

First Unitarian Church of St. Louis
Policy Board Meeting Minutes
13 June 2022 via Zoom

Meeting was called to order by President Steve Wilke at 6:34 pm.

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

Absent: Joel Hickman, Trustee; Luke Steffen, Trustee

Staff: Lynn Hunt

Church Council: Cathy Rauch

Guest: Lisa Ross

Chalice Lighting: Steve Wilke

Opening Words: Steve Wilke

Reading of Board Covenant: Norma Vogelweid

Process Observer: Erin Milligan

Whole Church Social Justice Project Task Force- Lisa Ross

The previous Board assigned Lisa and other members of the Task Force with organizing an all-church project with a social justice focus. She indicated that the Task Force would welcome additional members.

Besides addressing and working to alleviate an issue of our choosing, it is hoped such a project will also create a sense of unity among our church members. The challenge is identifying what we want to do as a church as opposed to individually. The Task Force has discussed using listening circles and one on one in-depth conversations with church members to determine interests. Although they are reluctant to do a survey, the Board thought that a brief questionnaire would be helpful. Not much will happen over the summer. Once the Task Force determines a process for input, then we can identify the issue we want to address and from there figure out what actions we can take to address it. It is likely that we will need to partner with other community organizations to realize our goals.

New Board member welcome

As an icebreaker, Steve asked all Board members to answer the following questions: *Why did you first start coming to church? Why do you keep coming back?* This portion of the meeting was recorded at the request of Rev. Kim Mason, who was unable to attend but wanted to hear our responses.

Norma first visited the church because the church was within walking distance of her home and joined because it did not “irk” her. She keeps coming because she feels at home here and loves that she can create her own worship service every summer.

Becca grew up UU. Her mother was the president of a UU congregation when Becca was very young. Her mother recommended that Becca’s sister find a UU church when she was in the Saint Louis area, and she found First Church. Becca followed her here and joined the choir. Although her sister has since moved, Becca keeps coming because the congregation has become her family, and being connected with us has been good for her mental health.

Jeremy began attending at the behest of his wife, Emily, who was new to the area and seeking connection. They determined that a Unitarian church would be a better fit for an atheist like Jeremy than a Presbyterian church, the denomination from which Emily came. Although Jeremy still has reservations about being “churched,” he has learned that “the effects you create are greater than how you feel about it.” Being a part of a church community allows him to have a greater effect. In addition, Jeremy keeps coming because he has come to love attending our services.

Cathy first came to our church when she moved to University City. Her ex-husband was a Methodist, but she did not appreciate the sermons she heard at that denomination’s churches they attended in the Central West End. First Unitarian Church better met their needs. She has been a member for 40 years. Over the decades our church helped her through her divorce; helped her find a job; and provided a supportive, accepting environment for her children. She never imagined she would hold her current position as Chair of the Church Council. She has kept coming in spite of being irked by various ministers along the way.

For **Susan**, being a UU is also a family affair, although in her case her daughter introduced her to Unitarianism 30 years ago and has since become a UU minister. After this introduction Susan visited area UU churches and stuck with ours. She likes being a member of a community that acknowledges that life is not easy for all, a sensibility that is lacking in her own affluent community.

In 2011, **Erin** was looking for a community that wasn’t composed primarily of lawyers. She became a member in 2014 and joined the Board shortly thereafter. She keeps coming back because she likes it more than she dislikes it.

Lynn was raised UU and came back to UUism as a parent when Earl Holt III was our minister. She found his sermons to be compelling even if she and Earl’s theologies weren’t entirely aligned.

Alison first came to our church in 1999, ostensibly because she and Steve were expecting their first child and wanted to have a church home within which to raise their family, but really she had been wanting to find a spiritual home for some time. A native New Englander, she came to Unitarianism through the Transcendentalists, who also influenced minister Earl Holt III. As veterans of our years of ministerial musical chairs will recall, there were some years during which it was sometimes difficult to keep coming back. Now with Rev. Kim as our settled minister and serving on the Board, she feels more engaged than ever.

Steve was raised by his UU parents in our church, which to him had always seemed “normal” until Youth Group and conversations with members outside our community made him realize we were not mainstream. He appreciates our free pulpit and that our members do not always agree with one another. He likes to be challenged. He had been coming to church for so long that joining was an afterthought, until he wanted to join the Board and it became a necessity.

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

- a. Minutes of Previous Meetings - (5/10/2021 and 5/16/2021)
- b. Report of the Minister - Kim Mason
- c. Report of the Administration - Lynn Hunt
- d. Report of the Board President – Steve Wilke (*actually submitted to the Board on 06/14/2022*)

Norma moved that we approve the above documents, Becca seconded, motion passed.

Business

- The Board approved Bobby Fernandes Brantley and George Grimm Howell as delegates to the General Assembly.
- The Board renominated Margaret Weck to serve on the Nominations and Leadership Development Committee.

Updates:

We need new liaisons for the Nominations and Leadership Development and Personnel Committees.

Susan Lammert is continuing as liaison to the **Committee on Ministry**. They met on 06/13/2022. They discussed the need to rewrite the Congregational Covenant, last updated in 2013. The topic of Social Justice is a source of contention and they wonder what this means for the church as a whole. They discussed the upcoming Eliot Project Summer Book Read involving Earl Holt's *Conservative Radical*, now on sale in Fellowship Hall. An air monitor has been installed on the church and is linked to a network showing air quality at many sites that previously were not being monitored. Finally, they talked about the need for more support for people in leadership roles and UUA sources for such support.

One year goals: Membership

Steve opened this discussion noting the lack of younger members in our congregation. He wondered what we can do to encourage people to come to our church and to stay. Some discussion followed regarding our use of social media, specifically Facebook. From a small business perspective, Jeremy believes that a robust social media presence is key and that we could improve ours. Steve reported that as Communications Director, Danielle Kosemczak has been working on this over the past 4 months. Becca suggested that we have more members-only groups that would allow for more interaction between members. Currently we have a public church page, an active RE group, and an inactive Young Adults group. Norma wondered about creating a "One-Off Volunteer Pool" for congregants to add their names to. The info would be available to all church organizers and committees when they simply need volunteers for events.

Retreat in August

The Board would like to meet on a Saturday or Sunday before homecoming for a retreat, having decided in May that we would continue with monthly Zoom meetings but would also meet in person occasionally. Lynn will create a Doodle poll so we can determine which dates work best for the most people. Alison suggested we meet at Pere Marquette Lodge. People liked this idea. Lynn reminded us that we have the budget to rent a conference room there.

Before our next meeting

Board members are encouraged to submit items for the Agenda to President Steve Wilke.

Checking in with process observer: Erin noted we were running slightly behind schedule partway through the meeting, but we managed to end just after 8:00 pm. (Some of us also inadvertently

demonstrated the pitfalls of trying to speak simultaneously, never a best practice but particularly ineffective on Zoom :D.)

Meeting adjourned at 8:03 pm.

The next Policy Board meeting will be held Monday, July 11, 2022, at 6:30 pm via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,

Alison Lamothe