

UUC Board Meeting Minutes February 8, 2024

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

Guests: Pauletta Copenheaver (via Zoom), Bob Stimson, Jamie McReynolds

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

- Fred called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. Rachel lit the chalice and Rami offered a reading.

Report on Connections Committee: Pauletta Copenheaver

- Members: Pauletta, Lisa Evanylo, Akiko Nakata, Kim Feucht, Franklyn Moreno.
- The Connections Committee's mission is to connect people, welcome visitors, members, and friends, and encourage engagement in congregational activities. Similar mission to the previous Membership Committee but is now extended to present members.
- Budget is divided into three parts:
 1. Greeting: \$75 for items such as name tags, brochures.
 2. Hospitality: \$500 (although actual costs sometimes go over) for coffee, tea, paper towels & supplies, potlucks, snacks after service.
 3. Other connection activities (see below): \$500.
- Connection Committee Activities:
 - Greeting during services, both in person and online. Lisa serves as the in-person coordinator, and Akiko as the online coordinator.
 - After-service coffee & snacks.
 - Potlucks (Frank Moreno and crew organize).
 - Newcomer's orientation (next one April 27), currently one in fall, one in spring (may increase back to 3/year in future).
 - Getting to Know UU and Tour, now combined, with Newcomers table in Elarth after services.
 - Ice Cream Social in fall.
 - Surviving Spouse Group (2x month).
 - Circle Suppers.
 - Occasional check-in with a normally active member who has been missing for a time.
 - Phone/email/text buddies (esp. for those who live alone, although not exclusively).
 - Social activities such as the Chili Cookoff (next one is March 8).
- Wayne inquired about the Committee's 2024-25 budget request, as he has not received it. Pauletta said she will resend it to him.

Discussion of Proposed Public Witness Statement: Bob Stimson and Jamie McReynolds

- Owing to growing concerns about democracy vs. authoritarianism, it is proposed that UUC should take a strong stance on preserving and strengthening democracy and offered a draft statement.
- Discussion of possibilities for how to move forward:

- o The sermon on Feb. 18 will be about preserving democracy. Near the end of the service the proposal will be discussed with the congregation.
- o A method of straw poll will be determined. It should be available in person and online, with a space for individuals to offer comments or ideas.
- o Fred questioned the actions to be taken listed in the draft statement: specifically, who is to “establish and execute educational programs”? Bob replied that it was Jim’s Boland’s idea, but that no one has been assigned to do so.
- o Fred suggested some wordsmithing (revision to wording), particularly what is meant by use of the term “globally”?
- o Rev. Pam suggested adding a portion of the Congregational Public Witness Policy to the bottom of the statement in order to strengthen the request.
- o Bob: The Board could decide after Feb. 18 whether we want to support it because it’s popular with congregants or could vote after the congregational meeting.
- o Fred: if 90% of the congregation agrees after Feb. 18, the Board would likely approve the statement at the next meeting. If fewer than 90%, the Board will discuss it further.
- o What can the congregation do if the statement is approved? Can use the UUC’s name when we carry signs, write letters to newspaper, etc.
- o Rev. Pam remarked that other congregations are considering the topic of protecting democracy; maybe we could partner with them.
- o Jamie – It is a hot topic for ministers; also made difficult because we protect free speech.

Approve Consent Agenda

- Margo moved to approve the consent agenda and Barbara seconded.
- Discussion: Rev. Pam brought up the friendly amendment discussed last month, concerning the proposal for purchase of new sound system components. Exactly what would we like Lucas to do? Agreed that she will ask him to clarify the proposal (esp. regarding acronyms).
- The Consent Agenda was approved unanimously. Reports included the following:
 - o February Agenda
 - o Minister's Report
 - o Administrator's Report
 - o Director of Lifespan Faith Development's (DLFD) Report
 - o Previous Meeting Minutes

Treasurer’s Report: Wayne

- Wayne presented the draft 2024-2025 budget. He has received input on most items; question marks indicate entries that are still uncertain.
- Bottom line: we would need a 14.2% increase in pledges from last year to meet the budget as presented – this is the largest increase over the previous year’s budget in many years. One year in the recent past we faced a >9% increase, and really had to beat the bushes to gain enough through pledges to meet the budget.

- Salaries make up the greatest amount of the increase (~11%), including a 5% raise for Rev. Pam, retirement, cost of living raises for pianist and choir director, and the proposed new full-time administrator position. Increasing the administrator position to full-time would add ~\$20,000 to the budget.
- Smaller items that add to the increase: bookkeeper raised price, repairs & maintenance, minor amounts for various other needs.
- Discussion of budget increase and addition of full-time administrator position:
 - Wayne reported that there was considerable discussion among the Finance Committee as to meeting the 14.2% increase necessary to pay for everything that is currently budgeted. Particularly, the committee was not certain that we should hire a full-time administrator.
 - A wide-ranging discussion followed regarding what should be cut from the budget, and how much.
 - The primary focus of the discussion revolved around the proposed full-time administrator position, and whether we could raise the needed additional funds to move the administrator from 25 hours (which is where it is now) to the proposed 40 hours.
 - Proposed: Advertising for a 30-hour position (as opposed to Erica's current 25-hour position or the 40-hour position we hoped to fund), and with intent to increase hours in the future), without making any other changes to the proposed budget, brings us 9.7% over last year instead of >14%.
- Discussion of timeline for 2024-2025 budget process:
 - The Annual Meeting must occur no later than June 15, with the Informational Meeting at least one week before Annual Meeting (we typically hold it two weeks before).
 - With consideration of holidays and summer plans, the following dates are proposed:
 - Annual Meeting: June 2
 - Informational Meeting: May 19
 - Joint Board Meeting: Wednesday, May 8, or Thursday, May 9.
 - Letters should go out one week before the Informational Meeting.
 - With regard to the playground, Rachel suggests that if we get the fencing done soon, more family members may be motivated to pledge.

Old Business

Restricted Gifts Procedure (Rev. Pam & Barbara):

- Rev. Pam will instruct the administrator not to deposit any monies targeted for restricted funds without Board approval except those already approved.
- Previously approved funds include the ways that people can give money using Vanco. These are YRRU, Pledge, Debt Reduction, Community Assistance, and WVTF.
- For anything else that comes in, the Board must be notified for approval, following policy and procedures.

Dancing through the Decades (Laura):

- Made \$390.
- Great fun was had by all participants!

Isabel Berney award nomination (Margo):

- In process. The committee will begin soliciting nominations.

Board approval and vote on administrator position (Pam):

- Motion to advertise for 30-hour position with a priority to bring up to full time incrementally.
- Fred moved to approve; Barbara seconded.
- Discussion: Wayne and Laura clarified that if we don't get enough money through pledges we might have to cut elsewhere.
- The motion was approved unanimously.

New Business

Newsletter:

- Who will write the next message from the Board? Wayne volunteered.

Stewardship Committee Luncheon (Pam, Fred):

- Encourage everyone to participate in the service and pledge party March 17.

Updated state of building report (Pam, Fred):

- Liz suggested that this report should be available to more people. Pam suggested (and all agreed) that Liz's report go into the Members area on the UUC website. A special page should be created for it.

Review of Public Witness policy in anticipation of request (Pam):

- People should be aware that it's up to the board to decide on the procedure (straw poll vs. other method?).
- For straw poll on Sunday, Feb. 18: Do we think it's adequate to make available to the congregation (including on Google) a card with yes vs. no and space for comments?
- Laura moved to approve the procedure, and Beth seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Other:

Barbara shared a funny UU joke!

Upcoming

- Next Board Meeting will be held on March 14, 2024.
- Reading for the March Meeting will be by Laura.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:04.

UUC Board Meeting Agenda February 8, 2024

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 (Rami), Check-in
Review and Accept Agenda

7:20-7:35

Committee Report: Pauletta Copenheaver will report on the Connections Committee Member's Forum

7:35-7:40

Approve Consent Agenda

Minister's Report

Administrator's Report

Director of Lifespan Faith Development's (DLFD) Report

Previous Meeting Minutes

7:40-8:15

Treasurer's Report

- Initial budget request (if available) and discussion
- Confirm timeline of budget process

8:15-8:35

Old Business

- How can we have adequate accountability and oversight regarding restricted gifts (Pam and Barbara)
- Dancing through the Decades roundup (Laura)
- Update on Isabel Berney award (Margo)
- Board approval and vote on full-time administrator position (Pam)

8:35-8:50

New Business

- Newsletter - who will write the next message from the Board?
- Report on Stewardship Committee's leadership luncheon (Fred and Pam)
- Suggestion regarding updated state of the building report (Pam and Fred)
- Review public witness policy in anticipation of a request (Pam)

8:50-9:00

Check-out - Did we abide by our covenant?

Upcoming

Next Board Meeting – March 14, 2024

Reading for March Meeting - ?

Leads Worship and Officiates Rites of Passage

Our January worship services focused on Liberating Love – the central value in the proposed Article II revision. We listened to a recording of MLK in a service exploring his ideas around Love and Power, dug into the language in the proposed bylaw change during another service, and looked back at our Universalist heritage and the call of Universal Love. Our theme in February moves on to the values Justice and Equity, and guest speakers Kimberley Homer and Dave Roberts gave compelling reflections on their experience of getting proximate to folks.

Provides Pastoral Care and Presence

In addition to meeting with the Surviving Spouses group, I've had pastoral meetings in the office, at health care facilities, and in people's homes.

Encourages Spiritual Development for Self and Others

The worship team decided to offer weekly Zoom meetings using materials that are part of the 30 Days of Love (between MLK Day and Valentine's Day). The conversations have been rich but not very well attended (I had to cancel the one this week due to another meeting and no one offering to facilitate). I've started meeting with one of the Soul Matters small groups because their facilitator had to step back. It was a great pleasure to be in a group again.

Witnesses to Social Justice in the Public Square

I was one of the table facilitators for the Dialogue on Race winter summit and was glad to see many folks from UUC in attendance. Our focus was on disparities in education and policing. I continue to meet with the Jim Crow/White Privilege issue group of the Dialogue on Race, as well as working with the Religious Affairs Committee of the local chapter of the NAACP.

I'm hopeful that our services on Justice and Equity will help along an effort of individuals in the congregation who would like UUC to make a public witness statement about preserving democracy. The service on February 18th will focus on this issue and include opportunities for congregants to discuss it. Please read the [public witness policy](#) in the board folder in preparation for their request.

Leads Administration

I made recommendations on staff compensation to the Finance Committee, using the [UUA Recommended Salary Ranges for our Geo Index](#). We are in between Size B and Size C, so I made adjustments (10% up from B) to reflect that.

I've enlisted three new members of the Safety Committee and will be calling a meeting soon to consider security cameras and discuss other safety issues (the need for a fire drill and active shooter plan). Paula Markham has asked if we could do an AED (automated external defibrillator) training here in conjunction with Shadow Lake Village. If we have 35 participants, we can get a grant toward getting a free AED. We hope to schedule the training sometime in March.

As reported at our January meeting, we received a proposal for expanding the playground fencing that was higher than expected. Rachel Craine is currently meeting with folks to get new bids. She is also working on getting new volunteers for the Playground Committee.

The Communications Committee has asked people to send in ideas for a new t-shirt design. Please send in your ideas (drawings or written descriptions) to administrator@uucnrv.org

The Personnel Committee is meeting this week to work on the Administrator Job Description. The members of the last Administrator Search Committee (Jim Flowers, Kristine Reid, and Jane Mahone) have all agreed to serve on a new search committee. I requested a salary of \$45,000 and \$6,000 toward UUA Health Insurance (80% of the Bronze level) for a full-time administrator. **I would like the board to approve that amount so that we can begin advertising for the position.**

I've surveyed possible members of the AV/IT task force, asking for input on current equipment and systems and their availability to serve on or consult with the committee. Rachel Craine, Liz Craine, Lucas Machi, Rich Gandour, and myself will be on the committee, with Chris Eagan, Ericka Kelly, Arthur Snoke, and Joe Parrish consulting. I'll be sending out the results of the survey and calling a meeting in the next week.

The Committee on Ministries has begun Feedback Groups on the Grounds Ministry with our first session on February 4th. [Please sign up](#) to participate in one of the Feedback Groups if you haven't yet.

I'm convening the Grounds Committee because they do not currently have a leader. I'm also recruiting someone to be the "lead" of the Social Justice Team, so that we can pull together the four social justice groups if we decide to work as a congregation on preserving democracy.

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

I attended the Meadville Lombard Spring Convocation and Worship. The speaker was Andrew Whitehead, who presented on The Ongoing Threat of Christian Nationalism to Democracy.

I continue to meet with the Blacksburg Ministerial Association. Coincidentally, we will be talking about how we as clergy might respond to threats to democracy at our next meeting.

I also meet monthly with UU religious professionals. We had to meet over Zoom in January due to inclement weather, but I hope to attend in person in Waynesboro this month.

I hope to attend the SEUUMA Spring Retreat at the Mountain the first week of April.

Anna Tulou will complete her internship and graduate from seminary this spring. We have begun talking about her ordination, which I hope will happen before I begin my sabbatical.

Time away from Blacksburg and UUC

February 19th – 20th Charlottesville/Waynesboro for Blue Ridge Cluster meeting

April 1st – 4th The Mountain for SEUUMA Spring Retreat

June – August Sabbatical (contingent on our having hired and trained an administrator by then)

Administrator's Report to the Board February 2024

Stewardship Update: I'll be working this month to get the stewardship post card ready for our kickoff the beginning of March

Tax Letters and Pledge Balances: 2023 Tax letters went out at the end of January.

Communications: Communications is running a campaign to get ideas for a new t-shirt.

UUA Certification: With Help from Pam and Wayne, the UUA congregation certification was completed at the end of January.

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

DLFD Report to the Board – February 2024

Children and Youth Programs:

- **Registration Numbers:** Currently 61 families and 107 children have registered for 132 activity/positions in the 2023-24 year.
- **Programming:**
 - Children's RE is going well. Average attendance for the year so far is about 27 kids/Sunday, up from 24 for the same time last year (and 15 from the 2021-2 year—coming back from pandemic)
 - YRUU—had a successful coffee house (raised \$450 and lots of fun!) They will be doing an escape room this month, as well as planning for the Mountain Con (March 22-24)
 - MSYG will be making blankets for Project Linus this month.

Adult Programming:

- Building Bridges for Adults—Begins the study of Christianity this month, with Courtney Roberts agreeing to facilitate. Visits in February will include St. Mary's Catholic Church and Blacksburg Presbyterian Church.
- OWL for older adults has been well attended, with 14 at the last meeting.
- Parent Covenant Group—will continue to meet on 3rd Fridays this year.
- Sunday Circle: 7 people attended the Jan. 21 Sunday Circle (at 11:30)—SUUSI and 11 people attended the Feb. 4 (8:30) Geopolitical Cartoons.
- Cynthia Luke's "Getting your ducks in a row" class was very successful, with about 30 total participants.

Other DLFD Activities:

- The LFD committee met in January to check in on how this year is going and start planning for next year. They will help select lessons for the summer RE program and for next year's 2-3 grade curriculum. We also discussed curriculum options for middle school next year, with a goal of engagement, since it is a hard age to keep.
- Working on recruiting for a new playground committee, library committee, and a new YRUU advisor.

Important Dates for RE:

May 12—YRUU Bridging Service

May 19—Teacher appreciation/ice cream social

May 26—no RE

June 2-Aug 4—Summer RE

Aug. 11—No RE

(Aug 13—MCPS starts)

Aug. 18—RE starts for 2024-5 year