UUCSC Board of Directors Meeting
February 5, 2025

Present: President Nancy Richman, VP Russell Stokes, Treasurer Mary Alice Kimball, Clerk Mary Fulton, Directors Kelsey Briggs (via Zoom), Chris Johnson and Rev. Denis Letourneau Paul
Guest: Lee Cowan DRE via Zoom
Call to Order: 10:34 am by Nancy Richman

MOTION: Nancy moves to ratify the January minutes approved via email.
PASSED unanimously

Staff reports are appended.

Treasurer's report: Aline Couture has stepped down from chair of the Finance Committee, consequently Patricia Kelley is the newly appointed chair of the Finance Committee. Other new members are Elise Bender and Brian Maynard. UUA certification was completed on time. An audit for Church Mutual was submitted. One 1099 was sent. The Stewardship campaign will begin the budget cycle on February 16. The pledge packet will contain a letter from the Finance committee thanking everyone and stating each person's pledge from last year with the amount paid so far. It is NOT an invoice. A potential candidate for the Financial Administrators position will be interviewed soon.

Old Business

Masking policy: Lee was asked to address this issue. The Board strongly suggests wearing masks during this peak RSV/covid/flu season. Families downstairs in RE, however, do not wear masks. Since there are several in person activities planned in February and March the Board discussed how to mitigate the transmission of viruses. It is assumed that immune compromised individuals will take whatever precautions are necessary to protect their health, including staying home.
MOTION: Nancy Richman moves to continue encouraging masking for Sunday services, in March the coffee hour will be held outside or not at all.
PASSED unanimously

New Business

Director Bethany Sorrentino requested a replacement:
MOTION: Nancy Richman moves invite Trish Hindley to be an interim Board member until June.
PASSED unanimously

Sanctuary art group: The group will be part of the Aesthetics committee and have access to that budget line.

Committee of Ministry: A meeting with Board will be arranged to discuss how the work of the congregation might be improved.

Board meeting schedule: Finance has requested a change in meeting dates so that reporting can be done in a timelier manner. Future Board meetings will be held on Zoom from 10:30 till 12:30 on:
February 26
March 26
April 30
May 28
The Annual meeting will be held June 8.

ICE policy:
MOTION: Kelsey Briggs moves that UUCSC not allow ICE, or the police, to enter the congregation unless they have a warrant in pursuit of a person.
PASSED unanimously.
Further plans will need to be made as to how this policy will be implemented.

Adjourned at 12:30.
Submitted by Mary Fulton, Clerk

The next Board meeting will be February 26 via Zoom at 10:30am - 12:30pm
Coordinating Council meeting will be March 12 via Zoom at 1:00pm - 2:30pm

Staff Reports

Minister's Report to the Board of Directors
UU Congregation of South County
Rev. Denis Paul

January 31, 2025

Dear Members of the Board of Directors,

Since my last report to the board, I have led the following worship services:
1/5 "Henry David Thoreau and the Birth of Anarcho-Primitivism," with Adria Evans
1/12 "Visionary? Or Nutcase?" with Michelle Stage
1/19 "Refugia in Tension," with Kathy Swink

Following are my thoughts on different areas of ministry:

Worship Life

The search for a new Music Director continues. Although there has been only one applicant, despite extensive advertising and networking, after the interview, that applicant seems well-equipped to meet the needs of the congregation reaffirmed at the 1/12 chalice-side chat. They are also open to "auditioning" for the choir (a date has been set) and to a trial/short contract period until 6/30. Advertising continues.

The loose-knit group of people taking responsibility for art in the sanctuary seem poised to become an actual committee with assigned leadership. They are considering applying to the Hurdis Fund for a small budget. Meanwhile, a few Worship Assistants are beginning to do more than readings and spiritual reflections in services, like leading Joys and Concerns, meditations and prayers. They are spreading their wings and broadening the pool of skills among lay leaders.

Congregational Life

It's exciting to see so many new people, especially since the beginning of November, including a refreshing number of men. At the first of two "New to UUCSC" classes, there were 7 people considering membership.

I've enjoyed working with Lee to create a program to prepare four third-graders and their parents for the Affirmation in May, the service in which we welcome them into our culture of curiosity and truth-seeking. Youth RE is expanding, and bringing in more families all week long as we address their needs, which is important because we need more younger adults if we are to survive. We must nurture them into congregational leadership.

It comes as no surprise to anybody that with our currently limited pool of leaders, we're finding it difficult to adhere to some of our own policies and bylaws, and fill vacate seats. With that in mind, as the Committee on Ministry approaches the annual evaluation of ministry, I wonder if it might make sense to have them meet with the board to talk about how to address the challenges, and how the COM can help find creative solutions.

February 2025
Director of Religious Exploration Board Report

Dear Board,

RE continues to feel very alive and vibrant with a consistent group of 15-20 kids every Sunday. And we have new families come at least once a month. Our Sundays have been almost entirely downstairs this month, working on building UU identity through sharing, conversation, the Wunder Box and free play. We prepared for the Wünder Revels of Imbolc by making homemade instruments: the younger kids made drums and the middle schoolers hammered nails into Pringles containers for rainsticks. We had one Time for All Ages with the storyteller Mitch Capel and last Sunday we did something we've never done: the kids come up at the end of service for Imbolc with our homemade symbolic seed. It was sweet to all be together for our closing song.

The Wünder Revels of Imbolc was a sweet multi-gen celebration outside and I felt very supported in making it happen. So many people brought food, Kelsey brought her propane burner and then ladled out our hot spicy beverage. The kids mixed and milled and crumbled the chai spices and then ceremoniously plopped the bundle into the hot water. We had a lot of shifting as to whether it would be inside or out, but it's great to be able to celebrate the changing seasons out on our land.

We also hosted a Funda Fest storytelling event on Jan. 18th and set up craft stations for the kids who came. We had many families from the community come and one who came back the following Sunday!

And I held an RE Listening and Brainstorm session after service on Jan. 26th that was well attended with lots of ideas and feedback. I love this model of input and engagement. I had planned to hold these four times per year, but it might be a little more often if I can work them in.

A most exciting thing has happened: we have a little Wednesday Village in RE! Because our middle schoolers are meeting on Wednesdays for Dungeons and Dragons and we opened up the nursery for play, we now have parents and kids of all ages using all the RE spaces to explore and connect. Anyone is welcome to join us anytime between 4 and 7pm for joyful play, chatting and potluck.

Rev. Denis and I are planning for a 9-10 yr old Affirmation ceremony for four kids in our congregation. We're creating a rite of passage program for them that we're calling the Wünder Explorers that will meet once a month for three months and help them dig deeper into their senses and questions about themselves and the world.

I met with Jeannette Bessinger, the Director of Spiritual Development at the Westminster Unitarian Church in East Greenwich. We talked about getting our middle schoolers together to work on a jointly created social justice project. They have been focusing on supporting the unhoused population in our state and have several ideas for how to move forward.

Office Administrator Board Report, February 2025

Membership
Val and I met to update and produce materials for the New to UUCSC classes.

Facilities
Russell and I met to discuss the new facilities use manual and policies. I have contacted several committee chairs and other congregants who frequently schedule events in the building to start to implement the new policies.

Russell also mentioned wanting to upgrade security for times that I am in the building alone. I am reluctant to lock the door between the vestibule and the sanctuary but will do so if the board feels that it is needed.

There was a problem with the heat in the Oneto Room. Summit was contacted and (eventually) came and fixed it.

Ongoing
I continue to work with Etta on the newsletter and website, and to take care of the mail, email and phone messages. I continue to produce the weekly order of service and the monthly announcements insert, and to deliver the food donations to the Johnnycake Center.

Best,

Sara Kaplow
Office Administrator