

Unitarian Society of New Haven  
Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Trustees  
January 14, 2021

Accepted February 11, 2021

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

**Others Present:** Gwen Heuss-Severance and David Stagg (Management Team) and Cindy Chelcun (Stewardship co-chair)

## 1. Gather

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

Nancy called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm

Tina lit the chalice and read an excerpt from Maya Angelou's *A Brave and Startling Truth*

We read the Board Covenant and followed with a life check-in.

Rev. Lindasusan volunteered to be the process observer for the meeting.

## Agenda Changes

Nancy added two items to the agenda. One is to hold a second Board meeting, to discuss priorities to recommend to the Finance Committee for the FY22 budget. The second is to discuss the Hospitality and Inclusion section of the Commission on Institutional Change report, *Widening the Circle of Concern*.

## 2. Reports

### Cindy Chelcun, Stewardship co-chair

Cindy reported on the committee's plan to recruit Stewardship Ambassadors to widely decentralize the Stewardship process across USNH leadership. This was a recommendation of the Stewardship Consultation Process with Liz Coit in 2019. Purposes are to

- Deepen the "infrastructure" of Stewardship at USNH
- Engage more of the congregation in more comfortable and confident one-to-one interactions about pledging, and stewardship in general
- Broaden our messages of gratitude for **all gifts** of time, talent and treasure to USNH

A Stewardship Ambassador is an appointed or volunteer member of each committee and task force who will maintain contact with all committee members around stewardship. They will not ask for pledges of specific amounts but will express gratitude for contributions to USNH, ask if there are any questions about the pledge appeal, and urge people to complete their pledge as soon as possible. Any concerns will be shared with the Stewardship liaison and/or Rev. Lindasusan, as appropriate.

The Stewardship team will provide guidance for ambassadors. This is not meant to be a time-consuming role and can happen largely within regular committee communication.

This program will occur in tandem with Stewardship outreach to members who are not connected to a committee, task force, or other structured group at USNH.

Gwen noted that Cindy will present this plan at the Feb 3 Council of Chairs meeting.

Nancy expressed deep gratitude to Cindy and the rest of the Stewardship Committee for doing this work, and noted that the Stewardship Ambassador program is especially appropriate and useful during COVID, as it has a community-building component.

The Board expressed its strong support for the program by a show of hands, and Cindy left the meeting.

### **Welcome to Treasurer Larry Copes**

Nancy expressed gratitude to Larry for accepting the Treasurer role. We are all so glad you are with us.

### **Minister's Report**

Rev. Lindasusan expressed their<sup>1</sup> excitement about our statement about the breach of the US Capitol and that we were able to do it so quickly. They also noted that they did not sign the statement separately because they are an ex-officio member of the Board.

They also reminded us that we are living through multiple levels of trauma, and we should not underestimate that cost. Please be kind to yourself and to the folks around you.

They shared steps taken to encourage more people to engage with and get to know them.

Rev. Lindasusan is excited about USNH's membership in CONECT. They attended the CONECT Assembly on January 12 and had a conversation with a CONECT organizer about other ways they can be involved in CONECT.

Rev. Lindasusan noted that USNH is already implementing some of the recommendations in *Widening the Circle of Concern*, most notably "education about the covenantal nature of our faith." They will be participating in the January 31 discussion of the report.

They also reported that the goal of reshaping and expanding the Pastoral Care structure was too ambitious for this first year, so it is on the back burner for now.

Rev. Lindasusan asked us to ponder how we are supporting our souls during these times.

Rev. Lindasusan noted that with RJ doing school from home and Emily experiencing chronic health issues, it is increasingly difficult to meet many competing demands. They asked for our patience with response times, noting that they are always doing the best they can for USNH.

Rev. Lindasusan is forming a Ministerial Advisory and Support Team (MAST) and has drafted a charge, mission, and duties. We are welcome to suggest potential members.

Tomorrow evening (Friday, Jan 15) is the MLK service at Congregation Mishkan Israel, for which Rev. Lindasusan has contributed a prayer.

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<sup>1</sup> Reverend Lindasusan's preferred pronoun is "they."

Rev. Lindasusan's report, including the Statement on the Breach of the U.S. Capitol and the plan for the Ministerial Advisory and Support Team, is appended to these minutes.

### **Proposed Revisions of our *Among Statements***

Nancy and Emily reported that, based on our discussions at the December Board meeting, they drafted revisions to our Among Ends. These were circulated in advance of the meeting, and Nancy walked us through the reasoning behind each change. The proposed language follows, with changed items in **blue text**, most of which is additional language. The first bullet had originally read "Treat one another with respect."

USNH is a congregation of **radical** welcome and connection, where people of all ages:

- **Honor and respect our Covenant and each other.**
- Give and receive support in times of joy, sorrow, and transition.
- Embrace **and affirm all** diversity, **for our members, our leadership, and all who enter our doors.**
- Engage in life-long learning **to deepen our self-understanding and enrich our relationships with one another.**
- Generously give of ourselves and our resources.

**MOTION:** Al moved and Emily seconded to accept the proposed revisions to the *Relationships Among Ends* statements. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Management Team Reports**

David reported that Jeremy Hill has resigned from the Management Team after three years of service. Jeremy will continue to work on the BRAG team and to draft Standard Operating Procedures.

There will be a financial report, based on six months of data, at next month's Board meeting, which David will work on with Larry.

David shared a graph comparing the rate of pledge income for FY20 and FY21 to date. Early this year we did very well, with a large amount of pre-paid pledges. As of October, we are behind last year's trend, but it is still too soon to tell how the year will unfold.

Comments and questions include:

- We don't know if this is just noise or part of a trend.
- What percentage of the congregation contributes on a monthly basis? We do not know precisely, but it is a large number.
- There is no plan to apply for another PPP grant. Terry Durham doesn't think we qualify, based on the requirements for loss of revenue.
- This is probably happening at many congregations. Does the UUA have suggestions for dealing with this during the pandemic? Becky noted that the USNH Stewardship team receives regular communication from the UUA Stewardship office and participates in occasional webinars.

- Importance of our UUA dues.
- Is Stewardship thinking about creative ways to fundraise? Maybe a plate donation “drive” to encourage people to aggregate what they would have put in the plate.
- Rev. Lindasusan said that the Stewardship team is thinking of stewardship in a big picture way, not just the pledge campaign. They may be able to work on some fundraisers
- Some wondered if anyone is working on holding the chocolate auction online.

**Gwen reported for BRAG**, noting that the positivity rate for our area was just over 6%. This is better than it has been but the number of hospitalizations has also increased. We will be continuing our current protocols.

{We took a five minute break}

### **3. Future Planning**

#### **Ad-hoc committee to review finance-related roles and responsibilities**

Nancy walked the Board through the rationale for creating an ad-hoc committee to clarify the appropriate roles and responsibilities of the Treasurer, Finance Committee, Management Team, and the Board as a whole. With Policy Governance more mature, now is a good time to explore and possibly redefine these roles and responsibilities. We reviewed the proposed charge and made minor revisions.

**MOTION:** Becky moved and Tina seconded a motion to appoint an **Ad-hoc Committee on Financial Roles and Responsibilities:**

*The Board appoints an ad-hoc committee to study, evaluate, and make recommendations to the Board to define:*

- *the specific and appropriate financial roles and responsibilities of the USNH Treasurer, Finance Committee, Management Team, Board of Trustees and other relevant participants in financial matters;*
- *the accountability relationships among the above entities regarding finances; and*
- *the appropriate financial reporting to the Board of Trustees.*

*The committee will be chaired by the Treasurer, Larry Copes. Other members will include Clerk Becky Friedkin, chair of Finance Terry Durham and Finance Committee member Kathy Garner, and David Stagg and Rev. Lindasusan Ulrich of the Management Team.*

*The Board affirms that, under Policy Governance, the Treasurer’s role is primarily oversight rather than day-to-day operational activities. This should guide the committee’s work.*

*If needed, the ad-hoc committee may extend its work beyond this congregational year. However, the Committee will report to the Board as appropriate and no later than its April 8 meeting, so that the Board can update the congregation at the 2021 spring annual meeting.*

The motion passed unanimously.

### **Special meeting to discuss FY22 budget priorities**

Nancy noted that the Finance Committee will be starting work on the first draft of a budget and asked for our input about our priorities. She suggested that we hold a special meeting to discuss these priorities. We agreed on a one-hour meeting on January 28 at 6:30 pm.

### **Board self-evaluation**

With the proposal to experiment with a smaller Board, we agreed to study our effectiveness, especially in relation to our size. Do we have enough people to do what we need to do? How does our size affect our effectiveness? Rich volunteered to work on this and present some ideas at our February meeting. He would appreciate a partner in this work.

### **The Proposed 8<sup>th</sup> Principle of Unitarian Universalism**

Nancy urged everyone to read *Widening the Circle of Concern* and attend the discussion on January 31. She would also like us to become educated about the proposed 8<sup>th</sup> principle. Helpful background is available at <https://www.8thprincipleuu.org>. Rev. Lindasusan noted that the seven principles have evolved, both in number and wording.

### **Lighthouse Structure**

The Lighthouse Structure was made for the Yale Humanist Society (YHS) and has been displayed on the New Haven Green during the winter holidays, as a counter to religious symbolism. The YHS is willing to donate it to us and has the funds to transport and install it. The Management Team recommends that if the Board approves, then the MT and Building & Grounds would determine where it could be located. The proposal would then be presented to the congregation for a vote.

Rev. Lindasusan noted that we do not have to accept this gift and we do not need to rush to meet the donor's preferred timeline. The process of making a decision is ultimately more important than the decision we come to.

Board member comments follow:

- One member feels that the inscription seems to be in opposition to other religious traditions and would prefer not to accept.
- Was the artist part of the decision to offer it to USNH? We do not know.
- Does it need footings, concrete support? No.
- It would make a big statement. Is that what we want our statement to be?
- Would it be visited by others, or is it mostly for the USNH community?

Because some feel that the location and feasibility might affect their vote, David will take the idea to Building and Grounds for further investigation.

We agreed to review the materials, possibly visit the structure in Bethany, and discuss it at our special meeting in two weeks.

### **Discussion of *Widening the Circle of Concern***

We did not have time to discuss the Hospitality and Inclusion portion of the report.

#### **4. Closing**

##### **Consent Agenda**

The minutes of the December 10, 2020 Board meeting and the December 13, 2020 Congregational Meeting were accepted without changes.

##### **Process Observations**

Rev. Lindasusan noticed that with fewer people there was more participation from everyone. There were no bystanders, everyone participated.

##### **Thank you notes**

Becky will do the thank-you note this month.

##### **Adjournment**

Larry moved and Al seconded to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 8:52 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Becky Friedkin, Clerk

Attachment:

Minister's Report

## Minister's Report to the Board of Trustees

January 14, 2021

Can it really be 2021? So much has already happened in these first two weeks of the new year. Most notably, the country watched while violent insurrectionists took over the U.S. Capitol in an attempted coup that took five lives. I'm proud that as a Board, we put out a statement denouncing these actions (see page 3 of this report for the text).

As a reminder to us all, we're living through a period with multiple levels of trauma, which may show up in delayed reactions to major events. Please remember to be kind to yourselves and others.

### What do you notice?

- I'd been hearing from multiple sources that congregants have been looking for ways to get to know me more. Given how few opportunities we've had for informal interactions, this makes sense. To that end, I've run an item in the weekly e-news on "How to Reach Your Minister," including details on lectio divina classes (Monday and Saturday mornings), office hours through Calendly, and my best contact information. People have started taking me up on office hours.
- I attended the CONECT assembly on January 12, 2021, at which USNH had a very strong showing! The goal was to gather at least 1,000 attendees, and I believe there were more like 1,100. I'm excited that the congregation is part of such a vibrant coalition. (As a bonus, a childhood friend who was recently elected to the CT state legislature got a shout-out along with other new members.) On January 11, I also had a great conversation with Kristen Estabrook, the CONECT organizer for our area, about ways I might plug in.
- I've been reading "Widening the Circle of Concern," the final report from the UUA's Commission on Institutional Change (COIC). I've noticed that some of the recommendations are things we're already pursuing at USNH. For example, one of the recommendations in the very first chapter of the report highlights the importance of "education about the covenantal nature of our faith." I'll be participating in a conversation about the COIC report on January 31, facilitated by Jesse Greist and Tisa Wanger.
- With everything already going on at USNH and in the world right now, I've decided to postpone my plans to rework the charge to the Pastoral Care team. I'd long wondered whether I was being too ambitious in taking this on in my first year, and the answer turned out to be yes. I think changes will also be easier to make once we're able to meet in person again.

## Do you have questions?

- How are you attending to your soul these days?

## What do you need?

- With RJ doing school from home and Emily dealing with chronic health issues, I ask for your continued patience with response times. I do so with some hesitancy and self-consciousness, but the reality of my multiple responsibilities presses on me more than my aspirations as a communicator or my self-image as a good worker. I **can** promise you this: I'm always doing the best I can for USNH. It just may not look like what others accomplished pre-pandemic and pre-coup attempt.
- I've gotten many questions about when I might form a Committee on Ministry. I'd been taking my time, wanting to choose a model that would be most useful. I've decided to create a Ministerial Advisory and Support Team (MAST), whose charge is to "aid the minister in carrying on an effective ministry by being available for reflection and counsel." (See page 4 for the full mission and duties.) I have some people in mind to ask to join. If you have recommendations for congregants who might be valuable additions to the team, please email me at [RevLindasusan@usnh.org](mailto:RevLindasusan@usnh.org).

## Anything else?

- I'm delighted to take part in Congregation Mishkan Israel's 54th Annual Interfaith MLK Service, which will be broadcast on Friday, January 15 at 7pm. (Details will be in this week's e-news.) I wrote a prayer specifically for this event.



*Author and activist Helen Keller wrote, "I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do something that I can do." In that spirit, the Board of Trustees and I crafted this statement on the events of January 6, 2021.*

*—Rev. Lindasusan*

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## **Statement on the Breach of the U.S. Capitol**

We, the people of the Unitarian Society of New Haven, unequivocally condemn the terrorist attack on the US Capitol today. We condemn any and all attempts to delay the certification or overturn the results of a free, fair, and secure democratic election. We witness and condemn the hypocrisy of our militarized and white supremacist policing system, which reacts with extreme violence to people of color peacefully protesting while allowing white supremacists to commit domestic terrorism and sedition against our government. As Unitarian Universalists, we affirm and promote the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large.

As UUA President Susan Frederick-Gray has said, "As Unitarian Universalists, it is important to remember that our commitment to democracy is not just political or moral, it is fundamentally theological. It grows from our affirmation of the inherent worth and dignity of every person and the Universalist understanding that we are all part of one creation, interconnected. These theological values of human dignity and interdependence are why we know everyone needs a voice in the matters that affect their lives."

We are prepared to join in collective, moral, faithful action to defend our democracy. We call on all of our country's leaders and institutions to do the same.

*USNH Board of Trustees*

*January 6, 2021*

## **Ministerial Advisory and Support Team (MAST)**

### **Mission**

The Ministerial Advisory and Support Team (MAST) acts as a confidential reflection and advisory group for issues brought forward by the minister.

The MAST:

- Aids the minister in carrying on an effective ministry by being available for reflection and counsel.
- Works with the minister on continuing education and other professional development plans.

### **Overview of the MAST's Role**

The MAST promotes the effectiveness of the minister within the context of the congregation's entire ministry.

The MAST operates from a stance of appreciative inquiry and empowerment:

- Noticing what is working well
- Focusing on improvement rather than criticism
- Looking for potential in the problem
- Maintaining respectful relationships
- Operating as openly and honestly as possible

### **Requirements**

The MAST meets monthly throughout the congregational year. Except under exceptional circumstances, the MAST commits to absolute confidentiality by all members.

MAST members should:

- Have a commitment to the congregation's purpose and ministry
- Be able to consider the larger perspective
- Maintain confidentiality
- Be able to ask thoughtful, open-ended questions
- Work collaboratively
- Have knowledge of Unitarian Universalism
- Encourage people with concerns to express them directly to the relevant person