

**First Unitarian Church of St. Louis**  
**Policy Board Meeting Minutes**  
**March 11, 2024 Virtual**

**President Steve Wilke called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.**

**Others in attendance:** Alison Lamothe, Vice President; Kathy Wilke, Treasurer; Sidney Watson, Secretary; Susan Lammert, Trustee; Chris Kocher, Trustee

**Absent:** Rebecca (Becca) McBride, Trustee;

**Staff:** Rev. Kim Mason, Lynn Hunt

**Church Council:** Sherry Bassi

**Other attendees:** Sarah Francois

**Opening Words:** Kathy Wilke

**Reading of Board Covenant:** Alison

**Chalice Lighting:** Alison and Kim

**Process Observer:** Kathy Wilke

**Canvas Update and Board Expectations**

Sarah Francois reported that the canvas is going well! Pledges now total \$323,536. We have \$106,464 to go! Sarah recommended that the Board calling people sooner to encourage them to pledge rather than waiting until the very end of the canvas drive.

Sarah will provide us with a list of people who have yet to pledge and suggested talking points. Most people don't pick up their phones when called. She recommends leaving a voicemail, a text, and an email.

**Treasurer's Report**

Treasurer Kathy Wilke announced we have \$12,000 in the Sabbatical Fund, more than we anticipated. The congregation budgeted money each year for the Sabbatical Fund, but no one told Randy, our accountant, to allocate the money to the Sabbatical Fund. In other words, Sabbatical money was in the budget but not transferred into the correct account for bookkeeping purposes.

We may soon have some specific and costly needs, like building upkeep and Sabbatical expenses.

Kathy also reported that the church's endowment fund was doing well.

The strong stock market is helping and we received several generous gifts to the endowment over the last year. The fund is now at \$1.17 million, even after taking out a sizable chunk for building needs. As Treasurer, she has tried to keep track of the principal so we don't dip into it. Kathy also explained that some people prepay their pledges, which can confuse the budget reporting. Pledged money for a future year's pledge is income for a future year, not income in the year received. We have shifted how this appears in the budget sheets so it is not misleading.

The church has a lot of small designated funds, like Sandwich Making, Music Fund, and the Memorial Fund. These are not endowment funds. However, unlike general funds, some of these small funds are allowed to carry over unused funds from year to year. For example, money in the Music Fund gets carried over year-to-year to ensure we have funds to fix a big-ticket item like the piano. For general funds, money not used in a budget year is lost.

A few funds, including the Wallace Fund and Dodson Fund, receive a portion of the proceeds from interest and value from the Endowment account. We don't have these figures yet for 2023 because this reckoning takes some time after the year's close.

Lynn noted that we may have some overruns in the Facilities budget this year because their budget has been flat for a few years, and costs have increased.

### **Sabbatical Planning**

Tom Finan, from the Worship Committee, met with the Board to brainstorm ideas for worship services during Kim's upcoming four-month Sabbatical from April to May 2024. We have several options, many of which can be offered in combination.

- Hire a Sabbatical Minister for four months who is full, half-time, or three-quarter time. A three-quarter-time minister would cost about \$4,000 a month or \$16,000 for four months.
- Have all services be lay-lead.
- Pay for worship speakers from Meadville Seminary.
- Pay UU ministers to fill the pulpit on Sundays. The speakers' fee was \$75 in 2017. We would also have to cover travel expenses because there is no ready supply of local UU ministers.
- Use a combination of lay-lead and paid outside speakers who might be UU ministers, local outside speakers, or local non-UU faith leaders from various faiths, including Christian, Jewish, and Islam.
- Combine the Sunday workshop with a Clark speaker.

### **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

Treasurer's Report – Balance Sheet January 2024, Budget v Actual January 2024

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

### **Service Awards**

The Board determines the recipients of two annual awards. The Ross Award recognizes lifetime service to First U. The Fathman Award is a “most valuable player” for service during the prior church year. An Awards Committee recommends the recipients for a Board vote and presents the awards during the Annual Meeting in May.

Steve will ask Becca to lead the Awards Committee. If Becca is not available, then Chris and Susan will serve.

### **Board Coffee Hour**

We discussed the pros and cons of the board hosting a Coffee Hour after the service, but did not take any action.

### **Board Nominations**

We also discussed ideas we might share with the Nominations Committee for next year’s President and Vice President.

### **Building Issues**

First U does not have a procedure for staff to pay for small-cost items. Facilities are dealing with the issue. They are trying to draw a line between major projects that require a process and minor projects where staff should have authority. We look forward to reviewing a proposal from the Facilities group.

Sherry gave an update on the bookstore. She recommends closing the bookstore and donating the remaining books. Margaret Weeks investigated rehabilitating the bookstore, but many people feel it no longer meets the church's needs.

Susan moved to close the bookstore and donate any remaining. Kathy seconded—the **motion passed by a unanimous vote.**

The next issue will be to decide what to do with the bookstore’s present space. Sherry will have the Council solicit ideas from the committees and do some brainstorming.

### **Action Items for Next Meeting: What needs to be done before the next board meeting?**

- Awards committees will meet, Steve will check with Becca about being chair.
- Steve will meet with the facilities committee about a process for small purchases.
- Board members will keep brainstorming and thinking of people who would be a good President or Vice President and pass those suggestions along to the Nominating Committee.

In April, Chris will give the Opening Words, and Alison will read the Board Covenant (which should be on the agenda.) The Process Observer is TBD.

Process Observer Kathy said, “You did great. You are good.”

**The meeting adjourned at 8:09 p.m.**

The next Policy Board meeting is on Zoom on April 15, 2024, at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sidney Watson, Secretary