

## **President's Report 2024 Spring Congregational Meeting**

The cycles of the seasons show us that change is part of life. Our church community has experienced so many changes in the past few years, and the 2023-24 church year brought more transformation as we had to pivot our thinking and adapt to many challenges and changes.

Our church bylaws state that the purpose of the board of trustees is to provide governance as representatives of the congregation. Boards are responsible for considering the big picture of organizations: policies and long-range planning, bylaws and budget, vision and mission.

As a board, we are committed to love, community, and growth. We love and support our church community through the challenging financial decisions we make, the thoughtful policy work we do, and guiding the church throughout the changes that life brings.

Here are a few highlights of the seasons of our church year:

### **Summer**

- We elected new board of trustees officers for the 2023-2024 congregational year. We started the church year with the following board members: Kim Ziemann, President; Melody Vaccaro, Vice-President; Judy Hart, Immediate Past President; Peg Pelter, Allison Hope Starr, JoEllen Polzien, Allison Hope Starr, Floyd Wickenkamp, Mary K Stillwell, Elle Straatmann (fulfilling Dorothy Ramsey's term).
- We welcomed Marcia Cederdahl as the new chair of the Program Council
- Jason Slaughter began his term as Treasurer, and Karen Heafer was elected as Vice-Treasurer
- The board approved updates to the Finance Handbook and Personnel Handbook
- Our church sent delegates to the UUA General Assembly both in person in Pittsburg and virtually.
- We celebrated the return of our Rev. Dr. Oscar Sinclair and his family and celebrated our congregation with a picnic potluck in July at Antelope Park
- The amazing volunteers on the Bylaws Taskforce started meeting twice a month with a goal of completing the draft of the bylaws before Thanksgiving and having them approved at the winter congregational meeting.
- A team was established to explore revisions to our Vision and Mission
- The board voted to approve a much overdue Financial Review
- The Stewardship Ministry Team started meeting to plan for the annual giving campaign and also to research other year-round stewardship opportunities
- The board began budget discussions while the Program Council and committees began work on budget requests.
- At the Summer Retreat, leaders developed four priorities for the church year:

- o aligning staff and ministerial salaries with the UUA-suggested midpoint guidelines.
- o implementing a funding plan for building and grounds sustainability.
- o increasing involvement and engagement across all parts of the congregation and strengthening volunteer leadership.
- o And expanding collaborative efforts on human rights advocacy including but not limited to Justice in Action, legislative advocacy, and social movements that align with our denominational values.
  - Many of our church members are involved in Justice in Action, and Oscar was recently elected to be co-president.

### **Fall:**

- The Annual Giving Campaign had its Kickoff with a Potluck on September 10
- Board members encouraged congregant conversations about special memories at church and why our church is important
- Our church hosted the Otoe Missouriia Brunch on September 22
- The Bylaws Review task force continued to meet and do revision work, as well as planning for presenting the revised Bylaws to the congregation
- A confidentiality statement was drafted.
- The new heat pump was installed
- The Stewardship Ministry began meeting
- The Mission and Vision team continued to plan and discuss
- Our 501c3 status went into effect.
- We met with church leaders of the Omaha UU churches and hope to continue that partnership
- The Executive committee, comprised of the board president, vice-president, treasurer, vice treasurer, Program Council Chair, and Minister, met multiple times to work on the budget.
- The second chance Auction was a huge success
- Then the Board planned and held two town hall meetings and the Winter Congregational Meeting
- The 2024 budget was approved. While pledging amounts were high, expenses were higher and income was down in other areas. Difficult decisions were made to cut funding for programming, reduce staff hours, and furlour our minister for three months in 2024. Salaries were raised to the UUA-suggested midpoint, but were budgeted at the changed work hours.
- The revised Bylaws were approved.

### **Winter**

- Board members and the LUF committee (now known as the Capital Investment Committee) held meetings to collaborate about LUF and Board relations and the LUF Board agreement

- The Stewardship Ministry continued meeting to develop ideas for creating a broader income base.
- A winter board retreat was held where we deepened connections as church leaders, examined changes in church demographics, and discussed our priorities for the remainder of the church year.
- A review of the 2023 finances showed that we ended the 2023 church year with a deficit (this had no connection to the budget passed in December for the 2024 year). For our 2023 budget year, our expenses were right on target for what we budgeted, but our income was considerably lower than expected. Our rental income and money from fundraisers exceeded expectations, but our pledge repayment was only 85%.

## **Spring**

- Church leaders and long-term repair and replace stakeholders met to develop a plan for Building and Grounds Sustainability.
- Board members and the LUF committee (now known as the Capital Investment Committee) continued to collaborate
- Our minister, Rev. Dr. Oscar Sinclair, announced that he had accepted an offer to candidate at Unity Church-Unitarian in St. Paul, Minnesota, and was selected to be their next settled minister.
- Rev. Dr. Oscar Sinclair was gone during the month of April because of being furloughed.
- An interim minister search team was approved by the board, and they began the work of developing our church's profile on the Minister Search System
- Listening sessions were held to answer questions and listen to concerns as we proceeded with the Interim Minister search process.
- The Board of Trustees and Program Council held a forum to discuss what works well with our current governance model and how we can make it even better.
- The Auction was a success, thanks to Karen Heafer and Barbara Pearson, and all the amazing people who donated and bid on items.
- The financial review was scheduled for June.
- The interim minister search team checked references for and interviewed the four highly qualified candidates who applied for the position.
- Bluestem Montessori will be leaving UCL in June, but we have signed a contract for a preschool/daycare to rent our building.
- Rev. A.J. Galazen accepted our offer to be the next interim minister at UCL starting on August 1st.

Our Church remains an incredibly vital place. Look at what we have accomplished this year. Look at the calendar, the work of the committees, the joy of children and youth in RGL, the wonderful music in our services, and our partnerships in the community.

We are here because we care about our church. I'm so grateful for your commitment to show up. I send a thank you to everyone who participated in the Town Halls and Congregational Meeting, and all who will be voting. Being part of this democratic process is one of the many ways our members show up to support and care for our church community.

I want to say thank you to our minister, Rev. Dr. Oscar Sinclair, for all you have done with us in the past seven years. You will be missed and we wish you well in the next seasons of your life.

I also send my thanks of our amazing staff: our administrative director Jean Helms, our religious growth and learning director Chelsea Krafka, our music director Bob Fuson, our administrative associate Wendy Hestermann, and our choir director Julie Enerson. We value the work you do for our church.

I am so grateful to all of the leaders of UCL. Much time, energy, and dedication goes into volunteering for leadership positions. Thank you to the committee members and chairs, program council liaisons, and our program council chair Marcia Cederdahl. Your work is crucial.

While I may be the voice of the board, the governance work is done by all of the members of the board. Thank you all.

A special thanks goes to those members whose board terms are ending: JoEllen Polzien, Meg Mering, and Elle Straatmann,

In June we start a new season. We welcome new members to the Board of Trustees and will be electing new officers. We will be saying goodbye to Oscar and welcoming a new interim minister. The seasons to come will surely bring even more change. But we are about the work of transforming ourselves and the world, together, through love.

Thank you for allowing me to serve as your board of trustees president.

Kim Ziemann (she/her)  
President of the Board of Trustees  
Unitarian Church of Lincoln