

First Unitarian Church of St. Louis Policy Board Meeting
Monday, December 9, 2024, 6:00–7:30 p.m. – via Zoom
Minutes

President Charles (Chuck) Eby called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

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

Absent: Rebecca (Becca) McBride

Church Council: Sherry Bassi

Staff: Rev. Kim Mason, Lynn Hunt

Opening Words by Larry, a poem called Snowy Night by Mary Oliver
Betty will do Opening Words in January

Board Covenant read by Larry

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1cBWTB1BODfNv4Xks6vuDCH0RmnF5brnV/edit?usp=drive_link&oid=105183447557092303738&rtpof=true&sd=true

Chalice Lighting by Larry

The Process Observer is Kathy

Check-in: Chuck asked us to share our favorite December holiday activity as our check-in this month.

Consent Agenda

Minutes of the November 2024 Board Meeting
Report of the Minister - Kim Mason
Report of the Administration - Lynn Hunt
Report from the President-Chuck Eby
Report from Director of Religious Education - Michele Grove
November Church Council Notes – Lynn Hunt
Financials from the Treasurer – Kathy Wilke

Larry moved to approve the November 2024 Policy Board minutes. Kathy seconded. Motion passed.

Updates

- Refreshing Vision Statement

We discussed the feedback we have received from and about the three Board-led small group Vision Sessions. So far, 30 people, including attendees and Board members, have attended. We have two more sessions in December. One is another after-church in-person event, And the other is scheduled for Wednesday, December 11, from 6 to 7 p.m. on Zoom. We will also have two sessions in January that will be designed and scheduled for young adults and RE parents.

Some consistent themes are beginning to emerge. Once the sessions conclude, we will review all the data we have collected more closely to share at the upcoming Mid-Winter meeting.

- Sabbatical minister contract

We signed a contract with Rev. Sabrina Trupia to serve as our Sabbatical Minister from January to April 2025.

- Church building condition outside consultant request to facilities committee

President Chuck sent the following request to the Facilities Committee Chair, Tom Finan, after receiving comments from the Policy Board.

The Policy Board requests the Facilities Committee obtain an outside consultant to perform a comprehensive Building Condition Survey. The primary purpose of the survey is to advise church leaders on anticipated repair and replacement costs in the next 5-10 years to continue using our buildings for church-related activities.

The consultant should have experience evaluating buildings like those on our property. While there are some businesses that exclusively evaluate churches, this is not a requirement of the Board.

The assessment would include our site, buildings, and associated physical systems. The Board requests the Facilities Committee obtain at least three quotes from qualified vendors for the same scope of consultation, review and rank them (1st, 2nd, 3rd, or not acceptable), and present the Committee's recommendations and rationale to the Board by the end of first quarter, 2025. The Board will select which proposal to accept. The Board anticipates the consultant cost will be approximately \$5,000-10,000.

Chuck has talked with Tom and believes he understands the charge. The Board will check in monthly with the Facilities Committee about their progress in obtaining the bids.

- Date for Mid-Winter meeting

Last month, the Board decided to have the mid-winter meeting on February 1, 2025, contingent on Interim DRE Michele Grove being available to facilitate. She isn't available on February 1 but is available on January 25.

Chris moved that the 2025 Mid-Winter Meeting be the evening of Saturday, January 25. Kathy seconded. Motion passed.

- Canvas co-leader

We are still looking for a canvas co-leader to serve with Erin Milligan. We discussed some excellent options among our talented members. We agreed that if our candidate cannot commit to a two-year canvass co-leader term, we would suggest that the canvas co-leaders recruit someone for an “intern” position to learn the ropes and serve as co-leader in 2026.

New Business

- Sabbatical responsibilities and call list document

Rev. Kim shared a Sabbatical Call Sheet she created so people know who to contact during her sabbatical from January through April 2025. It identifies who to contact about questions and concerns divided into areas like general questions, building, worship, rites of passage, finances, pastoral care, children & youth religious education and child care, scheduling and publications, membership and newcomers, technology, Board and governance, and social action and community services. The sheet includes the name of the person to contact, their position, and their contact information. For member contacts, it says to see the Church Directory for contact information to avoid publicly sharing people’s personal information.

The Sabbatical Contact Sheet will be available in hard copy in the Fellowship Hall next to the Sabbatical Brochure. Policy Board members, Council members, and Committee chairs will receive an electronic copy. The weekly e-blast will notify everyone that the Sabbatical Contact Sheet is available in Fellowship Hall and tell them how to request an electronic version.

Two action items related to the SCS:

1. Rev. Kim will send the final draft of the SCS to Policy Board members for suggestions and edits by the end of the day Wednesday, December 11.
2. Chuck will write a message for the Sunday e-blast explaining the Sabbatical Call Sheet, letting people know it will be available in Fellowship Hall, and explaining how to request an electronic copy.

- Conflict management during Kim’s Sabbatical

A minister’s sabbatical can create anxiety among members. We know from other congregations’ experiences that during a ministerial sabbatical, anxious people may act in ways that are not helpful. This behavior is not conscious acting out but unconscious behavior that typically results from unacknowledged anxiety.

One way sabbatical-related anxiety has surfaced in other congregations is an increase in members approaching leadership with complaints about how others are performing their

church roles. The complaints are often accompanied by a request that leadership “fix” the problem while holding the complainant’s identity anonymous.

We agreed that it is essential that we, as Policy Board members, carefully listen if people want to talk about concerns and problems. Listening is a critical part of what we should be doing. We should send people to folks who are the leaders in the areas they are concerned about, such as music, worship, or RE. However, the Policy Board should not be a conduit for anonymous criticism of those trying to do their best to help the church. We should help people deliver their constructive criticism directly.

- Personnel Policies update

The update is in the final stages of formatting and will be an item for new business in January.

- Policy Board member updates

Sidney cannot attend the January and February Board meetings. Chuck has asked Becca if she can take the minutes.

- Mid-Winter Meeting Planning

Michele will handle the program for the meeting, but the Policy Board is responsible for setting up, preparing the potluck dinner, and cleaning up. Chuck and Larry will join Rev. Kim and Michele during their weekly meeting to discuss the agenda and Policy Board’s responsibilities for the Mid-Winter Meeting. The board and council are typically responsible for the appetizer and drinks, with each group taking one. We have church members who enjoy making table centerpieces. Lynn noted that we have plenty of wine and other beverages available.

- Rev. Kim’s last Sunday before her sabbatical

Rev. Kim’s last Sunday is December 29. We agreed to have a celebratory cake in Fellowship Hall after service as a send-off, see-you-soon, au revoir, bon voyage celebration. Lynn will order the cake.

Process Observer Kathy said, “We did get bogged down a bit, but we did good.”

Adjourned at 7:36 p.m.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Sidney Watson
Secretary