

Birmingham Unitarian Church
Board of Trustees
Meeting Minutes
August 28, 2023

Present: Claudia Kocher, Tony Kubien, Tanya Nordhaus, Julia Pulver, Andrew Schreck, Diane Slon, Amy Smalley, Craig Stroup, Rev. Mandy Beal

Absent: Brian Schandavel

In-Person Visitors: John Brus, Sara Constantakis (Membership), Carole Wiseman

Zoom Visitors: Judy Amir, Terry Fitzpatrick, Yvette Kaplan, Dan Kosuth, Cynthia Osterhage, Kris Schreck (Membership), Dick Wiseman

The meeting was held both in person at BUC and on Zoom.

Andrew called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM. Amy read the Board Covenant. Rev. Mandy led the chalice lighting and check-in.

Minutes

- Andrew moved that the minutes of the July 24, 2023, board meeting be accepted.
- The motion passed unanimously.

Monthly Reports

1. Treasurer's Report – Craig

- Andrew moved that the Treasurer's report be accepted.
- Craig presented the treasurer's report (document attached).
- The final statement for the prior year is now available, showing an \$8,500 operating loss due to rental income and a \$15,000 positive variance due to lower expenses.
- For the month of July, we have a positive variance of \$5,448.
- From the August Budget and Finance meeting, the current year should include a 5% reserve from the \$450,000 pledge. Valerie will make that change, which Craig will take that change back to the committee.
- BUC's unrestricted cash is currently at \$107,551.
- Endowments are up nearly \$13,000 from June 30.
- The motion passed unanimously.

2. Minister's Report – Rev. Mandy

- Andrew moved that the Minister's report be accepted.
- Rev. Mandy noted that her report mirrored agenda items and so highlighted two items from her report (document attached): (1) Our programs need people and asked the Board to model volunteerism, and (2) RE will move to a "Free Choice"

model being adopted by churches with similar enrollment: combined age groups and no formal curriculum; rather, a variety of different activities that create community (e.g., baking treats for coffee hour) and provide opportunities to discuss UU values.

- Diane asked about using already involved Board members to fill the volunteer deficit vs. finding more volunteers. Rev. Mandy agreed and noted that Sara would discuss this further in the membership portion of the meeting.
- Tanya asked for a clarification about the options for older kids—would activities vary, and could older kids help the younger ones? Rev. Mandy affirmed both.
- The motion passed unanimously.

Open Topics

1. Membership

- Andrew acknowledged that membership is currently a source of anxiety. In our governance model membership falls under Programming. Membership has ties to revenue, programming, and longevity. Andrew invited the former Membership Chair, Kris Schreck, and our Director of Congregational Life, Sara Constantakis, to discuss membership.
- Rev. Mandy agreed about the need to openly address the anxiety about membership. She reminded us that attendance is a single data point and that small groups started last year also increased connections.
- Sara discussed last year's accomplishments and this year's goals:
 - Post-COVID, being able to gather was important to people. An enhanced coffee hour on celebration Sundays marked monthly birthdays, and three new small groups were formed. Action Sundays gave families a way to serve together and share a meal; the pancake crew became a dedicated and efficient group.
 - Other activities included Field Day, Game Night, and an end-of-year picnic. We will have an offsite retreat this fall.
 - New bulletin board in the foyer to announce events. She is also adding coffee hour ambassadors to connect with visitors, as well as a secondary greeter table in the Hodas Hall so people can get more information without worrying about being late to worship. These efforts "move welcome throughout the church" to stress that being welcoming is everyone's job.
- Rev. Mandy discussed last year's ministerial programming:
 - Monthly Celebration Sundays show that we value children and families by providing a family-friendly worship service. She noted that, outside of white culture, it is unusual to separate kids from their families at church.
 - The spiritual practices group that met weekly last year had a small but loyal following. This year, Rev. Mandy will add some of the practices to the worship services instead of continuing the group.
 - The Minister's Study Group, which read foundational documents, was well attended.

- Kris discussed the amount of one-on-one outreach that the Membership Committee did last year: 79 individuals, more than double the previous year. The increase in outreach is exponential.
 - New visitors every week—positive momentum.
 - She thinks it is important to have programs in place for newcomers so they can find a place for themselves at BUC.
 - 7 book signings last year out of 79 outreach contacts, a similar conversion rate from the prior year.
 - BUC has a number of active visitors and friends; membership cannot be rushed.
 - Kris reminded us that relationship building is not always visible, but it is occurring.
 - Discussion:
 - Diane asked if we know why 80% of visitors don't stay, assuming 10% conversion to members and 10% active friends. Kris explained that there are multiple ways of contact (an email with booklet for someone who signs up for more info, phone calls for those who leave messages, walk-ins who fill out a contact form. If they fill out the longer online form about interests, Sara will connect them to programming. Many are a combination of these outreach types.). However, there is no good quantitative or qualitative information about people who don't return.
 - Andrew asked if we were doing anything outside of BUC. Rev. Mandy recalled prior discussion of advertising and said that Sara would work with Julia and Andrew on a marketing plan. Sara added that Trunk or Treat will also be an outreach event (also and Action Sunday).
 - Tanya asked (1) if we could have a marquee sign at the entrance to display upcoming events and sermon topics. Answer: Not allowed in Bloomfield Hills. She also remembered their being a volunteer coordinator when she was in high school and misses that kind of outreach. She also noted the importance of 7 contacts per person for year as a fundraising tip.
 - Claudia asked if there had been a post-COVID survey to gauge people's interests and needs, or a plan to do so. Rev. Mandy responded that she tries to do more word-of-mouth information, building on what we do well. She is open to survey if the Board wants to pursue it. Diane proposed that a survey be sent as a link in the newsletter. Rev. Mandy asked for clear instructions for Sara about the timing of a survey, given the attention Article II and the capital campaign study are getting.
 - Claudia also asked if we could do a meeting similar to the restart before Rev. Dittmar visits us in the spring. Andrew deferred commenting to later in the
2. Stewardship for Us
 - Mark Ewert will be here the weekend of September 15-17. Everyone should have gotten their invitations.
 - He will meet with the Board on Friday evening. Claudia encouraged everyone to attend.
 3. Conflict Transformation Task Force

- Rev. Mandy indicated that the task force did not meet last week due to the flooding at her home. They will meet on 9/5 to look at emotional dynamics and what the church may need to resolve conflicts. The goal is clear assignments for interviews with other churches that have right relationship teams.
4. Article II Task Force
 - 10/14/2023 – Rev. Greta Jo Seidohl will preach about Article II.
 - 11/12/2023 – Worship service is open to the task force.
 - Diane asked about the purpose of the task force. Andrew responded that it is to (1) educate the congregation about what the changes may look like, (2) gauge interest in amendments and finding other churches to put them forward, and (3) focus on the feelings and similarities rather than the differences from the seven principles.

New Topics

1. Budget and Finance
 - A new member is needed to replace Max Kort, whose term ended. Board members were asked to come with suggestions.
 - Amy suggested Rich Schreck and Jeff Kingzett.
 - Rev. Mandy suggested Susan Stoll.
 - Andrew will reach out to Jeff Kingzett (perhaps after his 9/17 wedding).
 - Budget and Finance chair Craig Spangler asked about reinstating the 3-bid process for purchases over \$5,000.
 - Rev. Mandy clarified that this process had not been suspended, but that it was not always possible to get three bids during COVID.
 - Andrew indicated that this will be moved to the Budget and Finance meeting.
2. Disruptive Behavior Policy (sent to the board for review in advance of the meeting)
 - Andrew moved that the updated policy be approved.
 - No discussion followed.
 - The motion passed unanimously.
3. Town Hall
 - Andrew proposed a town hall in lieu of the restart meeting and proposed 9/24 or 10/15 after worship.
 - Rev. Mandy sent Andrew suggestions for a moderator, individuals both from within and outside of BUC.

Issues Arising for the Good of the Church

1. Andrew: Board meeting September through December will be held in person only.
2. Rev. Mandy: Activated line of executive succession to Valerie, who will reach out to her as needed during her leave. (Executive Limitation 9 is relevant here)

Visitor Comments/Questions

1. Judy Amir asked where to locate the Disruptive Behavior Policy and who are the new Membership Committee members. Rev. Mandy responded that the policy will be on the

Member Resources section of the web site and that Kevin Kozlowski, Paula Olson, and Allen Craig are the new Membership Committee.

2. Cynthia Osterhage asked if 5 people had signed the book in June, referencing that Kris Schreck had mentioned 7 book signings earlier in the meeting but had noted only two signings at the June membership meeting. Rev. Mandy listed the five additional May and June signings.
3. John Brus said he was getting re-oriented with church governance via the UUA web site. He brought up a comment that Rev. Mandy had made in her 7/16/23 sermon that “some of you would throw a party if I left” and said that had offended him. He stated that he believes putting a grievance process in place for things “festered the past couple of years” looks defensive. He believes BUC needs a forthright discussion about issues and stated that he and others think that the Board’s approving Rev. Mandy’s Family Leave is a mistake. Rev. Mandy apologized to John for her sermon’s offending him and stated that she wished he had come to her to have a conversation about it. She pointed to the Conflict Transformation Task Force as a way of resolving issues and referenced emails she had received—including one from Cynthia Osterhage—that had prompted the comment in her sermon. She also indicated that she is doing intensive work this year on conflict resolution. Cynthia defended her email and all communication as being shared with the best interests of BUC in mind. Julia Pulver asserted Rev. Mandy’s right to parental leave, which is in her contract. Andrew invited Cynthia to meet with him and Rev. Mandy privately, as the conversation had ceased to be productive, and the Board still needed to go into executive session.
4. Carole Wiseman commented that she hadn’t been to a board meeting in some time and wanted to know more about what was going on. Re: Sara’s discussion about membership, she asked how many people attend things and if we track that.

Andrew moved to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:48 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Amy Smalley, Secretary

Minister/Executive Report to the Board of Trustees

August 2023 (submitted August 27, 2023)

Note: BUC's 2022-2023 Board of Trustees adopted Pillars of Ministry to provide focus for our congregation's work. This planning model is recommended by Rev. Dan Hotchkiss and outlined in Governance and Ministry.

Pillar 1: Foster a stronger culture of engagement, stewardship, and fellowship

Conflict Transformation Task Force (CTTF) - This task force was formed with the intention of studying BUC's approach(es) to conflict, learning about how other UU congregations deal with conflict at a structural level, and then writing a set of recommendations for the board about policies and structures that we might consider adopting to transform our relationship to conflict. After our first meeting, I felt it would be better to move our focus off of BUC's past and use fictionalized/amalgamated case studies provided by Rev. Sharon Dittmar (our UUA Congregational Life Consultant) instead.

During our second meeting, we talked about conflict in congregations as a normal part of life together, and the potential that conflict presents for spiritual and emotional maturation. Our third meeting, scheduled for 8/24/2023, was canceled because my home flooded. Our next meeting, 9/5/2023 will focus on the material intended for 8/24/2023, which is an overview of terms and concepts from Bowen Family Systems Theory as they relate to congregational life (e.g. boundaries, enmeshment, emotional triangle, etc.).

Membership Committee - At the end of the 2022-2023 church year, it became apparent that our Membership Team needed to move in a different direction. Two long term members stepped down for personal reasons, and there was an uncomfortable level of conflict and/or disagreement with those who remained. Director and Congregational Life, Sara Constantakis, and I talked about the direction we would like for this work to take and decided on a more structured committee model, rather than the more freeform team model we've been using. The members of this committee will be responsible for being actively engaged in all aspects of our membership program, including greeting, coffee hour ambassadors (more below), Getting to Know UU, and exit interviews. The new committee includes Allen Craig, Keven Kozlowski, and Paula Olson.

A new initiative of our Membership Committee is recruiting, organizing, and training Coffee Hour Ambassadors. These Ambassadors will be on the lookout for new people and others that could use a friendly conversation, and hopefully lessen the stress that can come with not having a ready-made group during that time. Also, our Membership Committee will establish a secondary greeting table in Hodas Hall in an effort to provide more connection and information after services.

Volunteer Fair - We will have another Volunteer Fair following the worship service on Homecoming Sunday (9/10/2023). This will be a chance for people to sign up for small groups, committees, and get to know who is doing what in our Beloved Community.

Music Ministry - The BUC Choir and supporters gathered on August 26 at the Dearing's home for their annual Back-to-church Fiesta, which gave all choir folks (new and returning) a chance to eat, mingle and even sample some of the songs for the fall and winter.

Religious Education - Like many congregations, our RE program attendance and enrollment has declined significantly over the past several years. In response to the changing attendance patterns and needs of our young people, our RE philosophy is shifting from curriculum-based to a "free-choice" model. This decision is on par with other congregations of our size and based on what our Director of Religious Education, Shannon Snideman, is learning in regional DRE conversations hosted by Rev. Sharon Dittmar.

This model is based on the work of veteran RE professional Joy Berry's "Soul Work." Starting in September, our K-7 grades will be combined, and participants will have options ranging from handicrafts, to lego building, to outdoor exploration, and even a monthly baking project that the rest of the congregation will sample during coffee hour (which is another inroad to building relationships between our RE program and the rest of the congregation).

Perhaps the biggest challenge Shannon is facing is finding adults for our classrooms. Teaching RE is fun, it's easy, and it requires no prep-work on your part. Plus you get to hang out with some amazing young people! Contact Shannon directly to sign up.

TL;DR: Our staff and lay leaders have some really, really good ideas to support the life of our church, but we need your help to make them go. Please volunteer to greet, usher, teach RE, and/or be a coffee hour ambassador.

Upcoming: BUC's Fall Retreat is coming up 10/6/2023-10/8/2023! This is a great opportunity to build relationships, deepen our Unitarian Universalism, and have some good old-fashioned church fun!

Pillar 2: Direct our resources and decision-making toward fully and explicitly being antiracist, anti oppressive, and multicultural

A new session of our "Living the Pledge" workshop series is upcoming in the fall.

Pillar 3: Commit to meaningful action to significantly reduce consumption of non-renewable resources

During the 2021-2022 church year, our Environmental Action Team came to the Board hoping for a way forward to install solar panels. The Board directed that team to create a comprehensive plan, which was adopted during BUC's 2022 Annual Meeting. However, there was no funding to that plan. In the 2022-2023 church year, the possibility of undertaking a capital campaign to fund all or part of that plan, and potentially other things that weren't

included, was formally considered. That year's board approved a motion to hire Stewardship For Us to consult with our congregation about a possible capital campaign and our stewardship processes. There were some delays, but we are on track for a consultation with Mark Ewert in mid-September, including on-site work 9/15/2023 and 9/16/2023.

Please keep in mind this does not mean that we are undertaking a capital campaign. It is a consultation to determine appetite and readiness, and to get some outside perspective on our stewardship process.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Mandy Beal

Birmingham Unitarian Church

Treasurer's Report to Board of Trustees

August 28, 2023

1. Final 2022-23 Fiscal Year Financial Statements are complete, and the results are as shown below:

	Month of June - FINAL			June 30 Year-To-Date - FINAL		
	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>B/(W)</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>B/(W)</u>
Revenues	\$47,728	\$48,413	-\$685	\$713,638	\$720,149	-\$6,511
Adj. Oper. Exp	<u>-\$51,618</u>	<u>-\$57,813</u>	<u>\$6,195</u>	<u>-\$705,158</u>	<u>-\$726,484</u>	<u>\$21,326</u>
Adj. Oper. Inc./Loss	-\$3,890	-\$9,400	\$5,510	\$8,480	-\$6,335	\$14,815

- Revenue variance is primarily Rental Income
- Operating expense variance is primarily Facilities Staff, partially offset by Facility/Office Expense
- Without ERTC income of \$47,841, the adjusted operating loss would be -\$39,361 for the full year

2. July 2023 Financial Statements are complete, and the results presented to Budget & Finance are below:

	Month of July			Full Year 2023-24 Budget
	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>B/(W)</u>	<u>Budget</u>
Revenues	\$51,069	\$49,754	\$1,315	\$652,665
Adj. Oper. Exp	<u>-\$49,429</u>	<u>-\$53,562</u>	<u>\$4,133</u>	<u>-\$716,179</u>
Adj. Oper. Inc./Loss	\$1,640	-\$3,808	\$5,448	-\$63,514

- Revenue variance for July is primarily \$5,509 of favorable pledges variance (mostly Prior Yr) offset by a shortfall of -\$4,802 in Rental Income
- Operating expense variance for July is primarily Facility/Office Expense
- I am investigating a small difference in the full year budget deficit of -\$63,514 shown on the July statements, which is -\$805 higher than the -\$62,709 deficit I had seen on earlier reporting.

3. At the August Budget & Finance meeting, it was agreed that the 2023-24 budget should include a 5% reserve from the \$450K pledge to allow for some congregants not completely fulfilling their pledges. Valerie will make this change, which I believe should be reflected in the August 2023 financial statements.

4. Estimated General Fund (unrestricted) cash at July 31 is \$107,551 (\$167,036 including 2023-24 prepaid pledges)

5. Endowment fund market values at July 31, 2023 were as follows:

General Endowment: \$581,637.32 (up \$11,886 from June 30)
 Music Endowment: \$45,222.23 (up \$969.14 from June 30)
 Memorial Glen Endowment: \$45,152.15 (up \$1,011.83 from June 30)

Respectfully submitted by Craig Stroup, Treasurer
 August 28, 2023