

MINUTES

Board of Trustees: March 15, 2023 Meeting First Unitarian Church of Pittsburgh

Board Members Attending: Rob Schwartz, President; Bob Mitchell; Christine Milcarek; Kate Snow, Secretary; Nick Izzo; Raeann Olander Murray; Heather Masterson; Kyle Gracey, Treasurer.

Board Members Absent: Amy DeChicchis

Ex Officio Members Attending: Rev. Kate R. Walker, Minister.

Others: Pat Schuetz, Temporary Recording Secretary.

Visitors: Sue Oerkvitz.

Meeting conducted via Zoom.

1. **Call to Order (Rob, 7:00).** Rob called the meeting to order.
2. **Opening Words (Rob, 7:00).** “The Power of I,” by Edward Everett Hale.
3. **Welcoming guests (Rob).** Pat Schuetz, Sue Oerkvitz.
4. **Announcements (Raeann, 7:02).**
 - Next Board meeting: Wednesday, April 19, 2023.
 - April opening words: Kate Snow.
 - Committee reports due in April: Finance, Nominating, Personnel, Program Endowments, VIM.
5. **Consent agenda (Rob, 7:03).**
 - **Draft minutes.**

Raeann clarified that her opening words were written by Lucille Clifton, not from the Trevor Noah show. Kate Snow will make the change.

A motion having been proposed and seconded to accept the minutes as amended, it was passed without objection.
 - **LRED Report.**
 - **Committee reports: Building, Committee on Shared Ministry, Finance, Safety.**
 - **COSM.** Kyle noted that it was missing. Rob explained that he is the committee liaison but is unsure how to get a report. Rev. Kate directed him to contact Mary Dennison.
 - **Building.**
 - Kate asked whether the Board voted to spend the \$8,000 to fix the sidewalk. Kyle explained that the money was available in the reserves approved with the endowment withdrawal in the fall, so a vote was not required.

- Nick asked if some of the money had come from the Memorial Garden fund. Kyle agreed it had.
 - Heather asked members to please try to submit reports by Sunday evening.
 - Bob noted that the solar panel work had been scheduled to start in April and asked why there has been a delay. Nick said he is still trying to get a firm date for the work, noting delays in getting the roof finished.
- **2022-2023 Board Priorities (review).**
Rob is seeking feedback.
 - **Minutes of March Finance Committee meeting.**
No discussion.
 - **Summary of Congregation Meeting re: Bylaws change.**
Kyle is preparing a document. Raeann said the Board would discuss it when it's ready.
 - **Minister's Report.**
Nick asked if Rev. Kate needed support from the Board to reduce stress on the staff. She reported that she's been in contact with Mary Dennison and with Rob, and that Mary has been very helpful.

6. VOTE: Ratification of email vote (Raeann,7:14).

February 26 email vote for Endowment Committees:

- Music Endowment: Christine Michaels
- Endowment for Ministry Children and Youth: Julie Downs
- Campus Ministry Endowment: Jennifer Adibi
- Social Justice Endowment: Sonia Wellington

Heather thanked the members for their fast response.

The motion to approve Christine Michaels (Music Endowment), Julie Downs (Endowment for Ministry, Children and Youth), Jennifer Adibi (Campus Ministry Endowment) and Sonia Wellington (Social Justice Endowment), having been proposed and seconded, was approved without objection.

7. Discussion of GA and delegate selection/in-home hospitality (Chris, 7:16).

- Chris noted that the Board does have a policy for delegate selection.
- She reported that she registered with Latonya Richardson the 6 members in our congregation who have offered home hospitality. She noted that nobody from GA has been in touch with her and asked Rev. Kate what she's supposed to do now.
- Rev. Kate didn't know but reported that last week Latonya told her she's found two volunteer coordinators.
- Chris said she had suggested Amy DeChicchis for the third coordinator, and Amy was approved.
- Rev. Kate will do more to promote GA to the Congregation.
- Chris observed that she has put requests for home hospitality in the newsletter and on the website.
- Rob suggested Chris ask Cecily to post it on the Church's Facebook page.

8. VOTE: Delegate Selection Policy (Rev. Kate,7:21).

- Rev. Kate noted that the Board did vote on this policy, in June, and suggested that what it needs to vote on now is the delegates: Jean Schmidt and Kyle Gracey have nominated themselves.
- She put the link to the policy in the chat, and the text on the screen, and read through it, noting that the Church is entitled to 6 delegates and emphasizing that delegates are encouraged to vote their conscience.
- She also explained that anyone can watch the business meetings on Zoom without registering and paying admission. Jean has registered.

A motion to change the text of the policy from "seven Principles" to "eight Principles" having been proposed and seconded, it was approved without objection.

- Rev. Kate updated the policy document in real time.
- Rob noted that publicity for GA has not included the cost.
- Chris pointed out the location of the GA notice on the Church website.

A motion to appoint Jean Schmidt and Kyle Gracey as delegates to GA having been proposed and seconded, it was approved without objection, with Kyle's abstention.

- Rev. Kate noted that she and Erica have delegate status, which does not count against the 6 to which the Church is entitled.

9. VOTE: Filtration Equipment Installation Estimate (Bob, 7:36).

- Bob reported that, there having been a fair consensus at the February Board meeting to proceed with estimates, he had done so. The projected cost for an air quality upgrade consisting of 8 heat pumps, of two different models (the one in the Undercroft having been replaced already), including shipping and installation, is \$22,085.
- To test the effectiveness of the upgrade, Bob explained that a loaner monitor from a local vendor has been installed in the sanctuary to collect 2 to 3 weeks of air quality data before and after the upgrade.
- Raeann noted that the estimate did not include tax. Rev. Kate pointed out that the tax will be waived because of the Church's non-profit status. Kyle confirmed that the Board does have the Pennsylvania non-profit certificate and can provide it.
- Kyle observed that we need to be sure air sampling tests the whole sanctuary.
- He was surprised that the estimate included 8 units, as the Board had only discussed the 5 units in the sanctuary, and that is what the Congregational survey described and what the Board approved in February. He noted that he is not supportive of upgrading units outside the sanctuary, and that we already have filtrations solutions in other parts of the building.
 - Bob agreed that HEPA units have been installed in the undercroft but often are not turned on; the replacement units would be programable and would eliminate the need for intervention.
 - Rob agreed with Kyle's point and asked if the Board could get an estimate for just 5 units.
 - Bob suggested that the price per unit wouldn't change and offered to get a new estimate.
 - He noted that this would eliminate a filter on the heat pump in the office and asked Rev. Kate's opinion of that.
 - Rev. Kate said she thought it was essential to have one in the nursery, or the Board would have to provide another solution.
 - She also pointed out that the ones we have in the Undercroft and elsewhere are constantly monitoring, and turn on when particulate matter reaches a threshold – there is no intervention required.
- Rob asked how long it would take to do the installation once the equipment was shipped. Bob said, the one we got took a couple of hours. Probably a day or two.
 - Rev. Kate asked if we could vote by email if Bob gets a new estimate.
 - Rob suggested we just vote now as it's an easy calculation to make – 5 units with shipping and installation should be about \$16,000.
- Heather asked how the Board is paying for this.
 - Kyle said, assuming 5 units:
 - Leftover money from the HVAC project, \$1,000.
 - Leftover money from the organ restoration project, about \$4,000.
 - The remainder from retained earnings – the leftover money from last year.
 - We will not have to touch the Endowment.
 - Heather asked if the Church had not received a restricted gift for this purpose. Kyle recalled that, yes, he had neglected to mention the gift. It's about \$1,000.

- He suggested we let the congregation know the Board would welcome donations for the air filter upgrade. Rob agreed, noting that our church is an old building, with a lot of maintenance issues.
- Bob reviewed the plans for before-and-after air quality testing, and Kyle and Rob agreed they are all on the same page. Kyle wants positive results shared with the congregation and noted that, should they not be positive, he expected to have a conversation with the vendor.
- Sue Oerkvitz asked if there will be a cost to uninstall the loaner unit in the Undercroft. Bob suggested that was a question for Sentry; he will ask.
- Sue noted that if the Board is not installing an air filter in the Undercroft, it needs some additional HEPA units for the downstairs lobby and the Youth Room.
 - Rev. Kate agreed and noted the ones in the office cost about \$900. She suggested the Board might do well to compare the cost of portable to permanent units.
 - Rob argued that the Board does not want to slow the process of getting air filters in the sanctuary, and suggested it vote on that immediately.
 - Kyle agreed, and noted that the Board has an Office Equipment budget that could pay for some of the portable units – the Board has choices.

A motion to approve the expenditure of up to \$17,000 for 5 air filters for the sanctuary having been proposed and seconded, it was approved without objection.

- Rob thanked Sue, noting that this is a big accomplishment. Rev. Kate concurred.
- Kyle suggested we let the Congregation know, and asked whether this should wait until after the installation and testing, and whether the Board could repackage the language from the original survey for the purpose. Rev. Kate suggested we continue with the agenda – the discussion of masking – and that it might inform the Board’s messaging.

10. Discuss Mask Policy (Rev. Kate, 8:03).

- Rev. Kate noted that with warm weather we can open windows. Also, that the Church is now an outlier in the community in requiring masking. She noted that she is hearing from the Congregation that mandatory masking seems to have reached its limit.
- Kyle observed that he doesn’t care about being an outlier but recognizes members’ strong desire to make masking optional. He notes that the VA no longer requires masking and that people aren’t even masking at West Penn Hospital despite the posted mandate. He thinks that once we have air filters installed it will be time.
- Rob is concerned that the continued mask policy may negatively influence newcomers.
- Heather observed that members are making full use of the mask-optional areas of the building.

- Bob wondered if we could do a survey about this, noting that the people who are coming to church are a self-selected population of those who are comfortable being at church. His concern is the unmasked infected, pointing out that masks are most effective in limiting spread from infected people.
- Kyle suggested we not touch the policy that allows Erica to set stricter standards for RE, noting an immunocompromised child is currently enrolled.
- Rev. Kate noted several groups who meet in the building, usually in rooms that are already mask-optional.
- Rob pointed out that covid is not going away, and we never planned to mask forever. He pointed out that the issue is timing – now, with windows open, or months from now when air filters are installed? Personally, he would prefer not to wait.
- Heather thought it made sense to send the Congregation a message now – to notify them that the air filters are coming, and that the masking policy is being relaxed.
 - Rev. Kate thought masking could be made conditional on the weather – if windows can be open, you can take off your mask.
 - Rob agreed, noting that weather can be variable in the spring, so masking could be made conditional on the air temperature.
- A motion was proposed, but members continued to discuss the wording. Rev. Kate pulled up the current policy and offered to revise Article 1 to read that masks are optional, rewording the rest for consistency, and return with a motion for a vote at the April Board meeting.
 - Rob asked if the Board proposed to implement a new policy before the next meeting.
 - Rev. Kate suggested the message to the Congregation include conditional language, and that by the April meeting we may have more information.
 - Heather offered to help draft the message.
 - Rob will help as well, and if the text is ready by Sunday, Kate will read it from the pulpit.

11. Summary of Congregation Meeting re: Bylaws Change (Raeann, 8:21).

- 13 attended Sunday’s Zoom meeting for discussion, plus 8 trustees. Attendees asked to have the discussion shared. She, Heather and Kyle took notes, which Kyle is synthesizing. He will submit his summary to the Board before it’s released to the Congregation.
- Most attendees were in favor of the amendment, but wanted to know what the Board is doing to fix the situation.
- Also, attendees asked what protections are in place to prevent malfeasance by a financial officer, or excessive longevity.

- They suggested other solutions, which the Board has already considered and rejected.
- The Congregational vote is scheduled for March 26. Nick has met with Claus to discuss how to manage the voting. Rob will run the meeting.
- Rob noted that another activity is scheduled which could suppress attendance – a voting quorum is 60. He checked the schedule, however, and reported that it's an Introduction to Unitarian Universalism, which Rev. Kate says won't involve members. Joy in Action is scheduled immediately after the Congregational meeting, but that should not affect attendance.
- Chris asked to discuss the Treasurer's position.
 - Raeann noted that Claus has offered helpful insight into that as well as the Controller's position.
 - Kyle called Chris's attention to the minutes of the Finance Committee, at which the Treasurer's position was discussed. He suggested it would be a good topic for the Board retreat.
- Rob thanked Raeann for leading the discussion meeting.
- Heather suggested the Board would get questions at the voting meeting, as well as amendment proposals, and that the Board should be prepared for them. She noted that it's hard to manage in the moment. Rob said he would consult with Kyle, and invited Board members to suggest questions that might be raised.

12. Board Check-in (Rob, 8:32).

Rob asked members to suggest one thing going well on the Board, and one opportunity for improvement.

- He began, noting that Board Priorities is going well; that getting them on paper helps with accountability. As an area of opportunity, he noted that this is a strong, efficient group, but he wishes he were better trained in the process of running a meeting. Kyle offered to run a training for Board members.
- Nick thought Rob's process was fine. He likes that the Board discusses issues before moving ahead on them.
- Chris offered Robert's Rules of Order as a document that's been helpful to her. She thinks Board members do a good job of listening to each other.
- Bob was happy that the process of discernment and planning engages the Board members, and that both VIM and the Committee on Shared Ministry have been reinvigorated. As an area of opportunity, he suggested the pipeline to financial offices.
- Raeann observed that as a new member she has felt very supported by experienced members. She noted that she struggles with SharePoint, and agrees with Heather that the sooner reports are posted, the better.
- Kate Snow said that as she is ending her third year on the Board, she's pleased by the respect members show each other, in light of legendary stories about prior Boards. She pointed out that she's ending her third year as Secretary, first year

shadowing and handling some duties, and she suggested that the position requires training; it's a job with lots of responsibilities.

- Kyle agreed with everything everyone had said. He thought he had seen concrete evidence of improvement in the Board's communication with the Congregation, and in its effort to invite input from the Congregation. He suggested Board members collectively could improve their understanding of what every Board member thinks before trying to decide something. Rob suggested that clarifying discussion topics with bullet points could help.
- Heather suggested that Board meeting agendas sometimes get too packed, and sometimes there's not enough time allotted for an issue. She loves the consent agenda, and that members come to discussions with a lot of background information.

13. Appreciations and Aspirations (Rob, 8:50).

- Rob thanked members for their input.
- Heather appreciated Rev. Kate's running of Game Night, noting that a lot of people were made happy. Rob seconded that, and thanked Heather for organizing it. He noted that attendance was 40 or so. Rev. Kate noted Theo Downs' leadership potential.

14. Adjourn (Rob, 8:52).

Respectfully submitted,
Pat Schuetz, Temporary Recording Secretary
Approved by the Board: April 19, 2023
Kate Snow, Secretary
