

**MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 29, 2023, 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 11:24 AM. This meeting was conducted in the Sanctuary, with members who were unable to attend in person having pre-registered to participate virtually on Zoom. Sincere thanks go to Jim Cooper (our technical manager for the Zoom session), and to Bruce MacNair and the Tech Team for handling all technical needs for the meeting, to Kathy Roberts, Eileen O'Reilly, and Lindy Hennessy, for their assistance with member check-in and timekeeping, and to all others who helped with this meeting.

CHALICE LIGHTING AND OPENING WORDS: Senior Minister Rev. John Morehouse reminded the Congregation that the chalice remains forever lit in our hearts. For Opening Words, he read "Prayer for the Stubborn" by Vanessa Southern.

OVERVIEW AND GENERAL PROCEDURES FOR THE MEETING: Luke Garvey reviewed the procedures and protocols for all members in the sanctuary. As outlined in our Constitution, this meeting is the second Member Meeting to hold a vote on this Motion. At the Member Meeting on December 11, 2022, the Motion successfully met its two-thirds majority vote and passed with an overwhelming majority. Members in the sanctuary must first sign in at the registration table and receive a voting card. Anyone may speak in favor or against the Motion, using the central microphone. Speakers will be limited to two-minutes each. No further amendments may be made at this meeting and no new business may be introduced. Once the official quorum has been met, the Motion must receive at least two-thirds majority vote of the members present at this meeting (counting those here in person as well as those attending remotely) in order to pass and be ratified.

REVIEW OF INSTRUCTIONS FOR VIRTUAL PARTICIPANTS: Luke Garvey reviewed instructions for those attending via Zoom. Zoom attendees were required to pre-register for this meeting. Upon logging into Zoom, members must first type their full names into the chat feed to verify attendance. Voting is done by typing one's name and their vote into the chat function. Members on Zoom may also speak at the meeting. To do so, they must type their request into the chat feed and wait for the Moderator to call on them by name.

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 91 members in attendance in person and 14 members attending remotely via Zoom for a total attendance of 105 voting members.

BOARD REMARKS: PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE: Beth Cliff, Vice President, and the Board's Liaison to the Naming Committee, made a few remarks on behalf of the Board. Her abbreviated comments follow: Our legal name is an invaluable part of our identity as a spiritual and religious Congregation. It describes who we are to people who otherwise know nothing about us, and it distinguishes us from other religious institutions in the area. It is written on all our stationery, our signage, our website, in google searches and Wikipedia. Our name identifies us "at a glance."

Two years ago, the Board discussed exploring a name change to help us grow the Congregation with new members and more accurately capture who we are as a religious institution. We discussed that our name didn't correctly represent us as a member of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), and that we wanted our name to be as spiritually diverse, inclusive, and open as we are in practice, as a non-creedal, non-dogmatic Congregation that is welcoming to everyone from all faith traditions. We wanted to eliminate any barriers our name might present, either by association or suggestion.

And so, we launched a process and discussion for the Congregation to explore this idea and ultimately decide what our legal name should be. The Board put together a terrific Naming Committee last spring, which brought the process forward to our meeting in December. This committee did a marvelous job in defining and overseeing a naming process that was purposefully inclusive, transparent, neutral, democratic, and designed to empower and give voice and vote to the Congregation.

At the end of the day, it was up to all of us, as a full community, to participate and ultimately vote on a name, and that we did: 232 individuals participated in the process this summer and fall which whittled down 85 choices down to 1. The vote passed with 103 YES and 16 NO—an 86% majority.

The Board would like to thank the Naming Committee: Randy Burnham, Luisa Francouer, Carolyn Gundell, Rob Herman, Sudha Sankar, and Rob Zuckerman for coming forward to serve us all in this way. They spent many hours so that we could come to be where we are today. And, also, we want to thank Mike Costantino, who worked behind the scenes, without fanfare, putting the various surveys together and helping us all interpret the data that came out of it.

And we know that, as a community, whatever happens here, we, the Board, and us, as a Congregation, will acknowledge and respect that not everyone will like the outcome—there will be sadness for some, joy for others. As a community who cares for each other, we'll get through it, together, and we ask that each of us be patient and kind to one another as we sort through our thoughts and opinions and work through our heightened emotions that often come at a time like this. We can take comfort that it's because we all care deeply.

MOTION #1: Eileen Belmont proposed the first Motion for today's meeting, and it was seconded by Jerusha Vogel. **The Motion: To change our legal name from "The Unitarian Church in Westport" to "The Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Westport."**

DISCUSSION ON MOTION #1: 7 or 8 people came to the microphone to speak in favor of the Motion, some giving personal anecdotes, including what it means to feel alienated from one's community of origin and how it later feels to find one's true community; mixed feelings about losing an old connection to the trappings of a Catholic upbringing by forgoing the word "Church" in our name, but deciding that overall, our community was better served without that word; a personal story of understanding how important a name

is, not only to one's own identity and one's presentation to the outside world, but also to one's sense of oneself. A couple people spoke against the Motion, one not identifying with the added word "Universalist" and another preferring one of the earlier name suggestions that has been outvoted in December. New business was raised, asking for a discussion of a nick-name to be added to our signage, but Ken Vogel, our Parliamentarian for the meeting, explained that this meeting's purpose was only to address the two Motions on the Agenda, and any new business would have to wait until the Annual Meeting, or for another Congregational Meeting that was specifically called to address that topic.

VOTE ON MOTION #1: 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 (89 YES in the room and 14 YES on Zoom). The total number of members in attendance at the meeting was 105. A vote against the Motion was not taken—but there could only have been 2 votes against the Motion. The Motion passed by an overwhelming majority (far surpassing the required two-thirds majority approval number, which was 70 votes in favor). The Motion to change our name has now been ratified and takes effect immediately.

MOTION #2: To Ordain Carrie McEvoy to the Unitarian Universalist Ministry. The Motion was made by Maureen McBride and Seconded by Randy Burnham.

DISCUSSION ON MOTION #2: Randy Burnham spoke as an endorsement of the Motion, of Carrie's journey, and of the many others from our Congregation who have answered the Call to the Ministry in the Unitarian Universalist faith.

VOTE ON MOTION #2: The vote on the Motion was unanimous: 105 votes in favor, 100% of those in attendance. The Congregation fully supports the Ordination of Carrie McEvoy into the Unitarian Universalist Ministry.

ADJOURNMENT: A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Tom Hearne, seconded by Michelle Garvey, and unanimously passed. The meeting was adjourned at 12:34 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Stapley Emberling,
Secretary for the Board of Trustees
For January 29, 2023