

**Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Montclair**  
**Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes**  
**July 12, 2011**

Staff: Judy Tomlinson

Board: Teresa DeSousa, Judy Strachan, Michael Mernin, Connie Thames, Terry Cummings, Carol McGough, Thom Kennon, Cheryl Crawford, Sue Raufer

Guests: Courtney Allen

Meeting called to order at 7:40 p.m.

**Adoption of Minutes:**

*Motion to adopt June minutes. (Terry C./Judy S.) Motion carried.*

**Thank You Notes:** Theatre group c/o Vince Wares for The Shadow Box production.  
Reminder for next month: Laura Stakiwicz & Jeannine Mueller (RE Summer program)

**President's Report:** We'll go back to Thursdays for board meetings. Next meeting will be August 11<sup>th</sup>. Committee Liaison List – Sending it around today. Board members need to go back to committee chairs and ask committees to submit annual reports. Teresa will send them a request, and each Board Liaison should follow up with committee chairs. Name tags on mail slot (outside of office) will be changed tomorrow.

**Ministers' reports:**

**Judy:** Still busy this summer. GA was exciting, w/ great speakers. Judy has been impressed w/ the membership task force. Since participating in the membership webinar they have divided up into groups to address specific areas. The PR committee came on Sunday with a comprehensive report on how they propose to “get our name out there”. Nick Lewis and Judy T. are going to put together a digital task-force to revamp the website. Also, Nick has reached out to neighboring congregations in order to share best practices and encourage cooperation in outreach. Harvest the Power Leadership is looking into their next series. Twelve visitors signed the guest book since the last meeting. One issue is that a woman who is mentally ill has been coming into the building during the week and doing strange things; leaving messages around, having outbursts, caused some difficulty, and in other ways has acted inappropriately. The Covenant Groups have been moving along. The leadership is great, but within the groups the meetings are often not well attended. Last week we were in the Montclair Times, and we are in the Montclair Times again this week. The Community Network assists with needs of members of the congregation. The Caring Network (Diane Specht) maintains contact with shut-ins and other members of the congregation who cannot make it to services or events.

**Council on Ministries:** Not present this week. They will be invited to the board retreat.

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**Harvest the Power:** (Courtney Allen) Last year was a transformational year for both the 9 participants and the 5 facilitators. (Distributed form) Form describes focusing on self, community, leadership, then vision. This is more than just trying to find people to fill the leadership positions in the congregations. The group hit their stride in January with interactive discussions, games, a special meeting to go through the archives, This took a lot of work to pull off these meetings, but it was worth it. It resulted in deepening commitments across the board from the participants. Courtney read feedback from participants. Courtney's goal is to educate the board about Harvest the Power, and to ask for money. It was costly because it was necessary to meet participants where they were, in a caring manner. Courtney asked the board for \$1500 to run this program for this next year. It is not clear that this is enough so that facilitators will not have to again put money out of pocket to cover the cost of the program. Board requested a more specific budget breakdown in order to establish an accurate cost for this program. The Board also asked for indicia that the financial contributions of the participants went up, as one measure of the success/ commitment of the program.

**2011-2012 Pledge Drive:** (John and Lauren Carlton) Appreciated support of Board in this process. It is apparent that we have different types of people in this congregation, with different economic situations and with different relationships to the congregation. (Example: People who come for services, people who come to serve in RE). We will discuss further during the Board retreat. February is not the time for us to say what we want to do. We should have sent the message of what we wanted to do in August or September, and let people mull it over until February. People want to know what we will be doing differently; what the changes will be. Do we want to target some changes to specific fund raising actions? (Example: The fall auction will support the student minister program.) Outreach of the message ("We are a different type of congregation") has to go out through all different networks. In January or February, decide the "ask". Rely on the ministers to get a read on the congregation. There was a little bit of disconnect between reality and expectations. (Example: Unemployment is higher within the congregation this year, yet there was disappointment in the fact that we did not raise as much as in previous years.) The theme may be tied to what we want to do, what our goals are. Creates buy-in to a specific goal. Get the message out through all of the venues – through the services, the committees, the RE network, etc. This year there was a major donor party, an RE party, a third party and a mop-up party. By the end, the people who wanted to go to parties got the opportunity to do so. We could consider extended coffee hours, but that will, again, get to the people who go to services. The pitch should come from the heads of the networks – the RE leaders, the committee chairs. We should let people know of the cost to the congregation of teaching RE to a child for a year, for example. "Each person costs us \$1800 instead of "The average pledge is 1800." Because of the difference of the people in our congregation, we cannot take a one-size-fits-all (percentage wise) approach. The lateness of the pledges is a fact of life. The second shadow curve is when people actually pay up on their pledge. We moved away from "When are you going to pledge?" to "Let us know if you are not going to be able to pledge. Mechanics: We should pay for a secure credit card pledge. It got cut from the budget this year. We are trying to get away from credit card fees. We should encourage people to do electronic funds transfer. Let people know that we can take credit card payments monthly or quarterly. Donna can get

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the money by getting people to give her their routing number telephonically. The pledge form was modified so people paid dues, and pledges. It could be segregated one more time, allowing for earmarks. This may be something we want to steer away from. The technology firm that we use said the secure credit card route costs \$5000. This seems like it should be cheaper. Every year there is a new chair. Is there a written process on how to do it? Each chair passes information on to the next chair. What seems to be true is that we are moving away from people having the time, they would rather write a check. The Carltons volunteered to chair for another year. What can the Board do to help? Carltons felt supported, many Board members volunteered to do follow-up calls. The Board should think about, and articulate the message early on. The end piece is the follow-up calls. And the middle piece, perhaps would be a canvas kick-off that would be attended by board and committee chairs, lay teachers. Problem is that it would be tasking them with a job they did not sign on for. This could be covered at the meeting at the committee at the beginning of the year. Thank you to the Carltons! They are invited to the Board Retreat on Sept 16 & 17

**Financial Matters:** (Judy S.) We do not have final books yet, but as of year's end, so far we have a surplus of \$51,000, of which \$25,000 we should be able to allocate. Based on last year's board's commitment, we will be putting \$23,000 into the reserve fund. The pledges for next year are \$425,000 which is \$7000 over the budget we approved. However we also have learned that the benefit cost to some staff are coming in at \$3500 over budget. The finance committee thought we should strive for a reserve fund of \$150,000, which is aspirational. They also thought the bylaws should reflect an 8% leeway for the Board before we have to go to the congregation with budget changes. The plan for the proposed changes to the bylaws is to distribute the changes to the bylaws in September, be available at coffee hour to answer questions, then call for a congregational meeting in October. This year we budgeted an eight percent uncollected pledge amount, and the uncollectable pledges came in at only six percent. In the future the uncollectable amount will be based on the median for the past year few years. We had to increase the amount budgeted for the accountant. Last year at \$18,000, we took it down to 12,000, but ultimately had to split the difference and settled on \$15,000. We could switch over to Quickbooks instead of Church Windows, which would make it so that we would not be hamstrung by the fact that the accountant is one of the few people who know Church Windows.

**New Business/Question Time:**

Email from Judie Rinearson about a project to archive all of the music in the congregation. She would like the congregation to hire a college student to do it (index it and organize it) She would like us to take \$300 from the music committee to do this. This is actually a decision from the endowment committee.

Partners in Health want to enter into a partnership agreement with us whereby we participate in mutual advertising. This is a Mountainside Hospital initiative. Teresa will send this around for us.

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Membership Committee wants to form a digital task force and actually pay someone to maintain the website.

How does the senior youth determine who the two youth representatives to the board will be? This was decided at the senior youth retreat. Henry Kanengiser and Amber Gramp will be the representatives to the board.

**Schedule Board Moments:**

7/17 – Teresa / transparency

7/24 – Small Group Ministries – Michael Mernin

7/31 – End of year financial position – Judy Strachan

8/7 – Undoing racism. Worship committee / Terry Cummings

8/14 – Auction plug – Michael Mernin

Teresa plans to continue transparency by posting the agenda and board meeting notice to the website.

**Operational Issues for Donna:**

Example: Board had made a decision last year regarding a rental space, but that was never communicated to Donna so it was never acted on. We need to find a way to let her know when such things, such as calendaring meetings, comes up. We could ask Deb Corbett to do this as board liaison to staff.

**Board Retreat:**

Friday night = Dinner. Saturday all day here. We should set goals at the next meeting. We need to reaffirm our covenant, with whatever changes we think are appropriate. Let's look at the goals we had for last year that Nick pulled together. Please come up with your own ideas of where we want to take things. We should spend the meeting time doing work, and knock out administrative tasks via email. Teresa will distribute the bylaws before the next meeting. We may not have a board meeting in September. Send Teresa recommendations for restaurants.

We had a discussion about the people who are not paying their pledges (Teresa distributed a list, and recollected it after discussion). We need to decide what we are going to do about those who do not pay their pledge. Judy S. drafted a letter. Michael Mernin offered to revise the letter in light of our discussion, and tracking the by-laws.

Process Monitor

*Motion to adjourn (Michael/Carol)* The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Next meeting is Thursday August 11, 2011.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Susan Raufer  
Secretary of the Board

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