

## **Pre-Congregational Meeting Packet**

The attached documents are drafts of the agenda and applicable documents proposed for the May 22, 2022 Congregational Meeting.

The Pre-congregational meeting will be held at 1:00 p.m. on April 24, 2022. The purpose of this meeting is to provide a forum for questions, concerns and clarification of items that will be presented for a vote at the Congregational Meeting. We will review the agenda with time for discussion, but no votes will be taken. If you have questions about any of the items that will be voted on, we encourage you to attend the Pre-congregational meeting or contact Toni Wegner, Board of Trustees President, at [president@austinuu.org](mailto:president@austinuu.org).

Agenda – Congregational Meeting  
 First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin  
 Sunday, May 22, 2022, 1:00 pm – 3:00pm in the Sanctuary and on Zoom:  
<https://zoom.us/my/firstuuaustin>, Password is 512452

	Pp.	Min	Time
1. Welcome and Call to Order, Toni Wegner		10	1:00
a. Unison Reading of Covenant and Lighting of Chalice	2		
b. Adopt Consent Agenda			
• Rules of Procedure	3-4		
• Minutes of December 2021 congregational meeting	5-6		
c. Adopt Agenda			
2. Update: State of the Church, Rev. Meg Barnhouse		10	1:10
3. Congregational Vote on Board of Trustees Slate Vic Cornell (President-elect), Donna Carpenter, Joseph Hunt, Mateo Kresha (three-year terms)	7-11	5	1:20
4. Congregational Vote on Nominating Committee Member Becca Brenna-Luna (three-year term)	7, 12	5	1:25
Margaret Borden and Toni Wegner are both appointed by the board for one-year terms, which do not require a congregational vote	7, 13		
5. Congregational Vote on Adopting the Unitarian Universalist 8 <sup>th</sup> Principle.	14	15	1:30
6. Discussion and Congregational Vote on Proposed Change to the Church Bylaws.	15-16	15	1:45
7. Discussion and Congregational Vote to confer Minister Emerita status to The Reverend Meg Barnhouse.	17	15	2:00
8. Joys/Concerns/Intentions		13	2:15
9. Closing Reading and Extinguish Chalice		2	2:28
10. Adjourn			2:30

## **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. Means of Voting

Unless specified otherwise in advance, members may attend meetings in person or remotely. 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, unless the meeting notice allows absentee voting.

## 3. Presentation of Items

A Board Member or the appropriate Committee Chair will move the action items as distributed in the meeting notice.

## 4. 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 must submit it in writing before it is discussed. Assistance will be provided as needed.

## 5. 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 at who identify as pro and con. Discussion may also include points of clarification or amendments.
- c. No one may call the previous question if there are persons both pro and con 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. All speakers who are in person must speak using a microphone.

## 6. Budget Motions

Anyone making a motion concerning the budget must submit it to the Chair in writing 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.

#### 7. 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.

#### 8. 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.

#### 9. 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, Dec 19, 2021, 1:30 pm – 2:30 pm - Held in person and on Zoom: <https://zoom.us/my/firstuuaustin>

### 1. Welcome and Call to Order, Toni Wegner – 10 min

- President Toni Wegner confirmed that we had a quorum (> 43 members) and called the meeting to order at ~1:35 pm.
- She read opening words while David Riehl lit the chalice; all were then invited to read the Covenant of Healthy Relations.
- She introduced our parliamentarian, Kirk Overbey, the President-elect and Secretary, and two Zoom pilots as well as two in-person vote counters.
- There were no changes or objections to the consent agenda, which included the Rules of Procedure and Minutes of the May 23, 2021 Congregational Meeting, and it thus was approved by unanimous consent.
- The agenda for this meeting was approved likewise.

### 2. Update: State of the Church, Rev. Meg Barnhouse – 10 min

- Rev. Meg began by speaking about the recent trends with membership declines, not just within First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin but a broader UUA trend nationwide. Within our church the number of pledging units have declined to 287 units in 2022 compared to 308 units the previous period.
- She shared that the church will be focusing on advertising and marketing efforts to bring in more people to the church.
- She provided an update on the Faith Development Program, funded by Karen and John Franks. She shared that the committee has not been fully formed yet and she is also inviting ideas on how to use the funds for this program.
- She recognized the excellent job that the staff has been doing during a difficult year marked by the pandemic and also noted that the music program had continued to survive despite the difficult circumstances.
- She recognized the efforts of the RE program and how kids are back on the church grounds these days.
- Finally, she made a note regarding Bear's departure from his role and his replacement, Martha. She requested the congregation's patience with the transition.

### 3. Call for return of ballots for 2022 Monthly Special Offerings, Carrie Holley-Hurt – 5 min

- Carrie provided a brief overview of the process for casting the ballot for 2022 Monthly Special Offerings.
- She requested that the congregants either use the paper ballot available at the church or cast the vote(s) online by the end of the day.
- She shared that we need to identify 11 non-profits that will benefit from the monthly special offerings; the 12<sup>th</sup> non-profit will always be the Texas Justice Ministry.

### 4. 2022 Proposed Budget, Meg Barnhouse and Chris Jimmerson – 20 minutes

- Rev. Chris briefly walked through the key highlights of the proposed 2022 financial budget.
- As part of the walk through, he shared that the Stewardship Committee achieved 95.26% of its stated goal for 2022.
- He mentioned that the church also benefited from ~\$150K in funds received via Biden's

#### CARES Act.

- The budget includes fairly conservative estimates for revenues including rental revenues, plate collections, etc.
- He shared that the church will increase its contributions to the UUA annual fund by 10% in keeping with our commitment to do so annually.
- He also shared brief details regarding the renegotiated loan terms based on recent property value appraisals.
- Q&A:
  - 1 - In response to a question regarding details on expenditures, Rev. Chris mentioned that he will be happy to share the details via email or over the phone.
  - 2 - In response to a question regarding rental income, he shared that the revenue is primarily from renting out classroom space, Howson Hall and the Sanctuary for different activities.
  - 3 - In response to a question regarding COVID guidelines with rentals, he confirmed that the church staff follow all requisite guidelines for rentals and internal functions.

#### 5. Joys and Concerns – 10 min

- Congregants took turns sharing their joys and concerns from a difficult 2021.

#### 6. Closing Reading and Extinguish Chalice – 5 min

- Toni read the closing words as Sadie Lambert extinguished the chalice.
- As part of announcements, Rev. Meg shared that the church management team is in conversations regarding a potential next wave due to Omicron variant and are also keeping an eye on Travis County case numbers. The church reopening team will be consulted before any decision is made regarding potential church closure(s).
- Sadie made an announcement encouraging congregants to donate to the Holiday Staff Fundraiser while receiving as a thank you a copy of the Holiday Recipe Book prepared on behalf of the Board of Trustees.

<b>Board of Trustees Members and Nominees</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Term</b>	<b>Current Position</b>
Nesan Lawrence	Returning	2021-2023	President
Vic Cornell	Nominee	2022-2024	President-elect
Rob Hirschfield	Returning	2020-2023	Trustee
Suzette Emberton	Returning	2021-2024	Trustee
Russell Holley-Hurt	Returning	2021-2024	Trustee
Kelly Raley	Returning	2021-2024	Trustee
David Riehl	Returning	2021-2024	Trustee
Nathan Walther	Returning	2021-2024	Trustee
Donna Carpenter	Nominee	2022-2025	Trustee
Mateo (Matthew) Kresha	Nominee	2022-2025	Trustee
Joseph Hunt	Nominee	2022-2025	Trustee

<b>Nominating Committee</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Term</b>
Becca Brennan-Luna	Nominee	2022-2025
Tomas Medina	Returning	2021-2024
Phil Hewitt	Returning	2020-2023
Margaret Borden	Board appointed	2022-2023
Toni Wegner	Board appointed	2022-2023



## 2022-2023 First UU Austin Nominations

### Board of Trustees and Nominating Committee



#### Vic Cornell, President-Elect

Victor first walked into First UU back in 2001, while Rev. Davidson Loehr was in the pulpit. He was looking for a church to raise his newborn child, Shanti, in. He attended off and on for the next decade, and his ex-wife (Kami) even got a job at the church. He started coming regularly once he started attending Meadville Lombard Theological School in Chicago. He figured that if he was getting a

degree from a UU seminary, he should probably be attending a UU church more consistently. He served on the Religious Education Committee and co-taught an anti-racism adult RE class with Rev. Marisol Caballero. During most of the past 20 years, he worked at the American Civil Liberties Union of Texas (ACLU-TX) and addressed the congregation multiple times for the monthly special offerings. He is currently working at the Texas Campaign for the Environment (TCE), which is also grateful to have been selected for the monthly special offerings. Now that Shanti has grown up and moved out, he attends with his wife, Ruth Friede-Cornell, and their son, middle-schooler Liam. Vic looks forward to being more involved in the First UU Church of Austin community and is deeply honored to be nominated to serve on the board.



## Donna Carpenter, Trustee – 3 Years

Donna and her husband, Okey Nwanyanwu, were married by a Unitarian minister in Houston 40 years ago in June. They briefly attended services at First UU there but shortly thereafter began a 20+ year sojourn in planning and implementing HIV/AIDS programs in east and southern Africa. During that time, she also maintained a private practice as a psychologist, wherever she has found herself. She continues a part-time practice as a psychologist in Austin, specializing in aging and women's issues. During her time in Africa, she had no access to Unitarian services (long before Internet services became common!!), but was fortunate to get exposed to a thriving Buddhist community in Zimbabwe. She benefitted greatly from this experience but found that the eclectic, agnostic approach of UUism better fit her developing spirituality.

She returned to Austin in 2011 and joined First UU Austin shortly after Meg Barnhouse became Minister. She found it a welcoming place to adjust back to life in the US and nurture her spiritual and community life. She led Chalice Circles for many years, served on the Stewardship Committee, enjoyed women's fellowship under the stars at UBarU, delved deep into the teachings of UUism in Wellspring and Covenant Groups and made many steadfast friends at 4x4 dinners. She looks forward to reconnecting with the church's members after 2 long years of isolation. She hopes her service on the Board will help First UU build on the thriving ministry Rev. Meg leaves behind.



## Joseph Hunt, Trustee - 3 years

Joseph has been a member of First UU for 26 years. He grew up in the suburbs of Washington, DC and spent his boyhood summers on his grandparents' ranch in Oklahoma. He graduated with a BA in English Literature and Education from the University of Maryland. As a student teacher he met his wife, Zosia, but he never continued in a teaching career. Instead he joined IBM as Customer Service Engineer in the Government buildings and law firms in Washington. He married Zosia in 1980 and shortly after was transferred to Boca Raton, Florida to help develop the early Personal Computers. While in Florida he quickly developed a love for birding, hiking trail building, and the Unitarian church. He was very involved in environmental causes and filled various offices in the local Audubon Society.

In IBM, he worked in Information Development, Usability, management, and eventually Project Management in Globalization. He was transferred to Austin in 1996 and joined the First UU Church. He retired after 31 years as the Operations Manager for Globalization. Through work assignments and birding trips, he and Zosia have traveled the world together. In Austin he has volunteered in several aging organizations (AGE, Family Eldercare, Drive a Senior), environmental and civic Austin city activities, and the UU Church (ushering, Caring Committee, stewardship, finance committee, grounds, database management, bookkeeping. Pastoral Care Associate, and special projects). Joseph is a Texas Master Naturalist and Audubon Master Birder. He is very involved in the Friendship Force of Austin to spread peace and understanding to people around the world through personal contact. Though Joseph and Zosia never had children, they act as active grandparents to a 16-year old and a two year old.



## Mateo (Matthew) Kresha, Trustee – 3 Years

Mateo is new to UU having become a member only briefly before the Coronavirus Pandemic. He grew up in San Antonio, after that he spent some time residing in Houston before putting roots down in Austin. Mateo's family of origin attended Unity Church of Christianity (aka "Mystical Christianity"), which was open enough to allow Mateo and other youth leadership to study different religions of the world with some depth. Mateo is grateful to have found UU!

Mateo was an activist from a young age from helping to start a recycling program at his middle school to getting suspended for direct action protesting unjust treatment of gay and sexual minorities at his high school. In Houston Mateo helped organize marches and actions to end the war in Afghanistan & Iraq, climate change, as well as CAFTA & NAFTA. Once in Austin Mateo began affiliating with the Coahuiltecans (Mikan-Garza Band) and other local indigenous people and started supporting and helping at ceremonies. He has testified before City Council and Texas Congress in support of solar power and renewable energy and set up a student support network at ACC for renewable energy. He has attended and supported the Black Lives Matter protests and as a biracial person with European (Czech) and Indigenous (Aztec) ancestry, Mateo see himself as a bridge person - working to expand this bridge with a passion for a just and compassionate world extended to our more than human relations.

Mateo has performed with Space City Gamelan and Bramaya and enjoys playing percussion of all varieties! He enjoys tinkering with instruments as well as electronics, creating regalia, camping and being in nature. Mateo also enjoys participating in Danza ceremonias with Kalpulli Ameyaltonal, as well as Sweat Lodges, and other ceremonial lifeways. He is honored to be part of the Board.



## Becca Brennan-Luna, Nominating Committee – 3 Years

Becca and her wife Amy were looking for a spiritual home. In September of 2017, they were welcomed with open arms by the community of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin. Becca values connection, so she was excited to join some groups. She is part of “Alphabet Soup,” the LGBTQIA+ group, and the People of the Global Majority group. She was very happy to be involved in volunteer activities to feed the hungry in the community. She hopes to get involved again soon. Becca has worked with children her entire adult life as a nanny, an educator, a foster parent, and currently as a Behavioral Therapist. She loves nurturing children, helping them learn, and helping them realize their true potential. She really

enjoyed volunteering with the Religious Education Classes at First UU. Becca is passionate about making a difference in the community, and making sure other people feel as welcome and accepted as she feels at First UU of Austin. She understands that there is so much work to be done in the community. She knows that she can always learn more and do more. She is learning a lot about being anti-racist. She strives to be a social justice warrior and help make positive changes in the community. She is willing to learn more and do the work. Becca is truly blessed to be a part of First UU. She has received inspiring and uplifting messages, heard breathtaking music, and made many wonderful friends. She is honored to serve her spiritual home as a member of the nominating committee.



## Margaret Borden, Nominating Committee – 1 year, Board appointed

Margaret came to First UU in 1993 with her 2-year-old son James hoping to nourish her own spiritual needs and find support instilling in James the values she holds dear. Her church experience as a youth led her to seek that support within a church community. First UU did not disappoint. Both James and she made friends. And when she went through chemotherapy 5 years later, she discovered how closely her life had become intertwined with others.

Over the years, Margaret facilitated adult and children's religious education, an elementary OWL class and a chalice circle. She ran the bookstore and served on the nominating committee, the former committee on ministries and the healthy relations ministry. She served as a listening minister and a pastoral care associate for Rev. Meg. Her greatest privilege and most rewarding experience were as a board trustee through the terms of two interim ministers and Rev Meg's first year in Austin. During that time, she coordinated the Bridgebuilder Action Planning Team, whose work led to the first versions of our mission statement and ends, our healthy relations covenant, and our church's move to policy-based governance.

Margaret continues to serve with the change team, whose goal is to identify and mitigate ways in which white supremacy culture manifests in our predominately white congregation, and the healthy relations ministry, although the work of these two ministries has paused because of our separation from each other during the pandemic. She serves on the Transformation~ Connection~ Service ministry and participates in a chalice circle, allowing meaningful connections to continue during times limited to virtual meetings.

### **8<sup>th</sup> Principle**

“We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.”

## Proposed Bylaw Change

Current:

### ARTICLE XI: SENIOR MINISTER

#### Section 1: Selection

In the event of a vacancy in the position of senior minister, the Board of Trustees shall appoint a committee of at least nine persons to assist in the selection of a candidate for this position. Upon nomination by the Board of Trustees, election to the position of senior minister shall be by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the members of the church present and voting at a regular or special meeting.

Proposed:

### ARTICLE XI: SENIOR MINISTER

#### Section 1: Selection

In the event of a vacancy in the position of senior minister, the congregation shall follow the current recommendations of the UUA for a called ministry search process, subject to modifications approved by the Board of Trustees, unless the Board decides to pursue an alternative to a called settled minister. Election to the position of senior minister shall be by an affirmative vote of 90% of the members of the church present and voting at a regular or special meeting.

## Background for Proposed Bylaw Change

Our current bylaws were last revised in May 2013, with the section on selecting a senior minister (Article XI Section 1) going back much further. It is out-of-date and inconsistent with UUA recommendations and guidelines. The UUA search process to call a senior minister is described in the [Settlement Handbook](#). It is based on best practices and updated regularly using what is learned from each search cycle. An overview is provided in the

[Checklist for Congregational Boards Engaging a Settled Minister Search.](#)

Both members of the UUA that have contacted us regarding the ministerial transition asked about our bylaws and were concerned about them as written. Apparently many congregations amend their bylaws to follow recommended practices prior to a transition ([Settlement Handbook](#), p. 25).

The parts of our current bylaws that raise concerns are:



- The Board appoints at least nine persons on the search committee (*the Settlement Handbook, p. 36-38, provides recommendations for selecting a search committee that involve significant input from the congregation; the current recommendation is no more than seven search committee members*);
- References to the Board's involvement in the search process (*the current recommendation is that the search committee operates independently of the Board*);
- Election to the position of senior minister by two-thirds vote of the congregation (*the current recommendation is for 90% or more of the congregation to vote to call a minister; most ministers will not accept a call with a vote of less than 90%*).

Key features of proposed revision to Article XI Section 1:

- The bylaws change identifies the current recommendations of the UUA for a called ministry search process as the default, but gives the Board leeway in the process. The flexibility allows the Board to benefit from the wisdom gained from other churches' searches without tying it to any specifics.
- The phrase, "unless the Board decides to pursue an alternative to a called settled minister," allows for possibilities of hiring contract, developmental or interim ministers, which are currently not addressed in our bylaws (see the Settlement Handbook, p. 16).

If you have any questions about the proposed bylaw change, please feel free to reach out to Toni Wegner ([president@austinuu.org](mailto:president@austinuu.org) , 617-596-6530).

Resolution to Confer Minister Emerita Status to The Reverend Meg Barnhouse  
May 22, 2022

Whereas The Reverend Meg Barnhouse has faithfully served as the Senior Minister and Executive of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin for 11 years;

Whereas the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin wishes to express gratitude for her teachings, insights, compassion, kindness, music, courage, inspiration, humor and wisdom;

Whereas the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin wishes to acknowledge the indelible impact she has and will continue to have on this church;

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin bestows Minister Emerita status to The Reverend Meg Barnhouse.

Background Information

According to [UUA policies](#), “the title Minister Emeritus or Minister Emerita is granted to honor long and meritorious service to a congregation where the minister has given devoted and competent ministerial service.” The honor is bestowed by a vote of the congregation.

While Minister Emerita is an honorary title, it affords some privileges (e.g., ability to vote at General Assembly), expresses appreciation for a valued ministry, and creates a permanent record of the link between the Minister Emerita and the church. The nature of the relationship between a Minister Emerita and the congregation would be defined in a mutually agreed covenant with future ministers.

The First UU Austin Board of Trustees unanimously recommended that we have a congregational vote to confer Minister Emerita Status to Rev. Meg Barnhouse at our Congregational Meeting May 22, 2022.