



## UUCK Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes May 24, 2023

### I. Call to Order

Board Members In attendance in-person were: Don Gregg, Kara Kramer, Diane Kloss, and Rev. Steven. Liz Bright, Susanna Smart, Carol Weigand, and Heidi Shaffer Bish. Rev Sunshine joined virtually for part of the discussion on preparation for the Annual Meeting and budget discussions. Randy Leeson and Vivien Sandlund joined early in the meeting to convey opinions and feelings related to the proposed budget.

After a brief check-in, the meeting started with chalice lighting and Rev Steven offering a reading. The order of agenda items was changed to accommodate the schedule of the visitors. The meeting ended at 9pm.

### II. Input from Congregants:

Randy Leeson spoke about his concern about reviewing the line item budget. He disagreed with hiring new staff during these financial circumstances. He asked the Board to reconsider the budget; redo it and reduce it by 50K, at least. Said he plans to take action to vote the budget down, as it stands.

Vivien Sandlund agreed with Randy. Income went down and expenses up; concern with this trend that would lead to running down the endowment. Concerned and worried about not living within our means as well as about the severe cuts that would be necessary this year if we don't curtail spending this year.

The question was posed for Randy and Vivien: If you were in our seats (the Board's), what would you cut? Randy suggested cutting in different areas, and he offered to email the spreadsheet he made to demonstrate this. Vivien recommended not hiring a Music Director at this time and scaling back professional expenses temporarily until the membership goes up enough to cover expenses. Randy expressed interest in not cutting staff, and cutting enough from other areas as well as delaying the hire of a Music Director. He emphasized the need to survive this year and to work for two years to grow membership and pledges. Vivien suggested that we temporarily cut what we pay the UUA. Randy added that in the past we've temporarily reduced our contribution to UUA.

Randy and Vivien departed after laying out their general concerns. They were thanked for their willingness and effort to communicate about this important issue.

### III. Announcements:

UU Board Breaking NEWS: No need for BBN this month or next due to other general meetings with the congregation.

### IV. Approval of Prior Minutes

The prior meeting minutes were reviewed. Diane moved to approve; Kara seconded; all approved.

### V. Consent Agenda:

The Board discussed reports received:

Treasurer report: *not available by time of meeting*

Minister's report: 50K from Jack Graham's offering as conveyed by MaryAnne Stephens, with stipulations reflecting Jack's priorities.

MET report: starting to assemble a music team which is assisting with services.

Heidi moved to accept the consent agenda; Liz seconded; all agreed.

## **VI. Annual Meeting Discussion and Preparation:**

Rev. Sunshine Wolfe, Regional Staff from UUA joined at 745pm to discuss budget and factions.

Board members introduced themselves. Rev Steven stated that we have congregational factions and conflict related to the proposed budget, and that the Board needs to be prepared to address this during the Annual Meeting.

Rev Sunshine shared that:

Many congregations are struggling with money and therefore with anxiety which in turn leads to not being able to hear others' opinions and difficulty navigating a course together. Communication is essential.

Rev Sunshine advised resisting urgency: "If you can, slow it down"; delay budget vote.

It is not a problem to be in conflict. Conflict means that something matters. Conflict transformation happens when we work through it.

The Board members were asked to express their opinions about how to proceed. All Board members shared their thoughts.

Nothing requires us to vote on a budget at the annual meeting but it is required that the congregation eventually vote on a budget.

The church is values rooted; people interact more as a family and on a personal level. Caring matters. Relationship matters.

Give space for the feelings, then people can respond more thoughtfully (expressing feelings helps calm the amygdala and then the prefrontal cortex is accessible to think things through more clearly).

A small group sharing activity (for the congregation discussions) was suggested: "How did this feel to you when you heard about the proposed budget? Tell the story about what it felt like and what you thought when you first heard about the budget and how you came to this moment, here and now". When people feel heard by their group, they get more ready to think with less anxiety.

### Suggestions regarding Opening Comments from the Board during the Budget Discussion Meetings:

Reveal how the Board has grappled with the budget over time and how the Board experience is a microcosm of the congregation's experience. Invite participation in announcements about the Budget Discussions and when opening the meetings: "We want to take some time. We want to hear from you. Come to meet and talk. We want to hear from everyone. We care about us all. We want to hear more ideas".

Do an informational piece at the beginning of the Budget Discussion meetings. Allow time and silence for slow processing and for people to manage their feelings.

Rev Sunshine added that people are more open to changing their minds when they've listened to others and been heard (in person or via zoom), therefore, direct discussions are more effective, rather than asking people to respond with their concerns in writing.

Much discussion ensued about how to support the process of discourse to allow people to feel heard and to hear each other and to gain input about ways to respond to the budget issues. Language choices can set a tone of inclusion in which multiple, even seemingly-conflicting ideas are accepted as part of the whole discussion. Using the word "and", instead of "but" can convey an understanding that opposing ideas and feelings can co-exist.

The Board discussed how the concern to live within our budget can be expressed as an interest in sustainability; this term may be helpful as it casts a positive light on the perspective that promotes thrift. The Board discussed the tension between the *apparently* opposing values of living within our budget versus living our value of expanding the community to bring in more members.

Rev Sunshine described the "roller coaster of change" process in which one party works on an issue, another joins the discussion of the issue, and time is required for the parties to come to common understanding. In this case, the Board and the MET have studied the budget issue and agreed on an action, and now the rest of the congregation is faced with the issue they must vote on. Time and process are necessary to assist everyone in studying the issue and coming to an agreement about action.

Out of respect for the complexity of the issue of the budget, The Board voted to table the vote on the budget which had been planned for this Sunday. (Rev Steven moved to table the vote; Susanna seconded; all approved).

Agreed to notify the congregation via special email from the Office to be sent out asap. Rev Steven said he would also bring this up in the service on Sunday.

Dates for three congregational-wide Budget Discussions were determined. Rev Steven placed these on the church calendar.

Sunday June 4th, 11:15am in the Sanctuary

Tuesday June 6th, 7pm at the church (location TBA)

Sunday June 11th, 7pm Zoom, Kara will arrange with MaryBeth regarding the zoom meeting set up.

## **VII. Date for Post-Annual Meeting Board meeting**

A follow-up meeting of the Board will be held on June 13th, 7pm in Hobbs during which we will debrief and take next steps following the three congregational-wide Budget Discussions.

## **VIII. Review Slate of Candidates and Appointed Positions:**

Slate of Candidates: The Board reviewed the names and positions as previously discussed. The slate of candidates will be voted on at the Annual Meeting this Sunday.

Appointed Positions: appointed positions are to be determined in June.

## **IX. Appoint Delegates to General Assembly**

Vivien Sandlund, Elaine Bowen, Kathy Kerns, Lee Brooker. Vivien plans to attend virtually.

Susanna moved to accept; Kara seconded; all approved

## **X. Approve Funding for Roof Inspection?**

The roof inspection was done already due to a recent opportunity to do an assessment at a reasonable cost. The reallocation of undesignated capital funds was used to cover the \$294.36 inspection. The Board voted to approve this: Diana moved to accept; Liz seconded.

### **XI. Bell Tower Roof Replacement Capital Request**

A bid from IA Lewin and Associates was received for doing a structural inspection; the cost for the inspection alone was bid at \$3,860 dollars. The bid for a structural engineer's inspection would be subcontracted, by IA Lewin and Associates.

The Board agreed that a structural engineer's inspection is needed to assess risks and what will be needed in the way of repairs. The Board agreed that the bid for the inspection is too high and that the Board will, instead, seek out and hire a structural engineer directly. Heidi knows the architect for the Bell Tower Bar and said she will try to contact that architect.

Board agreed by consensus to reject the current proposal from IA Lewin and Associates.

### **XII. Next Board Meeting:**

A follow-up meeting of the Board will be held on June 13th, 7pm in Hobbs during which we will debrief and take next steps following the three congregation-wide Budget Discussions.

### **XIII. Process Review**

Brief statements of enthusiasm and thanks for the discussion and for having Rev Sunshine's input.

### **XIV. Extinguish the Chalice and Adjournment**

Rev. Steven offered closing words of gratitude and extinguished the chalice. The meeting was adjourned at 9 PM.

Gratefully submitted,

Susanna Smart and Carol Weigand, Co-Secretaries