

AUUF Board Meeting Minutes | July 9, 2023

July 9, 2023, 12:34–3:27 p.m.

Attending

Peter Livant (president), Randy Melius (president-elect), Leah Billye Welburn (VP, finance), Jim Newton (treasurer), Gary Lerude (secretary), Emily Graff via Zoom, Emily Livant, Sally McCreary via Zoom, and Becki Retzlaff via Zoom.

Peter started the meeting at 12:34 p.m., welcoming the incoming members to the first meeting of the 2023-2024 board.

Chalice Lighting

To Be a Unitarian Universalist — Erika Hewitt

To be a Unitarian Universalist means we'll never be done with the work:

the work of telling the truth about oppression

the work of resisting any laws, policies, or practices that deny anyone their humanity

the work of stubbornly seeking out the spark of the divine in each other, no matter what

the work of creating heaven on earth

To be a Unitarian Universalist also means we're not alone in the work:

we are not alone because of our promises to love one another

we are not alone because we are companions on the journey

we grow ourselves into allies, helping one another get free —

because none of us is truly free until we are all free.

Opening Words

Loneliness does not come from having no people around you, but from being unable to communicate the things that seem important to you. — Carl Jung

Check-In

Board members checked in.

Minutes from June 5, 2023 Board Meeting

The minutes from the June 5 board meeting, submitted by Ayesha Alam, were approved with no changes. Motion: Gary Lerude; Second: Jim Newton.

Consent Agenda Items

The board accepted the president's report, submitted by Peter, and the end-of-year Religious Exploration (RE) report, submitted by Angela Farmer, the Coordinator of Religious Exploration (CRE) programs.

Strengthening AUUF Teen Support

Tagging on the RE report and commenting on the plans for the coming church year, Becki expressed a concern that AUUF's program for teens is not adequate for the times we're facing. With state and national attacks on gender identity and sexual orientation, school groups for non-binary teens are being disbanded; books that address LGBTQ+ topics are being removed from school and community libraries. This societal climate of non-acceptance and persecution and the resulting void in public schools has amplified the need for supportive communities outside the educational system — a void AUUF can help fill with programs both within the RE program and the larger congregation. Becki wants to raise awareness of this issue within the fellowship, leading to programs responding to the need for more accepting and supportive communities for teens.

From Angela's report, Becki's understanding is the proposed RE plan for the coming year will provide an RE program each week for the Chalice Children age category. Becki said it's encouraging that this age group will have RE every week, which is back to the pre-COVID schedule. However, the program for the teens is an every-other-week schedule, with one week the "water watch" field trip — meaning only one week a month in an RE program, the other two weeks sitting in church. Becki advocates for an intentional place for the teens to gather every week — not attending the church service — to provide a strong, supportive community. Becki said she is hoping to find allies for this from the board.

Responding to Becki, Billye noted the gap UU churches have historically seen in youth involvement following the bridging ceremony and commented this gap is moving earlier into the teen years. She recommends asking the RE committee and Angela to discuss this with representatives from the board. Peter said a board committee can study the issue and explore options; however, we need to be mindful of our governance, i.e., who has the responsibility to structure the RE program. Emily Graff said the RE committee would like input while allowing Angela, as the CRE, the autonomy to build the RE program. Becki said she sees this topic as broader than just the RE program. Emily Graff, Becki, and Billye volunteered to explore options with Angela and the RE committee.

Board Covenant

UUs are a covenantal religion. The covenant is the "glue" that holds us together as a loving community. Best practices are that covenants are updated every time someone new joins a group and, at least, reviewed every year. Our last board covenant was written in 2018.

To start the process of developing a covenant for this year's board, we watched a segment of a webinar produced by the UUA about the history of covenants and the process of creating them. The slides used in the webinar are attached. A key point from the webinar: the process of developing the covenant is as important as the words used in the covenant. Creating the covenant shouldn't be rushed.

After watching the webinar, the board spent a few minutes brainstorming ideas for this year's covenant. Peter noted them, which we'll review and discuss at the next regular board meeting.

The AUUF fellowship does not have a covenant. Now that we have adopted mission and vision statements, Peter would like to develop a covenant for AUUF this church year.

Blips on the Board's Radar

Peter asked for feedback on the latest *Blips on the Board's Radar* article, which summarizes Rev. Chris' resignation, the board's subsequent response, and the results of the AUUF annual business meeting on May 21 — just after Rev. Chris announced their resignation at the end of the service. The article will be posted on the website, and printed copies will be available in church.

Plans for AUUF's Ministry Post Rev. Chris

Peter summarized his thinking and resulting actions following Rev. Chris' resignation: Given the timing of the resignation at the end of the normal ministerial search calendar (i.e., for settled and interim ministers), Peter concluded we will need a "contract" minister to help fill Rev. Chris' ministerial duties while we determine the longer-term plan for ministry. Given the urgency — Rev. Chris' last day is July 31 — Peter started recruiting members of a committee to begin preparing for a search.

Our contact at the UUA, Christine Purcell, who is the Transitions Program Manager, advised Peter that the likelihood we will find a settled minister is low: far more congregations are seeking ministers than ministers seeking congregations. Of the ministers seeking congregations, just two were near Alabama, and one has accepted a position in Georgia. Equally important, the UUA doesn't recommend small congregations call settled ministers because of the financial commitment to sustain a settled minister.

Through Christine, Peter learned last week that Rev. Marti Keller, who served as AUUF's contract minister the year before Rev. Chris was called, is available and willing to serve AUUF in a ¼- or ½-time "targeted ministry," the role to help us prepare for our next phase of ministry. Living in Atlanta, she would be available to conduct one in-person service a month, as well as work with the board and congregation to help us discern our future. She would not provide pastoral care

except for emergencies. She wants a decision from us by July 16 (in one week), so she can finalize which congregations she will support during this church year.

The Committee on Ministry (COM) and fellowship are asking for more communication from the board and the opportunity to provide input to inform board decisions. The challenge is the short time we have to respond to Rev. Keller. The COM has scheduled an interactive service next week to get congregational input about future steps, which is the same day we owe Rev. Keller feedback on our interest.

Board members discussed how best to gather congregational input and make a decision by the deadline requested by Rev. Keller. Billye suggested we communicate the opportunity to engage Rev. Keller and ask for fellowship input within a few days. We can use Sunday's COM listening service to gather more input and make a decision the same day. Billye said we can frame Rev. Keller's "targeted ministry" as a short-term commitment helping us make longer-term plans, noting also that Marti is known to many in the fellowship.

Board members who were at the church during Rev. Keller's year at AUUF spoke positively about her ministry and expressed support for engaging her. Sally said people want stability, and engaging Rev. Keller will help quell the feelings of instability associated with uncertainty about our future. The board expressed consensus with the approach suggested by Billye, i.e., let the fellowship know we have this option and gather feedback via email and Sunday's service, which will enable us to make a decision and contact Rev. Keller by late Sunday. Gary volunteered to draft an email to the congregation, which Peter will finalize and send no later than Monday, July 10.

In parallel, Peter will ask the search team to begin updating the AUUF congregational profile to create a draft that reflects the status of the fellowship and what we are seeking in a minister. It may be helpful to ask for congregational input on several of the questions in the profile.

Board Policies

The UUA has established a list of 29 board policies recommended for UU congregations. Arguably, the most important is a "safe congregations" policy, which is required of all congregations. Peter recommended this be the next policy developed by the board, working with Susan McCallister, chair of the Safety committee. Jim Newton already serves on the committee, and Emily Livant volunteered to serve as another board representative to help draft the policy. The UUA provides templates for these policies to help boards develop them.

Other Board Items

Updating several other items on the board's radar:

- Chili cook-off: no progress since the last meeting.

- The quilt for Rev. Chris is complete; the \$250 cost will be included in the revised budget.
- Social Action: longtime chairs Jim Newton and Jim Bradley want to step down, and finding replacements is a board responsibility. Billye volunteered to help search for new committee chairs; using the board's randomized "brown bag" procedure, Emily Graff was asked to assist.
- Rev. Diana will conduct Susan Starr's memorial service on Saturday, July 29. By consent, the board authorized payment of an honorarium at the UUMA's recommended rate.

Onboarding New Board Members

Billye covered the following points for new board members:

- The board has nine members, five of which are elected roles (president, president-elect, VP of finance, treasurer, and secretary). Of the four remaining board members, three are elected for rotating three-year terms and one serves a one-year term.
- The quorum for a board meeting is five members. The board can take action between meetings via email.
- The board is responsible for the physical property, administration, and financial affairs of the church. The board develops and manages the budget, which is approved by the congregation. The board cannot incur a deficit without congregational approval.
- The bylaws give the president the authority to conduct the normal affairs of the church.
- The church's fiscal year runs from July 1 through June 30 of the following calendar year.
- The church's bylaws are available [on the AUUF website](#).
- Billye and Jim are working to reorganize the AUUF Google Drive to make it easier for the board and committees to store and access information.

Billye posed an idea to improve communication and help ensure clear lines of responsibility: should board members have defined tasks, such as serving as the primary communicator between the board and congregation? In this example, lacking a well-defined channel may result in items from the congregation to the board not being logged and addressed.

Becki asked about the process to add a topic to the agenda for a board meeting. She cited two items she requested to be added to today's agenda that were not included: (1) RE programming for teens, which she brought up during the consent agenda, and (2) the search team, intended to respond to concerns raised by Marcia and the COM. Peter responded that the president has the responsibility and authority to define the agenda for the board meetings, and the two additions proposed by Becki were not specific enough, i.e., scope and desired outcome, for Peter to add them.

Future Board Meetings

- We'll meet next Sunday, July 16, to discuss fellowship feedback and whether to engage Rev. Keller.

- The next regular board meeting will be on Sunday, August 13, at 12:30, following the potluck.
- The UUA will be conducting a training session for board members on Saturday, August 12.
- We will hold an AUUF board retreat at some time after the board training.

The board meeting was adjourned at 3:27 p.m. Motion: Billye; Second: Randy

Attachments

- Slides on Covenant from UUA Webinar