

**Unitarian Church of All Souls**  
**Minutes of the Board of Trustees Meeting**  
**1157 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY**  
**Sunday, October 29, 2023**

A meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Unitarian Church of All Souls was convened in the Forrest Church Gallery of the Church by Board First Vice President Gus Young at 12:45 p.m.

Trustees Present: Gus Young (First Vice President), Li Yu (Second Vice President), Richard Esposito, Dixie Goss, Beryl Jones-Woodin, Judith Moldover, Matthew Singh. Absent: President Mark Leeds (President); Shivani Singh.

Also present: Nadira Shiwram-Singh (Director of Finance and Administration); Cecily Millen Elizondo (Director of Growth); Pamela Patton (Director of Congregational Ministries); Arthur Hopkirk (Secretary to the Board).

The Board's First Vice President, Gus Young, called the meeting to order at 12:45 p.m.

Pamela Patton reported on activities for the Buddhism and Mindfulness program. The daily community meditation held online at 8:30 a.m. has been a success. About 25 to 30 people per day are participating. Eight volunteers have agreed to lead meditations.

Patton said the retreat led by Pilar Jennings was a success. Offerings from participants totaled approximately \$2500 and All Souls received half of the offerings after compensating Jennings as per the agreement with her.

Patton also reported that Anne Bradley is pushing forward with the development of the new All Souls website. Alex Goodwin continues to volunteer his services for creation of the website when he is available.

Cecily Millen Elizondo reported that Mitchell Gray, a professional photographer, will be available to take pictures of locations in the church that can be rented for events, and photographs of some events. Some of these photographs will be posted on the church's website. For the moment, taking head shots of personnel and Board members will be deferred due to the expense. Those persons may provide their own photos for posting on the website.

Patton had hoped to hold a Pathways to Membership program on November 5<sup>th</sup>. However, due to changes in the Rev. Galen Guengerich's schedule, that program will be rescheduled. Patton hopes that the program will occur in early December.

Li Yu said that he believed that the potluck lunch held on October 1<sup>st</sup> was successful. Patton responded that the staff was considering holding potluck once a month. There was an exchange of views on getting more volunteers involved in coffee hour. Dixie Goss suggested holding community dinners and using them as a fundraising opportunity. Freewill donations could be solicited. In addition, such dinners might be used to kickoff the Annual Giving campaign.

**Richard Esposito moved that Dr. Chris Rogutsky provide figures for inclusion in the monthly dashboard on registration in Religious Education, weekly Religious Education attendance, and weekly attendance at the Sunday morning Adult Education program. Judith Moldover seconded the motion. The motion passed by a vote of 7-0.**

Esposito raised the question of security issues considering recent world events. Nadira Shiwram-Singh explained some of the measures that have been taken both on Sunday and during the rest of the week.

Shiwram-Singh said that she had electronically sent a report to the Board the previous night and invited questions. Li Yu sought clarification that the drawdown from the endowment had been reduced from 4.5% to 2%. Shiwram-Singh confirmed that the drawdown had been reduced to 2%.<sup>1</sup>

Esposito raised concerns about nine (9) credit cards being used by staff members for church expenditures and that receipts for those expenses were not always submitted in a timely manner. In accord with a recommendation by auditors, Shiwram-Singh suggested reducing the number of credit cards to three (3) and billing all recurring charges to one credit card so that she can keep track of such expenses more reliably.

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<sup>1</sup> Shiwram-Singh said that a contrary statement in a report was a remnant from earlier reports that had not been corrected.

**Esposito moved that the number of credit cards used in the name of All Souls Unitarian Church be limited to three (3), effective as of December 1, 2023. Li Yu seconded the motion. The motion passed by a vote of 7-0.<sup>2</sup>**

Shiwram-Singh said that revenue from all sources is down 16% from the budgeted amount.<sup>3</sup> Millen Elizondo believes that one problem is that those who owe money under contracts do not always pay All Souls in a timely manner. There was a discussion of Millen Elizondo amending All Souls' form contracts by including a provision for penalties for late payment. Beryl Jones-Woodin noted that Millen Elizondo should have discretion to waive penalties depending on individual circumstances.

Shiwram-Singh reported that approximately \$250,000 to \$300,000 in capital expenses have been incurred for the building's boiler and other major building maintenance. Funding sources for these expenses have not yet been secured.

**Esposito moved to approve the minutes of the September 24, 2023, meeting of the Board that previously had been distributed. Li Yu seconded the motion. The motion carried by a vote of 7-0.**

Millen Elizondo reported that she had recently attended a symposium entitled, "Not So Scary Fundraising," sponsored by the New York City chapter of American Fundraising Professionals. Three themes of the conference were the importance to successful fundraising of storytelling, cultivation of donors, and maintaining the donor pipeline.

Regarding storytelling, Millen Elizondo would like to interview members of the congregation including Board members about why they give to All Souls.

With respect to cultivating donors, Millen Elizondo noted the importance of meeting with donors to determine what, in their view, is going well at All Souls and what is

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<sup>2</sup> Esposito stated that the new policy will encourage the timely submission of receipts by staff. Beryl Jones-Woodin said that the motion was intended to address concerns raised by All Souls' auditors.

<sup>3</sup> Later, Esposito clarified that a statement in the October 2023 financial report submitted by Shiwram-Singh that congregational giving was down 34% reflected a comparison with the amount budgeted. The level of congregational giving is nonetheless ahead of the amount for the previous year at this point.

not going so well. Since she has been in her current role on the church's staff, Millen Elizondo has met with middle-tier donors. Rev. Galen Guengerich has met with larger donors. Millen Elizondo noted that as Rev. Guengerich leaves the role of senior minister, plans will have to be developed for transferring his role of cultivating large donors to Millen Elizondo or Board members. Millen Elizondo raised the possibility of leveraging Rev. Guengerich's retirement for purposes of fundraising.

As for maintaining the donor pipeline, there was a discussion about identifying those who have stopped contributing and getting them re-engaged with All Souls. Millen Elizondo raised the possibility of having meetings of monthly donors.

Jones Woodin emphasized the importance of persuading every congregant to make some financial contribution consistent with their means.

Goss suggested organizing a committee to phone or contact mid-tier donors as part of the Annual Giving process. Goss said that All Souls should have more events for fundraising.

**Esposito moved and Li Yu seconded a motion that (1) Millen Elizondo provide the Board by its next meeting with a breakdown of the distribution of donors; and (2) Millen Elizondo identify members of a committee of volunteers to work on improving Annual Giving; and create a mission for that committee that will include achieving 100% participation in Annual Giving by congregation members. The motion passed by a vote of 7-0.<sup>4</sup>**

Li Yu gave an update on the work of the Nominating Committee. That Committee had met that morning (of October 29<sup>th</sup>) before the church service. The Committee believes that it is on track for reporting a slate of candidates for the Board by the Board's November meeting. The Committee asked that Millen Elizondo identify two possible Sundays in January 2024 so as to have a candidates' forum on one of

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<sup>4</sup> In a discussion of the content and wording of this motion, the meaning of the "distribution of donors" was discussed. Although the exact outlines were not agreed upon, the basic concept was to identify the number of pledging units that fell into the top, middle, and lower tiers of Annual Giving, and the number of members of the congregation who do not participate in Annual Giving at all. In addition, it would be useful to have statistics on the percentage of the budgeted Annual Giving goal that was being raised from the top, middle, and lower tiers of Annual Giving participants.

those dates. The forum would be a hybrid event with the opportunity for participation both in person and over Zoom.

The public portion of the meeting was adjourned at about 2:15 p.m.<sup>5</sup> The Board reconvened for an Executive Session after it was permitted to reenter the church.

Respectfully submitted,

Arthur Hopkirk  
Secretary to the Board

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<sup>5</sup> The meeting was interrupted twice by false fire alarms.