

First Unitarian Church of Des Moines
Board of Trustees Minutes
Thursday, October 20, 2022

In attendance and via Zoom:

Board Members: LeeAnn Back, Kevin Boeckholt, Reba Eagles, Jeremy Guenther, Crystal Loving, Sally Merritt, Greg Nichols, Fern Stewart

Staff: Transitional Contract Minister Victoria Safford and Alice Stewart

Several church members were also in attendance.

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 p.m. by Board President Reba Eagles. The chalice was presented. Reba read a note from Steve Herwig expressing his gratitude to the Board for their efforts in hiring Rev. Victoria Safford. It was moved by Jeremy Guenther, seconded by Crystal Loving to approve the proposed agenda and the minutes from the September 22nd meeting. Motion approved.

Minister's Report

Transitional Contract Minister Victoria Stafford presented her remote and on-site weekends between January and June, 2023, noting the drop during the winter months of two visits a month instead of the current two.

Conversation Circles have been launched, with members invited to register for one of fourteen Conversation Circles to be held late October through early December. It is hoped that through this hard work, healing and repair of trust can begin. Rev. Victoria will facilitate each group, with a Board member acting as host as well as a Right Relations team member present. Board members were encouraged to sign up as simply members of the congregation.

Sunday Services are solid and reliable thanks to the Celebrants each week led by Heidi Levine and Kathryn Sutton, noting no major changes to the Order of Service were planned for this year. She thanked the musicians Bruce Martin, Barb Martin and Karen Kraemer for their extraordinary contributions.

Pastoral Care continues to meet and refine protocols for memorial planning and a shift of some responsibilities from volunteers to the Minister.

Stewardship/Budgeting Process has been discussed with Alice Stewart and various lay leaders to clarify the annual calendar so that staff, committee leaders and the congregation may bring ideas, concerns, questions and requests at the right points in the process. A small group met and discussed the how and when the vision for the annual campaign is imagined and articulated. She noted it was the Board's responsibility to gather the goals, plans and dreams of various leaders into a coherent vision statement every year. The Board discussed the need to follow the Mission and

Vision 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 goals which were responses to the 2022 Open Questions Forums held by the Governance Committee. Also suggested was a review of the current Governance budget policy.

Transitional Ministry Interim Training included an intensive 4-day conference on-line with continued meetings twice a month with fellow interim ministers. In addition, she is also meeting with an interim mentor on-line once a month resulting in deep conversations, learning and reflection acknowledging transitional struggles are shared by many congregations.

Director of Finance Report:

Alice Stewart, Director of Finance, reported September's attendance was the highest since the beginning of the pandemic and with revenue tied to attendance it was a very good month. Members reviewed their pledges and several made large pledge payments to adjust what was pledged as well as generous miscellaneous contributions. Overall, leaving aside the astoundingly generous mortgage donations, we received 188% of expected revenue. Expenses included the higher water bill, health and disability insurance payments for two months for new employees, and usual fall expenses related to programming and staff office supplies. Discussion revolved around a lack of planned revenue stream due to the lack of pledge cards. It was noted that Birch had included the pledge information in the new member classes.

New Business

Congregational Conversations: The conversations are being hosted by the board. The conversations will be limited to 8-9 individuals for a 90 minute session. Participants will be encouraged to tell their story and share the narrative with others. The discussions will be carefully curated, with a chalice lighting, welcome, discussion and closing words with chalice extinguishing. In early January, Rev. Victoria will bring to the congregation at church poignant moments from the various shared stories both positive and negative. An announcement will be made on Sunday to get the word out regarding the meeting schedules..

Goals: Addressing Related Tasks: The Mission and Vision 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 goals were responses by the Board to the 2022 Open Questions Forums held by the Governance Committee with the congregation. The questions were: How do we remain relevant? and What do you need from your church in the coming year?

At the Board retreat in August the Board formulated the Mission and Vision for the next two years based on the responses to the questions. Listed below are the goals, along with how they are being addressed:

Building Community: Within our Church/Year 1

- Faith Formation
 - Bolster RE for children and youth; shift to Sunday programming
 - Currently COA, YRUU and Pre-K-1st and 2nd - 5th grade groups are meeting on Sunday morning from 10:45-noon. There has been an increase in participation each Sunday.
 - Strengthen Adult Programming
 - Currently Soul Matters program for writers; 3 groups studying Parker Palmer's *A Hidden Wholeness*; a two-part song-writing seminar; and a class on Inuit art. The Adult Programming Committee has resumed Sunday forums and is building the schedule for spring forums. Groups for spiritual and ethical growth continue including; the Buddhist Sangha; Humanist book-group; Pagan group; and the Young Adults group.
- Community Connections: *The church is OPEN!*
 - Resumption of Wednesday night dinners
 - This will resume once the kitchen reopens
 - Encourage groups: CUPPS, Humanists, etc.
 - CUPPS just held a 5 part class
 - Humanists are meeting
 - Create unstructured social time
 - Bent Needles
 - Several activities for children and families have been scheduled by the Minister of Fun
 - Adult opportunities include Circle Dinners with no agenda other than to get together for a meal
- Pastoral Care
 - Renew a reliable caring ministry provided by the Minister and Pastoral Care Team
 - continues to meet and refine protocols for memorial planning and a shift of some responsibilities from volunteers to the Minister.

The following goals are for the 2023-2024 Church Year or both if noted Years 1 and 2, these are included in the minutes for informational purposes.

BUILDING COMMUNITY: Within our Church/Year 2

- Membership
 - Build membership/outreach
 - Strengthen welcome to new members and support of continuing members
- Continue and Strengthen our Partnership with AMOS
- Continue and Expand Social Justice Work

STEWARDED RESOURCES: Years 1 and 2

- Manage resources responsibly and communicate openly with membership
 - See Ministers Report early in these minutes - Year 1
- Develop sound plan for managing our Campus
 - A team is forming to provide plans, maintenance schedules and capital improvement schedules - Year 1
- Design and implement successful financial stewardship campaign each year
 - See Stewardship and Budgeting under Minister Report - Year 1
- Build the church endowment

ENGAGING OUR CONGREGATION: Year 1

- Prepare for, then collaborate with Transitional Contract Minister - done
- Ensure that the Board’s monthly agenda reflects our current goals - ongoing
- Renew programs for Leadership Development
 - Reba and Sally working towards
- Continue to strive for transparent and frequent communication regarding all church activity - ongoing
- Redefine and articulate “right relations” and “covenant behavior” in our congregation
 - Right Relations Committee, Board and Minister
 - Reviewing what it means
 - What is covenant
 - Roles of staff, Board and members

ENGAGING OUR CONGREGATION: Year 2

- Continue the work of transition, working with Interim and/or Developmental minister to prepare for eventual search process for a settled minister

Mask Policy: No changes.

Realm: An open enrollment starting around Thanksgiving to the end of the year for the congregation. Members will be encouraged to register as well as providing hands on “genius bar” after services.

To	
Cc	
Bcc	
Subject	

Announcements:

The next Board meeting will be held Thursday, November 17, 2022.

LeeAnn Back provided the closing and the chalice was extinguished.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:10 p.m., submitted by Fern Stewart, Secretary