



**Foothills Annual  
Congregational Meeting  
Approved Minutes  
June 14, 2020**

1. Meeting called to order at 11:05am by Board President Sara Steen. Chalice lighting by Lisa Peppin.
2. Rev. Sean Neil-Barron presented a short audio file instructing congregants on how to use the Zoom meeting-space buttons, including muting/unmuting, chat, how to ask questions by using the raise/lower hand functions and how to vote by using the yes/no buttons.
3. **Sara Steen called for the standing rules to be approved and seeing no objections, declared them approved.**
4. **Sara Steen called for the agenda to be approved and seeing no objections, declared them approved.**
5. Sara Steen mentioned that due to the large amount of information to be given during today's meeting and the possibility of not fielding all questions, she and Reverend Gretchen Haley offered to hold a forum for that specific purpose sometime in the next couple of weeks.
6. **Sara Steen called for any corrections to the following congregational meeting minutes: June 2, 2019, October 6, 2019, December 8, 2019 and March 1, 2020 and hearing no objections declared all four meeting minutes approved.**
7. Sara Steen reviewed the events of the past board year starting with Rev. Gretchen's 14-week sabbatical during which time Associate Minister, Sean Neil-Barron stepped in to assume the role of Senior Minister in her absence.
8. Sara Steen noted In December, 2019, the congregation voted to ordain Christopher Watkins-Lamb.

9. Sara Steen reported that when the coronavirus became a pandemic around mid-March, ministers and staff acted quickly to move all of the services and church functions online. Other responses included the formation of 21 Community Circles and starting in April, 2020, the building was resourced to house homeless families in Fort Collins.

10. Sara honored and thanked outgoing board members, Joan Woodbury and Cheryl Hazlitt. Cheryl was noted for her work as board secretary as well as board liaison to both the Personnel committee and the Nominating committee. Joan was noted for her work as a past board president, and current board liaison to the Governance committee. Sara expressed gratitude for the congregants who served on the Governance, Personnel and Finance committees as well as congregants who served on the Senior Minister Evaluation, Restoring Wholeness and Endowment task forces.

11. Sara reminded the congregation that during the March 1, 2020 congregational meeting, over \$6M in pledges was received for the Capital Campaign; the congregation voted to authorize the final design work of Phase One for \$8.2M: and voted to authorize a \$1.29M C-Pace loan. At the conclusion of that meeting, the congregation instructed the ministry to explore options on how to raise the additional \$900,000 needed to “bridge the gap” between the \$7.3M (\$6M in pledges + \$1.29M C-PACE loan) and the actual cost of \$8.2M. In early April, the board asked the architect to pause on the final design work due to the coronavirus and the Building Expansion team also paused their work to give ministry time to assess the financial situation. The ministry then created a 5-member team whose job it was to reach out to people who had pledged to the Capital Campaign to assess their ongoing ability to meet their pledges. Of those contacted, 100% expressing confidence in their plan to fulfill their pledges. The board will meet on June 18, 2020 to review the ministry report on these pledges and to assess the congregation’s wishes to move forward using the following questions as a guide:

12. Do we attempt to raise an additional \$900,000 (from increased/new pledges, and/or additional loans/member notes) and instruct the architect to commence final design on the \$8.2M Phase One project as planned?

13. Do we go back to the architect and ask them to provide us with a new Phase One plan that could be completed for \$7.3M?

14. Do we reconsider the loan in light of economic uncertainty and either revise/reduce our design to be in line with the \$7.3M or attempt to raise

additional money to accommodate the \$8.2M Phase One project costs or some combination of these three options?

15. The board will return to the congregation in early fall with recommendations on how to move forward.

16. Sara thanked the Building Expansion team, the Capital Campaign steering committee, and everyone in the congregation who participated in the vital work of Building for Courageous Love this year.

17. Sara delivered an update on the Restoring Wholeness task force work. After a short history of the misconduct that occurred at Foothills in 2017 and 2018, she noted that the ministers and the board worked together to create the Restoring Wholeness Task Force to help identify and carry out next steps in this ongoing work. The goal of this task force was to create and maintain a healthy culture at Foothills where each person's integrity is respected, where expectations for healthy boundaries between religious professionals and congregants are clear, where people understand why these boundaries exist and that there is a clear path toward accountability and healing if violations do occur. The Restoring Wholeness task force began its work in April, 2019 and concluded its work in January, 2020 and presented that work to the board. The board is now working to first: create a tiered narrative that will have varying levels of detail in each tier and write narratives that will be available within our church community so that a common language can be spoken about the misconduct that occurred. Secondly, the task force is working on revisions to board policies and monitoring practices involving ministry, staff and lay leaders that will enhance our church's culture, prevent future misconduct and promote healthy relationships between religious professionals and congregants. As we do this work, the board welcomes your questions, concerns and thoughts around these important issues.

18. The Senior Minister Evaluation task force presented a short video describing the work they had done to evaluate senior minister, Gretchen Haley, and a four page summary was provided to the congregation through a link included in the annual meeting packet. Senior minister Gretchen Haley thanked the team for the work they had done to complete her evaluation.

19. Rev. Gretchen Haley presented the minister's report which outlined the four strategies the church is using to move through this time: Worship Where You Are; Community Circles for Connection, Resourcing Our Community Partners; and Steward Foothills for the Long Haul. Other strategies outlined were that the worship remain relevant with a high impact; the worship offers practices and ways of making meaning; the worship provides comfort for this challenging time; and the worship feels worth attending. Total online attendance peaked in April with consistent numbers of between 300 and 500. In mid-April, more people began attending the 9:00am service. The incredible work of the Family Ministry Team was highlighted for their ability to offer 40 online gatherings to children, pre-teens and high school youth with an average of about 35 children attending. Videos specifically targeting families with younger children have reached about 155 people. A workshop for parents as social justice educators was offered with 34 people participating and of those, 40% were outside the Foothills community. We have had six different congregations joining us during this time: the Unitarian Universalist Church of Bowling Green Kentucky; the Unitarian Universalist Church of Charleston, West Virginia; First Parish Brewster Unitarian Universalist, Brewster, Massachusetts; the Unitarian Universalist Church of Cleveland, Ohio; the Unitarian Universalist Church of Ogden, Utah; and Two Rivers Unitarian Universalist Church, Carbondale, Colorado. Our worship elements are being used across the country and the Zoom home video made by Jennifer and Doug Powell and their family has over 1300 views on YouTube. There has been over 220 members of all ages participating in making worship happen; 12 households participated in lighting the chalice; we had baby blessings; 18 different people contributed to musical recordings and we continue to increase participation. The Climate Justice team offered blessings; over 100 people contributed videos for our flower communion; and through lip syncing and dancing many of you contributed to songs from the worship. Online viewers from 30 different states and provinces and up to 5 different countries watched our services. Over 1600 people watched our videos on our YouTube channel and there was a 65% increase in our podcast downloads and 30% of our people are watching on demand. Reverend Gretchen thanked all of the volunteers who made the online technology possible and accessible.

20. Assistant Minister, Sean Neil-Barron provided an update on the strategy of building Community Circles for Connection reporting that 22 Community Circles had been created. These Circles were initially designed for the practical needs of getting groceries and prescriptions. During the first month of the pandemic, the practical needs of the Circles were lower and the emotional, spiritual and

connective needs were much greater. Since their inception, over 500 people are connected through these Circles with two to six leads and parish visitors doing the work of connecting. The goal for the Circles was to get connected, to build community and grow together and a deepening ownership of the church for the church is occurring. There are people making sure everyone can access Zoom; people who are providing socially distant technical support; people making sure prescriptions are filled and grocery runs are made; and people who didn't know each other are checking in, peer to peer, to make sure everyone is getting what they need. The question now is what needs to be at the heart of these Community Circles that allows them to be a place for spiritual sustenance, a place of real care, and a place of real, deep connection. There is a team of people in place who are starting a revisioning process to identify what's possible and what structures might allow courageous love to unfold in our local neighborhood. Reverend Sean thanked all of the circle leads and parish visitors and also thanked Reverend Kristen Psaki and Amy Gage for all of their hard work in providing solid foundations for these Community Circles.

21. Reverend Gretchen continued with the ministry report strategy of Resourcing Our Community Partners noting our building was being shared with Family Housing Network to house and support families coming out of homeless situations. Of the 14 families that have stayed in the building, five have since moved into permanent housing. This sharing of our building with families will continue as long as we are out of the building which looks as if it will probably be May, 2021. In the meantime, ministry is assessing the number of coronavirus cases and the safety of reopening is being considered. Other ways of resourcing our community partners includes making plans to share some of our office space with another community partner; offering the mobile food bank as a drive-through where over 250 unduplicated households received food from the food bank in April including 597 volunteer service hours. Reverend Gretchen thanked Courtney Butner and Mary Klecan and all volunteers who have made the drive-through work. Another major initiative has been our support for the Interfaith Solidarity and Accompaniment Coalition's (ISAAC) emergency immigration fund , which Foothills is the fiscal agent . As a result of our partnership we have been able to distribute \$150,000 in April and May to 500 immigrants in Northern Colorado through a rapid response. The congregation has supported this fund with donations of staff time, including Reverend Kristen Psaki, who has been on the Oversight committee. We have assisted in applying for and have received three grants for this fund including one from the Colorado Trust Statewide Covid fund and another is in process through the Bohemian

Foundation. The congregation has also directly contributed over \$30,000 within this same time period and has been a huge support in helping coordinate response for the immigrant community in Northern Colorado through weekly calls and facilitation of coordination by Reverend Kirsten. In this past week, we have started to help in the launch of the Black Indigenous People of Color alliance (BIPOC) with an upcoming report in the fall. Our fourth strategy, Foothills For The Long Haul, is deciding on choices today that are connected to our long term future. Instead of this being considered a short term pivot, we are working on integrating what we are doing now into the bold vision that was articulated by the board based on the dreams of the congregation. Consideration is also being given to how these Community Circles can be set up as a deep network of care and community all across Northern Colorado so that when we return to the building, we will still feel a deep sense of connection motivating us to return because of those relationships that have been sustained over the long haul. Another part of Foothills For the Long Haul is our financial stewardship and making sure we are thinking not just about the short term but the long term. Our budget has been reviewed and adjusted monthly with quarterly pledge statements being sent out. The building plans have been slowed down and we applied and received a payroll loan of \$100,000 from the Covid Relief Act of which all but \$12,000 will be converted to a grant. A staffing plan that strengthens our ministry both now and into the future is also being made. Financially, preliminary April results show 10% under overall expenses and on budget for income. Predictably, May was not as strong as the whole plate was given to support the immigration fund. Depending on community influences such as the Poudre School District and Colorado State University, the economic downturn may be more visible in 2021. Ministry continues to feel positive we can mitigate the challenges and will continue to have funds for ministry. As of September 14, 2020, shifts were made in staffing resulting in a remaining staff of 14 employees. This decrease was due to switching to an online environment and not based on the financial picture. The assistant office position and the choir director position were eliminated along with decreasing the family ministry team by two. Plans are being made to implement a national search for a full time music director in 2021. Reverend Christopher Lamb-Watkins' hours will be increased and Amy Gate will become full time. Major staff transitions include office administrator, Jeffrey Mizell leaving to move out of state and Reverend Kristen Psaki leaving to pursue other ways of doing ministry outside of congregational life. Reverend Kristen expressed gratitude for everyone who had reached out and gratitude for her ability to say "yes" to the call of her heart's ministry of moving closer to the earth and land in community ministry. Reverend Elaine Tenbrink was introduced as the

new half-time Assistant Minister. Valuing and supporting staff during this time will result in staff having time off this summer and increasing their compensation at mid-year. Support of Poudre School District's hybrid learning environment will mean adjusted work schedules. Currently some churches are reopening however our current building space is too small to reopen safely. Guidance for small group gatherings outside will be created and sent out however congregants will need to make the choice of whether to engage or not in these activities. Reverend Gretchen thanked the congregation for their participation, for caring for each other, for helping each other access technology, for financial support and thanked the board for their leadership and to the congregation for remaining an incredible amount of hope.

22. Sara Steen extended the meeting time to 1:00pm.

23. Sue Sullivan, board liaison to the Endowment Committee, provided an update on the Endowment task force and the endowment fund. She began by expressing gratitude to the Endowment task force who gathered information from other Unitarian Universalist congregations on how to manage an endowment fund when the church has grown and has transitioned to a more professional structure of governance. Since its inception, the endowment fund has been managed by an elected committee of 5 congregants who are technically accountable to the board of trustees although there are no clear lines of authority and oversight and the fund isn't integrated with the other fund raising efforts of the church. What few guidelines are written about spending money from the fund don't necessarily align with the current vision and mission of the congregation. Many meetings between the board and the members of the current Endowment committee have taken place to talk about the difficulties of growing the endowment fund in isolation of other fund raising work of the church, i.e., annual pledge drives and Capital Campaign. Also many phone conversations and a round table discussion last fall took place with those congregants who had either donated to the fund or had previously served on the Endowment committee. At that time, the focus was on building expansion and if the congregants felt that using some or all of our \$300,000 endowment fund was a mission appropriate, high impact use of a fund that is too small to be an effective endowment. Based on the task force's research and our current budget, a minimum effective endowment fund for a church of our size is \$2M. Since the onset of the coronavirus, the Unitarian Universalist Association finance and fundraising staff advised that congregations should consider having policies that explicitly authorize the use of the principle of their endowment fund in times of fiscal

emergency. Thanks to the resilience and generosity of our congregation, we are currently in solid shape financially and don't anticipate needing to use the endowment to fund the essential functioning of the church. The advice from the UUA has reiterated for the board the importance of a clearly stated mission and uses for the endowment fund and clear lines of authority. The board has concluded that in its vision setting role, should hold the authority for the endowment and its alignment with our mission and vision. We also feel that the practical work of fundraising and managing the investments of the endowment should reside on the ministry side of policy governance. This could be accomplished perhaps as an endowment team or a legacy gifting team so that it could effectively coordinate with our other finance and fundraising teams. The term, ministry, in policy governance terms, was defined as the ministers, the staff and the many teams of congregants who do the work of the church in partnership with them. The ministry team is part of the governance structure where the congregation as a whole gets most involved in the work of the church so locating the endowment fund's management in a ministry team actually places it mainly under the congregation's control. To summarize, this coming year the board will be revising board policies including those that delineate the purposes and the use of the endowment fund and we will begin the major work of updating our church bylaws to bring them into the current era of governance. These changes to how the endowment is governed will come before the congregation for a vote as part of these bylaw revisions. The board invites the congregations thoughts and reflections on the endowment and the long term congregational goals you believe it should serve. The congregation was encouraged to communicate with the board via email at [theboard@foothillsuu.org](mailto:theboard@foothillsuu.org).

24. The members of the Nominating committee, Linda Kothera, Elizabeth Stanley and Cheryl Hazlitt working closely with the Leadership Development committee, have developed a slate of candidates for Foothills' elected positions. Nominees for the board of trustee positions are Andrea Delorey and Doug Powell, both nominated for a 3 year term, and Sara Steen who is being nominated for a one year term moving from president to trustee. Nominees for the Endowment committee are John Busby and Steve Tenbrink for three year terms and Joan Woodbury for a one year term.

**25. The Nominating committee moved to approve this slate of nominees for 2020-2021.**



**26. Eric Price moved to amend the slate of nominees for 2020-21.** She expressed concern about a possible conflict of interest between Steve Tenbrink being nominated for a position on the Endowment committee and the recent hire of his daughter-in-law Elaine Aron-Tenbrink, as Assistant Minister. The motion was seconded by Marty Tharp. Sara clarified that the motion under discussion was to remove Steve Tenbrink from the slate of nominees. A discussion followed.

**27. Sara called for a vote on the motion to remove Steve Tenbrink from the slate of nominees for 2020-21.**

**28. The motion to remove Steve Tenbrink from the current slate of nominees was denied by a vote of 84 to 22.**

**29. Sara called for a vote to approve the original slate of nominees for 2020-21 and the motion was approved by a vote of 110 yes to 2 no with 1 abstention.**

30. Sara reiterated that due to the large amount of information that was given during today's meeting, she and Reverend Gretchen would be holding a forum for the specific purpose of answering questions sometime in the next couple of weeks.

31. Sara thanked all of those who had agreed to serve the congregation in the coming year.

32. Sue Sullivan, incoming board president, thanked Sara Steen, the outgoing board president for the amazing job she did while president. Sue added that during these unusual times, Foothills is proving that we are rising to the challenge with creativity, deep connection and compassion and she is looking forward to facing this new future and helping to build this beloved community in this new reality.