

TUUCW
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, June 17, 2025

Present at the meeting:

Board & Minister: Beth Cliff, Felicia Keeton, Mark Corcoran, Jon Gage, Ravi Sankar, Dayle Brownstein, Julyen Norman, Jon Gage (arrived 7:07 p.m.), Rev Alan (7:08 p.m.), Sari Bodi (absent)

Observers: Eileen Belmont, Linda Hudson, Ruth Fontilla

The meeting was called to order by Beth Cliff at 7:01 p.m.

Following a reminder of observation protocols by Beth, the Chalice was lit, and Dayle Brownstein shared a reading. Afterwards, Beth called for a moment of silence prior to check-in.

Consent Agenda

- **MOTION** was made by Mark and seconded by Jon to approve the 5/17/25 meeting minutes.
 - Beth clarified that she would modify the notes to show the Board discussed, but did not move, to require ministers to submit written recommendations to the Board for approval before making staffing changes because the Board felt this motion contradicted current governance practices for settled ministry.
- The motion to approve the minutes, with this modification, passed unanimously.

Observers' check-in

During check-in, Beth confirmed, when asked by Eileen O'Reilly, that the website committee was on today's agenda.

Minister's Report and Discussion:

Reverend Alan shared highlights from his final report. He clarified that Angi Haen's title was changed from Faith Formation Lead to Director of Faith Formation, but there is an open question on if Sue O'Meara's title was changed to Business Manager. Beth suggested we move this discussion to a future executive session. Alan thanked the board for the shawl. Jon shared he had not yet read Alan's report and will let Alan know if he has questions in the coming weeks.

Active BOT programs and workstreams:

In the event a written report or plan was submitted, the notes below reflect any discussion not captured in these documents which Board members reviewed prior to the meeting.

Congregational Survey. A plan to understand why people engage with our congregation (Lead: Alexa Marshall)

- The survey response was disappointing because only 59 members responded, of which only 4 were younger than 55 years of age. The goal was to get a better cross section of viewpoints and not just hear from the core group that typically participates.
- The plan is to launch a deeper survey this fall. Prior to that, Alexa will share a summary of the survey along with strategies to improve the response.

Treasurer's Report and Discussion (Lead: Jon Gage)

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After reading through his hand-out that summarized our current financial position, Jon clarified that what is in the summary are estimates. He touched upon future revenue opportunities to close our budget deficit and highlighted that our Voices program is struggling to find a new permanent leader which could have membership and revenue implications.

Key points from group discussion:

- Ravi asked about pledges made after June 30th – Mark clarified there is a point the books are closed and late pledges get allocated to the next fiscal year (he did not know the exact date).
- Ravi also asked to meet with Jon and Mark at a later date to understand the P&L Actual Budget to Summary tab in the May 2025 Financial Reports workbook.
- Beth suggested the congregation would appreciate and benefit from a summary financial report or dashboard and will work with Jon and Elana on this.

Construction project & vote on flooring color update - Ken Vogel (joined 7:40 p.m.)

Ken joined the meeting to ask the Board to decide whether it supports the June 8th flooring color vote or is instead in favor of setting up a third vote on the flooring color.

- Ken sent the Board an email with a description of voting framework. He shared some history behind the decision to allow the congregation to vote on the flooring color even though a special design team had originally been created to do this. At the annual meeting in June, Sand won over Ebony in the most recent vote 52 to 48. This caused consternation amongst a few design team and other members since Ebony won in an earlier vote which included fewer colors. Ken hosted a meeting on June 12th to hear and discuss concerns about the role of the design team and the ranked choice voting process. One key learning is to make the voting area a discussion free zone.
- Some design team members escalated concerns about Sand winning the vote to the COM. The COM asked Ken to delay making a final decision on taking a third vote until they had time to evaluate the situation. The board discussed whether we should wait to affirm the June 8th vote or not. Ken reminded the board that only a few members feel the June 8th vote is not valid and suggested that a re-vote would lead to wider and deeper consternation.
- The board reflected on how to avoid this situation in the future including establishing clear roles and responsibilities, creating a covenant in advance that affirms everyone will accept the final vote results, establishing a set timeline that does not change and leveraging the COM and Right Relations to assist with any conflict.
- **MOTION:** Jon moved that the board support the June 8th vote and 52-48 result for the color Sand and Julyen seconded. The motion passed 7 to 1.
- Next steps: Beth to speak with Shahan on COM, and Mark to speak with John Turmell.

Governance update – Ken Vogel

- Beth provided the new board members with an introduction to the Governance committee formation and will send out the committee’s materials. Ken reviewed the committee’s process for evaluating governance and decision-making framework alternatives, and how they formed the following recommendations:
 - To form an Operations Council to reduce the burden on the minister.
 - A couple of CT UU congregations have similar model – New Haven & Newton

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- To staff the Council with 4 member volunteers (who have already been identified and recruited).
- To establish roles and responsibilities between the board (strategy), minister, staff, Operating Council, elected committees and new Development lead.
- Ken stated that the committee recommends a pilot since we've not done this before. It's expected we'll iterate on this framework for a while.
- Operating Council next steps: the Governance committee will continue to work out details this summer. Ken confirmed that the committee has not yet spoken to Rev. Carlton Smith or staff yet. The plan is to meet with them and also hold sessions with the congregation. In the fall, the committee will formally update the board and gain any necessary approvals before formally launching the Operating Council.
- Decision-making framework next steps: This summer the committee will create a draft congregational decision-making handbook to review with the board in the fall. This handbook will also be a living document that we'll also iterate on.

Website Refresh Update

Beth provided an update based on a conversation with Chris Campbell before the meeting. She will send out Chris's presentation deck to the board.

- The current website cannot be updated because it's built on an older software program. In addition, it cannot be migrated over to a new website platform due to the risk of it crashing and losing the existing content.
- The plan, therefore, is to design and build a new website using internal tech support. The goal is to use a website platform that integrates with Realm. Alternatives are being explored.
- Originally, Alan brought this matter to the board for approval to use \$30,000 in endowment funds for the website refresh. Once the new Ops Council is formed, the website committee will confer with the Council, not the board give this is an operational matter.

New Board Set-up

- Mark suggested keeping the current officers. Ravi asked about changing board officer leadership and Beth clarified typically the officers are in place for two years since it takes a while to learn the job. Also, Ravi, Beth and Alexa will move off the board June 2026. Felicia stated she'd continue as Secretary only with a co-lead to share the work.
- **MOTION**: Mark moved to continue with existing officers. Dayle seconded. Motion passed with Ravi abstaining.

Board Schedule & Housekeeping

- Everyone agreed (no motion required) to change the policy manual to state the board will meet on the 4th Tuesday of each month. This will give the Finance committee more time to complete their monthly work.
- Board retreat will be Labor Day weekend.
- The Board communicates one voice to the congregation.
- Beth asked that board members stay succinct in emails and hold discussions on issues and opinions for meetings.
- The Board Dropbox folders are where we'll hold materials. Documents should not be emailed.

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- The Board should focus on the Ends and not on operational matters.
 - o The 2024-2025 Ends – located in Dropbox.
 - Is a safe place to all people, mainstream and most vulnerable, who center Love in their lives.
 - Empowers individuals to amplify their positive impact of our UU principles on the world.
 - Supports a vibrant shared ministry based on trust and good governance.
- As part of onboarding, here are the new member buddies:
 - o Julyen: Beth
 - o Sari: Jon
 - o Dayle: Felicia
- Rev. Carlton starts on August 15th. and his first service will be homecoming (the last summer service is August 10th)
 - o Beth has met with Rev. Carlton, and he shared he will learn through observation. He does not want to live in the meeting house so we will not update the bathroom upstairs.
 - o Ravi volunteered to work with him on worship.
 - o Julyen will be the Board's point person on transition.
- Financial sustainability plan.
 - o With the approval of \$30k to hire the Developmental lead, Brian Lasher has volunteered to work with Naree and set up a hiring team.
- Mark will send a construction update and related budget to Beth and Jon will make sure the finance reports summarize expenditures.

Process observations shared by Ravi – the meeting went well, although the conversation about the flooring color vote went long.

Closing reflection by Beth Cliff

9:40 p.m. – Meeting adjourned