

*MidAmerica Region, UUA
2019 Business Meeting, April 6, 2019, St. Louis, MO
Minutes*

Welcome and Call to Order

President David Lauth called the meeting to order at 10:50 am Central Time with opening words from Rebecca Edmiston-Lange.

Introduction to MidAmerica Region

President Lauth welcomed delegates and other members of the MidAmerica Region to the 6th gathering as a Region. He acknowledged Board Members Tammy Lemmer, Omega Burckhardt, Christopher Sims, Brian Bach and Mitra Jafarzadeh in attendance. He reported that MidAmerica consists of 186 UUA affiliated congregations across 13 states with 28,000 individual members and serving 8,000 children and youth in religious education programs. Ten Congregations have membership over 500 people (making up ¼ of the Region's total membership,) with 129 congregations (79%) with under 150 members, and 51 congregations with under 50 members.

Credentials Report/Certification of Quorum

Secretary Tammy Lemmer affirmed that quorum was met by exceeding the required number of represented congregations (25) located in at least five states. Officially there were 165 total delegates (129 congregational delegates and 36 professional delegates) representing 66 congregations from all 13 states.

Approval of Rules of Procedure

Vice President Mitra Jafarzadeh moved adoption of the Rules of Procedure as distributed to congregations and as appears on the Region's website. Janet Nortrum (First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee, WI) seconded. The motion carried.

Nominating Committee Report and Election

Kay Slama (UU Church of Willmar, MN) reported that she and Bob Lovell (UU Church of Greater Lansing, MI) were selected as Co-Chairs of the Nominating Committee. She presented the report of the Committee, including a review of the outreach and recruitment process and presentation of the proposed slate. She shared her appreciation for the opportunity to serve, and thanked those who have accepted invitations to serve. She noted that the Region had provided space for an information table for those interested in learning more about Regional Leadership.

With no other nominees submitted for consideration, Dale Handeen (UU Church of Willmar, MN) moved adoption of the slate. Susan Cohn (UU Church of Lexington, KY) seconded. The motion carried.

Following the acknowledgement that the Region was meeting on land once belonging to the indigenous Osage, Miami, Sioux and Haudenosaunega (also called Iroquois) tribes, Kay Slama responded to several questions about the Nominating process.

Q. What steps were taken to address white supremacy and bias?

A. There was a specific request from the Board to focus on increasing diversity. The Committee surveyed sitting members of boards and committees on their identities. They also made contact with various people of color individuals and organizations for recommendations. In looking at available candidates, the committee weighed in favor of increasing diversity.

Q. What about names that were submitted for consideration that were not included on the slate, especially young adults?

A. Committee members made attempts to reach all individuals submitted for consideration. Some individuals did not respond. Anyone interested is encouraged to speak with a Committee member or to visit the info table and share their contact information. Younger adult representation is welcomed and encouraged.

President Lauth thanked the Nominating Committee for their service.

Proposed Amendments to the Bylaws of the MidAmerica Region

Secretary Tammy Lemmer described the process the Board launched in the fall to update the bylaws which were originally adopted as part of regionalization. The Nominating Committee in particular had articulated concerns related to filling vacancies. Board members Tammy Lemmer and Kyrie Bock were selected to serve on a Bylaws Workgroup with Kay Slama, Bob Lovell and Kees DeWitt from the Nominating Committee. Feedback was solicited from across the Region.

Proposed changes relate to the election of officers, clarification that Ministers may serve (even if not members of their congregations), clarifying the Camp UniStar appointment process, and adding Nominating Committee vacancy language. T. Lemmer made a motion to adopt the proposed amendments to the MidAmerica Region Bylaws. Helen Dwyer (All Souls Unitarian Church, Indianapolis, IN)

Tammy Lemmer and Kay Slama addressed several questions.

Q. Did the committee consider institutionalizing attention to anti-racism and multi-culturalism especially in the role of the Nominating Committee?

A. Inclusivity and diversity are already codified in Article II, Section 4, as well as Article VII, Section 1 e. These principles remain at the forefront of conversations and decision-making.

Q. What if no one wants to take a position of leadership once elected to the Board?

A. There is process language in the bylaws to address identification of leaders and the role of the Board and Nominating Committee. Specific skills and experience will still be sought in the nomination process.

Q. Is there a way to ensure young adult representation?

A. The Region could consider a future Bylaw change. However, there is currently and has been young adult representation on the Board since Regionalization.

Q. Is there concern about filling the position of Treasurer?

A. It is the role of the Nominating Committee to know who is on and coming off the Board. They will continue to identify and recruit people to fill any gaps.

Q. Should the Region adopt language similar to the UUA bylaws regarding Youth Caucus members?

A. That could be considered for a future update.

Q. Could the Treasurer position be made ex-officio to pull in expertise?

A. That could also be considered.

Q. Should the Charge from the Board to the Nominating Committee include a request for specific representation (i.e. need for specific experience, young adult.)?

A. The Board and Nominating Committee take their role very seriously, and the makeup of leadership positions is looked at closely. The Board Charge often does highlight and identify specific gaps. One of the biggest barriers is the response (or lack thereof) from Congregations when the call for nominations goes out.

Q. What other ways could we codify the commitment to diversity?

A. Some ideas include updating the nominee questionnaire and referring to the Commission of Institutional Change for suggestions. The Nominating Committee continues to be open to other ideas and values the input of all.

With no additional questions the vote was held and the motion passed unanimously. Tammy Lemmer thanked the committee for their time and efforts.

Expression of Appreciation from our Unitarian Universalist Association

Rev. Vail Weller, Congregational Giving Director of the UUA Stewardship & Development Office shared greetings and gratitude from UUA President Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray. Rev. Weller described contributions to the Annual Program Fund (APF) as the way we, as Congregations, make a commitment to each other through financial support for our Association. The mission of the APF is to equip congregations for healthy, vital ministry, to credential and support leaders, and to advance UU values. She thanked the Region for our support for each other and the Association.

Expenditures for the Association rose in the period of 2005-2015. Attainment of APF goals was 73% nationally, but only 62% in MidAmerica. Rev. Weller and Stewardship staff welcome conversations about attaining Honor Congregation status (those contributing their full requested contribution of the end of the fiscal year,) and thanked those that are maintaining and striving to reach that status.

Recognition of Those Completing Their Service to the MidAmerica Region this year

Rev. Ian Evison acknowledged staff member Peg Bocard, who is completing her service to MidAmerica.

Nancy Combs-Morgan, Jessica York, and President Lauth honored the work of outgoing Congregational Lead, The Rev. Ian Evison, who was set to retire as of April 20. President Lauth

described Rev. Evison as steady, astute and unflappable, and someone who acknowledges mistakes and strives to make amends.

In his parting words, Rev. Evison thanked his colleagues and the many volunteers he's worked with over the years. He noted it was an honor to serve the Association, even in difficult times. His experience in supporting the Native American Water Protectors at Standing Rock in North Dakota with the Rev. Karen VanFossan has been life changing, and he plans to continue that work.

President Lauth acknowledged the service of outgoing Board Member Omega Burckhardt, who is pursuing ministerial studies. He also noted the passing of former Board Member Janis Cheney, who is greatly missed.

Closing Words

President David Lauth offered closing words from Andrea Hawkins-Kamper on "being about the work."

Adjournment

Iris Kiesling (UU Church of Bloomington, IN) moved for adjournment and Terry Wiggins (First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee, WI) seconded. The motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 11:57 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted by Tammy Lemmer, Secretary