Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Montclair
April 21, 2015
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
Meeting began at 7:35 pm

Staff: Charlie Ortman, Judy Tomlinson

Members: Arlene Dodge, Mary Moriarty, Sue Raufer, Dennis Drew, Dorothy Sommer, Judith Rew, Mike Mernin, Luis DeLeon, Laura Kushner, Dottie Hiebing, Chris Corbett

Visitors: Dianne Specht

Opening Words: Laura
Roses by Mary Oliver

Statement of Guiding Principles: Laura

Motion to adapt last month's board minutes
Sue moved / Dorothy seconded / Adopted

President's Report: Mike
Welcome and bid a found farewell to Luis.

Our annual meeting is May 17. We will hold election for the new board members. We are losing Laura, Cheryl, and Jerry. New proposed nominees are Jim Abramson, Denise Rodgers, and Ellen Fenster (since Luis is moving and will not).

In conversation with Silke: It might be a nice idea if the congregation passes a resolution to rededicate our commitment to the Green Sanctuary at the annual meeting. We are four years into the certified status, and Silke found a nice reading. It's a win win win win. Mike will send a copy to all of us.

We have Diane Specht coming in for a proposal about Black Lives Matter.

Minister's Report: Charlie
We've had one death this month, Alex Carr, who died Thursday morning. Joel Wexler's memorial will be this Sunday at 2 pm. Seven visitors have signed in this month. I received an inquiry from David Lewis and Carolyn Burr about GA. Judith Rew and Michael Mernin are going. What needs to happen is that we all are empowered to be delegates. So they can be participants and voting members of the GA. We'll do that next month. We are allowed 12 voting members.

The UULMNJ meeting that was held here last Saturday was a good and important meeting about the issues of our day. Our congregation was a good host. We led the worship service. It was a powerful gathering.

I would like to add a note of thanks to the congregation for dress-up Sunday and the fish fry.

The Metro Annual Meeting is next week. If you have some time Friday and Saturday it is the annual meeting of our district. Each year a minister from the district is invited to tell his or her life odyssey and Charlie has been invited to do that.

The MESH cabaret is at 7pm May 2, this Saturday evening in Fletcher Hall. A comedian and a torch singer. Charlie is the MC.

Associate Minister's Report: Judy Tomlinson
We are in the midst of Registration & Recruitment for next year in RE. We just held Blue Jean Sunday. Thanks are in order to Claudia Sanders, Laura Kushner, and John Carlton for their work.

COA graduation is coming up on May 3. Traditionally this is also a time when the board serves cake during coffee hour. We do two that day.

Judy has held a COA parent group this year for the fourth or fifth time. She asked parents what other age group for which they wish they had that kind of support. They said middle school. She is pulling together a three-session parents group for that age group.

Senior youth group: Dana just developed a brochure. She came to the final COA parent meeting and made sure the parents knew what's going on. Isaiah Brauer was also there to talk about senior youth. They are doing a worship service on Mother's Day, May 10, and will do the same service at the Orange Congregation the following week. They just went to a District Con for the first time in 8 or 10 years. It was apparently a great success.

Harvest the Power: This weekend is Harvest Graduation at 5:30 on Sunday evening. The Board is invited. For those with any interest in taking part in the program there will be three one-hour information sessions. The next one is Thursday at 7:30-8:30. Also we have a brochure.

Update on the Pledge Drive: The Felixes
We'll start on the numbers. And we've been doing some thinking about implications for next year. As of last Friday we were at $370,000. We are holding a matching grant. We're doing fine, it's leveled off. But we are $60,000 short of our goal. Looking at the number of people who haven't yet pledged, we could get to our goal if we could get these people to pledge. Some of them are significant givers. The ASK is really to say that you really should make those calls. We have 50+ people who haven't yet pledged. Please make your calls.

Comments:

Dotty: It's not painful. The response is positive. Most people said I forgot, I'm behind, good thing you called. The reminder is really useful.
Dorothy: I have to agree that it was not unpleasant. One family has moved to Pennsylvania; another who said she works on Sunday and the 12-year-old doesn't want to go. At least one said oh yeah, we'll get our pledge in.
Chris: People won't get back to you. It's so surprising.
Mark: There's a sense of responsibility on both sides. As we think of next year think about how to get people to feel that responsibility.

Nancy: We're taking them off the list if they moved or something like that. I thought it would be helpful to see the whole list. One of the challenges is that we don't have information about how these people are engaged. Are they in RE? A covenant group? We need to do a better job of tracking people. We were in Charlotte, NC recently and went to a UU that has an online membership form, which includes an online profile. I know that will be a very tough thing to institutionalize but it's important.

How connected does someone need to be to be considered a member? What if someone is an intermittent member. A number of new members pledge once and then not again.

Conclusion and ideas:

- We need to build on the conversation we had with Terry Sweetzer.
- Please make calls. Close the loop. Let Mark and Nancy know.
- They will send a new updated list.
- Look at different ways in: try to get more people involved.
- Last interesting idea from the Charlotte congregation: They had a bulletin board of new members in coffee hour that had pictures, names, where they live, their interests

Proposal from the Undoing Racism Committee: Diane Specht
We want to start a conversation and some action/educational things that would be represented by purchasing a banner that says: Black Lives Matter/Standing on the Side of Love. We really want the whole congregation to rally along with us. Take this on as a purpose and interest. We have some money to buy it. We are thinking of getting the youth involved to sell buttons. We are thinking of having meetings during the 10 o'clock coffee hour with a speaker or something like that. The youth group also has a blog they are putting out. We are looking for ways to get the youth involved here and in the community in these issues. We have a grant for at least two interns to develop these things. Becky already spoke to Charlie about speaking in the service. Becky wants to lean into the history of the Marriage Equality banner. We asked the Board to stand with us on the chancel and invite the congregation to stand with us. We ended up singing Standing on the Side of Love. I really think that that created a really, strong broad base of support within the congregation. What's at issue is timing. There aren't a lot of services left this year. There is a banner maker

in town that Becky knows who could do it. Becky was hoping that the Board could support this financially in some way.

Dottie moved that The Board support this banner, including financially, that we have UUCM on one side of it and Standing On The Side of Love on the other and BLACK LIVES MATTER the biggest words. A rough estimate of $200 or $300 was suggested. Let us symbolically stand.

Mike: When marriage equality came to NJ we took our banner down. But what could possibly be the milestone? What would warrant taking it down?

Charlie added that someone would come in about once a month having seen the last banner. We will have Christina Williams read something in the service.

Chris seconded/approved

Thank you notes:
Deb Ellis, organized the food for the Easter service and intends to do that going forward.
John Carlton /Claudia Sanders, for Blue Jean Sunday
Luis Deleon for his service to the UUCM as he prepares to move away

Treasurer's Report: Chris
Begin with Proposed Budget. Two things we need to project:

1. How are we going to do this year?
2. Look at the income we're going to have.

Current Year: It's very tight but very tight on purpose. If we use all the money that is saved from budgets such as Music and RE we would have enough. But I want to save that. Right now we are running a surplus. We spent $7,500 less than we earned. But last year we had $11,000. I propose that we hold back $18,000 from our past surpluses. But we have even more than that we've saved up.

Outlook for the Canvass: He's not assuming we're going to make the full $60,000 extra, which was our goal. He's proposing a little less than that. So he's only counting on $43,000, doable only if we keep making the calls.

The outlook for next year includes a very modest 2% increase, but it can hit all major areas that fall into two groups:

Current budget:
--Senior youth coordinator
--Enhance music director hours
--Employee bonus
--Green Sanctuary

New items:
--Interim minister relocation allowance ($5,000-$10,000 recommended). Interims move less stuff. The interim transition team will work with them in locating a place to rent, furniture, etc.
--Search committee budget
--Music director increased hours from 24 to 30 (per our pledge to bring his hours up in installments, this being our second)
--Maintain asst. music director
--Maintenance budget increase, which is very important, evidenced by our ceiling falling in recently.
--Relocation fund for interim minister

How do we get this?

- Assuming $10,000 more pledges come in than last year. Right now we are $5,000 under. We're going to have to work.
- Additional rental income. We were up about $6,500 and it's trending upward.
- Saving a month of minister's salary because our interim minister starts August 1 and Charlie leaves on June 30
- Funds: Had a surplus in the music, RE funds and Sabbatical fund. We pay a certain amount each year and when our ministers don't go on sabbatical we get some money back. Last year we agreed to use $3,250 towards our budget and specifically for visiting ministers. We'll end up using some of these funds this summer.
- Other one-time funds: Music committee agreed to give us $1,000; senior youth agreed to give back $1,000; use $,1000 each from funds.
- Holding back $18,000 surplus that we'll use if we need to; and will roll it over if we can; plus our $75,000 reserve fund. We won't use it if we don't have to but can if we have to.

Other factors:

- Pledges and Contributions are going down slightly because we are removing the use of one time contributions
- Fundraising activities; projecting that we can go up slightly; replace the prom
- Grocery store cards and Marketplace: Judy Strachen is not going to continue spearheading that. So we need someone to do that. The Marketplace needs to be looked at.
- RE registration fees were up this year, counting on that to continue to go up.
- We need to achieve our goals for this year's pledge drive.
- We need high level of fund raising; Auction the same or better; replace prom. We made $800 on the fish fry. So maybe we need three "fish fries."
- Better pledge drive.
- Replace one time funding of $30,000.
- We must stay on budget.

Charlie urged board members to make calls for pledge drive to ask people to at least match what they gave before. And would greatly appreciate an increase.

Question about fair compensation
We are giving staff a raise this year, not just a bonus.
Our new minister is coming in fully compensated according to the UUA guidelines.
It's very complicated to figure out a way to offer benefits to our staff. So we will commit to it and know that it will take some time.

We have to move to support this tonight in order to get this out by May 1 and on the agenda and we will have another meeting in one week.

Question: Are there things that have been suggested to you or the finance committee that have fallen off the table?

Biggest thing is maintenance fund: There is a minority on the Facilities Committee that thinks it is way too low and needs to be 2 or 3 higher.

(FYI: Insurance will cover most of the roof repair.)

Dennis offered: Curtains for Fletcher Hall. Fell off the list but Chris would make a commitment to do that from the $18,000 surplus.

The social justice commitment (to help fund the rental of space for S&J events) changed the atmosphere. Nothing is really changing, just improves the spirit.

Budgets represent opportunity.

The Board gave Chris a standing ovation.

Resolutions of the Board:
1. The budget for FY 15/16 is approved
2. The Board approves the use of $7,000 in funds from the fy12/14 surplus and $11,000 for 13/14 for use to close any budget gap in FY 14/15. Any leftover funds will go into the surplus that that FY.

Motion to accept the budget/seconded/passed

Fair compensation proposal further explained:
The UUA has established fair compensation guidelines about what type of benefits our employees should have:
--salary
--FICA
--insurance (health, life, etc.)
--retirement of some sort
--vacation

--professional development

May seem daunting but we are already there in most ways except insurance. Disability and Life would not be that expensive. Health benefits are tremendously complicated. If we offer a 20-hour employee health insurance we don't know if they would take it or should.

The UUA has three levels of recognition to entice us.
--*Fair compensation congregations-committed* commit to achieving compliance within five years. The finance committee will put this together if the Board agrees.
--Salary increases should be "fair"
--Come up with a more consistent policy for pensions
--We have to bring our recommendations to the Board. With Board approval we begin working this up.

Sue made motion that we put before the congregation at the annual meeting that we become a Fair Compensation Congregation-Committed.

Dotty seconded/ passed

Mike: made a motion to put before the congregation a resolution to recommit ourselves to the Green Sancturary.

Mary seconded/passed

Request to use a meeting space to establish a computing community in Montclair: Ursula Wolz

The initial classes in the spring would just be to gauge interest and the real classes would happen in the fall (we think). We want to see how this flies in this setting first. If we think this is important we can find the space.

Questions: The idea is a great one, providing an opportunity for underserved children and adults to "address the digital divide." But there are many unanswered questions. Are we sponsoring this? Hosting it? Should we monitor its success? Who exactly is this underserved population? Underserved in terms of class, diversity, race and gender? Or what? It's undefined. Make sure those principles are deliberately being implemented. If it's not-for-profit at what point does that become for profit? Perhaps it's just a rental question and nothing more at this point.

A motion to Donna engage with Ursula about renting at the member rate / Dennis seconded / passed

Board moments:

About the fact that we are not making any money on the marketplace (skit? Fun moment?) Charlie and Mike

Judy Strachen and Judy Ortman are stepping back (or moving) so we need more help.

Interim Minister subcommittee: Arlene
Some questions that have come up: Do they bring in their own staff? No, it is our by-laws that we hire staff. Second: What about vacation? We got 2 different answers. 8 weeks: First month in August is not considered vacation. They go on duty Sept. 1. Charlie's understanding is that a typical minister's vacation is confused by that title. There's really 4 weeks of vacation and 4 weeks of preparatory time. They are expected to be available in August but no worship services until September, unless they want to.

Judy's question: I'm here covering July; does the interim cover August? Good question!!!

Chris has the contract; will mark it up and send it to interim minister search sub-committee.

A changeover from interim minister search committee to transition team will happen shortly after the interim minister is hired. Mike will talk to Steve (of the NLDC) about coming up with a slate of candidates for the transition team.

May 12 at 7:30 will be a meeting so everybody can vote on the choice of an interim, assuming we have a candidate to present. If not we will move to the second round. Move for executive session.

Motion to adjourn

Laura moves/Dotty seconds/adjourns

Adjourned 9:58