

**First Unitarian Church of St. Louis**  
**Policy Board Meeting Minutes**  
**16 October 2022 in Hope Chapel**

**Meeting was called to order by President Steve Wilke at 11:37 am.**

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

**Absent;** Luke Steffen, Trustee

**Staff:** Lynn Hunt, Rev. Kim Mason (arrived 12:12 pm)

**Chalice Lighting:** Erin Milligan

**Opening Words:** Erin Milligan

**Process Observer:** Jeremy Colton

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

- a. Minutes of Previous Meeting: 9-12-2022
- a. Report of the Minister – Rev. Kim Mason
- b. Report of the Administrator – Lynn Hunt
- c. Report of the Board President – Steve Wilke

NOTE: Since Kim arrived late from teaching OWL, our conversations did not occur in the order established nor were all the topics included in the agenda.

Steve suggested that we renew sign-ups for the tasks associated with opening and running our Board meetings.

There was some discussion about what to do if a Board member is not meeting their responsibilities and we consulted the Bylaws for guidance. We also discussed the need for another one or two trustees, since we have fewer than we usually do. Becca agreed to bring this up with the Nominations and Leadership Development Committee.

Susan modeled a new church T-shirt. Jeremy is printing them through his business, Big Frog, and we can order our own color and size preference.

We talked about the Coffee Hour we had hoped to host, which was cancelled for logistical concerns expressed by the staff. Once we select a date, we can announce the event in the Newsletter and include information about what we do, indicating we will be available on a designated Sunday to answer additional questions. We discussed the pros and cons of being off on the sidelines versus approaching members at their tables. Jeremy suggested we assign a Board member or two to plan and execute this member outreach effort.

### **Board Committees Update**

Susan reported that the Committee on Ministry did not meet this past month.

Becca has agreed to serve as the Board liaison for the Nominations and Leadership Development Committee.

Norma has agreed to serve as the Board liaison for the Personnel Committee.

### **Update on Active Hope Project- Kim**

Kim revisited a topic from her sermon October 09, 2022, during which she announced the launch of the Active Hope Project, a name inspired by Joanna Macy, an environmental activist, author, and scholar of Buddhism, general systems theory, and deep ecology. Kim and Steve decided this was a better designation than the original Social Action Discernment Project due to its unfortunate abbreviation.

As Board veterans will recall, last year we discussed the role of social activism in the church. As Steve summarized in the Saturday, October 19, 2022 E-News:

After many, many discussions, the board determined we should seek input from the congregation to determine if we should be focusing on specific social action issues, and, if so, what issue or issues we should be focused on.

By focusing on a particular social action issue, our hope is we can make a bigger impact working together and making a stronger impact. Much like our focus on themes within our worship services, by focusing on specific social action issues, we can take more time to look at an issue in depth. Our hope is that such a focus will allow us to learn about the problems associated with it, discover what resources and opportunities are currently available in our broader community, and what we can contribute as a church to helping them....

In the coming weeks and months, we will be conducting focus groups, listening circles, and direct contact from our taskforce looking into this issue.

The Board has enlisted the help of the Outreach and Social Action cluster to include the whole congregation in this discernment process.

Kim's sermon reminds us that a church can be spiritual and active in the world. This project will help our congregation go outside our individual selves to assess a societal need. We will then go inside ourselves to discover the gifts we can bring to address this need, and then bridge the two in order to create a more beautiful world--and a more connected congregation.

#### **Auction Update- Kim and Steve**

Kim reminded us that the Board usually collaborates to provide some sort of offering to the Auction, which occurs prior to our next Board meeting and therefore required us to come up with some ideas immediately.

Becca offered to approach the Membership Director of the Missouri Botanical Garden. We thought we could create a basket with a membership to the Garden and some items from the Garden Gate Gift Shop. It is possible the Garden would be willing to donate all or some of these items.

After the meeting Norma suggested in an email that we offer one, two or three dinners or lunches for 2 to 4 with three board members and Kim at one of their homes. Erin offered to host a vegetarian meal for up to eight. Kim is willing to participate as long as she is included in setting the date and the date is set in advance.

Among the documents submitted to the Board for review prior to our meeting was an email from Kathy Wire to Steve that asked the following:

As I recall, board policy discourages fundraising for specific things without approval. Generally, the auction supports our budget, but we may have specific short donation "events" within the auction for special items. Landscaping comes to mind. I think in the past we asked folks to provide a tree. Somebody mentioned paving the parking lot as another past target. It also occurred to me that we could put out a special call for funding of the building maintenance fund.

Are you OK with the auction team working on ideas for this sort of specific target? We don't want to use this as a way of getting around the Board prerogative to set general funding direction. And I don't want it to become a way to fund pet projects that are only meaningful to a small part of the congregation. With those parameters, can we go ahead and explore? I would keep you and Cathy in the loop on our ideas.

Kathy was essentially inquiring about incorporating paddle raise events within our auction, where supporters pledge amounts for a specific purpose. She mentioned landscaping as a possibility and in fact our funding reserves for this are depleted.

The Board can determine or approve what a paddle raiser can fund. Becca observed that younger donors were more likely to donate to specific projects. She has extensive experience with fundraising and offered to work with the Auction Committee.

Looking forward, Norma asked if we should articulate a policy regarding the Board's role regarding paddle raisers as part of the church auction. Kim suggests instead we might instead define a general practice.

Steve said he will send an email to the Auction Committee. We need to know what they want to propose and ensure it fits within our budgetary needs. He will also let them know that Becca will be joining the Committee.

We were reminded that the auction takes place on November 12 and has as its theme the Roaring Twenties.

### **Governance Basics- How to be the BEST Board we can be!**

Prior to this month's Board members received the second installment in our leadership training, entitled "In the Room Where It Happens: Why We Have Meetings" (<https://www.uua.org/leaderlab/programs/board-training/board-meetings>). Subtopics covered are Effective Meetings, Setting the Agenda, Making Room for Multiple Viewpoints, Whole Congregation Discussions, and Whole Congregation Discernment.

The training suggests members check in briefly at the beginning of a meeting, to acknowledge that our being there precludes us being somewhere else. How does this impact us? We thought this would work for us within fairly strict parameters: each member takes a minute or less, with other participants practicing deep listening and refraining from commentary.

We like the idea of clearly labeling agenda items as action, discussion or information. Alison suggested we summarize our discussions briefly before moving on.

We observed that we already incorporate a number of suggestions to distinguish church Board meetings from typical business meetings.

### **Discussion of COVID-19 and whether to change our current policy**

The Covid Task Force has not met recently, although Lisa Ross contacted the Board via email and recommended we continue our current policy of requiring masks in the sanctuary and worship related events. The Board decided to postpone any decision regarding Covid policy until the Task Force meets and makes a formal recommendation.

### **Brainstorm ideas for better scheduling**

Kim has been unable to meet at the Board's regularly scheduled time of the second Monday of the month during October and November. There was some confusion regarding the date, time and place of this re-scheduled meeting. We agreed that email is not the best way to communicate these changes.

We also agreed that Rev. Kim's presence is essential and that rescheduling should start with her. Jeremy suggested we consult Kim's Calendly to assess her availability.

If Steve cannot attend a meeting, Erin can lead it instead.

We agreed that in general, Mondays via Zoom and Sundays after the church service in person are the best times and modes to meet. Hybrid meetings will not work for the Secretary; meetings she has observed remotely have sound issues that make note-taking difficult.

Along the lines of improved communication, we talked about how Board members can access all information concerning the Board via Google Drive. We will spend part of our next meeting with a brief tutorial.

**Checking in with process observer:** Jeremy observed that we did not talk over one another and that we didn't observe Robert's Rules.

**Meeting adjourned at 1:20 pm.**

**The next Policy Board meeting will not be held on its regularly scheduled second Monday night of the month but rather will be held Thursday, November 16, at 6:30 pm via Zoom.**

Respectfully submitted,

Alison Lamothe