

Unitarian Society of New Haven
Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Trustees
September 10, 2020

Accepted October 8, 2020

Board Members Present: President Nancy Apfel, Vice President Emily McCave, Clerk Becky Friedkin, Treasurer Michele DeMuisis, Past President Al Bosch; Trustees at Large, Bernice Marie-Daly, Rich Stockton; Youth Trustee Elizabeth S.; Rev. Lindasusan Ulrich, ex officio

Board Members Absent: Craig Machado, Tina Santoni

Others Present: David Stagg (Management Team)

1. Gather

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Board met online via Zoom.

Nancy called the meeting to order at 6:35 pm.

Rich lit a chalice given by Rev. Megan to the Worship Committee and read words by Rev. Kathleen McTigue (# 435 in the grey hymnal, adapted) . We followed with a life check-in, then read the proposed FY22 Board Covenant.

Michele joined the meeting.

2. Agenda changes

Becky reported that the Anti-Racism Taskforce asked her to share a presentation made by Jackie Trimble Shapiro to the Taskforce about the proposed 8th principle. The Taskforce will be working on educating the congregation and laying groundwork for adoption of the 8th principle by USNH. Becky will send it to folks.

3. Board resignation and Board Rep to the Nominating Committee

Christina Allen has had to resign from the Board due to health issues. The Nominating Committee will seek a replacement. We hope to hold a special Congregational Meeting to affirm that nomination.

We need a Board Representative to the Nominating Committee for this year. Becky would like someone else to take this responsibility this year as she has a very full plate.

3. Minister's Report

Rev. Lindasusan walked us through her report, which is attached.

MOTION: Becky moved and Nancy seconded that we accept Rev. Lindasusan's proposed housing allowance. The motion passed unanimously.

Elizabeth joined the meeting.

3. Management Team reports, including Policy 1.8 review

David began with some background on the policy review process. The Governance Policy book starts with statements about the purpose of USNH then dives into policies that constrain the

MT (what they must do and especially what they must **not** do). This structure gives the Management Team a great deal of latitude, within the prescribed policies. We reviewed and accepted the compliance report on Policy 1.8, Communication and Support to the Board.

The Building Reopening Advisory Group (BRAG) is considering adjustments to the outdoor gathering policy but nothing has been decided.

4. Fall Board/MT Retreat

Nancy spoke with Hillary Allen from the UUA about the UUA-sponsored Start Up retreat for congregations with new ministers. The UUA has found that these retreats are better held in the second year, when we have more information about congregational issues and we have developed relationships with Rev. Lindasusan.

We considered possible topics for our fall retreat, including policy governance; what we as a Board consider to be our thorny spots; reassessing our congregational goals and how we can better connect. This is also an opportunity to energize us, with a new congregational year. We tentatively decided to have a session on policy governance, followed by focus on connections within the congregation (the Belong Ends). Becky will send out a Doodle Poll to find a date.

5. Board Education

Rev. Lindasusan had suggested at the Officers' Meeting that we take turns preparing short (10-15 minute) presentations on various topics. Becky piloted that model by presenting on how we got to policy governance at USNH and the concept of Nested Bowls. (This part of the meeting was recorded.) We agreed to continue this model of Board education, hoping to build on topics over time. Becky and Bernice will present in October, continuing on policy governance.

5. Board Covenant

We discussed the proposed covenant, which we read at the beginning of the meeting.

MOTION: Bernice moved and Becky seconded that we adopt the revised covenant. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Consent agenda

The minutes of the August 13, 2020 Board meeting were accepted without changes.

7. Meeting process observations

Emily asked how people felt about having names assigned to the covenant document for quicker reading – all agreed. We will vary the assignments from month to month.

Other observations:

- It seems helpful to raise hands to speak.
- Please keep your thumbs up or down while voting until Becky announces the results.
- We moved through the agenda quickly and efficiently, perhaps partly because of a quicker check in with fewer attendees.
- At the beginning of the meeting when not all folks are here, it's unclear when we should start. Maybe the officers can figure out a system to do final reminders, and decide how long we are going to wait before beginning the meeting.

- During discussion (e.g., retreats) some people speak up but then there is often silence and we are not always sure of the extent of agreement. It would be helpful for people to show thumbs up or down in response to others' comments.
- Nancy is a wonderful, effective leader; she welcomed latecomers while still moving us along.

Nancy mentioned that if we do have a suggestion while observing process, please remember the covenant and be kind.

We need a volunteer for process observer at the October 8 meeting.

8. Thank you notes

We agreed on a number of thank you notes to write. Nancy, Becky, and Al will write them this month.

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 pm

Respectfully submitted,
Becky Friedkin, Clerk

Attachments:

- Minister's Report
- MT Monitoring Report: Policy 1.8
- Draft Board Covenant (adopted without changes at this meeting)

Minister's Report

September 2020

Minister's Report to the USNH Board of Trustees

Rev. Lindasusan Ulrich

Have I already been here a month? Have I only been here a month? A quote from Doctor Who pops to mind frequently these days: "People assume that time is a strict progression of cause to effect, but actually, from a nonlinear, non-subjective viewpoint, it's more like a big ball of wibbly-wobbly, timey-wimey...stuff." Amen, brother.

In the months to come, the structure of this report will no doubt change as we figure out what's most helpful. What follows seemed like a decent place to start.

Key Developments

- **Creating the covenant with Rev. John Marsh** — I've started a draft of a covenant and have reached out to Regional Staff to help me think through what it needs to include, given the unusual nature of the situation. I'm currently waiting to hear back about a time to talk. I've also spoken with Alison Patrick, who is eager to have the covenant in place for everyone's sake. More immediately, she has asked whether it would be okay for Daniel to continue with RE classes, to which Jesse and I have both given our blessing. Alison would like the Board to weigh in as well.
- **Reengaging with the Ends statements** — At the Management Team's August 25 meeting, I asked when the Ends statements and their interpretations were last reviewed. Based on various people's research, it looks like that part of the process got waylaid by other events (such as Rev. Megan's departure). We've begun talking about how to reengage with them, using the "Belong" document from 2019 as a starting point.

What I've Noticed

- **Silos** — I've noticed silos cropping up more often than I'd first expected, so I've also been pondering ways to dismantle and replace them. For example, because the whole staff doesn't meet regularly, we're each operating in our own circles. As minister, I move among many different groups, of course, but the system is less resilient if the minister is the only connective thread. In response, I've just launched a weekly check-in email among the staff as a simple way to keep each other updated on what we're doing, how we might help each other, and what's coming down the road.

To that same end, the worship planning team is starting to use one central google spreadsheet that gathers all the key information, from monthly themes to links for each service's script. Everyone can look in one place for the most up-to-date version of everything and make changes as needed. We'll even collect the Joys and Sorrows in the scripts so that the Pastoral Care Associates and I can follow up as needed. This kind of

Minister's Report

collaboration and information sharing also makes us stronger as a team in case someone gets sick or loses power and someone else needs to step in at the last minute.

- **Anxiety in the system** — I get the sense that many people are anxious to get on my calendar. Some of it has been my slower response time during this startup period (on top of the COVID Time Daze); as I get my feet under me more, this piece will stabilize. I believe the larger factor, though, is people's desire for **some** kind of certainty amidst current events, which are layered upon the echoes of Rev. Megan's and Rev. John's unexpected departures. I keep reminding folks that this moment in history requires something different from us — how could it not? — including the need to slow down.

My Questions for the Board

- What are your thoughts on Daniel attending RE?

What I Need from the Board

- **Housing allowance** — As I mentioned last month, the Board needs to vote to approve the amount I'm designating for housing. This is a formality required by the IRS. Based on conversations with my tax person, I'd like to set my 2020 housing allowance at \$35,329.
- **Study leave** — I'll be taking part of my study leave October 5-16 to finish my certification as a spiritual director. This second half of the program was originally scheduled for April, but we'll be attending virtually instead. For the worship service while I'm out (October 11), we've registered to broadcast the service created by UU the Vote, which will also give the worship planning team a week to take it easy.

MT monitoring of Policy Governance Section 1.8

(MT responses in red)

(The Management Team last reported on this section on September 19th 2019)

1.8 Communication and Support to the Board

The Management Team shall not permit the Board to be uninformed, misinformed, or unsupported in its work.

Accordingly, the Management Team may not:

- a. Fail to inform the Board in a timely manner of relevant trends, public policy initiatives, public events of the organization, material external and internal changes.

The arrival of the Coronavirus Pandemic in March 2020 and the sudden illness of our interim minister John Marsh in May 2020 precipitated major changes for USNH since last year. MT worked very closely with the Board in arriving at decisions around the closing of the building and the transition to online services. MT has created and chairs a new committee (The Building Reopening Advisory Group) that includes representatives from the Board to recommend the timing and other details related to reopening of the building.

- b. Fail to report to the Board, in a timely manner any significant information it requires including anticipated media coverage, threatened or impending legal issues, claims, or lawsuits.

There have been no incidents of the type described here since our last report

- c. Fail to submit the monitoring data required by the Board policy "3.5 Monitoring Management Team Performance" in a timely, accurate, and understandable fashion, and which includes the Management Team's interpretations of the policy.

MT has provided reports as required by 3.5.2 a) according to the schedule determined by the Board. These reports have included statements confirming compliance or non-compliance in accordance with MT interpretations previously determined. We have routinely evaluated the interpretations but no changes have been proposed since our last report.

- d. Fail to advise the Board if, in the Management Team's opinion, the Board is not in compliance with its own policies on Governance Process and Board-Management Team Delegation.

There has been no occasion where MT has formed any such opinion since our last report

- e. Fail to report in a timely manner, any actual or anticipated noncompliance with any Ends or Executive Limitations policies of the Board regardless of the Board's monitoring schedule.

MT is not aware of any such actual or anticipated noncompliance since our last report

- f. Fail to recommend changes in Board policies, when the need becomes known to them.

The last time we reported, MT proposed that each section of policy 1.8 include the MT interpretation “No interpretation required”. Revision 1.5 of the Policy Governance Handbook includes this change as approved by the Board.

- g. Fail to gather and consider as many staff and external points of view, issues, and options as needed, for fully informed Board choices.

MT has consistently sought the opinion of staff, committee members and others before bringing recommendations to the Board. MT has attended monthly Board meetings with the intention of keeping the Board informed of any matters requiring Board attention

- h. Fail to provide a mechanism for official Board, officer, or committee communications.

MT has worked closely with our congregational administrator to facilitate all forms of communication on behalf of the Board

- i. Fail to deal with the Board as a whole except when (a) fulfilling individual requests for information or (b) responding to officers or committees duly charged by the Board.

Formal discussions between the MT and the Board have taken place at monthly Board meetings in person and since March 2020 by Zoom. Some matters have been discussed beforehand by email or phone with the President or by email with the whole Board before being brought to a Board meeting.

- j. Fail to limit public statements about the official position of the congregation or Board on controversial social, political, and/or congregational issues to what the congregation or Board has formally and explicitly adopted as positions of record. Nothing in this policy shall be construed to infringe upon the fundamental principle of freedom of the pulpit.

MT has not made public statements about matters described in this section

Section 1.8 of the Policy governance Handbook was approved by the Board: March 12, 2015

Changes to MT interpretation were approved by the Board: September 12, 2019

We report compliance with sections a. through j. above
MT 9/10/2020

2020-2021 USNH Board Covenant

DRAFT, September 2020

Always bearing in mind that we are doing the work of the congregation, we commit to:

1. Come prepared to meetings
2. Respect the agenda
3. Assume good intentions
4. Take responsibility for the consequences of our words and actions
5. Be as fully present as possible
6. If needed, remind others to hold to the covenant
7. Speak our truth and listen openly and actively to others' truths
8. Respect ambiguity and encourage multiple viewpoints
9. Allow for moments of contemplation and opportunities to seek clarification
10. Commit to personal growth by risking vulnerability and imperfection
11. Respect confidential matters and speak with one voice outside meetings
12. Continue personal renewal so that we offer our best selves