

Unitarian Society of New Haven
Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Trustees
September 13, 2021, Via Zoom
Approved 10/14/21

Board Members Present:

President - Emily McCave
Vice President - Joanie Messner
Clerk - Aimee Cotton Bogush
Bernice Marie-Daly
Becky Reeve

Tina Santoni
Rich Stockton
Susan Trotta-Smith
Rev. Lindasusan Ulrich, ex officio

Others Present:

David Stagg (Management Team)

Board Members Absent:

1. Gather & Chalice Lighting

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m. and the chalice was lit. The covenant was read and check in took place.

2. Future Planning

Fall Retreat Date and Sub-Committee – Joanie

After discussion the best date is Sunday, 10/24, 1-5 pm, unsure if virtual or in-person. The backup date is Saturday, 10/23, 1-5 pm. A planning committee will consist of the officers, Sue, and Bernice. In addition to general bonding as a team and some orientation to the board, the retreat will provide time for reviewing goals for the year and how we will incorporate the 8th principle into our board work.

8th Principle Workgroup plans and congregational vote – Emily

Emily reviewed the progress of the 8th Principle Workgroup and upcoming events intended to engage the congregation in advance of a possible vote at the congregational meeting in December.

These include:

9/26 - after service, an open conversational forum led by the working group

11/7 - Coventanal Relations Committee holding a circle

11/29 - Mailing a brochure to all households

12/5 - Theme of the service is the 8th Principle

Trustees are asked to have conversations - show we are united and want it to move forward and that it matters. The president's letter in Oct. or Nov. will focus on the 8th principle and why it

matters to us. Emily asks other trustees to send thoughts about why it matters to you as a board member - she will incorporate in her note. The Paula Cole Jones videos are helpful and moving - maybe incorporated into parts of a service - Emily can also mention them in her president's note. (Links to the videos will be sent to the full board before the retreat.)

Fall Congregational Meeting Date Selection – Emily

It is decided that the Fall Congregational meeting will take place on December 12. The 8th Principle will tentatively be included on the agenda. It is hoped that most of the trustees will attend.

Carry over Board items 20-21 – Emily

- The 8th Principle - in process
- Work with nominating committee to create a charge - in process
- Waiting for final report from Ad Hoc committee on Financial Roles and Responsibilities - in process, hoping for report in Oct or Nov
- Spring Congregational meeting - will need to look at bylaws, in experimental phase on size and composition of board - either keeping as is, or making change. Also, potentially adjusting for fall meetings to be held before the end of January.
- Becky Sandmann - a community survey - get a sense of needs/wants/gifts/talents/how want to engage and participate in the community - MELD (Meaningful Engaged Leadership Development) might take a look at the task, no specific timeline, remains on radar for future consideration.
- Question of installing Kathleen McTigue as minister emeritus - tabling at this point because there is a lot going on with installation/anniversary, not a rush, maybe look at next year or in the spring.

Nominating Committee Update – Emily

Sue will be the member of the nominating committee from the Board.

Correspondence Received

Discussion took place about an email the board received from a member regarding worship services remaining virtual. The decision about being in person resides with the Worship Planning Team and BRAG, with board support. A plan for responding about the concern was created.

3. Reports

Minister's Report – Rev. Lindasusan (attached)

Rev. Lindasusan shared their report, noted managing expectations of the staff as they catch up on processing the trauma of the pandemic (more is not always possible), and reviewed the top priorities: restructuring pastoral care, spiritual practices for the congregation, and social justice.

Update on weekly in-person/live stream services - Rev. Lindasusan and David

The live-streamed service worked, but some issues with video quality need to be addressed. Going forward, the team would like to include pre-recorded material, which requires figuring out how folks attending within the building can see those parts. All are hopeful that in the not too distant future services can be in person. A review of the process and primary criteria for gathering in person took place.

Management Team Policy Review 1.8 – David (attached)

David shared the Management Team's Policy Review report.

NovFest Update – Rev. Lindasusan

Due to the unknowns regarding the Delta variant, the decision was made that the installation is 11/14 at 3pm, and the dinner/gala will be held in late Spring, when we hope to have more certainty around gathering together. From this change came a plan for holding 70th anniversary events once a month leading up to the late Spring gathering (about the history, Moth Radio Hour, congregation's name, etc.).

4. Closing

Consent Agenda: Minutes from August 12, 2021 Board Meeting were accepted.

Process Observations – Tina

Tina: Nice opening, check-in was deep and good. Everyone seemed to take part during the meeting, a diversity of opinions were shared. The board is challenged by current and ongoing disappointments and an honest discussion took place in which participants shared lived experience and good questions, and showed flexibility. The meeting ran on time, a break was provided. Tina observed indications that we are in a time of transitions and as a board this can be challenging, responding to congregational concerns can be challenging, overall a really good meeting. All were involved and had the energy to stay involved.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Aimee Cotton Bogush, Clerk



Minister's Report to the Board of Trustees

September 13, 2021

What do you notice?

- People are weary and long to be together. Pandemic fatigue isn't news, but it feels particularly acute, especially with energy that comes with the beginning of a new congregational year. Because of this, I want to keep an eye on the congregation's expectations — just because people's longing has increased doesn't mean that the capacity of staff and lay leaders has.
- The Worship Planning Team has been tracking the rate of new COVID cases in New Haven County as part of deciding whether Sunday services can include congregants in the sanctuary. While the rates leading up to September 12 didn't meet the criteria needed to open, the trend has been very promising. Depending on what the data show following Labor Day weekend, I'm hopeful that in-person services will resume in the not-too-distant future (fingers crossed!).

Do you have questions?

- Where is your energy these days? If you relaxed your precautions post-vaccination, have you gotten back in the swing of masking, etc.? How is pandemic fatigue showing up for you?

What do you need?

- I've attached a list of goals for the coming year, with three marked as my top priorities. In order to be accountable to the Board, I'd love to get your feedback on whether these seem like the right priorities. (I'd work on the other goals/tasks as well, but my focus would keep returning to the main three.)

Thanks to my Ministerial Advisory and Support Team (MAST) for helping me think through and reflect on what is most needed at USNH this coming year.

Goals for 2021-22

Rev. Lindasusan V. Ulrich
September 2021

Top Priorities

Pastoral Care Restructuring

- Recruit additional people to the Pastoral Care Team
- Introduce the structure and its underlying theology to the congregation
- Plan a Sunday service during which people fill out volunteer forms
- Help organize necessary infrastructure: database to track volunteer responses, data entry, pastoral care voicemail
- Create a system to track/follow up on care

Spiritual Practices with the Congregation

- Worship
- Lectio divina
- Group spiritual direction
- Getting to know people
- Teaching
- Comfort shawls (if possible)

Social Justice

- Engage with CONECT
- Study prison abolition
- Start a BIPOC group at USNH
- Support the 8th Principle process

Other Goals/Tasks

I don't expect I'll be able to achieve all of the tasks listed below, but they give an idea of where we might head.

Installation and 70th Anniversary Festivities

- Work with the NovFest Committee
- Facilitate Sunday AM worship for November 14
- Create Installation liturgy
- Help with vision for 70th anniversary event series

Stewardship

- Recruit additional people to the Stewardship Team
- Do education around giving (especially re: membership requirement)

- Hold focus groups on giving
- Lead a visioning process with the congregation? (Where do we want to go? What resources will it take to get there?)

COIC Recommendations

- Continue to teach about and emphasize covenant
- Work with the Nominating Committee on its charge

Administration

- Do regular supervision
- Hold weekly huddles with Jamie and Jesse
- Hold monthly all-staff meetings
- Create and update policies
- Help hire and onboard a Membership Coordinator
- Respond to emails promptly

Personal and Professional Commitments

- Family
- MAST
- Professional development, including FOWH and other conferences
- Spiritual practices: coloring meditation, card spreads
- Music
- Writing
- Collegial group
- Skinner House Editorial Board
- Other denominational opportunities
- Chapter/cluster meetings

MT monitoring of Policy Governance Section 1.8

(MT responses in red)

(The Management Team last reported on this section on September 10th 2020)

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 Management Team has attended all the regular monthly meetings of the Board. We have provided reports on financial matters (see c. below) and presented our proposed budget for fiscal 2021-22 for final discussion. We have also presented reports from the Building Reopening Advisory Group (BRAG) and reports on meetings of the Council of Chairs. We collaborated with the Board and the Treasurer on the work of the ad-hoc Committee on Financial Roles and Responsibilities (CFRR)

- 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. As a result of work on the Committee for Roles and Responsibilities we will report on sections 1.5 and 1.6 in March of 2022 and the Treasurer will audit the reports

- 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 MT has not become aware of any needed changes in Board policies.

- 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 9/13/2021