January 17, 2024
UCM Board Meeting Agenda *and Notes*

People present: *Rev. Joan Javier-Duval; UCM Board Officers Claudia Clark (President), Ansel Ploog (Vice-President), Fran Dodd (Financial Officer), Brenda Bean (Secretary); At-Large Board Members Steve Gold, Hugo Liepmann, and Jen Mathews; with Guests Steve Finner and Paul Ohlson*.

4:00 Check-In – *Glad to have Joan back! Happy and grateful to be at UCM and now have the financial reports! Challenged to keep up; good at procrastinating. Distracted by dental care. Delighted with new snow for skiing and snowshoeing. Grateful for Zoom, thanks to restoration of internet.*

4:05 Chalice Lighting and Reading – *Hugo read one of the Howard Thurman quotes about listening for one's own internal guide as shared during Sunday's worship service.*

4:15 Steve Finner - Board Selection of Delegates to UUA – *Introducing himself as a denominational zealot, Steve urged us to send all the delegates to General Assembly (GA) to which UCM is entitled (6) by the UUA, based on membership size. This year's GA is entirely virtual, and the Board should encourage people to attend, including 2 Board members. The registration fee is $280 unless the person signs up for only the business sessions and none of the workshops, in which case the registration fee is $0. Other free aspects of GA are the Sunday morning worship, the Ware Lecture, and the Service of the Living Tradition (focused on clergy transitions). Delegates should report back to the congregation about GA business/voting. Last year Steve Finner, Elaine Ball, and Jim Finney were the UCM delegates to GA. Before signing off from Zoom,* ***Steve said he will return to talk more about this with the Board in the future.***

The Board will add to its future agenda a discussion of the proposed GA business (esp. the change in Article II) as well as the appointment of delegates. *Rev. Joan reminded us that she will be leading a 4-session educational opportunity for the congregation about the proposed changes to Article II. This will take place in the Fireplace Room and on Zoom from 5:30-7:00 p.m. on the four Wednesdays of January 31, February 14, February 28, and March 13.*

4:25 UCM Governing Policies (2023/24 YTD Report) – *Ansel read each of the following policies out-loud and asked "What's going well, could be improved, and/or what language should be changed?"*

> **GP-5.1:** Board Roles and Responsibilities – President – *The policy names this Officer as President, also Chair of the Board. We discussed whether this title should be changed to simply "Chair" because that seems less hierarchical and all-powerful than "President."*

Reflecting that some organizations have both a Board Chair and a separate President, we sought clarification about the role of UCM's President and noticed that:

- *this Governing Board Policy 5.1 says the President "represents the Board to outside parties" and*
- *section 5.2 of the Bylaws says the President "has the authority to…represent the Congregation on public occasions."*

This caused us to realize that - if the Board changes the title of this Officer in its Governing Board Policies - we must simultaneously propose to the congregation the same change for the Bylaws. ***We will consider changing the title when we review the Bylaws for necessary changes.***

GP-5.2: Board Roles and Responsibilities – Vice-President – *Because the Vice-President must function as the President in the absence of the President, we realized that* ***the title Vice-President should also be considered for change during review of the Bylaws****.....*

We all thanked Ansel for doing a great job coordinating the monitoring of governing policies as required!

EL-5: Asset Protection *(internal report by ET was due November 15)* – ***Discuss on Feb. 7.***

4:45 UCM Flood Resilience Efforts Update – *Paul Ohlson presented a memo with sample options and highlighted that helping the congregation decide upon its future will require a careful involvement and discernment process led by the Board. Everyone must have an opportunity to participate and be heard in some way. The Board might want to spend time to really map out its process.*

Or, as the Board discussed, it may not be necessary to have the whole plan figured out, only to embark on the process and assure people "We don't have any answers; it will all depend upon congregational input."

Rev. Joan said it is important to communicate to the congregation that external circumstances have forced us into examining the congregation's long-term future – not for 5 but for 50 or more years down the road. She reminded us that many people not coming to the building are still very connected to the congregation.

We reflected that the congregation's experience of the July flood and subsequent use of the North Branch Nature Center may have opened our minds to alternatives.

We asked that UCM's Climate Resiliency research specifically include the thinking/plans of the Montpelier Flood Recovery and Resiliency Commission as well as the thinking/plans of other Montpelier churches.

Any decision must align with UCM values, and the Board may want to consider how UCM can more fully – publicly, not just privately - embody its values as suggested in an article posted in today's agenda. (The article is entitled "Reach Out to Become a Public Church" from the Fall, 2009 UU World.)

Like during his last meeting with the Board, Paul asked for suggestions of people whom we think can be objective researchers. He also asked: "If people who are not appointed want to sit in on the meetings, does the small research group – and Board - allow them to do so?" Without reaching any conclusions, the Board discussed whether research can be objective and how exclusive/inclusive we should be in choosing the small group of researchers. ***We suggested a job description for potential researchers, with the top requirement being the commitment to be/remain objective.*** *If people are willing and want to 'apply' for the job, they can be told "The Board will consider you" for appointment.*

Paul will bring to the next Board meeting a draft charge for the small research group.

5:00 2024 Montpelier Art Walk - Is this something we want to do? How would we fund it? (Community Pouch? UUA Grant Followup Questionnaire - Use portion of grant for a Community Partners Donation?) *Brenda recalled Sierra Lowell asking FRuuT last summer if it wanted to make a contribution to a community partner. At the time, Brenda did not understand such a donation might be a requirement of the $50,000 UUA Disaster Relief Grant. Joan explored this with the UUA and learned it is an option, not a requirement. The UUA understands our building needs from the flood were significant enough that they do not expect us to use their Disaster Relief funds for community partners. Fran verified the significance of our building needs: to date, UCM has spent nearly $70,000 for flood recovery and anticipates another $100,000 in expense.*

Claudia brought this business to the Board because she received a request from Montpelier ArtWalk for UCM support. Several Board members were in favor of contributing to the ArtWalk. Others said that if UCM does choose to pass along UUA Disaster Relief or other funds to a community partner, they would prefer the donation to be for Community Lunch or other service for hungry or homeless people. Joan said this should be decided by the ET.

5:10 Board Letter to Congregation – ***Steve agreed to (and later did) start drafting the letter, expecting help on certain topics from others as specified below. Steve will address Climate Resilience and encourage people to attend the Town Hall Meeting after worship service on Feb. 11.*** *We agreed the letter will be done by the January 31 Board meeting, ready to send out that evening to the UCM Newsroom for publishing in the Weekly Announcements Feb. 2. There will be no staff newsletter with which a Board letter could be linked until March.*

Flood Recovery – [Brenda wondered if Fran's list of accomplishments with the summary of finances could be posted to the UCM website so the Board letter can include a hotlink to it.]
Stewardship – to be written by Ansel.
Elevator Update –to be written by Claudia.

5:25 Stewardship Update - *Ansel reported that planning meetings are underway.* ***She asked Board members to commit to making phone calls for the pledge drive between Feb 18 – March 17, especially after 2/25; the Board agreed.***

5:35 Financial Update (TBD) - *The ET is scheduled to review the financial situation in February. We hope this means Joan and Fran will have the opportunity to look over the financial reports before final versions are presented to the Board. However, because the Board has already received a version of the reports, some members have questions. Joan suggested Board members email their questions to her for sharing with the whole ET. One request was that the General Operating Fund, Capital Fund, and Special Funds be reported separately, not combined as in the current version of the half-year FY2024 report.*

We hope to discuss the final end-of-year FY2023 report during the first Board meeting in February and the final half-year FY 2024 report during the second Board meeting in February, when we should also discuss preparation of next year's budget.

5:55 Board Meeting Location? Renters taking over Children's Chapel and probably Vestry. ***The Board can stay in the Fireplace Room until the Vestry is rented, then we can meet in the Nursery, setting up our own chairs and a table (to be returned to the Preschool Room).***

6:00 Adjourn. *To discuss personnel issues, the Board voted to go into Executive Session at 6:01 p.m. and to come out at 6:14 p.m. Then we adjourned.*