November 15, 2023

UCM Board Meeting Agenda (by Steve) ***and Notes (by Brenda)***

Facilitator: Board member Steve Gold. Others present: Rev. Joan Javier-Duval; Board Officers Claudia Clark (President), Ansel Ploog (Vice-President), Fran Dodd (Financial Officer), Brenda Bean (Secretary); At-Large Board Members Hugo Liepmann and Jen Mathews; ET Members Dawn Evans and Donna Russo-Savage; also Church Administrator Sierra Lowell.

4:00 - Check In: *How does it feel to be back in the building? Warm and fuzzy; terrific to be back in the Sanctuary, wondering about in the rest of the building; exciting, good to know it's not an endless list of things still to be done; nice to be together in person; good to be back; enjoyed being back – the building feels clean and uncluttered, with a beautifully finished Vestry floor; grateful; great to be back with the energy of the people in the building!*

4:10 - Chalice Lighting and Reading: *With Dawn, Steve lit the chalice; Brenda read a paragraph from "A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities that Arise in Disaster," researched and written by Rebecca Solnit.*

4:15 - Approve Minutes?

- Oct. 18 – *Ansel moved and Claudia seconded approval; no discussion.* ***Approved; Fran abstained due to her absence from that meeting.***
- Nov. 1 – *Claudia moved and Ansel seconded approval; no discussion.* ***Approved.***

4:20 - Monitoring:

1. Follow Up on Nov. 1 Discussion with Erica - How We Will Move Forward with Monitoring Reports/Policy Reflections? *Ansel said it was great to meet with Erica and be reminded that we can make the Governing Policies work for us and change what needs to change, without focusing so much on compliance. She gave us permission to fine-tune, not vote! Also, she encouraged us to be explicit about "the next elegant step," which Fran appreciated. Ansel is keeping track of changes we suggest in a Google Doc on the Living Agenda. Steve was not at the meeting with Erica but was relieved to learn of her suggestions. Claudia thanked her by email.*

2. November Monitoring Reports:
    - GP-4: Goals, Priorities, Consultations and Education Plans – *Brenda commented that we have a calendar but no strategic plan. We have discussed gathering membership input for long-range planning to strengthen UCM's climate resilience but have not yet specified how or when, except to say after Joan's sabbatical.* ***Ansel and Jen suggested adding flexibility to the dates mentioned in GP-4 by saying something like "preferably" or "as early as possible."*** *We received education from Erica about governing, but evaluating the ends is not the same as activities to accomplish them.*

    - GP-5.4: Board Roles & Responsibilities – Secretary – *No problem mentioned.*

- <u>EL-4: Financial Condition, Planning and Budgeting</u> – *When Sierra arrived, she passed on a message from Emily Seifert that UCM has already received more than 32% of the pledges for FY2024, ahead of the usual collection timeline. Sierra said, "so you 'All' are fine...." (a phrase she repeated in a subsequent email).*

  Then Sierra discussed a draft end-of-year financial report for FY2023 she had emailed us 30 minutes before the meeting. We had begun to explore the report when Joan questioned some line items in it and Sierra concluded she sent the wrong version. In the discussion the Board learned that the budget for FY2023 included $45,000 in cash reserves that did not really exist as a line item or account and, thus, could not be spent. We also learned the report is a draft because of expenses ($11,000, more or less) not yet properly assigned. ***The Board asked to review a final version of the year-end report upon which both Sierra and Joan agree, at the Dec. 6 meeting****.*

  As Sierra was leaving, she admonished the Board to pay attention not only to finances but also to the lived experiences of people in the community (including UCM staff and others). Because Brenda questioned what she was saying, Sierra "felt compelled" [as stated in her subsequent email] to follow-up with an email that included the following message:

  > As an "Empathetic Employee committed to Epigenetic Equity and Earth Equinimity," facilitating (and encouraging) connections between financial power and spiritual practices - as integral elements impacting public health and human rights - is hopefully a mutually inclusive accepted intention/norm. … [with the following hotlinks:]
  >
  > https://www.cdc.gov/nchhstp/socialdeterminants/faq.html
  >
  > https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/disparities/index.htm
  >
  > https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/take-action-to-improve-health/learning-guides/understand-and-identify-root-causes-of-inequities#/

- <u>BE-1: Unity of Control</u> – *The Board and ET noted no particular violation of this policy but acknowledged a lot of challenge to "Unity of Control" as we all struggled mightily to cope with the flood.*

- <u>GP-5.3: Board Roles & Responsibilities - Financial Officer</u> – *Fran pointed out that the flood has affected her ability to act as Financial Officer for the Board. She spoke about the requests she makes of staff to respond to her needs for information, such as for the standard end-of-year and/or quarterly financial* *reports. She recognizes that her requests may be too demanding of staff or disrupt/stress the ET post-flood. However, the lack of information makes it difficult for her to be sure she is on top of the financial situation. For example: right now, FRuuT and the Board need a better idea of what has been spent from the UCM Flood Recovery Fund to allow decision-making about the kitchen, etc.*

Joan agreed there is a lot of pressure on staff due to catching up from the flood and to coping with (other) staff vacancies. Staff are currently way behind in paying bills and entering the data into the flood recovery spreadsheet. Also, we have no Treasurer and only a two-person Finance Committee.

The Boad wondered what can be done to help. Joan said she has already approved adding .10 FTE to make the Church Administrator role full-time effective Oct. 1, but this pays for work that was happening without pay so is not a new resource. She has also approved paying for additional bookkeeping time, particularly for flood recovery.

We discussed that volunteers with a capacity for attention to detail might be able to help. Fran offered to speak with Emily about Fran herself volunteering to update the flood recovery expense spreadsheet or to at least let Fran enter into the spreadsheet about flood losses and repairs that Fran is keeping the bills which Emily has paid. (When Fran later did reach out to Emily to offer to volunteer, Sierra responded that she and Emily are catching up and will do the work themselves and should be caught up after Thanksgiving. Fran replied that December 1st would work.)

4:50 - <u>Final Details on Verdis' Ordination:</u> *Vic Guadagno will be recording a video with Jen and others and he, with Meredith Warner, has sent a letter to the congregation seeking donations for a gift and the travels of the church members and friends going from UCM. Joan invited the Board to help Elaine Ball with the short celebration to be held at UCM following the 90-minute ordination that will be shown in the Sanctuary online starting at 3:00 p.m. on Sunday Dec. 3. Some members of the Gospel Choir will be helping with this reception, while others will be singing with Verdis in Rochester!*

5:00 - <u>Minister's Report:</u> *Ansel mentioned attending the UU Trauma Workshop that Joan described in her report. Ansel was impressed with the list of cognitive symptoms of trauma handed out there; she thinks those symptoms could get in the way of being present to each other here for a while.*

Steve highlighted the ET concern mentioned by Joan about the Board not supporting Lifespan Spiritual Exploration (LSE). Joan suggested expanding the language about the goal now focused on adult spiritual exploration, maybe by adding a multi-year focus on children/youth, too. The staffing and/or programming might need to be changed/expanded. We've lost a lot of young families.

Fran wondered if families are in shock from so many changes: Liza to Rowan to Sally plus CoVid and the flood. Fran is hopeful that families with children will return to UCM because of the presence of Sally Armstrong, who is very experienced, organized, optimistic and cheerful. Joan agreed that transitions cause or allow changes.

Hugo reported from his attendance at the Committee of Chairs meeting that volunteer participation is down "across the board:" LSE, Holiday Fair, Community Lunch, CAT, baristas, small groups -with exception of 2 new Seasoned Souls Groups (totaling 7). However, 18 people attended the Committee of Chairs meeting in person or on Zoom.

Joan believes we are now in a "post-resignation" world where people don't have as much enthusiasm as in the past for demanding positions that pay little and require hard work. Joan has concluded that we need to focus on what is working, who is here, and help it/them shine, without aiming for a return to the past. We are in a "liminal time" when we don't know where we are going and must continue to appreciate those who show up. We should not use the same measures of engagement as in the past. For example: attendance might not mean the same now, and many people volunteer in different ways than by attending committee meetings, etc. Jen noted that attendance via live-streaming allows more efficient engagement, invisible as it may be. (We inquired about attendance online for worship services and learned it may average about 25 people.) Joan said people have told her they still feel UCM is their spiritual and communal home even if they are not here; we must remember and appreciate them and not assume they are any less dedicated.

Joan will be leaving soon for a short (5 week) sabbatical. Steve asked if she would be away with a peaceful or anxious mind about UCM. Joan replied that while she knows UCM will be fine, some pieces of business will not be moved forward (like beginning work on the annual budget, hiring for a permanent LSE Director, hiring the Sexton, etc.) and will be waiting for her return in January.

5:25 - <u>Timeline for the Winter/Spring Pledge (Annual Budget) Drive:</u> *Ansel asked the Board if it would approve conducting the stewardship campaign this year in the form of a canvass, with outside help about how to do it well. The UUA has useful resources and consultants, like Mark Ewert, who has advised UCM in the past. Steve would like to know how canvassing was done in prior years. Ansel said there was a plan and some training to canvass in the spring of 2020, but CoVid interrupted. Joan supports a canvass because it allows speaking directly to each other about the needs of the church. The follow-up phone calls we tend to do are already like a canvass.* ***The Board agreed to a canvass. Ansel will reach out to Erica and Mark; Jen will help Ansel.***

5:35 - <u>Next Steps in Elevator Replacement:</u> *Claudia and Fran quickly explained that UCM has received 2 bids for ½-cab elevators and 2 bids for full-cab elevators. The ½-cab elevators are less expensive and preferable from an historic preservation point of view, as they learned during a visit to UCM from Charlotte Barrett of the Preservation Trust of Vermont (PTV). Specifically,* *Charlotte advised UCM to avoid the full-cab because it would involve a larger shaft than the existing elevette and would block the view of -and involve damage to - the old window in the north wall of the Bell Tower Room, near the Sanctuary. They reported that Mary Alice Bisbee (who was active with the former Accessibility Committee) also prefers a ½-cab; she told Barbara Conrey that some people feel claustrophobic when in a full cab. Barbara was present during the PTV visit and recounted her conversation with Mary Alice, who also liked the idea and drawings for a ramp that Barbara then shared with Charlotte. Claudia and Barbara discussed all of this with Charlotte in hopes PTV will support UCM's grant application to the Foundation for Sacred Places to replace the elevette ruined by the flood.*

5:50 - Gifts of Love (Ansel): *Tabled. (A follow-up email invited the Board to attend for this event a planning meeting to be led by Johanna Nichols on Sunday Nov. 26 after worship.)*

5:55 – Thank-You Cards: *Joan signed the letters throughout the meeting, but we did not stuff envelopes.*

6:00 – Adjourned: ***Steve will prepare the agenda for, and facilitate, the next meeting, Dec. 6, 4-6 p.m.***