February 7, 2024
UCM Board Meeting Agenda

People present: Rev. Joan Javier-Duval; UCM Board Officers Claudia Clark (President), Ansel Ploog (Vice-President), Fran Dodd (Financial Officer), Brenda Bean (Secretary); UCM Board Members At-Large Steve Gold, Hugo Liepmann, and Jen Matthews; and ET Members Dawn Evans and Donna Russo-Savage.

4:00 Check In: *welcoming sun and warmth, gearing up for greenhouses, suffering pain that prevents desired activities.*

4:05 Chalice Lighting and Reading: *Jen read from a poem in "Relate! One Human to Another" by Tucker Sullivan.*

4:15 Steve Finner - Board Selection of Delegates to UUA *(his email with dates of needed actions)*: *Steve spoke about the importance of sending delegates who will be faithful to the future. Other churches send delegates appointed by the Board and/or ratified during the Annual Meeting. He suggested a committee to select the delegates and is willing to serve on it.*

Joan said that on 2/5/24 staff certified to the UUA that UCM has 238 members, 20 less than last year. Therefore, we can send only 5 – not 6 - delegates to GA. Delegates typically vote according to their own conscience, particularly since the congregation has seldom taken a position on any of the issues. We discussed whether we should ask the delegates to vote in a certain way, including about the proposed Article II; ***we decided to ask them to at least study the materials Joan has provided in her workshops about Article II.*** *Brenda proposed that the congregation vote on Article II during Annual Meeting, as it did for adoption of the 8th Principle.*

Ansel suggested reviewing the schedule proposed by Steve, trying to simplify it and especially to avoid the need for another committee! ***We agreed to discuss this further on Feb. 21.***

4:25 Board Minutes' Approval: Jan 3, 2024 and Jan 17, 2024: ***Steve Gold moved that both sets of minutes be approved. Claudia seconded, and the Board agreed.***

4:30 Stewardship FY2025 Update: *Ansel reported that early pledging will begin Feb. 18; she hopes the Board will pledge online (at https://ucmvt.breezechms.com/form/UCM-pledge-FY2025) during that week, before Feb. 25 when the official Annual Pledge Drive will begin. Joan asked if any Board member would like to give a testimonial about "What would a world transformed by our care?" look or sound like, via dance, picture, poem, short speech, etc. If so, please send your testimonial to Ansel.*

4:35 Elevator Update: *Claudia is approaching commercial construction companies about their willingness to rebuild the shaft.*

4:40 Kitchen Update: *Claudia said the possible equipment has been measured/taped on the floor. She would like to invite input about the proposed layout from some interested individuals in the next couple of weeks. However, there is still concern about letting people into the kitchen. In fact, VOSHA is coming to test the building – perhaps especially the kitchen – on Feb. 22. Waiting for the results of the VOSHA testing will set back progress with the kitchen planning, especially since starting in March Claudia will be out for 6-8 weeks due to surgery.* ***However, we agreed to wait for the VOSHA testing results before proceeding.***

4:45 Town Hall Update: *Steve Gold reminded us that this Sunday, Feb. 11, the Board will hold the Climate Resilience Town Hall meeting in-person and online by continuing the live-streaming from the worship service. We discussed an online form to collect ideas about process, options, and concerns via the UCM website. Joan created the form and hotlink to it (http://tinyurl.com/ucm-climate-resilience).*

Steve also mentioned a draft job description for anyone willing to be a researcher for the options; he will share it with the Board (see *Job Description for Climate Resiliency Researchers.docx - Google Docs). And he reminded us that Paul Ohlson recommends the Board research the best process for going forward in a fair, equitable, inclusive – democratic – way.*

5:15 FY22/23 Financial Review: *Joan said she reviewed the financial reports shown to the Board earlier and sent Sierra a compiled set of questions. Answers to the questions are not expected to cause any significant changes to the numbers. Since Joan sent the questions, Fran and Sierra have addressed some but not all of them. Brenda wondered about the unexplained unfunded liabilities, which appear to be growing. Joan assured her that, while there is not yet an explanation, UCM does not owe anyone anything.*

Though we ended FY2023 in the red (-$43,000), that was primarily due to budgeting that proposed the use of $45,000 in cash reserves that didn't technically exist and a -$9,000 calculation error. We spent about $10,000 less than expected.

Fran spoke about her internal financial review, in which she recommended considering whether an actual Cash Reserve fund should be created (to tap if fiscal year ends with a negative number, and to replenish if it ends in a positive number). UCM Financial Management Policies state that the church maintains at least 10% of the annual General Fund budget at the beginning of each fiscal year (July 1) to cover expenses in the summer when income tends to be less because of the lack of worship services. [Prepaid pledges combined with cash in the checking account's General Fund and the Northfield Savings Bank savings account of $20,000 (the latter referred to as 'the Summer Reserve") have historically been sufficient to satisfy this policy. Fran doesn't yet know whether that was *true on July 1, 2023.] She wonders whether $20,000 is still sufficient for the Summer Reserve with payroll being higher now.*

Fran also reminded us that the Trust Company of VT recently sent an annual report showing we have about $980,000 in Long-Term Invested Funds (LTIFs).

5:40 FY24/25 Budget Goals: *Joan summarized her thinking about the FY2025 budget so far:*

- *Raise the payment toward the UCM share of the UUA Program Funds to $11,000 (an added $6,000).*
- *Keeping staff levels as they are – with Cost of Living (COL) adjustments only – results in a $15,000 increase for salaries. [This includes filling the vacant positions of Sexton and Director of Lifespan Spiritual Exploration (LSE) as currently budgeted.]*
- *However, UCM has for a long time been committed to following the UUA Fair Compensation Guidelines, which were updated a year ago and might now be closer to Central Vermont's market forces. Paying even more than the minimum toward the Guidelines could help with hiring people for the vacant positions.*
- *Adding back a Ministerial Intern, restoring full-time hours for the Director of LSE, and fully meeting the Fair Share Compensation Guidelines, would cost another $72,000.*
- *How do we balance meeting the UUA Guidelines with the UCM ability to pay?*

We wondered about the likelihood of finding another Ministerial Intern; Joan thinks it might be possible to apply for another grant from the UUA to help pay for one.

Fran pointed out that increased salaries correspond with increased benefits. She is also aware that Sierra wants funds in the next budget for a formal audit (maybe $6,000).

We spoke about the huge property tax increases many Vermonters are expecting for at least the next few years and the fact that most UCM members live on fixed incomes.

We reviewed the allowed and historical use of UCM's LTIFs.

We discussed that UCM typically proposes a "wish" budget for the Annual Pledge Drive and then – based upon the pledges raised - adjusts the "real" budget to be voted upon during the Annual Meeting. ***We agreed to discuss the Budget Goals again on Feb. 21.***

6:00 p.m. (more or less) *Adjourned.*