

**First Unitarian Church of St. Louis**  
**Policy Board Meeting Minutes**  
**November 25, 2023 Virtual**

**President Steve Wilke called the meeting to order at 6:39 p.m.**

**Others in attendance:** Alison Lamothe, Vice President; Jeremy Colton, Treasurer; Sidney Watson, Secretary; Chris Kocher, Trustee to be updated

**Absent:** Rebecca (Becca) McBride, Trustee; Susan Lammert, Trustee

**Staff:** Rev. Kim Mason, Lynn Hunt

**Church Council:** Sherry Bassi

**Chalice Lighting:** Rev. Kim

**Opening Words:** Alison

**Reading of Board Covenant:** Chris

**Process Observer:** Chris

**Consent Agenda**

- Minutes of Previous Meeting
- Report of the Minister - Kim Mason
- Report of the Administration - Lynn Hunt
- Report of the Board President – Steve Wilke
- Church Council Notes – Sherri Bassi
- RE Report – Danielle Kozemczac
- Treasurers’ Report – Jeremy Colton

Alison moved to approve these documents, and Chris seconded. **The motion passed unanimously.**

**Changing the policy on part-time worker’s vacation**

The personnel committee recommended the following policy change for earned vacation time for part-time staff:

“All permanent part-time staff who regularly work at least 10 hours per week will receive paid vacation time in proportion to the hours they usually work according to the same schedule accorded to full-time staff, i.e., A part-time employee working 15 hours a week will receive two weeks of paid vacation at their standard time of 15 hours per week. No hourly employee will be paid more for vacation time than their average weekly earnings. Hourly employees who work on Sundays only will receive two paid Sundays off per year.”

Members agreed that this policy is an excellent idea reflecting our values to support our valued staff.

**Alison moved to approve the policy change recommended by the Personnel Committee, and Jeremy seconded. The motion passed unanimously.**

### **Member Certification Letters**

Member Certification Letters are an annual event. When a member has not made a contribution of record for two years and has not asked for a waiver or other consideration, we send them a letter asking if they would prefer to become a friend. If the member does not respond to the letter within two months, they switch them from member to friend. We do this annually in November because we want our membership records to be up-to-date when we report church membership to the UUA in January.

Records show that the following people should be sent a Member Certification letter: Gabe Enz, Kelly Jones, Rebecca Langrall, Jim Marks, Josephine Butler, Jeff Bewley, and Victoria Bonvento.

We noted how important it is to stay in touch and reach out to people we have not seen in a while. We also discussed whether any Board Members could contact these people personally, even as we move forward with the official Member Certification.

**Alison moved that we send Gabe Enz, Kelly Jones, Rebecca Langrall, Jim Marks, Josephine Butler, Jeff Bewley, and Victoria Bonvento Member Certification Letters. Chris seconded. The motion passed unanimously.**

### **Board committees update**

The Nominating Committee only has one member, Margaret Weck. We discussed members we might reach out to join the Committee. Chris will talk to some choir members.

### **Taking a Stand Committee, should we wait for next year?**

Last month, Sidney and Steve volunteered to form a committee to explore whether and how the church might create a policy on taking a stand on social justice issues. Sidney summarized the UUA's guide, *Taking Action as a Congregation, Guide to Congregational Resolutions & Social Justice Statements*, available at <https://www.uua.org/justice-programs/resolutions>. She stressed two points.

One, any process by which a congregation takes a stand on a social justice issue should be inclusive and nurture community. This does not mean that controversial issues should be avoided; it just means that they should be addressed thoroughly and thoughtfully. Space needs to be created so that if there is a minority in disagreement they still feel part of the community.

Two, don't confuse taking a congregational stand on an issue with creating social change. Sometimes, congregational resolutions are viewed as an end rather than a means to an end. Congregational resolutions are a tactic, not a goal. Examples of goals are changing a particular public policy, changing the position of an elected official on a given issue, or preventing or requiring a specific type of action.

The *Taking Action Guide* provides samples of two types of processes for taking a stand as a Congregation. Congregational resolutions require a vote of the congregation and typically take months, even a year or more of study and discussion. Congregational resolutions are most appropriate for resolutions that speak broadly to a social justice issue, like climate change or anti-racism. Social justice committee resolutions typically require a consensus or super-majority vote of one or more church committees. The public stance is on behalf of the committee rather than the congregation as a whole. Like a congregational resolution, a committee resolution needs to be inclusive but can provide a faster process for taking a public stance on specific issues, like endorsing legislation. Whether through congregational vote or committee action, public stances should be grounded in UU principles and values.

First U has no policy on taking a public stand through congregation or a committee resolution. The discussion focused on how First U might develop such processes. Board members noted that some issues, like the request to post a sign supporting the UAW strike, are urgent, non-controversial public stands that require quick action to be relevant. Rev. Kim pointed out that congregational resolutions are similar to UUA Statements of Conscious, requiring a three-year study and reflection process before a vote. Committee resolutions taking a public stand are similar to UUA Actions of Immediate Witness, which pertain to an issue that requires immediate action and are initiated by gathering enough signatures to make the proposal eligible for a vote at the next General Assembly.

With either type of resolution, board members felt that the congregation needs time to reflect on and discuss the processes that best fit our church. That reflection and discernment will need time and attention from members, committees, the church council, and the board. The Social Responsibility cluster is already engaged in labor-intensive work to design a church-wide social action project. We have committed ourselves as a church community to focus broadly on educating ourselves about the upcoming GA vote to amend Article II of the UUA bylaws. We just aren't sure now is the time to start another project.

The board agreed to continue discussing the issue of a process for First U to take a public stand, including whether we have clear policies on how individual members and committees can collect signatures and support for ballot initiatives, legislative proposals, and other immediate social action.

### **Information Updates**

- **Trunk or Treat?** Board members and staff who participated in area-wide UU Trunk or Treat were enthusiastic and hopeful that the event would continue and grow in future years.
- **UAW sign.** With the strike drawing to a close, the sign in support of the union workers is down.
- **Intern.** We have an intern job announcement posted on the UUA intern clearinghouse with a January 15 deadline. There's a lot of excitement about the possibility of an intern!
- **Hanging of the Greens.** Instead of a Hanging of the Greens event, Jane Hoekelman and her covenant group decorate the church for Christmas. Welcoming Congregations has their meeting on the First Sunday of December, and they may help decorate the tree.
- **George Grimm Howell** has been accepted into a preliminary fellowship pending the completion of his internship. He would like to be co-ordained by Columbia and First U, with

the event at First U in June 2024. The board enthusiastically agreed to recommend that the congregation vote at the mid-winter meeting to host George's ordination.

### **Continuing to learn about the proposed UUA Article II Revision**

So far, the board has focused on proposed changes to UUA Article II, Section C-2.2, that move from a statement of principles to a statement of values and covenant. This month, under Rev. Kim's leadership, the board focused on other proposed changes to Article II. We reviewed proposed Section C-2.1, the statement of purposes; proposed Section C-2.4, inclusion; proposed Section C-2.5, freedom of belief; and studied proposed Section C-2.3, inspirations. The current Article II, Section C-2.1 refers to six sources from which the living tradition draws. The proposed amendment uses the term "inspirations" and is more inclusive, saying, "We draw upon sacred, secular, and scientific understandings that help us make meaning and live into our values."

### **Please remember to sign up to be a Sunday morning greeter.**

Sunday morning greeters are drawn from the board and council. Please remember to sign up to be a greeter. We briefly discussed whether to enlarge the pool of potential greeters since we have shrunk the size of the board.

### **Volunteers to lead the next board meeting**

In December, Jeremy will give the Opening words, Alison will read the Board Covenant, and the Process Observer is TBD.

### **What needs to be done before the next board meeting?**

- Identify people to invite to join the nominating committee; choir members

### **The meeting adjourned at 8:13 p.m.**

This next Policy Board meeting is on December 11, 2023, at 6:30 p.m. on Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sidney Watson, Secretary