

**First Unitarian Church of St. Louis Policy Board Meeting
Sunday, October 11, 2025, 11:30-1:00 pm, in person
Minutes**

President Kathy Wilke called the meeting to order at 11:46 am.

Others in attendance: Chris Kocher (online), 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: Erin Milligan, Fran Hoffman, and Kathy Wire attended the discussion of Transgender Inclusion in Congregations.

Staff: Lynn Hunt, Rev. Kim Mason

Opening Words and Chalice Lighting by Lisa Ross

Board Covenant read by Margaret Weck,

We covenant to respect and care for each other, the congregation and ourselves.

We promise to demonstrate leadership and commitment to the congregation by our example.

We promise to support our church ministers and staff so that their efforts can be most productive.

We promise to try to discover what is best for our church as a whole, not what may be best for us or a small group of the congregation.

The Process Observer is Chris Peterson.

Kathy welcomed the Council Members who joined us for the discussion of Transgender Inclusion in Congregations.

Discussion of Transgender Inclusion in Congregations

Transgender Inclusion in Congregations is a six-session online course focused on culture shift and radical welcome taught by the Transforming Hearts Collective, Rev. Mykal Slack, and Zr. Alex Kapitan. This month, Board and Council members viewed Session 1: Introduction to Beloved Community: Welcome as a Spiritual Practice. We discussed and reflected on two of the three questions posed at the end of Session 1.

- Call to mind an experience of profound welcome and belonging. Consider: What did it feel like in your body? What impact did it have on you? How did the space change because you were there?
- What is appealing or exciting about the idea of Beloved Community as it is discussed in this session, and practicing it in your congregation? What do you think gets in the way of Beloved Community in your congregation?

We will reflect on our own, on the third question raised by the end of the session: Think

about a time when compassionate communication (inviting awareness by taking a breath; practicing “THINK” – is my response thoughtful, honest, inspirational, necessary, and kind) would have been helpful or meaningful.

Consent Agenda

- Minutes from 9/8/25 Board meeting
- 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, Cathy Rauch
- Treasurer’s Report and July-October Statement of Activity, Margaret Weck

Motion to approve the September 8, 2025, Minutes. Betty moved. Chris seconded. Motion passed.

Updates & Board Insights

- Feedback on the startup workshop for our new Minister of Congregational Life, Rev. Sabrina Trupia

Board members agreed that the startup workshop, which prepared the congregation for Rev. Trupia’s new ministry focused on religious education and membership, was awesome and necessary, and that Rev. Barb Greve was the perfect facilitator. Two suggestions for improvement were to allow more time for anonymous questions during the Beyond Categorical Thinking discussion and to allow Rev. Sabrina more time to ask what we can do for her.

- Evolving traditions

Rev. Kim informed the Board that a couple of holiday traditions are evolving.

Cornbread Communion, November 23 – This year, we are asking everyone to bring a bread that reflects their family’s tradition to share during the communion. It could be muffins, cornbread, strudel, or whatever else. In recent years, the children met at the church the Saturday before Cornbread Communion to bake the bread, but since our children’s schedules are pretty full, it has become too difficult to coordinate a group baking session.

Hanging of the Greens, first Friday in December – After a break, Sue Herzberg is leading a team to reimagine this church-wide event that will probably include a tree, carols, and decorating the church. Volunteers are welcome. See the e-news for more details.

- UUA No Kings activity

The UUA is a national co-sponsor of the No Kings Mobilization effort. Multiple events are scheduled in the St. Louis area. The Social Justice Committee is organizing people to attend the downtown St. Louis event. Rev. Kim will lead the group. Check the e-news for details on where to gather.

- Land Acknowledgement/Land Displacement Project

The Social Justice Committee received a request from the Worship Committee to develop a land acknowledgement. This led to inviting speaker Galen Gritts to speak about Missouri, Native Land: Tales from the Other Side on September 21. Many indigenous cultures don't have a concept of private property, which can make land acknowledgements feel culturally disconnected. We are therefore considering a statement about land displacement.

Member Chris Tighe, in consultation with Galen Gritts, has drafted a statement on land displacement. The Social Justice Committee plans to present the draft for discussion at the Midwinter Meeting and then seek approval of the final version through a vote at the May 2026 Congregational meeting.

New Business

- Proposal from Personnel Committee to make Juneteenth a paid staff holiday

Betty Neill presented a proposal from the Personnel Committee to make Juneteenth (June 19th) a paid staff holiday. Michael "Mo" Hurst, our AV Technician/Stream Producer, submitted the following request to the committee:

As you know, Juneteenth commemorates the emancipation of enslaved African Americans in the United States. It marks the date in 1965 when Union troops arrived in Galveston, Texas to enforce the Emancipation Proclamation, finally freeing the enslaved people of the city more than two years after it was issued. In 2021, Juneteenth was recognized as a federal holiday, reflecting its national importance as a day of remembrance, reflection, and celebration of freedom.

Adding Juneteenth to our church's holiday calendar aligns with our Unitarian Universalist values of justice, equity, and the inherent worth and dignity of every person. It provides an opportunity for our staff and community to honor this history and reaffirm our commitment to these principles.

I propose that Juneteenth be observed as a paid holiday for church staff beginning in the upcoming year.

Motion to make Juneteenth a staff holiday. Lisa moved. Margaret seconded. Motion passed.

- Margaret Weck- November 15 Fund Raiser for Building Fund

Treasurer Margaret Weck announced that we are planning a fundraiser to replenish the building fund after we had to withdraw large amounts to cover tornado damage to the building and grounds. The theme is "Build It and They Will Come." There will be lots of baseball-themed activities, a short live auction, trivia contests, and raffles. It's going to be a fun event. There will also be opportunities to make multi-year pledges to support the building fund. See the e-news for details.

- **Member Certification**

Lynn Hunt explained that every two years, we contact members who have not pledged to confirm whether they want to keep their membership. Letters will be sent out soon, so we will have accurate end-of-year numbers for our AAU certification to the UUA.

Old business

- Freedom School update

Lisa Ross informed us that we are moving forward to become a Freedom School site for summer 2026. Beyond Housing staff submitted the required paperwork for First U to become a site. The next step will happen at the Mission Free School Board's November meeting, where they will decide if they have enough funds to support the project. The Freedom School will be budget-neutral for the church.

Other business

We had some unhoused people camping behind the church. We contacted the Central West End housing team, and they helped these folks find accommodations.

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

- Watch Session 2, Transgender Inclusion for Congregations
- Sign up to be a greeter

Observations from Process Observer

Chris Peterson said starting with the Transgender discussion was helpful for community building. He also noted that being in person was very good. Everyone came prepared for the Transgender conversation, and the questions during the meeting were helpful. We managed our time well, considering how much we had to cover.

The meeting adjourned at 1:24.

The next Board meeting is scheduled for Monday, November 17, 2025, at 6:30 pm, in person and on Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,
Sidney Watson
Secretary