

USH Board Meeting – April 12, 2022

Present – Bob Hewey, Eve Pech, Sarah McKenzie, Rob Spector, Peter Meny, Tina Davies, Dana Donovan, Jon Covault

Absent – Rev. Terry Cummins (on administrative leave)

Guests – Susan & Don Hope, Janice and David Newton, Laura Cipriano, Buffie Pinney, Annie Witzler, Stu and Bev Spence, Richard Groothuis, Jim Venneman, Paul Cipriano, Virginia de Lima

6:35 – started with check-ins

6:46 – Opening Words from Rob

6:47 – Eve read the Board Covenant

6:48 – March Board Minutes. Rob moved to accept the minutes; Bob seconded.

Aye – 8

Nay – 0

Abstain – 0

6:49 – Church Governance & coverage during Rev. Terry's leave: Rob and a few other Board Members met with the staff last week regarding supervision and support over the next few weeks or so. Jon Covault will be support for Kevin and Briana; Sue Smolski will be support for Annie, and Dana will be the point person on the RE committee; Sue S will also offer support for Buffie, and Tina will be the point person for her on Communications; Laurie Kelliher will be support for Sam. Buffie and Kevin will be covering Briana's responsibilities while she heals after her car accident.

6:55 – Annual Meeting Discussion: We have new Board positions that need to be filled at the May Annual Meeting. Martha has been having a hard time filling those open nominations. The two open positions are Treasurer and President-Elect. There's a chance that one of the positions has been nominated, should know by tomorrow. Rob will coordinate with Tina regarding an e-brief to go out with job descriptions, potentially put out a nominations box, and/or an email address people can send nominations to. Discussion of topics to discuss at Annual Meeting. We will likely not have a full idea of staffing budget prior to May 22.

7:27 – Updates on the Budget and Stewardship: Stewardship is going pretty well, there's still a way to go. Bob is cautiously optimistic. Jon, Peter, and Tina need to get the proposed Staffing budget together for Bob.

7:36 – Administration Council update: Lighting wiring and receptacles have all been installed, lighting fixtures will ship on April 28 or so, and will be installed hopefully by mid-May. Peter Meny has been getting bids on carpeting replacement, B&G has accepted a bid of approx. \$14,000. Does not include labor to move furniture, B&G and volunteers will move that furniture for the carpet installers. B&G also working on getting USH designated as a historic landmark. April 23rd is a B&G work day, there will be some breakfast-y snacks available for volunteers.

Jon made the resolution that we pay up to \$15,000 +/- from the former sound abatement funds and to accept the bid from Dalene Flooring and designate B&G to make decisions about details. Bob H seconded.

Aye – 8

Nay – 0

Abstain – 0

7:53 – Minister’s Discretionary Funds Policy Addendum (see attached): For minister to consult with the Caring Network to use as an advisory piece.

7:57 – Volunteer Recognition – please get any information on the nominees to Tina for inclusion.

7:58 – Judy Robbins’ proposal for surveying the membership (see attached) – Judy thinks we should take a deeper look into the congregation via an email survey. Rob & Eve met with Judy & Tina after the last Board Meeting, maybe have Judy address the congregation at the congregational meeting to explain, if the Board is ready for the process to start at that point. Peter proposed approving the idea of taking a survey of the congregation regarding next steps. Board would like her to put together some questions for the Board to review, and a full proposal for the survey.

8:32 – Board went into Executive Session



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

Board Meeting Agenda for Tonight's Meeting

1 message

Robert Spector <Robert_Spector@ctd.uscourts.gov>

Tue, Apr 12, 2022 at 11:58 AM

To: Sarah McKenzie <sarah.h.mckenzie@gmail.com>, "BoltonBob@aol.com" <boltonbob@aol.com>, "elpech@sbcglobal.net" <elpech@sbcglobal.net>, DANA DONOVAN <danadonovan@sbcglobal.net>, Peter Meny <pimeny9@gmail.com>, Jonathan Covault <jncovault@hotmail.com>, Christina Davies <daviesush@gmail.com>

Good morning everyone. I am very sorry for the delay in getting the Agenda to you for tonight's meeting. It has been a long month. See you at 6:30pm. Please note that our May Board Meeting was moved to May 3, 2022 and will not occur on May 10, 2022.

USH BOARD MEETING AGENDA - 4/12/22 at 6:30pm, via Zoom

6:30pm Check in, All - 15 mins.

6:45pm Opening Words, Rob - 3 mins.

6:48pm Board Covenant, Eve - 2 mins.

6:50pm Approval of February Board Minutes, Sarah - 2 mins.

6:52pm Church Governance and Staffing During Rev. Terry's Paid Administrative Leave – 15 mins.

7:07pm Planning Our Annual Meeting, Nominating New Board Members – 20 mins.

7:27pm Updates On 2022-23 Budget, Stewardship, Bob - 10 mins.

7:37pm B&G update on several items (Lighting project, Funding request for carpet, Cleanup day (4/23) and Designation of Meeting House as historic landmark), Jon and Peter – 15 mins.

7:52pm Approving Addendum to the Minister's Discretionary Fund, Tina – 5 mins.

7:57pm Volunteer Recognition Update, Tina – 5 mins.

8:02pm Long term planning for our Ministerial Search, Proposed Survey of our Membership, Tina – 10 mins.

8:12pm Acceptance of Council Reports – 5 mins.

8:17pm Guest Comments - 5 mins.

8:22pm Executive Session

NEXT BOARD MEETING IS TUESDAY, May 3, 2022 at 6:30pm.

Treasurer's Report – April 2022

Financial Status/Cashflow

The USH Financial Status and Cashflow remain very positive, despite all the current upheaval with the staff.

Loss of Bookkeeper Impact

The loss of Brian Mullen to a move to Florida has put a major strain on the Treasurer. The one training session on Quick Books, which occurred shortly before Brian's departure, was insufficient to encompass all the activity required to maintain the usual level of accounting at USH. In addition, the Quick Books software used for keeping track of USH accounts was on Brian's personal laptop computer. This required the purchase of a USH owned laptop (about \$800) and installation of Quick Books and Microsoft Office software for use to process USH Accounts and Reports. TAB Computing was contacted to assist in the installation of the software.

To assure that employees continued to be paid in a timely manner, rather than continue the process via QuickBooks, we have contracted the payroll process to Payroll Matters, a local firm that specializes in handling payrolls for small businesses and religious organizations.

Help with the bookkeeping function has been sought and realized with the hiring of Ann LaPorte-Bryan, formerly an active member of USH, who has an established bookkeeping service. She has agreed to work with USH at a cost of \$25/hour. While she is familiar with QuickBooks, she is not familiar with this edition or our accounts, so I have been working cooperatively with her to learn the system and keep things afloat. Emphasis has been on depositing funds as they are received and paying bills in the order of urgency.

As we were working with QuickBooks, we ran into a number of problems and contacted the vendor, Intuit, to see if they could help us. The Intuit service rep did an analysis of the problem and indicated that our files had been partially corrupted some time ago. However, because our version of QuickBooks is specifically for non-profits and acquired for a very low price, it includes no service plan. Fixing the problem with our files could be done on a standalone basis for around \$1300, or we could pay \$2000 for a two-year service contract, renewable afterward for \$250 per two-year period. Since we need to get the data fixed in order to do our work, and we may run into other problems requiring service, I opted for the two-year service plan and the data is now no longer corrupted.

The implementation of Vanco as our online payment system for pledging, pledge payments, contributions, Meeting House Presents tickets, etc. is actively being used. This is an area that Ann and I have yet to incorporate into our bookkeeping but will be addressed as soon as possible

One area not being addressed by Ann or me is the maintenance of Church Windows for the Stewardship campaign. This has been a problem for Joe Rubin and his team but we just do not

have the time and attention to learn this system at this time. Brian Harvey has some knowledge of this system and may be able to help.

Budget Preparation for FY22/23

Most of the Council Chairs have provided input for the upcoming fiscal year. However, the task force looking at our staffing needs, has yet to produce a report so it is difficult to project a budget without a real sense of our ongoing staffing needs and costs.

Covid Changes revisited

Trash pickup has not reverted to its pre-Covid schedule. It continues on a once-a-month basis, saving about \$60 per month.

Knox Foundation Garden Water

Last fall Knox indicated that they would pursue an alternative to using USH's MDC water for their community gardens. Despite my enquiries, I have not heard of any alternative plans. I will not expect to turn the water on for them in mid-May as we have done in the past, unless they request it and agree to continue to pay the cost.

Treasurer's Role During Minister's Administrative Leave

I have been asked to assume the role of approver of staff timesheets. I pass the information on to Buffie Pinney, Office Administrator, to submit to Payroll Matters for processing.

Treasurer's Term Expires July 1, 2022

I have notified the Board and the Nominating Committee that I intend to leave the Treasurer's position upon completion of my two-year term on July 1, 2022. I expect to make myself available to train my replacement.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bob Hewey, USH Treasurer

Annual Stewardship. Joe Rubin has done a fine job leading the 2022 Stewardship Pledge Campaign. Rev Terry gave a sermon “Why We Give” on Sunday March 6 to start Stewardship month. We have had several members speak during services about why they cherish and support USH. A team of 4 are sending emails/calling 81 past donors whom we have not yet heard from. Anticipate a tally of pledges late April.

Building and Grounds Sub-Council. Hybrid meetings held March 20 and April 10

Spring Work Day – Saturday April 23. Breakfast at USH 8-9 am and clean up inside and out 9-noon.

Carpeting of ambulatory rooms. Peter Meny led the effort to contact carpet installers and received bids from two vendors. The final B&G vendor choice is Dalene Flooring S. Windsor and Southington. The winning bid is for \$14,104 and includes materials charge of \$9,838 (3408 sq ft carpet, pad and required installation materials) and labor \$4,266 for removal of old and installation of new carpet. B&G or other able volunteers will be needed to move furniture out of rooms prior and return after carpet installation. Plans would be to complete the project in three groups of rooms to allow time/space to move furniture.

Motion to be considered at April 12 board meeting →The B and G Sub-Council recommends that the Board approve an appropriation for the project to cover the bid of Dalene Flooring (Southington) of approximately \$14,100 from identified Endowment resources, and that B and G be delegated authority for scheduling the work in connection with ability to empty rooms, arrange carpeting work, and such other details as may be necessary.

Potential designation of the Meeting House as a Historical Landmark. Toni Gold is leading the inquiry and has contacted Mary Falvey, Executive Director of the Hartford Preservation Alliance, the nonprofit organization that is the advocate for preserving historic resources in Hartford (see <https://hartfordpreservation.org/>). She will be happy to meet with us and talk about the National Register nomination process and help us apply for a grant from the state to fund a consultant. She also provided very helpful information that the funding for such work is plentiful right now, and that, since we are a nonprofit, we might be able to request that the matching funds requirement be waived and obtain a grant for the full amount!

David Venneman Memorial Lighting Project -

Wiring and ceiling attachment fixtures for 8 light units have been installed and wooden rays replaced. Light fixtures are anticipated for delivery early in May. There was minimal disruption to our use of the Sanctuary during the project. We are thankful for the time donated by the project architect Hugh Schweitzer and the professional carpentry work by John Bengston and Kevin Girouard.

Live streaming capacity. David Cipriano, a U Hart student, has settled into his job as video / streaming manager for 3 weeks per month. Two audience (eg congregation) microphones and stands have been added to provide streaming viewers to experience some of the audience ambience now that we are singing hymns again. The same style microphones and stands will be ordered to incorporate a choir.

Funds for these items will be funded from the “sound abatement” gift resource.

Other - A suitable Lenovo lap top PC was purchased for the new bookkeeper's use (cost \$850).

Social Justice Council Report

April 11, 2022

Dana Donovan chair

The social justice council held their monthly meeting on March 15th. I have attached the minutes for that meeting as a separate file in my email.

The GNO for March was collected on March 27th with the proceeds to be given to the United Ukranian American Relief Committee. I do not have a final figure for the collection but Bob Hewey mentioned that it was in excess of \$1,300.00 which is one of the largest GNOs collected in the last few years.

On Sunday, May 21st, the Connecticut Foodshare is holding a Walk Against Hunger at Dunkin Donuts Park. They have invited us to gather a team together for the walk. We will discuss this further during the SJ council meeting next week.

Council on Community Within

April, 2022

Update on Community Within subcouncils since March board meeting:

Communications

1. Website updating continues. Complete revamping of the RE section was undertaken; also, the section formerly titled Members is now labeled Internal Affairs... wide access to minutes, reports, and other informational documents is now open (i.e. without password requirements). The only password-protected area is the member picture-and-information portion of the directory (which, as indicated, contains photos and other personal information about members and friends of USH).
2. Production of weekly eNews continues as a coordinated effort of an editorial/production team (consisting of Buffie and several members of the subcouncil). This has, so far, operated smoothly.
3. Annie Witzler is now an admin on the Facebook page; other admins include the Ciprianos and Buffie. Our Easter service and egg hunt have been posted and are highlighted for Hartford-area FB scrollers.

Membership

A “Meet the Minister” event had been tentatively slotted for early May, with a subsequent new member welcome to follow in mid-June. These are now on hold for the time being.

Caring Network

The Network reviewed a draft ‘guidance document’ intended to provide background and history of our Minister’s Discretionary Fund, and how funds have been used to aid members and friends of USH and the wider community. This would accompany the policy on use and reporting of MDF funds, approved at the USH Board’s March 8, 2022 meeting.

The intent is to illustrate, for future ministers, types of assistance to people and projects which have experienced favor among members of the

congregation, thus providing guidance for ministers in years to come. It is also hoped and intended that ministers should, when questions arise, consult with the Caring Network.

The attached memorandum was approved by the Caring Network subcouncil on April 10, 2022, and the Network requests this be arranged to the policy approved on March 8 as a “package” of guidance for, and requirements pertaining to, the Minister’s Discretionary Fund.

Respectfully submitted,

Christina Davies, Chair; Council for Community Within

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Spiritual Life Council Report September 2021

R.E.

Annie has planned an Easter Egg hunt this Sunday and is inviting children from The Village to attend. Plans for a 'Family Fun Night' for RE children and their families is also going forward.

Children's attendance at Sunday service continues to be sparse. Hopefully these special events (above) as well as Covid withdrawal (fingers crossed!) will result in increased attendance. This continues to be Annie's primary focus for the rest of the year.

Music Ministry – Nothing new to report.

Worship Associates

The pulpit is covered thru May 15th with one exception (May 8th) which Sue Smolski is working on..The WAs whose schedules permit have been wonderful in taking on the role of pulpit guest and other WAs have been stepping up to be the WA for those services.

The Summer worship theme was identified on March 17th---"Living Fully".
The first eNews about it is ready to go, thanks to Laurie Kelliher, for the week after Easter.

The pulpit guests for the weeks that had been identified as weeks Rev Terry would be away this summer are almost covered.

Sue and Rev Terry, have created a Matters of the Heart Gmail account that the WAs as well as the minister can access.

SpiritLife

SpiritLife Conversations is a series of facilitated zoom conversations on spiritual topics offered on the fourth Saturday each month. It is open to members of the three Hartford area UU churches on a drop-in basis. The topic for April 23 will be Mirabai Starr *Wild Mercy* focusing on women mystics, facilitated by Dave Gonci.

Twenty-four folks attended a March 26 zoom SpiritLife conversation on redefining prayer. Judy Robbins opened by saying that the stereotype of prayer is talking to God in a petitionary way. A lively discussion circled around the topic of appreciation and gratitude as forms of prayer that help give meaning to our lives. A variety of perspectives and practices were shared.

In lieu of the May meeting SpiritLife will gather in person at Fiske Hall at the Fern Street church from 11-1:00 on May 21 for a period of spiritual and social connection.

Memorandum -

To: Members of the Board of USH

From: Janice Newton, Chair of the Caring Network Committee

Re: Caring Network Committee guidelines for use of MDF

Date: April __10____, 2022

Rev. Terry has prepared a draft policy document for the Minister's Discretionary Fund (MDF).

The Caring Network Sub-Council has experience with the MDF and finds itself generally approving of the proposed policy with some reasonable suggestions for changes.

We believe it will be helpful to future ministers to know of the sorts of things the MDF has been used for in addition to the policy language about inappropriate use. To this end we recommend the addendum below, just informational.

Addendum

Caring Network Sub-Council Experience Minister's Discretionary Fund

A member of the church in need, or associates, usually contact the Chair of the Sub-Council about the circumstances giving rise to the request for help. Usually, the Chair will discuss the situation with the Sub-Council members informally or formally, although the Chair also has the discretion to go directly to the Minister request funds.

Monetary distributions are...

Generally restricted to members and friends. Frequently evaluation of requests may include exploration of various available social services that might be unknown to those seeking help.

Distribution of money is normally by a Minister's check to the individual involved but can be distributed to a trusted associate as may be appropriate. Items supported have included.

- Grub Hub cards for food
- Grocery cards for food
- Housecleaning services
- Laundry services
- Electric or gas bills for heating
- Transportation costs for attending doctors' visits (e.g., Uber)
- Childcare services
- Rent

These are just examples. Sub-Council members and associates also contribute their efforts in transportation to hospital or doctor visits, and numerous other uncompensated actions that can be accomplished by dedicated volunteers.

Date: Feb. 10, 2022
From: Judy Robbins, judyrobb2@gmail.com
To: USH Communications Committee
Re: Proposal for Polling Members' Opinions on the status of USH

Precis

- *We need a vehicle for congregants to express their ideas and opinions on the future of USH.*
- *The Board, Rev Terry and other decision makers need easy access to the full range of congregants' opinions.*
- *This vehicle needs to account for the UU "trance of political correctness."*

In face-to-face communications, UUs are very forthright; they have definite, thoughtful opinions and are not afraid to state them. But when in a group, UUs get into a trance of political correctness. They bend over backwards to see all points of view as legitimate and when they do state their personal opinions, they tend to water them down so as not to offend anyone. The end result is often a milquetoast, inoffensive stance that may meet basic criteria but fails to inspire.

Meetings, even relatively small ones, are the kind of circumstance where UUs tend to hold back strong opinions, perhaps for fear of being judged as an outlier, a naysayer or not inclusive enough. USH is in a touchy transition. This is not the time for people to hold back their thoughts and opinions -- or to sugarcoat them. Everyone needs to be heard. Otherwise, a few who are vocal and have definite opinions will make the decisions for all.

I propose to poll the congregation via email to solicit their candid, relatively uncensored opinions about the coming 5-6 years. I believe people will write honestly from the privacy of their own screens, a place where they don't have any pressure to speak eloquently or worry they might say something alienating or regrettable. They can erase and edit all they want.

Here is how I imagine this working. A series of questions would be drawn up and reviewed by the Board and Terry. These would not be check-box questions; they would require sentences or paragraphs to answer. The survey would go out to members via email. I, Judy, would be the person who collects these, collates the results and makes sure the results are distributed according to a pre-approved plan.

This would be a big volunteer commitment for me and it's a bit daunting thinking of the amount of time this would take. But, in this day and age, perhaps nothing is more important than democratic process. Here's a chance to "be the change" we want to see.

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