

FirstU Board Minutes

Wednesday 2023/03/15

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.

Agenda

1. Consent Agenda

- a. Approval of Agenda
- b. Minutes of Board 2023/01/18 and 2023/ 02/15
- c. Acknowledgement of report received from the last pledge campaign.
- d. Record of two motions passed by email on 2023/03/05
 - i. **Moved that the Board approves the three Motions set out below, and recommends the Congregation approve the three Motions below at a Special Congregational Meeting.**

Moved by Brent; Seconded by Lisa, passed

- ii. **Moved that the Board calls a Special Meeting of Members of the Congregation to approve the Three Motions below to be held via Zoom on Monday March 27th at 7pm.**

Moved by Brent; Seconded by Mary Ella, passed

Consent agenda Moved by Brent; seconded by Amy;

2. CHARITABLE PURPOSES

A. Motion to retain Karen Cooper as lawyer for charity-sensitive land-transfer agreements

Moved by Brent, Seconded by Lisa, carried

Bio: Karen Cooper is a Lawyer with the Charitable and Not-For-Profit Law group of KPMG Law LLP in the Ottawa office. Karen practices charity and not-for-profit law with an emphasis on corporate and tax issues. Her practice focuses on creating, restructuring and maintaining corporations, advising on governance issues, securing and defending charitable registrations, and advising high net worth families on how to achieve their philanthropic objectives. Karen has a reputation for providing practical and effective advice that is responsive to her clients' needs. Prior to joining KPMG Law, Karen worked at a nationally respected firm in the charity and not-for-profit law space and for the federal government as a Rulings Officer and as tax litigation counsel.

B. Motion to approve Revised Charitable Purposes *appendix A*

Moved by: Brent Seconded by: Phil, carried

3. Minister's Report [Rev Eric] *Appendix B*

To add: RE staffing: Rev Eric feels that the program needs to be carefully considered, temporary staffing stopgaps have been put in place to keep the program going for the time being.

4. President's Report [Brent]

In the Consent Agenda is a report from the Unitarian House board on our Master Concept Plan, submitted some weeks ago. This report was discussed in a face-to-face meeting (Jackie Holzman, Brian Castledine, Terry Kimmel, Mary Ella Keblusek and me) on March 17th. Principally, they want to hear a traffic study will occur (it is a requirement), which they felt might justify the permanent expropriation of a second/alternate entrance to campus. Given that, and with the CCWC underway, the Unitarian House Board plans to support the MCP at our meeting on Monday March 27th, in that some UH board members are FirstU members too. Consequently the UH report is informational to the FirstU board.

Also included as part of the Consent Agenda is Larry Jones' final report on last year's Pledge Campaign. Some of its observations have already been discussed by the Executive Committee, and the report has been passed along to the Renewal Task Force responsible for this year's pledge campaign. No further discussion is warranted. We thank Larry and Terry for their work for this and all past pledge campaigns

I am concerned by a lack of volunteer engagement, in that I have been asked to do some things which I have been unable to delegate effectively, and I know I am not alone.. That said, thanks to all those who are helping. I hope that the Renewal Red Button campaign starts to gather momentum very very soon.

5. Treasurer's Report [Phil]

- a. **Motion to approve the 2022 audited financial statements, as reviewed by the finance committee, including the annual transfer of \$43 000, and not the transfer of the rainy day Covid funds of \$40 000, as mentioned in the 2022 budget.**

Moved by Phil, Seconded by Brent, carried

6. OWL training after CUC-ACM symposium

Motion to approve up to \$3500 funding for OWL training for up to 10 new facilitators after the CUC symposium.

Moved by Lisa: Seconded by Amy, carried

-Historically, the congregation has offered to pay for OWL training for the congregation. Owl is a sexuality program for all ages. The source of the funds to pay for this will be finalized shortly.

7. Campus planning special meeting (Mar 27th)

During this time the details of the special meeting were finalized.

8. BOOK LAUNCH:

Moved by the Justice and Equality Action Group is requesting that First U sponsor a book launch on the premises in celebration of a book called: “*Advocating for Palestine in Canada: Histories, movements, action*” that has been recently published in Canada.

Moved by: Lisa, seconded by: David, carried

Details: Diana Ralph, of Or Haneshamah, is one of the ten authors. We have a long history of lifting up for discussion and resolution of the ongoing Palestinian / Israeli conflict. (Most recently we sponsored a guest speaker in December 2020). We would provide space for the presentations in the Sanctuary; along with live-streaming on YouTube; and a reception afterwards in Fellowship Hall. We would invite Rev Eric to introduce the evening and the moderator.

9. Information item: Community Services Response Fund (CSRF) Grant Application: This has been completed, thank you to Lisa.

Appendix A

Update to the revised Charitable Purposes and supporting activities for the First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa originally submitted to CRA on November 8, 2022 for review and comment.

Following receipt of the letter from CRA dated March 3, 2023 requesting additional information and suggesting changes to the structure and content of the revised Charitable Purposes and supporting activities for the First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa (FirstU), and the subsequent conversations between Guy Belleperche and Ala Uddin on March 14, 2023 and March 21, 2023 further clarifying the contents of the letter, FirstU has made the following changes to the originally submitted purposes:

1. We have removed mention of **shelter, clean water, education, and tuition** from purpose (d).
 - a. We only provide **education and tuition** support to volunteers and staff as part of volunteer and professional development, and this is part of our administrative activities and not a charitable purpose of our organization.
 - b. Our provision of **shelter** is limited to **looking at options to create affordable housing units on the campus property** as included in the 6th activity under purpose (c).
 - c. While we might provide drinking water in times of crisis, this would be included under the broader term of **food**. We do not have any activities aimed at providing clean water.
2. We have further revised the purpose (d) to include new supporting activities that detail the conditions under which we would provide food, clothing and school supplies.
3. We have created a new purpose (e) focused on the Benevolent Fund, with supporting activities. *We have also included our Benevolent Fund policy as additional supporting documentation.*

4. We have created a new purpose (f) focused on sponsoring and supporting refugees, with supporting activities.
 5. We have relabelled original purposes “(e) and (f)” to “(g) and (h)” to reflect the inclusion of the new purposes (e) and (f) on the Benevolent Fund and Refugees.
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The charitable purpose of the Corporation (First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa - FirstU) is to advance religion in accordance with the tenets, principles, practices and traditions of the Unitarian Universalist faith by carrying out the activities outlined below in support of its purposes.

All activities will be carried out directly by employees or volunteers of FirstU, or by persons hired by FirstU under contract, and unless otherwise specified, will be carried out at FirstU's campus in Ottawa, Ontario.

FirstU currently has 3 full-time staff (Minister, Operations Manager, Finance and Human Resources Manager) and 8 part-time staff (Music Director, Director of Religious Exploration, Spiritual Care Visitor, Communications Coordinator, Audiovisual Coordinator, Facility Manager and 2 janitorial staff).

Funds to support the activities of the congregation are raised by donations and through fundraising activities such as time and talent auctions and bazaars. FirstU also has revenue from leasing part of the campus to the River Parkway Children's Centre, and leasing space in the church building which is not needed for our own charitable activities. This includes space for a Reconstructionist Jewish community, renting rooms to non-profit organizations at rates consistent with CRA requirements, and ad hoc rentals for concerts, weddings, and other events.

- a) **Purpose:** Preaching, teaching and manifesting the tenets, principles, practices and traditions of the Unitarian Universalist faith;

Activities in support of purpose

- Led by its full-time Minister, FirstU offers weekly religious services that offer spiritual enrichment to its members and other congregants. The services are supported by volunteer Worship Associates who contribute to the planning of services and perform various roles during services. On occasion, guest speakers are invited. They are paid an honorarium.
- FirstU has a rich music program led by a Music Director, with hymns and anthems enriching the spiritual experiences of Sunday services. There are currently three choirs, each offering its unique blend of music to the Sunday offerings as well as offering occasional concerts. The choirs also provide opportunities for social connection, artistic fulfillment and community building within the congregation.
- Religious exploration (education) programs are offered to children and youth, providing instruction in Unitarian Universalism values, principles and sources. Under the leadership of the Minister and the Director of Religious Exploration, our programs aim

to provide children and youth with opportunities for personal and spiritual growth through creating a supportive environment where their diverse ways of being are celebrated. We strive to kindle the light within each child.

- FirstU offers programs and workshops for adults of all ages aimed at developing a deeper understanding of Unitarian Universalist history, its tenets, values, principles and sources, and aimed at exploring and enriching their spiritual journey. Other programs, such as those on compassionate communication or embracing diversity, help individuals more fully live into Unitarian Universalist principles and values.
- FirstU offers rituals to mark key life events, including naming ceremonies, coming of age rituals, weddings and memorial services/celebrations of life.
- Spiritual care is offered to congregants, with a caring network providing cards and support to congregants who are going through difficult times. A Spiritual Care Visitor and volunteers provide in-home or hospital visits to those seeking spiritual support.
- FirstU offers the services of Lay Chaplains who perform many types of rites of passage, but most often, weddings, memorials, and child naming/parent dedication services. They officiate these services primarily for people who are not associated with our congregation, but they can serve our members as well. Our lay chaplains receive training through, and are overseen by, the Canadian Unitarian Council, and are licensed to perform weddings by the Province of Ontario. A fee is charged for the services of lay chaplains.
- Through its intern minister program, FirstU supports the development of Unitarian Universalist ministers. Students studying for ministry are provided placements of 6-12 months working with the congregation under the supervision of the Minister.
- FirstU contributes financially to the work of the Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC), the umbrella organization for Canadian Unitarian and Unitarian Universalist congregations. FirstU also supports the work of the CUC and the denomination by periodically hosting regional and national conferences and other events. Members of FirstU benefit from participation in CUC various courses and offerings, ranging from leadership development to social justice engagement.
- FirstU maintains a relationship with the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), based in the United States of America. The UUA provides some religious education curriculum (for a fee) and provides guidance and support in the process of hiring new Ministers.

b) **Purpose:** Establishing, maintaining and operating a place of worship

Activities in support of purpose:

- FirstU has operated a place of worship in Ottawa for almost 125 years. It has been in its current location at 30 Cleary Avenue since 1967. With its towering spire, the church building is a notable landmark in Ottawa's west end. (A tour of the property is available on the website).
- The grounds of the property are also used to enhance the worship experience, with beautiful meditation and memorial gardens maintained by volunteers.

- At present, FirstU also shares its physical space with a Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation, Or Haneshamah, that rents rooms for its weekly Sabbath services and other events, and uses the sanctuary for high holidays.

c) **Purpose:** Nurturing, supporting and enhancing its religious community and other groups to work together on mutual concerns for the benefit of the community, including promoting and advancing social and environmental justice

Activities in support of purpose:

- Through its Mental Health Support and Action Group (MHSAG), FirstU offers a listening presence and mutual support for those of us who live with mental illness and as caregivers, thereby upholding the inherent worth and dignity of every person and affirming equity, compassion, and acceptance of one another just as we are. The MHSAG strives to increase the congregation's awareness about mental illness, its stigmas and marginalization, mental health issues, and addictions, and also champions the provision of affordable and supportive housing for people living with mental illness.
- In support of the Unitarian Universalist principle recognizing the inherent worth and dignity of every person, FirstU actively supports meaningful reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, in the context of the conclusions and calls to action of such bodies as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, the Human Rights Tribunal, and the Supreme Court. We do this through awareness-raising and education, participating as an ally in initiatives led by Indigenous people or organizations, and being advocates for systemic change. Examples include organizing an Orange Shirt Day Service and attending associated events, holding with Indigenous elders to continue educating ourselves on Indigenous history and culture and seeking ways to support initiatives of local Indigenous organizations.
- In keeping with its principle to support the interconnected web of life, FirstU takes and encourages action to promote sustainability, protect the natural environment, and combat climate change. It encourages congregants to take personal action in support of this principle. Recent examples are campaigns to encourage more sustainable food choices and to reduce personal use of plastics. As a congregation, FirstU is taking steps to reduce its carbon footprint and to adapt to increased climate risks. FirstU also encourages action within the larger community, by corporations, industry, and all levels of government, to address serious environmental issues, notably climate change. Recognizing that climate change will have an inordinate impact on marginalized communities, FirstU has recently been supporting an indigenous-led food security initiative the goal of which is to teach youth from marginalized, primarily indigenous, communities about climate change and sustainable gardening practices while at the same time growing food for a local food bank.
- As part of its focus on justice, equity and compassion in human relations, FirstU, through its Justice and Equality Action Group, seeks to educate itself and the community about situations of injustice and inequitable treatment of people, and supports initiatives to establish justice and equality. At the local level, this may include raising awareness of

poverty issues and promoting solutions such as affordable housing and food insecurity. It may also include activities such as periodic food drives in support of the local food bank.

- As part of our respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part and our belief in justice, equity and compassion in human relations and the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all, FirstU hosts and supports chapters of local and international charities that undertake work consistent with our principles and FirstU's mission. A chapter of GoGo Grannies, which supports the humanitarian work of the Stephen Lewis Foundation, has been meeting at FirstU for over 15 years.
- The City of Ottawa declared a housing and homelessness emergency in 2020. FirstU is looking at options to create affordable housing units on the campus property, continuing a tradition of using campus lands to support allied causes. FirstU entered into a long term lease and provided financial support for the creation of Unitarian House, a not-for-profit seniors residence, and entered into a long term lease for the River Parkway Children's Centre, a not-for-profit daycare. Smart development of the campus is another way for us to live our values and principles in the community.
- FirstU offers the Our Whole Lives program, a comprehensive, lifespan sexuality program that fosters informed, responsible and values-based decisions about sexual health and behaviour, and educates participants on the diversity of gender identities and expressions, and sexual orientations. With the adoption of a new principle focused on accountability, dismantling racism and other systemic barriers to full inclusion, FirstU has created working groups and hosted workshops and activities to educate our members and begin the work within our congregation and the broader community.
- FirstU supports groups and activities that foster connection and community between congregants, such as a Men's Breakfast Group, a knitting group and a bridge group. It also has an active caring network and spiritual care visitor program to assist members who are dealing with personal challenges and loss.
- FirstU provides office space to non-profit organizations whose objectives are consistent with our mission and vision, with rents consistent with CRA requirements.

d) **Purpose (REVISED):** Providing basic necessities of life, including food, clothing, and school supplies to individuals and families living below the poverty line, in cases of urgent need.

Activities in support of purpose:

- FirstU responds to calls for support for those living in need, including raising funds and seeking donations of in-kind support from congregants. For example, FirstU has participated in food drives in support of the local food bank. FirstU also provides donated clothing to local charities, for example, providing mittens and hats to the Snowsuit Fund as part of its annual Mitten Tree Service.
- FirstU has provided donations towards, and collected from congregants, educational items such as backpacks full of school supplies to give to high school students in low income communities who are participating in homework clubs in local community health centres.

- FirstU steps up in cases of local emergencies affecting those living in poverty, for example, providing clothing and necessities donated by congregants and offering volunteer support to victims of a recent fire at a low-income housing complex.
- As noted in c) above, FirstU supports the provision of affordable housing and is actively exploring how its campus could be used to support the development of much needed affordable housing.
- First U is in the planning stages of establishing a small food pantry for those in need in the immediate community. Food for the pantry will be donated by congregants, by local grocery stores, or purchased from funds donated by congregants.

e) **Purpose (NEW):** Maintaining a Benevolent Fund to assist in providing support in cases of urgent need.

Activities in support of purpose:

- The Benevolent Fund is intended primarily for the necessities of life in times of crisis and immediate financial distress for those experiencing poverty. Funds will not be granted at a set amount but rather given based on actual need and availability of funds. Examples of urgent need might include a contribution towards rent or utilities, funds for public transportation, hygiene items, a tank of gas, or a grocery card. Bus tickets or equivalent and grocery cards may be purchased by the Benevolent Fund and retained in the FirstU office for distribution to individuals in need who present in person.
- Money is raised by accepting specific contributions to the Benevolent Fund. All contributions are to be made specifically to the Benevolent Fund, never to assist identified individuals or families. The fund is established for short term needs and not ongoing assistance. When appropriate, the individual will be directed to an appropriate agency. An individual may normally only make one request from the fund per year. Exceptions may be made on a one-off basis in cases of urgent need. The FirstU Minister, or their designate, will be responsible for maintaining confidential records on disbursements from the Benevolent Fund.

f) **Purpose (NEW):** Sponsoring eligible refugees including providing financial and other support necessary to ensure a successful transition to life in Canada, consistent with Government of Canada requirements for refugee sponsorship.

Activities in support of purpose:

- FirstU has a long history of sponsoring and supporting refugees. Most recently, FirstU has supported five Syrian refugee families, three directly and two co-sponsored with community members. It currently has three applications for sponsorship with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. In most cases, these sponsorships are undertaken with the Canadian Unitarian Council as Sponsorship Agreement Holder and FirstU as the local constituent group.
- Specific activities include raising funds to support the sponsorship, reviewing and assessing the eligibility of the refugee(s), completing the sponsorship application, providing financial support for the first year of sponsorship, providing other support to

ensure the successful transition to life in Canada including assisting with: enrolment in ESL classes, registration of children in school, finding doctors and dentist and taking refugees to initial appointments, budgeting and setting up bank account, familiarization with local community and transit, and introduction to Canadian culture.

- g) **Purpose:** Gifting to qualified donees as defined in subsection 149.1(1) of the Income Tax Act (Canada)*

Activities in support of purpose:

In keeping with its tenets and principles, FirstU makes periodic gifts to other qualified donees to support activities that are consistent with FirstU's mission. Further information can be found in our T3010 submissions.

- h) **Purpose:** Undertaking activities ancillary and incidental to the attainment of the above charitable purposes.

Activities in support of purpose:

- FirstU is active in interfaith activities, including participating in the Capital Region Interfaith Council, helping build awareness of, and understanding between, the many faith traditions and contributing to the dynamic expression of our pluralistic spiritual community.
- FirstU actively participates in, and supports, activities led and sponsored by the Canadian Unitarian Council, including past and current work on marriage equality, anti-racism, education on 2SLGBTQ+ issues, anti-poverty work, Truth, Healing and Reconciliation, and decolonization.

* See Appendix C for subsection 149.1(1) of the Income Tax Act (Canada) definition of qualified donee.

Appendix B

**Minister's Report to the Board of Directors of the
First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa
March 2023**

Late last year, you asked for a dashboard of information regarding Sunday attendance and online activity of our website and social media locations. In January I provided that, and will continue to do so quarterly. So, next month my report will be less narrative and more numerically focused.

If you've been to the church offices recently, you'll have noticed that there has been some creative disruption at work. Namely, several offices are being moved around, the wing has been painted, and floors are being refinished for the first time in years. Here is Michelle Jackson's take on those changes and a renewed volunteer space:

"I'm excited that we are halfway through our staff offices' painting and cleaning! We have shaken things up and changed offices around so we may be playing a little hide and seek for a while. What I'm most eager to share with the Board is my enthusiasm and vision for my new space. I have moved into the old DRE office which has just been painted and the floors stripped and waxed with a new set up. It feels fresh and welcoming! The photocopier room, while not yet finished, will become the New Volunteer Resource Centre where volunteers will have a place to gather, find resources, and to see how they can participate and engage with things at FirstU! My hope is that between my office and the new Volunteer Resource Centre I will be able to create a warm, welcoming and collaborative working space during the week to comfortably accommodate Archives, Pledge campaign needs, fundraising needs, financial assistance needs, a comfortable place for volunteers to sit and work on their initiatives."

I will add that these changes, unintentionally coinciding with the return of Coffee Hour, and a more active Religious Exploration program, are boosting the energy level around the building and making it feel, to me at least, like church is back after a long pandemic-induced hiatus. I know that is overstating things, but it does feel like renewal is in the air in ways that have nothing to do with the promise of Spring.

Beyond all that, of course, the biggest topic of conversations in our community are to no one's surprise the vote on the Master Plan (which will take place before we meet next week) and the nearing CUC Symposium we're helping to host. I remain impressed with the care and thoroughness with which both are being prepared. Kathy Yach, Lisa Sharp and Maury Prevost deserves our continued thanks for their leadership in organizing our efforts toward the Symposium. And frankly, I wish I could provide Brent Nicolle a vacation that didn't involve any Zoom calls. He gave us way more than our fair attention during his time away in Florida recently.

And here are some short items to round out this admittedly shorter than usual report:

- Rev. Ellen and I still need to confirm a time for a retirement party in her honour.

- I still need to convene the group that has agreed to work with me on planning a “post Rev. Ellen” Caring Network and Spiritual Care Council.
- The memorial for Rev. Brian Kopke has been set for the morning of Saturday, October 28.
- In large part because I will be away in April (14 – 19 for the ordination of a former congregant) and in June (roughly 8 – 12 to officiate a memorial back in Ohio), I will participate in the annual General Assembly and Ministry Days (June 19 – 25) virtually this year.
- Additionally, Bob Armstrong has agreed to coordinate our summer worship services. So we are in good hands, once again.

My best to you all,

Rev. Eric Meter