

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING
JUNE 2, 2019
DRAFT MINUTES

Overview of Robert's Rules of Order:

Parliamentarian Matthew Diasio offered a lesson in the major points of Robert's Rules of Order, which are used to govern these meetings according to our bylaws.

Call to Order and Establishment of Quorum:

Chairperson Adam Slate, President of the Board of Trustees, called the meeting to order at 12:06 PM. He called on the Head Teller to establish the quorum which, according to our bylaws requires that 10% of membership to be in attendance. Our membership as of May 3, 2019 is 362 so 37 members constitute a quorum. The head teller reported there are 125 members in attendance, thus certifying a quorum.

Covenant:

We read our covenant together:

In order to create the beloved community we all desire for ourselves, we, the Congregation of Thomas Jefferson Memorial Church Unitarian Universalist covenant to:

- Communicate with compassion and respect, especially when we disagree,
- Celebrate diversity and nurture our inclusivity,
- Embrace one another spiritually and emotionally,
- Promote social justice within our congregation and the larger community,
- Generously support the ministries of the church with time, money and enthusiasm, and
- When we have fallen short, lovingly call each other back into covenant.

The Chair recognized the following people for their roles in this meeting: Ann Salamini, Board Secretary, who is taking minutes; Matthew Diasio, who is serving as Parliamentarian; Laura Wallace, who coordinated the written candidate statements; and the members of church staff, Nominating Committee and Board of Trustees who helped prepare for this meeting.

Connie Goodbread introduced herself and spoke as a representative of the UUA Southern Region Congregational Life Staff.

Opening Words and Lighting of the Chalice:

Alex McGee offered opening words. Stephanie and James Davis lit the chalice.

Approval of the Agenda:

The Chair called for approval of the agenda. A motion was made to amend the agenda.

MOTION: I move that the meeting agenda be amended to add a report by our Director of Faith Development.

Unanimously approved.

Approval of the Minutes of the Previous Congregational Meeting:

The next item was approval of the minutes of the September 9, 2018 congregational meeting. Adam called for corrections or additions. None being made, he called for a motion.

MOTION: I move to approve the minutes of the September 9, 2018 congregational meeting.

Unanimously approved.

Reports:

The Treasurer's Report and letters from the Lead Minister and Director of Administration and Finance were submitted in writing in the meeting materials. The text of these documents appears at the end of these minutes.

The Chair called on Leia Durland-Jones to make her annual report.

Director of Faith Development's Report:

As this is our annual meeting, it is a time for me to reflect with you specifically about this year in our congregation's lifespan faith development program. You may be familiar with the Masai people of Kenya who greet one another by asking, "Kasserian Ingera?" which means "how are the children?" Those of you who attended worship this morning and witnessed our high school seniors bridging to young adulthood, can attest that the children of our church are beautiful, complex, unique, talented, brave and loving. And our children and youth's faith development program, from infant through high school graduation, strives to support the full development of our children and their families. Our work is to nurture the next generation of Unitarian Universalists so that they are equipped with the skills, tools and resources they need to live their values every day and to help heal our hurting world.

Our religious education experiences for children and youth this year have some highlights that need a special shout-out including our meal packet initiative led by Margaret Gorman, our year-long *Our Whole Lives* comprehensive sexuality education program for our 7th & 8th graders, our church-wide celebrations of the Jewish holidays of Purim and Passover led by the Gill Family, our anti-racism focused family covenant group co-led by

Camille Thompson and Stephanie Davis, our senior high weeklong trip to Appalachia to help make peoples' homes warmer, safer and drier and our inclusive Sunday morning multi-age RE class designed to welcome children who do best in active learning environments led by Nick Laiacona and Michelle Benedict.

To all the volunteers in our children and youth's religious education programming, I offer my heart-felt appreciation for your time, your dedication and your willingness to engage with the very important work of helping our children understand what it means to embody our faith.

Every time we worship together whether it be in children's worship, in small groups, or in multigenerational community, we are all learning or reminding ourselves of how to live our faith and values in the wider world. As our children can tell you, from their internalization of our UU principles using the Rainbow Chalice, it is incumbent upon us... it is our work as Unitarian Universalists to keep learning throughout our lives. The children know this through the yellow candle which reminds us to "Yearn to Learn" and the green candle which tells us to keep "growing in our ongoing search for truth and meaning." Our adult faith development program is one way to do this. We had a variety of AFD offerings this year including Transylvania Stories and Unitarian Theology and Building Your Own Theology with Rev. Alex, Faithful Practices with RevWik, our tenth annual Women's Dream Quest, the short story reading group, Wednesday Wonderings, Tai Chi and several offerings related to our work for racial justice and dismantling white supremacy including RevWik's Seeing with New Eyes as well as a class focusing on the plays of August Wilson, and one called Exploring White Privilege led by Donna Baker and Ann Forno.

I want to lift up the work of our Racial Justice Committee, particularly Kate Fraleigh, for their commitment to creating opportunities for us to regularly engage with racial justice as faith development. Committing to and going deep on a personal level to learn about racial justice is truly one of our most profound opportunities for faith development. (Slide: Critiques of White Supremacy Culture.)

I urge us all to engage or re-engage or stay engaged with the important and life changing work of understanding and dismantling white supremacy. As Unitarian Universalists, we are called to this work and it is truly about our mutual liberation.

Which brings me to where we are today. I stand before you with a heavy heart. Like many of you, I am sad that Chris and Wik are leaving. And while I know that something had to shift, something had to change, this is not the change I prayed for. I have learned so many things from both Chris and Wik in the time that we worked together and I will remain forever grateful to them both for their many gifts of collegiality, friendship, courage and for seeing in me things I could not yet see myself. I will miss them both every day. Thankfully, what I have learned from and with them will live on in me. For instance, I will continue to remind myself, and I hope you will too, to see the world, due to Wik's urging, as "both/and" instead of "either/or" --realizing that dualistic thinking is usually unhelpful.

I will carry with me Wik's sense of humor, deep humility and his commitment to radically shared leadership. As you know, he is an amazing writer and creative thinker. I feel incredibly lucky to have co-led worship and adult faith development classes with him and to have co-authored a curriculum on family ministry for the Unitarian Universalist Association together.

And Chris, fierce warrior goddess for racial justice that she is, has allowed me to earn the privilege of being a white ally—a privilege that requires daily vigilance. And I make mistakes regularly and mess up and then work to find ways to repair our relationship. I have been very grateful to have Chris as my accountability partner. Many of you know that Chris' primary orientation as a religious professional is as a religious educator. Her antidotes to white supremacy culture or Multicultural Centering (Slide: Multicultural Centering by C. Rivera) is a powerful resource that gives me guidance, direction and a path forward. I hope you will take some time to reflect on this tool she created to see how you might incorporate its message into your own life.

There will be time in the coming weeks to formally and informally say our good-byes to Wik and Chris. Let's honor them and their gifts and their work and time with us by saying good-bye well and with love.

So what do we do now? The late Maria Harris, a prominent Christian religious educator, and someone I admire, taught that the entire congregation is the curriculum. Think about that for a minute. Maria Harris said everything we do—from the words we use when we talk with each other to

how we treat one another to how we use our time and resources teaches us and our children about our values and beliefs more than any curriculum we could ever use. The entire congregation is the curriculum. Our children and youth are watching and learning who to be and how to be from us. So what I ask of you today and as we move forward together is to be aware of your own actions and behaviors and how they impact others. How are your values manifesting in your behaviors? I heard a quote the other day, unfortunately, I can't remember where, about how our actions matter more than our opinions. That can be hard to remember, particularly as UU's. Our *actions* matter more than our opinions. Most of the time, our opinions really matter only to ourselves and our attachment to our preferences can get in our way. So I ask you, in this challenging time in the life of our congregation, and maybe forever, to really pay attention to when you might be expecting someone else or everyone else to defer to your preferences. I am asking you to be aware of your preferences, not necessarily to ignore or negate them, but to know when that's simply what they are, preferences. I am asking you to make room for the needs, wants, desires, and preference of others in our large and ever-changing faith family. If you are used to having your way, getting your needs heard and expecting they'll be met, or having your voice be centered, I invite you to step back, to make space, to be generous, to consider the whole and let our congregation be a place where many voices and many preferences can be honored as we work together to clarify who we are and to carry our multifaceted vision forward together.

There is much work ahead of us. We need time to reflect and discern together about where we have been. There are questions that need to be asked and wrestled with. There are answers that may be hard to sit with. There are many stories and experiences to be shared and heard. We must make and take the time to do this important work together. If we do not, I fear we will never be able to be whole.

I shared earlier that the Masai people greet one another by asking, "Kasserian Ingera?" "how are the children?" It is also important to know that the hoped for reply is "*all* the children are well." Not just my children. Not some of the children. All the children are well. For the Masai, society cannot be well unless all the children are well. In the coming weeks, months and years, may we too embrace our call as a people of faith to care lovingly for the children and youth of our congregation, and to care lovingly for each

other as well. And then, we must, *we must*, do the work that only we can do, for and with our siblings in the wider community and world. This work will be messy work. It will likely have times of great discomfort. We will disagree. We will make mistakes. We will need to practice naming when we have fallen out of covenant with each another and then find ways to make things right between us and be in covenant again. And, we will also find joy and purpose and healing, and if we're lucky, we just might be transformed. Our work is waiting for us--will you join me?

Amen and blessed be.

President Adam Slate gave his report:

Gratitude

For those of you who do not know me well--and I hope there are still a few of you with a normal enough TJMC experience that you still do not know me well--I am in the last few weeks of my second term as Board President. A second term is not something that happens very often, and I was not expecting to serve two terms. So let me start by saying how grateful I am for the opportunity, and *why* I am grateful, especially at this time in our congregation's history.

Most of all, I am grateful for the time I have gotten to spend with so many church members. I often remind us that it is easy to focus on our own silos and tribes within the congregation and think that our perspective is the predominant one. I have only been able to share a broad view of who constitutes TJMC because I have had the chance to meet with literally hundreds of you over the past two years. These interactions have enriched me, and I hope in turn they have helped enrich our congregation.

I have also tried to spend this time modeling what I have called a *non-anxious presence* as our congregation has worked through fundamental issues of how we talk to each other, interact with our leadership, and support spirituality and justice here in Charlottesville. I have tried to be the first person to say uncomfortable things and show they can be said without breaking our covenant to each other, said without wielding a pitchfork intending to run the supposed ogres out of our village, and said with love. This year has reminded the Board that there are things we cannot fix, and taught us that sometimes leadership means simply bearing witness to conflict, confusion, and suffering.

You have reminded me about covenant. That it is not a sword or a fence, but rather it's a promise, a promise that can be so tenuous, so tempting to elbow to the side, that it cannot survive without the poet Rumi's anthem: "Come, come, whoever you are... Even if you've broken your vows a thousand times."

I am grateful for the chance you have given me to represent this congregation at a time when a UU presence in Charlottesville has maybe never meant more. Through a Klan

rally. And a white nationalist rally. Doing so has reminded me that part of what constitutes a successful church has nothing to do with the needs of the people in the congregation; that it is about people who may never even know we are showing up for them.

I have gotten to work with such a great Board that brings a high level of integrity, transparency, honesty, and commitment to everything it does at a time when those traits are so important here. I am grateful for the trust that so many of you have placed in us.

The Work We Have Done

You have shown me up close that there are seldom thoroughly good guys or bad guys, but that there are many, many heroes who continue to nurture this place, working to achieve our mission in lots of ways. I want to make sure that my report holds up some of those examples. These are places where TJMC's commitment to our world continues to thrive:

- We have a monthly social action collection that raises over \$25K each year for area organizations.
- Our Soup Kitchen serves lunches to about 65 guests each week who experience food insecurity. We feed hundreds of people in the community each month through our long-running Food Pantry.
- Around 70 church members help us shelter PACEM guests for several weeks each winter by cooking food, setting up and cleaning up, and staying overnight.
- A large group of youth and adults repaired houses in some of the poorest parts of Appalachia as part of our Appalachian Service Project ministry.
- Members of the TJMC community have been doing racial justice work in the community through such organizations as the Jefferson School African American Heritage Center, SURJ, and the Charlottesville Clergy Collective's "Conversations Toward Reconciliation" initiative.

Within our congregation:

- Pastoral Visitors reaches out to members with pastoral and spiritual support. CareNet provides food and transportation. We offer solace to each other in crises and tragedy, celebrate children, and each other's small and large victories.
- We had another successful Women's DreamQuest retreat this year, and the UUGuys mens group continues to gather monthly.
- Many covenant groups, what we call our small-group ministries, meet regularly.
- Our young adult group meets regularly, as do our teen and youth members. Our youth members have done several camping trips together this year, and they lead an amazing worship service.
- Last month we enjoyed our largest ever Elder Dinner with close to 80 boisterous guests, and an army of volunteers.
- On Wednesdays we have mid-week contemplative worship on our labyrinth and in the sanctuary, and our Wednesday Wonderings group.

- Our Membership Committee developed a wonderful brochure naming the expectations of being a member; expectations we are called to honor in order to keep TJMC strong.
- And we have regular fundraising events that raise money and provide social opportunities, like our fall and spring auctions, annual yard sale, and our monthly second Sunday soup lunch.

Apologies

These are wonderful successes about which we can be proud, and they help make this place a beacon of hope, a powerhouse for justice, and a Unitarian Universalist sanctuary of the spirit for our congregation and for Central Virginia.

And yet what I most find myself feeling at the end of this tumultuous year is the need to apologize, to so many people.

To the TJMC staff: I am sorry for how we have treated you. Like everyone, none of you are perfect, but I have seen that you all strive to do your best. I am sorry that in conversations about things we want changed, we have at times been willing to be hurtful, rather than asking how we can support you.

I apologize to you and your families that we are having conversations about cutting your pay and work hours to balance our budget, when we as congregants have enough resources not to have to do this. We send you home from work wondering how you will get by on less pay, while many of us are able to take vacations, go out to dinner, buy new cars, see movies and plays, renovate our homes, and so many other things, often putting you in the back of our mind once we leave here on Sundays. We have seen over the years that we are capable of more generosity than we have chosen of late.

To the Board of Trustees that has worked so hard this year: I am sorry that you have been faced with uncomfortable choices and been asked to make decisions with no good outcomes. And at times had to face hostile treatment from members of the congregation even as you were working overtime on its behalf. Like the staff, no Board member is perfect, but I have seen that you bring your full selves to this work.

I include in this apology to the Board the several people who offered to serve in Board roles and then had to step back because the challenges this year seemed too overwhelming. I can imagine how painful it must have been to make that decision.

To all the people who have lost the comfort of our spiritual home due to our conflict. To those of you who have been so upset by issues you have had with the church office that you have not wanted to be in the sanctuary. To everyone who has been hurt or intimidated by someone in the congregation. This is not what a church is supposed to be. I am truly sorry.

To people who have said that you feel like you are losing your church. Rev. Wik reminds us every single week, that each time someone new walks into our community we become

a different place. This is what he means. As we work through our changes, we will never again be the church we were five years ago, even two years ago, or last week. And I know that comes with a profound sense of loss for some of us.

I apologize to the next generation of TJMC members. There is a lot of uncertainty in our future, but I am sure of one thing: those of you in your 20s, 30s, and 40s will be the people running this church in the next quarter-century. And thus far, my generation is failing you. Not because we haven't cared or haven't tried, but because we have not prepared this church to hand over to you when the time comes. We have been too willing to be the loudest voices in the room, and not devoted enough to invite you into our spaces.

To Rev. Wik: I appreciate that your decision to leave is made in the best interest of the church, and at the same time I am sorry that your ministry here ends this way. I have found through careful listening that the majority of this church still supports you. I have spent endless hours coming to understand that so many of the things you have tried to do here are necessary for the direction our congregation wants to go, and that many of the ways you have pushed us toward that growth have been even to the detriment of your own career. We will learn, too late, once you are no longer serving as a lightning rod for our conflict, that the disagreements about our direction, mission, values, and commitments are among ourselves, not with you.

To Chris: You have pointed out ways that people can be racist even while being well-intentioned. You have reminded those of us who identify as white that we do not need to be white supremacists in order to bathe in white supremacy culture. You have taught us not to ask people of color to explain and recommend fixes for the problems that keep us from being a multicultural community, and then you have sacrificed your well-being by answering those questions anyway. I apologize, formally, for what I can attest to firsthand: that we have threatened you, harassed you, bullied you, created obstacles for you, and made you a scapegoat for our own inability to grow. Still... still... as recently as this past month, I have heard from church members who continue to demean you for referring to your work here at TJMC as your ministry rather than learning the essential lesson that to be the people we want to be, we must all think of ourselves as ministers.

To Leia: I am profoundly sorry that you have had a front row seat for how TJMC has treated its leaders at a time when you are likely stepping into a larger leadership role. I know it has been painful. In my President's annual report last year, I said that I would like to see you take more risks. I have realized that I left out the other half of that sentence. I want you to take more risks... because, in spite of your gentle approach and your quiet demeanor, you are strong. You are strong, and your roots in this faith go deep. In the coming months we will learn that the work that TJMC's leadership has been trying to do around racial justice and institutional change and amplifying our UU values of generosity, stewardship, and service lives as strongly in you as in Rev. Wik, or Chris, or anyone. And sometimes it breaks my heart to think about how it might go when the congregation really figures out that this is the case.

To the Unitarian Universalist Association--that only exists to support its member congregations--I apologize that TJMC has not been the leader we could have been after the rallies here on August 11 and 12, 2017. When I travel, I visit other UU churches whenever I can, and even now, our city still comes up in most of the sermons I hear. We found ourselves at a unique and pivotal moment in history, unexpectedly at a time and in a place where Unitarian Universalism needed a healthy, thriving Charlottesville church, and we sidestepped that responsibility with our concerns about calendaring, email responsiveness, relatively small amounts of debt, whether our pledges should auto-renew, whether to print orders of service, and now interim ministry, and who is going to be in charge of this or that part of the church. I know that some people in this congregation have been angry. I know people are hurting--that's real. And I also bear deep regret that we have missed this opportunity under my leadership.

To the UUA Southern Region staff whose salary we decided to stop paying last year by taking our UUA donation almost completely out of our budget: I am sorry. You have followed our story, you have reached out to us sometimes even before we could contact you, you have given your time freely by phone and in person, and you have given your best advice even when there was no good advice to give. You have been generous with us at every turn.

To everyone in the congregation: I talked about how I have tried to model a non-anxious presence, and yet I am aware that there have been plenty of times where I have gotten angry, impatient, suspicious, blinded by my own perspective, short-sighted, careless, and thoughtless. I apologize for those elements of my character, especially to those of you who have been on the receiving end of those behaviors.

Lastly, many church leaders have families. I am sorry to my own family for a year that you were not expecting until it was too late to do anything about it. The depth of your patience and support of this church will go largely unnoticed. But not by me.

Where We Are Headed

We have a lot to do as we move forward into the new year. I do not mean the mechanics of staff transitions and calling a new minister. I mean the work that we really need to do in our congregation, the work that we can be so eager to postpone.

Racial justice work: Understanding, for those of us who identify as white, our fragility and sensitivities. Appreciating that although most of us are not white supremacists, most of us are complicit in perpetuating white supremacy culture. Owning the fact that, in spite of how many of us say that the conflict here has nothing to do with racial justice, many of the conversations I have had with dissatisfied church members turn into conversations about racial justice.

Identity work: We have been talking about the name of our church and its legacy for at least a quarter of a century. It has gotten to the breaking point for some members of the congregation who will not even use the name. We should affirm--as a community--that

we want to remain Thomas Jefferson Memorial Church, or that we do not, rather than brushing the topic under the carpet and letting it fester for years to come.

Stewardship work: Building a sense that we are owners of the church, with inherent responsibility to be generous with our time *and* our money based on what generosity means to each of us. And getting away from a transactional approach to church life where we measure our satisfaction by weighing the services we received against the dues that we pay.

Generational work: Finding ways for the longer-term members in our congregation to de-center ourselves from congregational decision-making and congregational focus, and for new leaders to step into those spaces that are being created. To understand that until we do this well, we are not really in covenant with each other.

Spiritual work: Appreciating that we are either church members, or we are not, and we cannot continue to hold back part of ourselves when we become dissatisfied. Because this does moral injury both to us and to our community, and at some point, we have to put ourselves right by deciding whether to stay engaged with our whole selves, or deciding that we cannot.

I wanted the bulk of my report to be a discussion of this work we need to do, but once I got finished writing my apologies, I realized that there would not be room to do any more than name these issues. And so we finish the church year the way we started it: with a lot of good intentions and not enough time. It's not a dark place to be, not a terrible place, just a very, very human place.

Blessing

On the day that I announced Chris and Erik's departure to the congregation, I attended the Friday night service at Congregation Beth Israel. Sometimes at the end of a long week, I find myself looking forward to the peaceful way the congregation welcomes the sabbath with their Shabbat service.

Often I will absentmindedly leaf through the siddur, the prayer book, which contains beautiful poetry and readings. On that particular evening, I came across this blessing by Rabbi Chaim Stern, which serves as a reminder of the vast gifts we sit upon here at TJMC:

Days pass and the years vanish, and we walk sightless among miracles.

God, fill our eyes with seeing and our minds with knowing;

Let there be moments when Your Presence,

like lightning, illumines the darkness in which we walk.

Help us to see, wherever we gaze, that the bush burns unconsumed.

And we, clay touched by God,

Will reach out for holiness and exclaim in wonder:

"How filled with awe is this place and we did not know it!"

May this blessing inspire us in the weeks and months ahead, and may we, in turn, be blessings to each other, to the church we love, and to the larger world.

Election of Congregationally-elected Positions:

The chair called on Sally Taylor, representing the Nominating Committee, to give a report of nominations. She presented to following slate:

Slate for election at the June 2, 2019 Congregational Meeting.

Board Positions:

- President - Lorie Craddock (2 year term) 2019-2021
- Treasurer - Stan Walker (2 year term) 2019-2021
- At-Large Board member - Kelsey Cowger (3 year term) 2019-2022
- At-Large Board member (by petition) - Carole Black (3 year term) 2019-2022
- At-Large Board member (by petition) - Wendy Repass (3 year term) 2019-2022
- At-Large Board member - Breck Gastinger (1 year term) 2019-2020 - if Lorie is elected President.

Nominating Committee members (4)

- Mary Beth Wiley (2 year term) 2019-2021
- Lisa Shutt (2 year term) 2019-2021
- Breck Gastinger (2 year term) 2019-2021
- Sally Taylor (2 year term) 2019-2020

Personnel Committee members (3)

- Donna Redmond (3 year term) 2019-2022
- Jim Gorham (3 year term) 2019-2022
- Carol Gardner (3 year term) 2019-2022

The Chair called for nominations from the floor for the position of President of the Board of Trustees. None being given, Lorie Craddock was declared elected by acclamation.

Nominations from the floor were invited in the case of Treasurer. None being given, Stan Walker was declared elected by acclamation.

There being three candidates for the single at-large board position, the Chair invited Kelsey Cowger, Carole Black and Wendy Repass to introduce themselves to the congregation. There followed a secret ballot. Kelsey Cowger was elected to the three-year at-large position.

The Chair called for nominations from the floor for the one-year at-large board position. None being given, Breck Gastinger was declared elected by acclamation.

Nominating Committee - No further nominations being made from the floor, Breck Gastinger, Lisa Shutt and Mary Beth Wiley were declared elected by acclamation to two-year terms on the Nominating Committee and Sally Taylor was elected to a one-year term.

Personnel Committee - There being no nominations from the floor, Carol Gardner, Jim Gorham and Donna Redmond were declared elected by acclamation to three-year terms on the Personnel Committee.

The Chair led the congregation in recognition for all newly elected leaders. He then recognized those leaders who are stepping down from their positions at the end of this month:

Cindy Shepard - at-large member, Jeanine Braithwaite - Treasurer, and Adam Slate - President, will be ending their service on the Board. Rev. Wik and Christina Rivera also serve as ex officio members of the Board and will also be leaving.

Amy Nash, Sean McCutcheon and Donna Baker will be completing their terms on the Nominating Committee.

Although it's not a congregationally-elected position, Adam also recognized Stan Walker, who will be stepping down as chair of the Finance Committee in order to serve as Treasurer.

Presentation of Compensation package for Rev. Erik Wikstrom:

Donna Baker spoke to the resignation package for Rev. Erik Wikstrom. The Board of Trustees and Rev. Wik have agreed on 10 months of compensation (salary and fringe benefits, excluding professional expenses). There are two considerations that impacted this decision:

1. The industry standard - (from the Unitarian Universalist Ministerial Association) recommends severance of one month for each year of service. Rev. Wik has been with TJMC for eight years.

2. Rev. Wik is due one month of sabbatical for each year of service, which should have been taken between the fourth and seventh years of service. On two occasions, Rev. Wik began to plan six months of sabbatical, but due to conflict in the church agreed in conjunction with the Board of Trustees that this sabbatical should be postponed. Although Rev. Wik's Letter of Agreement stipulates that unused sabbatical not be

reimbursed, the Board believes that (a) the congregational conflict at TJMC and (b) explicit agreement from elected leaders that the sabbatical should be postponed constitute extenuating circumstances, and that Erik should be compensated for some of this time.

These two components together amount to 14 months of compensation. The Board and Rev. Wik ultimately settled on a lower amount: 10 months. We have tried to honor both Rev. Wik's service to TJMC and the financial and justice-making responsibilities of this congregation.

Just as there are different perspectives and opinions within the congregation, there are differences of opinion among Board members. Through many conversations we considered the different voices, needs, and desires within our community; norms within the wider Unitarian Universalist Association; our UU principles; the demands of justice; the expressed needs of Wik; and our vision of who we want to be as a community. We also sought advice from a variety of sources including congregational life staff and compensation professionals at the Unitarian Universalist Association and an outside attorney. These were not always easy conversations, and the agreements we eventually arrived at reflect compromise--neither as much, nor as little, as some had hoped. Rev. Wik and the board each think the terms of the agreements are fair, and ultimately the Board has unanimously endorsed them.

We are seeking a just outcome for Rev Wik and the church. It is a false narrative that we can only be fair or financially responsible; in order for any church to be successful, it must be both.

Throughout the process of negotiating these agreements we kept coming back to several questions, and we encourage you to consider them as well:

1. How do we stay in covenant with one another?
2. What does Justice look like in this situation?
3. What kind of congregation do we want to aspire to be.

We are optimistic that the congregation will agree with the Board's process and affirm the agreements rather than fight for individual viewpoints.

Please keep in mind that this is a vote on the terms of this negotiated resignation agreement on how Rev Wik should be supported as he leaves. This is not a vote on whether or not Rev Wik should leave, nor is it a referendum on his time here at TJMC.

MOTION: With this said, I move that the congregation of Thomas Jefferson Memorial Church Unitarian Universalist approve the terms of Reverend Wikstrom's negotiated resignation as outlined.

Discussion-

Lorie Craddock (PRO) – I urge you to pass this severance package for Erik. No one likes where we are or how we got here. Many hearts are broken over this and many of us still feel conflicted about where we are. The Board left no stone unturned in coming to the end of this negotiation. We looked at Erik's letter of agreement and the UUA guidelines, consulted with attorneys, did our own due diligence via the internet. We met over a dozen times. This is the best outcome we could come to. This was a serious, difficult decision for all of us to make. The possibility of Erik staying was not on the table. We were tasked to make a decision that was as fair, equitable and financially responsible as possible. What we bring you today is the result of a lot of discussion.

No one else stepped to a microphone.

The Chair called the question: Approve the terms for Rev. Wik's resignation.

The motion passed with a majority vote in the affirmative.

The Chair thanked the Board of Trustees, Rev. Wik, the Congregational Life Staff of the UUA Southern Region and the UUA Compensation Staff for their advice and discussion throughout this process, and also to this congregation who just showed a great deal of trust toward those who conducted the negotiation.

Closing Words and Extinguishing the Chalice:

Leia Durland-Jones offered closing words and Kim Grover extinguished our chalice.

Adjournment:

MOTION: Adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed with a majority in the affirmative.

The meeting adjourned at 1:33PM.

Jeanine Braithwaite submitted the Treasurer's Report in writing:

The congregation's financial position improved significantly in April, as the gap in current year pledge payments narrowed significantly, in response to the direct appeal made to the congregation by our President and from the pulpit. We are now only \$12 K below our budgeted number for current pledges, which is much better than the alarming gap I wrote about in previous reports. We are also well above budget in unpledged donations, prior year pledge payments, and building user fees.

Current year pledges at end-April 2019 stood at \$301 K versus a budgeted amount of \$313 K, with unpledged donations at \$25 K (vs budgeted \$15 K), prior year pledges of \$21 K (vs budgeted \$14 K) and building user fees of \$20 K (vs budgeted \$17 K).

We've received several gifts in direct response to the Board's March 4th letter asking you to confirm the status of your annual financial pledge of support to the church. Frank and Linda Dukes (among others) gave \$1,000 in addition to their regular annual pledge, specifically inviting me to share the good news of this donation as a reminder that supporters may choose to be generous outside of the annual pledging process. In addition, we have received anonymous \$10,000 and \$20,000 gifts, and a new pledge of \$15,000.

Thus, our gross revenues at end-April were \$423 K versus budgeted \$425 K. Please remember that our budgeted revenue includes a \$17 K deficit approved by the previous congregational meeting. We have also maintained our exceptional expenditure control, running \$20 K below budgeted expenditures. At this point, we project being at or less under the \$17 K budget deficit approved by the Congregation at last year's Congregational meeting.

We have set up the paperwork to activate the Line of Credit (LOC) but have not yet drawn upon it. The Finance Committee and Board adopted a new policy to not draw on the LOC as long as our liquid assets on the balance sheet were above \$80 K. (The previous policy was to be above \$100 K). Our current liquid assets (as of 30 April 2019) are \$109 K.

The Rev. Erik Walker Wikstrom submitted a letter in writing:

Reflections on a Ministry — May 22, 2019 To the people of TJMC, the Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Charlottesville: Eight years ago you called me to serve this community as your Lead Minister. I promised that I would do my best to accept the challenge you offered: help you move into the next phase of your journey, help you to write the next chapter of your history, help you to grow into something new, help you to be more fully the Unitarian Universalist congregation that Charlottesville needs in these times. As I have often been the first to admit, I have not always satisfied everyone's expectations of what a Lead Minister should do and how it should be done. I have dropped balls, and I have let people down. During candidating week I told you that one of the ways I understands local UU congregations is as "laboratories" for discovering how our faith tradition should manifest in a particular time and place. Some of the "experiments" I encouraged us to try were dead ends; I don't deny this and never have. Over the years, in response to feedback, I made changes, course corrections, and led us to try new things – some of which have excited and inspired many here; some which have taken our congregation to the cutting edge of our Association's evolution. I have championed a radically shared leadership and ministry model aimed at addressing systemic issues of racism and misogyny by refusing to continue the clergy-centric structures and assumptions so common in faith communities. Leia, Chris, and I have twice been invited to teach a session at Harvard Divinity School about our Senior Staff model, in which the Director of Faith Development, the Director of Administration and Finance, and the Lead Minister collaboratively and co-equally share the responsibilities and authority of "running the church." Our approach to shared ministry was also influential in the decision to create a tri-Presidency at the UUA during the interim between Peter Morales and Susan Frederick-Gray. I have also unflinchingly demanded that we – myself as much as anyone – recognize in ourselves and our institution the ways we participate in and perpetuate the systems and structures of our white supremacist culture, however unintentionally and unconsciously ... especially those of us who identify as white. It is challenging for us good-hearted, well-meaning liberal white folks who have long been committed to racial justice, among whose number I count myself, to hear that even we are complicit in the continuation of the very oppression(s) we are trying to dismantle. Yet as we learn to listen more fully and faithfully to the voices of people of color, this truth becomes unavoidable and our denial of it just provides more evidence. The myriad of ways Christina has experienced racism during her time here, and the difficulty so many of us have had in believing

her when she's named it, brought up close and personal the need for us, as individuals and as an institution, to address white supremacy in here if we want to have any hope of making changes out there. Not everyone has agreed with my methods or my understanding and vision of what a UU congregation needs to be. Some have felt that I was going too far too fast, while others thought I was leading in the wrong direction altogether. In the past two or three years this divide has grown increasingly visible and deep. In 2016 we watched together as our country elected a misogynistic, xenophobic, regressively bigoted, and entirely unqualified man to be our nation's President. In the summer of 2017 our city became ground zero for a newly (re)empowered expression of the basest expressions of hate when first the KKK and then the "Unite the Right" rally gathered (from far and near) in our own downtown. In February of 2018 our Director of Administration and Finance, Christina Rivera, was the target of a racist attack in the form of an anonymous note delivered to her office, with the perpetrator most likely being a member of our community. That February marked the 75th anniversary of the founding of this congregation. Throughout that history there have been many times when a division erupted between those who believed that our congregation was called to take the risky position of moving to the forefront of efforts for change, and those who were less enthusiastic about taking risks because of their deep desire and heartfelt commitment to the quality of this community and the need to respond first-and-foremost to the needs of those who called this place "home." (We could call these the "risk friendly" and "risk reluctant.") Neither is "right" nor "wrong" – both can create loving community and both can work for justice. Yet they are different from one another, and it is extraordinarily difficult to be both at the same time. It might even be impossible. Each pulls the congregation in a different direction. And while there is a good deal of overlap, ultimately a decision must be made. Or, at least, a decision must be made if the congregation wants to be its most healthy, vibrant, and Alive. Time and again this congregation has bumped up against this divide, and according to all of the history I've read and been told about by people who were there, the congregation's decision has been not to decide. "The wounds were never healed," I have read, "the issues were never fully addressed." To paraphrase one of our long-time members, "we're really good at sweeping things under the rug." This has made it possible for folks to come back together comfortably, to "heal," while leaving the underlying issue of identity unresolved. Some of the conflict that has grown among us in the past couple of years is unquestionably about differing opinions on my performance, my message, and my style, and there are people who disagree about the way our finances have been handled, and decisions the Board has made, and no doubt other things. I don't deny that, and have tried to acknowledge the validity of those disagreements whenever possible. Dissent within a community is essential for its health and longevity. Yet I believe that beneath and behind those things is the never resolved division between the "risk reluctant" and the "risk friendly," between two competing visions of what a Unitarian Universalist congregation should be, and what a healthy congregation looks like. The greatest predictor of the success in solving a problem is a clear understanding of what the problem is. If one tries to solve the deep root of a problem by addressing only its surface layers, change can take place only at the top of the iceberg, not the estimated 87% that remains unseen. Two years ago an organized effort began to bring an end to our mutual ministry by forcing me to resign or asking the congregation to terminate my call. Their stated assumption was that my departure would fix what they see as wrong here. There is no doubt that things would change with another ordained minister in my role. Yet if my ministry is identified as the source of our current conflict, the underlying issue of who this congregation is and wants to be may once again go unresolved. No one, and no institution, can be all things to all people – at least not healthily. So much energy gets spent trying to react to the needs of whoever is unhappy at any particular moment. Yet there will always be someone unhappy if you try to please everyone, and this futile effort at achieving the impossible leaves little left with which to respond to the real needs of the community as a whole,

and the demands of the wider world. The decision to end my ministry with and among you is not one I've made lightly, nor is it one that I want to make. I would like to continue to serve this congregation; I would like to continue exploring and expanding the ministries that have been nurturing and exciting to so many here. We have done some really good things together, and have been moving in a direction that I deeply believe puts us more fully into alignment with the Call of our faith. I know that many of you feel that way, too. And there is so much still to do. We continue to be beckoned forward on the journey toward becoming a truly anti-racist, anti-oppression, multicultural Beloved Community that will be a living, breathing alternative to the White Supremacist Culture which pervades every facet of our society. I do not want to leave with so much undone, nor to leave all of you who are eager to embrace the discomfort of change. Yet as much as I want to stay I nonetheless feel compelled to leave. Over the past two years it has become undeniably clear that there are those who are willing to withhold or withdraw their resources to ensure that my continued ministry cannot succeed and that the congregation cannot continue down its current path. I want to be very clear — I truly do not disparage most of those who oppose my continued ministry; I believe that many of them do have the best interest of the congregation in mind, albeit an entirely different understanding than mine of what that is. These are honest disagreements, and as I have repeatedly said, honest disagreements are essential to a healthy community. Yet I must also say that there are some who have demonstrated that they are okay with the environment in our community becoming terribly unpleasant, extremely unhealthy, and, as many have said, toxic. These few folks are willing to see the congregation hurt in their effort to see me gone, so strongly do they believe that I am the problem. I cannot in good conscience allow this group to damage the congregation any further in the name of their opposition to me, nor can I continue to put my own physical, emotional, and spiritual health at risk or that of my family. I honestly don't know how much my leaving will "fix," yet I feel certain that nothing will be fixed as long as I remain. I have said since before I arrived here eight years ago that this is an extremely strong, beautiful, and committed congregation. I still say this today. Unitarian Universalism is truly needed here in Charlottesville and this congregation can be a beacon, a true powerhouse for racial justice, and an amplifier for the life-save message of our faith. I pray that with the issue of my ministry resolved you will be able to focus on the fundamental question of what kind of Unitarian Universalist congregation you truly wish to be, and that this time you stick with that discomforting question until you have finally found its answer. It has been an honor to serve as Lead Minister in the midst of this community of ministers. The staff I have worked with have been incomparable, rightly respected throughout our Association. The lay leaders have been inspirational. And this congregation has been like no other I have served. I bow deeply in gratitude, Pax tecum, RevWik

Director of Administration and Finance Christina Rivera submitted a letter in writing:

Hola TJMCUU Community,

This is an extraordinarily difficult letter to write. There are some of you who know a lot of the history that led us to this point and some who know nothing at all. So I'll try to recap a bit of the history, my decision to leave, and looking forward.

I was hired as the Director of Administration of Finance in April 2015. Previously I served the Waynesboro UU congregation as Director of Religious Education and at the time of hiring I served on the UUA Board of Trustees. I brought with me decades of experience in marketing,

IT, bookkeeping, operations, and management in addition to my religious education and ministry experience.

In general, I've experienced this congregation as welcoming and supportive...as long as I was doing exactly what that individual was asking for and in their timeline. Whenever I tried to set boundaries or set priorities, as supported by the Board, I was met with displeasure and in many cases astonishment, and the beginnings of distrust. Gradually the questions that were being asked about me were along the lines of what I was doing with my time, not about the priorities of the congregation as expressed by the Board and then enacted by staff. Why was I going to Boston for UUA Board meetings when I hadn't calendared someone's meeting? What work was I doing "on behalf of Wik" in our shared ministry model that wasn't allowing me to meet individual requests? Why was I talking about my work on behalf of Unitarian Universalism as ministry when I wasn't a "minister"? Why was I talking so much about racial justice? All of these questions were coded to mean why wasn't I behaving in ways that looked and felt comfortable to a mostly white, cisgendered, heteronormative congregation. Well, probably because I'm a queer Latina whose ministry is based on liberation. The same as I was during the hiring process but now acting out those same values and skills I was hired to bring to TJMCUU.

In Spring 2017 I informed the congregation that I was releasing a blog statement that I had been passed over for a UUA regional staff position due to white supremacy culture at the UUA. Immediately following this post I began to experience serious backlash from the TJMCUU congregation. While the Board and some individuals were extremely supportive of me, there were many who were angry that I named white supremacy culture. When I co-founded the UU White Supremacy TeachIn, I experienced many congregants' open hostility.

This open hostility came to head in Feb 2018 when I experienced a racial attack in my office in the form of a hate letter placed in my inbox. The letter included a reference to my children. It was a direct attack on me in the place I do my ministry, calculated to make me experience anxiety and fear anytime I enter my office. Unsigned, it meant every time I encountered a congregant my internal dialogue now included a "was it them?" analysis. It meant every time my children wanted to be part of the TJMCUU community I had to do mental calculations about their safety. As I type this my entire body is tensed, even a year later.

In the wake of that attack I wrote an article about the Culture of Complicity. How an attack like that doesn't just happen in a vacuum, it happens when there is a culture that allows, encourages, and affirms a person to those actions. Even amid individual and Board support, among a small group of congregants the backlash to the article was swift and vicious. And let me be clear, racist and abusive behaviour that gets normalized in a congregation as "oh that's just the way they are" or "they don't mean to be disrespectful" or "but they do so much for the church" or "they are just old" are all just coded messages for "we're going to tolerate their

abuse because it is easier to not rock the boat than to live out our UU values.” It completely ignores the racism and sexism that lives in the system and is protected at all costs in the name of harmony.

In October 2018 my teenage son was attacked via a hate letter mailed to UUA headquarters where he was volunteering for denomination leadership. That was the final straw for me and my family. I began deep discernment about leaving TJMCUU. I have never left a position without having another job lined up. Frankly as the sole income earner in my family, it terrifies me. But I finally realized that I would need to be the one to put the health and safety of my family first.

Let me be clear, I love working on behalf of Unitarian Universalism at TJMCUU. I love working with Leia, Wik, Wendy, Caroline, Alex and Scott. I’ve loved working with the TJMCUU Board and so many congregants. I’m enormously proud of the work we’ve done on behalf of Black Lives Matter, the busses to the Women’s March, bringing Rev. Jesse Jackson to preach, standing on the front lines on August 11/12, overseeing the renovations of Summit and Lower Hall, bringing long term facility renters who share our UU values. But none of that can undo the harm done by the culture of racism I’ve experienced during my tenure at TJMCUU.

As TJMCUU looks to its future, I hope and pray that it will not move towards healing without first examining the harm done. It is not enough to feel bad that harm was done, it is not enough to say gosh we wish those people had been nicer. Real systemic change can only happen when it begins with deep examination of the truth. Examine the ways in which a culture of complicity has harmed not just me and my family but TJMCUU. Be curious about the violence done to a staff member of color to have on her business card the name of Jefferson, a rapist and murderer. Ask questions about how a minister who is lauded for ground breaking work in shared ministry in our denomination is treated as though that is somehow shirking his responsibilities. If you are sad/mad/angry that we are leaving inquire as to what you have done to help us stay. And then think about ways to do more for the staff who remain. They will need your support now more than ever.

Finally, I hope and pray that you will finally recognize the ministry of Leia Durland-Jones. Leia has been with you and ministered to you for longer than any ordained clergy person and deserves to be recognized for the minister that she has been and will always be. She is more qualified to ministry than the vast majority of UU ministers I have ever met. Just because she chooses to fulfill her calling in religious education doesn’t make her any less a UU minister. In our faith, UU congregations hold the final authority on ordination and it is long past time when Leia should be formally ordained into ministry. Do it, ordain her before the next church year is over. Show her that her ministry has not gone unnoticed. She will be with you, be with her.

YoUUs in service, Christina Rivera

