

**First Unitarian Church of St. Louis**  
**Policy Board Meeting Minutes**  
**09 May 2022 via Zoom**

**Meeting was called to order by President Gene Rubin at 6:36 pm.**

**Others in attendance:** Steve Wilke, Vice President; Alison Lamothe, Secretary; Kathy Wilke, Treasurer; Sarah Francois, Trustee; Joel Hickman, Trustee; Susan Lammert, Trustee; Jason McClure, Trustee—from the soccer field!

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

**Church Council:** Cathy Rauch

**Chalice Lighting:** Gene Rubin

**Opening Words:** Kim Mason

**Reading of Board Covenant:** Gene Rubin

**Process Observer:** Kathy Wilke

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

- a. Minutes of Previous Meeting: 4-11-2022 (*actually NOT included in Gene's email with the rest of the documents; they were re-sent during the meeting*)
- 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 Religious Education Coordinator – Danielle Kozemczak

**Committee Reports**

**Updates**

**1) Canvass—Lynn Hunt**

Canvass is essentially over. We raised \$387, 000.

On April 21, 2022, Gene sent an email to the Policy Board stating:

“In order to balance next year’s budget, there is not enough money to provide any cost of living adjustment (COLA) to our staff. As we all know, inflation is running at around 8% and we really need to take care of our own with at least some COLA.

I would like to send out a ‘presidential plea’ for donations to support a cost of living adjustment for next year. If we could raise about \$10,000 this would allow an approximate COLA of about 4%.”

The Policy Board approved this request. So far \$4,720.00 has been raised to help provide COLA for our staff.

**2) Fellowship Dinner June 04, 2022 at 5:30 pm —Steve Wilke**

After a three-year hiatus, 40 people will be recognized this year. Steve promised this will be done in an entertaining way. Attendees can sign up online or in person. Joel reminded Board members to bring wine or non-alcoholic beverages.

### 3) **Church attendance**—Lynn Hunt

In-person attendance in April averaged 60-70 per service, with about 20-25 persons livestreaming and an additional 35-40 viewing the service afterwards during the week.

In her report, Rev. Kim noted that “Easter was our highest attendance yet since reopening with a combined online and in person attendance of 120. The sanctuary felt full, which was wonderful.”

### **Committee Reports**

#### 1) **Nominations and Leadership Development Committee**—Kathy Wilke

Last month, Board Trustee Mitch Herzog resigned. The NLDC does not intend to replace him right away. We can send suggestions to Kathy. She commended the Committee for their awesome work.

#### 2) **Personnel**—Sarah Francois

The Committee did not meet last month. Rev. Kim reported that Augie Underwood has moved from the nursery to being our Sunday morning sexton. We would like to hire one more nursery worker.

### **Discussions**

#### 1) **Proposal to rent the Clark Room**—Lynn Hunt

In her monthly report, Lynn said:

“We have been approached by the Rev. Darryl Gray about the possibility of renting space for office use by [Missouri Faith Voices](#) of which he is the executive director. You might be familiar with Rev. Gray as he has been extensively involved in local activism over the last few years. This organization is a statewide, multi faith non-profit that organizes around issues of racial & economic justice, Medicaid expansion, etc.

The space would be used by two people – community organizers. They will supply a desk for each, I imagine a filing cabinet and probably a small printer. At first we thought a classroom would be best, but when I learned they need a phone I suggested the Clark Room which is already wired for a phone....

We would, of course, continue to have access to the room for committee meetings and small groups. I think Clark would be far preferable to a classroom unless we turned the entire classroom over to them. The two youth rooms upstairs would be very cramped with a couple of desks in them and we actually use the two youth rooms much more than Clark (Maker’s Ministry, Covenant Groups, etc). I am also concerned about what the message would be to parents and youth that their space is not dedicated to their needs. We also will be using the classrooms in the fall for CRCs Hebrew school.

Clark is actually an underused room (it is kind of an odd shape). RE uses it on occasion, but not on a regular basis. We have lots of areas for small groups of the congregation (Hosmer, Dodson, Youth Rooms, 2 classrooms under the chapel, etc). For larger groups we generally use the Chapel and now with live streaming we will be using the Sanctuary for after services presentations. And, as I stated earlier, we would still have use of the room for committees, etc.

We do need to get a better internet connection up there (we need to do this anyway) and I would propose that we can split the cost with them. Because we see renting to them as a way to put our words into action as a

means of supporting our call to social justice we are thinking of a monthly rent in the range of \$400 to \$450.”

Rev Kim likes that this rental would jibe with our mission. Sarah, a professional realtor, thought the rental price is reasonable. Gene motioned that we support the Rev. Gray’s proposal that we provide the Clark Room as rented office space to Missouri Faith Voices. Susan Lammert seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

## **Church budget – Kathy Wilke**

Kathy introduced the proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2022-2023. It was prepared by Lynn Hunt, Kathy Wilke and the members of the Finance Committee.

As noted above, the Canvass resulted in pledges of \$387,000, which is an increase from last year. Some additional money was raised as a result of an appeal to make a 6% cost of living increase for the Church staff.

For the most part, the budget is flat (the same as last years' budget) except for few exceptions.:

The 6% Cost of Living increase for staff

Landscape was increased to make up for the loss of reserve fund monies

The contribution to the UUA was increased to \$19,000

The Proposed budget was approved with 2 corrections.

## **Annual Meeting May 15, 2022 at 11:30 am**

Lynn has provided Board members with an annotated agenda so we all know our roles. We need a quarter of our membership to attend so we have the necessary quorum to vote on our slate of candidates for FY 2022-2023, that is, at least 54 members in attendance. Mo will livestream the meeting into Zoom. We will need someone who attends the meeting in person to also monitor virtual attendees. The church can provide a computer through which to do this.

In addition to voting on this year's slate, we need to re-affirm votes passed in the 2020 and 2021 Annual Meeting, since motions were passed at these meetings with the caveat that they would be re-affirmed when we met together again in person.

Finally, there will be a brief Policy Board meeting right after the Annual Meeting to pass the gavel to all new members. We need to announce that all new Board Members should attend. Alison will take minutes of both meetings.

## **Discussion: Review of our experiences as board members**

Kathy said she appreciated that members could say things about which they feel strongly without judgement and noted our respectful treatment of one another. She is impressed by how much we all care and with Rev. Kim's leadership qualities.

Sarah, who is retiring from the Board, realizes that—in spite of the competing demands of raising busy children as well as her job—she has been able to contribute a lot. Her service has made her feel more connected to the Church. She wonders if a church our size really needs as many Board members. Gene thought we could keep the Board at its current size (we are down two members due to resignations) or even smaller.

Sarah also likes the idea of a yearly theme to provide focus. This year, Gene's stated focus was on "welcomeability" and improved financial understanding on the part of our membership, but inevitably, our focus was getting through the Covid-19 pandemic.

Susan appreciated this Board's respect for peoples' time. When she previously served on the Board, meetings tended to be overly long and it made her reluctant to serve again. She commended Gene's organizational skills and time management.

Steve Wilke likes that our Zoom format has made it easier for Board members from the Metro East to participate (with hearty nods of approval from Joel and Alison), but he wondered if we should return to

in-person meetings. Gene responded that it's easier to organize and run a meeting via Zoom. Susan added that it's also easier for people with families to participate remotely and suggested we could have mini-retreats periodically for some valuable in-person connection. Alison noted that she agreed to serve as Secretary with the understanding that she could attend meetings remotely.

Joel expressed appreciation for the work of the Covid Task Force.

Alison noted the professionalism with which we handled the difficult questions of how to keep our community together during the pandemic and when and how to return to our building safely. Participating in such decisions provided a sense of moral authority when confronting members of her local community who used their ideological and religious beliefs to justify their rejection of Covid mitigation strategies. We did not lose a single church member due to our policy decisions. We were truly pro-life.

From the soccer field, Jason entered the following into our chat: "Thanks to all for your service.... It has been wonderful to serve with you all and I appreciate the leadership of Kim and Gene. I concur with Sarah that the board may be larger than is necessary for a church of our size. For what it's worth I think in-person meetings are valuable, at least on occasion. "

Finally, Gene offered closing thoughts on his year in the role of Board President. He has been inspired by our collaborative spirit. He noted our safe return to the sanctuary this year and our livestreaming project that allows members to attend remotely from now on. He thought our email communication regarding recommendations by the Covid Task Force and our subsequent votes went well. He appreciates the hard work and dedication that have helped our church family run in a healthy direction. He wonders what's next, and where we go from here? Post-presidency, he will still think and care about these questions, but looks forward to worrying about them less.

**Checking in with process observer:** We forgot 😊 But in our closing discussion, we expressed appreciation for the way we conducted ourselves and treated one another throughout the year.

**Meeting adjourned promptly at 8:00 pm.**

**The next meeting will be the Annual Meeting at 11:30 am on May 15, 2022. It will be in-person and live-streamed.**

**The next Policy Board meeting will be held Monday, June 13, 2022, at 6:30 pm via Zoom.**

Respectfully submitted,

Alison Lamothe