

Board of Trustees: July 16, 2025

First Unitarian Church of Pittsburgh

Board Members Attending (End of Board Term): Jim Pashek, President (2027); Kyle Gracey, Treasurer (2025); Maria Lauro, Secretary (2027); Jean Schmidt (2026); Richard Dum (2027); Deborah McGuire (2028); Casey Taylor(2028)

Absent Members: Lucinda Beattie (2028,) Brian Junker, Past President (2026)

Ex Officio Member: Rev Kate Walker

Others: Arthur Notaro, Recording Secretary

Visitors: Joan Harvey, Danielle Staresinic, Jan Harrison

Call to Order (Jim) (7:00) (Zoom)

1. **Opening Words (Maria)** ...Maria read from a UUWorld 2011 article by Chance Hunter, featuring the Bono quote “I am a sworn enemy of the saccharine, and a believer in grace over karma” Hunter says: “I believe that karma has its place. We always need to be aware of the consequences of our actions, being aware of the most insidious actions, unintended consequences ...grace can feel like a wave of relief or a spike of pain, but.....no one owes us grace....karma may win the day, but grace wins in the end.”
2. **Welcoming Guests (Jim) ...Joan, Danielle, Jan**
3. **Election of board Officers**
Richard motions to nominate Jim to be President, unanimous approval with Jim abstaining. Richard motions to nominate Kyle to be Treasurer, unanimous approval with Kyle abstaining, Richard motions to nominate Maria to be secretary, unanimous approval with Maria abstaining.
4. **Announcements (Jim)**
 - a. Next Board meeting: Wed., August 20, 2025 (zoom meeting)
 - b. August Opening Words: Richard
 - c. 2025-2026 Opening Words Roster in Sharepoint
 - d. 2025-2026 Liaisons and Report Schedule in Sharepoint
 - e. Committee reports due in August; COSM, Finance, Investment, Stewardship.
5. **Consent Agenda (Jim) (Documents)**
 - a. Minutes from June board meeting. Motion to accept (with edits) by Kyle. Unanimously approved.
 - b. Minister’s Report. No comment.
 - c. LRED Report
 - ...

d. Treasurer's Report and Finance Committee
Kyle notes this is the finance committee report. No comments.

e. Committee reports:

i. Capital Campaign

No comments.

ii. Finance

No comments.

iii. Personnel

No comments.

iv. VIM

Kyle thought updated annual priorities looked good, but noted that the second item, becoming a hub for activism, seems ambitious.

v. Progress toward Strategic Plan

6. Composting Proposal (Joan Harvey)

Joan presented the current state of the composting attempts. Jan, Danielle and Julia have been working together to advance composting at the church. Environmental Justice Action Team welcomed the proposal from Juliet Staresinic, noting that onsite composting fell away due to sanitary issues and lack of labor to maintain the compost. Juliet suggested a commercial composting service.

Joan reviewed that event hosts need to take care of composting duties. Joan, Danielle and Juliet would form a team to post within the kitchen what is compostable and what is not. There is a cost to the composting service, which could be looked upon as a utility cost that aligns with UU Values.

This would include bagging compost, putting it into the large bins on a weekly basis. This has occurred for 5-6 months.

Kyle asks if the \$45 rate per month is accurate to the church's needs, and Joan reports that this is true, though Louis may charge for a second bin for large events.

Richard asks if there have been any issues with the service trial. Joan reports that signage and education of event hosts will help clarify how to proceed.

Jim asks if a 6 month pilot project were proposed, what is the total cost proposed?

Jan lists about \$45 per month. Joan clarifies in about 6 months perhaps about \$450 would be spent.

Jean says thank you for the legwork and development. She asks how many little bags from the kitchens fit outside: Joan says about six. She says that most of the time the can is not full.

Kate mentions events such as wedding receptions can produce a lot of compost, and project our values to rental tenants.

Kyle comments they are not sure where the money will come from for the pilot, but they can research and present at next month's meeting. Then it could be integrated into next year's budget. In the short term, the Social Justice Endowment has granted funding for one year of service.

Jan mentions Dan and Rita can be consulted about Dan making sure the compost is put outside.

Jim mentions to vote so in August we know we will need to find money or not. Kyle supports a pilot. Richard seconds it. Unanimous approval.

7. **Quarterly Financial Reports (Kyle)**

Income and Expenses:

Kyle reports things are in an ok position, not amazing or terrible. Year to date is the current focus, we have received 53% of pledges for the year, but this is typical and a slightly larger dip than last year. Investments are ahead due to market conditions. Other incomes have been reasonable. Overall we are only a few thousand behind. Payroll is slightly higher, but this is typical as most payroll is skewed toward the beginning of the year. B & G is high, around 8000 high due to paying for some of last year's security guards during the 2025 year. This will be high this year though last year was low. Insurance is high, will need to check for an unacknowledged premium increase. Solar panels have been great, otherwise unremarkable. We are about 7K high on spending. Overall expectations were we were behind, but we are around 11K behind, though this is not concerning due to the projected summer dip. We need to pay attention that pledging stays up and we don't go overboard on spending.

Balance Sheet:

Nothing super remarkable. This does not include investments.

Capital expenses: a gift was received to cover the stained glass repairs, which will go to zero. Fan replacement within the sanctuary will be necessary.

Important to not over commit on projects for which we will soon have a second invoice. We will likely need to cut spending for next year to have an overall positive budget. Right now we are not in a position to spend a lot on new initiatives.

8. **Capital Campaign Update (Jim)**

We have recorded pledges of \$1,092,581.02 from 115 of 188 possible pledge units. Of that, we have received \$246,128.91 in hand.

Jim reports the sanctuary lighting scope of work is underway with a half paid contract.

The work will happen in August and be complete by Ingathering in September. This will

include the destratification fans, the lights and the video screens. Jim requests to rename to an update on expenses on the capital campaign. Maria please fill in the numbers from Jim

9. **Vote: Assessment Schedule (Kyle)**

Kyle reports we have seen the schedule. Kyle asks about performed updates. Jean comments Kyle added plans for the stewardship committee. Kyle did update outreach goals for the committee, to reach out to less active pledgers but not a majority of the congregation. Maria mentions calls will be targeted rather than the past approach. Kate mentions like any good plan to give it a try and tweak after reviewing results. Kyle mentions some formal review is included. Jean asks who is COSM liaison, requests Richard to share this back to the COSM committee. Kyle moves to approve schedule as shown. Jim calls to vote, unanimous approval.

10. **Discussion: Board Goals for 2024-2025 (All)**

Jim discusses retreat comments. It isn't as developed as last years. Jim comments that understanding how goals can match our capacity is very important. Jim questions if goals can be rewritten to be more precise and specific. Kyle comments goals are slightly ambitious, but not overly. Jean comments loves that B & G sign item is pulled out, like to let them focus on other projects. Like to see pieces of this that overlap with strategic plan priorities, and specified articulation.

Casey comments that perhaps “tactical map” could replace the word implementation. Jim appreciates update.

Jim will continue to tweak and add to agenda for August. Responsibilities with name assignments to be available for August review and completed by September.

11. **Presentation: “Community of Communities: Shaping the Leading Edge” (Jean)**

Jean posted 2 video links in this month's Board Discussion folder that give a good introduction to the "Community of Communities" idea. It is recommended that all Board members watch these, and feel free to share with others at church. Kyle asks if these videos are similar to the workshop items from 'Building a Culture of Inclusion' held at our church in 2023, and they are. Paula Cole Jones is a UUA elder who was recently awarded. Communities are the engines of the association, congregation, where people find connection. Why do we need a shift? The 8th Principle is woven throughout the new UUA Shared Values. Living into the 8th Principle is really what this 'Community of Communities' idea is all about at its core. . The 8th principle is about developing diverse multicultural communities, and we can still use DEI in efforts to be boldly religious. How do we become more inclusive and more equitable to make the ground here more fertile for diversity to grow? In 4 key ways: 1. Shifting from 7 to 8 Principles. 2. Moving to a culture where transforming conflict (instead of conflict avoidance) is a leadership competency. 3. Moving from thinking about church as a family to thinking about church as a 'Community of Communities'. 4. Moving from a Dominant culture to a Multicultural Paradigm. Such a paradigm shift from a dominant culture to a multi cultural will help build a more resilient culture.

- a. Jean presents two diagrams of how this can work. How did the community of communities develop at First? It began in 2021 when our 8th principle group began talking about the 7 to 8 principle shift. In October 2022, the congregation voted unanimously to adopt the 8th principle. Living into the principle would be the real work. In October 2023, Paula led a weekend-long workshop at First U entitled 'Building a Culture of Inclusion'. Then in June of 2024 we continued our 8th Principle work with a 9-member First U team joining a national UUA-wide initiative called 'Community of Communities: Shaping the Leading Edge'. The first year of the initiative has completed, and the second year will start this September.
- b. After COVID, the RE community needed support. Casey is a large part of religious education.
- c. Emphasis on covenant. Jean expressed that First U is not a very covenantal church and that we could perhaps benefit by increasing this aspect of how we work together. Kyle pointed out that we do actually have a Board Covenant (p. 9 of the Governance Manual). This was written and approved by the Board that was in place in 2022 or 2023. Board priorities this year includes building a behavioral covenant for the board, and help to apply in other ways.
- d. Racial justice task force and religious education collaborated on a parenting for racial equity panel at the church.
- e. Be recognizing and encouraging communities opening to the outside. Women's Alliance, Racial Justice Task Force, etc.
- f. How does this work relate to the board priorities?
- g. Kyle comments the board does have a covenant on page 9 of the governance manual. Jean asks who wrote it. Kyle said it was written before Kyle joined the Board, and Kyle isn't sure exactly when, and then the prior board approved an update of it, around about 2022 or 2023.
- h. Jean said (and showed a slide to explain) the the Leading Edge Initiative is "an extension of ongoing 8th Principle work begun in 2021-2022". Kyle noted that the Leading Edge Initiative has not been explicitly approved by the congregation.
- i. Jean mentions that you have to find the people in the congregation who are change agents.
- j. Kate recommends that the Board covenant be reviewed each year at the Board Retreat, so that all board members are aware of it and have a chance to commit to it. Kate also asked Jean to find out if the 'Leading Edge' group at First U might consider doing a worship service to help the congregation learn about this 'Community of Communities' initiative and why it is important.

12. Future Business (All)

- A. Ingathering Planning (9-7)
- B. Goals of the Board
- C. Syndicated Reporting on Local Audiences - Casey
- D. Kate suggests to talk about Communications for ½ hour, Rob, Maria, Michael Safran, Mark Whittaker, Cecily - locate early in the agenda

- E. Nick would send out a recurring calendar reminder for the board meetings, Arthur to transition to B&G
- F. Need a vice president
- G. Jean adds VIM should add a review of a draft of the Strategic Plan- for 10 minutes

13. Acknowledgements and Appreciation (All)

- A.) Jim appreciates Brian 's leadership, he has been wonderful!
- B.) Jean appreciates Jim for stepping forward as president!
- C.) Maria appreciates new members for joining the board! Thanks to Arthur for the past year of recording, before updating the notes.
- D.) Thank you to Maria for taking on the role of secretary!
- E.) Kate thanks Arthur and Jim for taking on new roles!

14. Adjourn (Jim) (9:00)

Respectfully submitted,
Arthur Notaro, Recording Secretary

Approved by the Board:
Maria Lauro, Secretary