



Cultivate Courageous Connections

Board of Trustees Meeting

August 15th, 2023, at 6:30 PM in the Bernstein Room and via hybrid set-up.

Attendance: Michael Amy Cira, Kelly Greene, Gwynne Movius, Lisa Bovee-Kemper, Kathleen Carpenter, Alesia Hutto, Bob Gorman, Craig Miller, Shannon Maples

Absent: Kurt Merkle, Ben Baxter, Laurie Reed

Observers: Barry Ahrendt, Dave Warren

Call to Order

Chalice-Lighting Words (Shannon)

Vision, Mission, and Leadership Covenant Statements

Approval of minutes from July 2023 BOT meeting – Approved without changes.

Recognition of New Members (July 2023)

- Tennah Murphy

Eyes and Ears

Letter received yesterday regarding concerns about Article II, Facebook, member petitions, etc. Some community members do not feel heard. The writer expressed the need for continued conversation (e.g., around Covenant) and continued availability/transparency of the Board. Michael and Rev. Lisa responded to let the writer know we would consider this feedback.

Alesia noted that our bank account was hacked. Other congregations are noting that this is a common issue. The bank caught it in time, so we didn't experience any losses. Our account has been changed over and everything is fine now.

We heard lots of positive responses to William Williamson as guest speaker.

There was a huge turnout for Paula's first service/potluck; hopeful sign.

CT Reports

- Alesia is now publishing a quarterly financial report in the CT reports.
- We ended the year with a small deficit. Any net loss is covered through reserves.
- This year is starting off on solid footing. We hope we've seen most of the membership attrition that we will see and expect pledges will go up from here. The Stewardship campaign is about to start, and we need the funding for a new settled minister.
- The Search Team will work with the Finance Team on negotiations for a new minister to ensure anonymity.

Board Business

BOT text chain: ready to be set up to use for "urgent" matters.

Sign-ups for a table in Freeman Hall (September): Anyone who hasn't yet signed up should do so. We saw varying levels of engagement with members in the most recent few months. Michael tends to have people visit her, but she sets up a table and chairs away from other tables (against the back wall) with a tablecloth, chalice, and sign that says, "Talk to the Board." (Her materials are in the CYRE office.) She might be creating a more inviting environment than what the others of us have tried. We need to arrive early to set up.

Presentation of Sybil Bernstein and Charlotte Watkins Awards

These award presentations were postponed from the spring. Possible presentation dates include August 27 and September 10, both multi-gen services expected to be well attended. Michael will follow up to set a final date.

Prior award recipients were read the last time the Bernstein Award was announced. For the sake of time, and to keep the focus on current recipients, we will not read prior recipients this year. (For the Bernstein Award, there is a plaque in the Bernstein Room listing prior recipients. The Charlotte Watkins Beacon Award has been given only to Charlotte Watkins and Sid Freeman.)

Alesia will order the Charlotte Watkins Award; the Board entrusted her to choose the best style.

Kurt and Michael will present the awards. Michael and Shannon will write the script.

(September follow-up: the awards were presented September 10 to Kimberly Melton [Sybil Bernstein] and Tawana Wilson-Allen [Charlotte Watkins].)

Settled Minister Search Team Update (Kathleen)

Kathleen met with Search Team co-chairs Ellen Holliday and Rebekah Visco. The Search Team will remain independent from the Board, but they will keep us updated (meeting with Kathleen at least monthly) and utilize us as a resource as needed. They held their retreat in mid-July. Althea Clark is treasurer and is drafting a preliminary budget (all search expenses will be paid through reserves). Barry Ahrendt is creating a communications plan.

The Search Team is concerned about the petition circulating within the congregation about changing the bylaws to allow ministerial candidates outside of UUA Fellowship. They wonder how the search might be impacted if the congregation appears to be divided (e.g., in the congregational survey and focus groups/listening sessions). They also wonder about any consequences of going outside of the fellowship process and have already had some conversations about it with Christine Purcell, UUA's Transitions Program Manager. They asked that the Board keep them updated.

The Search Team is beginning to plan the survey and focus groups. Suggested questions are provided by the UUA, but the Search Team will tweak to fit our congregation. Listening sessions will be held with specific constituencies. All results will be entered into the congregational record in summary for candidates to review.

Actions Requested of the Board:

- A 3-member Negotiating Team needs to be convened by early October. Ellen has HR expertise and will be the Search Team rep; the Board needs to appoint two other members to serve. (One or both must be Board members; Barry and Dave will get clarity on this.) Financial expertise is also needed; Ben may be a good candidate.
- The Search Team will coordinate one of two diversity training offered by the UUA: "Beyond Categorical Thinking" or "Breaking Barriers, Building Beliefs." The team requests that the Board help promote attendance. By completing the program, congregations send a message to all their members and potential ministers about their commitment to full equality and ongoing learning about anti-racism and anti-oppression. Attendance is expected of the search committee, Board members, and other church leadership, and strongly encouraged for all members.

Petition to Change the Bylaws Regarding UCC Ministerial Candidates

(The petition has not yet received the required number of signatures to be brought before the Board. However, it generated significant discussion.)

Michael met with members in support of the petition and let them know that they are correctly following the process for change. When/if the petition is shared with the Board, we can begin communicating an official position to the congregation.

The Search Team asked about the consequences if the bylaws change is approved by the congregation:

- The Search Team will retain wide leeway in the candidates they review/select, unless there is a significant directive from the Board.

- Vetting non-UUA candidates will require more work on the part of the Search Team.
- Fellowshiped candidates are participating in a settlement process according to a set calendar. The UUA Transitions Office has covenanted with these ministers to provide a fair search process. If it's known that the UCC is considering unfellowshipped ministers on a different schedule than the UUA's, ministers in fellowship will learn this and may withdraw from the UCC as an option.
- The Search Team can choose to consider candidates outside of fellowship but announce that they will remain aligned with the UUA's schedule.
- Once the Search Team submits the congregational record in late fall, we are covenanting to follow the UUA's process.
- The petition language may allow the Board to propose our own language for a congregational vote that respects the petition request and also prioritizes the fellowshiping process.

The Board is refraining from taking an official stance until the petition is presented. However, minds are already being made up.

- E.g., Members are being asked to sign the petition because "there is a shortage of ministers." This is not accurate as it relates to the UCC; there is a shortage of ministers for small congregations and for contract positions that require a minister to relocate. The UCC may have strikes against us due to the actions of the NC State legislature and perhaps our own divisiveness, but there is not a shortage of ministers for congregations of this size that fairly compensate. Searching outside the UUA will be a red flag, no matter how we go about it. Since some of our members who are anti-UUA are in national groups, Rev. Lisa has already been approached by several potential candidates regarding our activities around the Article II discussion.

As individuals, if we are asked, we can explain that the petition group is following the appropriate process, and the Board hasn't yet received the petition. We can otherwise respond as individuals (not representing the Board) with factual information.

- Rev. Lisa and the Board will begin a "crowdsourced" document of questions and answers regarding the petition.
- We will continue to prioritize covenant and working on conflict, which hopefully will address the question of people feeling disconnected/not heard. (Meanwhile, a few voices have been heard a lot, while quieter voices are not being heard and are also expressing discontent.) The Board has developed a rough sketch for this "listening" that will be a topic for more in-depth discussion at our August retreat.

Final Plans for the Board Retreat

- Reminder to sign up for the UUA's Leading Large Board Training and do the pre-work.
- Friday evening, 6:00pm, Kathleen's house: potluck dinner, icebreaker, pre-session activities.
- Saturday, 8:30am, Kathleen's house – Kathleen will provide water and coffee. Lunch from Panera. UUA session starts at 12pm.
- Kathleen will reach out in advance with details including timing, her address, and the Panera order form.
- Rev. Lisa will confirm final details on the UUA's portion. (Follow-up: 12-3pm will be in congregationally mixed small groups by topic. There will be time afterward to meet together and process/plan. We will all need to bring our own devices and headphones.)

Covenant of Right Relations Policy

- We need to develop a group to work on this with Rev. Lisa.
- Bob volunteered and we will ask Laurie (given her background). Michael agreed to be an alternate if Laurie is unavailable.
- We hope to wrap this up by the October meeting.

Summary of Action Items

- Consider whether we can provide a fuller response to the letter writer at this time.
- Shannon will set up the text chain.
- All should sign up for a table in Freeman Hall, if not done already.
- Michael will finalize the date of award presentations. Michael and Shannon will write the script. Alesia will order the Charlotte Watkins Award.
- The Search Team will provide clarity about appointments to the Negotiating Team. Michael will ask Ben to serve on the team.
- Rev. Lisa will start a file on OneDrive so that we can crowdsource questions and answers regarding the petition.
- All should be sure to sign up for the UUA's Leading Large Board Training and do the pre-work. Kathleen will message the group with all final details and the lunch order form.
- Michael will check with Kurt about co-leading the goal-setting session at the retreat.

Executive Session (Covenant/Right Relations)

Rev. Lisa and Michael reported on recent conversations with members who are driving the petition and/or concerned about the direction of the UUA/Article II.

Rev. Lisa wants to schedule a Q&A session for Article II.

Adjournment

(Optional) OneDrive demonstration