

Unitarian Church in Charleston
Vestry Meeting Minutes
March 11, 2010

Members and staff present: Karen Abrams, Mark Farnham, Jeffrey Fleming, Carla Frichtel, Richard Hayes, Don Hearth, Maureen Kelly, Deborah Mihal, Sally Newell, Danny Reed, Paul Wilczynski

Guests: Suzanna van der Woude, Ellie Setser, Catherine Key

Opening words: Richard provided the opening words.

Minutes: Minutes of the February meeting were approved as amended.

Personnel discussion: Suzanna suggested minor changes to the Constitution to bring the terminology for Church officers up to date. Carla said she is tracking spots that need to be cleaned up and suggests a committee go through and make revisions. Suzanna also shared her observation that the double services during the restoration are putting an extra load on the staff, but they are working positively to make the church function normally.

Constitutional amendment: Catherine Key requested that the Vestry reconsider the issue of allowing votes by proxy or absentee ballot. She said Emilie Carey is prepared to introduce a resolution to this effect. Discussion included the likelihood that proxy would be more flexible than absentee voting to accommodate changes at the meeting that an absentee ballot would not cover, and that cell phones would allow proxy holders to communicate with members who are not present. Karen suggested that she put the wording in the form of a motion to be shared in a timely manner before the meeting.

Preliminary budget: Ellie Setser presented our current proposed budget: The pledges, while not up to our goal, will cover the loss of several income items, even with a 5% discount for the average non-payment.; personnel will receive a 3% COLA; UUA and TJ dues will be paid in full; and committees can be funded at their full request. Motion passed to refinish Gage Hall floors this summer for \$5000. Following that, the priority for increases if possible are for miscellaneous childcare, professional expenses for Carla and Janet to attend General Assembly in Charlotte in 2011, and for the Vestry funds to cover the cost of the Transition Committee.

Finance update: Don Hearth presented the quarterly finance update. While we're behind approximately \$9500 in pledge collection compared to last year, expenses are also down. His best guess is that we'll come in at about 92% of pledges being paid (slightly lower than the previous few years). He proposed the establishment of a Reserve Fund for repair and maintenance, growing it over time to equal the insurance deductible of \$25,000. Finance, Building and Grounds, and Churchyard all agree to the concept and to shift the tour money to this fund. Motion passed to establish this fund, to move the water easement money to this fund, and to transfer some of the Churchyard tour income money to this fund starting at the beginning of next fiscal year.

Recommendations for leadership: Karen led a discussion of church leaders who are or might be willing to be nominated for Vestry, Transition Team, and the Nominating

Committee. Karen will share this information as suggestions the committee might find helpful. The current Nominating Committee, chaired by Paul Garbarini, plans to develop a list of questions and interview potential candidates.

Fundraising for sanctuary renovation: Stan Goldberg is heading up this endeavor to close the gap between the amount of money on hand and the projected cost. A letter should be going out in the near future asking for a gift payable over the next two years.

Summer Services: Richard reported that the staff is positive in supporting this effort for the end of May and the beginning of September. There will be two services, 9:30 and 11:30, with no forum. Arrangements for coffee hour in between will be firmed up by the end of the month. RE classes will occur at the first service, with an “all age” class at 11:30. Sept. 12 will be a “family reunion” event in Gage Hall with concurrent RE registration, and the water service will be postponed until Sept. 19, when we hope the church is back online.

TJ Annual Meeting: Richard and Sally are interested in serving as delegates. Members will be invited to volunteer as well.

Gage Hall renovation: John Meffert is promoting the establishment of handicapped access to Gage Hall and the Sanctuary in conjunction with improving traffic flow in Gage Hall to avoid the kitchen for general entrance and exits. The Churchyard Committee will fund Gage Hall work in two steps in anticipation of the sanctuary’s going offline in May: (1) ramp and back door in Gage Hall, and (2) the front entrance for wheelchair access. Glen Keyes will work with BAR, and the city is likely to approve it since it involves handicapped accessibility.

Vestry initiatives:

Maureen reported that she will attend membership committee meetings as they continue to welcome and mentor new members.

Debra is meeting with the separate committees in her Social Justice task force.

Paul reported that there will be caring committee cards in the vestibule: one side for those who volunteer to work with the committee and the other for those who need its services. As a result of her work with the pledge drive, Emilie Carey will forward the names of those friends and members who are feeling less connection to the church. He added that COSM will look at following up on recommendations from membership for those who might need continued mentoring. Danny will be meeting with membership classes participants at the end of the class.

Mark has attended finance meetings.

Minister and Staff reports:

Danny reported on the continuation of his earlier efforts. He has suggested to COSM, and they have agreed, that they compile a “weather report:” a series of 3 phone calls monthly to a range of members to find out basic information relating to their feeling about the direction the church is taking. He has performed weddings and will conduct Don Cowie’s memorial service. There is no negative feedback to report.

Carla brought several recommendations.

Motion passed to allow a Piccolo Spoleto event (Susan Conant's service) in Gage Hall.

Motion passed to adopt the Green Sanctuary policy for Gage Hall.

Motion passed to accept Steve Hyatt's inclusion of the church in his website.

Motion passed to increase wedding fees for non-members beginning in the fall.

Motion passed to include Ruby Hutchison, Flo Stoertz, and Sue Metzger in the Samuel & Caroline Gilman Society per the Planned Giving Committee's recommendation.

Meeting evaluation: Danny asked us to respond to how we felt about tonight's meeting and solicited elaboration from some.

Closing Words: Maureen provided the closing words.

Next meetings: Executive committee, April 1; Vestry, March 8.

Respectfully submitted,
Sally Newell, secretary