



# CEDAR LANE

WHERE **LOVE** WORKS

**CLUUC Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes**  
**April 18, 2023**

## Attendance

**Officers:** Bob Essink (President), Roger Santodomingo (President-Elect), Sandy Dawsey (Secretary), Sandy Stalzer (Treasurer), Nancy Janssen (Assistant Secretary), Jack Rodgers (Assistant Treasurer)

**At-Large Members:** Sandy Shaw, John Dunn, Stephanie Williams, Nancy Floreen, Mmamohau Tswaedi

**Absent:** Marilyn Emery, Eduardo Hernandez

**Staff:** Abhi Janamanchi (Senior Minister), Jennifer Morley (Executive Director)

**Guests:** Jean Moyer, Jack Welch, Tod Chernikoff, Lisa Chernikoff, Greg Falcigno

## Opening

The meeting began at 6:30pm. Centering words were given by Rev. Abhi. Bob Essink read the Vision/Mission statement and Mmamohau Tswaedi read the Board of Trustees' Covenant.

## Consent Agenda

Sandy Dawsey asked if there was any discussion of the Consent Agenda. There was none. Nancy Floreen made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, and Sandy Stalzer seconded it. *All in favor.*

## Strategic Initiatives Fund

Bob reminded the Board that we had discussed the Strategic Initiatives Fund process at the February Board meeting, and then had made a few changes, but did not have time at the March Board meeting to revisit and vote on the final version (Appendix D). Nancy Floreen wanted to know who would review and decide on which proposals would be funded, and Bob said that the Board would do this. Jack Rodgers asked over how many years proposals could be entertained,

and Nancy F. asked over how many years approved monies could be spent, and Bob said that both of these time frames were unlimited (until the money in the Fund was all spent). Sandy Shaw moved that the Strategic Initiatives Fund process, as written in Appendix D (dated 3-21-23) be approved, and Sandy D seconded this motion. *All in favor.*

## Change in the Human Resources (HR) Committee Chair

Bob informed the Board that after multiple years of service as the Chair of the HR Committee, Linda Gianessi has resigned this position to “take a break” and do other things in the congregational community. Jack Welch volunteered to be the next Chair, and all current members of the HR Committee said they thought Jack would be good in this position. The Board recognized Linda for her many years of service. Sandy D. moved that Jack Welch be approved as the new Chair of the HR Committee, and Jack R. seconded this. *All in favor.*

## HR Committee Recommended Changes in the Personnel Policy Manual

Jack W. reviewed recent changes in the Personnel Policy Manual related to sexual harassment, including that harassment by people of the same or other genders was included, that anyone on the staff should report harassment to both the Senior Minister and the Executive Director, and that after review of an incident, any offender could be removed from Cedar Lane employment (if they were an employee) and be required to stay away from the Cedar Lane premises. The exact wording of the changes can be seen in Appendix E. Sandy Shaw moved that the changes in the Personnel Policy Manual related to sexual harassment be approved, and Mmamohao seconded this. *All in favor.*

## Conversation with Tod and Lisa Chernikoff

Tod and Lisa wrote a note to Bob expressing concerns that they had recently had, and he asked them to come and discuss these concerns with the Board. Most of their concerns related to less than optimal communication between the staff and the congregation, and a lack of congregational input in staff-initiated changes in the worship services, especially RE activities during the worship services. Specific concerns included the movement of baby/toddler care to lounge, reducing the space for Greeters (one of whom is Lisa); bringing a “creative listening cart” to the back of the sanctuary during services and encouraging children to take objects from this cart to play with during the service, which creates noise; changes in RE so there is no longer full-time RE, with a table downstairs with volunteers who know what is happening and where to direct children and parents each week, rather we have an RE which changes from week to week, without good communication to the greeters (or parents?) and it is unclear, especially when new children show up, where to take them. Tod and Lisa think that such (relatively major) changes should be discussed with the congregation in listening sessions, etc., and the congregation should have a say in approving them. They also thought we should re-institute a previous practice of Board members being present at coffee hour to hear congregants’ concerns.

Several Board members expressed sympathy for the frustrations coming from these experiences, and agreed that we need to develop and encourage better communications among the staff, congregation and Board members, eg. with question and comment boxes and other better feedback loops to express opinions and suggestions when the staff makes changes. There was also acknowledgement that there has always been tension over the upstairs/downstairs divide between adult worship and RE, with advantages and disadvantages associated with different balance points.

## Governance Committee Report on the Revised Board Policy Manual

The Governance Committee has worked for several years making proposed revisions to the Board Policy Manual, which was last revised in 2019. Greg Falcigno, the Committee Chair, provided the Board the results of this work, including the propose new Board Policy Manual (Appendix G-1) and Board Policy Manual Appendices (Appendix G-2) and a PowerPoint summary of the major changes (Appendix G-3), and he presented these major changes. The purpose of this presentation was to introduce these changes to the Board, so the Board can review them and be ready to discuss and possibly approve them at the next Board meeting in May.

## Widening the Circle of Concern Final Report

The WTCC Task Force completed its work during the past month, including completion of its final report (Appendix H). Eduardo Hernandez, the Chair of this Task Force, wanted the Board to receive and review this report now, even though he will have to miss this and the next two Board meetings, so Board discussion of the findings will not take place until he returns in July or August.

## Review of the 2023-2024 (FY24) Operating Budget

Jen presented the proposed FY24 operating budget (Appendix I-1). She noted that at this point we have received \$620K in pledges from 192 pledgers, and many people have increased their pledges from last year, but ~150 pledgers from last year have not pledged again this year. She also noted that a few donors have agreed to match additional pledges (new pledges or increases in current pledges) from now until the end of April. Jack W. noted that we are consistently losing ~25 pledges each year. Abhi said that the amount of pledges in the top quarter of pledgers continues to increase, but the amount of pledges in quarters 2-4 do not, and are below the amounts that pledgers in those quartiles give in other Potomac Partnership churches. Nancy F. wants the Board to get a list of those who have not yet pledged, so Board members can call them and ask them to pledge.

There was a discussion about why the pledge goal for FY24 was still \$850K, the same as FY23, when the FY23 goal has not yet been met (and probably won't be met). Jen said that this is still a potentially reachable goal, and we should keep it. Several members expressed concern that the COLA for staff in the FY24 budget was 3%, when the UUA recommendation was for an 8.3% COLA, and that the proposed contribution to the UUA was still only \$25K (compared to a

UUA request for \$75K from congregations of our size), but Jen said that these figures were all we could afford at this point. Several people noted that the projected FY24 budget has an estimated \$204K deficit (within the 5% of Endowment that can be accessed without a congregational vote), but that this is in fact a structural deficit that usually ends up at ~\$250K-\$300K, and this structural deficit is not sustainable.

This structural deficit has been in place for several years, but in the past 3 years we have been bailed out by unexpected windfalls, including covid subsidies from the government in the last 2 years, and we cannot expect to get such subsidies in the future. We need to generate a lot more revenue and/or cut our costs even further. Bob noted that finding new sources of revenue (to offset decreasing pledges) is the total reason for the Financial Sustainability Task Force and the two Workshops we have held on this subject in the past 1-2 months, and Abhi noted that the three Potomac Partnership churches and Arlington UU and All Souls UU are discussing the possibility of sharing staff to reduce expenses. Everyone agreed that we need to tell the Congregation the true financial picture at the Annual Meeting that we have this \$250K-\$300K structural annual deficit, that we have been lucky to have windfalls to cover this in the past few years, but we cannot expect similar windfalls in the future.

## Transitional Music Director update

Sandy D, Mmamohau and Abhi updated the Board on the progress in finding a transitional Music Director. A promising interested candidate has been found who has been interviewed by Abhi and a group of 5 members of the voice choir, handbell choir and Board. Her references are now being checked, and we hope to have her on board in May. Although a vote by the Board is not necessary to hire a Transitional Music Director, Nancy F. moved and Roger seconded a motion to affirm and support the process and decision of the staff in this regard. *All in favor.*

## Other Business

Because of the time, the other items on the agenda needed to be put off until the additional Board meeting planned for April 23. These items include an Executive Session, discussion of the results of the Financial Sustainability Task Force Workshops and next steps to evaluate priority options, and member engagement phone calls and visits.

## Closing

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 pm.