

## FRSUU Parish Board Minutes – December 17, 2025

**Present:** Bob Higgins, Tom Himmel, Kathy Desilets, Jim Supple, Renee Wolf Foster, Lori Clark, Andy Lobb, Julie Menin, Jeff Bard, Leslie Lawrence, Sarina Khan Reddy, Liss Larsen, Reverend Rebecca, Ed Budelmann, Wren Bellavance-Grace from the UUA

**Call to Order:** Bob Higgins called the meeting to order at 6pm.

**Welcome:** Rev. Rebecca welcomed all with a reminder that in these times we need to stand up for others, but to do that we need to take care of ourselves and nurture peace in ourselves. She read a piece from Frances Willard's book, *The Ordinary*, saying self-compassion is not self-improvement and inviting readers to welcome what is and what comes.

**Capital Campaign Update:** Bob Higgins summarized the project's status. The Board has given approval to the Capital Campaign Team's proposal to begin to interview prospective donors to see what their response is to the campaign and begin to determine what funding might be available. At this point, we are in the process of developing consensus about the campaign and do not have agreements about the definition or timing of the project. We need to be deliberate and careful in all communications. This is especially true as we look ahead to the work of ministerial transition and other material needs of the church. Jim Supple announced that he has withdrawn from the Capital Campaign Team to free up time for other important work.

**Annual Campaign Update:** Rev. Rebecca and Bob Higgins reported. The campaign theme will be *Rooted in Community – The Abundance of Our Lives Together*. The team has identified six captains and eight stewards and hopes that all Board members will join in, including asking people they know to consider joining the effort. We will need an aggressive campaign this year and are on the way. Bart Bracken has offered his assistance especially with orientation to the database.

Next campaign meeting will be in January.

**ACTION:** Approve the date for this year's Annual Meeting.

**Motion:** Julie Menin moved that the Annual Meeting take place on June 7, 2026. Andy Lobb seconded and the motion carried without objection.

**Facilities Updates & Issues:** Jim Supple, Bob Higgins, and Rev. Rebecca reported on heat pumps, Parish Hall electrical, and project management.

- Problems have arisen regarding the heat pump system including heat distributions, inability to connect to back up boiler, and higher than anticipated electrical costs.
- Currently we are dealing with leaks in the fire suppression system and some compliance issues.
- We have a plan to contract with a facilities manager who would manage large projects, oversee building maintenance and repair, and identify priority projects. Currently congregants are doing this work and Rev. Laurel (who has no professional expertise in the area) is responsible for supervising.

- Ongoing building related challenges highlight the need for a professional who can oversee this type of work.
- The Board unanimously supports action to contract with a professional to oversee maintenance and care of our buildings. Also, the Board would like to see the list of priority projects which the facilities team has developed with an ordering of which are most important.

**CPA Grant:** Bob Higgins reports that we met with the Preservation Committee regarding our application for \$117,000 for a fire suppression system for Parish Hall and repair of current fire panels. We have not yet sought bids for this work but got informal professional advice on pricing for the grant application.

**Updated Employee Manual:** Leslie Lawrence distributed the most current version of the manual to the Board. Lori Clark provided significant help with sections on harassment, use of social media, payment for comp time, and using personal vehicles for work. We still need the appendices and the evaluation form. The Board thanked Leslie, Lori, and the HR Committee for their thorough work on the policy.

**ACTION:** Accept the revised Employee Manual.

**Motion:** Julie Menin moved that the Board accept the Employee Manual as presented by the HR Committee. Andy Lobb seconded and the motion carried without objection.

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**Ministerial Transition Update:** Lori Clark, Tom Himmel, and Jim Supple reporting.

- Interviewing other comparable churches to learn about their governance structures and staffing plans.
- The Board will pull together a sub-committee to work on transition planning and preparation and to review interested candidates in the spring. In past ministerial searches the committee included representation of various populations and interest groups in the church. We need a good writer to lead work on the profile of the church and folks with good knowledge of the church.
- Once an Interim Minister is engaged, the board will convene a Transition Team to support them and collaborate with them, hopefully during their time with us.

**Finance:** Jim Supple reports.

- This year's budget continues to have a surplus due to great fundraising efforts with strong congregational support and a large anonymous gift.
- We expect increased health insurance costs, more employees on our plan, and increased utility costs for the winter.

- We are still in discussion with Dish about final payment.
- We should have a clearer picture of the rest of the year soon.
- Next year, we face challenges. We anticipate higher costs overall.
- At this point, the Board needs to decide if we want to apply for a federal rebate which could cover up to 30% of the costs of the heat pump project. Filings are due by May. As a church we do not have the same requirements as a 501(c)3 non-profit: no taxes and no 990's are required. We do need to register the project on the IRS website and document our work. We have done this in the past for Covid relief funds.

**ACTION:** Authorize application for federal rebate funds for heat pump project.

**Motion:** Jeff Bard moved that the Board authorize the staff to apply for federal rebate associated with energy saving through the heat pump project and take needed action to register with IRS for this purpose. Lori Clark seconded the motion, and it passed without opposition.

**Governance:** Leslie Lawrence reports that the Governance Committee is continuing its work:

- Developing an announcement to recruit a Young Church parent to a vacant Board position.
- Working on definitions and procedures for board-chartered work groups and committees.
- Tracking and accessing key documents.

**Stewardship/FunRaising:** Renee Wolf Foster reports.

- The congregation has been engaged in and excited about fundraising events. Both the Auction and the Cookie Walk had great reception from congregation and community. There were more volunteers for the cookie walk and all cookies were sold. Income for both events was close to projections.
- Next meeting will focus on spring fundraising. We will not hold a raffle this year; planning focus is on a social event.

**Budget Discussion & Planning:** Jim Supple reports.

- We are looking at increasing expenses including staff pay and benefits, inflation, and building maintenance needs. We are also considering adding staff and hours (e.g., new office administrator, project manager for facilities, and increasing hours for Mara). Increases are not just for this year, but likely to be ongoing. Jim proposes we have budget workshops which look at the balance of income and expenses including considering new revenue options.
- Currently our revenue comes mostly from the congregation—annual pledge campaign and fundraising but we could benefit from a broader approach—as well as limited income from building/steeple rental.
- Consider a variety of options looking at benefits and costs, for example, more building rentals. Can we look at paid programs for the public as a revenue source.
- Consider what we need to do to support our mission.

- We could hold workshops early next year to help clarify budget goals for the coming year and to encourage us to look at mechanisms to increase income.
- Strategic budgeting requires a multi-year approach.
- The workshop method would be a way to increase understanding of finance to enable the Board to be more involved in financial planning. This planning process currently occurs mostly in the Finance Committee.
- Jim is willing to facilitate workshops and will provide ideas for people to consider before the meeting.
- Possible further discussion at the next Board meeting on January 21.

**Consent Agenda:**

**Motion:** Kathy Desilets moved that the Board accept the minutes of the November 19 and December 3 meeting and the motion passed without objection.

**Closing Words:** Rev. Rebecca invited all to consider spiritual practices and she read Mary Oliver’s poem, “Praying.”

**Adjournment:**

**Motion:** Renee Wolf Foster moved to adjourn at 8:30pm. Jeff Bard seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Desilets, Clerk