

Unitarian Society of New Haven
Minutes of the January 11, 2024 Board Meeting

Approved by the Board February 8, 2024

Board Members

Bobbi Pace, President	Joan Ciano (absent)
Sue Trotta-Smith, Vice-President	Alissa Chapin
Tom Ward, Treasurer	Kathy Haskins
Terry Bohnhorst Blackhawk, Clerk (absent)	Kyle Manning
	Becky Reeve

David Stagg, Management Team
Rev. Stephen Kendrick, ex officio

Visitor: Alison Cunningham, Yale Divinity School

1. Call to order: President Bobbi Pace called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.
2. Chalice Lighting and Reading: Kyle Manning read “A Winter Blessing,” by Rebecca Ann Parker. Alissa Chapin will present the reading at the February Board meeting.
3. Bobbi Pace posed the question, “As a board member, what are you looking forward to be happening at USNH in 2024?” Members responded with comments such as-- a new baby and music; new speaker series; discussions around Article II; more active work with the focus on saving democracy, thinking about linking our congregation with other congregations in this work; learning from our young families how we can better meet their needs in 2024 and beyond, such as providing family dinner nights where families just bring themselves rather than bring a dish, other ways to “do” church, etc.; two or three robust new member classes; heightening morale and lifting people up, redefining what works for UU congregations in 2024 (beyond what worked in the 1950’s, i.e., “duties,” “committees”).
4. Together, members read the USNH Board’s shared covenant and new Ends (which have been slightly tweaked to reflect, more accurately, our intended Ends). It was suggested by Reverend Stephen that the Ends be posted in the lobby for all to see. If/when we install screens in the sanctuary, he would like the Ends displayed on the screens, with the phrases coming at us, for about five minutes

before the service. The members liked the idea. Both Reverend Stephen and Tom Ward suggested that perhaps the Order of Service could be revised to include the Covenant one week, followed by the Ends the week after, in a rotating fashion.

5. Bobbi Pace made a motion to approve the agenda, which was seconded by Becky Reeve and passed unanimously.

6. Sue Trotta-Smith made a motion to approve the new Ends, and Kathy Haskins seconded it; the new Ends were approved unanimously (attached).

7. Tom Ward made a motion to approve the minutes of the Fall Congregational Meeting, and Alissa Chapin seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

8. Tom Ward made a motion to approve the minutes of the December Board Meeting, and Alissa Chapin seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

9. Alison Cunningham, *Yale Divinity School, Reimagining Church, Director of Professional Formation*, spoke about the five-year grant from the Lilly endowment to engage local congregations in reimagining what it means to be a congregation of faith, post pandemic. Congregations invited to join this initiative will be assigned to work with a student who is in their last year of divinity school. Congregations are required to designate a “Working Group,” consisting of 3-8 people (not necessarily those in leadership roles) who have ideas as to what will engage the community and congregation. Students will listen to Working Groups to distill and gently nurture conversations to determine what comes next (what does church need to become?). The program invites visionary leaders to speak to the Working Groups. This is very deep work and will take place from September 2023 through April 2024. The program provides the congregation with \$7,000 to use towards implementing their vision. If USNH joins the program, Bobbi suggests that a couple of the board members and the management team help organize things.

10. There was no policy update required from the Management Team, but David Stagg reported that water heaters in the boiler room and daycare center sprang leaks and have been replaced. A small energy audit revealed that we should replace sanctuary lights with LED lights (half have been replaced so far), then old timer switches will be replaced with digital astronomical clocks. The last thing we will need is new speed controls for the fans. There was some discussion about the Management Team providing a “summary” of their meetings to the Board so that

the Board has the information needed to pose specific questions to the Management Team. David Stagg will present the request to the Management Team. It was reported that the Security Working Group would like to send out an eblast declaring that USNH is a “firearms free facility”. Bobbi will send it to the Board for review before it goes out.

11. Minister’s Report: Reverend Stephen passed along the staff’s appreciation of everyone’s patience and understanding over the holidays when several staff members were “out for the count” due to illness. He mentioned the need to go back to our Zoom model for services, if inclement weather makes it necessary to cancel in-person services, as was the case on January 7, 2024, due to the timing of a winter storm. Reverend Stephen reported that he took the staff out to dinner before Christmas and made sure they received bonuses. He reiterated the importance of showing our incredible staff how much they are appreciated. Reverend Stephen also mentioned that Carol Wade, Mary Losee, and Pat Trotta are doing a great job on the Pastoral Care team, and Susan Meredith is on board. He believes we need a total of nine members on the Pastoral Care team. Also reported was that Jesse Griest’s salary has been raised significantly and that his title needs to be changed to more accurately reflect his function and importance to the congregation. Bobbi expressed surprise that the Board did not receive notice of the decision to raise Jesse’s salary. This was discussed for a short time, and it was noted that the Personnel Committee gives salary recommendations based on UUA recommendations for fair compensation. To be discussed further.

12. Bobbi Pace made a motion that Reverend Stephen’s contract be extended for another year, and Kathy Haskins seconded the motion. The Board unanimously voted to extend Reverend Stephen’s contract for the 2024-2025 year, and he accepted.

13. Treasurer’s Report: Tom Ward stated that spending and income are tracking well, with income a little bit ahead. Religious Education expenses are at the 25% level (\$1,200 out of \$5,000). There is a good amount of money for music and the library. The Worship team has \$600 for outside speakers and hasn’t yet spent any. The Finance Committee, Endowment & Legacies Committee, and Tom are discussing giving money that we aren’t using to Endowment to invest in the way they are investing the endowment money.

14. Bobbi Pace made a motion for a policy change; namely, eliminating the word “called” from the 3.6 Ministerial Compensation section of the Policies, and leaving

the word “minister.” Becky Reeve seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously.

15. Article II: Bobbi Pace would like to include information regarding Article II in the newsletters and in emails, and she would like to form a committee to coordinate this. Kathy Haskins offered to assist with this. Reverend Stephen would like to include the topic of Article II in his preaching, and he feels it makes sense to invite Jesse and representatives from Adult Education to the next board meeting, as they’ll want to be involved in this.

16. Pastoral Care support next steps: Bobbi Pace spoke with Marian Visel, who may be available to provide some support. Reverend Stephen will speak with her further. Tom Ward thinks there will be a financial aspect to this, and there will be a place holder put in the budget for an amount-to-be-determined. Bobbi would like to talk to the Stewardship team about integrating Pastoral Care into the goals for this year’s Stewardship drive. Reverend Stephen believes having goals-- pastoral care, supporting democracy, the Reimagining Church initiative--always increases people’s enthusiasm for giving financially.

17. Leadership Retreat: Bobbi Pace proposed we organize a retreat focusing on “saving democracy” activities. Social Justice committees will be included, as will the Management Team and others. Bobbi is going to consult the calendar to determine what dates might work for us. Reverend Stephen mentioned he and Lurline deVos spoke recently about the importance of phone banking, and he believes we could recruit 40 people in the congregation to participate in a phone banking event. In addition, on Saturday, January 20th, USNH’s UU the Vote team is hosting a meeting of Connecticut UU congregations interested in forming a social justice network to work on democracy related issues. This is a first step in becoming acquainted with interested congregations.

18. Process Observation: The members unanimously agreed that the meeting stayed on track and that we are doing well in the areas of time management and keeping to the agenda during our board meetings. In addition, the members expressed their appreciation for the seriousness with which Bobbi Pace views her responsibilities as board president and her commitment to USNH.

Bobbi expressed that, for the time being, she (as Board President) would like to continue writing thank-you cards to those members we wish to acknowledge as having dedicated special time and effort to a task or event on behalf of the congregation.

19. Alissa Chapin made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and Kathy Haskins seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 9:06 p.m. The next meeting will take place on February 8, 2024, at 7 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kyle Manning, Board member

Attachment:
Ends Revision

USNH Ends Statements, adopted by the Board on January 11, 2024

The people of the Unitarian Society of New Haven are called to work within ourselves, with others in our faith community, and beyond in the wider world to:

Boldly seek opportunities to grow, learn, and worship, embracing the transformative power of connecting to that which is larger than ourselves.

Joyfully welcome all who enter our doors, as we affirm and embrace diversity of thought, orientation, and lifestyle.

Generously give and receive support in times of joy, sorrow, and transition.

Responsibly dismantle oppression in ourselves and our institutions, including USNH.

Tenaciously engage in spiritual and applied practices that promote ecological sustainability and environmental justice.