

UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF HARTFORD  
Board of Directors Meeting  
Date: March 5, 2015

Members Participating: Bill LaPorte-Bryan, Virginia de Lima, Louise Schmoll, Patrice Fitzgerald, Martha Bradley, John Clapp, Rev. Cathy Rion Starr, Rev. Heather Rion Starr

Others Participating: David Newton, Janice Newton, Bruce Robbins, Ed Savage, Peter Meny (arrived at 7:10), Ron Friedman (arrived 7:20), Brian Harvey (arrived 8:07)

Members Absent: Tina Davies, Marye Gail Harrison  
Call to Order: Meeting was called to order at 7:01, then broke at 7:24 to go into Executive Session and was resumed at 7:31.

Subject	Discussion	Action Required/Responsible
Opening Words	Rev. Heather read an invocation.	
Public Comments	<p>Ed Savage pointed out that the Social Justice Chair typically has a lesser workload than other Sub-Council heads. He is suggesting a change to the position description that would clarify duties in terms of interfaith relations, GA and UUA involvement, and other areas. He believes we should work toward a constitutional amendment.</p> <p>Ed also suggested asking UUA for financial assistance to defray costs for attending GA in Portland Oregon this year.</p> <p>The Board will get copies of both of these suggestions in writing. Additional discussion needs to be had before these items can be acted upon.</p>	
New Web Developers Project	<p>Bruce Robbins spoke about the report that was sent to the Board regarding the cost of developing a new website.</p> <p>The Board went into Executive Session to discuss personnel and compensation.</p>	
Nominating Committee	<p>Ron Friedman requested clarity as to which positions will be open.</p> <p>Marye Gail and Patrice are giving up their positions. Virginia becomes President automatically. The following people will stay on the Board for the second years of their current terms: Louise as Secretary, John as Chair of Administration, and Tina as Chair of Community Within. Martha, who is filling the second year of Ginny Allen's term, wishes to be considered for an additional new term as Chair of Spiritual Life.</p> <p>Positions to be filled include President-Elect, Secretary and Chair of Social Justice.</p> <p>Ron was thanked for his work.</p>	
Changing Membership categories in Constitution	<p>Heather has suggested simplifying the categories of membership. There are at least six at this point. A proposal to change that to a single category has been brought forward. Heather believes that it doesn't need to wait a full year until spring of 2016, and she hopes we can sort it through before this year's annual meeting. In order to make it happen this year, the Board would consider this proposal, vote on it in April, and it could be passed at this year's annual meeting.</p> <p>Tina (via email) suggested it should be considered carefully by the Membership Sub-Council. Bruce Robbins believes that it has not yet. They are having a meeting next week and Heather will ask Brian Harvey to put it on the agenda.</p> <p>David Newton gave brief remarks on how we came to have these past numerous categories which were related to how members were defined and how much USH had to pay to UUA to cover its "Fair Share." The actual impact on the budget would be an additional payment of \$2,000 that</p>	

	wouldn't be "billed" to us until FY 2016-2017. Louise recalls that for the first 20 years she was here, we paid only 50% of the "Fair Share." The cost per member in dues at all levels is approximately \$85 annually.	
Music Transition	<p>The Board had previously charged Rev. Cathy, Martha, and Mary-Anne Mulholland as chair of the Music Committee to create a plan when Gretchen Saathoff resigned as Music Director in the fall after a brief tenure. Martha brought along a list of the current members of the Music Staff Transition Team and has a proposal.</p> <p>Martha moved that the Board empower the Music Staff Transition Team as described, to "Create a vision for a vibrant music program for the 21st century and recommend to the board a plan to implement it that includes staffing and volunteer structure and roles, and draws on the musical talents and desire of the congregation as a whole."</p> <p>Rev. Cathy spoke about having a long-term plan that looks at where we are now and what we want from music going forward. She believes that this concerns the whole congregation, and the Board needs to own and support this work. Virginia believes the Board should endorse this.</p> <p>There was a discussion of specific time commitments from our Acting Music Director and Organist, and the fact that their positions (as currently planned) will be open at the end of June, 2015.</p> <p>Motion passed unanimously.</p>	
Installation Plans April 19	Former Minister Jon Luopa and his wife Annie will be coming to the Installation. John will be preaching at the service that morning and giving the "charge" to the new co-ministers.	
Ministers' report Rev. Cathy Rion Starr Rev. Heather Rion Starr	<p>The Minister's Report consisted in large part of a list of activities prioritized in response to an earlier effort by the Board to describe what they believed to be the most important tasks and duties. Heather had hoped that there would be more time for pastoral care. The first year has been busy, and included some staff transitions, some of which weren't anticipated. The email load continues to be challenging. Board members agreed that this first year involves a lot of learning. It helps if we as Board members and congregants can let them know the priority of email or other communication.</p> <p>Heather and Cathy mentioned that Pawel Jurek from UUSE (Manchester) has died and that there will be a service in his honor. Janice sent a card, Bill will send a card on behalf of the congregation.</p> <p>On March 22, there will be a celebration and thanks for Helen David downstairs after the service, with cake and flowers.</p>	
Pledge Drive	<p>Peter Meny came to the meeting to speak about Stewardship. Virginia had done some graphing that shows the good news; pledging is increasing over the last few years. We've had compelling reasons to request for increases, such as the loss of members a couple of years ago, and last year the need to attract new ministers.</p> <p>The challenge this year is to convey that there is a need again this year for an increase in pledges. Last Year's pledge total was \$262,000, and Brian Mullen's best guess as to the expected pledge total this year is \$233,850. Personal situations may reduce some pledges.</p> <p>We have a number of new members who are likely to give a minimum pledge of \$250. There may be some significant donors who will not pledge this year. We estimate that we need each member to increase his/her pledge by 7 to 12%.</p> <p>There will be a big event and a pancake breakfast on Stewardship Sunday, March 22.</p>	

	<p>Discussion: If we want to build and we're growing, we need to figure out where that money is coming from. It's unrealistic to expect those who are in the top "quartile" to increase their pledges every year on an ongoing basis. There was discussion about how to encourage members to give more, to mention wanting to give fair compensation to our hard-working staff, that we have new music transition needs, and more. At this point in the year we should be excited about the prospects of the Stewardship campaign. Peter was thanked for his update.</p>	
Comments from Board	<p>Patrice said that we have tension between "let's get it done quickly" and "let's get it done in a formal way." And the limited time we have to get things done versus actually using strict Roberts Rules. We seem to learn to run the Board meetings by late in the year... now that it's March we are working very efficiently together and getting things done. It seems we start from zero each year. Is there anything we can do to improve that?</p>	
Date of April Bd. Mtg., June plans, "under the stairs" chat with congregants and friends	<p>There is the possibility of a Board overnight at Senexet House on a Friday/Saturday in June. Do we want to go overnight? Patrice offered her house for a one-day "retreat." It looks like there is general support for an overnight. Bill will pursue the possibility of June 19<sup>th</sup> weekend.</p> <p>The next Board meeting is Tuesday, April 7<sup>th</sup>.</p> <p>"Under the Stairs" will take place on the fifth Sunday, March 29. Louise and Bill plan to be there.</p>	
Closing	<p>Cathy read from a Wendell Berry program.</p>	

Meeting adjourned at 9:08. Next Board meeting scheduled for Tuesday, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2015 at 7:00 PM at USH.

Respectfully submitted by Patrice Fitzgerald, Secretary

## **Ministers: Revs. Heather & Cathy Rion Starr**

Our Board Report will be brief this month, out of necessity. The month of March flew by! There is just so much going on. Tomorrow is Easter Sunday, our Installation is coming up, and it's been a busy time behind-the-scenes as well.

## **March Highlights:**

### **Worship Services** included:

- Guest speakers Rev. Keith Kron (March 1) (with Rev. Heather giving Opening Words) and Rev. Megan Lloyd Joiner (March 15)
- Music & Worship's "Seven Principles Sunday" on March 8 (rescheduled from February), lots of involvement and support from Rev. Cathy
- Stewardship Sunday service, led by Revs together, sermon by Rev. Heather
- "Listen to Your Life" service with Auction Sermon (winning bid by Mike Winterfield), led by Rev. Heather
- We are pleased to have all of our worship topics, leaders, and music selected for the remainder of the church year.

## **Ongoing**

- Rev. Heather has been working closely with the New Web Developers moving along the process for a new USH website, & eventually a new E-news format & production team as well.
- Rev. Cathy has been working closely with the Music Staff, Music Committee, Worship Arts, and Choir on all-things-music-related, including the Music Sunday Service, the Installation, several special guest musicians, and the ongoing music staff transition process. Music (and worship) continues to be a major focus of Rev. Cathy's time.
- Fully supported by Membership Committee, Rev. Heather participated in the second (this church year) UU, USH, and You 3-class post-service series. Somewhere in the ballpark of 12-20 people are expected to be celebrated as new members during the May 3<sup>rd</sup> New Member Ceremony!
- Throughout the month of March, Stewardship Info sessions were held and Testimonials shared during services, and both Revs supported this Pledge Drive in various ways.
- In the broader community, Rev. Cathy led the opening prayer at the Hartford City Council meeting this month, and the Installation has been an opportunity to reach out to clergy and community members.

## **Pastoral Care**

- Rev. Cathy will be officiating at Dorothy Fowler's Memorial Service, likely to be held in June, and has had good conversations with the Fowler family.
- Both Revs have increased time spent on pastoral care-by-phone, and that seems to be helping with the many people wanting more connection to us and to the congregation.
- **Seabury**—We are visiting with UUs at Seabury (all UUs welcome) on a monthly basis, typically on 2<sup>nd</sup> Fridays of the month, in the afternoon.

## **Staffing Updates**

- It's a great thing to have a significant staff transition go so smoothly. Our thanks to Helen David for that and good wishes for her happy & art-filled retirement. Thanks to Brian Mullen for hosting a lovely "It's Your Last Day!" retirement party for her.
- Linda Clark is settling in very well as our new Office Administrator. Please take the time to greet and talk with her if you haven't already. Once she has become comfortable with her current responsibilities (what Helen David was doing), she will also be the person we ask to take on being Web Administrator, once our new website is up (around

June 1), and the person we will ask to be the lead for taking over the E-news (along with columns and input submitted by others).

- Music staff: We are pleased to report that Pi-Hsun Shih has once again agreed to be our Summer Accompanist. Rebecca Pacuk will continue as Acting Choir Director at least through Christmas 2015 (we need to formalize this as a contract). In April, we will begin work to hire another Acting Accompanist, as Cheryl Wadsworth is ready to fully retire.
- The Music Staff Transition Team is off to a good start. We've begun surfacing some of the questions and process we'd like to do. The Music Committee voted to allocate \$1,000 from Friends of Music toward a consultant to support training the MSTT to do a listening campaign within the congregation.

General / The following note is a carry-over from previous reports but worth repeating, especially as Ron Sexton, Greg Nickett, and John Clapp have been looking at how to address providing improved compensation and benefits to our staff over the coming years. / In general, looking at the way that pay and benefits (including paid time off for sick days and holidays) is distributed, allocated, and actually applied at USH is something that both Cathy and Heather see as a priority in 2015. For example, even though paid sick days off are provided for in the USH Personnel Manual, it seems that some staff are not aware of that or in the practice of taking/using them. We would really like to encourage our staff to take their paid sick days off. We will looking for Board support in creating paid vacation days (which currently don't exist for non-ministerial part-time staff- which means everyone except the two of us!).

### **Denominational Connections**

- Rev. Cathy attended the ordination of Rachel Baker on March 15.
- Both Revs participated in an initial conversation about collaboration within Greater Hartford with UU Revs. Josh Pawelek, Jan Nielsen, and facilitated by UUA Staff, on March 20.
- Both Revs attended the Clara Barton Chapter Meeting and Retreat March 25-27. While attendance was low, the conversations were rich and worthwhile, and this was our first time at Rowe Center, which we loved.

### **Our work/priorities/time**

We continue to settle in to our first year as Co-Ministers at USH. At this point we can say that the work/life balance is feeling good, but that we are definitely "at capacity," as in not able to take on additional projects and follow through on them well. As additional things inevitably arise in the months and years to come, we will need to figure out how to delegate or share-with-lay-leaders or other staff some of our current responsibilities so as to be able to take on other projects and do them well.

### **Upcoming Schedule and dates**

- **Installation**—April 19, 2015, at 4pm. Installation Committee meetings having been going strong and we have a significant number of congregants of all ages and community members planning to attend. We encourage you to be ambassadors and explainers about the installation, when we will make a sacred covenant together – congregation and co-ministers.
- **April 22-28**—We will be going to Oregon for the Building Dedication at Heather's former congregation, the UU Fellowship of Central Oregon; Rev. Heather will be preaching there on Sunday morning, April 26. If you're interested, check out the brand-new building at [www.uufco.org](http://www.uufco.org)!
- **June 22-July 9**—We will leave on June 22 for Ministry Days which precede General Assembly (we will be there for all of that and look forward to seeing some USH'rs there as well), and then will take our annual July 4<sup>th</sup> vacation days with Heather's family on the Oregon Coast.

