

Minutes

Board of Trustees: August 18, 2021, Virtual Meeting

First Unitarian Church of Pittsburgh

Board Members Attending: Lee Carnes, Vice President (2022); Sam Hens-Greco (2022); Heather Masterson, President (2023); Kate Snow, Secretary (2023); Bob Mitchell (2024); Rob Schwartz (2024), Amy DeChicchis (2024)

Board Members Absent: Julie Downs (2022); Kyle Gracey, Treasurer (2023)

Ex Officio Members: Rev. Kate Walker, Minister

Others: Becky Studer, substitute Recording Secretary

Visitors: none

1. **Call to Order (7:01) (Heather)** Heather called the meeting to order.
2. **Opening Words** (provided by Lee Carnes) Inspiring text by Dr. Rebecca Ann Parker, UU minister, theologian, and author.
3. **Welcoming Guests (Heather)** none.
4. **Announcements (Heather)**
 - a. The next regularly scheduled Board meeting will be on Wednesday, September 15, at 7:00 p.m.
 - b. Kurt Summersgill has agreed to continue as Recording Secretary; however, he could not be here this evening as his husband is recovering from surgery.
 - c. Heather welcomed Rev. Kate and presented her with a gift from Board members of a Coupon Book for sights, sounds, and experiences to introduce her to Pittsburgh.
5. **Consent Agenda (Heather) (handouts)**
 - a. **Draft Minutes**
 - i. Motion by Heather, seconded by Rob to approve the minutes of the July 21, 2021, Board Meeting. Approved by 7 yes votes.
 - ii. Minutes of the August Finance Committee meeting (accepted, no vote).
 - iii. Ratification of the unanimous email vote of July 24 for Lee Carnes as VP. Rob moved the motion to approve, Bob seconded. Approved with 7 yes votes.
6. **Minister's Report (Rev. Kate) (Handout highlights)**
 - a. Rev. Kate is in conversation with Cicely Moultrie, communications coordinator, for pending parental leave beginning at the birth of her baby, October 11. Many of her responsibilities will be handled by Nancy Latimer, Mark Whittaker, and Claus Makowka, however we may need to temporarily hire a part time individual to deal with tasks with deadlines, depending on the budget. Rev. Kate has communicated with the Personnel Committee regarding options and updates to our current Personnel Policy, which does not cover paid parental leave, and,

therefore, is not consistent with UUA values. Paid parental leave is recommended by the UUA for personnel policies. Rev. Kate has been discussing this with the Personnel Committee and will bring a recommendation to the September Board meeting. She will, also, work with the Personnel Committee to update the whole Personnel Policy, which is out of date. Rev. Kate has asked the staff to provide time-frames for their various tasks, and that information may lead to members of the congregation doing things on a volunteer or paid basis, while Cicely is out on leave.

- b. Rob questioned the presence of people in the sanctuary at the 8-15-21 service. This will be discussed in the context of Reopening (see item 8).
- c. Lee requested that the Board be presented with the credentials of Stephanie Gannon, who has requested affiliate minister status with 1st Unitarian, prior to the September Board meeting when a decision will be made. Rev. Kate advised the Board that she would present the materials she received from Stephanie Gannon before the next Board meeting. Stephanie has found her service to the East Suburban congregation to be too difficult to continue as she has a full-time chaplain position. Several comments were made on the necessity of having clear expectations and boundaries for anyone in this position, with mention of previous conflicts here at 1st Unitarian. Rev. Kate assured the Board that there will be a letter of agreement with expectations and responsibilities clearly defined presented to the Board before the September discussion. Stephanie has indicated she wants to be of service, and specifically mentioned the Green Sanctuary movement. Rev. Kate noted she had good experiences with two affiliate ministers at her previous church and all necessary paperwork will be forthcoming.

7. Board and Start-up retreat (Rev. Kate)

Rev. Kate suggested these events could be held in tandem in a single weekend utilizing Friday evening for the Board/Minister discussions and a UUA facilitated start-up workshop on Saturday, and any remaining Board issues continuing into Saturday, and maybe into Sunday, as well. She is communicating with Rev. Sunshine Wolfe, our regional liaison, as to when this could be scheduled. It will likely be in October, possibly with both in person and Zoom meetings. Board members will receive a Doodle Poll to indicate their availability once Rev. Sunshine has indicated when they are available.

8. Report on August 7 Workshop-Future Change Framework (Attendees: Heather, Lee, Rev. Kate, Bob, Kate Snow; see materials included with Agenda)

Lee presented an overview of the Framework, which was designed to address: How to End Temporary Measures, Amplify Innovative Measures, Let Go of Obsolete Activities, and Restart Paused Activities; presented by the Mid-Atlantic Region and put on by the Royal Society of Arts. In Lee's prior church they stopped Joys and Concerns which was mentioned as something that was stopped without taking into account the feelings of those who missed it. This is an example of something from the past that might be

recovered. Lee and Heather were in a group where they discussed the process whereby Board members could meet with congregants routinely to discuss current issues and help congregants know who their Board members are and how we are working to move us into our best future.

Rev. Kate noted that we as a church and a denomination are in crisis with our identity being challenged. The question remains as to how we can best respond and create a future that exemplifies who we want to be in this new normal reality. It was suggested that the VIM process could be helpful as issues are addressed. We, as the Board, have some capacity to help shape that narrative. The metaphor of composting really spoke to what is needed, as there are some chemical changes going on here, holding people in their discomfort, and not retreating backwards into the comfortable.

Bob discussed how we can end temporary measures and best resume in person activities safely as with an out of doors church wide activity. An innovative measure might be to offer on-line and in person Cottage meetings to broaden involvement, as was done by the Search committee. When the church tried to have small group Zoom meetings a few years ago to get opinions, people weren't as familiar with Zoom as they are have become, so it might work better now. Something we may want to let go is so many in person church business meetings. A critical challenge is how to best restart children's RE.

Kate Snow appreciated the value of interacting with other UUs, especially as the small groups were maintained together for their breakout discussions. Other churches seem to do more social justice work from within their churches and church property. They pull people into their space, where we emanate out. The reflective learning process that involves Scanning, Evaluating, Mapping, Tracking, and Responding was particularly helpful as well. She has obtained the recommended book "The Art of Gathering: How We Meet and Why It Matters" and highly recommends it to the Board.

Heather referred everyone to items in the Discussion Folder from Rev. Kate and reiterated her hope that a mechanism for better Board–Congregation communication can be implemented. One church had Board Members sitting during coffee hour as a way to be available for questions and comments. She would also like to bring the Framework and Discernment approaches to all functioning church committees and groups. Rev. Kate agrees.

9. Update of Reopening Implementation Working Group (Bob)

Bob reiterated that their primary focus is on how we can do something together safely. Ingathering as an outdoor event has been proposed, and the group will clarify how that may happen soon. Rev. Kate joined the last meeting.

The 'experiment' of worship services being open to people happened inadvertently after the premature announcement in the weekly email. However, it did serve to highlight the questions that need to be answered before more than five people will be allowed into the sanctuary together. Lee observed that it served to give a sense of how many people

could be accommodated safely spaced. One of the attending members had not been participating for some time but chose to 'return,' and the 'visitor' wishes to continue with us. The Reopening Group will discuss the issues and some will be resolved by email. There was a discussion about the logistics of an outdoor In-gathering. Rev. Kate is pursuing Winchester-Thurston as an option. Rob reminded everyone that a five-stage process has been approved with the Working Group deciding when we can move forward to complete 'opening.'" When that happens it will involve many more groups, such as ushers, welcoming, etc., which need to be taken into consideration. Sam expressed appreciation of Peggy Parsons Task Force and the Working Group and their study and process that emphasized our being considerate of high-risk individuals and proceeding cautiously. Rev. Kate noted that how to be inclusive has shifted and that we will need to deal with being a mixed population. The Reopening group will be mindful of the changing nature of this pandemic and make recommendations and decisions accordingly. A retraction of the invitation to be in the sanctuary for services will be included in the August 19, 2021, weekly email.

10. Reimagining Fundraising Task Force Update (Heather)

The task force will send their framework and recommendations to the Board later as their focus currently needs to be on the Annual Pledge Drive.

11. Annual Pledge Drive (Heather)

In an initial meeting with several new members Maria Lauro agreed to be a co-chair, and another committee member will step up to be the other co-chair. Rev. Kate's suggestion of initiating a 'rollover' of a member's current pledge, as was done at Mt. Vernon, was discussed. Rev. Kate noted that this approach diminished the anxiety of the Pledge Drive Team by 100%, and yet their budget did increase each year. Our team wants to shift the emphasis from an annual event to a sense of continuing stewardship. The challenge is how to best effect this change. They will report their conclusions and plans to the Board at the September meeting, when Board members will be asked to pledge. Amy brought up a conversation that she had with another church member about doing two-year pledges, instead of every year. Sam suggested that we create a data report to provide clear information to the Congregation about why we might be making some changes.

12. Building and Grounds (Sam and Bob)

Much of the report was an updating of ongoing projects. They are continuing the effort to obtain a comprehensive operational manual for the geothermal system. Bob has been leading the communication and has not been successful getting it from Jonathan Iams, the designer of the system, and will approach Sentry Mechanical, which built the system and is currently doing the maintenance of the unit. While the system does meet basic airflow requirements, we cannot increase the filter level to the standard needed to assure the best filtration, as it cuts the ventilation too much. We also need more details on their maintenance billing and about the computer that controls the system.

Martin Schmidt is in the process of obtaining bids for solar panels on the Mason wing. As the planned rain garden is no longer feasible, the memorial donation that was to be used for it may be applied toward the cost of the solar installation.

Heather has signed a contract to have our trees that overhang neighboring property trimmed.

The repair of the wall between our driveway and neighboring property is complete.

Bob reported the 'light it forward' project, updating much of the lighting in the church to be more environmentally-friendly and more cost-effective, is in process.

We have a recommendation for a company to develop signage to memorialize the geothermal system, but will wait until the conclusion of the solar installation to initiate specific designs, so both environmental improvements can be honored. The company that designs these signs is in the North Hills of Pgh.

13. Ombudsman Role update (Heather)

Heather is in conversation with Ebe Emmons, who will continue in role for a bit longer, which is right now basically answering email, and Al Schwartz, who was the initial ombudsman, about the rationale behind this position, how it has worked, and whether it should be continued. It was set up by the previous minister to help facilitate questions and concerns. Comments and questions include whether the ombudsman role is necessary, if it should be a Board member, the degree of detail that the ombudsman reports to the Board, the necessity of record keeping, and, if it continues, the need for a clear description to be included in the Governance Manual. Also how does ombudsman position relate to the HCC (Healthy Congregations Collaborative), as both of these basically serve the same purpose—to bring up a non-confrontational way to resolve issues? These concerns will be addressed as the update evolves. Heather, Sam, and Rev. Kate will create a process for the role.

14. Overview of church governance documents (Kate)

Kate reported the new Bylaws (approved by the Congregation last November) and the revised Governance Manual (approved by the Board in May) can be found in the Board discussion folder and duplications of Web postings will be eliminated to assure that only current documents are visible. The Governance Manual was revised to remove legalese and shortened to reflect the current governance processes by Kate, Rev. Connie, Scott, Lee, and Claus. The Board concurred it is a major improvement, and it is suggested that all such documents be revisited and updated every three years.

Bob inquired as to how these new documents relate to the other pieces of governance, such as committee and team charters, VIM, and HCC. Rev. Kate asked is there is an inclusive list of these other pieces, and if not a consolidated and updated list should be compiled. She also noted reference to a Manual of Operational Procedures (dating from 2012) that will need to be replaced. It was noted that Claus and other finance

committee members have updated their procedures: other areas likely will need to be revisited and revised by the individuals involved in the processes.

Heather noted that she had received a copy of Dan Hotchkiss's Governance and Ministry from Ebe. Bob noted we were introduced to it by Rev. David Pyle, our consultant for moving from the Carver Policy Governance model to the Hotchkiss shared ministry model. Amy has received a copy from Eleanor Mayfield; it was a recent tradition for retiring Board members to pass their copy along to new Board members for their reference.

15. Appreciations and Aspirations (all).

16. Adjourn (Heather) (9:10)

Respectfully submitted,

Becky Studer, substitute Recording Secretary

Approved by the Board: September 15, 2021

Kate Snow, Secretary