

Agenda – Congregational Meeting  
First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin  
Sunday, May 23, 2021, 1:00 pm – 2:00pm on Zoom:  
<https://zoom.us/my/firstuuaustin>  
**Password is 512452**

1. Welcome and Call to Order, Elias Ponvert– 10 min
  - a. Unison Reading of Covenant and Lighting of Chalice Page 2
  - b. Adopt Consent Agenda
    - Rules of Procedure Pages 3-5
    - Minutes December 2020 congregational meeting 6-7
  - c. Adopt Agenda
  
2. Update: State of the Church, Rev. Meg Barnhouse – 10 min
  
3. Congregational vote on Board of Trustee slate – 15 min  
The nominating committee is pleased to recommend Suzette Emberton, Nathan Walther, and Russell Holley-Hurt to serve as new members on the board, all for 3-year terms. (see chart and biographies on pages 8 and 9)  
  
Kelly Raley and David Riehl have been serving partial terms and have confirmed their willingness to continue serving on the board for an additional, full 3 year term each. The nominating committee is pleased to recommend them.  
  
Nesan Lawrence has confirmed his willingness to serve as President-Elect next year and President the following year. The nominating committee is pleased to recommend him.
  
4. The nominating committee is pleased to recommend Tomas Medina to serve a three year term on the nominating committee.
  
5. Joys/Concerns/Intentions – 10 minutes
  
6. Closing Reading and Extinguish Chalice – 5 minutes
  
7. Adjourn

## **A COVENANT OF HEALTHY RELATIONS**

**As a religious community, we promise:**

### **To Welcome and Serve**

- By being intentionally hospitable to all people of good will
- By being present with one another through life's transitions
- By encouraging the spiritual growth of people of all ages

### **To Nurture and Protect**

- By communicating with one another directly in a spirit of compassion and good will
- By speaking when silence would inhibit progress
- By disagreeing from a place of curiosity and respect
- By interrupting hurtful interactions when we witness them
- By expressing our appreciation to each other

### **To Sustain and Build**

- By affirming our gratitude with generous gifts of time, talent and money for our beloved community
- By honoring our commitments to ourselves and one another for the sake of our own integrity and that of our congregation
- By forgiving ourselves and others when we fall short of expectations, showing good humor and the optimism required for moving forward

**Thus do we covenant with one another**

Approved at congregation meeting May 5, 2013

# First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin Congregational Meeting Rules of Procedure

## 1. Order of Business

The order of business will follow the meeting notice unless the order of business is changed by a majority vote.

## 2. Remote participant attendance and communication

To accommodate a wider range of technology access, members may join by remote in a number of ways including voice, chat/text or video. The meeting will be primarily conducted by voice.

To ensure individuals can be identified: the designated vote counters have discretion on how to recognize members. These methods include, but are not limited to, system identity, voice statements, typing/chat activity and video recognition.

If a typing/chat is not available to an attendee, they may submit statements and motions by voice using the chair or a designated assistant(s) to act as proxy. The chair or assistant(s) should also read relevant chat items to help voice-only attendees.

## 3. Means of Voting

As long as a quorum is present (ten percent of voting members of the congregation), voice votes, or a show of hands, including through digital means, will be used, unless the bylaws specify otherwise. Two or more people shall be designated as vote counters by the chair at the outset of the meeting in the event that a vote count is needed. All matters will be determined by the number of votes cast by members present and voting, as long as there is a quorum.

To streamline remote meetings, the vote counters may informally canvas the membership using one or several straw polling mechanisms, show of hands (virtual or video) or other method. Clear majority and uncontested items may be voted by acclimation.

#### 4. Presentation of Items

A Board Member or the appropriate Committee Chair will move the action items as printed in the meeting notice. If updated, items will be read aloud and displayed to accommodate voice only participants.

#### 5. Amendments

No one may offer an amendment until there has been at least ten minutes of debate on the main question as moved, unless no one else wants to speak to the main question or it is a clarifying amendment. Anyone making an amendment should give it to the chair via the chat function (or proxy as per #2).

#### 6. Time limits

These time limits will apply to all the business of the meeting. If no one objects, the Chair may grant minor extensions. Time limits may be extended by a two-thirds vote.

- a. No one may speak on any motion for more than two minutes or more than once as long as anyone else is waiting to speak, except that persons with special information may answer questions with the Chair's permission.
- b. No item will be discussed in the meeting for more than 30 minutes. Discussion time will be divided equally by alternating between speakers voicing pro and con positions. Speakers must state clearly if they are pro or con.
- c. No one may call the previous question if there are *both* pro and con persons waiting to speak and the time for discussion is not over. If the Chair sees no speakers for the con position, then the Chair may call for a vote.
- d. Every person must speak via voice or identify a reader for their chat/text comments.

#### 7. Budget Motions

Anyone making a motion concerning the budget should give it to the Chair via the chat function (or proxy as per #2) and must provide for reduction in specific

categories equal to any increase in spending in the motion. A simple majority vote is required to adopt motions concerning the budget.

#### 8. Items Not in the Meeting Notice

Items of a substantial nature which are not in the meeting notice shall not be considered. Committees with items of substantial importance must have the item prepared far enough in advance for inclusion in the meeting notice.

#### 9. Amending the Rules of Procedure

These rules of procedure will be adopted by a majority vote and may be changed during the meeting by a simple majority.

#### 10. Adjournment

The meeting will adjourn no later than two hours or at such time as a quorum is no longer present after the Chair has called the meeting to order. The meeting may be extended in 15-minute increments by a simple majority vote for as much as one additional hour.

## Minutes –First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin Congregational Meeting

Sunday, December 20, 2020, 1:00 – 2:30 (actual 3:15) pm on Zoom: <https://zoom.us/my/firstuuaustin>

1. Welcome and Call to Order, Elias Ponvert – 10 min (actual 15)
  - President Elias Ponvert confirmed we had a quorum (>49 members) and called the meeting to order at 1:07 pm.
    - He read the Covenant of Healthy Relations aloud and lit a chalice.
    - He introduced our parliamentarian, Kirk Overbey, two Zoom pilots, and did a sample poll to test voting.
  - The consent agenda, which included the Rules of Procedure and Minutes of the May 31, 2020 Congregational Meeting, was approved by unanimous consent. (Sam Roberts motioned, Marsha Sharp seconded.)
  - The agenda for this meeting was approved by unanimous consent. (Joe Milam-Kast motioned, Sam Roberts seconded.)
  
2. Update: State of the Church, Rev. Meg Barnhouse – 10 minutes
  - Rev. Meg mentioned events at the start of the year including a death and living seminar series by Lee Legault, intern minister, and other adult ed classes. Lee completed her internship in August, and we will not have an intern this year.
  - She talked about deciding not to meet on March 15<sup>th</sup>, and then moving to fully online services, which was a steep learning curve. Everyone came through like champs, and the music has been of amazing quality. Wonderful RE teachers have kept classes going.
  - The Stewardship Council did a wonderful job with this year’s campaign, at a time when other churches have struggled. We’re in pretty good shape because of money from the UUA for the Wake Now Our Vision campaign, led by the Overton/Nielsen family.
  - Many activities have continued virtually or with safe distancing, include Fellowship, Transformation through Service, and Chalice Circles.
  - First UU congregants gave \$5,962 to erase almost \$6 million of medical debt in Harris County.
  - Starting in January, Rev. Meg will meet with a team to consider when and how we will open.
  
3. Call for return of ballots for 2021 Monthly Special Offerings, Carrie Holley-Hurt– 5 minutes
  - Carrie let us know that there were 11 nominations for special offerings this year, so all will be accepted (i.e., no ballots were needed). Organizations include: Austin Sanctuary Network, Austin Justice Coalition, UU Ministry for the Earth, UBarU, Planned Parenthood, Texas Youth Rising, Texas Campaign for the Environment, Texas Community Clinic, Inside Books, UUSC, and SAFE.
  - Texas UU Justice Ministries (TXUJMJ), of which we are a founding member, is always included as one of our monthly special offerings.
  - The money for special offerings is divided equally at the end of the year.
  
4. 2020 Proposed Budget, Rev. Meg Barnhouse and Rev. Chris Jimmerson – 20 minutes (actual 12)
  - Rev. Chris presented and answered questions about the 2020 proposed budget. (See congregational meeting materials for details.)
  - Although we’re projecting expenses higher than revenues due to the pandemic, we do have cash reserves to cover the deficit, in part due to a Payroll Protection Loan we received that was subsequently forgiven.

- The 2021 proposed budget was accepted with 98% approval. (Eric Hepburn motioned, David Nuhn seconded.)
5. Proposed Bylaws Change to Allow for the Congregation to Adopt Positions of Public Record, Elias Ponvert – 20 Minutes (actual 65)
    - This was a follow on to the discussion at the Spring 2020 congregational meeting. The item was tabled when it appeared to be heated, and two town hall forums were scheduled in the fall to allow more discussion. The proposed bylaws change was modified based on the town hall forums.
    - Several people spoke against the amendment, citing that this amendment could lead to divisiveness, and that we have not been hindered by not having a process in place.
    - Rev. Meg can currently take a stand as an individual, identifying herself as a minister of our church. She can also reinforce a stand on behalf of the UUA.
    - Those who spoke for the amendment indicated that it would be a powerful tool for the ministers and that we need a way to speak as a body, not just as individuals. There also isn't a standard process to follow when we are approached to identify as a congregation on a specific position (e.g., reproductive rights congregation).
    - A motion to end the discussion vs. extend by 10 minutes did not receive enough votes to extend the discussion. (Elizabeth Gray moved, Richard Halpin seconded.)
    - A bylaws change requires a quorum with 2/3 approval of those who vote. The Parliamentarian proposed that we use a poll to vote, with one vote per Zoom account, and that we add a second vote for members who were sharing a Zoom account.
    - Using the above method, the vote was 44 who approved of the bylaws change and 25 against. This fell short of the 2/3rds vote needed to change the bylaws, so the change was not approved. (Eric Hepburn motioned, Gary Bennett seconded.)
  6. Proposed Bylaws Change to Clarify Meetings through Remote Means, Rob Hirschfeld and David Riehl – 10 Minutes
    - Dave Riehl presented the change to clarify that meetings can be held remotely.
    - The motion passed unanimously. (Richard Halpin motioned, Joe Milam-Kast seconded.) There was no discussion.
  7. Joys and Concerns – 10 minutes
    - Congregational members shared many things for which they are grateful.
  8. Closing Reading and Extinguish Chalice – 5 min
    - The president adjourned the meeting after a closing reading and extinguishing the chalice.

<b>Board of Trustees Members and Nominees</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Term</b>	<b>Current Position</b>
Toni Wegner	Returning	2020-2022	President
Nesan Lawrence	Nominee (new term)	2021-2023	President-elect
Leo Collas	Returning	2019-2022	Trustee
Sarah "Sadie" Lambert	Returning	2019-2022	Trustee
Rob Hirschfield	Returning	2020-2023	Trustee
Kristen Ray	Returning	2020-2023	Trustee
Kelly Raley	Nominee (new term)	2021-2024	Trustee
David Riehl	Nominee (new term)	2021-2024	Trustee
Suzette Emberton	Nominee	2021-2024	Trustee
Russell Holley-Hurt	Nominee	2021-2024	Trustee
Nathan Walther	Nominee	2021-2024	Trustee

<b>Nominating Committee</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Term</b>
Phil Hewitt	Returning	2020-2023
Tomas Medina	Nominee	2021-2024
Elias Ponvert	Board appointed	2021-2022
Valerie Sterne	Board appointed (new term)	2021-2022
Vacant	Board appointed	2019-2022



New board member biographies:

**Suzette Emberton** -- Suzette's involvement with First UU began in 2009, through participation in the music program. She sings with a few choral groups around town had been invited to sing a Bach piece with the UU choir. When she mentioned that it may not be appropriate for a non-religious person to sing in a church choir, the response was, "Perfect - you'll fit right in!"

After singing with the choir for a while, Suzette became a full member of the congregation and still performs with the choir and occasionally serves as a soloist or member of a small vocal ensemble. Her daughter Divya has sung with the youth choir, and her husband Manoj attends church on occasion.

Though Suzette's religious upbringing was in the Southern Baptist faith, she has proudly identified as a secular humanist her entire adult life. She fully affirms FUUCA's commitment to social justice, integrity, compassion, and reason and would be honored to serve on the Board of Trustees.

**Nathan Walther** -- Nathan moved to Austin in 1999 to work as a Software Engineer. He and his wife and two children found their spiritual home at First UU in 2013. He especially enjoys time in nature, such as camping, hiking, kayaking, amateur astronomy, and species identification. Nathan also volunteers with Paradox Players.

**Russell Holly-Hurt** – I am a father, musician, technology leader, and lifelong learner. I have been a member of First UU Austin since November 2017. I have two children, ages 6 and 12, who are eager participants in the Religious Education program. I love spending time with them playing games and hanging out outside. I have worked at the Whole Foods Market corporate office for eight years and am currently a software development manager. I have two master's degrees, including one in Chinese religions.