

**Towson Unitarian Universalist Church
Board of Trustees
November 2023 Meeting**

Date/Time:	November 15, 2023
Meeting:	November Board Meeting
Participants:	Patty Barry, SarahRuth Davis, Andrew Hager, Ellie Hughes, Tricia Lott, Larry Magder, Michael Magrogen, Tracey Myers-Preston, Rev. Clare Petersberger, Susan Riggs
Absent:	-
Guests:	-
Location:	Zoom
Next meeting:	Wednesday, December 20 at 7:30 pm

Pre-meeting Action Items:

Activity	Owner	Target Date
These action items are to be completed before the meeting. Often, they are related to consent agenda items, which are items for which there is no discussion unless a member has a question concerning them.		
Read and provide revisions of minutes from the previous Board meeting.	All	11/15
Read reports.	All	11/15

Scheduled Agenda:

Chalice Lighting	Ellie Hughes
Go-Around Question	Andrew Hager
Consent Agenda	Owner
Approve minutes from October Board Meeting	Patty Barry
Accept Minister's Report (Appendix 1)	Rev. Clare Petersberger
Accept President-Elect's Report (Appendix 2)	Ellie Hughes

Discussion Agenda	
Auction Update The Auction Committee is well organized and ready to go. A rehearsal was held tonight (11/15).	Larry Magder

Discussion Agenda	
<p>Accessibility Team Update</p> <p>On 11/2, the Accessibility Team interviewed David Bowles and Stephen Hill of DKNB Architecture. The interview went well, with the architects thoroughly answering questions. Reference calls are being made.</p> <p>The team also convened a focus group to get their feedback and reconnect with what is needed. Feedback included ways to improve some non-structural areas like hospitality. Members of the focus group are Lorraine Sorbello, Judy Clague, Claudia Summer, Dick and Nadine Wobus, Denise Reddy, Andrew Hager, Sue Royer, and Ellie Hughes.</p> <p>The Board voted unanimously to use the bulk of the Bolz bequest towards accessibility improvements.</p>	<p>Ellie Hughes</p>
<p>Growth and Connection</p> <p>The Board voted unanimously to endorse the creation of a Growth and Connection Team.</p> <p>The Board and the church community will take time to look at this. The Growth and Connection Team will encompass the duties of the Stewardship and Membership committees</p> <p>This is a long range plan, looking several years out. There will be a leadership retreat In January, which will include developing priorities for the coming year.</p> <p>The budget process will shift, creating a budget up front, so that a vision can be shared with the community. March will be the time for the front-end promotions, while a Pledge-a-Palooza will occur in April.</p> <p>Susan Riggs commented that some people will still need to be nurtured in order to give, so may need a phone call or visit. How do we encourage folks to give generously? Tracey agreed that nurturing is important and that the new plan encourages us to do so all year, not just in a couple of months of stewardship. The goal is to proactively connect with newcomers.</p> <p>In June, the congregation will still vote on the budget, developed by the Board.</p>	<p>Tracey Myers-Preston</p>

Having no further business before it, the meeting adjourned at 8:27.
Next month: Chalice lighting, Tracey Myers-Preston; process observation, Susan Riggs

REPORT TO BOARD FROM REV. CLARE
November 13, 2023

Since my last report....

WORSHIP

I attended, virtually, the Oct. 22nd worship service conducted by The Rev. Karyn Marsh honoring our ancestors.

On October 29th I offered the sermon that received the most bids at last year's auction on White Christian Nationalism: What is it? And why is it not going away? Kara Tyler delivered "Anti-racist Baby" by Ibram X. Kendi (which is on most "banned books" lists in the United States.) The Choir sang. I was grateful to have attended the Race and Power Summit of BRIDGE, MD last December and to have heard The Reverend Jim Wallis.

November 5 we began our exploration of the gift of generosity. Our focus was the Assistance Center of Towson Churches. Roslyn Canosa is a board member of ACTC and spoke. Beverly Ginsburg is a devoted volunteer and she spoke. The Choir sang "Here I Am Lord" and raised the roof!

November 12 we are celebrating Diwali. One expectation of the holiday is giving the gift of generosity. Kara Tyler is going to lead us in dance. The Choir is singing. It will be a joyful worship service!

Kara, Tracy, and I are planning for the 10:30 service on Sunday, December 24th, to be a holiday sing along. There will be a family service on the wonder of stars at 5:30 and a more traditional Christmas Eve Candlelight service on the mystery of the Incarnation at 7:30.

On October 28th, I officiated at the celebration of life for Laura Gravitt. She was not a member of TUUC. But her brother-in-law is Tom Culbertson, whose parents were members of TUUC. Tom now mows the TUUC grounds and removes our snow.

On November 4 I stopped by the gathering to honor Linda Mattingly.

On November 12th I'll be officiating at a service to lay to rest remains of Andree and Steve Maslen.

SarahRuth Davis's Leadership Project is Worship As A Spiritual Practice. We have discussed this in our weekly meetings. Participants will be sharing in the January 28, 2024 TUUC worship service.

TUUC has contracted with a third AV tech, Henry Basta, who is an Assistant Director of Digital Media Services for Towson University.

I wrote a November column for The Threshold about the gift of generosity.

Tracey Myers Preston and I met to talk about the November 26 worship service that she will be conducting.

PASTORAL CARE

I have made 10 pastoral visits.

PROGRAMMING

I hosted the October 24th session of Soul Matters Sharing Circles.

Writing As A Spiritual Practice met on October 20 with readings by Yehuda Amichai and Naomi Shihab Nye on war and peace. We met on November 3 with a reading by the Rev. Connie Simon regarding the musical playlist of our souls.

I attended the October Program Council Meeting.

The staff met on October 18.

It has been a joy to work with Tracey Myers Preston on "Our Journeys!" We had 12 participants on October 15. We will be concluding on November 19th. Tracey has edited the sessions so that they invite greater participation and less lecturing. Thank you, Tracey!

It was a delight to attend Scott Shane's talk about his book *Flee North!* Thank you, Andrew and Ellie for organizing it.

I met with the Accessibility Team on October 17 to talk about next steps in the process of making our building more accessible.

I met with the Sacred Listening Team on October 26 to sketch out next steps in our partnership with BRIDGE, MD.

A-TEAM

Carel Hedlund and Bobbie Miyasaki presented the A-Team with two options for pursuing solar energy for TUUC.

The first is that Interfaith Power And Light will do an aerial assessment to see if TUUC qualifies for their solar energy program in which private companies pay for the solar panels for non-profits for federal tax credits, state incentives, solar renewal energy credits. If we are eligible, we would pay for energy that we use that our solar panels create.

Another opportunity is to access renewable energy from a community solar farm.

Neighborhood Sun is in Maryland. We would pay 10% less than BGE currently charges and know that our energy is cleaner.

Individuals can sign up through church and get an incentive--- church gets \$100.

There is no charge for joining or for leaving.

Neighborhood Solar is willing to come make a presentation

We agreed to pursue aerial assessment with Interfaith Power And Light and then look into Neighborhood Sun

Recommendation for Board on CD for Bolz bequest---A-Team recommended investing \$100,000 of the Bolz bequest in an instrument that will earn interest. Larry will have news about this.

We are looking for a second quote for cleaning the carpets.

Kai is looking for a volunteer to open the TUUC doors on March 28, 2024 10:30 p.m. - 6:45 a.m. on the 29th for VASCA.

Dan is looking into sponsorships for auction and how doable it is on Bid Beacon.

We have received quotes to fill our potholes...Aurora is \$3,800 the other one is \$5,600 more than Aurora. Clare F-A will ask about scheduled availability with Aurora. Paving the second half of parking lot \$56,000-\$60,000 (not in the cards right now)

We are looking at lighting in the main classroom. Look into motion sensors. SarahRuth lifted-up how this would improve accessibility. And we use that room for movies...so we need to factor that in.

Clare F-A is aware of running toilet in a downstairs bathroom.

Next meeting date and time November 17 at 11 a.m.

WIDER COMMUNITY

I attended the second meeting of the interfaith Anam Cara clergy group.
I attended a Planned Parenthood of Maryland webinar about Abortion Access.
I attended a UUMA program on AI and Ministry.
I attended the November meeting of the Religious Leaders Caucus for BRIDGE, MD which was a year in review program.

DENOMINATION

I attended the September 27th meeting of the Chesapeake Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association.
I attended a virtual program on AI & Unitarian Universalism.
I attended the Ministers Brainstorming Meeting for December's theme of the Gift of Mystery.
I have attended a meeting of the Leadership Team of the Chesapeake Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association.

UUC CHURCH AS EMPLOYER

Since we last met, the UUA has sent information regarding the UUA's Blue Cross/Blue Shield Health Insurance program. It is currently open enrollment in the plan and this information has been shared by Kai with every staff member.

Here is what the Board needs to know:

Over the past five years, the UUA Health Plan has been committed to keeping premium increases as low as possible so that the plan remains affordable. We have had an average of 4.7% annual increases since 2018, including one year with a 0% increase. However, as the COVID pandemic becomes less acute, we have seen claims within our participant base continue to rise. Last year, the UUA infused the Health Plan reserves with \$1 million to help balance this demand. We remain aware that the U.S. healthcare system is struggling to hire enough providers, including mental health professionals who specialize in pediatric care, as well as treating Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) and transgender/nonbinary individuals.

With this year's premium increase, the UUA has begun to explore strategies to increase the stability and sustainability of our participant base. We will be communicating more about this with you in the year ahead. We are committed to ensuring our religious professionals have access to equitable and affirming health care option, and thank all of our members for their trust and investment in the UUA Health Plan.

2024 Health Insurance Premium/Benefits: Health care costs, particularly prescription drugs, keep rising at rates higher than the general inflation rate. Nationally, insurance plans are seeking ways to reduce benefits and to control premiums, even still many plans are facing double-digit rate increases for 2024. So, too, is the UUA Health Plan. The UUA Health Plan Committee has set a 12.5% premium increase for our various plans. Premiums vary by age and some participants will additionally see a small age adjustment.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Clare

Appendix 2: President-Elect's Report

As President-Elect, I convened a meeting of the Program Council on November 1, where we finalized goals for the coming year in alignment with the draft Board vision and goals. Andrew and I co-organized the Scott Shane author talk and book signing fundraiser, which took place on November 4. Special thanks to Kai, Jay Hauf, and Carel Hedlund for their support on this project! I discussed church matters with Rev Clare and Andrew via email, phone, and in-person meetings, and met with Andrew and Tracey Myers-Preston regarding her Connection and Growth initiative.

I taught finger-knitting and discussed the month's theme of Heritage as part of Making Faith on October 22, and attended an RE Committee meeting on October 24. I helped with the post-RE apple dumpling making session on November 5. I've had multiple conversations with the YRE teens to plan their involvement in service on November 19.

As convener of the team coordinating the initial phases of the accessibility project, I held a meeting on October 17 at which we reviewed bids received. The committee held interviews with the bidding firms on November 2. I participated in the focus group convened by Sue Royer on November 12.

Respectfully submitted,
Ellie Hughes