

First Unitarian Church of St. Louis
Policy Board Meeting Minutes
14 February 2022 via Zoom

Meeting was called to order by President Gene Rubin at 6:35 pm.

Others in attendance: Steve Wilke, Vice President; Alison Lamothe, Secretary; Kathy Wilke, Treasurer; Susan Lammert, Trustee; Joel Hickman, Trustee; Mitch Herzog, Trustee

Absent: Sarah Francois ,Trustee (joined but had to leave); Jason McClure, Trustee

Staff: Rev. Kim Mason, Lynn Hunt, Danielle Kozemczak

Church Council: Cathy Rauch

Guest: Jama Dodson

Chalice Lighting: Gene Rubin

Opening Words: Susan Lammert

Reading of Board Covenant: Steve Wilke

Process Observer: Kathy Wilke

Consent Agenda. Documents submitted to Board to review prior to meeting.

- a. Minutes of Previous Meeting: 1-10-2022
- b. Report of the Minister – Rev. Kim Mason
- c. Report of the Administrator – Lynn Hunt
- d. Report of the Board President – Gene Rubin
- e. Report of the Council Chair – Cathy Rauch
- f. Report of the Director of Religious Education and Communications – Danielle Kozemczak
- g. Report of board email votes regarding virtual vs. in-person services

Committee Reports

Kathy Wilke, **Nominations and Leadership Development Committee.** There are a lot of openings but not enough potential nominees to fill the positions.

Steve Wilke could not attend the **Committee on Ministry's** meeting due to his involvement with Rev. Kim's evaluation.

Treasurer's update: Kathy Wilke and Lynn Hunt. We have some expensive plumbing issues that need to be addressed. Maplewood Plumbing is recommending we do an exterior plumbing repair. All current plumbing issues are in our RE wing. Kathy assured us that we are \$22,000 ahead on our budget. Lynn cited other sources that could be used for the repairs: we have \$4,500 in our Memorial Fund, \$1,700 in Special Gifts, and \$41,900 in Capital Fund. We may need roof repairs soon. We also anticipate spending \$2,000 to address live streaming and internet issues.

The Board determined that Facilities is responsible for resolving the plumbing issues and should prepare a plan that would then move up through leadership. That is, Facilities should submit recommendations to the Church Council for approval (this can be done via email); from there the Policy Board can make the final approval.

Nomination and Leadership Development Committee documents (submitted to be read in advance): Jama Dodson. The NLDC has been busy reconciling differences between its Committee Description and its stated Policies/Operating Procedure. The updated documents clarify the historical independence of the NLDC to prepare a slate of candidates without interference from the Policy Board. The Policy Board may then make recommendations regarding the slate but does not need to approve it. A motion to approve the NLDC's proposed document changes passed unanimously.

Jama reiterated the Committee's concern that not enough church members are willing to take the Board and Council positions available, and unfortunately the same members keep being asked to fill leadership positions. She asked for the Board's help in making recommendations to the Committee. Finances are our weakest area in terms of recruitment. We also hope to be able to nominate a Vice President who will be willing to serve as President the following year.

Updates:

1) **Canvass and early board pledging.** This year's canvass will officially kick off March 6. Policy Board members should pledge early so that the church can make positive, upbeat statements to encourage others to pledge and to do so promptly. The members of the Canvass Committee encourage all church members to see ourselves as part of this effort. They are enlisting the help of the Choir and volunteers to bake cookies to deliver to members' household along with pledge cards.

2) **Clark Lecture.** In the future, Lynn recommended that the church establish a proper committee, as has happened in years past, because hosting the event under normal circumstances is a lot of work. In order to give church members more input, Gene motioned that we send out an announcement to the congregation in October 2022 and ask for suggestions for speakers. Steve seconded; motion passed.

3) **Annual meeting.** The Annual Meeting will take place on May 15, format to be determined. An announcement and the agenda need to go out by April 15. Committee reports should be submitted by April 20. The slate of nominees for positions on the Policy Board and Church Council and their bios need to be published in time for the congregation to take notice. The Policy Board will be meeting prior to the Annual Meeting on May 9, and briefly right after the meeting to mark transitions in leadership.

Follow-up discussion on Role of Social Activism in our church

We followed up a discussion initiated in our previous Board meeting regarding whether and how our church should or could take a more active, public role in social justice issues. Specifically, Gene wondered how we as a congregation could move together to address one or two areas of importance.

In 2018, Charlie Kindleberger conducted a survey to determine which social justice issues our congregation was most interested in addressing; the results were the unhoused and racial justice. Although these issues are far from being resolved (Susan noted that Saint Louis recently earned an "F" for affordable housing), the Board agreed that it might be time reassess to which causes our members want to devote their time, energy and resources.

1. To assess possible causes, the Board proposes we launch a new survey, to be developed within the Outreach and Social Action Cluster.
2. Once causes are identified, we propose brainstorming sessions among the wider membership to determine how we want to address these causes. What concrete, meaningful steps can we take?
3. Finally, we can develop a plan of action that helps us as a congregation live up to our values and principles.

Rev. Kim reminded us of the three-pronged approach to bring about social change: 1) Education; 2) Direct Service and 3) Advocacy. Alison suggested that we provide members with a variety of different actions they can take as part of our church community to make a difference, depending on their time, energy and inclinations. No action is too small; as Lynn has told our children from the pulpit, every drop fills our bucket.

There continues to be some reticence among our members to take a more activist role as a congregation, a reticence that is out of step with the UUA's 2021 Statement of Conscience that boldly declares "Systemic white supremacy is a direct affront to every one of our principles" and calls us to take prophetic, concrete action. (*UUWorld* Fall 2021 pp. 10-11). It is entirely possible that a more visible, active role in helping our Saint Louis community will help us grow our church community.

Checking in with process observer: Kathy noted we did well sticking to the schedule and treating one another respectfully.

Meeting adjourned at 8:01 pm.

The next Policy Board meeting will be held Monday, March 14, 2022, at 6:30 pm via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,

Alison Lamothe