October 18, 2023
UCM Board Meeting Agenda

People Present: *Rev. Joan Javier-Duval; Board Officers: President and Facilitator for this meeting Claudia Clarke, Vice President Ansel Ploog, Secretary Brenda Bean; Board Members At-Large: Hugo Liepmann, Jen Mathews.*

4:00 Check-Ins: *Being back at UCM lifted spirits; illness of extended family member; enjoying researching and filing documents with church history; busy and glad to be here; exhausted from and proud of going through process of buying a car; resting between travels to daughter/son.*

4:10 Chalice Lighting and Reading: *Joan read from Gillian Wegner's poem "Nature Walk."*

4:20 Approve Minutes: Oct. 4th: *Hugo and Ansel moved/seconded to accept the minutes; the motion passed.*

--Discuss posting minutes on website: *Brenda organizes the minutes to reflect the agenda and the hotlinks included therein but is concerned that some hotlinks should not be part of the public record, even though they have been in prior years' minutes. The Board agreed with not including in the minutes the hotlinks to some types of information [inter-Board communication or documents which might inform an Executive Session (personnel, legal issues)]. During this discussion Rev. Joan verified she is happy to have her Monthly Minister's Reports shared publicly. They are so informative that Brenda suggested they also be separately posted and highlighted someplace on the UCM website.*

4:25 Update from Kitchen Planning Group and FRuuT:

Kitchen: Claudia has observed an odor of mold in the kitchen (which is now primarily shut up) and some evidence of it in the lower/base historic cabinet. She and Barbara Conrey will meet tomorrow with Montpelier Building Inspector Michelle Savary to learn what is needed to meet various codes for health and safety. (Michelle then emphasized getting rid of the mold and talking with the Vermont State Health Dept.) The small kitchen group (which includes Steve, Claudia, Barbara, Janet Poeton, and Scott Hess) is especially anxious to learn what can be done without having to install a very costly ventilation system for the cooking equipment.

FRuuT: Joan reported that – as is clear from the church reopening this past weekend – FRuuT is close to completing its charge to address the health and safety concerns posed by the flood (not counting work needed in the kitchen). (Brenda will email to the Board Emily Seifert's recent memo about what was accomplished in the week prior to reopening.) And before its November 1 meeting, the Board might have from FRuuT a comparison of bids for the new elevator to consider. Meanwhile, Joan is inviting FRuuT and the Board to dinner at her home on Saturday evening Oct. 28 to celebrate all that has been done.

--1992 Flood Newsletter - interesting reading

--Post Flood Report from PTV - *FYI only since revisions may be needed to the document. Still, the Principal Engineer Bob Neeld might (did) join the FRuuT meeting on Tuesday Oct. 24 to give an overview of his recommendations and answer questions. Board members might want to attend to prepare for discussions of climate/flood resiliency.*

4:35 Discuss sending Board newsletter article re: Support for Central Community Lunch: Moving to Christ Church – can we enlist UCM volunteers starting Oct. 30? *We decided to amend Steve's draft letter to the congregation to add an update about Community Lunch. Claudia will insert the following information:*

- *Description of the collaborative planning between multiple churches to offer community meals at a single site because several church kitchens were damaged in the flood (including UCM's).*
- *Working side-by-side with other churches makes it possible for us to continue to care for the community in this moment of adaptation.*
- *Use of the kitchen at Christ Church now is a temporary solution; a longer-term solution may be use of the kitchen at Trinity Methodist Church but repairs are not yet done there.*
- *While it may be painful to learn that UCM will not be offering Monday Lunch at UCM, we are still able to carry out our mission "to serve human need." We can still put our whole hearts into this work and chop vegetables, scrape dishes, etc., just at a different location.*
- *UCM volunteers are still needed for the Monday Community Lunch!*

4:40 Minister's Report: *Via screen-sharing Joan reviewed, among other things, that we are a downtown church where missions to "serve human need" typically bring up tensions with people who may lack and need housing. She also highlighted that 2 ministers from the UUA's "UU Trauma Response Ministry" will be here on Sunday Oct. 22 to lead a workshop that may help identify for the congregation (including the Board) what it and the broader community have been dealing with because of the flood.*

Joan shared concern about low attendance by families with children since CoVid and especially since the flood. Last year their attendance was lower than historically typical, and few children were there on Sunday Oct. 16, the first week back at UCM. There has been a seismic change for decades in how the population responds to religious education and religion at large, and CoVid exacerbated it. The Board may want to be aware of – and curious about - this for long-range planning. How is our reality fitting in with the bigger picture? UCM may need to change its approach to meet the needs of families with children and be a vibrant, multicultural, multigenerational congregation. The Board agreed that it wants to be kept informed about attendance (perhaps through the Minister's Monthly Report?), at least.

Joan told us that the weekend of the Holiday Fair is the same weekend as Verdis' ordination in Rochester, NY. She will be there in Rochester to preach the Sunday morning of his ordination, which she will attend. She urged Board members to also attend in person or via live-streaming.

4:50 Review UCM Monitoring Schedule for the year; October: UCM Monitoring Schedule ***GP-2***: *Ansel said last year the Board used a survey to record and reflect upon its thoughts about how its style of governance matches (or not) the style recommended in the Board's own Governance Policies (UCM Governing Policies - 7-23-2018; Last year's survey for GP-2). Brenda suggested that, for the future, the Board also get input from the congregation, not just itself, about how well it is doing.*

We discussed the style of governance described in Governance Policy 2 (GP-2) as written. Board members feel least comfortable about meeting the expectations that the Board emphasize the "(7) future rather than past or present, and (8) pro-activity rather than reactivity. As such, the Board will be an initiator of direction, not a responder to current situations." Between CoVid and the flood, for the past 3.5 years we feel the Board has mostly been forced to react to current events.

Joan pointed out the primary purpose of the Board is to serve the congregation. If the leadership is not attending to a crisis like CoVid or the flood, it is not being of service. This policy does not address times of crises. She has observed the Board attempting to govern with an "outward vision rather than internal preoccupation" (item #2) despite dealing with crises.

Jen suggested that the Board amend GP-2 to add an item #9: "All of the above is superseded by a big crisis!" Ansel will consider this self-reflection by the Board as she guides us through the other scheduled monitoring for the year and leads the Board in its task to "Review policy monitoring process." Brenda thanked her for helping us remember how we want to be.

5:20 Tasks - lay the groundwork for each TASK; what might be the first step(s): *Claudia and Joan led us in brainstorming about each task **(see attached chart)** and suggested we dedicate the first of our usual 2 meetings per month to further define and do the work, perhaps starting Nov 1.*

5:55 Board Representation:

--Committee of Chairs: November TBD and Jan 16 and April 16 – Hugo.

--New Members UU Class: Nov. 4 (TBD Time); different committees – *Claudia could attend for 15 minutes (Brenda backup).*

--Committees Fair, Sunday: Nov. 5 (11:15 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.) – *We should have a table/presence.*

6:00 Adjourn: *Done!*

BOARD TASKS for FY 2024, with Initial Steps	
STEWARDSHIP	
Re-evaluate/examine feasibility of the fundraising events budgeted for this year. (Fran, Ansel, Jen)	*Move forward with fund-raising events (check with Johanna Nichols).*
Review and consider staffing needs (work with the ET). (Jen, Steve)	*Claudia reached out to Erica Baron, New England regional representative, to look at staffing and administrative issues; she could join the first half hour of the Nov. 1 meeting. We might ask what she sees in other congregations and what homework she could give us.*
Consider an ongoing Stewardship Committee. (Ansel, Brenda, Hugo, Claudia, Jen)	*Find volunteers who are not on the Board and who have institutional knowledge and experience with fund-raising. Have them review historical data about UCM trends for giving over recent years; hear/review consultants' reports about effective fund-raising; join the UUA virtual groups about stewardship (w/consultant Mark Ewert).*
Lead annual pledge drive. (Ansel, Brenda, Claudia, Fran, Jen, Steve)	*Set a timetable for the Annual Pledge Drive.*
FLOOD RECOVERY	
Engage with flood recovery efforts at UCM (Brenda, Fran).	*FRuuT's work is mostly but not entirely done.*
	Joan might help start the ministry of a long-term recovery group for the 200 households in Montpelier approved for FEMA funds and the 100 more who might have qualified but did not apply. There would be another for Barre and another for Central Vermont.
Design and initiate congregational conversations about the climate resilience of the congregation and the building. (Brenda, Steve)	*Joan mentioned we might want to wait to hold these conversations until we have been in the building a while, reacquainting ourselves with it and each other.* ***(Brenda wonders if we should wait until after the holidays and Joan has returned from sabbatical in January.)***

	*Joan suggested that we start the conversations by **focusing on the mission**, not on the building, and by encouraging conversations about the interdependence of our mission/institutions with the environment. (It is important for a Green Sanctuary church to consider and understand all of this.) The future of the congregation is not the same as the future of the building.*
	***For decisions about the building**: Design an educational process/context that might include a Flood Recovery tour and a town hall forum with a presentation about the building's past and future. For the past we could include Claudia's research and Joan's sermon, adding the 1992 flood. For the future we could present (a revised version of) the report from the Preservation Trust of Vermont (PTV), acknowledging that the PTV focus on historic preservation may not be the focus of the congregation. There could be a moderated discussion and soliciting of opinions. For this the Board will want to clearly define what we want to learn from the congregation and how we will know when we have learned it.*
GOVERNANCE	
Review existing Bylaws. (Steve, Hugo, Jen)	*Evaluate whether an Executive Team (ET) is needed, and if so, what composition could be of most use and least administrative burden for the minister.*
Review policy monitoring process. (Ansel, Hugo, Jen)	*The Board's role with crises is not clear. Should the Board or ET or a separate Task Force or Committee be asked to draft a crisis/emergency plan for UCM? (There is a Disaster Preparedness Toolbox from the UUA to use as reference.)*