

USH Board of Directors – January 10, 2023

Present – Eve Pech, Peter Meny, Jon Covault, Sarah McKenzie, Tina Davies, Judy Sullivan, Paul Cipriano, Dana Donovan

Absent - None

Guests – Stanley and Nancy Kemmerer, Sue Smolski, David and Janice Newton, Judy Robbins, Rick Tsukada, Laura Cipriano

6:32 – Check Ins

6:41 – Opening Words

6:45 – Dana read the Board Covenant

6:47 – Board Minutes – Minutes were approved via email vote in December.

6:48 – Status of the Minister’s search: our posting on the UUA website is live and viewable by candidates. We will look into adding the document to our website and providing a link to it for any members who would like to view it. Should we post on other job boards (Harvard Divinity School, Hartford Seminary)? Maybe wait and let the UUA posting percolate prior to posting elsewhere. Also, Eve will reconnect with Keith Kron to find out who our contact at the UUA should be.

7:00 – Stewardship: Paul had a conversation with Carolyn Carlson. Theme is Love in Action; Carolyn is looking for some examples of how the congregation/Lay Leaders put love/covenant into action. Email any suggestions to Carolyn and/or Paul. She is also looking for some people to give testimonials on why they give (one for each week in March). Also – are we going to hold a semi-annual meeting in February? If not, Carolyn would like a budget workshop. Exec Committee discussed holding a semi-annual meeting on February 19 (to coincide with soup Sunday). Semi-annual meetings are informational, non-voting meetings. Board agreed to hold a semi-annual meeting on February 19.

7:10 – Worship Associate Update: Judy Robbins gave an update on Sunday Services and WAs and some concerns for the attention of the Board. (See Attached). Maybe create a simple pamphlet to describe how things get done at the Meetinghouse and who is responsible for what. Use Rev Cathy and Heather’s sabbatical pamphlet as a template. Peter, Judy, and Paul are willing to help put together an updated pamphlet for members. WAs will send someone to Board meetings more regularly to be in better, more consistent, communication with the Board.

7:48 – Minister’s Discretionary Fund: We established a practice when Rev. Terry left that the Caring Network bring forward recommendations to the Board, and then the Board would authorize the Treasurer to release the funds. Eve asked if Janice was comfortable with this practice. Janice stated that the Caring Network is not in charge of the MDF; They made suggestions but did not have knowledge of IF funds were disbursed. The person who needs the help should be the one to decide if anyone else should know. Peter suggested that it should be either JUST Jon Covault as the Treasurer, or perhaps the Treasurer plus another Board Member. Janice would be comfortable making those decisions with Tina and Jon until such a time as we have a minister. At which point we have a minister,

all decision making on the MDF would revert to the minister. The Board agreed with this updated practice.

7:56 – Security Task Force Update: Audit Committee: This audit is to satisfy the Security Grant application. Committee is Sherry Manetta, Laura Cipriano, and Miriam Byroade. Security Committee will be meeting again soon to flesh out security and safety plans, and will meet monthly.

8:00 – Interfaith Power & Light Grant: Some movement, Bill Simmons has been put in charge of the contact with Interfaith Power & Light. They don't have a lot of information and details yet on actually disbursing the money.

8:02 – Appreciation Gift for Cressy Goodwin: What should we do to show our appreciation for all of Cressy's help. Paul spoke to Cressy, and he is open to anything. We had previously discussed either a certificate, or perhaps a donation to UUS:E (his home congregation) in his name, or a gift card to him personally. We will create a certificate of thanks and get him a \$150 gift certificate to a restaurant (Paul will find out where). Eve will talk to Karolina regarding the actual certificate.

8:08 – Council Reports: (See Attached)

Treasurer's Report – highlights: we are collecting more \$ doing the 50/50 GNO. Pledge fulfillment is going well, we are at about 80% collected. Looking at 7% increase in the budget for next year, which includes a full-time minister and the expanded office administrator position. Gas bill went up significantly.

Social Justice – highlights: we're starting to see more of a willingness in the community to have a relationship with USH. Operation Fuel (this month's GNO) doesn't need volunteers, they need the word to get out there that there is money available for people who need help paying their utility bill.

Community Within – highlights: things appear to be operating smoothly within the council.

Spiritual Life – highlights: Peter going to meet with the youth group on the 23rd to see how we can get them involved in Sunday worship, will report back to the Board in February.

Administration – highlights: Meeting House Presents will be getting some help from University of Hartford students with marketing the concerts (actually under Community Within). Paul was also wondering who usually completes the congregational certification to the UUA (Used to be combo of Minister, Admin, and Bookkeeper).

Judy made the motion to accept Council Reports, Peter Seconded.

Aye – 8

Nay – 0

Abstain – 0

8:24 – Guest Comments – Comments from David Newton and Stan Kemmerer.

8:26 – Peter Meny made the motion to adjourn, Sarah seconded.

Aye – 8

Nay – 0

USH BOARD MEETING AGENDA - 1/10/22 at 6:30pm –Zoom meeting

6:30pm Check in - 15 mins.

6:45pm Opening Words, Eve – 2 mins

6:47pm Board Covenant, Dana - 2 mins.

6:49pm Approval of Board October Minutes, Sarah - 2 mins.

6:51pm Status of minister search - 10 minutes.

7:01pm Stewardship questions- Paul-20 minutes

....Planning for Semi Annual meeting 2/19 to include Stewardship message

7:21pm WA update – Judy Robbins- 15minutes

7:36pm- Minister's Discretionary Fund- 5 minutes

7:41pm- Security Task Force update- Audit committee- 10minutes

7:51pm- Any more information on Interfaith Power and Light Grant- 5 minutes

7:56pm- Cressy Goodwin recognition- 5 minutes

8:01pm -Acceptance of Council Reports, Comments, Questions - 15 min

8:16 pm Guest comments – 10 min

Unitarian Society of Hartford Board Meeting
 Jan 10, 2023
 Worship Associate Presentation
 Delivered by Judy Robbins

The following report was prepared by Worship Associates Judy Robbins and Sue Smolski, Rick Tsukada.

State of the Pulpit Report

The Worship Associates have the pulpit virtually filled through June and we will begin planning for summer at our February meeting. We need to plan months ahead to accommodate our speakers' schedules. Planning also means that we are not operating in crisis mode. Feedback on services continues to be favorable.

Sue Smolski is our current Worship Associate Chair. The leadership for the coming year will be determined in the spring.

Concerns

The fallout of Covid hit all churches hard and we are no exception. The loss of Rev Terry and the confidentiality around that left many in the congregation mistrustful and asking many questions. The Sunday services over these past ten months have consciously tried to rebuild trust and deepen a sense of community.

We are congregants who have a unique perspective. As Worship Associates, we have the ear of the congregation. People frequently ask us questions or bring concerns to us. As congregants ourselves, we, often share those concerns.

Filling the pulpit is only part of a minister's job. The other part is a long list of administrative, supervisory, and pastoral care duties, among other things. To whom do these fall under our current circumstances? When congregants come to us with procedural questions, we frequently lack the answers and we are not sure how to direct them to get answers. I (Judy) sent an email on Dec 1, 2022 to Eve, Dana and Peter with a list of the kind of questions we are getting and we thought it was worth updating here.

We believe that we would have a healthier, more informed, more empowered congregation if everyone knows how USH is currently operating. The following questions all boil down to one large question: *without a minister, how do things currently work at USH?*

- The "wheel" chart is not particularly clear. Few people know, for example, what "Community Within" means. A list of who to direct questions to with contact information would be really helpful to get answers to questions.

- Who makes what decisions? How? Some decisions need to go through the board but others do not. How to know which is which?
- Who is the point person for adult programs?
- Who is in charge of RE? Who is supervising Annie? What should we tell a visitor about RE?
- If we want to organize a potluck or food after a service, who do we go to?
- Is there a plan to address our shrinking donor base?
- How is the endowment being managed?
- Is there someone in place who could serve as a minister or chaplain for a congregant who is ill or dying? Who would do a funeral? Or other rite of passage? Who organizes those events?
- What is the process for hiring a contract minister? What part does the congregation play in that process?
- How are purchases made? For example, we could use a few more “card” tables for coffee hour. Who is empowered to make those decisions?
- A woman cried on Dana’s shoulder one recent Sunday. These situations need careful handling. What is the procedure for handling sensitive situations like this where a professional response may be needed, eg a minister or therapist?
- What are **actual** membership numbers currently? The online member directory does not reflect the current congregation.
- Without a clear understanding of our membership numbers and our volunteer base, how can we evaluate the success of our ministries or plan for future ministries?
- Is there a plan for operating as a smaller church?
- We recommend at least one more congregational meeting to discuss changes to UUA Article II and the implications for USH.
- How are delegates to GA from USH chosen? Given the importance of voting on Article II, will delegates “vote their conscience” or will they be charged to vote as the congregation wishes?
- One Sunday no one had a key to open the office. The Sunday service cannot happen without access to the office. We need to have plans for potentially disastrous situations like this. Key pads?
- We have a number of people who are either at Seabury or are infirm at home. How are we ministering to them? Is there a plan to incorporate them better into the life of USH?

These specific questions and others as they arise are the kind of things congregants want to know.

In Conclusion

In February, the WAs will begin to plan for summer services and in early June we will be working on the fall/winter 2023-24 schedule. We are aware that the Board has submitted an application for a contract minister. All of us are looking ahead hopefully. Late spring would be an ideal time for the WAs to coordinate with the Board on a vision for the next church year. Once we are united with a common vision, the WAs can craft services that convey that vision to the congregation.

To recap, the more we as a congregation are informed about how USH operates and the common vision and goals we are working toward, the healthier and more empowered we will be. Having a vision keeps our spirits up and as a consequence it inspires volunteerism and financial support.

We hope this report will facilitate further dialogue. Everyone here loves USH and this report is offered with good intentions in service to USH.

- End -



Sarah McKenzie <sarah.h.mckenzie@gmail.com>

Community Within

Christina Davies <daviesush@gmail.com>

Tue, Jan 10, 2023 at 2:40 PM

To: Eve Pech <elpech@sbcglobal.net>, DANA DONOVAN <dedanu49@gmail.com>, Jonathan Covault <jncovault@hotmail.com>, Sarah McKenzie <sarah.h.mckenzie@gmail.com>, Peter Meny <plmeny9@gmail.com>, "Sullivan, Judy" <jasullivan57@gmail.com>, Paul Cipriano <pcipriano01@gmail.com>

All areas have been holding steady, functioning as desired.

With Laurie Kelliher overseeing Membership activities, there's renewed attention to Welcome Team staffing, and resurrecting First Sunday Connections under the stairs provides additional opportunity for coffee hour socializing in a quieter, more focused environment.

Tina

Social Justice Report January, 2023

The committee met on December 20 via Zoom. Beth Brigham, from The Universalist Church of West Hartford attended and discussed the Fern Street Food Ministry. She explained the five different food programs that they currently administer and the opportunities for USH members to participate. Louise and I have rescheduled the meeting with Katherine Wilson to discuss the backpack program to Jan.13.

The Good Neighbor Offering (GNO) program continues to have increased donations for both the community organization and USH. \$1056 was raised in December for the Blue Hills Civic Association.

We are planning a Reproductive Justice Worship Service for Feb.5. Louise Harmon, Dana Donovan, Sherry Manetta and I met for a planning session with Sue Smolski, who is the Worship Associate for that Sunday. Our intent is to discuss the scope of reproductive justice and consider how our UU principles inform our actions. We have invited three younger women from the congregation to participate with us.

Jessica Puk, founder and board president of the REACH Fund of Connecticut (Reproductive Equity, Access and CHoice), will attend our January 17 social justice meeting to discuss the work of this newly formed organization. REACH is the designated February GNO, and a representative from their board will attend the Feb.5 Sunday service to tell us how this organization is offering financial aid to any and all women seeking abortion care in CT, whether they are CT residents or non-residents. All are welcome to attend the social justice meeting, which will be via Zoom. (link on USH calendar and enews)

Registration for GHIAA (Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance) Core Team Training is scheduled for four Thursday evenings in February via Zoom. Registration link: <https://www.tfaforms.com/5037056>

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Sullivan
Chair, Social Justice Sub-Council

Spiritual Life Council Report January 2023

Worship Associates

We had four services in a one week span from December 18 -25! The Worship Associates deserve a great deal of credit for making this happen without a minister. We are also grateful to Sam, Annie, Ushers & Greeters, as well as Buffie, Karolina and the volunteers who put all those Orders of Service together.

The WA's have planned services for the rest of the church year (end of June) and are ready to welcome a new minister if we are able to hire one before then. If a new minister is not hired before the summer, the WA's may need others to plan services for the summer.

SpiritLife – Nothing new to report.

R.E.

Fourteen children and youth attended the Christmas Eve service and participated in the story telling by Annie that was enjoyed by the congregation. I will be meeting with members of the Youth Group on January 22 to get their ideas on how they can be more involved in Sunday service.

Annie will begin some on-line training for UU RE educators next week.

Music Ministry – Sam reports that the choir is still developing. He is hoping to have the choir sing again at a service in February and he is working on re-arranging some existing songs to accommodate a smaller group.

Chancel Art – Nothing new to report.

Treasurer's Report – January 11, 2023

Financial Status/Cashflow

The USH financial status and cashflow remains healthy. Pledge payment response remains excellent with 80% of pledge dollars collected by end of 2022 (50% of pledge period). We continue to not use funds from the endowment.

Sunday offering/ GNO 50:50

For the 4 months September – December, 2022 donations collected for our monthly good neighbors has been averaging over \$1,000 and the USH portion has been \$435/month Around half of donations are designated to be 100% for our GNO. For the 21-22 budget year Sunday offerings totaled \$2,900 and for our FY 22-23 we had budgeted \$4,000 income for Sunday offerings which is in line with the past 4 months.

Finance committee.

An initial budget planning meeting is scheduled for Jan 26, to better inform our stewardship goals for the FY 23-24. The draft budget includes a stewardship goal of a 7% increase in pledges compared with FY22—23.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jon Covault, USH Treasurer