

**MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 11, 2022, SPECIAL MEMBER MEETING OF
THE UNITARIAN CHURCH IN WESTPORT**

CALL TO ORDER: Luke Garvey, President of the Board of Trustees (the Board) and Moderator for this meeting, called the meeting to order at 11:39 AM. This meeting was conducted in the Sanctuary, with members who were unable to attend in person participating virtually on Zoom. Sincere thanks go to Jim Cooper (our technical manager for the Zoom session), to Bruce MacNair and the Tech Team for handling all other technical needs for the meeting, to Anita Pfluger, Kathy Roberts, Lindy Hennessy, and Eileen O'Reilly for their assistance with member check-in, vote counting, and timekeeping, and to all others who helped with this meeting.

CHALICE LIGHTING: Senior Minister Rev. John Morehouse lit the chalice.

REVIEW OF COVENANT: Rev. Morehouse read aloud our Covenant of Right Relations and requested that anyone who wished to speak at the meeting to please remember to abide by the guidelines for behavior expressed in our Covenant.

REVIEW OF PROTOCOLS AND PROCEDURES: Ken Vogel, Parliamentarian, explained the rules for the meeting: 1) there would be three separate microphones for speakers (FOR, AGAINST, and PROCEDURAL); 2) speakers would be limited to two minutes each, and a timekeeper would signal the end of their allotted time; 3) any congregant is allowed to speak but only eligible voting members are allowed to vote or make an amendment; 4) attendees on Zoom will also be able to speak at the meeting, and eligible members on Zoom can make amendments and their votes will be counted along with the votes from the members present in person. There was further discussion to clarify the difference between voting for Amendments to a motion and voting on the motion itself. Amendments could be made from the Procedural mike. There were questions from various participants and explanations given on what Amendments could be made, when, and how. After answering all questions, the Parliamentarian also explained that acceptance of an Amendment required, first, that it be seconded, and then, following discussion, required a vote of approval from a 51% majority of the eligible voting members present. For the motion to pass, a two-thirds majority was required.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR VIRTUAL PARTICIPANTS: Luke Garvey reviewed the instructions for all members attending via Zoom: Members should first type their full names into the chat feed. Since they are not registering in-person to receive a voting card, their membership status must be individually verified by volunteers who are reviewing the Zoom chat feed in real-time. This is essential so that meeting attendance is accurately recorded as well as for the counting of votes on Zoom.

QUORUM REPORT: Stapley Emberling, Secretary for the Board, confirmed that the quorum had been met in accordance with our Constitution and that this meeting met the requirements for a Member Meeting. There were 89 members in attendance in person and 30 members attending remotely on Zoom, for a total attendance of 119.

BOARD REMARKS: PURPOSE AND PROCESS: Beth Cliff, Vice President, and the Board's Liaison to the Naming Committee, spoke briefly to give context to this meeting and its purpose, and to summarize the process leading up to this point. She began her remarks describing why a legal name is so important, including how our name (on our stationery, signage, website, in Google searches and on Wikipedia) is an "at-a-glance identifier" for who we are to those who have never heard of us. She explained that enabling the public to find us easily, while eliminating any unintended barriers to joining us, is a top priority for us as a Congregation. The Board believes that growth through new members is healthy for us, and one of the highest priorities – if not the highest – for us as a Congregation going forward.

Beth then went on to outline the process that got us to this meeting: that the exploration of the possibility of a change to our name has been a two-year project with input and active participation from congregants since the Spring of 2021, led (extremely well) by the volunteer Naming Committee. Their goal was to make the process as inclusive, transparent, and democratic as possible. The work has included Town Halls, both in person and virtual, a Summer Service, a final Town Hall, and three separate voting sessions. Eventually, 86 submitted names were pared down to a single name agreed upon by an open democratic process. The result is the name, The Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Westport, that is being discussed today. It is the first of two Member Meetings that are required in order to make a change to our Constitution (which includes any change made to our name). Note: If today's Motion should pass, a second Member Meeting will be called after the New Year to vote on whether or not the proposed change will be ratified.

THE MOTION: Bob Perry proposed the Motion for today's meeting, and it was seconded by Chuck Harrington. **The Motion: To change our legal name from "The Unitarian Church in Westport" to "The Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Westport."**

AMENDMENT #1: After discussion, with speakers both in support of and those against the Motion, Bill Hart proposed an amendment to the original Motion, and it was seconded by Diana Bell. **Amendment #1: Instead of changing our legal name, change only our signage, stationery, and website to whatever D.B.A. we choose to go by.** B Hart claimed that keeping the legal name as "The Unitarian Church in Westport" would avoid the expense and hassle of an official legal name-change, and we could still call ourselves whatever we wanted. Some members spoke in favor of this Amendment, but many more spoke to oppose it and to disagree with the premise that this alternative course would be more economical. A vote was called, and Amendment #1 was voted down by an overwhelming majority, with only 3 votes in favor. Discussion then returned to the original Motion.

AMENDMENT #2: After further speakers had been heard, a second amendment was proposed by Trina Wong and seconded by Ann Lundberg. **Amendment #2: To change our name to "Covenant Together, A Unitarian Universalist Congregation."** After discussion on this amendment, and speakers both pro and con, a vote was taken. Amendment #2 was overwhelmingly voted down, with only 2 votes in favor. Discussion again returned to the original Motion.

AMENDMENT #3: After further discussion on the original Motion, Randy Burnham proposed a third amendment, which was seconded by Linda Hudson. **Amendment #3: To change our name to “Silverbrook: A Unitarian Universalist Congregation.”** Discussion followed on this amendment, then Beth Cliff called the question, and a vote was taken. In the room, 14 members voted in favor of Amendment #3, along with 5 members on the Zoom connection, for a total of 19 in favor. However, the votes opposing Amendment #3 were overwhelming. The amendment failed. Discussion again returned to the original Motion.

DISCUSSION ON ORIGINAL MOTION: Ongoing comments in favor of the proposed new name included the following: personal discomfort with the word “Church” in our current name; concern that associations surrounding the word “church” might be a deterrent to potential newcomers who come from non-Christian backgrounds; the desire to add the word “Universalist” because it more accurately describes who we are and clarifies our alignment with the UUA; regardless of what we choose to call ourselves informally, it is our legal name that is always published by outside media in news articles or mentioned on local news programs alongside any mention of our activities or interaction with the community, so it is our legal name that communicates our identity to the world. Comments made against the Motion included: personal identification with a Christian tradition and a desire to keep the word “Church” in our title; disappointment that our Congregation claims to appreciate and celebrate traditions from all the major religions but seems to be particularly repulsed by Christianity and is at pains to disassociate itself from it as much as possible; there is no evidence that adding the word “Universalist” to our name would attract new members; we have had the same name since our Congregation was first created — and, even if it was changed at one point early on, it has remained the same for a very long time, so why change it; there is no reason to change our name at this particular time; we can’t afford the expense of changing our name when our finances are in serious trouble.

VOTE ON ORIGINAL MOTION: The question was called by Chuck Harrington for a vote on the original Motion: **The Motion: To change our legal name from “The Unitarian Church in Westport” to “The Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Westport.”** The vote in favor of the Motion was 103 (76 YES in the room and 27 YES on Zoom). The vote against the Motion was 16 (13 in the room voted NO and 3 on Zoom voted NO). The Motion met its two-thirds majority approval number (which was 80 votes in favor). The Motion passed.

RATIFICATION: The next step in the process will be another vote on this Motion by the membership at a second Congregational Meeting, which has tentatively been scheduled for January 29, 2023. A Call-To-Meeting will be sent out to the Congregation in early January.

ADJOURNMENT: A motion to adjourn the meeting was made, seconded, and unanimously passed. The meeting was adjourned at 1:09 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Stapley Emberling,
Secretary for the Board of Trustees
For December 11, 2022