

**First Unitarian Church of St. Louis Policy Board Meeting
Monday, September 8, 2025, 6:30–8:00 pm via Zoom
Minutes (draft)**

President Kathy Wilke called the meeting to order at 6:31 pm.

Others in attendance: Chris Kocher, Vice President; Margaret Weck, Treasurer; Sidney Watson, Secretary; Carl Bassi, Mike Bray, Deborah Cavanaugh Grant, Betty Neill, Chris Peterson, Lisa Ross, Trustees

Absent: no one

Church Council: Cathy Rauch

Staff: Lynn Hunt, Rev. Kim Mason

Opening Words and Chalice Lighting by Carl Bassi

Board Covenant read by Chris Peterson

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1cBWTB1BODfNv4Xks6vuDCH0RmnF5brnV/edit?usp=drive_link&ouid=105183447557092303738&rtpof=true&sd=true

The Process Observer is Lisa Ross

For our check-in, we shared our favorite squash.

Consent Agenda

- Minutes from July 14, 2025 Board meeting (requires a vote to approve)
- Report of the Minister-Rev. Kim Mason
- Report of the Minister of Congregational Life - Rev. Sabrina Trupia
- Report of the Administration - Lynn Hunt
- Report from the President - Kathy Wilke
- Church Council Notes - Fran Hoffman
- Report of the Budget – Kathy Wilke
- Statement of Activity July 1-August 31, 2025, from the Treasurer - Margaret Weck
- List of Designated Collections for 2025-2026

Motion to approve the July 14, 2025, Board minutes. Lisa moved. Betty seconded. Motion passed.

Updates & Board Insights

- Picking Dates

Rev Kim is out of town on the regular scheduled dates for the October and November Board meetings. We agreed to switch the dates for those meetings to Sunday, October 12, and Monday, November 17.

We picked January 17 for the mid-Winter Meeting.

- **Board Basics Training**

We discussed UU Board Basics Training, Session 3

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2rS55gqpG48&t=1s>), which we watched before the meeting.

- Our process for making decisions is to strive for consensus, taking votes when necessary as a matter of law or for the record.
- We thought the suggestion of discussing a Big Question over several months, allowing our thinking to evolve without a specific outcome, was interesting and something worth considering.
- We have a Process Observer for each meeting, but we don't have a robust description for that role. The Process Observer serves as a time keeper and also as a reminder that we should make room for everyone to participate in a respectful conversation.
- We don't have a policy for how to reconcile a situation where a Board member doesn't feel like there is room for them in the conversation and is reluctant to come forward to say so.
 - We suggested that we might remind members that they may add agenda items for items they wish to discuss.
 - In addition to asking people if they are ready to vote, we can first ask if everyone has had a chance to speak before we call for a vote.
- We raised two questions about communication that we want to work on and discuss more:
 - One, are we doing a good job of making sure the congregation knows what is going on with the Board? Two, are there ways for people to raise issues with the Board? How can we facilitate more communication about ideas arising from members?
 - A problem we identified is that members often don't know whom to contact with a question, concern, or idea. As one step to create more transparency, we decided to make a bulletin board that includes photos, names, and other information about Board and Council members. We hope this will raise awareness about the roles and responsibilities of church leadership. Kim is taking the lead to create the bulletin board. Everyone needs to send Kim a photo to use on the new board.

We will circle back to these issues and this discussion at a later date.

New Business

- **CDF Freedom School summer session possibility**

Lisa Ross and Cathy Rauch presented a proposal for First U to become a site for a Children's Defense Fund Freedom School summer session. The CDF Freedom Schools® program has its

origins in the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project of 1964, which brought college students from around the country to Mississippi to secure justice and voting rights for Black citizens. These early Freedom Schools aimed to keep Black children and youth safe and provide them with rich educational experiences that were not offered in Mississippi's public schools.

CDF opened the first two CDF Freedom Schools sites in 1995 to address the needs of children who lacked access to high-quality literacy programs during the summer. Today's CDF Freedom Schools is designed to foster a love of learning, improve reading and language skills, build community, empower "scholars" (as the students are called), strengthen families, connect children to needed medical and social services, and develop social action skills. All Freedom Schools are offered at no cost to the families they serve.

Carrie Henderson, the local director of CDF Freedom Schools, has approached First U to become a site for a new Freedom School. CDF Freedom Schools presently operates 6-week summer programs at four sites in the St. Louis area, mainly in the county. CDF Freedom Schools wants to expand in the St. Louis area, especially in the City.

Host sites for CDF Freedom Schools provide the facilities for the summer school. Freedom Schools provide the staff, curriculum, books, supplies, and do the teaching, although they also offer numerous opportunities for volunteers.

Lisa and Cathy are learning more about the process to become a host, including the costs. Typically, the host pays a \$10,000 site fee to help cover the \$285 per child cost of the summer school. In addition, First U will likely incur about \$6,000 in air conditioning and other facilities costs to host a 6-week summer school. Lisa and Cathy have already identified a potential source of grant funding to cover these costs. However, there are lots of details to be figured out.

The consensus was that hosting a Freedom School summer session aligns with our mission and vision. Board members agreed that we are in favor of moving forward with the proposal to become a site for a Freedom School summer session, asking the Church Council to explore how we can make this happen and sustain it without using Church funds.

Old business

- Betty reported that the Personnel Committee is updating staff job descriptions and plans to complete the process before staff reviews.
- Treasurer Margaret reported that the Finance is working to consolidate some line-items in the budget with advice and help from Margaret.
- We are still looking for a Board member to serve as liaison to the Nominating Committee.

Wrap up

Here's what we need to do before the next meeting:

- Send Kim a photo

- Cathy and Lisa will take the Freedom School idea to the Council

Observations from Process Observer

Lisa said, “We did well. We covered a lot. People had an opportunity to speak and were respectful. We had a good discussion of the Board Basics training.”

The meeting adjourned at 8:03 pm.

The next Board meeting is scheduled for Sunday, October 12, 2025, after church service and in person.

Respectfully submitted,
Sidney Watson
Secretary