

**UUC Board Meeting Agenda**  
**December 14, 2023**  
[\(Zoom Link\)](#)

*We, the UUC Board, seek informed collaboration and clarity in our work of supporting UUC ministries. We interact with respect, trust, deep listening, and curiosity. We affirm one another, and maintain fierce dedication to diversity and inclusion in our commitment to the community we serve. We communicate directly and with courageous love. When it arises, we engage in productive conflict. We are focused, accountable, and authentic. We laugh together. We maintain the trust and confidentiality of board members' contributions and speak with one voice regarding board actions.*

7:00-7:20

Chalice Lighting, Reading (Margo), Check-in  
Review and Accept Agenda

7:20-7:35

Committee on Ministries member report on minister's evaluation (Guest speaker TBA)

Member Forum

7:30-7:40

Approve Consent Agenda

**Minister's Report**

**Administrator's Report**

**Director of Lifespan Faith Development's (DLFD) Report**

**Previous Meeting Minutes**

7:40-7:50

**Treasurer's Report**

7:50-8:20

Old Business

- Discussion regarding grounds and playground (Rev. Pam): Phases and amounts for each phase. Are the playground improvement plans a priority? If so, based on quotes for new fencing, how should we fund it?
- Update on Dancing Through the Decades (Laura)

8:20-8:50

New Business

- Follow up on meeting with past presidents: How can we make the Board more visible and increase communication with the congregation? One idea: A board member article for each month. Who will write the next one?
- Timeline for stewardship campaign (Wayne?).
- Approving housing portion of minister's salary for 2024.
- Report about Right Relationships Committee (Rev. Pam).

- Possible schedule of committees' reports to the Board. (Fred and Rev. Pam). Possible reports and order for discussion: January: Endowment Committee (Bill Baker); February: Connections Committee (Pauletta Copenheaver and Lisa Evanylo); March: Pastoral Services (Jane Mahone); April: Social Action (Community Service Team (Molly McClintock) and/or Social Justice Team (Sara Dalton); May: Operations Facilities (Liz Crane)

*8:50-9:00*

Check-out - Did we abide by our covenant?

Upcoming

Next Board Meeting – January 11, 2024

Reading for January Meeting – ?

Other activities?

**UUC Board Meeting Minutes  
December 14, 2023**

***In attendance:*** Fred Piercy, Barbara Taylor, Margo Walter, Beth McClellan, Rev. Pam Philips, Rachel Craine, Laura Robinson, Wayne Neu (zoom),

***Guests:*** Ashley Dugan, Toni Cox (zoom)

**Chalice Lighting, Reading, Check-in and Review of Agenda**

- Fred called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and Rev. Pam lit the chalice.
- The agenda was approved unanimously.

**Report on Minister's Evaluation: Ashley Dugan & Toni Cox (on zoom)**

- The Committee on Ministries (COM) met in November to discuss the minister's evaluation.
- Came to unanimous agreement on Rev Pam's salary: COM thinks it's overdue, possibly hasn't kept pace with cost of living; deserved based on her many contributions (including during the pandemic – her actions and activities actually grew the congregation instead of losing members).
- Evaluation process: Jane Keppel-Benson did the heavy lifting. Categories of evaluation are pre-determined. Sought feedback from individuals/committees who had first-hand knowledge of Rev. Pam's contributions in each of the categories.
- Everyone asked gave a whole-hearted recommendation.
- Listening circles were done previously; plan to continue this in the coming months. These were very helpful to understand how we work together and connect.
- Also will be getting feedback from the Grounds Committee.
- Wayne had a question on how salary level was chosen – we are between B & C in terms of congregation size. B & C overlap as defined, so COM had to pick one. Choosing a C allows more flexibility. (We have ~220 members; highest of B category is 230, but overlaps w C. Our RE program is definitely in the upper range.) Rev. Pam will send out guidelines to the Board for clarification.

**Approve Consent Agenda**

- Barbara motioned to approve the consent agenda and Margo seconded. After discussion, the Board approved unanimously. These reports included the following:
  - Minister's Report
  - Administrator's Report
  - Director of Lifespan Faith Development's (DLFD) Report
  - Previous Meeting Minutes

**Treasurer's Report**

- Wayne – pledge income has come back up to normal level.
- Auction funds have mostly come in. Stripe fees increased over that expected due to the increased use of credit cards.

- Budgeted contribution to Facilities Maintenance Escrow needs to be moved over that fund.
- Contribution of Mental Health Justice funds to NAMI has been done.
- The Board is supposed to approve all restricted gifts. This didn't happen with a recent contribution; the board should discuss the issue.
- Finance Committee is considering two recommendations for building improvements:
  - Replacing mini-split HVAC in nursery + second unit in library so could use heat pump instead of base-board heat.
  - Adding security cameras and equipment to monitor the entire building exterior and parking lot.
- Another issue for budgeting: a paid AV position? Fred will ask the Finance Committee for additional info.

## Old Business

### Playground Maintenance and Upgrade (Rev. Pam):

- Rev Pam presented the 2022 proposal to expand playground to ~twice as large to accommodate separate spaces for little vs. big kids.
  - Phase I expansion: Costs in 2022 proposal assumed volunteer labor. Pam is checking on contractor cost. Would add \$2000 to original estimate.
  - Phase II expansion; playground equipment, ADA path.
  - Phase III expansion equipment, commercial grade (industrial much too expensive).
  - We have \$1500 budgeted (was for Phase I); also additional – total ~\$2000.
  - First proposed in 2013. Seems like it's (past) time!
- Would need to determine who would keep up the expanded space, as the Grounds Committee doesn't feel it is their role.
- Pam's feedback: She knows a colleague whose church did a 3-week campaign and got all the money they needed for a new playground. Thinks our congregation would use the playground if it were better, and that there is a push for it to happen. Our playground is useful for ~15 kids. We have 100+ kids. Do kids deserve space of their own? It is a value thing; also a safety issue. The Board committed to Phase 1 last year; unfortunately, we need more money than the previous proposal.
- Fred – what would be our legitimate next step? Phase 1 is valuable, really need to do it even if other Phases aren't completed or plans change in the future. But we must have the Phase 1 expansion done before other phases could take place.
- Pam will get firm quotes and bring those to the Board meeting in January.
- Discussion points: Ask congregation: Do we have the congregation buy-in? Should we do a limited scope capital campaign for full expansion? That would need to wait for a congregational vote.

### Restricted funds (Wayne):

- Wayne moved that we accept the restricted funds that were recently received from a parishioner. Laura seconded. Discussion: Barbara asked who has control of where the money is spent.

- Discussion of policy: In the future, when someone wants to give such restricted funds, we should discuss and approve it before it's accepted and listed in the budget.
- Proposal – we should receive more info on contribution and source of funds. As general policy, we don't want to accept money for any purpose without following board policy.
- Wayne's motion passed with one "no" vote.
- Rev. Pam will make sure that Erica knows we must approve future contributions before the money is deposited.

#### Dancing through the Decades (Laura):

- The Connection Committee wants to help promote it but needs to determine how participants will RSVP and pay (since auction site is closed).
- Rachel can advertise in her weekly newsletter to families; she also can make a Google sheet. Recommends dropping family price to \$20 instead of \$30; especially for those with little kids. Participants can also pay at the door w/ cash or check.
- Pam: we can play it up on Sundays during announcements.
- Laura will really push it in January after the holidays.

#### **New Business**

- NPR issue: Rev. Pam – FYI to Board. We give money to NPR (WVTF) that pays for church PR. NPR wants to do a year-long contract, not 6-month. It comes out of our fund-raising within congregation (half-plate, not our budget). We had enough budgeted for fall but will need additional for spring.
- Rev. Pam is going to do a monthly message from the minister; she proposes that there is also a monthly message from the Board. Laura volunteered to write one for January.
- Margo: Making more connections with congregation – she suggested we make sure we're visible at the potluck. Recently she sat at a table with others that she didn't know well and let them know she was on the Board. This led to a great time and discussion.
  - Wayne: Before covid we had a "board table" with a couple of members present, and anyone could talk with them.
  - We need to move quickly to get board member nametags.
  - Fred suggests having an announcement before potlucks.
- Timeline for stewardship campaign (Wayne):
  - Budgeting begins now (committee's requests for budget + justification)
  - Mid-Jan. through mid-Feb. Need stewardship goal by end of Feb.
  - The stewardship campaign starts in early March; need goal by then. It's done by the end of March.
  - Mopping up in mid-April; final budget needed by end of April.
  - Budget info letters need to go out to congregation ahead of Informational Meeting around mid-May.
  - Informational Meeting usually held two weeks before Annual Meeting in June.
- Approval of housing portion of Rev. Pam's salary:
  - Pam suggested that \$7,500 is sufficient to cover their expenses.
  - Barbara proposed that we approve \$7,500, and Laura seconded. It was approved unanimously.
- Right Relations Team:

- Nancy Bodenhorn is communicating with Rev. Pam.
- We have asked them to write up a description of the committee and their charge.
- In the meantime, Pam referred a conflict to the committee and they dealt with it successfully.
- Teaching congregation to deal with such things proactively is the goal.
- Fred: He and Rev. Pam have identified committees and recommended a timeline for committee reports to the Board (see agenda).

#### Other

- Laura would like to commend board members/leaders for their contributions to the UUC.
- Margo: A free Mental Health Workshop will be held here on Feb. 10. It will be appropriate for 16 years and older.
- At the end of the meeting, as we were discussing whether we were true to our covenant during the meeting, Fred asked the Board if his leadership is oppressive. We said we would let him know if he became so (amid laughter).

#### Upcoming

- Next Board Meeting will be held on January 11, 2024.
- Reading for January Meeting will be by Margo.

*The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 PM.*

December 2023 Minister's Report to the Board  
Submitted by Rev. Pam Philips

### Leads Worship and Officiates Rites of Passage

In November, we explored the Gift of Generosity, one of the core values of Unitarian Universalism that is included in the proposed Article II revision (in the UUA Bylaws). In addition to exploring how we might be more generous in sharing our faith and how acts of generosity connect us, we had two services that considered and celebrated Abundance. One was led by community member Justin Summers, who has started a nonprofit to help displaced people buy houses (Sequoia Housing Partners). He comes from a Christian background and so included scripture; his message was well received. I appreciate Ellen Plummer and Rachel Craine for leading the next worship service when I had COVID, which included a ritual with cider and corn bread muffins (made by Rachel Craine).

Our December worship services are exploring the Gift of Mystery, in addition to services that acknowledge some of the holidays of the month. We'll have a special Christmas Eve service at 5:00 on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

I officiated at a very small family in-home wedding this past month. I also officiated at the Celebration of Life for Åke-Eric Renqvist, Helen's husband. We were blessed to have the Blacksburg Community Strings (which Åke conducted for 22 years) play at the service and to be joined by several of his relatives in Finland on Zoom.

### Provides Pastoral Care and Presence

This has been a time requiring much pastoral care, particularly around the deaths of two Blacksburg High School students who were known by members of UUC. I participated in the community vigil at BHS on November 11<sup>th</sup> (thanks to Leslie Hager-Smith for helping to coordinate the vigil and inviting me). I've visited people in their homes, my office, and health care facilities, and our ministerial intern has also been providing pastoral care. I continue to meet with the Surviving Spouses (except when I was on retreat/sick).

### Encourages Spiritual Development for Self and Others

Our Conversations on Our Faith group has finished an excellent book on humanism and has started a Neil DeGrasse Tyson book ([Starry Messengers](#)). We hosted the Interfaith book group on November 12<sup>th</sup> (which I led) and are continuing to discuss -- [The Great Partnership: Science, Religion, and the Search for Meaning](#) by Jonathan Sacks. It has been especially important to me to be in conversation with members of the Blacksburg Jewish Community Center (as well as other local congregations) because of the war in Israel.

I really appreciated my time at The Mountain for the Southeast UU Ministers Association (SEUUMA) retreat, which included workshops and worship services. It was a restorative and educational time for me.

I had a week of unexpected rest when I got COVID for the first time the week of Thanksgiving. I'm sorry to have missed being with friends in Charlottesville, but my case was mild, we have Netflix, and I didn't miss any meetings. I will have a proposed plan for my upcoming sabbatical at our January board meeting.

### Witnesses to Social Justice in the Public Square

We held a service on November 20<sup>th</sup> for Transgender Day of Remembrance. Members of the congregation helped create a chain with the names of people across the world who died by violence this past year because they were transgender, writing names on slips of paper before and after the service on the 19<sup>th</sup> that we put together the next day. We had small attendance, including members of UUC in Blacksburg and Roanoke and the pastor from Blacksburg Presbyterian and their child. It was a meaningful service. We plan to schedule next year's TDoR service at a time when more VT students will be able to attend.

### Leads Administration

Nancy Bodenhorn has met with me to discuss the new Right Relations / Conflict Transformation Team, which has met three times to discuss the UUA training Nancy has taken. She has already facilitated a conversation between two people who were having conflict and reports that it went better than expected. The team members include Rami Steinruck, Molly Lazar, and Jane Hundley.

The Connections Committee had a successful Newcomers Orientation on November 11<sup>th</sup>, with eight newcomers. We recognized four new members at the service on December 3<sup>rd</sup>: Nancy Metz, Leyla Nazhandali, Niko Rensberger, and Carolyn Rude.

The Committee on Ministries completed an [evaluation of the minister](#), contacting several members of the congregation with whom I work for feedback. You will find the evaluation in the December board folder. They also decided to write a [letter to the board](#) with recommendations for my salary (which I have not yet read, but encourage us all to read).

The Grounds Ministry is currently without official leaders, but I will be meeting with Susan Baker and Denise Martin to discuss needs until new leadership is identified. The Committee on Ministries is planning listening circles in the new year to hear feedback from the congregation on their experience of the grounds and their hopes for the future, which I hope will help give the Grounds Ministry direction as they look forward.

One part of the grounds that is of particular interest to the board is the playground. I've put a copy of the [Playground Committee's proposal](#) in the December board folder. You will see that Phase I, which the board voted to fund last year, involves expanding the playground, which requires putting up more fencing. They projected the cost would be \$1,250 for materials and assumed congregants could do the labor. It seems unlikely that we will be able to provide labor in house, so I asked Derek Rountree (who wrote up the proposal) how much labor would cost, and he estimates that it would be between \$1,500 to \$2,500. I'm checking with a contractor to get a more formal estimate. For context, one of the recommendations coming out of congregational conflict in 2013 (involving a conflict on the playground) was to expand the playground so that there was room for younger children and older children. I feel it is time to follow those recommendations for the safety and well-being of our children.

The Communications Committee decided that we didn't have time to enter a float in the Blacksburg Holiday Parade, but we did have a group of walkers who handed out candy with information about UUC. Thanks to those who walked in the parade (middle school youth group and others) and who made signs for them to carry. George Lally drove his car with UUC signs on it and Rachel Craine put UUC info on the candies. The ComCom will be meeting next week to discuss getting UUC t-shirts and ways to make the website more informative. As we were putting together the Winter newsletter, we realized that the board had not submitted an article. I recommend that we have a monthly message from the board – written by the president or a member of the board – on the webpage, along with the Message from the Minister page.

### Serves the Larger Unitarian Universalist Faith and Leads the Faith into the Future

We have been exploring the Article II revision in worship in preparation for the vote during the UUA General Assembly in June.

I volunteered at the SEUUMA retreat by setting up Zoom spaces for those who attended virtually and providing tech support during the retreat. I continue to meet with colleagues in Blacksburg, including the Blacksburg Ministerial Association monthly meetings.

### Time away from Blacksburg and UUC

December 25-26, Charlottesville

December 31 – January 5<sup>th</sup>, Cancun, Mexico vacation

**Administrator's Report to the Board  
December 10, 2022**

**Stewardship Committee:** I met with the stewardship committee in november and I created logo drafts for this year's campaign.

**Communications Committee:** Currently working with staff on updating the website. We'll be meeting this coming week to discuss ideas for UUC T-shirts and merchandise vendors. We are still exploring ideas regarding the newsletter and how we are getting information out to the congregation.

**Pledge updates:** Went out last month.

**Rentals:** Rentals have been coming in steadily for the upcoming both new and returning renters.

**Attendance/Members:** See the [Attendance/Numbers](#) Google doc.

## **DLFD Report to the Board – December 2023**

### **Children and Youth Programs:**

- **Registration Numbers:** Currently 56 families and 99 children have registered for 124 activity/positions in the 2023-24 year.
  
- **Programming:**
  - Children’s RE is going well, as is 8-9 OWL
  - YRUU had a great time doing the Pasta making dinner last Sunday. Next Sunday they will sell jars of cookie mix they made after the service as a fundraiser, and then go bowling/play laser tag that evening. This will be their last meeting until January.
  - MSYG had fun at the holiday parade, and represented UUC well. They also completed 44 gifts and cards for some of our older congregants. Their next outing will be bowling/laser tag in January.

### **Adult Programming:**

- Building Bridges for Adults–Kimberly Homer and KC Arceneaux presented the lesson on Paganism and Indigenous Religions this past Monday night, with about 10 participants online and in person. Moving the class to Monday nights has freed up Sunday afternoons a bit, and we will continue to meet on Mondays after the new year.
- Young Adult OWL finishes up this week. Several of our UUYA’s participated, and it has been a great experience. OWL for older adults begins in January.
- Parent Covenant Group did not meet in December, and is planning to try meeting on a Friday night in January.
- Sunday Circle: 7 people attended the Nov. 19 Sunday Circle (at 11:30)—History of Thanksgiving. 10 people attended the Dec. 3 (8:30) presentation on Costa Rica.
- January Programming: Cynthia Luke will be holding a class on “Getting your ducks in a row” focusing on things to do to prepare for end of life. Several people have already signed up. And of course, building bridges will continue and OWL for older adults.

### **Other Programming:**

- Our 17 buddy matches will meet after the service next Sunday.
- The Mitten Tree brought in lots of warm donations for the Christmas Store.
- This month, families/people can collect food for the food pantry in our “reverse advent” food drive.
- Our Transgender Day of Remembrance Service was lightly attended, but meaningful. You can see the chain we made hanging in Elarth.

- Family Holiday Fun Night was lightly attended. Next year we will try not to have it the day after the holiday parade.

**Other DLFD Activites:**

- Holiday Pageant this Sunday!!!
- Spring teacher recruitment is finished. We have a full complement of 34 volunteers making sure our children and youth programming runs smoothly.
- I am planning teacher training for January 6. I plan to include a mini workshop on UU identity for our RE teachers. This is my final project for the UU identity class I took in October, and I'm glad to be able to implement some of what I learned.

Time off: I plan to take time off December 25-January 1. (2 holidays and 6 vacation days)