

# FirstU Board Meeting minutes

Our mission is to “Kindle the light within and inspire courage to nurture the web of life and to create a just and compassionate world.”

Date: 2023/01/18

Main Goal: To move forward with our Master Concept Plan, and other plans

Attending: Brent Nicolle, Lisa Sharp, Mary Ella Keblusek, Phil Nagy, Amy Berube, Caycee Price, Carl Sonnen, David Chernushenko, Rev Eric Meter, Jen Brennan, Michelle Jackson

## 1. Call to Order

## 2. Consent Agenda

### a. Approval of Agenda

### b. Approval of Minutes of Board 2022/11/23

### c. Approval of Membership - Lars Clout

Lars Clout has known about Unitarianism for some time and been involved with our congregation for over 2.5 years. Before getting involved with us, Lars felt like they were missing an avenue for their spiritualism. They find that the congregation is a place for spirituality and they feel like a member of the community. They often take part in Fellowship Hour and have been a host. They have pledged.

### d. Approval of Membership - Sarah Craig

Sarah Craig (whose legal name of Lynda will be used in our records for tax purposes) has been a member of the Kingston Fellowship for some time. During Covid she began watching our services on YouTube and finds them inspiring and energetic. Through participation in online Fellowship Hour, being an observer of our Fall Congregation Meeting and fulsome phone conversations with several W&M members, Sarah feels comfortable with our congregation. Sarah, who has health challenges that significantly restrict her mobility, intends to engage with us virtually while remaining a resident of Kingston where she has a house. She has already pledged and connected with the Women’s Personal Growth Group and the Thursday Afternoon Virtual Discussion Circle.

### e. Approval of Membership - Tess Frost

Looking for an accepting spiritual community, Tess Frost has been attending frequently, often with her young adult son Griffin who is on the spectrum. She describes herself as an agnostic, but is very interested in world religions. She came to us after discovering online the UU Hysterical Society. Tess has joined the Chalice Choir, enjoying the singing and sense of community. Having mental health challenges herself and in her family, Tess has recently connected with the Mental Health Support and Action Group. Although she works full time, Tess volunteered in the prep week and day of Fall Fair and very much enjoyed the sense of community around it. She understands our expectations concerning contributing financially and knows about the pledge campaign.

### f. Acceptance of Shine grant award

Ajashki was awarded a \$3310 SHINE grant from Crime Prevention Ottawa (CPO). More details on the SHINE program are available at:

<https://www.crimepreventionottawa.ca/cpo-initiatives/shine-youth-led-arts/>

The Grant Agreement details required authorization by the Board and had implications for liability insurance, AODA (Accessibility of Ontarians with Disability Act) training and bookkeeping. The Board delegated such authorizations to the Exec. FirstU Exec agreed by email to the terms of the Grant Award and it was signed by Brent on Thurs 2022/12/22.

**g. Approval of sharing MCP with campus boards**

Exec and the board approved a motion to share the master concept draft with our campus partners prior to the release to the congregation.

Moved: Carl, Seconded: David, carried

**3. Reports**

**a. Minister's Report & Dashboard *appendix A***

**b. Privacy Report *appendix B***

**c. Justice & Equity Action Group**

Brief information about merger of some of the SJAN groups into this working group. They are investigating the creation of a food cupboard to support some members of our extended community who are experiencing food insecurity.

**d. Update on Unitarian House**

Mary Ella, the liaison for Unitarian House, provided an update about the recent board meeting.

**4. Campus Planning**

**a. Motion to recommend that the congregation approve the Master Concept Plan as presented.**

**Moved: David, Seconded: Carl, Carried.**

**b. Discussion of Town Halls**

Recommended to be both in person and online in order to assist as many people to react to the information as possible before the vote on the plan. The town halls will be happening late January or early February. Voting on the plan will likely happen in March.

**c. Discussion of Desire for Campus 3D Model**

There might be a limiting quality. If it can be produced cheaply this may be interesting, but the board feels that it does not add a lot of value to the process.

**d. Motion to engage a Land Transfer Task Force to understand the options, restrictions and parameters of land-transfers to OAHS and the Limited Partnership prior to congregational vote, *appendix C***

In order to investigate the implications of transferring a portion of our land to OAHS in order to be able to do so legally without affecting our tax status, a team is being proposed. Lisa Sharp and Guy Belleperche will be chairing this task force. Other members are Bill Van Iterson and Brent Nicolle.

**Moved: Phil, Seconded: Carl, Carried.**

**e. Motion to request the Property Team to study appropriate on-campus parking management solutions in preparation for LRT and**

**more residents.**

During the evolution of the campus and future LRT, there are a lot of implications of how vehicles may be allowed to come and stay on the campus. The property team is being invited to explore the different implications, in conjunction potentially with a consultant.

**Moved: Brent, Seconded: Mary Ella, Carried.**

**5. Membership Engagement**

- a. Motion to approve the proposed Renewal Task Force terms of reference *Appendix D***

**Moved: Phil, Seconded: Amy, Carried.**

- b. Discussion of moving Fellowship Hour to Sunday evenings**

Attendance at fellowship hour has diminished drastically since many more people are coming to the Worship services in person. The group is still valuable and wanted by our virtual members, so it will likely be moved to another meeting time and become a stand alone group.

**6. Closing - thank you for attending the meeting**

## *Appendix A*

### Minister's Report to the Board of Directors of the First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa

January 2023

Much of this report will be devoted to updates from other staff and groups. At last week's Board Exec meeting, I was asked to provide some information on both Sunday attendance/newcomers and how many people are looking at our website and watching our worship services via YouTube.

Before I get to those, however, let me offer the following updates on what has been keeping me busy since we last met in November. Thankfully we were able to celebrate Christmas Eve in worship hall once again last month. This was a joy, though there were some kinks that'll I want to work out before next year, namely who gets the candles ready. This year, Margaret Linton took on that task at the last minute because no one else had stepped forward to do so.

On an entirely different note, I want you to know that I recently met Rev. John Marsh's widow, Allison Patrick. She reached out to me following the installation ceremony, and may begin bringing her grandson to church for our youth activities.

Last weekend, the Membership Task Force began meeting, with one prospective church member, Michelle Jackson and a good range of other members of the congregation. The question "what is a church member" has come up often over the last several years. I am looking forward to the group helping focus our welcoming efforts as well as possibly recommending some changes to our governance documents.

As you know, the Campus Master Plan will be released in the coming weeks. The pre-release session at the beginning of last week was well-received. And much work remains.

While I have done so before, I'd like to again express my appreciation for the work of the Campus Planning Group as well as the representatives from Unitarian House, River Parkway Children's Centre and Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services.

Looking Ahead:

I'll be meeting with Jane Lindsay and Eva Berringer later this week on renewing our Adult Programs. Plans for the CUC Symposium here in May are ramping up quickly in the weeks before registration opens early next month.

I want you to know that I will be away for two weeks in a row during April, the 16th and the 23rd. While I can't remember when I last took two consecutive Sundays off other than during the summer months, I've been invited to both a former congregant's ordination, and the installation of my successor in Racine, Wisconsin, where I served before saying Yes to all of you nearly two years ago now. As those two dates are six days apart, it made sense to make one slightly larger trip of it.

You may have noticed that over the last months, while I may not have preached every Sunday, I've been present and led worship. That will change starting next month when I return to my normal practice of taking a Sunday off per month.

#### Data and Observations:

Again, at last week's Board Exec meeting, I was asked to provide information on both Sunday attendance/newcomers, and how many people are looking at our website and watching our worship services online. Below is first the information Allison sent in on our on-line analytics.

- Between December 15 and January 12, we have had about 1900 page views (this will go up at end of day [Jan 13] – there's always a spike when the eUU goes out)
  - Most people visit 2 pages (eUU and some other page, which varies) per visit, but a few visit more than that.
  - ~400 unique visits to the eUU page
  - ~200 unique visits to the What's Happening page
  - ~260 visits to the landing page – this matches up with the total number of visitors who found us using a search engine rather than a direct link from a facebook post, our youtube channel, a mailchimp email, or via some other direct link)
  - ~100 visits to the Welcome page (which tells me that about 40% of the people googling "Unitarian Church near me" and similar are NEW visitors rather than people who know to use the navigation bar to jump directly to the information they need)
- YouTube views in the past 28 days:
- Youtube views vary by service/event. Christmas Even and the Mitten Tree service have both had over 100 views, but most services average between 60 and 85 views.
  - We've had 7 new subscribers
  - ~450 channel views – many of-whom are coming via google search, though some come from direct links on facebook
  - ~ 1/3 of our viewers are subscribed to our channel

- Average view-duration, on Sundays, is ~35 minutes which: I'm wondering if many online viewers tune in at the 10-minute point in the livestream (when the services roughly gets started) and log out after the Reflection is finished. That's an absolute guess though.

Regarding Sunday morning attendance, the ushers take a count weekly. Data from the last month:

Dec 18 – 61

Dec 24 – 76

Jan 1 – 52

Jan 8 – 76

Jan 15 – 62

(Frankly, I'd like us to track the total number of folks in the building on Sunday morning, not just those sitting in the pews.)

And a note from Jane Lindsay on counting newcomers:

We have never recorded newcomer numbers and do not have in place a process to make this meaningful. I am somewhat ambivalent on the value of doing this to send to the Board. I will try to fit this topic into the Jan 24 W&M meeting where we will consider a new way of organizing our work. How much time there will be to get into the specifics of this I am not sure.

Here are some considerations off the top of my head:

- Recording might now mean recording “seeming” numbers. I say “seeming” because these might include people the Welcome Table staffer talks to and people the staffer sees that they think are newcomers but do not get to talk to – and this might then include people that the staffer does not know are not newcomers.
- Right now the degree of informally noting newcomers or doing proactive outreach to them (vs. responding when one comes to the table) varies by Greeter and WT staffer and how active a Greeter is in directing / introducing a newcomer to the Welcome Table person.
- There is also the variable of people we see and think are newcomers but who do not want to talk with us, preferring to quietly observe.
- We could add a “seeming newcomer” column to the record sheet of attendance at each service but would have to first agree the criteria for being counted as a newcomer. (For example, how many times a newcomer attends before not being counted as a newcomer.)

Also, with more activity in Children's Religious Exploration, I asked for Neo to provide an

overview:

We have lots of great things happening in CRE! New parents consistently show up, so we have new friends joining our Chalice Playgroup. From September to December, we completed the UU curriculum Friendship Finders and will start the Chalice Children curriculum the second week of January.

Kindergarten OWL is starting at our Church towards the end of January. We have 16 participants registered. Almost too many, which is a great problem to have. I have been busy coordinating and advertising the program and will act as one of the four facilitators. While we are running OWL, our Chalice Playroom will continue programming. We will have one leader working with younger children and another focused on our older children. I have a meeting with our parent team to brainstorm ideas on how we can better support our [youth].

Coming of Age, It looks like Coming of Age should be possible for us to run. We have four dedicated facilitators and three participants registered. CoA will be held on Sunday evenings.

We need help with outreach, so if you know of anyone with kids who would be interested in CoA, please have them contact me, and I can give them program details. Mystery Pals, We are excited to have Mystery Pals at First U again. Mystery Pals will be starting Feb 14th. We are looking for more Pals; if you are interested in supporting the connections between our little ones and the congregation, please sign up. Registration can be found in the eUU.

And, lastly, here's an update from Jen Brennan:

1. FYI's:

- the Property Team will be going ahead with a major overhaul of the wifi networks in the

church. There have been many requests for this.

- the Property Team will be conducting a church wide space/storage audit

2. You all might be aware of this already – if not:

The Congregation is eligible to apply for funding for the Community Services Recovery Fund:

“This Fund is a historic one-time investment of \$400 million that will help community service organizations to adapt, to modernize and to be better equipped to improve the efficacy, accessibility and sustainability of the community services that they provide, so they can continue to support communities across Canada through the pandemic recovery and beyond.

Funding from the Community Services Recovery Fund will enable community service organizations to invest in their own organizational capacity under one of the three project focus areas:

- Investing in People: projects that focus on how organizations recruit, retain, engage and support their personnel.

- Investing in Systems and Processes: projects that invest in the systems and processes

involved in creating the internal workings of an organization's overall structure.

- Investing in Program and Service Innovation and Redesign: projects primarily focused on program and service innovation and redesign using information gained during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Applications for funding can be submitted to the National Funders from now until February 21, 2023.”

-Community Services Recovery Fund application process opens to support pandemic recovery

- Canada.ca There is a free webinar on the new Recovery Fund for Charities and Not-for-Profits. Thursday, January 19 at 1pm. Let Jen know if you'd like the link.

All that amounts to a longer report than usual. I wanted you to hear directly from Allison, Jane, Neo and Jen. In other months, I'll pare things down a bit.

In shared faith,

Rev. Eric



## *Appendix B*

### Adherence to Privacy Policy Update 2023

- There are no incidents to report from 2022.
- There were no formal requests for access to information in 2022.

Last year, the goals for 2022 were to ensure any official (Rental Booking Forms, Membership Forms, etc.) paperwork contain information about how personal information that is collected will be used, retained and destroyed. COMPLETE

#### Goals for 2023

A - it appears some form of working from home will be permanent for some staff, I will continue to ensure that the computers that are being used at home continue to have up-to-date anti-virus software installed.

B- Address our record retention and destruction. Most (but not all) records can be destroyed prior to 2016.

Note there are no provisions on the Privacy Policy to deal with pastoral records of outgoing ministers.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Jen Brennan  
Operations Manager and Privacy Officer  
January 16, 2023

## *Appendix C*

### 1. Terms of Reference for Land-Transfer Task Force (draft)

**Purpose:** This Task Force is responsible for investigating the possibilities and implications regarding the legalities of our intended land-transfers. Part of this investigation is required before congregational votes on land-transfers to OAHS and to the Limited Partnership, both of which could jeopardize our charitable status if structured incorrectly. Recent comparative experiences with other charities, professional legal advice and CRA advice is likely required; caveat: we should be judicious in requesting excessive professional legal advice while our congregational sign-off is still in doubt. It is expected that a partial explanation of “what we know” is available at the Town Halls, and that we only proceed with congregational votes once we know “what’s possible” (a vote may include different possibilities). The mechanics of execution may take considerable time (eg OAHS pursuing Charitable status, Refining our own Charitable status, and/or Creation of an independent legal entity)

**Appointed** to the Task Force will be Guy Belleperche, Lisa Sharp, Bill Van Iterson, Brent Nicolle. Guy and Lisa to serve as co-chairs. Mary Ella and Terry Kimmel to be advised from time to time. Eva Berringer can be consulted when necessary, such as on updating Charitable Purposes.

**Reporting:** This Task Force reports to the Board.

**Longevity:** This Task Force should dissolve once legal choices are understood.

## *Appendix D*

### Terms of Reference for Renewal Task Force

The purpose of the Renewal Task Force is to enhance the volunteer and financial resources of The First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa (FirstU).

The Renewal Task Force reports directly to the Board of Directors, and will coordinate with other groups and individuals, particularly the Membership Task Force, and any groups or individuals engaged in fund raising activities, such as time and talent or silent auctions.

The Renewal Task Force will have 4-6 members. Their mandate ends December 31, 2023, with the possibility of renewal for additional years.

With respect to volunteer resources, the Renewal Task Force will:

- Develop a database of existing FirstU volunteer activities of members and friends of the congregation
- Develop a list of unfilled volunteer opportunities within FirstU
- Develop a list of individuals willing to devote more of their time and talents to FirstU
- Match unfilled volunteer opportunities with those willing to be more active volunteers

With respect to financial resources, the Renewal Task Force will:

- Institute and manage a short (4-6 week) financial campaign aimed at physical needs of the FirstU property, preferably in the spring
- Institute and manage a financial pledge campaign that honours contributions of time as well as money
- Evolve these financial campaigns away from paper to on-line based

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## 3. Board Announcements Roster

From <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1ef8-gZAawTDsFWqey3zsNhxll6ZzWWWeG15ckHaLHks/edit#gid=0>

Jan 22	David
Jan 29	Phil
Feb 5	Mary Ella
Feb 12	Caycee
Feb 19 (long weekend)	Carl

## 4. Readings and Songs

	Feb	Mar	Apr
Opening song	Rev Eric	David	Amy

Opening reading	Brent	Carl	Phil
Closing reading	Caycee	Mary Ella	Brent