

Unitarian Universalist Church of Nashua, NH Meeting of the Board of Trustees

January 12, 2023

And see appendix:

Special Board votes via Email and Zoom

Meetings held hybrid, at church and via Zoom, due to COVID-19

Final Minutes by Jodie K. Holway, Church Clerk

Reviewed by: Robin Trudel, Lindsey Hedrick, Brenna Woods, Cecile Bonvouloir

Meeting Attendees:

- **In person:** Brenna Woods (President), Lindsey Hedrick (Vice President), Robin Trudel, Rev. Allison
- **Virtual:**, Jodie K. Holway (Clerk), Cecile Bonvouloir, Anne Smith, Caro Barschow (Ministerial Intern)
- **Excused:** Burns Fisher, Victoria Agnew

Agenda: Appendix A

1. **Chalice Lighting and Storytelling**, Jodie K. Holway
 - a. This year, all Board opening stories are about one of our four Values
 - b. Jodie is grateful for the generosity and love-in-action of the Grossmans
 - i. Kathy Grossman so many contributions to our congregation
 1. Donated an event to Auction to create art glass
 2. Performed a few trombone pieces on video during pandemic
 3. Leader in the Music area, authored our song
 - ii. Frank Grossman so many contributions to our congregation
 1. Has been half of the Financial Records Review forever
 2. Provided the Wonder-Bot for all pandemic zoom services
 3. Runs all the tech for Zoom on the balcony during services
 4. Allowed my teenager Xander to run all the sound for Christmas Eve services
 - c. Everyone exclaims over their myriad contributions to our community
 - i. Rev. Allison remembers, it was only the second week of pandemic, Frank asked if he might be able to give any support for online services
 - ii. This was a butterfly-wing moment - Rev. Allison saying YES had amazon repercussions throughout the rest of the year and all multiplatform and everything beyond that day
 - iii. Cecile was on the Ministerial Search committee that brought Allison here along with Kathy - she is amazing, sensitive, deep...

2. Consent Agenda

- a. **MOTION** to approve the [November](#) and [December](#) minutes with adjustments **MOVED** by Lindsey Hedrick, **SECOND** by Robin Trudel, **PASSES**
3. **Minister's Report**, Rev. Allison Palm (see Appendix B)
 - a. Outreach collection for January is no longer going to the Rescue Mission
 - i. See email to congregation - their values are not aligned with ours
 - b. Mini-retreat of the staff was this month
 - i. Energizing, centering for everyone
 - ii. Escape room was good team bonding, and they successfully escaped
 - c. CWGWWS has a new co-chair of its Board of Trustees - Jay Guarneri
 - d. Reviewed survey responses from the Congregational Survey Update
 - i. Not a lot of responses, 44 total, fewer than received last year
 - ii. Still these responses show everything is moving in right direction
 - iii. Especially people knowing what Faith Formation actually does
 1. This was a challenge/aim due to prior years' feedback
 2. This is now showing a good score - our efforts are working
 - e. Invite us to Jan 28 Leadership Summit, "Create Your UU Elevator Speech"
 - i. Talk about what is UU when we're out among the wider community
 - ii. Led by Caro Barschow, will be both fun and educational
 4. **Committee Reports**, represented by Lindsey Hedrick
 - a. Monitoring committee, comment about the Monitoring Table
 - i. Somehow we got out of sync on the table used by Rev. Allison vs. the table in the published policy - we'll fix this discrepancy now
 - ii. Team will finalize the official revised document by February's meeting
 - iii. Then Rev. Allison can monitor the next policy for March
 - b. Note about Endowment (Burns is excused from today's meeting)
 - i. Put a pin in this, do not move funds to Common Endowment Fund now
 1. Don't confuse congregation while we're doing Capital Campaign
 - ii. Cemetery Committee is separate and merely uses the church's tax ID; will they move their funds to the CEF if and when we move ours?
 1. So far we have an informal but definite agreement: yes they will plan to move, they have no current objections or concerns
 5. **Planning for Rev. Allison's Review**, Brenna Woods
 - a. Propose that this Board and congregation won't perform a full review right now
 - i. A lot of work is underway: Capital Campaign, financial feasibility study
 - ii. And Rev. Allison has been out for half the year that would be reviewed
 - b. Rev. Allison would still do a self-review
 - i. She'll bring to Board of Trustees and we'll discuss together
 - ii. Timeframe: around March, to feed into annual budget discussions
 - c. **MOTION** for Reverend Allison to perform only a self-review for 2022 **MOVED** by Lindsey Hedrick, **SECOND** by Anne Smith, **PASSES**

6. **Financial Feasibility Study - Debrief Discussion**, led by Brenna Woods
- a. Discussion of the FFS report by consultant Mark Ewert
 - i. Encouraging that the study found such a high amount is possible
 1. Would be enough to make meaningful changes
 2. Impressive that this small slice of members might provide \$1 million by themselves - or higher
 - ii. FFS estimates:
 1. We can comfortably raise \$1.4 - \$1.8M
 2. Our full desired amount \$2.36M is within reach as a stretch goal
 3. Mark would have preferred to see more households in a few of the giving categories, but some people said they might give higher than that amount (but Mark didn't say how much higher)
 - iii. How did the consultant pick the subset of interviewed members?
 1. Concern: were they cherry-picked to be the wealthiest?
 2. 30% of congregants were pulled from Breeze, conscious variety:
 - a. Some lay leaders, and the Board
 - b. Some of Stewardship's higher givers to, not all top givers
 - c. Mix of ages, length of membership, LGBTQ, genders, races, have children/no children
 3. Note some people were invited but didn't agree to be interviewed
 - b. We promised the congregation to invite their further prioritization, in November's all-congregation meeting
 - i. We should get input and get more aligned before the next all-congregation meeting - how to do this without repeating ourselves?
 - ii. Note we'll never get 100% of people on board with anything, but we cannot let this stop the rest of us from moving forward
 - iii. But we can hold multiple listening sessions and we'll find out if a significant chunk of people aren't onboard
 - c. What amount of money can we really raise?
 - i. No matter what, we must feel successful; it must be a good experience
 - ii. Wonder if we can scale down to fit between Visionary and Welcoming?
 1. Yes we can think outside these plans
 2. Are there items that could be identified in/out to bring another chunk of people on board to donate more vs. less? Well, this is exactly what has been done up to this point, with surveys and estimates etc: trust the process!
 3. Lots of doubters have already come around to plan to donate
 4. Example of the organ, we can continue to communicate this separately, Jed is writing up a big report about the limited available options - only a couple people are mentioning this in discussions

- iii. Instead of chipping away at little pieces, let's try looking at our vision and identity and see how can we reach these better, who we want to be
 - 1. We've spent 9+ years talking about our new identity
 - 2. [BoV Campus Vision Statement](#) was adopted in Fall 2020 in a special meeting, it was intentionally to support this effort today
 - 3. Instead of performing cost-benefit analysis, let's be inspirational!
 - 4. Need to connect the dots for the congregation: enabling anyone to reach the pulpit means accessibility, accessibility allows us to dismantle systems of oppression!
- iv. The first amount mentioned was \$2.36M which spooked many people
 - 1. Can we go a bit lower but still be an inspirational/stretch goal?
 - 2. Over \$2 million is scary yet exciting and ambitious!
 - 3. Some people specifically told Mark that they could give more
 - 4. Having a bigger target may inspire bigger giving
- v. Need an education effort on what it means to make a major gift
 - 1. What it means, how to plan and think about this, etc.
 - 2. Talk about living in discomfort, there is no crystal ball
 - a. Will you regret it? you feel like it's the right thing to do but you're uncomfortable to not know what will happen
 - b. We're deciding who we'll be for the next 200 years - let's not be cheap about that
 - 3. This congregation does play it safe a lot, esp related to money
 - 4. New England frugality, we don't think we need nice things
- vi. We don't want future generations to say "Those folks in 2023 could have done better for us"
- vii. When this huge neoclassical monument was originally built it was a historic moment - now we're the ones in another historical moment

7. Capital Campaign Discussion with Building our Vision team

- a. Attendees via Zoom: Frank Grossman, Jess Woods, Rick Spitz, Jon Lasselle
- b. What happens if we fall a bit short: e.g. plan to raise \$1.9 M but get \$1.7 M?
 - i. Won't sign any construction contracts until AFTER Capital Campaign
- c. What happens if these estimates are wrong?
 - i. Yes, some of the expected numbers will shift as we get into the details
 - ii. Hutter is the construction manager company who gave us these free estimates, hoping to be chosen by us for project
- d. Discussion about Parish House boiler, estimates around HVAC are confusing
 - i. ACTION: Frank Grossman talk more with Hutter about boiler and chairs
- e. What amount is our target: comfortable, ambitious, or in between?
 - i. Middle plan estimated \$1.75 M, we voted to explore Visionary at \$2.4 M
- f. Let's break out a few line items and look at them
 - i. 3 highest-voted priorities: Energy Option 1, Entrances, Safe Passage
 - ii. 3 lowest: Sanctuary, Bathrooms, Energy Option 2
 - 1. So the bathrooms are out of all plans already

- 2. Also out: changes to auditorium/Parish House, White Wing
- iii. Question about simply lowering the chancel, are the estimates granular enough to see the cost of this work?
 - 1. Or leave the pews intact or get less-expensive chairs instead
- iv. Most expensive items: Boiler and how far you go in the sanctuary
 - 1. Sanctuary changes were the most controversial
- v. We might be eligible for federal grants to redo our windows
 - 1. Windows, heating, doors are part of the Inflation Reduction Act
 - 2. Up to \$200K but who knows - rules will be published soon
- g. Can we plan controversial changes later, like the interior of sanctuary?
 - i. Or doing this will unlock activities and opportunities that we can't even imagine right now -don't postpone the hard stuff?
- h. If we don't make the sanctuary accessible, including the podium, then we're excluding Rev. Allison if she's ever in a wheelchair - she herself finds this hard to stomach, just leaving it as-is during this time of renewal
 - i. Discussions of other ways to make the sanctuary accessible
 - ii. Big long ramp with railings is an eyesore or blocks half the pews
 - iii. Metal lifts are noisy and don't help all disabilities anyway
- i. Church architecture can and should reflect our values
 - i. We should not be OK with just leaving things the way they are today
 - ii. Unify our beautiful buildings with the connectors
 - iii. Meaningful contribution to climate change by greening changes
- j. Timing? Guided by Mark Ewert's experience, how about:
 - i. 6-8 weeks for the Capital Campaign, so April/May 2023
 - ii. February is too soon – need to educate and align the congregation
 - iii. So need to kick off the campaign in March: let's do March 5th
 - iv. Need to give 45 days notice, per bylaws: that's tomorrow

8. Decision about Capital Campaign Target, all Board members

- a. Should we target a number:
 - i. Is it better to aim for \$2.1 M or \$2.2 M? Do they inspire differently?
 - ii. Or is it better to target \$1.9 M to be conservative, not so ambitious?
- b. Or is it better to not target a number, but rather a scope:
 - i. More exciting to target everything in the Visionary except pew changes
 - ii. Rev. Allison's viewpoint about herself being unable to reach the chancel was compelling - inescapable conclusion, we must include this change!
- c. **MOTION** to accept the scope for the Capital Campaign including all of the Visionary Plan's contents except without adjustments to the pews.
MOVED by Robin Trudel, **SECOND** by Anne Smith
- d. Discussion:
 - i. We on the Board represent the church, but the bathroom and changes to sanctuary were lowest on list, we are concerned to not override some congregants' feelings by pushing changes onto them
 - ii. No, there are about 7 different proposed changes to the sanctuary

- iii. We'll do a lot of changes that are not controversial, and we'll listen more
- iv. We're listening to the congregation yes, but we'd like to listen to the minister too – who feels uncomfortable to NOT lower the chancel, maybe the congregation thinks there's other options for accessibility
- v. Some individuals will not like this plan - or won't like any plan at all
- vi. 89% voted to move towards visionary plan, which also includes removing the pews - we're being faithful to this deep listening
- e. Vote, **MOTION PASSES**
- f. We'll meet again next week to plan next steps - special meeting via Zoom.

9. Checkout and Closing Words

Appendix A: Agenda

Appendix B: Minister's Report

Appendix for Special Board Meeting, January 16, 2023, via Zoom

MOTION: Shall we hold a Congregation-Wide meeting on March 5, 2023, to determine launching our Capital Campaign?

MOVED by Anne Smith, **SECONDED** by Cecile Bonvouloir

MOTION PASSES unanimously

Special Board Meeting closed.

Appendix for Special Board Vote, January 18-22, 2023, via Email

MOTION: Shall we present the fundraising goal of \$2.2 million dollars to the congregation?

MOVED by Anne Smith, **SECONDED** by Robin Trudel

MOTION PASSES

Agenda

Board of Trustees, Unitarian-Universalist Church of Nashua

January 12, 2023

- 6:30 (20) Check In**
- 6:50 (5) Chalice Lighting: Jodie's Story**
- 6:55 (10) Follow Up Story Telling**
- 7:05 (5) Consent Agenda (Brenna)**
- 7:10 (10) Minister's Report - Allison**
- 7:20 (5) Monitoring Subcommittee**
- 7:25 (5) Allison's review (Brenna)**
- 7:30 (30) FFS Debrief Discussion**
- 7:55 BREAK**
- 8:00 (85) Capital Campaign Discussion**
 - What to present to bring to the congregation?
 - What are the changes we want to make and how do those changes connect to our values, mission and ends?
 - Congregational Meeting Logistics?
- 9:25 (5) Check Out (Brenna)**
 - How did we do this evening?
 - Did everyone feel heard?
 - Are there any concerns or compliments you want to give to the group?
- 9:30 Closing Words (Allison)**

Minister's Report to the Board of Trustees
Rev. Allison Palm
UU Church of Nashua, NH
January 10, 2023
Covering December 7, 2022 – January 10, 2023

As expected, December was focused on my re-entry after sabbatical and on our holiday services. We did a lot of worship in the last month, including a fantastic Sunday Solstice service put on by our children and youth, an online contemplative Solstice service, two Christmas Eve services, a casual Christmas Day gathering and a New Year's Day Poetry Service. I'm especially grateful for our Worship Associates who took on three of those services on their own.

Faith Formation is going strong, with January workshops started last weekend. The Crossing Paths class is learning about Islam this month and Coming of Age has moved into the second section of their curriculum on "Becoming." We have a few new Adult Faith Formation programs coming up this month. Caring Circles, which will be led by me, is a monthly drop in opportunity for sharing and support around particular identities, transitions or life stages. January's group will be for people who are caring for loved ones. The other new program is a four week Spiritual Nourishment time. This is being done in conjunction with the [UUA's 30 Days of Love](#), and will be a 30 minute noon-time zoom call using the resources from that week. This is being led by Harry Purkhiser and Danielle Van Dusen. We also have a young adult who is working with Sadie to re-launch our young adult group, hopefully with a first gathering at the end of the month.

The Racial Justice Group met last week to review plans for the spring. In addition to coming up with the Spiritual Nourishment idea, they are hoping to do a retreat morning in March or April to discuss the Anti-Racism rubric that the Widening the Circle Team recommended we use to assess our congregation's efforts. The Renewal of Welcoming Team is working on an after church session for the spring as well as getting our old Welcoming Congregation signs outside replaced with new ones that include the Progress Pride Flag.

Thou Outreach Team is responding this week to concerns about this month's Outreach Offering recipient and their lack of alignment with our values. From my conversations with them so far, it seems the organization was not properly vetted. I am meeting with them tonight about how to move forward and we will communicate with the congregation as soon as there is a plan.

We have had lots of newcomers who are joining or talking to me about joining in the future. In the last month, 7 people have joined and I have 5 more who are planning on making appointments this month. I held an Exploring Membership session last month and an Intro to UU session this month.

I really encourage everyone on the Board to sign up for the Leadership Summit that is coming up at the end of this month. Caro is taking the lead on this, and I will be there to support them. It is on January 28 from 9:30-1:30, and lunch will be provided. The topic will be on how to create your UU elevator speech. I think this is an essential skill for all our leaders and am so grateful to Caro for spearheading it. The sign up link is here: <https://uucn.breezechms.com/form/89adeb>

The staff is having a mini-retreat this week to re-center ourselves as we go into the second half of the year. As part of that, we will be reviewing the Board Ends survey from this past summer.

Professional Development/Collegial Connection

- Attended NH UUMA December Cluster meeting
- Attended a webinar on the ways churches can benefit from the Inflation Reduction Act
- Working on a proposal for a workshop for General Assembly on ritual and theology

Community/Social Justice Activities

- Attended Immigrant Solidarity January Meeting & Vigil
- Attended Nashua Area Interfaith Council January meeting
- Had 2 1-1 meetings to facilitate re-entry into my role as president of NH Council of Churches
- Attending Planned Parenthood NH faith leader call today to prep for legislative session
- Signed on to coalition response regarding remarks made at the Governor's inaugural (<https://nhchurches.org/our-faiths-demand-we-show-up/>)

Children's Winter Garden with White Wing School

- Amanda Banner finished up her time as co-chair of the CWG-WWS Board. I am so grateful for her good work in that role. We are still waiting to appoint a church member co-chair to take her place.
- I got to continue my December tradition of reading a Christmas story to the kids. I hope to read again to them sometime in the spring.
- Registration has started for next year and is going really well. There are already 53 kids enrolled, 8 more than this time last year.
- The school was able to have in-person holiday celebrations with families this year for the first time since 2019, which everyone was grateful for. I was there as a parent and got to hear some great comments from the families about how welcoming our sanctuary is for young kids.
- We learned last week that the Nashua Planning Board was going to be considering a waiver to put in a vape shop/lounge across the street (where Portland Pie used to be). There is currently an ordinance that they can't do that within 1000 feet of a school. Chris and CWG-WWS Board member Jay Guarneri went to speak against the waiver on Thursday. The waiver was unfortunately approved. Mike Apfelberg from United Way reached out to Chris to see if the school would be interested in taking further action. They will discuss this at the school board meeting this week.
- New external doors were installed the week between Christmas and New Year and they are working very well!

Minister's Schedule

- My Sunday off for January was Jan. 1, so I am on for the rest of the month.
- Church offices are closed on January 16 for MLK Day.

Monitoring Reports

There are no monitoring reports due for this month, according to the current monitoring calendar.

One question: have the new policies that were developed last year been officially approved?
When should I start using those as the basis of my reports?

I also wanted to note that there are no financials this month. The current monitoring table indicates that I only do those 4 times a year – Sep., Dec., March and May. I believe you were receiving them every month during my sabbatical, so I wanted to make note that I am going back to that schedule.