

First Unitarian Church of Des Moines
Board of Trustees Minutes
Thursday, February 23, 2023

In attendance 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

The meeting was called to order at 6:08 p.m. by Board President Reba Eagles. The chalice was presented. LeeAnn Back led the Board in reading the covenant. The check-in question was "What were two or three traits or skills will the new Interim Minister possess? Trustees responded. It was moved by Crystal Loving, seconded by Kevin Boeckholt to approve the amended agenda and minutes from the January 8, 14, 19, 31 and February 6, 2023 meetings. Motion approved.

Timekeeper and Process Observer: Kevin Boeckholt

Minister's Report

Transitional Contract Minister Victoria Stafford reported her written report was included in the packet. Discussion regarding the minister compensation account and Congregational Sponsorship of Birch Spick were to be discussed later in the meeting.

Director of Finance Report:

Alice Stewart, Director of Finance, provided highlights for the past month which included January expenses exceeding revenue due to seasonal costs including snow removal, graphic design costs and hospitality costs related to the opportunity to buy out a large amount of decaffeinated coffee. This month was a leveling out due to pledge income taking a dip during the holidays. Cash contributions and bank interest continue to remain strong. Cash contributions represent half to Faith in Action partners and the other half go to a variety of social justice programs including Family Promise to Feds to TAG.

Responding to questions regarding Statement of Financial Position regarding general fund checking and Bankers Trust Savings, reflect the Kitchen Project funds which will be spent down.

Alice was thanked for her excellent reports created for the current budget and line items.

New Business

Mask Policy: There are no changes to the current mask policy and the item has been removed from future agendas. Masks remain optional.

Congregational Sponsorship: Birch Spick: Primarily, sponsorship implies that the congregation sees the aspirant's true potential for professional ministry. If approved, a small ad-hoc committee would be formed to support them on their journey and help develop recommendations for what sponsorship would mean for UCDSM. There are no financial or programmatic requirements. It will allow Birch a relationship with the incoming interim minister or settled minister. Birch will sign the membership book and rejoin the congregation. The Board supported the idea of sponsorship for Birch Spick. They are participating in a remote, light-caseload through a seminary in Chicago. Birch will experience numerous styles of ministry during his time here. It was moved by Crystal Loving to support the request from Birch Spick for Congregational Sponsorship, seconded by Sally Merritt. Voted via Zoom and in person. Approved.

Transition Report: Scott Emison Clair reported the Interim Ministry Advisory Committee had an initial meeting February 12, March 5 at a congregational forum. Two key questions will be presented at the forum; what three key areas to focus on and what are the desired strengths wanted in the interim minister. The information will be reviewed and included in the informational packet due to the UUA in early April. Scott thanked Rev. Victoria for her guidance and wisdom in the past meeting of the committee. The Board thanked the committee for their work on this. Committee members include Scott Emison Clair, Shelley Kaldenberg, Steve Herwig, Doug Aupperle, Crystal Loving, Eliot Nassif.

Budget Update: The big item needed to be added are moving expenses for the interim minister ranging anywhere from \$10,000 to \$15,000 which is not in the current budget. One other item that needs to be considered is the Transfest Festival which would be approximately \$2,500 which is very important to support. The proposed stewardship goal would be \$621,000. Alice reviewed the numbers.

Michael Merritt on behalf of the Stewardship Team will need a number to shoot for which will need to be provided at tonight's meeting. He noted the \$621,000 was a 22% increase in the previous years' \$500,000 target. He noted membership had dropped a bit, but the next four Sundays would focus on how valuable the church is to everyone. Actual Stewardship Sunday is scheduled for March 26. April 15 will be the end of the stewardship drive and at the April meeting the Board will determine what will be included or removed once that number is known. 51% of our members are not pledging, they are giving however, the goal is 100% participation pledging. The

\$620,000 represents where we were in 2019, pre-covid, establishing ourselves where we were pre-covid.

It was noted the \$620,000 figure did not include the moving expenses or the Transfest funds. The issue is we are already at a very lean budget. Staffing is the largest portion but it is a lean budget. Rev. Victoria noted a 20% increase is a high minded goal. She requested Board members talk to members in the circles we move in, to get the conversations going, to get individuals to increase their pledges. Another thought was to attract a good interim candidate, you need to show support. Board members need to sharpen their pencils and consider how to reduce to get a balanced budget.

The Board recommended a \$615,000 canvas number, with an operating budget \$631,000. Alice will provide the budget numbers with the actual numbers from last year to what is expected to next year to the Board and Stewardship Committee.

Minister Compensation Accounts: Rev. Victoria requested a shift of \$2,500 from Professional Expense line to Travel Expenses. The costs are almost entirely for lodging and a car with little cushion. Airbnb rates fluctuate unexpectedly month-to-month. All unspent funds in both line items revert to the church at the end of the contract. She noted the decision was not setting precedent. It was moved by Crystal Loving, seconded by Jeremy Guenther to amend the contract to reduce professional expense line item by \$3,000, and move the \$3,000 to the travel expenses line item. Voted via Zoom and in-person. Approved.

Nomination Committee: Fern Stewart proposed the Nomination Committee membership: Pam Backstrom 2023, Michael Andreski 2024 and Sue Huber 2025, two board representatives LeeAnn Back and Fern Stewart. It was moved by LeeAnn Back, seconded by Sally Merritt to approve the Nomination Committee as presented. Voted via Zoom and in-person. Approved.

Announcements: Braille signage is ready to be placed upon Anne and Al Powers return to Des Moines.

The next Board meeting will be held Thursday, March 16, 2023.

LeeAnn Back provided the closing and the chalice was extinguished.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:34 p.m.,

Submitted by Fern Stewart, Secretary