

Zoom Meeting of The Urantia Book Fellowship

Meeting of the General Council

Sunday, October 18 , 2020

A meeting of the General Council of the Urantia Book Fellowship took place on Zoom Sunday, October 18, 2020.

The recorded version is available at Meeting Recording:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/SHRFHvsnX60YevSFeGUzPhgo09fGFI9Fal5sOBcUypNFmYGobyi0VucXDGskCTek.r06jRwVISUxbW6HV> (Hold control button and left click to open the link) You need to access the link from your firstname.lastname@urantia.org email.

Sunday, October 18, 2020: President Geoff Theiss called the meeting to order at 8:01 PST

1. Roll call:

The following members were present, constituting a quorum:

Tom Allen	Cecelia Lampley (9:30 PT)	Derek Samaras
Dan Amyx	John Lange	Steve Sawyer
Lara Amyx	Karen Larsen	David Schlundt
Ted Blaney	Albert Einstein Lassiter	Cristina Seaborn
Larry Bowman	Jena Lassiter	Sue Snider Seccombe
Douglas Burns	Barbara Newsome	Pablo Segovia (9:30 PT)
Bobbie Dreier	Mike Painter	Jill Strunk
John Hales	Michael Perrie	Geoff Taylor (9:30 PT)
Jock Holloway	Andre Radatus	Geoff Theiss
David Kulieke	Brent St. Denis	Paula Thompson

Absent: Katarina Becker, Michael Challis, Cabot Eudaley, Sean Privitera, and Diane Labrecque.
A vacancy resulted from the resignation of Dana Bredemeyer in September, 2020.

2. Opening Reading or Prayer: Michael Perrie led the group in a prayer.

3. Approve Agenda: The agenda was unanimously approved, with one addition (Deciding if the winter GC meeting will be on Zoom or if a location needs to be chosen).

4. Approve Minutes: Minutes from the July 18-19, 2020 GC meeting were approved unanimously.

5. President's Report: Geoff Thoess began with heartfelt appreciation for all of the effort and dedication demonstrated by GC members in so many areas. He acknowledged extra stress in his life in the last couple of months, with the death of his father and grandfather. He also spoke to some of the challenges of his role as president and his intent to meet his multiple responsibilities, keeping in mind the needs and desires of the GC members, the Constitution, and the values espoused in the Urantia Book. He further explained some of the decisions made by the EC since the last GC meeting, including launching of the Second Miler Program, continued work on the Wild Apricot website, digitization of many secondary works, and transition steps being taken to accommodate Paula's intention to retire at the end of 2021. As a first step, the Fellowship office in Colorado will be relinquished at the end of this month, and Paula and Derek will work from

their homes. He mentioned the relatively small number of active members in Fellowship Societies and tied it to the theme of a need for organizational metamorphosis which will be addressed later in the meeting by the Organizational Guidance Committee.

6. Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Brent St. Denis presented and explained at some length the treasurer's report. The full report is available at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1c2a4hVDIIJIDl0k7BX01KdXqhM6DUPpn/view?usp=sharing>

7. Organizational Guidance Committee (OGC) – Report:

David Schlundt presented an hour on M-Turk research.
Some highlights are:

M-Turk Survey

Overall goals:

1. Better understanding of how to reach out to people who are not currently aware of the Urantia Book or who may know of it but have not investigated, and
2. Understanding young people and how we might better reach out to them.

Demographics were explained and seemed appropriate for our purposes.

Summary: “What Have We Learned?”

- Belief in God or a higher power is common, including among younger people.
- People cite a wide range of influences on their religious beliefs, but 85% include some form of Christianity.
- 23% are not at all religious; 12% are not at all spiritual.
- Most people are concordant in religious and spiritual, with the exception of 19% who are low religious and high spiritual.
- No dramatic age differences were noted in solitary prayer, attending worship services, reading holy books or meditation.
- Do NOT see a gap in interest or engagement in religion/spirituality for young people.

A second part of the survey involved measures of core values and analysis leading to group labels and categorization by likelihood of being open to UB and approaches most likely to appeal to different categories.

See the full report at

https://drive.google.com/file/d/10gc_iKQERY8aelKIICgWVUI3QnjQ9c2y/view?usp=sharing

OGC report of research and recommendations for strategic direction and change.

During a more-than-three-hour segment of the meeting, Sue Snider Seccombe, Dan Amyx, Jena Lassiter, Albert Einstein Lassiter and Dr. David Schlundt presented preliminary recommendations for the strategic direction of the Fellowship. The report was based on results of a UB readers survey from January, 2020; 50 interviews with Urantia Book community leaders from June, 2020; the findings from the MTurk study (“Religion, Spirituality and Values in the 21st Century”), which included more than 3,000 people; and many, many hours of work by the Organizational Guidance Committee. The recommendations ranged from polishing the mission and purpose statements of the Fellowship to very specific action steps in a variety of categories, such as: aligning structure to fit current needs and interests of the community, including (among others) creating multiple levels of membership and possibly supplementing societies with service groups;

creating a culture of connection through improving communication, internally and externally, including better connection to societies and “speaking with one voice” across media channels; optimizing governance, including realigning committees to reflect the new ways we work and communicate; increasing paid staff; a thorough review of the Constitution; and ways to involve young readers in meaningful way. GC members were given time to respond to the presentation at several points. Suggestions for further exploring these ideas, gathering feedback, and establishing working teams were proposed. Next steps were suggested, honoring the fact that everything can’t be accomplished immediately. The point was made that it’s a process and teamwork is essential. You will have ample opportunity to be involved in ways that interest you. The full report is available at

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/141MI4C9ST68_yZZq3BFwKMF8zJ4lwQjM9oSkPLmuzEQ

8. Fellowship Teamwork Initiative launch –Douglas Burns

Douglas Burns presented on the concept of teamwork within the organization, which he explained was inspired through his work with the IT Committee. He distinguished between decentralized vs. distributed organization, and he proposed a model beyond those two models, which he calls “collaborative organization.” He said, “It involves more than just cooperation; it requires the ability and willingness to creatively share ideas and knowledge and to create new knowledge with others.” He talked about the tools available to us, with everybody doing their work in the cloud, using the Google Workspace, so everything is searchable, a common repository of information, available from any device. Each person would be provided with personal workspace, as well as shared workspace. Groups and committee forums were explained.

Three tools currently being used are: Google Workspace (GSuite) – documents, email, storage, and security;

Zoom –video meetings and working groups;

and ClickUp—task tracking.

He explained further how people would optimally use these tools, and suggested that members of the IT team would be available to help people learn to use them.

Full presentation is available at

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1iXHliz_-2UeDRalbPQdZYMS-rxGyIP-menTlklJDSO/edit#slide=id.p

9. Location Committee Report (including response to suggestion by Michael Painter and Michael Perrie about renting space at Unity Village in Kansas City, MO)

Lara Amyx reported that It is the recommendation of the ad hoc Location Committee that we do not go forward with the rental agreement with Unity Church for the following reasons:

Remoteness of the location from any UB community of readers, or members.

Being on the 5th floor of an office tower does not provide any opportunity to engage with a local community

While we look at Unity Church as "friendly" to the UB we do not want to be seen as attached to any outside organization

Renting does not provide stability to the UBF now or for the future

It is the consensus that we should look to purchase an asset that has the ability to generate income to offset the overhead expenses we incur in the running of the Fellowship.

The COVID-19 era and its changes in the business landscape should prove to be very beneficial for us in the near future. As businesses are going remote it is bringing the

price of real estate down. We should start to see these changes in the next 3-9 months. This fact, along with the organizational/structural changes we are in the process of making, should come together at about the same time.

This Ad Hoc committee was originally a “physical space research” motion made in 2016. Lara Amyx, as chair, was tasked with forming a committee and reporting back. That report was made and the task was completed, so the Ad Hoc committee was sunsetted, according to official procedure. However, the Committee has continued its search and mentioned at this meeting several potential locations which are under consideration.

Motions:

Tom Allen proposed the following motion, which was seconded:

“I move that the Physical Location Committee continue its search, and present to the General Council, three well-researched locations for consideration with well-principled criteria to guide the search at the winter GC meeting.”

The motion carried.

Tom Allen further proposed a motion, which was seconded, that Lara Amyx, as chair of the Physical Location Committee, appoint at least five committee members, in addition to herself, to prepare the report from the rechartered committee.

The motion carried.

10. Public Relations Policy Proposal – Steven Sawyer and Tom Allen, presenters.

Public Policy Resolution

Whereas, no Fellowship policy exists that addresses secular political activity on the corporate nor on the individual level, and

Whereas, General Councilors are not required by the Constitution of the United States from exercising free speech, and

Whereas, no guidance for General Councilors has been given to prevent a Councilor’s public political conduct from confusing new readers dissuading them from joining the Fellowship, and

Whereas, the Purpose of THE URANTIA BOOK FELLOWSHIP is “to increase and enhance the comfort, happiness, and well-being of all people, as individuals and as members of society,” and

Whereas, Each General Councilor should espouse this Purpose with wisdom and discretion in public secular activity, therefore be it

Resolved, that the following policy be adopted by the General Council:

The implementation of the purposes of THE URANTIA BOOK FELLOWSHIP is not associated with the politics of civil government. THE URANTIA BOOK FELLOWSHIP does not endorse political candidates nor is money allocated for political movements. General Councilors will demonstrate discretion, restraint, and

ethics concerning the use of personal social media accounts to espouse political views.

Respectfully submitted,
Tom Allen
General Councilor
THE URANTIA BOOK FELLOWSHIP

Steve Sawyer presented his reasons for asking Tom to help him draft this proposal, explaining a number of concerns. His main concerns are that new readers might be dissuaded from becoming involved with the Urantia Book movement if they are in disagreement with the political views of someone they know is part of the leadership of the Fellowship and that it might be harmful to the Fellowship itself, through loss of donations, for instance. Brent St. Denis proposed the following amended version:

Brent St. Denis proposed the following amended reversion:

The implementation of the purposes of THE URANTIA BOOK FELLOWSHIP is not associated with the politics of civil government. THE URANTIA BOOK FELLOWSHIP does not endorse political candidates nor is money allocated for political movements. General Councilors, as individuals, are invited to demonstrate discretion concerning the use of any social media that might associate political commentary with the Fellowship.

The motion to amend carried.

The amended motion carried.

11. General Council member presentation

A. Establishment of a Benevolent Fund to be administered by an Ad Hoc Committee called the Compassion Committee

Karen Larson moved that \$4,000 be allocated in next year's budget to an ongoing ad hoc committee, called the Compassion Committee. The committee will prepare a procedure and criteria for identifying persons in need who are members of THE URANTIA BOOK FELLOWSHIP, as determined by this committee, and shall disburse funds for the benefit of the person(s) in need. The fund will be called the Benevolence Fund. This ad hoc committee shall be made up of Karen Larsen (chair), Tom Allen, Paula Thompson, Cristina Seaborn and other interested members. The committee will be created to act in perpetuity.

The motion passed, contingent on CPA review and approval of the Benevolence Fund as it relates to the non-profit status requirements of the Fellowship.

B. Derek Samaras presented on the ethos of the Urantia Book community and the "love within this family." He showed a video with scenes and video clips from the Urantia Book family through the years, starting with scenes going back to the beginning of the forum. He pointed out the loving feeling inherent in the scenes. Then he showed scenes from his own journey with the Urantia Book Community, including many people well known within the community and how the love has spread from person to person. He shared how caring for his ailing grandparents for

seven years helped prepare him to receive and appreciate the caring within the Urantia Book family and he showed lots of examples of the support for his passion in spreading the Urantia Book truth. He made the point that his experience with Paula In the office has helped him to see and appreciate the loving ethos the Fellowship provides.

He recommended that in making strategic changes to the Fellowship, we do not let anything eclipse the ethos of a loving family.

12. New Business: None

13. Location of Winter Meeting: A motion to have our winter meeting on Zoom was made and seconded. The motion passed.