

First Unitarian Church of St. Louis
Policy Board Meeting Minutes
13 March 2023 Virtual

Meeting was called to order by President Steve Wilke at 6:33 pm.

Others in attendance: Erin Milligan, Vice President; Alison Lamothe, Secretary; Joel Hickman, Trustee; Susan Lammert, Trustee; Rebecca (Becca) McBride, Trustee; Norma Vogelweid, Trustee

Absent: Jeremy Colton, Treasurer

Staff: Rev. Kim Mason, Lynn Hunt

Church Council: Cathy Rauch

Special Guests: Kathy Wire, Finance Committee Chair; Sarah Francois, Canvass Committee Co-Chair

Chalice Lighting: Rev. Kim Mason

Opening Words: Norma Vogelweid

Reading of Board Covenant: Joel Hickman

Process Observer: Becca McBride

Canvas Update- Sarah Francois

Our annual Canvas Campaign kicked off Sunday, March 5. Sarah reported that \$310,431 has been pledged so far, leaving \$119,569 left to raise to meet our goal of \$430,000. 52% of our members have pledged. Sarah requested that Board members assist in reaching out to unpledged households after March 20.

Roof *DISCUSSION*:

- a. General discussion of the roofing contract status
- b. Discussion with Kathy Wire regarding how to pay for the project
- c. How we need to communicate with the congregation regarding this issue

Prior to our meeting Steve Wilke summarized the roofing contract status and the Finance Committee's recommendations for funding options as follows:

"Facilities has a quorum approval of the Bartch Bid. One member continues to be against the proposal and did submit several other bids. Facilities reviewed them all and the majority of them believe the Bartch bid is the best option.... How to finance it is another matter. Kathy Wire said the following at the Counsel [sic] meeting:

- If funds are needed immediately there is enough cash available from the unrestricted general fund (\$82,000) and building reserve fund (\$46,000) to cover the RE roof repairs. This does not require congregational approval, just approval by the Policy Board.
- They recommend that money be withdrawn from the Endowment to cover the cost, which will require congregational approval. Leaders are encouraged to talk to members and promote the idea. The alternative would be borrowing money, but interest rates are high and then we would have to repay it.
- These funds should then be replenished (via capital campaign) so that they are available for future projects. However, it should not be framed as "borrowing" from and then "repaying" the Endowment, which has never worked in the past.

....One interesting side note: the Bartch bid does not require a downpayment. It is due when the work is completed. That means we can sign the Bartch Bid soon and work on the funding mechanism in the upcoming months.”

Time is of the essence: the longer we wait to act, the more damage will be done. Bartch can only guarantee its quote for a limited time; postponing the decision could cost us thousands more. Given these circumstances, the Board took the following action:

Norma Vogelweid motioned that we approve the Bartch Roofing bid, Susan Lammert seconded. Seven voted in favor, none opposed. **Motion passed.**

As noted previously, if funds are needed immediately there is enough cash available from the unrestricted general fund (\$82,000) and building reserve fund (\$46,000) to cover the RE roof repairs. This would not require congregational approval. However, we do not want to drain these reserves dry. Although it would require congregational approval, the Finance Committee recommends that money be withdrawn from the Endowment to cover the cost. It is likely that we can have this funding mechanism approved prior to the completion of the project.

Alison Lamothe motioned that we approve seeking congressional approval to take the necessary funds to pay for these repairs from our endowment, Norma seconded. Seven voted in favor, none opposed. **Motion passed.**

In the long run, it is highly desirable that we launch a capital campaign designated for maintenance of our historic (and thus, aging) building. If we seek only to replenish our endowment it will not necessarily serve our intent to establish a rainy-day maintenance fund; we will want funds raised to be restricted to this purpose. Steve and Rev. Kim have worked with a UUA consultant who recommends that, prior to launching a capital campaign, we have a weekend-long meeting and then plan on launching it one year later. Most successful campaigns have specific aims; we should assess our maintenance needs carefully beforehand while keeping our Mission in mind.

As for communication with the congregation regarding this issue, Steve will publish an article in the E-News this week. The Board is encouraged to follow his lead and remember to emphasize that this is an urgent matter that required fast action. We will schedule an informational meeting at the end of March. We will call a Special Congregational Meeting for April 23 to seek congregational approval for withdrawing money from the endowment. We will need 25% of our members to be present for a quorum, and a majority of these will have to vote in favor for the motion to be approved. We can defer detailed discussion of a capital campaign for now and remember that ultimately, its intent will be to prevent us having to make emergency decisions like this in the future.

Consent Agenda – read in advance of meeting

- a. Minutes of Previous Meetings (regular February meeting and Special Vote)
- b. Report of the Minister – Rev. Kim Mason
- c. Report of the Administrator – Lynn Hunt
- d. Balance sheet from Jeremy Colton, Treasurer
- e. Report of the Board President – Steve Wilke
- f. Report of the Council- Cathy Rauch
- g. Facilities Project Proposal and accompanying email from Clint Cruise, Facilities Cluster Chair

Boardly Duties

Ross and Fathman Awards. These awards are presented at the Annual Meeting in May, and are characterized as a Most Valuable Player and Lifetime Achievement Award, respectively. Traditionally, a few members from the Board join with past recipients and consider nominees for the current year. Cathy Rauch has participated in this process in the past and says the task is usually accomplished in one or two meetings and is fun!

Given that the Board is down two people from a year ago, this year one Board member volunteered to serve in this capacity: Erin Milligan. It was suggested she work with Pam Geppert, last year's Ross Award recipient.

Helping with Active Hope Project. Although the goal was that this process would conclude in February, Lisa Ross still needs help calling individual members of the congregation. Erin, Jeremy Colton and Joel Hickman have been assisting thus far.

Board table at the Trivia Night? Steve encouraged Board members to form a table or at least pay for one to help the Boston Trip Group's Trivia Night fundraiser scheduled for April 15.

Board Training: Change is Hard, Even if it's the Promised Land

For this month's training we were asked to watch three videos with an optional fourth.

The first was *Rollercoaster of Change*, presented by Gil Rendle (2007). He reminds his audience that while growth might generate excitement, change always involves loss. This is why people resist it; there is comfort with the familiarity of how we are used to doing things.

He describes three stages of change: 1) letting go of the old; 2) a confusing, in-between time, and 3) beginning anew. This last stage is where proponents of change would like to begin!

He illustrates the "rollercoaster" as a briefly up, then down trajectory that bottoms out and then begins to rise again. When change is announced, the energy is generally positive but then degenerates as people experience the difficulty of letting go. Eventually energies rise again as people adapt to the changes.

A challenge for people in leadership is that usually we are ahead of other members of the congregation when it comes to change. Congregants might still be processing their difficult feelings while we might be embracing the changes we have proposed. They will need to be able to talk to us; we will need to listen to them. Eventually, however, the time comes for leaders to say, "Let's go." This takes courage. Rendle described this as "the Exodus moment: you're leading members into a wilderness of the unknown and unfamiliar." Looking backward, Cathy recalled our church's long low moment after the departure of our long-term settled minister, associate minister and RE director. Looking forward, Rev. Kim would like to work on building congregational tolerance for future low moments on this rollercoaster.

The next video was *Adaptive vs. Technical Challenges: A Case Study*, by David Pyle (Leaderlab/UUA.org, 2018). Pyle described a technical problem as one that can be clearly defined and for which knowledge exists to fix it. A mixed problem is clearly defined but its solution may be harder to define, and may or may not be known. (Our need for roof repairs is a mixed problem: we know what the problems are, but we have had to decide how we will address it; with the help of the

congregation, we will have to decide how we will finance the fixes we have just approved.) An adaptive problem is one whose definition is unclear and the solution is unknown; it requires solution by a learning community. Adaptive problems require the adaptation of human relationships, always a hard, messy process.

The third video was *Adaptive Leadership: 6 Key Concepts*, by Renee Ruchotzke. She defines these concepts as follows:

- 1) **“Get on the balcony,”** in essence, get the big picture;
- 2) **Productive disequilibrium.** Ruchotzke believes that adaptive challenges are best addressed while we are in a space of “productive distress,” which she places between un-challenging stability that doesn’t call us to action and an overwhelmed state in which we cannot function. Within a congregation, good leadership can broaden our range of productive distress; Susan believes we have a lot of good leaders in our congregation capable of doing this.
- 3) **Work avoidance.** If we treat an adaptive challenge like a technical challenge, there are many ways we can create busy work for ourselves that doesn’t bring about an actual solution to our problem.
- 4) **Giving the work back.** Adaptive leadership and problem-solving require time, and struggle.
- 5) **Regulating the heat.** We need to give people time to talk in order to cool things down.
- 6) **Powerful questions.** The third video ended here; a fourth optional video explored this concept further.

Ruchotzke listed a number of characteristics of powerful questions: they generate curiosity; they stimulate conversation; they are thought provoking; they surface underlying assumptions; they invite creativity and possibility; they generate energy; they channel attention; they explore deep meaning, and they evoke more questions. She and workshop participants generated this powerful question as an example: “What is the essence of a thriving and inspiring UU community in 20 years, and why does it matter?”

Values Discussion and whether to present at the Annual Meeting- *postponed*

New business- *Discussion*

Norma observed that, according to her Minister’s Report, Rev. Kim is struggling to make it to Fellowship Hall on Sundays. By the time she leaves the receiving line after the service, there is nearly always a meeting to attend. This gives some members the impression that she is “too busy” to talk or meet with them. We brainstormed ways we could free up Rev. Kim to be more available during Fellowship:

- We could postpone (some) meetings until noon
- We could shorten the service
- We could designate one Sunday a month as a “NO MEETING SUNDAY”
- We could encourage (some) groups to meet at 9 am, prior to services

We discussed the pros and cons of all of these options. As the person responsible for scheduling, Lynn Hunt is concerned how implementing these proposals would work logistically. Susan mentioned that we will need to provide additional childcare if we want people with families to be able to attend earlier or later meetings. As a lay leader who has prepared hour-long services, Norma reminded us that “every five minutes count.” Eventually, it may be necessary to develop a policy that will allow Rev. Kim more

opportunities to interact with church members during Fellowship while still allowing those groups who prefer to meet on Sundays to do so.

Action Items for Next Meeting

- Board members will need to make phone calls and/or send emails to help with Canvas. One way or another, we would like to hear from all targeted households.
- Steve will sign the Bartch Roofing contract and publish an article in the E-News regarding this project and what it means for the congregation.
- Erin will work with Pam Geppert on the Ross and Fathman Awards.
- Rev. Kim will meet with the Finance and Facilities Committees.
- Lynn will provide Danielle Kozemczak with attendance numbers to include in the E-News

Process Observer check-in: Becca observed that people's questions were answered and that the meeting ran relatively smoothly.

Meeting adjourned at 8:10 pm.

The next Policy Board meeting will be held Monday, April 11, at 6:30 pm via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,

Alison Lamothe