**Future Committee Questions for the Congregation**

**1. As we regroup after FUSW's recent challenges, a basic question to ask ourselves is whether we want FUSW to continue. Do you envision a future for FUSW? Do you want to continue being a part of this congregation?**

I am supportive, and want to continue to be supportive.

I do want it to continue, and I do envision a future for FUSW, and I have some ideas that I want to contribute. We are both supportive, and want to continue to be supportive.

I definitely do want it to continue, and want to be a part of it. I have been doing Zoom, tho it’s hard. I haven’t been to more than one meeting at South Church because I can’t drive. I feel committed to FUSW, but we’ll have to see what happens. Whether I’ll be able to actively participate is TBD.

I had read thru the questions prior, and I had a childish response: “Yes I want to continue, and yes I want to be a part of it.” But then I asked myself, “What do I want to contribute?” There’s this thing of wanting it to be there, but not able to help out because of busy-ness, etc. I haven’t been there so much, and I feel guilty. I would like to think of it continuing and being a member. But how I would participate? That’s the question.

**2. Some have proposed that FUSW merge with another (presumably UU) congregation. Do you like this idea, or would you prefer to see FUSW continue as an independent entity?**

I am opposed to any idea of merging. Any place we might merge isn’t close enough to our turf, and I think that would deprive some current members in of the area closest to Jackson Ave. would not be well served. Any merger would be bad for us. In addition, I want to point out that if we do not remain independent there is in our bylaws a dissolution clause that says in such a case all of our assets go to the UUA unless UUA agrees to something else. We have significant assets, and the UUA would probably want them. I view a merger as a dissolution of our congregation.

I wouldn’t mind merging, but I don’t think they **[White Plains]** want us. The women’s group was talking about it, and they said that WP want to run the show, and we wouldn’t have that much influence.

I don’t merge with anyone, I would like us to remain independent, but who knows if we can?

I also don’t want a merger, although that may be the practical thing in terms of people, numbers, etc. But that’s not what I would want.

**3. Until the most recent surge in COVID cases, we have been holding services in the chapel of South Church.** **As the chapel in South Church cannot hold our entire congregation, as South Church meets some, but not all, of our needs, and as our lease at South Church is unlikely to be extended indefinitely, we will need to start actively looking for a new home for FUSW. This would have to be a rented building or space, as we do not have the funds to purchase a property,**

**What qualities (location? Configuration?) would you like to see us look for in our next home?**

Parking is a must. Parking at South Church is not good for us. It’s a very uncomfortable place to be, we walk down a long hall to get to it, it’s cramped, I find the chairs uncomfortable. We have no space there except a place to put our hymnals. I would like a modern-looking place. Our former home could seat about 100, had restrooms, a small kitchen and an office or two. That would be the minimum we should shoot for. The problem of Sunday school space is another difficulty, but there might be ways to still encourage young families to join us, even if not a lot of Sunday school space available at first. It should not be very far from our old home, 25 Old Jackson Ave. That’s to serve the area that we serve.

I don’t think we want anything that looks too ecumenical, but we want a place with parking and room for a Sunday school, a meeting room, the usual stuff. I have to say that the space we’re renting from South Church is a nice chapel, a good choice. Good interim solution, and I’m not down on it at all.

It’s so hard for me to say, because in my mind we had such a perfect space. Definitely we need a place where we can meet in person, and parking. We had such a perfect place, and I don’t know if we’ll ever find anything that comes close. I don’t know if there’s a place where I can get to. We’ll see. I have no idea. It’s probably going to be in Yonkers, somewhere near Old Jackson. It’s hard for me. I have to admit that I’ve been exploring Ethical Culture, because I can walk there, and it’s a very nice setting in Riverdale. The minister is an ordained UU minister, nice spirituality. Even though I try to go to the women’s group, but I’m not very independently doing it.

The first thing I thought of was, “We have to have a piano.” I miss the music, and I hate the masks thing. But that’s life as it is, and we have to deal with it. I’d like a space that’s big enough that we can all comfortably be there. I very much look forward to meeting in person when possible. It’s a big ask to have all the things we had. A good big room—and a piano.

I hadn’t thought about location, but it does make sense to me to be in a more visible location. It wouldn’t hurt, and might be beneficial. There would be the loss of a more pastoral setting, but it’s important to be someplace visible, accessible, with a sign. I think Yonkers is a good idea, since that’s where we started.

**4. When we complete the sale of 25 Old Jackson Avenue, FUSW's assets will be approximately one million dollars. How should these assets be handled? Do you think we should spend as little as possible in the short term so as to preserve these assets, or would you favor investing some portion of these assets in congregational growth--in a more ideal location, for instance, in staff (including our minister), and in community outreach?**

The fund that attracted David Bryce was my idea, not Gil Hart’s, and I believe we need an energetic full-time minister. It might be lovely if we could get a full-time minister to help us find a place where we want to move. And for many other reasons. A part-time person would not be suitable in our current position. Arlin is 74, and I was told by him that Sarita wants him to retire. I think we need a star from the young UU ministry to have the chance of their lifetime to come and bring us back to where we were ten years ago. If there’s any objection to spending this money that exceeds our current income, I point out that the total budget for this year is $120,000. The total pledge is about $100,000. The $20,000 is coming from savings. So we’re already investing just to exist.

The most important thing is get a charismatic minister. The problem is, where do they live? Gil Hart got a few of us to donate a chunk of money to pay for a full-time minister. I don’t think we can pinch our pennies at the beginning; we have to spend money to get it going, get someone in RE. Right now, so many people who are disappointed in how the world is going, now is the time to get people attracted to Unitarian Universalism, because people need it. Someplace reasonable. If we can promote UU, that would be good.

If we have a building, we want a minister, and then we need outreach. I think first you need a physical space to do outreach, so that people can come there, to feel that they belong. We need the space and we need a minister to hold us together.

I’m somewhere in the middle. I understand the idea of investing—that’s been a topic the whole time I’ve been a member. You really need a minister, because without that you don’t have much. There will need to be a pretty significant outlay. I don’t know how many members we have now, and I don’t know how much they can give. Maybe it makes more sense to spend the money we have. What would we be saving it toward?

**5. At present, we are a congregation that is predominantly white and predominantly of retirement or pre-retirement age. What would you like the demographics of our congregation to look like? Should we make sustained efforts to create this more diverse congregation?**

I want first of all a multigenerational congregation, and the more variety, the better. And this area—I keep checking on the demographics of the area that we draw membership from, and Larry Greenberg is one of my sources. For example, in Hastings, there’s no shortage of young families. The Hastings school are staying full. I believe that this is a very rich part of the world for liberal religion, and I want us to try to attract as many families and other people as we can.

We have a lot of Hispanic people in our area, and they’re all Catholic, so they can’t be recruited. There are other people, black, white, maybe Asian. We should welcome everyone.

We definitely need youth and people of color. But again, you need a building, and you need someone to coordinate it, otherwise where is everything going to come from? It would be the minister who would coordinate it, because you want youth to breathe life into the community. And certainly we need diversity.

I would just say, we should welcome any and all, whoever we can get, and a more diverse group would be great.

**6. What ideas do you have for attracting new members to our congregation?**

We need an outstanding minister.

I agree with that, and Brenda has said the same. I believe that a full-time leader who’s energetic, but who would also need help from the congregation to do his/her job, should help us to figure out what we should do to grow.

I think we need an energetic minister who’s committed to helping us grow, to diversity, who would have good idea of how to help us along. We need somebody to tie us together, to motivate us.

I think it’s the minister, and I think the location might be a factor as well.

**7. Are there other issues or ideas about FUSW’s future that you would like to raise?**

A long-term financial plan for the congregation. There should be a strict and vigorous plan for an endowment fund and a way to attract funds to it. There has never been such a thing, and you will never attract serious money if you don’t say what the serious money will be for. Now that we need a permanent home for this congregation, I would think that members would be willing to put significant money to that end.

I think that once we get a place and a minister, we have to publicize our congregation. We should have a lot of music there, to attract people who wouldn’t ordinarily come. And we need to publicize our mission.

I think it’s all been said. I’m here to help in any way I can, but I’m not sure what that will be. How can you attract kids if you don’t have a place to be with them?

The only other thing that comes to mind is more pandemic-related. The importance of meeting in person. It just matters a lot. Zoom is different, it’s not the same. I think that needs to be the goal, and I guess that relates to the size of the space, so we can safely come together.

**8. Are you hopeful?**

I have high hopes, but realistically, we’ve been declining for several years. We have a median age of about 70, and if something isn’t done, that decline will continue. We should take that big money and devote it to hiring somebody who can lead us out of that decline.

I don’t want to commit right now.

Yes, I don’t want it to fall apart.

Yes, especially now that I see the people here in this meeting.