

**Unitarian Universalist Society  
Board of Trustees  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

October 20, 2021 (virtual via Zoom)

**Present:** Alan Swanson (President), Joe Rasmussen (Past-President), Rochelle Honey-Arcement (Vice-President), Mike Pavelich (Treasurer), Diana Henry (Trustee), John Raley (Financial Trustee), Julia Audlehelm (Trustee), Hazel Seaba (Trustee), Rev. Diana Smith (Minister, Ex Officio), Paula Miller (Interim Secretary)

**Absent:** None

**Guests:** None

**Call to Order and Chalice Lighting:** President Alan Swanson called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. and lit the chalice. Rasmussen provided **Opening Words** from J.R.R. Tolkien.

**Check-In:** Members present provided personal updates.

**Board Read:** Members discussed the first 4 chapters from Trauma Stewardship by Laura van Dernoot Lipsky.

**Consent Agenda:** September 15 corrected Board Minutes, October 10 Exec Committee minutes, Treasurer Pavelich report and financial summary with CA Emma Barnum Financial Narrative, Rev. Diana Smith report including DCL Peggy Garrigues report, Jeff Walberg AV/Publicity update, CA Emma Barnum report, DLRE Marsha Thrall report, and DM Alex Heetland highlights. Rev. Diana has also included Peggy Garrigues' new position description. The motion to approve the consent agenda was made by Pavelich and seconded by Audlehelm. The agenda was approved unanimously.

**Board Committee Reports:**

Governance – 4 amendments to POLICY 1.4: Board Committees, Task Forces, Teams, and Interest Groups Policy were introduced: 3 were worked on last year to clarify how UUS members are selected for nomination to committees, and the 4<sup>th</sup> was written to clarify that the Right Relations committee needs to have a chair or co-chair from the Board. The motion to adopt the amendments was made by Pavelich and seconded by Swanson. The vote in favor of amending the policies was unanimous.

UUS Memorial Garden: Two new policies addressing the new UUS Memorial Garden were introduced. Rasmussen confirmed these are based on Iowa Code as well a review of practices at other churches. One primary concern is deciding who is considered to be a “friend” since we want to avoid any issue with who can use the garden at a time of emotional difficulty for people. The Governance committee confirmed that an application will need to be designed which can be approved by the minister or Board president if no minister is available. Rasmussen

advised that the UU church in Des Moines is the only other congregation in Iowa with a memorial garden, and they ask for a voluntary donation which avoids certain pitfalls with state laws concerning what is a “perpetual care” cemetery. Audlehelm confirmed that the \$300 voluntary donation amount came from the Des Moines UU church which sold bricks to finance their garden and confirmed she would be fine with removing a specific dollar amount. Swanson recommended voting on the policies tonight but advised that the 2<sup>nd</sup> policy, which addresses the interment process and voluntary donation, is really a procedure which can be changed later. Pavelich motioned to approve Policy 3.3-14: Memorial Garden Internment, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Henry. Raley moved to approve Policy 3.3-8, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Audlehelm. Votes to approve both policies were unanimous.

Personnel – Honey-Arcement reported that the fair compensation review of UUS staff has been completed and compensation for wages and health insurance is appropriate; however, professional expense compensation is below similarly-sized churches in the Midwest. She also requested clarification on whether personnel updates need to go to the Governance Committee before being brought before the Board? Swanson confirmed that the Personnel committee can make procedural changes as long as no financial concerns are involved. Rasmussen confirmed that the Governance Committee is currently working on clarifying what is policy vs “work rules” to determine when changes will need to go through them first. Swanson confirmed that the clarification of sabbatical guidelines will be discussed in the Governance Committee in Nov and then brought before the board so this change can be in place for 2022. Rev Diana confirmed that Peggy Garrigues’ job title will change to reflect more community engagement and will reflect the mission of collaboration with other organizations outside the UUS.

Finance – Raley reported that the Sept and Oct meetings revolved around BGI progress and feedback, and they have been discussing the Board’s requests for more transparency of endowment funds. The Endowment Committee meets next week and he will have an updated report after that.

Right Relations – Audlehelm reported that the committee is heading up Rev Diana’s installation ceremony scheduled for 3 pm on 10/24. They have assembled supply bags which will be delivered to all UUS members so they can participate in the ceremony either online or in person. The Treats & Talents fundraiser auction for the operating budget is currently being planned: the tentative date was Sat 12/04 in the evening, but this will also be the date of the Big 10 championship football game and they are concerned that this could be a distraction. Rev Diana confirmed that Peggy Garrigues has emails ready to change the date of the auction to the evening of Friday 12/03, and then the scheduled pick-up date for items would be the following Sunday. The entire event will be held online like last year.

Mission & Vision Review – Seaba advised that all 5 members met last Monday to continue work on the statement drafts for each of the 5 committees they are charged with. 4 drafts were ready and they discussed 3 in depth, but they have made excellent progress and they have a good framework to work from. Committee member Paul Pomrehn will be leaving at the end of the year.

## **OTHER BUSINESS:**

**COVID and UUS Reopening Progress:** At the last Board meeting we agreed to expand Phase 3 guidelines to 10-50 cases/100,000 case with the idea that these changes would be re-evaluated at the 11/17 Board meeting. Johnson County is currently at 17.5 cases/100,000. Rev Diana advised that there is an emergent question about serving food at gatherings: last weekend the Bengali community had a gathering at the UUS and they are considering renting the UUS for other gatherings, including a Diwali ceremony on the evening of 11/20. Food is a very important part of the Diwali ceremony but current guidelines only allows food outdoors. Peggy Garrigues and Rev Diana have been brainstorming about this and wonder if an exception could be made to allow food in the Fellowship Hall. Last weekend the renters were advised of our COVID policies but were allowed to have food. The COVID advisory team is currently on hiatus, but both Amy Fretz and Peg Voelker are available to provide feedback on this issue. Rev Diana advised that since there is no specific proposal right now she will discuss this with the COVID team members, including Paul Pomrehn, to see what their input is. Raley pointed out that any changes which need to be made to the COVID guidelines can be discussed by Board members via email.

**Balance and Growth Initiative (BGI):** Honey-Arcement reported that at last night's meeting they reviewed different fiscal scenarios for the next 2 years to address the need to balance the budget by 2024. The expected deficit for 2022 is \$87,500 assuming pledges of \$410,000 and rental income/fundraising of \$30,000. In 2023 the expected deficit is \$55,000 assuming \$440,000 in pledges and \$40,000 in rents/fundraising. Their proposal would ask for \$82,000 from endowment to help reduce the deficits over both years. In 2022 planning will begin on a new capital campaign to pay off the mortgage and put the UUS on more stable financial footing. Honey-Arcement confirmed that the Endowment Committee does not want to be approached on a yearly basis so this year's request should be sufficient to cover what is predicted to be needed for 2022-2023. Pavelich confirmed that they want to keep a floor of \$200,000 in cash in the bank to cover any extraordinary crises. Swanson recommended rewording the BGI statement to clarify that the minimal necessary withdrawals should be from general endowment earnings. Raley agreed there should only be a single request from endowment and asked the Board to decide on a number now which can be taken back to the Finance and Endowment committees before the Dec congregational meeting. Swanson suggested a \$100,000 request from Endowment, to be issued in monthly installments over 2 years, which is slightly higher than the BGI but still provides a small financial cushion. Raley added that we also communicate to the congregation all the work which has already been done to balance the budget, including bringing accounting in-house. Seaba asked about the phrase "systemic funding problem" and asked how this problem originated and will be reversed? Pavelich acknowledged that this problem could persist if rental income and pledges don't increase, and we do have a commitment to have a balanced budget by 2024 or we will face staff cuts. Rev Diana confirmed that we want to keep the budget for staffing stable right now as we move into new changes for how UUS operates structurally. The vision is to expand congregational life to include increased partnerships with the wider community such as the UUS had with the Bengali celebration last week. She advised that if this vision is not realized in

2 years then cutting staff costs is appropriate. Pavelich stressed that we also need to bring this discussion before the congregation, possibly in gatherings or online chat rooms, so they are aware of these changes prior to the December meeting.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**Stewardship Campaign:** has a board-approved goal of \$420,000 and launched Sunday, Sept 26. Rev Diana reported that right now \$356,000 in pledges has been received.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**Racial Justice:** The Racial Justice Team met on 10/17/21 and requested the Board's input on how to present both the ongoing discussion of adding the Eighth Principle and "Widening the Circle," the Board's last read. Swanson advised that adding the Eighth Principle gives this emphasis, and general discussion focuses on whether this is needed as a separate principle or if this idea is already included in the other 7 principles. Honey-Arcement wants to include this in the bigger conversation in order to help reduce "silos" of social justice activism where groups operate independently of one another instead of in community. Rev Diana advised that we should engage in this as a congregation and this discussion is also part of reviewing Article 2 of the bylaws, which is the mission and vision of the UUA and the sources of inspiration. Right now they are reviewing this in depth and additional materials should be coming out in January 2022. Swanson confirmed that this discussion is coming at the right time to work with BGI goals and should also be discussed at the 01/08/22 Board planning meeting.

**Board Planning Meeting:** Is currently set for 01/08/2022 which will focus on brainstorming 2022's 3 open questions relating to UUS's mission and vision.

**Climate Week NYC:** Swanson confirmed that out of more than 1000 congregations recognized as part of Climate Week NYC for environmental efforts the UUS was 1 of 2 churches to be recognized nationally for already cutting emissions to zero or near-zero.

**Guest Comments:** none

**Closed Executive Session:** The session was held for the Board to review its report prepared as part of Rev Diana's final Fellowship assessment process, in which 1.) a board report, 2). A report by the Ministerial Formation Team, and 3) a report by Rev Diana herself are presented to UUA by Nov 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Process Observer:** Pavelich

**Closing Words:** Raley

**Adjournment, and Extinguish the Chalice:** Swanson

The meeting adjourned at 9:34 pm.

**Next board meeting 7:00, November 17, 2021 via Zoom**

**Paula Miller, Acting Secretary**

**Draft #2.**