

**First Unitarian Church of St. Louis**  
**Policy Board Meeting Minutes**  
**December 11, 2023 Virtual**

**President Steve Wilke called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.**

**Others in attendance:** Alison Lamothe, Vice President; Sidney Watson, Secretary; Chris Kocher, Trustee; Susan Lammert, Trustee; Rebecca (Becca) McBride, Trustee

**Absent:** Jeremy Colton, Treasurer

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

**Church Council:** Sherry Bassi

**Chalice Lighting:** Rev. Kim

**Opening Words:** words by Jeremy, spoken by Steve

**Reading of Board Covenant:** Alison

**Process Observer:** Chris

**Consent Agenda**

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

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

**Report on a recent Reconciliation Process**

Rev. Kim recently mediated a reconciliation process between three members of the facilities cluster regarding decision-making processes within the cluster

According to our church By-laws Article 4, Section 3, Board Meetings are open to members and friends, except as determined by the Board to protect the confidentiality of any person or organization or as necessary for Church business (such as consideration of the purchase of realty). **Sidney moved to go into a closed session to protect confidentiality. Alison seconded. The motion passed unanimously.**

Following the discussion, **Alison moved to go back into open session, Sidney second. The motion passed unanimously.**

**Board committees update**

Rev. Kim attended the last meeting of the Personnel Committee. The Committee is updating the Personnel Manual, going chapter by chapter.

Sidney spoke briefly with Margaret Weck, and the Nominations Committee will seek new members after the holiday.

During the Midwinter Meeting, new board members are invited to talk briefly about why they joined the Policy Board. Chris agreed to will speak. Sidney will be out of town and will provide written comments for Alison to share.

### **Sabbatical Update**

This is Rev. Kim's fifth year as our beloved minister, and she is eligible for a sabbatical. Our letter of agreement with Rev. Kim provides that she is eligible for a sabbatical beginning in her fourth year with us. She must take the sabbatical between years five and seven or lose it. Rev. Kim is entitled to one month of sabbatical per year of service. She must give the congregation four months' notice if she takes three months or less of sabbatical time. If she takes more than four months of sabbatical, she must provide notice a year in advance.

Rev. Kim is considering taking four months of sabbatical beginning January 2025. Her official notice will come in January 2024.

The process provides that Rev. Kim will present her sabbatical proposal to the Board. Once approved, she must have a Sabbatical Committee. The role of a sabbatical committee is to determine various things related to the sabbatical, including how to cover the pulpit and pastoral care during the minister's absence. The Sabbatical Committee also works with Kim to communicate with the congregation about the role of the sabbatical and when and how members can communicate with Rev. Kim during the sabbatical.

The Board agreed to serve as Rev. Kim's Sabbatical Committee. While formal planning will begin in January after Rev. Kim gives her official notice, the Board started discussing several issues. First, how does a sabbatical impact an intern, and how might we arrange to supervise an intern during the sabbatical? Second, how do we fund the extra costs of a sabbatical? We will need to include sabbatical expenses in next year's operating budget. One way we balanced our annual operating budget over the last few years is by underfunding the line item for sabbatical expenses. We have only \$5,000 set aside in the sabbatical account.

The discussion ended on a high note. The last First U minister to take a sabbatical was Rev. Earl Holt. Rev. Kim is the first minister since Earl to serve the congregation long enough to qualify for a sabbatical. The Board thanked Rev. Kim for her service and her longevity!

### **Board Training on Recruiting Volunteers**

For the educational component of this month's board meeting, Rev. Kim shared a short video entitled *Sharing the Ministry: A Practical Guide for Transforming Volunteers into Ministers*. We had a great discussion about effective (and ineffective) ways to recruit church volunteers. Next month, we will discuss how to support and retain volunteers.

## **New Business - Conflict Between Israel and Hamas**

Lisa Ross copied President Steve on an email to the Toward Justice Group asking what we might do as a UU congregation about the conflict between Israel and Hamas, noting that the UUA has issued a statement,

<https://www.uua.org/pressroom/press-releases/catastrophe-gaza-and-israel#:~:text=The%20UUA%20condemns%20the%20harm,avoid%20further%20escalating%20military%20action>

The Board decided that beginning in January, Rev. Kim will lead a Congregational conversation about the conflict between Israel and Hamas, including a discussion of statements adopted by the UUA and what we might do. The Board realizes that conversations about events in Gaza and Israel can be traumatizing, especially for those of Jewish and Palestinian descent, and divisive. We seek to create space to learn more and hear from each other.

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

In January, Susan will give the Opening words, Becca will read the Board Covenant, and the Process Observer is TBD.

## **Process observer report**

Chris reported we “did fine.” We stayed on time except when we had important new business.

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

- Think of people who would be good for nominations or positions coming up.
- Steve will talk to Lisa and Towards Justice group.
- Rev. Kim will let people know we will discuss Israel and Hamas beginning in January.

## **The meeting adjourned at 8:24 p.m.**

This next Policy Board meeting is on Zoom on January 8, 2023, at 6:30 p.m..

Respectfully submitted,  
Sidney Watson, Secretary