

## **First Unitarian Church of Providence**

Prudential Committee Minutes

November 8, 2023

### **ATTENDING:**

#### **Prudential Committee**

Hillary Salmons, President

Joan Richards, Past-President

Karen Silva, President-Elect

John Dooley, Treasurer

Chris Campanile, Assistant Treasurer

Kate Niles, Clerk

Dana Borrelli-Murray, Personnel Liaison

Peter Laarman, Strategic Planning

Katy Killilea, Community Life Liaison

Lisa Voutes, Social Justice Liaison

Alison Green, Spiritual Development Liaison

Andy Wilby, Stewardship Liaison (absent)

Ex-officio – Rev. Liz Lerner Maclay

#### **Church Staff Attending**

Nancy Forsstrom, Director of Operations

Mandy Neff, Interim Religious Education Director (absent)

#### **Guests**

Erica Baron, UUA Consultant

### **6:35 PM – Call to order, Chalice lighting, opening welcome**

**Approval of June minutes and Minutes from 10.11.23. Karen Silva moved; Joan Richards seconded Unanimously approved. Guests will be listed above in future.**

1. **Erica Baron** – Congregational Consultant.
  - a. Why Church Is Hard Right Now. Setting Priorities.
    - i. History: UU volunteer structure was appropriate for white middle- and upper-class families in the 1950s. It assumed availability of a stay at home person. This person (female, usually) was to volunteer outside the home at church.
    - ii. Now Sunday morning is not a protected time and we don't have an assumed volunteer population who does not work outside the home. The job market has radically changed too. Less access to top paying jobs due to lack of retirement and the handicap of coming into careers in a recession means millennials will not make as much during their careers as previous generations. Also parents

parent more now than in the 50s, actually. Then the pandemic hit. The degree of burnout was very high and the sense of entrapment high. So volunteer structure of congregations is not stable now.

- iii. As a result, the old paradigm is out but the new is still being built. What can we actually do versus what our imaginations wish for has to be addressed. First U is at capacity for staff and volunteers. So where is the addition of Strategic Plan going to fit as a result? Priorities must be set.
- b. Erica has five suggestions for congregations looking to set priorities: Mission, Capacity, Impact, Will, Competence. Erica is not worried about our competence ☺. Mission is the Strategic Plan for our purposes right now. Erica will focus mostly on capacity. Staff and PruComm need to figure out capacity together so that we can prioritize effectively.
- c. We may think about “diversifying” ways into church engagement that does not prioritize Sunday Worship. E.g. Friday potlucks, book clubs etc. Conversations about membership and pledging can occur within these other formats. This raises questions about buildings and grounds usage, however. The sanctuary (historic, expensive) matters for worship but not book clubs, e.g. Liz pointed out that UU ministers are wrestling with what “church” is going to be in the future a lot. But Erica feels that a spiritual community has something essential for people or she would not be doing the job she is.
- d. Mandy reports that First U is serving 72 kids and their families with enthusiastic teachers. Other UU churches are not as lucky. But the rate of change regarding curriculum is rapid (as is society in general) and difficult to accommodate.
- e. Erica suggests we set up intentional conversations between staff and Pru Comm to set priorities; i.e, a Collaborative Capacity and Priority Discernment Process. Joan moves to affirm the importance of this and move in this direction. Peter seconded the motion. Liz says discuss. What does this look like?
  - i. What are some concrete steps? Erica recommends that staff reflect on their current work load vis a vis the Strategic Plan to estimate their capacity. Based on this, what are their top priorities?
  - ii. Then converse with a select group of Pru Comm members (“a SWAT team”). John, Hillary, Dana, Liz and Erica will lay out a game plan based on priority suggested. Motion to approve by Hilary. John seconded. Unanimously approved.

## 2. Staff Reports:

- a. Attached to Nancy’s email with agenda – John (Finance), Mandy (spiritual pathways), Liz (sr minister) are reports.
- b. Liz added that she and Mandy have talked about some additional things for families to do (softball teams, etc). Fits with the reconfigurations of

“church” as per discussion with Erica, above. A felt sense of love and community has been expressed to Liz.

- c. Mandy wants to highlight the depth of growth happening with Spiritual Pathways program across age groups.
- d. Nancy – “we had an auction.” It has grown. We made more than 17K this year and met our fundraising goal. She will restructure it next year with better volunteer help, a better night, and to be more family friendly.

### **3. Mosaic Transition to Antiracism Team:**

- a. Peter: Issues of capacity are very relevant here. Current team is overbooked at this time. So we may need a Plan B with a two-year immersive calendar instead of one. Maybe our 28K for one year budget should be cut in half and spread over two years. This year we might focus on finish the History Report. By 2025-2026 the new DRE will be settled in and that might dovetail nicely with Year Two and broader justice education programming. Dana suggested working with identity and allyship as we built antiracism work. This is tangible and folds into our goal toward being a church of the city. Liz says using the history report to ground reparative outreach (e.g. caretaking a forgotten grave of a slave owned by a congregant; considering what to do with inherited silver from a slaveholding family). Peter mentioned that the Mile of History association is going to do public history about slave history and our church is on their list.

### **4. Finance Report:**

- a. We are ahead on income via pledges and expenses.
- b. Finance and Development wants to be a Committee (versus a Team) under Stewardship. Peter moves, Hillary seconds. Unanimous approval.
- c. Washington Trust came through. COO came to F and D. Letter went out signed by Liz and Hillary.
- d. Diane Baxter reported to Chris that they are asking for 12% increase in Commitment Drive Pledges that amounts to 60K. This does need to be set collaboratively with Pru Comm, however, first, and driven by budget estimates coming out of the December budget meeting.
- e. AV project moving forward. It could be up by Christmas if the last part ordered comes through as projected.
- f. Budgets due end of November from Committees. Nancy will let people know at the end of next week who needs to do what.

### **5. Buildings and Grounds updates:**

- a. Andy doesn't have the time to do the kitchen work. Peter Van Erp is willing to take the lead and is an architect. Tom Getz will contact JWU to consult.

### **6. Food Pantry Discussion:**

- a. Nancy explains the difference between Loaves and Fishes and Food Pantry. The Food Pantry was established in 2000 via an endowment. It is not included in the operating budget of the church. The Pantry has people come to the church to pick up food. Loaves and Fishes has a perpetual collections support at Thanksgiving and an endowment too. They do outreach to the homeless and shelters and is part of a multi-ecumenical community. They collect and make bag lunches and deliver it. The Food Pantry would like a perpetual collections support as Loaves and Fishes does, which is a Pru Comm duty. Joan moves to create a permanent collection for the Food Pantry. John seconds. Discussion: Liz states that the Community Collections was meant for outside organizations. So maybe Food Pantry and Loaves and Fishes needs different funding and maybe we should make them part of our operating budget. Also are these groups more charitable or about public justice? What groups are truly about our Strategic Plan with our Community Collections? There is no rush on this decision and it was agreed we give it some intentionality first. Hillary suggested we put this in budget considerations to replace Collections (about 1000-2000 per group).

**7. DRE Search Update:**

- a. Alison – job posting needs to occur before the holidays. Liz: Defining the position is still under discussion vis a vis including adult programming. Is this for Roger? Or part of a DRE job that would be more of a Lifespan position? And what are ramifications for Coordination of Community Life position down the road? Where do we want Adult Programming? Ethical role clarification is needed.
- b. It was suggested that the DRE search committee meet with the Strategic Planners to get a better sense of their recommendations and that they would be invited to the December Pru Comm meeting to present their recommendations.

- 8. Other Business:** Pru Comm needs to send Roger flowers post-surgery. Roger also forwarded an email to Liz re a letter from Deacons. Deacons are searching for an identity. The discussion concluded with the recommendation we discuss ways they could be helpful in our strategic planning implementation efforts and other church work that needs volunteer support. This will be further discussed at the December meeting.

**9:05 Closing. Meeting Adjourned. Hillary moved, Alison seconded. Unanimous approval.**

