

Annual Board Report for 2016-2017:

The Board's focus this year has been on reviewing and revising the policies and procedures for every function and committee of the business side of keeping Beacon running. Our by-laws clearly state that the upkeep and publicizing of our policies are the responsibility of the Board, but for too long, this has not been possible. One reason has been technical: there has not been the capacity to post and maintain the most recent version of our policies online. Consider that this is a 67-page document. The other reason is human capital: for the past six years, our lay leadership has done a magnificent job of keeping Beacon smoothly and professionally running amid multiple ministerial searches, hellos and good-byes.

So, policies and procedures have languished in various home garages and laptops – often with one section directly conflicting another. Or referencing a Board decision without the corresponding date. Often our leaders have had “private” versions that did not match up with other leaders’ equally closely held versions. In short, there were lots of opportunities for improvement!

Carleton Sheppard had started the tedious process of collecting and collating these previously, and this year’s Board dug in. A special thanks to her, to Adele Coleman for proofreading, to Theresa deBoer for updating, and Dennis Spurlin for making the website posting possible.

One of our first policies to revise in September ‘16 was our building rental policy. Specifically, we coordinated with our insurance company on what it takes to make this possible. In short, yes, with the proper independently acquired insurance, and cleaning deposit, alcohol can be served on our premises. But our insurance agent strongly advises against it. The Board looked into this primarily to make us a competitive rental for small wedding or anniversary parties. Please see our office manager for details, should you wish to add this to a rental. Our building rental revenue has exceeded expectations this year, and we would like to make this even more attractive.

The next set of policies the Board tackled in October ‘16 was our personnel policies. Over several supervisors, we had ended up with contradictory language between contracts, letters of agreement, and benefits such as sick leave and vacation, that was not even in line with FICA and wage law. There were also conflicts between our approved policies and our bookkeeping practice.

In January ‘17, the Board moved on to the Finance policies. The finance procedures and policies were thorough and well-written, but there were (are) different versions. Here there were also policies that conflicted with other policies elsewhere in the documents. There were also conflicts between the duties assigned by our by-laws to the Board vs. the Finance Committee.

Lastly, the Board approved the policies that the Religious Education submitted.

This did not finish all the policies and procedures, and this will always be an ongoing responsibility of the Board. However, future boards will have a better reference point.

Other actions of note by this year’s Board:

- As voted at the '16 Congregational meeting, the Board ascertained that the insurance payments for Rev. Joanne Gianino were made whole.
- The Board kept as closely as possible to a deficit budget, and approved almost no new requests.
- The signed contract with the UUA for 10% contribution to the UUA pension plan for employees working over 20 hours/week was renegotiated with the UUA to a 5% obligation.
- Monthly process of “Gratitudes” from the Board was standardized and publicized.
- As per our by-laws, the Board approved and appointed the Committee on Shared Ministry members: Nancy Paxton (Chair), Collin Weller, Mark James, and Dru Monroe.
- The Board-sponsored Homecoming picnic in September was well attended and enjoyed. A special thanks to Dru Monroe for finding such a superb facility for meeting our needs.
- The New Minister Start-Up workshop was held in September for 19 congregation lay leaders and Rev. Kevin. Sarah Millspaugh, our UUA District liaison, was a much-praised facilitator.
- Cassie Daken started an Adult RE/outreach Yoga series that has been lasting, and well attended. The requested donation has been a split with Beacon and the instructors.
- The Finance Committee asked that Bookkeeping wait for 30 days after the month's end for dispersal of funds to our Share-the-Plate partners, to be able to reconcile funds and to clarify proper accounting.
- The Board thanks CAC Chairs Eric Burns and Katy Grant for doing due diligence on new partners approved by the Board for our Share-A-Plate partners: The Literacy Center, the Hozhoni Foundation, JLB, and NAPA.
- A special thanks to CVT chair Dora Harrison for her annual review of membership status as reported to the UUA for our Fair Share contribution.
- Dan Davis has kept the Board apprised of the ongoing issues around our front door settling. At this time, the Board postponed action until a capital campaign, and possible front door and foundation change occurs. However, roof repair was more urgent, and the Board approved \$5500 for this.
- The Board changed policies for “Consent Agenda Items” – those items which require no discussion – which can now be approved via email vote and recorded on the next month's minutes.
- Going to two services again was considered – and tabled – until attendance of over 75 people/service regularly demands it. Our previous experiment with two services had a lasting and disastrous impact on RE attendance, probably due to the 9:00 and 11:00 times.
- Thank you to our new office manager, Heather Thornton who has put in countless hours on our new website design, development and implementation. She has been supported by numerous hours of volunteer support from Dennis Spurlin and Carleton Sheppard.
- In November of 2016, we said good-bye to office manager, Jodi Boyd, as she followed husband to new employment in Phoenix. In December of 2016, our Music Director of ten years, Erika Palm, went on a medical leave of absence. Also in December of 2018, our custodian, Avery Brain, resigned to continue to work on her master's. In February of 2017, our Director of Religious Education, Sakenya McDonald, resigned to pursue her master's and a graduate teaching position in Prescott. Our Lead Teacher, Tessa Reagan, resigned at the end of May to take a full-time position. These employment changes have kept the Board and Rev. Kevin Lawson, very occupied with saying good-bye and finding replacements.

- The Board approved the use of our building for a community support group for youth who identify as LGBTQIA.
- The Board has asked the Finance committee to add another column on historical expectations to the Profit and Loss Report, so that the Board can better track revenue and expenditure expectations.
- The Board actively supported the annual auction when donations were arriving slowly, with the creation of B-E-A-C-O-N themed baskets from the Board and key committees.
- Suggestion for future: “a purse auction” fundraiser.
- Paul and Trish Black did an outstanding and energetic job as “Ministers of Stewardship”, with pledge parties, posters, testimonials, and publicity to raise monies for the ’17-’18 budget to better fund the needs of a growing congregation. The Board helped in calling members, funding expenses, and attending functions.
- The Board was delighted to assist and participate in the installation of our settled minister, Rev. Kevin Lawson!
- Some 12 adults and 8 of our youth attended District Justice Assembly, and brought home worship services and ideas for service.
- The RE Committee tried a new format of having children going straight to their classrooms, which gave them more time for lessons. However, after a six-month trial, the Board felt that this took much of the life out of our services, and contributed to a decline in overall RE attendance.
- The Board approved two potential sources for Fifth Sunday share-the-plate distribution: Youth Activity Fund and the Minister’s Discretionary Fund. Neither of these are funded from pledges, nor are standing committees.
- A new flag expense for events and marches – to be lighter than our quilted flag and more visible and manageable than our two-person flag, was approved from the unspent Board budget.
- The Board reviewed payrates and needed hours for staff for 2017-2018 budget, and other line items and wording for proposed draft budget.
- The Board added to the policy 200.9 to have the President, as well as the Treasurer, audit the Minister’s Discretionary Fund.
- The Board has researched and approved the creation of a task force to develop a Covenant of Right Relations designed to handle conflicts and improve organizational structure. This Task Force will be meeting in late June 2017 to begin congregational awareness in Fall 2017.
- Treasurer Anne Wittke researched Beacon joining electronic fundraising via I-give and Amazon Smile, as well as Fry’s and Basha’s rewards. This is hoped to raise significant funds for Beacon in the upcoming year’s budget.
- Rev. Kevin created the idea of home hospitality for Pride/Folk Festival weekends to UU’s from the valley – also perhaps the Celtic Festival and a weekend tbd in August or September.
- The By-Laws were amended in our annual June 17 meeting to clarify the role of the Board Secretary, and the budget was approved, as well as slates of leadership approved (thanks to the Leadership Succession Team for a job well done!).
- The Board has completed a glowing Fellowshipping Review for Rev. Kevin’s progress in his ministerial status.

And lastly, but not least, the current By-Laws are posted, along with our Policies and Procedures.

It has been a busy year, and my heartfelt thanks to a Board that was full of wisdom and good cheer (Dennis Spurlin, Anne Witke, Christina Boyd, Theresa deBoer, Amy Huntereece, Adele Coleman, Ruth Roazen) , the many Committee Chairs who contribute so many hours, all who pledge so generously, and the many unsung – but necessary – tasks by our talented membership.

Most of all, a thanks to Rev. Kevin Lawson for his tireless and committed partnership with our lay leadership. He contributes more to the welfare of Beacon than the average member or friend will ever see, and I am truly grateful for his laughter, light, friendship and fellowship.

Your truly,

Carol Hixson

Board President, '16-'17