

First Unitarian Church of Providence

Prudential Committee Meeting Notes

June 8, 2022

ATTENDING:

Prudential Committee

Odile Mattiauda, President

Michael Cappelli, Past-President

Joan Richards, President-elect *absent*

John Dooley, Treasurer

Rick Richards, Assistant Treasurer

Claire Rosenbaum, Clerk

Edie Warren, Personnel Liaison

Beth Armstrong, Strategic Planning *absent*

Louise Sloan, Community Life Liaison

Greg Kniseley, Social Justice Liaison

Alison Green, Spiritual Development Liaison

Vacant, Stewardship Liaison

Ex-officio - Liz Lerner Maclay, Minister

Carson Cole, Youth Representative *absent*

Church Staff Attending

Nancy Forsstrom, Director of Operations

Roger Peltier, Assistant Minister for Pastoral Care

Guests Attending

Peter Laarman

Andy Wilby

Hilary Salmons

Lisa Voutes

Janice Okoomian (virtual at 8:30 for Music Committee discussion)

6:45 PM – Gathering

Opening Words – (Michael) –Margaret Meade

Covenant Reading -

Call to Order – 6:55 PM

Approval of Minutes of April 13 (Odile/ Edie) – Minutes were approved unanimously.

Approval of Minutes from May 11 and May 25 meetings (Odile / Alison) – These minutes were also approved unanimously.

Introductions of New members – Former and new members shared their “bizarre bios” as a way of introduction to each other.

Announcements –

- Thanks to all who made the Annual Meeting on Sunday a success.
- Greg Kniseley and representatives from Spiritual Pathways will gather information to recommend emeritus status for Cathy over the summer. More information in the fall.
- Thanks to Louise as Community Life Liaison for arranging the wonderful Sweet P Blues Band social evening on Friday.

REPORTS

Director of Operation Report (Nancy) – (See written report). Nancy spent much of her time this month in preparation for the annual meeting – budget and annual report. Nancy has been getting messages from those who attended the meeting online. Several reported that they could not hear and were not sure they were given an opportunity to vote (although their votes were considered and all votes were unanimous). However, if there had been any controversial issues, they were unsure how their voices and votes would be considered. Hybrid meetings should always take time to stop and ensure that those online can hear, are heard, and have a chance to speak and register their votes.

There have been problems with the tower clock not keeping time (See report from David House). Verdin Company which did the repairs to the clock timing mechanism a few years ago admits that they did something wrong – gears are seizing. Verdin is paying for preservation expert to fix the gears. However, it has been determined that the clock gears all need to be cleaned. There are funds from the Capital Campaign available to pay for the cost of cleaning. Cost will be \$1000 - \$1500.

Motion: To accept estimate \$1000 - \$2500 to clean the clock while it is being repaired and use Capital Campaign funds to pay for this. (Odile / Edie). Passed unanimously.

Senior Minister Report (Rev. Liz) (See written report) – The congregation should expect more conversation regarding a mission statement. Church mission statements are meant to be reconsidered and updated every 7-10 years at least, to guide and ensure the relevance and alignment of the church’s work for the current times. Liz acknowledged that First U staff are not adequately trained in tech for hybrid (as in the attempt at hybrid annual meeting). We will need to pay attention to this need moving forward. Mandy Neff, new interim DRE, will start in August. Cathy will finish at the end of June.

Assistant Minister Report (Rev. Roger)– (See written report) Roger has been spending a lot of time on learning tech for hybrid and streaming and has come as far as he can with our existing technology. Hybrid church is not going away. We need to invest in appropriate, effective

technology and likely hire a tech person to make this possible for First U. Conversations are happening with Michael Cappelli and John Dooley regarding next steps on this front.

Treasurer Report (John) – (See written report) – We are in good shape. We are at 92% of church year. Revenues coming in are at 93.3%. Because of a lot of what we couldn't do because of COVID, expenses are under at 86% of budget. With Commitment Drive, we have almost same level of giving as last year at around \$475K. We have fifty fewer pledges, but a 16% increase in average pledge. The budget for 2022/23 was approved at the annual meeting. We will be working on redefining roles of Finance Committee. **Motion: To name Jay Glasson as Chair of Finance Committee** (Odile / Michael). Passed unanimously.

Commitment Drive (Rick) – (See written Report) – Official opening of next year's Commitment Drive will be first Sunday in March, 2023. However, there is a new timeline with tasks to occur before that. It will be a year-long effort involving PruComm and whole congregation. Diane Baxter will chair next year's commitment drive.

Social Justice (Greg) - Community Collections (See Report)– There were four applications for five pass through collection slots. The review committee accepted all four. There are also three standing pass through collections: Loaves and Fishes (November), Minister's Discretionary Fund (December) and Transylvania Partnership Church (January). Committee also considered strategies for creating greater visibility of the Community Collection program and helping members/friends understand the practice of generosity – and the connection between giving funds to the larger community and our congregation's mission.

Community Life (Louise) – Sweet P Blues Band event was a success. There were 50 attendees, many from First U as well as several Bethel AME members. Mosaic Team and History Committee are working on refurbishing parlors. Ministers Parlor will be focused on First U history. Photos of more current church life by Phil Lieberman will decorate the front parlor. The trim in front parlor will be painted a “sanctuary” blue that picks up a color in the carpet for a fresher more contemporary look.

Spiritual Life – (Alison) - A lot of effort went in the celebration for Cathy's retirement. Mandy Neff, Interim DRE came and met with Cathy, other staff, and Edie. She and Cathy are sharing a covenant.

Building and Grounds – Master plan for capital improvements will be ready by end of June to begin to move on by Fall. Finance committee will work on how to pay for needed repairs. Sound in meeting house and renovations for disability access are also needs to be considered.

Music Committee Recommendations (see Music committee 3 documents)

The music committee had considered using some of its budget to make a donation to Music One RI in lieu of “Royalties” when performing music composed by anonymous enslaved Africans.

This idea was inspired by a similar project at United Parish in Brookline (See <https://www.unitedparishbrookline.org/news/the-negro-spiritual-royalties-project>). When informed that such funds could not come from the operating budget, the deadline to be considered for a Community Collection had passed. Therefore, the Music Committee is requesting that their application be considered for a Special collection for Music One RI, since there is a fifth slot available in the calendar for next year. There is also a suggestion by Social Justice Liaison to make this “Royalties Project Collection” a standing collection.

Motion: To accept Music One RI as a special collection (Odile / Alison).

Table this for next meeting pending more information about the recipient organization.

Janice Okoomian (Music Committee Chair) - Music Committee is requesting that Beth Armstrong’s interim Music Director term extend to a second year, given that Rev. Liz will be on sabbatical this fall when a search for a permanent Music Director would otherwise need to begin. Beth has been approached and willing to serve and excited by this proposition.

Motion: That Beth Armstrong serve an additional year as Interim Music Director (2023/24 in addition to 2022/23) (Odile / Rick). Motion Passed Unanimously.

Consideration of plan for full time Music Director - It has become clear with survey of congregation about music that the congregational desire for music has expanded. The congregation wants more variety and opportunity for music in worship and other aspects of community life along with continued excellence. To meet this vision, a Music Director would need a lot more time devoted to finding music, people who can play it, rehearsal time, etc.; conceiving, and implementing extra opportunities for participatory music-making; better integration and coordination with youth music program; possible organization and direction of two choirs, one skilled in music reading and classical music, the other more skilled in rote singing and non-classical idioms. The congregation wants so much more from music than a part time Music Director can deliver. The Music Committee feels that being able to implement all of these ideas would be very exciting and have discussed this idea with Rev Liz who agrees. Funding a full time position would also indicate how serious we take the role of music in our worship and community life. The Music Committee would like to do a national search for our next permanent Music Director to find someone with the musical excellence and breadth necessary, but potential candidates would not likely make a move for a part time position.

We are confident that the congregation will give to this if they are excited about a more diverse and vibrant music program. PruComm will need to recognize and take into consideration various complexities -- funding, sound in the meeting house, many other layers. Space and sound in Meeting House will need to be flexible to support the kind of diverse music program envisioned. This will take time, thus the need to have the interim with Beth be for two years. Music Committee will do some groundwork with UUA regarding Music Director salary guidelines, etc. as well as building congregational support in the Fall. The Music Committee

will need to coordinate with Commitment Drive to help incorporate this vision into the Commitment Drive activity next year. They should also focus on giving the congregation a taste of what is possible within the limits of Beth's part time interim Music Director role.

Audio-Visual Proposal – See proposal put together by Michael C. **Motion: Create an AV Team to go forward to make a recommendation to PruCom for capital improvements to sound and technology.** (Edie / John)

Proposal is based on acoustic analysis paid for by member of congregation. It is an executive summary of this and other assessments as well. Estimates are ball park figures. Group will need to look at details and create a budget including expenses and potential revenue to propose to PruComm so commitments can be made to vendors before moving forward any further.

Thanks – Odile extended a big “Thank you” to exiting PruComm members, Michael, Edie, Greg and Beth. The PruComm presented Liz with gift as she heads to her sabbatical.

Closing Words (Michael) The Little Prince

Adjourn –9:10 PM

PruComm Retreat – July 22 – 23

Chalice Extinguishing

Respectfully Submitted,
Claire Rosenbaum, Clerk