

# Unitarian Society of Hartford Board Meeting

## January 9, 2024

Location: Zoom

Quorum NO\_\_YES\_X

Board Attendees	Guests	Regrets
Dana Donovan	David Newton	Jon Covault
Nancy Kemmerer	Janice Newton	Rev. Bob Janis
Rick Tsukada	Beverly Spence	
Paul Cipriano	Laura Cipriano	
Gloria F. Mengual		
Jim Venneman		
Judy Sullivan		
Tina Davies		
Laurie Kelliher		

## Orders of Business

6:30 p.m. **Dana** - called the meeting to order. Board members checked in.  
**Nancy** – Quarterly Board covenant reading

- I. Approval of December 2023 Board Meeting Minutes – Judy made Motion to approve December Board meeting minutes. Tina seconded. Unanimous approval.**

## UPDATES

### **II. Building & Grounds –David Newton**

- Servetus room is under construction.
- We’re continuing to work on historical designation.
- Not much luck in applying for infrastructure grants for nonprofits.
- Looking to replace a box outside office where mail is left with a slit in the wall to drop mail.
- Gloria Bent submitted document with building recommendations to accommodate differently-abled people.

### **III. Security** – *Paul Cipriano*

Committee working on emergency response plan. Still waiting for state to reimburse us for the security system. Their web site refers to early 2024. We can apply for more money for year 2024. We still have \$8,000- \$9,000 left from the amount granted to us. Laura C. – reported out on work to improve how handicapped door functions – suggested seeking out available funding for this. Nancy suggested improving lighting for sidewalk between parking lot and church. Tina suggested bullet-proof glass for building. Laura noted due to building design, it may be tough, as bullet-proof glass doesn't allow for movement, like plexiglass windows, which give.

### **IV. HR Subgroup** – *Gloria F. Mengual*

- a. Employee training in sexual harassment** – need to contact CHRO regarding use of the training located on their web pag.
- b. Employee handbook** – reviewing present USH handbook, written in 2004. Checking out United Church of Christ employee handbook to hopefully use as guide to update USH handbook. Have asked two people with administrative and HR experience if they would be willing to help with employee handbook update - Carol Simpson and Sue Tenorio; Sue noted she could work on this with GFM for a bit.
- c. Need for replacements for both Nancy and Laura on HR sub-council** – Gloria requested recommendations for replacing Nancy and Laura on HR sub-council. Ron Sexton offered to help out, but not be part of permanent committee. Jim V. suggested approaching Sexton, whose son works in HR.
- d. Resignations from HR subcouncil** - *Nancy Kemmerer and Laura Cipriano*

## **NEW BUSINESS**

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**V. MINISTER'S REPORT** - *Rev. Bob Janis* \*(See addendum below for complete report)

### **VI. VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION AWARDS** – *Tina Davies*

- a. See Tina's email. She will put a form in everyone's mailbox with a pink nomination form. If Board members could return nominations by January 23, Tina will put together listing of volunteers and their qualifications, then create a ballot for next month. Asked who from Board will help her sort the nominations as they come in. Laurie K. volunteered to help with this.

## **VII. Welcome Team Volunteers Update – Laurie Kelliher**

- a. We are coming out of the 'quiet' time in terms of church attendance – end of year. Want to put welcome table downstairs during coffee hour to continue the welcoming process. She will discuss with Karolina creation of an attractive sign for the table. Music Sunday was well-attended – 100 people. Two other times, we had 90 attending in person. Several recent visitors acknowledged that they drove by and were curious about the building. Considering when to schedule a new member ceremony. Karolina and Laurie are working on new cards with UU information for back of pews for new folks to take – stiffer stock and more attractive. Judy S. noted another church gives out blue mugs to visitors during coffee hour so they are more easily identifiable. The visitors green tag worn by recent person (Omar) who recently stopped by during coffee hour worked well.

## **VIII. Update on Religious Education and Need for Volunteers (Help needed with aesthetics and USH history)– Rick Tsukada**

Looking for historian to create a panel of USH land history – original inhabitants of USH land. Also looking for members for RE committee.

## **IX. COUNCIL CHAIR REPORTS**

**1. Administration – Paul Cipriano** – no report beyond security report made earlier \*(See above)

**2. Community Within Report– Tina Davies**

- This month's movie is a genre Annie suggested; sign-up is good. Movie partnership with SJ in September was productive.
- Caring Network has been assisting with many memorial services.
- The hope is to have on the first Sunday in February a *Ground Hog Day Potluck* at USH after service.
- Meeting House Presents is holding a concert later this month. Any help with promoting these concerts would be most welcome. Now they provide promos on FB. Patrice helps promote these concerts at Fern Street UU. Run ads sometimes in WH News and other spots. Word of mouth works best.

**3. Finance Report– Jon Covault** \*(See addendum below for complete report)

**4. Membership Report– Laurie Kelliher** \*(See above)

**Social Justice Report**– *Judy Sullivan* –\*(See addendum below for complete report). SJ cancelled January meeting to accommodate GHIAA session coming up same date – Tuesdays - January 16 and January 23. GHIAA focused service will take place on March 24. Community organizing training led by GHIAA is coming up in February.

**5. Spiritual Life Report**– *Rick Tsukada*

I'm looking at some of the areas under Spirit Life, like music, thinking about how to make this more cohesive. Looking to examine Religious Education focus and organize volunteers to work on this. Rev. Bob is planning new Thursday night service and has been very involved in memorial services. For memorials, many are seeing a UU service for first time – how do we create space in these situations to have them leave with a good feeling about their experience and what we are about?

Secondly, we are looking for an ad hoc working group to concentrate on examining our church library in terms of 'focus' and usage. Please send me names of folks who may be interested that I may contact.

**6. Giving/Stewardship** - *Jim Venneman* –Year-end Appeal: we have received twice as much as the budget anticipated in the "412101 - Fundraising - Other" account. In planning for the upcoming Stewardship campaign, I met with Carolyn Carlson. When USH receives the historical designation, we are eligible for 50% reimbursement for building upkeep. USH received a \$1 million contribution, with \$250,000 coming in each year for four years. This year's contribution could be used for matching purposes. Karolina received notice of a \$10,000 gift from an anonymous donor via the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving - fund #54. It will be placed into the Schwab account.

**GUEST COMMENTS –**

- *David Newton*: It would be helpful to have a list of non-officer resources regarding congregational affairs. Ex: all memorial services, now I know all about getting ashes into ground and appropriate Unitarian words to use for such services. Who at USH has other areas of expertise - public relations, human resources, psychology, social work, etc.? If we gather this information in one place, when someone asks "Who do I talk to about..." we know the 'go to' person at USH.

**MOTION TO ADJOURN – Rick made motion to adjourn at 8:30p.m; Judy seconded motion. Unanimous vote to adjourn.**

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## **Addendums – January 2024 Reports**

### **1. USH Ministerial Board Report ~ Rev. Bob Janis January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

#### **Sundays & Special Services**

Christmas Eve went well, I think – was tricky doing two different services in one day. If I did it again, may simply have more or less repeated the same one.

Was pleasantly surprised with how well the “snowed out” service went – several positive comments. We had a couple of technical hiccups but overall, the team rallied really well. Nice to know we still have that capability as a congregation, to do online only if needed.

#### **Pastoral Care and Rites of Passage**

Dale Hackett and Peter Upton funerals were both very significant in the life of the congregation; both men sorely missed here. Having Secretary John Kerry come to honor Peter Upton a big moment in the life of the congregation; thanks to Brian Harvey who really made this happen with coordination; and to Sec. Kerry who came through in a big way. Both families were greatly moved by the glorious reception afterward; deep thanks to David and Janice Newton and everyone who pitched in.

#### **Programming and Social Justice**

Attending a racial justice training with GHIAA Tuesday morning this January, and learning about a Hartford Interfaith event too. Good to get “plugged in” with local faith groups and organizations.

Looking forward to Article 2 discussion, The Sum of Us, new social justice initiatives, - lots of good stuff going on!

Planning to continue “First Tuesdays” through at least June and the Poetry Group through March. Looking at a new initiative in late spring. Possibilities include sermon writing & worship planning; bible/sacred texts study;

programming for newcomers or younger age groups. Not everything will happen at the same time – we'll see what develops first.

Joanne Lefferts, a newcomer to this congregation, is interested in exploring Labyrinth practices here at USH. Very interested to explore what that might look like, aware we've done some work in the past, both with the labyrinth onsite at the community garden and a portable labyrinth.

## **2. Treasurer Report ~ Jon Covault     January 9, 2024**

**2023-2024 budget:** Pledge giving received as of Dec 31, 2023 totals \$207,268 or 74% of pledge total (\$279,135). Expenses have generally been in line with the approved budget. The service contract for our elevator has increased by approximately \$1,200 per year.

**Stewardship:** Regifting sale raised \$ 1,123. Our December year end stewardship appeal raised \$10,294. We are very thankful for these additional gifts to be used to reduce our FY24 shortfall.

**Capital projects** – \$21,274.50 for sewage pump replacement completed in November.

**UBS Endowment** - \$253,273 endowment gift received in December from an anonymous donor. Withdrawals for December were \$21,274.50 for sewage pump replacement, and the monthly support of our annual budget (\$4,454).

**Schwab savings account** – Interest income of \$418. No withdrawals in December. Transfer of \$11,552 from M&T checking to Schwab representing the FY22 budget surplus, which together with various surpluses over past 11 years totals \$62,900 which we may need to use a portion from this rainy day fund for the current FY.

**Monthly GNO** giving for December:

- Foodshare \$1,663
- Horace Bushnell Food pantry for children - \$570

## **3. Membership Report ~ Laurie Kelliher     January 9, 2024**

USH typically sees a moderate drop in service attendance during the November/December holiday months, though this year the number of people

in the pews stayed fairly steady with 65-95 folks at service. Music Sunday was particularly well-attended with 100 people. Friends and family of guest artists most likely led to the increase, but USH received welcome exposure. Fewer visitors have attended this month; hopefully the change reflects the busy holiday season.

New member ceremony will be held in May. One person has expressed an interest in becoming a member. Two others are considering it.

The February Board minutes (2/18/24) will be presented by Membership, when a broader appeal for Welcome Team members, attention to visitors and invitation for new members can be made in real time.

#### **4. Social Justice Council ~ Judy Sullivan    January 9, 2024**

**The Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA):** The January Social Justice meeting has been cancelled in order to accommodate our members who wish to participate in two Tuesday evening GHIAA Zoom meetings. The 1/16 session will be an update on GHIAA activity for the next few months, including issue action. The 1/23 session will focus on preparation for house meetings, which are an important part of the process to determine our next actions.

Three members have registered for the GHIAA core training: Gloria Mengual (board member), Joanne Orlando and Gloria Bent. I encourage anyone who is curious about community organizing to join the above Zoom meetings and/or the orientation session on Monday, 1/29 on Zoom @ 7 – 8:30 pm.

USH GHIAA leaders have also been asked to create a Sunday worship service devoted to the work of GHIAA. The suggestion actually came from a congregant, via Judy Robbins and Sue Smolski. The idea was well received by the social justice team and Rev. Jocelyn Gardner-Spencer (GHIAA staff) has agreed to be the pulpit guest. The date for this service is March 24, 2024 (mark your calendars please!)

**Anti-Racism Programming/Podcasts and Discussions:** Seven racial justice discussions have been scheduled over several months beginning January 18 from 7 to 8:30PM. For each session, participants will be asked to listen to a podcast in advance and to then attend a discussion online led by Gloria Mengual. The program is based on a podcast series which in turn is based on a book by Heather McGhee entitled *The Sum of Us*. More

information on the podcasts is here

<https://open.spotify.com/show/19VMtc487rqmrb6GC8eRvd>

The registration for each discussion: [ushsocialjustice@gmail.com](mailto:ushsocialjustice@gmail.com).

Announcements will appear regularly in the enews.

**Horace Bushnell Children's Food Pantry:** December has been such a giving month! In addition to oodles of food donations, coats, and special toy donations, we also contributed a total of \$570 to help with Christmas food and toys. Our contact at HBCFP, LisaMarie, is very happy to see us each week!

**Fern Street Food Ministry:** The school backpack program continues to grow and USH continues to be involved. This month I was fortunate to bring two grandchildren to help pack. I'm always amazed at how eager they are to help, and also cut our packing time by 30 minutes!

**Accessibility:** Gloria Bent has been in touch with Rev. Bob and David Newton (B&G) to begin discussions of the recent report about the physical accessibility at USH. The team also will pursue ideas to address disabilities that are not readily identifiable.

**Good Neighbor Offering (GNO):** The December GNO was CT Foodshare and a total of \$1663 was raised. The January GNO is Operation Fuel and speakers will be at our Sunday service January 14.