

Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Montclair
October 21, 2014
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
Meeting began at 7:37 pm

Staff: Charlie Ortman

Members: Sue Raufer, Dennis Drew, Judith Rew, Dorothy Sommer, Dottie Hiebing, Chris Corbett, Laura Kushner, Jerry Fried, Arlene Dodge, Scott Sealle, Mike Mernin, Mary Moriarty

Guests: Joel Naftelberg

Opening Words: Sue Raufer
From This I Believe (Ted Goup)

Statement of Guiding Principles: Dorothy

Adoption of September board minutes
Chris moved / Dorothy Seconded / Passed

Presiden'ts Report: Mike

Last week Charlie and Mike met with Silke to keep the energy going about our commitment to the Green Sanctuary. The Green Sanctuary is very interested in helping to fix coffee hour. What it ultimately requires is a culture change. It's about recognizing the importance of our being hospitable to guests and to each other. How do we do this and keep it green is the challenge. The current situation, which leaves Danny to do the clean up, which is not his job, has to change.

There was a suggestion that we do an online survey, like Survey Monkey, in order to determine just what the congregation feels about coffee hour. Or do it on paper during coffee hour. The Board will take charge of this.

Auction update: Dennis Kurtti has hit the ground running as chairperson. A couple of great new volunteers: Erin Krupa made the googledoc for volunteer sign up and the online registration. Sports/body and soul is the theme. There is energy around it. Please sign up to help out. This is the most important fundraiser that we have.

Minister's Report: Charlie

No report of number of visitors. Jaclyn Poleo will be back on or around the 10th.

A couple weeks ago I talked about "We Don't Need Another Hero." Coffee hour is a good example; one or two people could turn this around. As Mike said, we need a change in culture; recognition that this is about hospitality and sustainability. We have tried many of the things other congregations do although we have never outright assigned it to members who have not volunteered. We can't work it out in

the Board meeting but we need to find a couple of people who will work on that sea change.

RE signups (reported by Charlie as Judy was away attending an RE conference): Although we have gotten some new volunteers we need some more. We're going to hire someone in PreK, which will be taken out of our budget.

Saturday morning the November 8, 9:30-noon, Terry Sweetzer will come speak to us about fundraising (he is the district expert; was the leader of that department at the UUA for a decade. Was renown for being one of the greatest experts in the association). 9-12 noon. It will be videotaped by Jerry and made available for those not able to attend. Terry Sweetzer will also be honored by the UU UN Office at the Fourth Unitarian in NYC.

The March to End Mass Incarceration will begin at 4:00 pm tomorrow, Oct. 22, at the top of Church St. Plaza. At 5:45 we will march up Bloomfield Ave. and to the UU. Event will go until 8 at the UU. The congregation has really joined in this effort.

Be sure and vote on Nov. 4, especially Ballot Question # 1 (Bail Bond reform).

The MESH Gala will be on Friday, Nov. 14; will have a great band and silent auction. MESH website has the details.

Thank you notes: Undoing Racism Committee for the service on Sunday, the guest speaker from the American Civil Liberties Union.

MESH: Joel Naftelberg

Gave a review of Wednesday night UU MESH Café. It's our fourth year, beginning originally as a breakfast service on weekends. There was no facility that was providing dinners. Now various congregations provide Mon. through Sat. dinner service. The UU is probably the biggest: We've regularly served 55 dinners; this season up to 75 guests, which is 10 tables. The volunteers number about 18-24 adults. They include members of UU, local recovery groups, the community that are not UU, Montclair State, Key Clubs, Girls and Boys Clubs; support networks with transition services. The funding has been raised through a collection at the UU (every second Sunday) and the rest essentially from the volunteers. We have a side account that is separate from the UU. The year prior when we ran out of money it came from the Minister's Discretionary Fund. In years past we've provided night respite but now it's being organized differently. We provide clothing; we're popular in the community. This past summer we took about 40% of our funds and put it into kitchen repairs. There were some unsafe conditions; shelves falling, doors off hinges. We fixed some plumbing and counter tops. We added shelving; we added a storage room. We've created a really amazing MESH community. We sit at the tables to just talk to the guests. The foods served includes some "special nights" like Italian nights, trying to be healthy conscious, offer special desserts. The reason that we serve more guests is that other congegation participants have a cap on how many to let in and

we don't. We offer a full dinner service with high quality food. We open the service with a reading and are supported by music, which makes it extra special; Peggy LaVake Mike Shapiro, and others provide music. Charlie originally tapped Joel to keep the email chain going and now there are six who operate together as leaders: Kitty and David Bessey, Peter Arian, Randi Hawkins, Beth Anderson, and Joel.

The relationship with MESH, Inc. (a 501c3): Each of the partner organizations operates under the banner of MESH; we are in partnership with other faith organizations: we have access to their website; they provide 4 staff paid members because of our numbers, who provide security, know how, understanding of food service rules. They help us serve. Liability insurance is provided by MESH Inc. Charlie is currently president of MESH, Inc., which has two program areas: the Mesh cafés and the overnight respite when the temperature gets below 30 degrees.

Who are the guests: Men, women and children from the community. Some are living in cars, vestibules; on disability that has run out; some are seniors who can't afford food and medication; some are suffering from domestic violence. UU has become a very friendly faith. The staff doesn't want the guests to travel to the bathrooms alone, etc. so we accompany them.

MESH is promoted mostly through word of mouth. This community populates the library, where they let each other know where the meal is that evening. We issue a MESH "passport" with all the places listed. We know most of the guests, but see 5 to 10 new faces each week. We remove intoxicated guests rather than call the police. And are some times called on on nights other than Wednesday to help out with difficult individuals. Chris said the vibrancy is clear from the finances. This is a positive good for the congregation.

Weve had to scramble a little to get enough volunteers for food this fall. We made some changes and tried something new; but we are changing back in our communication. We've never not had enough food. It's that much of a shared miracle.

Charlie said MESH is the second largest volunteer program in our congregation; second only to religious education.

Senior Youth Proposal for Sleep in a Box: Mike

Noone came to speak to us about it; probably there was a miscue. Charlie said this was talked about at a staff meeting and it was felt that this is probably a good thing for the Board to be in on. There is going to do an overnight sleep out. We need to get it in the newspaper. We need to think about the precedent for the Board response. When do we have to sign off/not sign off on events?

Is it scheduled? [We need that date...] Dana and senior youth volunteers will be staying there as well, using the normal ratio of adults to youth; 2 for less than 10; one additional for each 10.

Treasurers Report

Last month's theme: Income coming in slowly

Good news: Our pledges has generally picked up

We haven't used any of our savings yet; next monthly we'll slowly start transferring savings into the income category. We're not taking any money out of funds until the end of year. We have money that we have saved that is coming out of our checking account.

Looking at September, the pledges are coming in and we're doing pretty well.

A real bright spot: Religious Education fees have really improved.

As methods of receiving the funds, we like automatic withdrawal first; credit card second; pledge later via check our least favorite (and the least reliable). About 50% come in via the automatic methods; 50% write checks.

We've agreed to spend at a better clip. We have a new youth coordinator; music budget increase; commitment to green sanctuary. Facility expenses have gone up and we have done some big projects, which mean we have spent early. But overall our expenses are okay; no reason to panic.

YTD we are still \$18,384 ahead; last year \$68,977 ahead. We're okay but we have to watch it.

Funds balance: Mostly UUA funds, which are fairly conservatively run. Warning: they most likely aren't going to grow this year. For things like the capital fund we haven't added to it but we may decide we have put some money in that. The Music Fund may be in trouble. There's going to be a challenge in the spring. Will we be able to have an assistant music director next year? There will be tougher times in the Spring when these funds go down or are flat.

We need to let Judie and the music committee know to watch it.

Where Money Comes from (see treasurers report)

Where Money Goes (see treasurers report)

Laura asked about the switch in our electricity: The news is good; it looks the same as last year but we don't really don't know the savings yet.

Motion to accept the treasurers report:

Dotty moved / Arlene seconded / passed

UU of Essex partnership reporting procedures

We agreed to have some sort of follow up. Laura reached out and we were going to set up a meeting with the various subcommittees, but she didn't get any response from Gordon or Georgiana or others... Mike Mernin will call Georgiana (president of the board at UU Essex). The lack of response seemed to Charlie to mean that there is a lack of energy. Dreg Jacoby is their administrator and primary communicator.

Review of goals made at the retreat:

Mary and Sue (?) will create a document reporting procedures and decision making by a task force or ad hoc committee.

Dennis, Charlie, and Sue are working on the statement of guiding principles.

Jerry, Charlie will review the covenant.

All three of these groups will get their reports out a week before the next meeting.

Judith will get minutes out two weeks before.

Board procedures around making decisions between meetings:

Fundraising, ballot initiative request...

Mike felt the need to push for a quick response... due to some fuzziness on Mike's part about our role and some of it because we were called upon to offer support. According to the Bylaws it could have just been thrown to the Executive Committee, but Mike felt it was better to throw it to the whole board. Even if it was an emergency we would let everyone know contemporaneously.

First example: Cecilia had been working on the overturning of Citizen's United; UULMNJ had pulled away from it and Cecilia was sort of left on her own to work with the Morris congregation. We approved it at a meeting in her absence. It was a little different than our normal procedure.

Then in September, Francesca requested that we take some sort of action or stand on the ballot initiative to create an ordinance in Montclair requiring local employers to offer sick leave to Montclair employees. It has passed in Jersey City; is up for a vote in Montclair, Paterson, and Passaic. The request was that we cosponsor the ballot initiative, and it was a request for quick action. How do we as a congregation go about cosponsoring a political vote? Mike wanted to get some semblance of feedback from the Board before the next meeting. It is valuable as an educational, informational exercise. We vetted it and came up with a proposed response that we look at it for an educational/informational perspective: allowing that we set up a table at coffee hour, etc.

So the question has been asked: how does the Board decide when it is necessary/not necessary to act.

Jerry referred to another situation last spring in regard to Francesca's "Just One Thing" emails. What does it mean to cosponsor? There are certainly things that legally we can't do and some things that are grey area. Chris: We need to vet things and that sometimes it takes time.

Charlie: The Board can never speak for the congregation. The Board can sign on to anything but not as the Unitarian Universalist Congregation. The Minister cannot speak on behalf of the congregation either. An example is the Board signed on to affirm the Undoing Racism's Mass Incarceration effort as a Board.

The last time the congregation voted to become a new sanctuary and to be a welcoming congregation. The congregation empowered Charlie to speak.

Mary: It was my understanding that this is a democratic body and that we can speak for the congregation. But the By-laws say the Board has that right only in regard to issues of process: hiring/firing/financial issues. No matter how burning an issue, we can't speak for the congregation but can always call an emergency meeting.

Arlene: we can vote online when it's a small thing like fundraising for our youth; but we learn and sometimes change our minds by our discussion here at the meeting.

Dennis Drew: Jerry made us realize how wrong the idea for a new parking lot was.

Review senior youth fundraiser proposal: Dana has a friend who is a life coach who does seminars for the empowerment of girls and women. The senior youth would promote and host the workshop here. This woman would not charge, so the money would all go to the senior youth. Details had already been worked out by Judy T. and Dana, with Charlie brought into the loop, before they asked. They needed a couple of weekends to promote and sign people up for it. Some important points made:

- Charlie: The philosophy behind that is simply that the board vets fundraisers so they don't get in each other's way.
- Dotty: It took a couple of emails before I realized that this is common practice for the Board. We needed to be told that. The by-laws empower the Executive Board to make decisions between meetings. But to vote we need to have a quorum: on line or in person.
- Chris's posed the question: Which would you prefer: not to have an online process or prefer to have an online process?
- Mike: In general we are going to stay away from decision making situations between meetings. These rarely come up.
- Laura: Sometimes there are questions... about the efficacy of a fundraiser.
- Dennis: The give and take with Markus was enriching to us (in regard to the Music in Montclair proposal) and the opportunity was there to learn. We are missing opportunities to see who are the senior youth are.

- Jerry: It would be helpful to have some type of procedure in place when there are emergencies. UUs and Board meetings have no problem having a robust discussion about these things. But we have to allow the ministers to make decisions. If it fails, well, that will be a very good learning experience.
- Mike: I wanted to air all the issues that arose like this to get some clarity. Mike pledged to not allow things between meetings to get acted on too fast. Pointed out that had this not come up between meetings it would have come up in Judy T.'s report and we would have just noted it.
- Scott: I would be very fine to empower you to make a decision like that.
- Charlie: Our message to Francesca was as caring as it could be.

Communications Committee: Judith Rew

New volunteers: Steve Ramshur and Steven Crooks have volunteered to be involved with instagram and twitter; an article was published about Dana Moore by John Chadwick; a meeting will be held soon.

Purple room renaming:

Charlie reminded us that this is a very big deal. It should be a good item for the congregational meeting. The Board will have to pass the resolution to pass onto the congregation. And it ought to be an in depth process.

Board Moments:

Laura on defibrillator (when?—not until we buy one; Jason Brome may have input)

Survey about coffee hour: on the 16th of November (Mary Moriarty and Michael)

Scheduling issues: Workshop with Terry Sweetzer

Executive session

Motion to go out of executive session

Dotty moved / Cheryl seconded / passed

Process observation: Arlene

Reports great/ handouts great/ great discussion/ everybody made input. Felt like everybody got heard. Green Sanctuary conversation ongoing. MESH certainly is anti-racist, anti-repression, helps the homeless; Mass incarceration support; felt like we have / lots of social justice

Motion to adjourn:

Mary moved / Laura seconded / passed

Adjourned: 9:36