UCM Board Minutes - February 2, 2025

Attendance: Jeremy Beaudry (President), Ansel Ploog (Vice President), Brenda Bean (Financial Officer), Jen Matthews (Secretary), Steve Gold (Member-at-Large), Steve Grunewald (Member–at-Large), Rev. Joan Javier-Duval, Donna Russo Savage (executive team), Dawn Evans (Executive Team), Diane Marie (Executive Team), Paul Ohlson

Chalice lighting and reading

- Jeremy read Leon Weiseltier's "Sink So As To Rise" from Kaddish

Approve Minutes from January's Board Meeting

- All in favor of approving January's Minutes.

Climate Resiliency Study Group decision making process (Brenda Bean, Paul Ohlson, Steve Gold)

- The sub-groups are working, not doing any outreach yet. The group was waiting until Joan's announcement today.
- A suggestion was made to make sure the study group is a "two way street". It's important to let the congregation communicate to the study group.
- The main point the Study Group wanted to make during this meeting is that it's the Board's responsibility to develop a decision making process, create and opportunity for input, and to consider that the decision making process should not divide the congregation
- The point regarding congregation buy-in was emphasized, the decision making process/model should be loaded with compromises, built on love, and not about which options but how we make the decision.
- The Board will need to decide who will make the decision and how the decision will be made including congregational approval.
- The Board was encouraged that the focus should be on the process for making the decision.
- There were several ideas discussed:
    - Should this be a congregational group versus just a Board responsibility?
    - Congregational involvement/leadership is important during this time.
    - Should we tap specific people to engage in the process?
- After much discussion a few action items were identified for next steps:
    - Jeremy will connect with Rev. Eric Baron, UUA consultant for New England Region to help us pinpoint what we're trying to accomplish with a decision making model.
    - Engage the UCM congregation about former decision making processes.
    - Connect with other congregations about what has worked for them. (Steve Grunewald?)

Policy Monitoring

- BE-3: Delegation to the Executive Team
    - The Executive Team (ET) reports they have no concerns with this policy at this time.
- EL-3: Compensation and Benefits to Church Staff
    - Clarification of policy reminding the Board that we cannot tell the ET what to do only what they cannot do.
    - There is some conflict noted with EL-3 #1 The ET shall not offer more compensation than the church can pay/afford and #2 The ET shall not establish compensation and benefits that deviate materially from the UUA Compensation Standards. ET noted they are unable to determine if in compliance with the Salary Recommendations portion of the policy
    - Ansel has agreed to work on an edit of this policy for increased clarity. A question was raised about sharing UUA guidelines or just the bare basics.
    - There was discussion about the board providing some communication around our goal to aspire for wages that meet UUA guidelines and how we can achieve compliance with a focus on worker dignity, worker rights, as well as the worth and value of each employee.

- EL-4: Financial Condition, Planning, and Budgeting
    - The budget represents the Stewardship committee's goal of a 3.5% pledge increase.
    - All staff positions are at a minimum salary range.
    - The budget reflects not funding a Congregational Administrator.
    - A proposal for all eligible staff, 5 employees, $4,400 stipend for health insurance
    - There was a discussion around the long term invested fund and allowable withdrawal amount.
    - The fundraiser amount has been decreased in this new budget.
    - For FY26 the Spiritual Exploration position has been increased to a 12 month position up from 11 months.

Pledge Drive

- Pledge drive will start on February 23 and run for 3 weeks.
- Board members will be calling some congregants about their pledges. Members are encouraged to reach out early before pledge packets are returned.
- There was discussion about communication strategies including mailings and/or information provided at the Board table during coffee hour.

Winter/Spring Board Communications

- Steve Grunewald has set up an outline and schedule for enews communications from the Board.
- Communications will initially focus on UCM's fiscal health.

Vision and Strategy

- The Board will work with Erica Baron to facilitate our visioning work.
- We will continue to work with the Climate Resiliency Study Group.
- We will reconsider our approach for strategizing.

Minister's Report

- Joan raised the question of the Board addressing a social media policy in light of recent changes to Meta's fact checking and free speech policies.

Other

- A question was raised about input for Joan's evaluation, specifically the 360 review. The last 360 was completed in 2019.