

First Universalist Church, Unitarian Universalist  
Auburn, ME  
Board of Directors  
Meeting Minutes  
March 1, 2023

Present: Anne Perron (President), Linda Greathouse (Vice President), Jane Pentheny (member-at-large), Betty Riggan (member-at-large) via Zoom, David Das (Clerk), Rev. Jodi Hayashida (*ex officio*)

Invited Guest: Rev. Paul Langston-Daley (via Zoom)

Guests: Levesque; Toby Haber-Giasson (Communications chair); Greg Whitney (chair, PSDI); Angela Foss (chair, Music Associates); Sharon Kinsman (Pastoral Ministry committee); Esther Tucker (Membership committee).

6:35: Anne Perron called the meeting to order.

Jane read the Mission Statement; Linda read the Vision Statement.



***Board Chalice***

Anne brought out the “Board Chalice” that she has created: a piece of 60-80 year old apple wood (grows slowly; dense) with hieroglyph figures to represent the Church supported by 3 legs made of oak with similar figures to represent the many members of the congregation who support the church.

Brief Sharing by Board members.

**Consent Agenda:**

Approval of February 15, 2023 Meeting Minutes.

Minister’s Report (appended): Jodi outlined her plan on what needs to be in place before she leaves and what needs to be well documented for the interim minister.

### **Open Session:**

Toby: expressed her concern over the lack of coordination in scheduling events. In the past, the Council of Committees has coordinated events. She is still not clear as to the role of the Council of Committees; would like to convene a meeting of the Council soon. She had questions about the purpose of the proposed March 12 meeting with committee chairs and church leaders.

Anne: has a meeting with the church administrator on Friday to address issue of calendar clarity.

Linda: looking to improve the church website – there would be a home for each committee on the website with calendar and announcements.

Toby: as Communications chair – role is to coordinate all the communications platforms; mediate content.

Anne: need for a healthy, forward-looking web presence as we engage in the interim minister search process.

Greg: question about what is allowable interaction with Jodi following her departure.

Jodi: chance social interactions/conversations around town (i.e. Shaw's) perfectly ok. Conversations about church life, policy etc. not ok.

### **Approval of PSDI Sewall Grant Application:**

Explanation of the initial Board vote approving the application. Board voted in favor via email. However, Board policy requires unanimous agreement to hold a vote via email. Two members were out of email range.

Motion by David to approve the Sewall Grant application; second by Linda. Unanimous approval.

### **March 12 Meeting Update:**

Board to meet with committee chairs and other church leaders after service. To address issues of communication, Board liaisons with individual committees; committee schedules.

### **Interim Minister Search Update:**

Linda reported out that the Interim Search Committee:

- Has been meeting weekly
- Has registered with the UUA Transitions Office
- Has contacted Christine Purcell, our liaison in the office
- Has started reading a lot about the process
- Has looked at sample applications by ministers seeking an interim position
- Congregational application – probably a 40-60 page document – centered on 10 key questions to be answered by the full Board
  - Board retreat scheduled for Friday, March 17 to address congregational application.

### **Debrief on Restorative Justice Circles with Rev. Paul Langston-Daley**

Rev. Langston-Daley started with a brief recap:

- Most everyone seemed to be satisfied with the circle process.
- The PSDI issue characterized by good intentions; no sense of malice on either side.
- PSDI wants to do good work.
- Congregation wants to support it, but to have clear expectations and boundaries.
- Need to rebuild trust within the congregation; the fragile nature of trust in many congregations – a real impact of COVID.

Rev. Langston-Daley then walked us through (adding significant explication and nuance) his written analysis. Four major areas for us to consider;

- Trust Building:
  - Create small group opportunities – affinity groups; committees. The importance of starting and ending with a ritual. To deepen relationality.
  - Review/create congregational covenant: how do we hold each other accountable for bending/breaking the covenant? What does it mean for the covenant to be broken. (clarification of this in discussion section below)
  - Be explicit on how to negotiate conflict; set up a process.
  - Recommended a deep dive into “Classism” and its relationship to Capitalism.
  
- Communication:

- EVERY congregation has communication issues.
  - Encourage people to do the hard work of being a member of the congregational/to take on congregational responsibility by committing to read all communications.
  - Develop better and varied ways of disseminating information.
  - Reconsider social media:
    - It is an outward facing document. Not healthy to have church debates on a document open to the public.
    - The entire UUA world is impacted by a single congregation's social media ugliness.
    - Facebook: have a moderator? Shut it down?
    - Many congregations do not allow member input on the Facebook page.
  - Hold regular monthly Town Hall-style meetings on a whole array of topics pertaining to congregational life. Publicize the heck out of the meetings. Close the loop on any Town Hall discussion; don't let questions hang out there unanswered.
- Pastoral Needs (linked to Trust Issues):
    - There must be a desire to repair broken relationships.
    - Encourage apologies
    - Awareness of the trauma caused by COVID
    - People want to return to that sense of belonging.
    - The importance of ritual throughout.
    - Create a conflict resolution process (perhaps engage a consultant)
- Planning Needs:
    - Need for a consensus building process that will lead to action, that will get the "thing" done.
    - Recommended the "Fist to Five" process (linked in the written report)
    - Importance of a timeline and clarity
- General Comments:
    - Circles seemed to be helpful; served to dial down the tension.
    - Stressed the importance of ritual and of covenant
    - ***The need to fall in love with each other again. We need to remember that Unitarian Universalism saves lives.***

## **Discussion:**

Jane: are there funding resources for a consultant?

- Rev. Langston-Daley suggested the UU Funding Panel and contacting Regional staff.

Linda: looked for definition of congregational covenant.

- Rev. Langston-Daley replied that it is a set of rules on how we are to be together. Must be explicit with clear expectations. Without a covenant, there is no way of holding somebody accountable. Need to know what the Covenant means; what it means to break the Covenant, to be out of covenant.
  - Perhaps hold a workshop on how to deal with conflict; how to do conflict well (very few congregations do conflict well).

## **Further Comment (after Rev. Langston-Daley was de-zoomed):**

Esther: has worked with Paula Spruill on the Directory since June; ready to be printed.

Toby: Would be great to share the updated Directory with Stewardship.

Esther: Has spoken with Luke Lunt about creating small “getting to know you” groups. (Led to a positive general conversation about previous small group efforts during COVID and pre-COVID).

**Board Member “check-out”** (and distribution of cookies)

## **8:30 Adjournment**

Respectfully submitted,

David H. Das (Clerk)

## **Minister's Report**

### **3.1.23**

With just over 5 weeks left before my time here ends, I am very much focused on what needs to be in place before I go and what I need to be sure to leave well documented for the interim. With that goal in mind, below are the pieces I am thinking of now. I welcome additional suggestions!

Pastoral: [Pastoral ministry is organizing to cover the gap between my departure and the arrival of the interim as they would if I was on vacation or sabbatical. That will be in place before I leave.]

- notecards with pastoral updates on members and a link to the PM rolling notes
- contact info for the PM
- Files with documentation of problematic behaviors/behavioral covenants that have been established (or where to find them)

Worship: [I am hoping to have a worship calendar filled in before I leave, along with contact info for payment to finance]

- Copies of sample orders of service for important services like Christmas Eve
- List of active worship associates and their contact info
- Process for worship prep with staff/role breakdown as it stands now

Administrative:

- Staff names, roles, experience, contact info
- All policies
- Bylaws
- Board policy manual
- Personnel policy manual
- List of committees/task forces and chairs with contact info
- Typical schedule of meetings
- Detailed calendar of the year mapping out important events and services

External:

- overview of UU landscape in the state and region
- overview of the multifaith community in L/A
- my phone number in case they have questions