

**USR Board of Trustees Meeting  
March 10, 2021  
Minutes**

**Attendance:** : Dawn Walter, Sarah Lenzi, Don Campolo, Robert Markowitz, Kristin Bluemel, Chris Dunnigan, Helen Matusow-Ayres

Starting : 6:32

- I. Check-In
- II. Last Month's Action Items
  - Statement of Conscience- should we ask the congregation to support it? This needs more discussion, still not sure of how to proceed.
  - Altar remodeling should be rolled into improvement budget
- III. New Thank You Notes
  - None this month
  - Thinking of you- skip this month
- IV. Covenants
  - Summary

Board needs to remember to use executive session when we are discussing confidential matters. We reviewed the Board Covenant as a reminder of how we should be conducting business.
  - Discussion
    - Doing a good job of calling ourselves on it.
- V. Reopening Update
  - Summary
    - ◇ SCRT recommended that we stay closed for Sunday Services until September of this year. We may be able to host some in person events. The status of the virus and the safety guidelines are changing very rapidly. Hopefully we will be able to improve our technology so that we are able to hold tandem services; some people can be on Zoom and some in person.
    - ◇ NJ is still limited to 10 people in meetings. Support groups can meet in person with up to 25 people in the fellowship hall. That enable us to rent to that size of a group of renters or allow for use by congregants.
    - ◇ Carol Wolf is going to change the website after the spring holidays. It may not work for a while. She will make the announcement at a service about it. There will be a lot more photographs.
  - Action
    - ◇ The Board passed the proposal to remain remote for Sunday Services until September and to permit up to 25 people to meet in person in the
    - ◇ Fellowship Hall
    - ◇ Sarah will write a message to the congregation about maintaining remote services until September and in person small group meetings. She will

either post it on the website or use another yet to be determined medium to communicate this.

VI. Board Turnover

- Summary

- ◇ The Board discussed status of Board member terms:

- ◆ Robert Markowitz's term is ending this June.
    - ◆ Kris Bluemel is going to England 1/22, so she will not be renewing and she needs to be replaced.
    - ◆ Helen will stay on the Board and attend the meetings remotely for the next year. Board will address the feasibility of this practice for the following year.

- Action

- ◇ Dawn will review nominating needs with the Nominating Committee

VII. Pledge/Budget process

- Summary

- ◇ Don sent pledge information electronically to 170 units. 154 had a history of pledging.

- ◆ 66 have affirmatively pledged and 50 of them met or exceeded the 5% increase equaling \$244,000 in active pledges to date.
    - ◆ Passive responders will be sent a final email to be told that we are going to record the pledge with a 5% increase.
    - ◆ Questioned if he should also paper mail or make an announcement at the service.

- ◇ Needs to follow-up with newcomers who do not have a pledge history

- ◇ We can construct the budget at the next Board meeting once we have a better idea of pledges for projecting the income. This will allow for the budget to be constructed by June.

- Discussion

- ◇ Many people probably did not act because they were accepting the 5% increase

- ◇ Suggestions made

- ◆ Send a statement
    - ◆ Others thought that we should announce it at the service
    - ◆ Special e blast reminder and put in a date by which people need to respond
    - ◆ Send a thank you indicating how many gave over the 5% and how many gave other amounts.

- ◇ We need to make a budget projection. We could look at the last three years and make a projection for what the income will be. We could also pick a percentage of those who have not pledged who we assume will go for the 5%

- ◇ How much have we collected from last year's pledges?

- ◆ We are a little behind in pledge collection. Assisted by contributions that were not a part of the pledge drive. We are on

track for exceeding our projection and matching last year's revenue.

- ◆ Our investment return has far exceeded our projections.
- ◆ PPE has also helped with our income
- ◇ PPE application is due to the bank by Monday. We are eligible for funding for payroll, mortgage interest and utilities. Not promising that it will need to be repaid. The note will specify if it has to be repaid and what the interest is. We will receive the note before March 31.
- Action
  - ◇ Don will send a thank you email to everyone in the congregation and put the message on realm. Don will draft a message and send it to Dawn and Sarah for their approval.
  - ◇ Don will work with Ann to reach out to newcomers
  - ◇ Chris will complete and submit our PPE loan request to MMT Bank by 3/15 and he will keep the Board informed about interest and repayment.

#### VIII. Building Improvements Budget

- Summary
  - ◇ We have already spent \$115,000 of the Building Improvement Fund.
  - ◇ The estimates for creating the budget tend to be 10% higher than the actual cost.
  - ◇ We now have to fund the technology upgrades for tandem services. We have a plan and we need to find someone to do it.
  - ◇ Outdoor lighting needs to be fixed. Rob Willis thinks that it will cost more than the existing budget
  - ◇ Rob is going to go forward with replacing the Reeb roof immediately-before September
  - ◇ The concrete ramp on Reeb also needs to be replaced.
  - ◇ Renovating the upstairs bathroom will also be completed. Needs to remain ADA compliant.
  - ◇ Rob wants to replace the carpeting with wood-look tile.
  - ◇ Revised solar panel budget is \$70,000. Can be funded through reserves. We can pay back our reserves when we start getting money back for the energy costs.
  - ◇ Chancel update actual costs are also much higher than estimated.
- Discussion
  - ◇ Money needs to be spent in the way that will most attract new members-lighting and signs. Rob Willis is looking at Church signs. If you see a sign you like send a photo to Rob.
  - ◇ The Board needs to decide how the remainder of the funds in the Building Fund should be spent.
  - ◇ Should we be funding future projects or current projects?
  - ◇ Is having a hand dryer in the upstairs bathroom too noisy? Not sure what is better for the environment.
  - ◇ We should talk to the staff before making a decision about replacing the carpet in Reeb.

- ◇ Sarah never uses her upstairs office. Sarah would like someone to give consideration to finding a space for her on the first floor.
- ◇ Ask the people who use the space how they feel about the kitchen and what is needed.
- ◇ We should have the stove in the main building assessed.
- ◇ HVAC improvements are not that costly and we may not have a choice but to fund this.
- ◇ Repairing the stained glass windows need to be more of a priority for impressions of new visitors.
- ◇ The chancel is important, but the cost of the proposal we have is very high. It needs to be modular.
- ◇ Could we raise money for replacing the Chancel?
- ◇ It needs to be accessible
- ◇ The proposed design is not natural enough, doesn't match the Velonis piece. Very manufactured and angular.
- ◇ We need to have more than one design to review.
- ◇ Too expensive for a brand new capital campaign with so many other priorities.
- ◇ Need to be careful about competing campaigns and keep going back to the well. This might be outside of our means. Is there something less expensive that is off the shelf that we should be considering?
- ◇ We are considering other items that are greater than what was budgeted, like the solar panels.
- ◇ We need to stay within our budget.
- ◇ Is it within our values to spend so much money on a chancel?
- ◇ Are there any artists in the congregation who could design the chancel?
- ◇ Assign to a sub-committee to work on this as a project. Ask the most artistic members to be on the committee.
- ◇ An interim solution could be the best choice at this point.
- ◇ Is there someone in the congregation who would take a leadership role in working with a committee?
- ◇ What we do with the design is up to us. Brian (the designer) can make it or we can have it made here, or we can do parts of it and not the whole.
- ◇ Some of the top priority projects may take most of the money. We should see where we are after those projects have final estimates or completed and push the other projects into next summer.
- ◇ We should assign Board members to speak with stakeholders about the spaces that they use before making final decisions about them

- Action

- ◇ Dawn will talk to Rob Willis about the hand dryer in the upstairs bathroom in the main building.
- ◇ Dawn will ask Rob to ask an architect to review plans for moving the Ministers office to the first floor.

- ◇ Board members should review capital improvement budget and make comments about priority of each item.
- ◇ We need to come back to the chancel conversation- pause
- IX. DRE Report
  - Discussion
    - ◇ Dawn gave Jeannie a template. The report is still a bit long.
    - ◇ It is definitely getting closer to what we need.
  - Action
    - ◇ Dawn will continue working with Jeannie to improve her reports.
- X. Minister Report
  - Summary
    - ◇ Nothing to highlight or discuss
- XI. Widening the Circle
  - Summary
    - ◇ We only have time for an introduction to the topic
    - ◇ WTC, the fifth principle and the eighth principle
    - ◇ Sarah will write a summary of what is happening nationally related to this issue.
    - ◇ It is very important for the Board to discuss this.
    - ◇ Racial Justice committee wants to come to the meeting to discuss adopting the eighth principle
  - Discussion
    - ◇ Concern was expressed over the political implications and the exclusion of people who do not agree with the idea that there needs to be a wholesale effort to act in order to reverse the white supremacy takeover of UU.
    - ◇ The suggested changes are not political but ethical. There is racism operating. Is this an over correction?
    - ◇ We should read the document thinking about the distinction between ethics and politics.
    - ◇ How do we make sure that our congregations feelings about these issues get voiced and heard?
  - Action
    - ◇ Sarah will provide a summary for the Board and the Board will read further into the documents for a more extensive discussion at our next meeting.
    - ◇ We will discuss this in more detail at the next meeting.

Adjourned at 8:59 pm