum. Planning a co- Service with Rev. Jenkins in December and again in January.

**Goal 2: Broaden/deepen musical range at First U** – Liz is working with Fred on this. Along with other diversity of music this fall, one service included a music video production of Don Henley’s Heart of the Matter featuring a new attendee who is participating from New York state, along with the Grays. Fred will be working with Delbert Collins from Bethel AME on the December and January joint services.

**Goal 3. : Broaden/deepen connections with clergy who are people of color** - Proposed a new initiative to RI Department of Health (RIDOH): Faith In Science clergy team. Liz is leading that with Pastor Mal Davis from Pleasant St. Baptist Church in Westerly in partnership with RIDOH to counter justifiable suspicion of vaccines and medical treatment by POC communities, especially African Americans. All other clergy on team are people of color.

* **7:08PM - DRE (Cathy)–** Weekly family chapel is offered virtually with support from Jenn N. and Anne V. Chapel is followed by smaller breakout groups – themes based on chapel service. Last year’s Coming of Age group presented on Nov. 1. Sr. High Youth group meets virtually on Sunday afternoon, Campus group on Sunday evening. Some from campus group want to take a leave in November. First UU at home packages going out this week via mail. Cathy continues to work with Liz, Kristi, Fred, Roger on worship planning. Harvest the Power (8) starts with Jenn N. next week. Widening the Circle of Concern – (12) has started with Cathy and Tiffany Reed. Proposed parent support groups need more interest before starting up. Planning for the “Common Read” – Breathe – Imani Perry for second semester. Relationship building and connection is the focus for everything.
* **7:14 PM Church Administrator (Nancy) ––** Groups using the building have settled into a routine. Groups meeting Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. No outside special events scheduled right now. First U 4 You packets are going out to 540 households – members, friends, RE households. Font desk volunteers are helping on this. Working on keeping communication up.
* **7:17 PM - Treasurer Report (David) -** With a third of the year gone by, we have spent 24% of the budget. 40% of pledges have been received. Total income is at 32%. The budgeted expenses were adjusted upward by $18,000 for the tech upgrade. The FY 19/20 surplus contribution also adjust upward by same amount to balance. On paper we have a surplus of $99,000. PPP $83,000 is still a loan. Nancy is working on the application for PPP forgiveness. Using the 24 week window that is allowed – $150,000 was spent during that time. We clearly spent more than the loan on payroll. Forgiveness may not come until April. However, we fully expect loan to be forgiven.
* **Liaison updates**
  + **7:25PM** **Strategic Planning** – (Beth) Task Force has been established for formulating a mission statement – Joe Fisler, Sena Pounder, Elizabeth Allsworth, Peter Laarman. They have met twice already; meeting again next week. Beth shared materials and notes from PruComm retreat and Mosaic Committee with them. Beth will keep PruComm informed. She expects to get work done in a month or two. Perhaps at next meeting there could be time to discuss milestones and plans for communication out to congregation.
  + **7:29PM** **- Congregational Life** – (Louise)– Thoughts and structure for forming the Mosaic committee: Louise wants to be sure to include liaisons to existing key church groups and committees. Louise will put out a call for people to nominate themselves for the committee and also recruit for a larger mailing list interest group. Tiered approach – book groups, professional led groups, etc. A little something in every newsletter – “five minutes on race” – short videos / articles. Work may overlap with Widening the Circle of Concern group.
  + **7:38PM** **Social Justice (Greg)**  –– Get the vote out effort was strong and effective – still need to find ways to get voters out in Georgia for two Senate runoff elections. Working with Nancy to schedule special Sunday Collections for rest of year. Would like to see some of the results of various social justice efforts highlighted in First U Times.
  + **7:40PM** **Spiritual Development (Elizabeth)**  – Connected with Phip Wheelock - Music Committee. Discussed the need for organ repair and increasing the musical offerings. Also discussed the need for reconfiguring of front of sanctuary space to accommodate more and various musical offerings. Worship - Committee is strong, flexible with changing needs, tech, etc. Small Group Ministry is holding monthly facilitator meetings. Soul Circle leaders need to help each other – especially newer facilitators. Deacons – Spoke with Nori D. regarding best place for Deacons (worship or community life). May need to review and possibly revise By-Laws, if necessary.
  + **7:52PM** **Stewardship** (Tiffany)- Changing fundraising strategy beyond “commitment drive”. Bring more folks around table to make things more holistic. Tiffany convened the group. They developed the following purpose statement: *“The Stewardship Team is home for fundraising, stewardship, and deepening a sense community for First Unitarian Church of Providence. A holistic team that supports our annual pledge drive, planned giving society, and “fun” and “fund” raising throughout the year, the Stewardship Team designs programming that centers and builds a culture of abundance, develops a congregation-wide attitude of gracious giving, raises the funds necessary for the execution of our mission and vision, and helps us to use our wealth to live out our seven principles.”* Following recommendation of Mark Ewert, Tiffany is asking PruComm to engage with a self-assessment survey for people in leadership. Please complete and return to Tiffany before Dec. 1. Data will help to identify priorities for the year.
  + **7:58PM** **Human Resources** – (Edie)–We need an HR committee. Liz and Edie have had to deal with some issues on their own that should have involved a committee. Performance reviews are completed. Performance reviews will be stored in locked cabinet in the office. Staff anniversaries coming up – Jenn 10 years; Jaime – 20 in January; Fred - 20 years in July. Cathy – 27; Walter – 22.

**DISCUSSION:**

* **8:02PM - Request for Sponsorship from Nicholas Aaron Friesner –** 
  + Sponsorship allows for applicant to move forward on path to ordination
  + Nicholas wants to live up to our expectations. He has been a member for about a year. This is the first congregation he has joined as an active member as an adult. He has been active on the lay ministry team. He holds a Masters in Theology from Yale and PhD. In Divinity from Brown U. Wants to take that knowledge and put into action. Feels that UU can do help his do this. Wants to become a military chaplain. Needs to catch up and do more practical work that he missed in academic work. Still waiting to hear about getting into Divinity School.
  + What kind of support can we bring for you? Nicholas wants to continue to be part of the congregation. He has joined Harvest the Power group. Wants to continue to learn and be part of the community – Small Group Ministry / lay ministry.
  + Thoughts on his experience with Lay ministry? – As a quiet person himself he has a strength as a good listener. May need to develop a louder voice when needed. Lay ministry gives opportunity to do both – growing in this regard.
  + Military chaplaincy is career goal – while in divinity school can join military through chaplain candidate program. Reservist and active in summertime.
* **8:20PM - Continue Discussion on Motion proposed via email –** 
  + **MOTION:** **"Move that the Meeting House and buildings remain closed for worship services as well as religious education for youth and families for the remainder of the Church year ending June 30, 2021. Additionally, the Prudential Committee will continue to support the initiatives recommended by the bridging team that are intended to strengthen our faith and community both internally and beyond."** (Michael /Beth)
  + Discussion with Bridging Team members: What benchmarks will you use to reopen, especially Sunday worship? Recommendations will be guided by incidents of new cases in the state, data and guidance from RIDOH and Governor’s orders and guidance for different kinds of activity. The larger the group, the higher the risk. This risk is even higher when community numbers are high. Different kinds of activity increase the risk. New case counts are higher today than they have ever been and trend is going up rapidly. Benchmarks for recommending re-opening – When new case count is low and staying low – positivity rate low .5 – 1%.

Governor’s current guidance – “If at all possible, offer service virtually.”

UUA guidance and recommendations – “Do not consider opening until summer of 2021.” We don’t want to go back to in person services until everyone can go back. Want to do what is safe for all as loving, caring community. Concern that we might lose members or pledges was raised. Bridging team has reached consensus on their recommendation.

Amendment (David) – to change the date to March 30 – no second. Motion to call the question – nine in favor – 2 abstention.

**Motion passed - 10 in favor – 1 opposed.**

Recommendation that we offer an all-congregation zoom opportunity to talk about this decision with Bridging Committee and PruComm. Strong and clear message will be crafted that explains that the Bridging Team will continue to meet and reassess when conditions might change to make an earlier opening possible and safe. Bridging Team will meet Monday and a communication about this decision will be sent to congregation in subsequent newsletter. PruComm members are invited to Bridging team Monday – 7-8PM.

* **9:02PM - Prudential Committee Goals / Priorities** 
  + Proposed PruComm goals were shared in google drive – All Pru Comm members asked to email Cheryl - say yes or no to each of the goals. Send her thoughts about the following:
  + Prioritize, set milestones / outcomes
  + Identify immediate action items
* **Additional items… Sanctuary Proposal to be discussed at future meeting**

**9:03 PM** **Closing Words** – (Louise Sloan) “We Need a God who Bleeds New” – Ntosake Shange

Extinguish Chalice

**9:04PM Adjourn (Michael / Cheryl)**

Motion to adjourn passed unanimously

Respectfully submitted,

Claire Rosenbaum, Clerk