

**First Unitarian Church of St. Louis
Policy Board Meeting Minutes
September 11, 2023 Virtual**

President Steve Wilke called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

Others in attendance: Alison Lamothe, Vice President; Jeremy Colton, Treasurer; Sidney Watson, Secretary; Susan Lammert, Trustee

Absent: Rebecca (Becca) McBride, Trustee; Chris Kocher, Trustee

Staff: Rev. Kim Mason, Lynn Hunt

Church Council: Sherry Bassi

Chalice Lighting: Kim Mason

Opening Words: Steve Wilke

Reading of Board Covenant: Susan Lammert

Process Observer: Alison Lamothe

Consent Agenda – Read in advance of the meeting
Minutes of Previous Meeting – Alison Lamothe
Report of the Minister - Kim Mason
Report of the Administration - Lynn Hunt
Report of the Board President – Steve Wilke

Alison moved to approve these documents with one correction to the minutes, and Susan seconded.
MOTION PASSED.

Alison noted, and others agreed it would be helpful to receive reports and other documents earlier than the day of the Board meeting. Lynn explained that she circulates Board materials the Friday before the Board meeting and urged people to get Board materials to her by early Friday (or maybe even Thursday).

Who's Liasoning Who? Finalizing our Board Committee Assignments

Board Committee assignments are finalized and confirmed. Sidney is the liaison to the Nominating Committee, and Becca is the liaison to the Personnel Committee. Susan confirmed she has one more year as a liaison with the Committee on Ministry.

Updates: Building, Finance, and other Board questions?

Steve expressed his concern that there are many things he, Rev. Kim, and Lynn may know but may not get to share with the Board because things move so quickly. Is there anything about the church that Board Members are concerned about and would like an update about?

Building: Tom Finan submitted a Building Report that shows that roof repairs are progressing. Lynn Hunt confirmed that we have money, including approximately \$40,000 in capital reserves, to cover the present repairs to the roof.

Operating Budget: The church's annual operating budget finished in the black. Lynn reported that we both had more income and spent less than anticipated during the last budget year. On the income side, the auction overperformed (Yeah! Thanks for all that hard work!), and we received several large donations from a member who wanted the money to go into the operating fund. Neither of these pleasant events are things that we can depend on every year. We are not having an auction this year. Kim noted that having money to put into reserves at the end of the year is "not a bad thing."

Active Hope Project Revisited: What is the Board's role in the Summit?

The Active Hope Project is a yearlong project soliciting people's input through surveys, small groups, and 1:1 interviews. That process discerned that most people in the congregation believe it would be good for the congregation to have a cohesive social justice program. Most people expressed an interest in housing and homelessness, a big topic. There is much we could do. There is some we are already doing. The Summit is an opportunity to talk about the facets of social action and explore how we might build a congregational social justice program. The Summit will help us drill down to help identify a targeted area under the rubric of housing/homelessness. We continue to keep the process one that seeks broad input from all segments of the congregation.

What is the Board's role?

After a helpful discussion about the history of the Active Hope Project and conversations that previous Boards had, we agreed that the role of individual Board members and the Board as a whole is to continue to support the process that undergirds the Active Hope Project, which is to seek broad input from the members of the congregation.

Two years ago, when Gene Rubin was president, the Board asked itself: What is the role of social action, and what relationship does social action have with the church? Board members had many views, and prior minutes recorded their fulsome conversation. The Active Hope Project was conceived to help us discern how the members of this congregation feel about this question.

Many operational and policy questions will likely arise as the Active Hope Project progresses. At the operational level, the Policy Council is responsible for determining how many committees we need in the area of social justice and how best to coordinate their work. Sherry Bassi confirmed that the Policy Council already knows the importance of reviewing our committee structure for social justice and other activities. At the policy level, the Board has already identified the need to consider whether and how First Unitarian might create a process by which the congregation can take a position on issues. Sidney was asked to find more information on the process used over a decade ago when the First U Social Responsibility Committee was allowed to endorse the principles of Missouri Health Care for All.

Article II Revision: The Board's Role in our Church's position on the Revision

In preparation for discussion of the proposed changes to Article II of the UUA Bylaws, Board members received links to Rev. Kim's sermon on the history of this issue, Love Can Be the Center, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LGSROc186PU>, and the UUA Article II Study Commission Report, <https://www.uua.org/files/2023-02/article-II-study-report-2021-23.pdf>.

Article II of the UUA Bylaws, Principles, and Purposes is the covenant to which all UU congregations and communities pledge themselves when they become members of UUA. The last substantial revision was in 1985, and includes seven principles that guide our living tradition. In 2020, the UUA charged a Study Commission to consider possible amendments to Article II. After a two-year process of listening, conversation, drafts, and feedback, the Study Commission recommended that Article II move from a statement of principles to a statement of values that embraces that "Love is the power that holds us together and is at the center of our shared values." Last summer's General Assembly (GA), after discussion and amendments, passed the final version of the proposed Article II revision, setting the stage for a final vote at the 2024 GA that will require a 2/3 majority vote.

Rev. Kim suggested we embark on a congregational process to learn more about the Article II revision and the process by which it emerged. The revision has a great deal of support within the denomination, and it would be good for this congregation to be part of the conversation leading up to the final vote and feel a sense of ownership of a critical event in the life of the denomination.

Rev. Kim will offer classes on the Article II revision in the fall and spring. She will give a series of sermons in the spring about the revision. She anticipates multiple avenues for members to engage around this topic. Steve Wilke noted that we could use the Mid-Winter Meeting as an opportunity to talk about the revision.

Board members began discussing what kind of process we might undertake to educate ourselves and engage as a congregation in the process that leads to the GA vote on the Article II revision. The Board did not take any formal votes but discussed several options. One suggestion was that educational events should culminate in a congregational vote during the May 2024 Congregational Meeting in May 2024. One question was whether the Board should take a vote as to what it recommends to the congregation.

Rev. Kim also noted that First U will send up to five delegates to the 2024 GA who will vote on the Article II revision. Now is the time to begin encouraging people to attend GA as delegates. GA will be virtual, which may make it easier for people to attend.

Lynn pointed out that First U GA delegates vote their conscience, in part because there is an opportunity for discussion and learning at GA prior to the vote. It would benefit our delegates to know how the church (and possibly the Board) has voted on the Article II revision proposal.

As we discussed how to raise visibility for this issue, Jeremy reminded us that he has designed and has available Towards Justice T-shirts that promote the visibility of this move from seven principles to six values.

Wrap up & what needs doing before next board meeting

- Many Board members will be attending the Summit.

- Sidney will look for details on the process used by the Social Responsibility Committee to sign the Missouri Health Care for All principles.
- Jeremy will send information about the First U T-shirts.
- Please remember to get Board reports to Lynn by Friday morning before the Board meeting.

Process Observer check-in: Alison, “We treated each other with respect. We did wonderfully.”

The meeting adjourned at 7:59 p.m.

The next Policy Board meeting is on Monday, October 9, at 6:30 p.m. on Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,
Sidney Watson, Secretary