

First Unitarian Church of St. Louis
Policy Board Meeting Minutes
February 12, 2024 Virtual

President Steve Wilke called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

Others in attendance: Alison Lamothe, Vice President; Sidney Watson, Secretary; Susan Lammert, Trustee; Rebecca (Becca) McBride, Trustee; Chris Kocher, Trustee

Absent: no one

Staff: Rev. Kim Mason, Lynn Hunt

Church Council: Sherry Bassi

Chalice Lighting: Rev. Kim

Opening Words: Susan

Reading of Board Covenant: Becca McBride

Process Observer: Becca McBride

Consent Agenda

- Minutes of Previous Meeting – Sidney Watson
- Report of the Minister - Kim Mason
- Report of the Administration & Programming - Lynn Hunt
- Report of the Board President – Steve Wilke
- Church Council Notes – Sherry Bassi
- RE Report – Danielle Kozemczak

Becca moved to approve these documents, and Chris seconded. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Vote to Approve Kathy Wilke as Interim Treasurer

Becca moved to approve Kathy Wilke as Interim Treasurer, and Alison seconded. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Steve will draft a group thank you to Jeremy expressing our appreciation for his service as Treasurer.

We discussed how to fill the Sunday morning Greeter slots, which the Board now does. The group agreed it would be helpful to invite others to join us in serving as Greeters, although we did not decide how that might be done.

Ballot Initiative Petition Request

Missourians for Constitutional Freedom are gathering signatures to put a proposed state Constitutional amendment on the ballot to prohibit state interference with abortion and to make state law comply with the standards in *Roe v Wade*. Many people have asked if we would be involved. People seem interested in supporting the effort. The official launch was last Tuesday for gathering signatures. The plan is to gather sufficient signatures to put the initiative on the August or November ballot

Susan moved, and Alison seconded a motion to allow Toward Justice to circulate a petition sponsored by Missourians for Constitutional Freedom to prohibit state interference with abortion decisions up until the point of fetal viability (generally, about 24 weeks). That was the widely accepted standard under *Roe v Wade*. The vote was unanimously in favor.

We discussed what procedure the church and board should use for future requests related to ballot initiatives and signature collection. We did not take a vote but agreed that we prefer that a committee or group within the church sponsor such requests. We would like these requests to include a statement of how the request fits with the values of the UUA and First Unitarian. Steve will share this process with the congregation during the upcoming Mid-Winter Meeting.

Planning for Rev Kim's Sabbatical

The Board serves as the Sabbatical Committee to plan for Rev. Kim's four-month sabbatical, January-April 2025.

We have about \$3,000 in the account that helps pay for services needed while the minister is on sabbatical. We have a line item in the Operating Budget for the Minister's Sabbatical, which we should contribute to each year. If we put \$2,000 in the account each year for five years, we would have \$10,000 to support sabbatical expenses. Regrettably, we zeroed out the sabbatical line for several years to balance the budget.

Two big ticket items for sabbatical expenses are pulpit coverage and pastoral care. The \$3,000 in the account will cover about four months of pulpit coverage at three paid pulpits per month. The UUA's recommended pastoral fee for our area is \$150/hour in our area. In short, we have enough in the sabbatical account to pay either for pulpit coverage or pastoral care, but not both. As we plan for Rev. Kim's sabbatical, we have to consider how much money we have and what we can rely on lay folks to do as volunteers.

We again discussed the possibility that an intern might cover some of our sabbatical needs. We are about to interview two candidates for a 2024-2025 Intern position. However, even if we have an intern, we won't know until they begin the position whether they will be able to assume some of the duties we need to have filled during the sabbatical that go above and beyond what is typically asked of an intern. It is a lot to ask of an intern. We also still need to determine if we have a local UU minister who can supervise an intern during Rev. Kim's sabbatical. Rev. Kim has approached Rev. Krista Taves, Acting Lead Minister of Eliot Chapel, about supervising a

First U intern. Rev. Taves might be open to providing supervision, but her position for next year has not yet been confirmed. We also don't know the cost for supervising an intern. We wondered whether this cost might be paid out of the intern account rather than the sabbatical account, noting that using the intern account for supervision costs has a long-term impact on funding for future interns.

We can use the 2024-2025 Canvass Drive to help raise money to support sabbatical expenses. We could also have a special fundraiser. If people think it's important, they will give.

Canvas Information and Board Expectations

The Canvas Kickoff Dinner is on Saturday, March 2. RSVPs will be coming out soon. Board members are asked to attend and supply drinks.

Board members are also asked to pledge by February 29 so that their pledges can be included in the Canvass Dinner announcement that launches the canvass. Board members can pledge online or directly with Lynn. Lynn hopes the online will be available next week.

Pledge cards will be handed out on March 4.

This year's canvass theme is Weaving our Future. Sarah Francois and Erin Milligan are pledge chairs. They have many high-energy ideas, including various lottery gifts to encourage new, old, and increased pledges.

Board members are also asked to call or email those who have not yet pledged as we near the end of the Canvass, likely during the first week of April. We will be provided a script. We will have a board meeting before this, so stay tuned for more.

Mid-Winter Meeting rescheduled

Mid-Winter Meeting was canceled because of inclement weather and is now scheduled for Sunday, February 25, as a lunch after service. The agenda has changed somewhat. It now includes:

- Announcements
 - Update on the Social Responsibility Summit
 - Process for ballot initiative petitions
 - Encouraging candidates for upcoming board positions to be elected in May
- Congregational vote for First U to host George Grimm-Howell's ordination and reception on June 8.

We also discussed the need to recruit more members to the Nominating Committee to assist Margaret Weck, the chair.

Building Long-Term Planning

Tom Finan is leading a project to do long-term planning about how we use our building and grounds now and how we would like to use them in the future. He hopes to help us think about how to optimize our space and identify what we need to fix, not just for the next five years, but for the next ten to thirty years. After Tom and the Facilities Committee finish their work, they may come to the Board with policy needs.

New Business

Chris asked about joint area-wide UU events. Rev. Kim explained that the four St. Louis area congregations started meeting last year and collaborating on several things. The congregations joined in the fall for a Tower Grove Pride booth and Halloween Trunk or Treat. Upcoming is an April 14 all-area church service that will be piped in and out of all four locations. Each congregation will be responsible for different parts of the service, which will be Zoomed to the other congregations. On June 9, an all-area UU Picnic will be in Tower Grove Park.

As an aside, we noted that April 8 is a solar eclipse, which conflicts with a board meeting date. It sounds like we will be moving our board meeting to April 15.

What needs to be done before the next board meeting?

- Communicate to the congregation about the abortion petition through the Board summary and pulpit announcements
- Steve will write a thank you note to Jeremy on behalf of the Board
- Remember to attend the rescheduled Mid-winter meeting on Sunday, February 25, and thanks to Chris for speaking. Let's help make the recruitment of nominations for board positions exciting!
- Don't forget the Canvass kickoff dinner on March 2.

In March, Kathy will give the Opening Words, and Alison will read the Board Covenant, which will be printed in the agenda. The Process Observer is TBD.

Process Observer Becca said we stayed on time, and everyone got to participate.

The meeting adjourned at 8:03 p.m.

The next Policy Board meeting is on Zoom on March 11, 2024, at 6:30 p.m..

Respectfully submitted,
Sidney Watson, Secretary