

First Unitarian Church of St. Louis Policy Board Meeting
Monday, August 12, 2024, 6:30 p.m. – Virtual
Minutes

President Charles (Chuck) Eby called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m.

Others in attendance: Larry Dusenbery, Vice President; Kathy Wilke, Treasurer; Sidney Watson, Secretary; Chris Kocher, Trustee; Betty Neill, Trustee; Rebecca (Becca) McBride, Trustee

Absent: no one

Church Council: Sherry Bassi

Staff: Rev. Kim Mason

Other attendees: none

Opening Words by Chuck from Rachel Carlson

Chalice Lighting by Rev. Kim

Reading of Board Covenant by Kathy Wilke, available at
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1cBWTB1BODfNv4Xks6vuDCH0RmnF5brnV/edit?usp=drive_link&oid=105183447557092303738&rtopf=true&sd=true

Process Observer – Chris

Check-in:

To begin the meeting, Chuck asked us to share our summer activities. We went around the Zoom room and spent ten delightful minutes sharing our joys and concerns.

Consent Agenda

- Minutes of the June 2024 meeting
- Report of the Minister - Kim Mason
- Report of the Administration - Lynn Hunt
- Report of the Board President – Chuck Eby
- Treasurer’s Report and Financials – Kathy Wilke
- Church Council Report – Lynn Hunt

Treasurer Kathy pointed out that although the financials appear to show a large discrepancy between the budget and actuals for 2023-2024, we are only slightly in the red, but that is not a big deal. This month’s financials do not yet reflect money that needs to be transferred from one account to another to cover the costs of George’s ordination.

Lynn commented that the 2023-2024 budget overage primarily resulted from building repairs where we had more expenses than anticipated. Two building repair items are still pending, and the Facilities Committee has not yet decided whether repair or replacement is preferable. The committee is also in the process of determining what to do over the west Fellowship Hall alcoves. They received multiple bids, but every bid gave them a different recommendation on what to do, which meant the bids varied greatly. Lynn anticipates having more information to share at the Board Retreat.

Larry moved to accept these reports. Betty seconded the motion. The motion **passed**.

Active Hope Project: Summer activities with Tabernacle Community Development (TCD)/Hub

First U participated in three summer activities with TCD: two neighborhood beautification days and a back-to-school event. Other special events will be coming up, offering opportunities for First U volunteers. In addition, TCD has a food pantry and a new tutoring and reading program for grade school children which need volunteers.

We discussed ways to share information about Active Hope volunteer opportunities with the church members, including using separate e-blasts to highlight Active Hope activities.

Those who participated in this summer's Active Hope projects said they enjoyed seeing the progress TCD is making building and remodeling new affordable housing units. They also commented that our volunteers, especially repeat volunteers, are starting to develop a relationship with the staff at TCD.

Updates on Staff Openings - discussion items no action needed

- Communications

For now, Lynn is taking on the communications function with compensation for the extra work.

Lynn plans to stay on through this program year and be the staff point person during the ministerial sabbatical. She will begin transitioning into retirement next program year, 2025-2026.

Lynn discussed how the church's administrative work has changed over the 20+ years she has been church staff. Technology now does the work that people used to do. She suggests it is worth taking time to do intentional transitioning and thinking about our changing staff needs rather than merely replicate what we have had in the past.

- Organist/music director

It has been challenging to get applicants for the organist position. Organists, particularly church organists, are a dwindling career. We may not be able to fill the organist position for the fall and may need to rely on a pianist in the short term.

Earl filled two positions: organist and music director. Kim has asked choir director Joel to take the next year to think about the church's music needs and how to staff the church's music positions.

We noted how important music has been to the history of this church and how important these positions are to the life of the church.

- Religious education (RE)

A five-person committee, three adults and two youths, are searching for a new RE director. They want a good candidate and decided it was too rushed to get a good candidate by fall.

The committee decided to post an announcement for an Interim RE position, a part-time, remote position focused on planning for a new model for First U RE. The RE model the church uses now is the same model we used when we had 150 kids. The old model no longer works. The committee thought it was time to restructure the RE program.

The committee plans to hire an interim RE to help with the restructuring. They also plan to hire someone part-time to be on sight on Sunday mornings and to prepare the materials during the week.

The Interim remote RE position has already generated five applicants. Kim reported that the committee anticipates that the Interim RE will help facilitate congregational conversations about what we are doing now and what we want for the future. This process will require outreach and engagement to understand the congregation's vision for the church and RE.

Kim also pointed out that this is good work to do while the minister is on sabbatical. The minister's role is not to create the church's vision but to help us live into our vision. With Kim away on sabbatical, it is a good time to discuss what does not work now without worrying about hurting Kim's feelings.

New Business:

- Update from Sabbatical Committee

Steve Wilke is chairing the Sabbatical Committee. He reports that their work will ramp up after the Worship Committee retreat this weekend.

- Board and Council retreat-Saturday August 24

Since Board meetings are on Zoom, we do not have as much time to socialize as we would have if we met in person. To give us some in-person time to visit before digging into business at the in-person Board Retreat, we have added a kickoff dinner on Friday, August 23, 6:00-8:00 p.m. (time tentative) in Shaw Park at the covered pavilion. Spouses and partners are invited.

On Saturday, August 24, the policy board and council members are asked to block off 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. for the retreat. We will meet at the church. The agenda is a combination of team building and skill building. The skill-building will focus on policy governance. Participants will also walk around the church to see the facility problem areas to help the Policy Board better understand the problems the Facility Committee is working on. Finally, the retreat will discuss the role of the Sabbatical Committee as we move into a ministerial sabbatical in early 2025.

Sidney cannot attend, so Becca volunteered to take notes.

Action Items before the next meeting

- Chuck will nail down times for the Friday evening retreat dinner and get maps for the pavilion
- Chuck and Kim will provide additional details about the retreat
- Be on the lookout for emails about lunch at the retreat

Update from Sherry on the Outreach and Social Action Cluster

Sherry reported that the Outreach and Social Action Cluster has several small committees with overlapping community outreach and service responsibilities. The Church Council is working on a proposal to bring these groups together into an umbrella Social Responsibility Committee with Cathy

Rauch as chair. People will still function in lead roles for specific activities, like Food Outreach and Toward Justice, but Cathy will serve as chair for the umbrella committee chair. One of the agenda items for this newly formed committee is to figure out how to communicate better among the church's many outreach and social action activities. The new Social Responsibility Committee will have its first meeting shortly. Welcoming Congregations, Partner Church, and FCCF will continue to meet separately.

Process observer: Chris announced that everything was on time, and we finished nine minutes early. Chris said, "Everybody did a good job. Good communication. Good ideas. A lot of respect for each other. Good job, everyone."

The meeting adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

The next Policy Board meeting on Zoom is moved from the regularly scheduled time o Monday, September 9, to Monday, September 16. The time remains at 6:30 p.m..

Respectfully submitted,
Sidney Watson, Secretary