

UUC Board Meeting Minutes November 14, 2024

***In attendance:** Laura Robinson, Wayne Neu, Margo Walter, Joe Cooley, Chris Long, Cassy Kost, Beth McClellan, Rachel Craine, Rev. Pam Philips*

Chalice Lighting, Reading, and Check-in

- Laura called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm, and Margo offered a reading.

- Laura offered a slight change to agenda, to have Liz Craine speak first in the member forum. Cassy moved to accept the November agenda with the change, and Chris seconded. The agenda was approved unanimously.

Member Forum

- Liz Craine provided a State of the Building (Nov. 2024) document for the Board.
 - Completed items: 1) exterior painting; 2) replacement of mini-split in Nursery and installation of mini-split in Library; 3) parking lot lights working again and pole lights converted to LED; 4) proposals solicited for resealing and restriping parking lot (one received thus far).
 - Upcoming needs: resealing parking lot (fill in cracks, striping), also replacing wooden curb stops; fire sprinkler tests; replace water heater upstairs (31 years old); replace telephone system, also fire alarm line; replace one fridge in kitchen; landscape lighting by front door.
 - Items of concern:
 1. Replacing halogen lights over dais with LEDs (not priority in winter, but summer is critical due to heat).
 2. HVAC units: all except new mini-splits are 17+ years old (typical lifespan is 14-18 years). Discussed desire to move away from fossil fuels (not gas pack), there are new and more efficient technologies (e.g., new Mitsubishi 5-ton heat pumps). A possibility: when one of ours dies we could replace it with a new Mitsubishi heat pump to try it out.
 - A discussion ensued about which items (upcoming) are most important now. Lighting is a safety issue that should be addressed ASAP. We have enough in the budget to do fire sprinkler, replace fridge, and lighting. Parking lot will be done in spring, but we should be thinking ahead and getting estimates. HVAC – we'll wait until something dies. Water heater will wait.
 - Items to consider for future: security cameras, add shower downstairs, more energy efficiency, parking lot lighting – solar light trial. Also possibly an elevator (costly – presently ~\$54,000).

- Rachel shared a very sweet letter from the children to the Board. They have some interesting ideas for improving the playground, including a water park and ice-skating rink! Other suggestions are much more practical, including a jungle gym.

- Noted the UUC Defending Democracy report submitted by Jim Bohland, followed with a brief discussion about what's next.

Approve Consent Agenda

- Reports included the following:
 - Minister's Report
 - Administrator's Report
 - Director of Lifespan Faith Development's (DLFD) Report
 - Previous Meeting Minutes
- Beth moved to approve the consent agenda; Margo seconded. The consent agenda was approved unanimously.
- Wayne: Treasurers Report:
 - Chart of net income by fiscal year: discussed history of how we got where we are today (note that Quickbooks only goes back to 2017). Two spikes in 2021 & 22 (PPE loan, then very good pledge year), now we're back to normal or slightly positive state.
 - Update on undesignated funds (provided graph for 2016-2024): the amount has been up and down with a big rise 2021-22. Since then has been basically stable; hasn't been growing a lot lately, but this is not unexpected.
 - Question: what are undesignated funds? Answer: money that we don't have earmarked for a particular purpose. Expenses have been growing more than income in general. Facilities/maintenance needs (esp. HVAC) will require large outlays. At present we have the money, but the obligations will take most of it. But we're not in dire straits!

Old Business

- Updates on the auction (Chris):
 - Net income \$27,000, so far we have collected \$22,500. Auction committee is losing some folks for the future. Chris will be stepping down as chair and may be replaced by three members as co-chairs, with one serving as the "face" of the committee. Next year we'll probably aim to make around \$20,000.
- Update on assistance for those affected by hurricane (Rev. Pam):
 - UUA hasn't cut the proposed \$3,000 check yet. So far we haven't identified a recipient. Should we just send it to Asheville and let them decide? Everyone agreed with this idea; no further discussion.
- Grounds Ministry: Greg Evanylo made a request for Board approval that he donate to UUC, from which he could reimburse himself for money spent on supplies for grounds maintenance (any such donation must be approved by board):
 - Discussion: The best way to do this is to have grounds committee put it in the budget (he shouldn't have to use his own money). We need to follow current policy – submit for reimbursement from grounds budget, which is already approved.
 - Brings up the need to review grounds budget, possibly increase it next year?
 - We must deny the request in order to enforce the current policy, while at the same time being very grateful for Greg's service to the Grounds Ministry and willingness to go beyond the call of duty. Laura moved that we do this and she will communicate with Greg. Cassy seconded, and the motion passed.

- Deteriorating wooden fence in parking lot: Jim Flower's has asked that the Board decide whether to remove or repair it.
 - Discussion: Is it unsafe? How bad is the damage? It was decided that we need more information on the state of the fence and its usefulness. We will request more information; the issue was tabled until such time.
- Grounds Ministry: need for new leadership and reorganization (see Jim Flowers' email – he needs to step down).
 - Discussion: Last grounds workday was very successful. Winter is down-time to be thinking through this. Ideas for moving forward were discussed.
- Accessibility: Joe will have a report at the Board's next meeting.
- Safety Committee: Rev. Pam offered that the committee (now named "Safer Congregation Committee") is meeting next week.

New Business

- Endowment Fund Committee – Bill Baker is stepping down as Chair after many years of service.
 - Currently, Bill and Jim Bohland are the only remaining committee members. The main role of the committee is to make the endowment visible to the congregation.
 - Discussion: We should put an announcement in the December newsletter, asking if anyone is interested in serving or nominating. The Board will need to nominate someone.
 - Bill's letter apprised us of an upcoming Zoom webinar for the quarterly meeting of the UUA Investment Committee. Would anyone attend? Wayne noted that is generally just informational and recordings are available; therefore there is no immediate need to attend.
 - The Board will write a letter of appreciation to Bill for starting and serving on the committee.
- Goals of the Board for the remainder of this year (through June)? (Laura)
 - What goals do we want to prioritize? Laura provided a list of possibilities.
 - Discussion, especially concerning leadership development needs.
 - We should have a vision for where we want to put our money and time when we create the budget in the spring.
 - Comment: we spend a good deal of time discussing grounds and the building, not so much on programs. In general the programs are doing great, just don't get as much of our attention.
- Board calendar (Laura):
 - Someone to write newsletter article of the December newsletter (due Nov. 21)? Cassy volunteered. Chris will do one for the February issue; Joe after that.
 - Christmas parade? Will children be walking? More adults should walk with them. Rachel noted that it's a smaller group this year, so they will likely just be watching. Perhaps the July 4th parade?
 - We need to be planning for the next Isabel Berney award.

- Additional motion and vote by email on 11/22/24:
 - Motion to approve all donations from the UUC Craft Sale, upcoming in December, be designated for the playground upgrade, and to create a TRNA for this. Motion was made by Wayne, seconded by Laura.
 - Note: artists donate 10% (or more) of what they earn to UUC.
 - The motion was shared by email and passed.

Check-out - Did we abide by our covenant? Yes

Upcoming

Next Board Meeting – Dec. 12, 2024

Reading for next meeting? Chris

Meeting adjourned at 8:56.

UUC Board Meeting Agenda
November 14, 2024
Location: UUC, Blacksburg, VA

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, recognizing experiences and perspectives from all.

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 PM - 7:20 PM

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

7:20 PM - 7:30 PM

- Member Forum
 - Letter
 - Report from UUC Defending Democracy
- "State of the Building Report 2024" (Liz Craine)

7:35 PM - 7:45 PM

- Approve Consent Agenda
 - Minister's Report
 - Administrator's Report
 - Director of Lifespan Faith Development's (DLFD) Report
 - Previous Meeting Minutes
- Treasurer's Report (Wayne Neu)

7:45 PM - 8:20 PM

- Old Business
 - Auction outcome – how did we do? (Chris Long)
 - Update on assistance for people impacted by Hurricane Helene (Rev. Pam)
 - Update on grounds
 - Request by Greg Evanylo: May he donate for maintenance of grounds? See email dated Oct. 29.
 - Fence: repair or remove?
 - Future leadership?
 - Should there be a discussion at the 2025 annual meeting about grounds?
 - Any updates about accessibility? (Joe)
 - Any updates from safety committee (Rev. Pam)

8:20 PM - 8:50 PM

- New Business
 - Endowment Fund Committee
 - Bill Baker retiring as Chair of Endowment Fund
 - Who will attend UUA's Endowment Webinar on 11/19 from 2 PM - 3 PM?

November 2024 Minister's Report to the Board
Submitted by Rev. Pam Philips

Leads Worship and Officiates Rites of Passage

We explored the theme of Living Love through the Practice of Deep Listening in October. Members of the Lay Pastoral Care Ministry – Jane Mahone and Sally Bohland – participated in a service exploring the role of listening in pastoral care, including a poem written by former LPCM member Linda Pfeiffer. We also explored listening to ourselves (the still small voice) and listening to people whose ideas we abhor. November brings the theme of Living Love through the Practice of Repair. Our first service explored the Jewish concept of tikkun olam – repair of the world -- and included special music by Jared and a candle lighting ritual in anticipation of the election. The service on November 10th will address the outcome of the election. I will have preached seven weeks in a row since my return from sabbatical by next Sunday, when we will welcome Dr. Brandy Faulkner to the pulpit.

I officiated at the wedding of Jean Elliott and Sharon Crane at Claytor Lake and will officiate at Gary Wamsley's memorial service on December 7th at UUC.

Provides Pastoral Care and Presence

We trained two new members of the Lay Pastoral Care Ministry—Earle Irwin and Pat Traynor --who applied in response to the service we did that explained the program. We also said goodbye to Daniel Vogler, who is stepping off the team.

I met with congregants in their homes, my office, and on the grounds. I also opened up the sanctuary on the day after the election. Several people came to talk, listen, and light candles.

Encourages Spiritual Development for Self and Others

Several Soul Matters groups are meeting. The Conversations on Our Faith and Meditation groups meet weekly. The Interfaith Book Discussion group continues to meet every few weeks. We're starting a new book – *The Battle for God* by Karen Armstrong – on November 24th at the Blacksburg Jewish Community Center – all are welcome to attend.

Witnesses to Social Justice in the Public Square

Rachel Craine and I formed a UUC team for the NAMI walk, raising \$451.21(our goal was \$500). Our local NAMI affiliate grew out of the UUC Mental Health Justice Ministry and includes several UUC members.

Thanks to all the congregants who worked so hard to get out the vote for this year's election – especially Voting Rights members Sara Dalton, Carolyn Rude, and Anna Vijayan. I'm also aware that many members of UUC worked the polls – both inside for the over 14-hour shifts and outside greeting voters – in addition to canvassing for their candidates.

If you haven't yet read it, please see Jim Bohland's [report to the board](#) on the progress of Defending Democracy. Given the outcome of the election, it is likely that all of our social justice groups will be busy in the coming year.

We will be holding a vigil on the annual **Transgender Day of Remembrance on November 20th at 7:00** in the sanctuary. A new group for transgender youth and their families will be organizing the event. I attended the fall meeting of the [Inclusion Council](#).

Leads Administration

We've had a successful transition from our former administrator to our new one over the past month. Di Ross did an excellent job completing financial tasks, with the help of treasurer Wayne Neu, and trained Jenny Fairchild, using documentation Di created. Jenny is now doing all the financial tasks and will be adding more of the tasks that I've been doing (sending out email announcements, updating the website, putting together the announcements slideshow, communicating with renters, posting on social media). I've learned quite a bit more about the administrator's role, and I hope that will help me be a better supervisor. We're introducing Jenny to the congregation during the service on Sunday, the 10th.

I spoke with Ella Kromin to explain the board's decision not to renew her contract, which she understood and expected. I've met with members and former members of the choir to discuss the decision and brainstorm possible paths moving forward. I've also met with Jared Gibbs to discuss how we might reinvigorate the music ministry. He is working on a survey for congregants who are interested in participating in music in a variety of ways. The Committee on Ministries has planned Listening Circles to give the entire congregation an opportunity to provide feedback on their experience of music at UUC and share their hopes for the future. I encourage members of the board to [sign up and attend one of these hybrid meetings](#). Seven people have already signed up.

The Connections Committee, in addition to organizing greeters, has been staffing a table after the Sunday service to provide information to newcomers. They held a Newcomers Orientation on Saturday, November 9th which 12 people attended. Jill Kiecolt has gotten Circle Suppers off the ground, with two circles already formed and another set to begin in November. Seth Leonard and Amanda Morgan are taking the lead on organizing a Thanksgiving dinner at UUC – you can [sign up here](#).

I met with the Safety Committee, which would like to be renamed the Safer Congregations Committee. Chair Lauren Oliver has made good use of the UUA Safer Congregations online materials and will be writing up a description to send to the board for inclusion in our policy manual.

Congratulations to the Grounds Ministry, and especially the organizers of a very successful Grounds Work Day on November 2nd (27 people came to work) – Susan Baker and Amanda Morgan.

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

I will be attending the Southeast UU Ministers Association retreat at The Mountain this week (with Good Samaritan Hospice intern chaplain Ellen Plummer), returning Thursday afternoon in time for the board meeting.

I met with a Starr King School for the Ministry student to discuss the role of deep listening in parish ministry.

Time away from Blacksburg

November 11-14 – The Mountain (SEUUMA) – I'll be back in time for the board meeting!
November 28th – Charlottesville for Thanksgiving

- Our goals a Board: What do we want to accomplish by June 2025? (Laura)
- Quick review of upcoming things on our calendar. (Laura)
 - Who would like to write article for our next newsletter and website?
 - Blacksburg holiday parade?

8:50 PM - 9:00 PM

- Check-out - Did we abide by our covenant?

Upcoming

- Next Board Meeting – December 12
- Reading for next meeting?

Administrator's Report to the Board

November 2024

New Administrator Update:

Di Ross and Rev. Pam have been training our new administrator, me, Jenny Fairchild. I worked on an hourly basis this month to begin training and to complete the more critical financial duties needed for our bookkeeping. I was introduced in worship on 11/10/24. My first day as a full-time employee was 11/12/2024.

Many thanks to Di Ross, Rev. Pam, and Rachel Craine. Each took on additional responsibilities during the administrator transition period, ensuring that operations continue to run smoothly. We are in a good place in terms of weekly tasks, including mass communications, financials, and rentals. The next big areas to tackle are website updates and other ongoing/monthly/yearly administrative tasks.

I am thrilled to be a part of the UUC community. I look forward to jumping right in (and providing a more fulsome board report in the future!) – Jenny

DLFD Report to the Board –November, 2024

Children and Youth Programs:

- **Registration Numbers:** Registration has held steady with 48 families and 78 children registered for 107 activity positions. Attendance continues to be high except in our youngest classes.

- **Programming:**
 - Scary to Be Hungry was a huge success, bringing in over \$3338 in food and cash donations, with 9 families participating. Crosby Houston was AMAZING helping out at the food pantry!
 - The Mitten Tree is set up in the lower lobby, and collection will continue through the month of November for the Montgomery County Christmas Store.
 - YRUU has been having a food drive competition all month–Ryan Bagchi brought in the most food (40 items out of a total of 125!)
 - MSYG met for a “Friendsgiving” last week and made holiday gifts for about 40 of our older congregants in Warm Hearth and Blacksburg. They will be delivered by Avi Vijayan and Delaney Rountree sometime after Thanksgiving weekend.
 - The 2nd and 3rd grade class made holiday cards for 16 older congregants who live outside Blacksburg, and those will be mailed out in December.
 - OWL for grades 4-5 wraps up next week. We have had 10 very active participants. Thanks to Kendra, Jane K-B and Molly Lazar for teaching this class!
 - The Coming of Age class finished the first section of their curriculum, on Belonging, and celebrated with an “Escape the Crate” ghost hunt adventure. They are now beginning the second part of their curriculum, “Becoming.” This is our first time doing COA this way, with the Soul Matters curriculum, and I think it is going very well. I’m excited to see what their COA service in May will look like!

Adult Programming:

- Sunday Circles in October (Tyranny of the Minority, Carolyn Rude and Jamie McReynolds) and November (Defending Democracy, Jim Bohland) were both well attended, with about 16 people in person and on zoom.
- Parent Covenant Group canceled for October (families were too busy) but will be held this Friday with at least 5 families planning to attend
- The first Date with Death Club was held on October 21, with 18 people in attendance. We have over 30 registered now, though because each class stands alone I expect 20 or so to be the average.

- The all-ages game night in October was very lightly attended—6 people/2 families. We had a lot of fun, though. I am hoping for a bigger turn out for the next one, on Saturday, November 23. Please consider coming out to support this!

Other DLFD Activites:

- Though technically not part of my hours, I have been working with community members to form PRYDE (Pride, Resilience, Youth, Diversity and Empowerment,) a group for LGBTQ+ youth and families. They are meeting here twice a month for socializing, support, education and advocacy. The group is helping plan a Transgender Day of Remembrance Vigil for November 20th.
- The playground committee has ordered a few items for the playground which will be installed this month. They moved a dump truck worth of mulch this past weekend, and will be assembling new climbers, a swing, and a balance slackline next week. It was great to see so many volunteers helping out!
- I will be going to NRCC on Thursday, Nov. 14 to attend the “Microaggressions and Allyship: Cultural Competency and Awareness Workshop” with Dr. Bryant Marks of the National Training Institute on Race Equity.
- We collected 419 cans of pasta for the food pantry (exceeding our goal of 400!) These will be used in their holiday bag program for kids who need it over school breaks.
- I have finally gotten my hours back in balance! I will be taking 2 vacation days around Thanksgiving, and plan to be off Nov. 28-Dec. 1



Pictures: Derek with 2nd and 3rd graders dismantling old playground equipment and lots of pasta