

First Unitarian Church of St. Louis Policy Board Meeting
Monday, May 11, 2026, 6:30-8:00 PM via Zoom
Minutes (draft 5-27-2026)

President Kathy Wilke called the meeting to order at 6:32 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

Members: Kathy Wire, Sue Herzberg, Judy Myers

Opening Words and Chalice Lighting by Chris Kocher, reading from Wendell Berry

For a **Check-in**, we shared nicknames we loved and hated from our childhoods.

Board Covenant Reading by Betty Neill

Member Sue Herzberg asked the Board to reconsider the \$15,000 one-time special payment to Augustine Underwood, whose position as Administrative Assistant is no longer needed. The \$15,000 is slightly more than one year's compensation and retirement contribution for the position. Sue suggested increasing the amount by \$5,000.

Member Judy Meyers raised questions and concerns about the new staffing structure approved by the Board in April 2026, which recommends transitioning to a choirmaster position after our current choir director's planned retirement in 2027. She also asked how future staffing plans would affect the Music Search Committee's search this summer for a pianist to begin in September 2026.

The **Policy Board went into Executive Session at 6:30 pm** to discuss personnel matters.

Executive Session ended at 7:40 pm.

Margaret Weck moved that we make a one-time special payment of \$20,000 to Augustine Underwood and forgive an outstanding loan to her son, Sloan Marion. Funds for this payment will come from the 2025-2026 general funds. This motion supersedes and replaces the motion passed on May 1, 2026. Seconded by Betty. Motion passed.

The Board affirms the importance of the music program. Last month, the Board adopted the Personnel Committee's recommendation to create one music staff position, a combined

musician/choir director role, to take effect when our choir director retires at the end of the 2026-2027 church year. We ask the Music Committee, as the members closest to the music, for their vision for how to sustain, advance, and staff the music program over the next two years and beyond, in light of the Personnel Committee's recommendation.

Chris Peterson is the process observer.

Consent Agenda

- Minutes from April 13, 2026 Policy Board meeting
- Minutes from the May 1, 2026 Special Policy 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

Motion to approve the April 13, 2026, minutes as corrected by Betty. Chris seconded. Motion passed.

Lisa moved to approve May 1, 2026, Special Meeting Minutes as corrected. Seconded by Chris. Motion passed.

Old Business

- Approval of the 2026-2027 Church Budget

Kathy Wire presented the draft 2026-2027 Budget for the Board's consideration. This year's pledge drive raised about \$440,000, all of which will go toward the 2026-2027 operating budget of approximately \$604,000.

Our operating budget is high for a UU congregation our size (190 members). We spend more than similarly sized UU congregations because we have more employees and an older, larger building that requires substantial upkeep. This year, we held a successful fundraiser that enabled us to establish a special account, separate from the operating budget, to support capital improvements to the building. At the last Board meeting, the Board adopted a 2-year plan recommended by the Personnel Committee to reduce staff.

We are not in financial trouble, but we are working to reduce our reliance on the endowment to fund operating expenses, so that endowment funds can be used for special projects, including social justice initiatives.

The budget contains a 2% increase in staff salaries.

Sidney moved to increase the salary for hourly employees to at least \$18.00 an hour, which will increase the budget by \$800. Betty seconded. Motion passed.

Betty Neill moved to approve a balanced operating budget of approximately \$604,000, including a 5% draw from the endowment fund. Motion by Betty Neill. Seconded by Lisa. Motion passes.

- Nominating Committee Slate for Board and Council officers

The Nominating Committee is finalizing the slate of candidates to present for a vote at the Annual Meeting.

New Business

- Annual Meeting Agenda and Rolls

We quickly reviewed the Annual Meeting Agenda provided in advance of the meeting. Chris Kocher will read the congregational covenant.

Chris Peterson, our Process Observer, noted that we “were keeping love at the center.”

Closing words from Rev. Kim

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 pm.

The next meeting is on Sunday, May 17, 2026, following the congregation’s Annual Meeting and the election of new Board members.

Respectfully submitted,
Sidney Watson
Secretary