

First Unitarian Church of Des Moines
Board of Trustees Minutes
Thursday, September 22, 2022

In attendance and via Zoom:

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

Staff: Alice Stewart and Transitional Contract Minister Victoria Stafford

Several church members were also in attendance.

Timekeeper: Sally Merritt; Process Observer: LeeAnn Back

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m. by Board President Reba Eagles. The chalice was presented. The Board read aloud the BOT Covenant recommitting themselves to the work of the congregation as well as their responsibility to each other as a board members. It was moved by LeeAnn Back, seconded by Sally Merritt to approve the agenda and minutes from the August 18th meeting. Motion approved.

Minister's Report

Transitional Contract Minister Victoria Stafford reported having spent most of her time with the pastoral care team and the Sunday services celebrant team. In the future written updates will be provided by Birch Spick for Family Faith Formation and Membership and include the challenges, goals, who's helping and progress in those two programs. Discussion included the need to continue to define the FF format, to support the families wherever they are, to recognize the changes in the state of religious education and to assist our children to shine as bright Unitarian/Universalists in the world. The new format is from 10:45 to noon for all youth programs with the expectation that children will attend Sunday services with their families. She emphasized the need for communication on all fronts. Rev. Victoria also addressed her desire to spend as much time as possible this Fall in person, acknowledging winter's hazardous weather would limit her traveling ability and she would rely on Zoom in those instances.

In reviewing her expectations as Transitional Contract Minister, she acknowledged the general tasks of preaching and pastoral care would be addressed. She would provide a steady, reliable train on time Sunday presence, with rights of passage shared with colleagues when not available. Collaboration with Birch to maintain half-time positions stay half-time, for Birch's sake as well as to address the church's needs in the future. She will serve as chief of staff along with Alice Stewart, support Walter Pearson with the adult programming, support the work of the ad-hoc Right Relations Committee, by their invitation and support the Stewardship Team. However, she will miss teaching classes, leading support groups, being in the community doing public witness and social justice,

program development, financial development including dreaming big and special campaigns. In the future, those would be provided by a settled minister.

The Transitional Team Advisory Board recognized the need to provide a space for conversations that need to be had right away. Discussion included the need for hard conversations, around the issue of who decides what in the congregation, role of Board, role of minister, the role of Governance and honoring those responsibilities that they have. Community Conversations will be made available for small groups to gather and be comfortable to share their concerns. This information will allow Rev. Victoria to gather information, in a caring objective manner which will then be provided to the board at the end of the year. It was discussed that there is several years of work to be done, to sweep up the glass on the ground, and identified a need for demographic diversity in leadership as several years of work to build and carry out the changes and none of us will be at this table three years from now.

Also discussed was imagining if Rev. Victoria is here a year or two, and what comes after her time; the lack of members in their late 20's and 30's and what Sunday church means to that demographic; and expanding the Transitional Team membership. Questions remain regarding what do you see on the horizon, what would make this a bright, transforming light in your life and pointing Rev. Victoria quietly towards others with whom to speak. Discussion regarding the future of the church as bright and inspiring as well as allowing people their grief. Church is real life, and like life, change happens, this is transitional. Strength and health of the congregation needs to be emphasized, ministers come and go, we need to commit to each other. At every gathering, a sense that builds this future for those not here yet, all of us who have not yet arrived or are in Faith Formation. Exciting times Transformation versus transition.

Director of Finance Report:

Alice Stewart, Director of Finance, reported August attendance matched the previous year's. The first Sunday in September attendance was incredible. In our church, attendance is tied to giving, while there is a lot of on-line giving we don't have much recurring. Our revenues were at 92% and expenses at 76% according to the budget, which is great. Pledge income is coming back to where we need to be, expectations for September should be great. Expenses included higher water bill, increased office supplies tied to new staff; music, musicians and RE curricula tied to new year; additional name tags tied to new members; and an increase in tripped alarms. The tripped alarms are being addressed by tightening doors and calling the office when alarms are tripped.

Discussion included the desire that, once stewardship is done annually, to encourage recurring payments to even up cash flow especially for the summer. Discussion included providing the congregation with a simple set of steps regarding the pledging process as well as providing assistance to members in-person. Various payment options will be available in the future.

Additional reports will be provided to the Board at the next meeting.

Staff accessibility liaison would be Alice Stewart.

New Business

Mask Policy: We will use UUA as a guide as data in Iowa may be flawed, If notice is given by congregants, news sources or Polk County Health, policy decisions will be made. There has been no feedback from the congregation. Policy review will continue under new business.

Leadership Spotlight: September, October and November have been filled. It was suggested individuals share with the congregation why they chose to serve, your attraction to the church, what it means to be a dedicated volunteer. Optimal results would be getting others interested in serving as well as helping the congregations get to know their leaders..

Other New Business: It was moved by Greg Nichols, seconded by LeeAnn Back to nominate Jean Rommes to serve as a congregant member of the Governance Committee. Motion approved.

Committee Reports: In the future written reports will be submitted and oral reports will be made when needed.

Announcements:

Welcome to Jeremy Guenther newest Board member.

Ministry of Fun Picnic will meet at 11:00 a.m., Sunday, September 25th.

Second Board Retreat will be held at 2:00 p.m., Sunday, September 25th.

Leadership Team will meet on October 1, at 9:00 a.m.

The next Board meeting will be held Thursday, October 20, 2022.

LeeAnn Back provided the closing and the chalice was extinguished.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:17 p.m., submitted by Fern Stewart, Secretary