Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Montclair
November 17, 2014
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
Meeting began at 7:37 pm

Staff: Charlie Ortman, Judy Tomlinson

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

Guest: Nick Lewis, Teresa DeSousa, Silke Springorum

Opening Words: Mary Moriarty
Forgive us (Vivian Pomeroy)

Statement of Guiding Principles: Mary Moriarty

Adoption of October board minutes
Dottie moved / Dorothy Seconded / Passed

President's Report: Mike Mernin
We have our auction on Saturday. Dennis Kurtti is doing a terrific job, has collected many new volunteers. Volunteers were trained on data entry. More people are going to be collecting the payment and handing out items. You still can contribute. We're not making a printed program, just printing out the list from the website. You can also call up and print a list yourself. It's a good list, good quality, up one or two vacation rentals. Come early, spend a lot.

Coffee hour: Connie Thames reports that she has been approached recently and in the past about making Coffee and Connection Hour a fundraising activity for specific groups. She feels uncomfortable with that and feels there should be some type of official stance from the Board. Groups have always been encouraged to just set up a special table. But a "play to eat" approach should require some sort of official vote or approval process. Mike doesn't like the pay to eat approach. We do have the donation dish.

Mary asked: Do the band of volunteers cover the costs of feeding us? Yes, to some degree. Chris said: We have a budget of $1,500. When specific groups volunteer it's expected that they will donate food. But the "regulars" shouldn't be expected to pick up milk, etc.

No vote was taken but the general consensus was: NO to pay and eat but groups can set up separate tables during Coffee and Connection Hour.

Minister's Report: Charlie Ortman
There were 11 visitors last month. (See list at end of minutes.)
The MESH Gala was wonderful. But more urgently our night respite is set up for only 20 degrees or below. Not even on a night like tonight (which is in the 30s) would cause us to hold a respite. We are still negotiating for a place but I would like to have it here. We would have people sleep in both Fletcher Hall and the Alliance Room.

A silent candle light vigil will be held in response to the Grand Jury decision in Ferguson, Missouri, on Church St. When it happens depends on when the decision is made.

Finally, what a great workshop we had with Terry Sweetser. He was very forthcoming about following up with us. Jerry has the video. Jerry did a lot of work to pull that off.

Associate Minister's Report: Judy Tomlinson
Last month I attended the Religious Educators Fall Conference in Atlanta. I gave the keynote and did the closing service. Next year it will be in Morristown so will be local. Hopefully we'll have a direct connection.

There are a lot of good things happening in RE.

- The Holiday Workshop is coming back. It is being combined with Mary's Singalong.
- I would like to thank Nelia Sellers, Jim Abrams, Avron Stoloff , Shannon Gattens, and Randi Hawkins (Judy will confirm this list) who accompanied 15 youth to Boston, the first year that they have visited the new headquarters. We stayed at a youth hostel.
- Judith Stein-Farrall, Dana Moore and I have started working on January and February events because I will be away in January as part of my sabbatical.

Path to Membership: We have spoken to RE, Council of Ministry, the Crazy Quuilters, and Undoing Racism. The Finance Committee is coming up. The reaction has been generally positive (or neutral). People have seen the logic; everybody agrees it is a beautiful brochure. We haven't received any comments that it was not worthwhile. Most people are grateful that we are coming to them individually.

I went to the Mass Incarceration rally in Trenton and the meeting at Ner Tamid.

Thanksgiving service: The annual Interfaith Clergy Association service will be held at 5:00 pm Sunday before Thanksgiving at Temple Ner Tamid. There will be good music. Edward Clydesdale, the retired chaplain of Mountainside Hospital, is giving the sermon.

[Charlie left meeting so we could discuss "celebration" plans for Charlie's retirement. Nick and Teresa reported on organizing efforts, which will take place over several months, over several months, culminating in the final service. A proposed and very preliminary budget was sent via email. [Because this is "secret" no more details are recorded.] The Board affirmed the plan with a show of hands.

Green Congregation: Silke Springhorum
As a follow up to last fall's Climate March we will hold a vigil in support of the UN climate talks being held in Lima, Peru December 1-12 as a Meeting of Parties to the Kyoto Protocol. We will get together on Sunday, Dec. 7 from 3-5. We will be joining a worldwide event "LightForLima" sponsored by the organization ourvoices.net. We should let our people at the UN know how we feel. We need to lay the groundwork for a Climate Treaty.

Mike clarified that the Board can endorse it but not the congregation. Charlie and Judy will attend. Following the Church Street vigil the indoor part of the vigil will be held in the Rotunda.

We are seeking a good local speaker and would like to reach out to other faith communities.

Charlie was in conversation with the sergeant in regard to the Mass Incarceration Rally and confirmed that no permits would be needed for a crowd that we are hoping will reach 40 or 50 but will be no more than that.

Publicity will be arranged through social media primarily. Steve Ramshur is leading that effort.

Mary made motion to endorse this event as a Board.
So moved / seconded / passed

Side note: We are on the new green energy program

Thank you notes: Amy Crafton for Children's Choir, Dennis for wildly successful auction (crossed fingers); Coming of Age volunteers (listed in Judy Tomlinson's report); Randi Hawkins and Susan Krcmar for doing Sharing Our Riches as they are stepping down after years of service on this committee.

Sleep in the Box: Dana put the word out and more and more people want to take part. But it will need some time to organize given the increased interest. She will come to us with a real proposal.

Administrators Report: All is well. We are still learning through our recent server crash. We are connecting everything back, a work in progress. In conjunction with that Dennis has improved wifi this year for the purpose of facilitating the auction, which we will all benefit from.

Chris: Treasurer's Report
I'm starting to get a little worried about how the year is going in comparison to other years. Everything is going well except our pledges. This year the RE fees are going better than ever; our rentals are good. But 2/3rds of our income is our pledges and we are about $30,000 behind, more than we expected. Almost all our short fall is from those who give by check. We have about 10 pledge units that include some of the pillars of the church who haven't paid anything. They are going to give but they haven't given at all yet. So it's hard to know how concerned to be. There were some big expenses this month. And we have a three-check pay month, which makes us look much worse. We have just spent some money early and used some capital improvement fund right away. And some things will be over budget.

Net effect of this: Last year this time we had an $80,000 surplus; this year we only have $7,600. So it's worrisome. We are going to keep looking to see how we're doing in January. We're sending out a mailing to our check people.

Funds: Last two years they've gone up-up-up. This year all our funds are down a bit. It does mean something for the Music Endowment Fund. The Music Director Assistant may not be able to be paid out of this fund.

General education about our funds: We have three required funds according to the by-laws: The endowment, capital, and reserve funds. We are not allowed to take principle out of the endowment fund. The by-laws do allow us to take up to a third from our capital fund. How do these grow? There hasn't been an active campaign to beef these up in many years. We get some bequests but most growth comes from the return and growth of the funds themselves. The UUA oversees these funds.

The Capital fund is for improvements to our building.

The reserve fund is only three years old. It was created as a response to the 2008 downturn. It's meant for emergencies. We did a major drive to correct a $60,000 deficit and we got $90,000, so we used the surplus to create this fund, which now has $75,000.

There's also the Music Fund, Mortenson Scholarship Fund, and the Minister's Discretionary Fund (these are not mandated by the by-laws).

Minister's Discretionary Fund: Charlie explained that the name should probably be changed. It began as a gift from Pete and Doris Williams. Only the income could be spent. Charlie requested that there are "two" funds: Minister's Discretionary Fund and the interest from that fund that goes into the bank account Charlie has control of. Gifts he receives from weddings, funerals, etc. go into this fund as well. He has the personal control of this fund. Judy T. is a witness to it. It has no other source of funds except every now and then someone will make a contribution. Charlie takes the interest out of the $27,000 that goes into his account that he can write checks from.

Sometimes it's a matter of confidentiality: for instance helping someone who is in hardship. The bigger fund is watched. Donna draws the interest check out and puts it into his personally controlled checking account . A new minister could want to do it differently. If there are irregularities it would be only between Charlie and the IRS. Our auditor said every church he knows has such a fund under the complete of the minister. But someone else, such as Judy Tomlinson, should sign off.

Question about bequests: We should make this more a regular practice of asking for bequests.

Motion to accept treasurer's report
Dottie moved / Arlene seconded / Accepted

Board moments:
Question about the check problem? Wait until the mailing goes out and the auction happens. In January we will look at it more closely. We will do a Board Moment of gratitude for all those who are giving so much this season.

Mary: We were going to start doing something about the interim minister's process. Maybe a piece in the Gazette with a time line for the Interim Minister process. We need something visual. Judith will do it.

Sue Raufer: Council meeting, which we going to try to do December 7 [has been moved to January.]

Judith: Need to activate an annual report.

Mary: Report on the coffee hour survey. It's 10 questions.

Mary: Report on the Brendan Tevlin fund. Brendan was the 19-year-old nephew of the Nulty's, who was brutally murdered June 25. The shooter said it was retribution for everyone killed in Afghanistan by Americans. There is a fund now called "Good vibes and easy living," which will raise money for a sports field at Seton Hall Prep. Should the Board support this as a gesture of support for The Nulty's? Sometimes the Board will pass the hat; or use the Board discretionary fund. Can we give $100? Donna has to be told. It will be from the congregation.

We will get it into written announcements.

Orange Congregation Meeting: Sue Raufer
A small group met; there was a sense of aspiration and it was helpful. The Orange Congregation held a big event on Saturday afternoon, at which they brought people in from Beacon House in Washington and other places to describe successful examples of urban ministry. Treasurer Bill Slezak had made a proposal that the congregation basically terminate Sunday morning worship and move to a vision of social service/social justice. It was seen as premature. They would continue to exist

as a UU presence. Initially they would keep their building but maybe use their assets for their programs. There is a bit of a sense that it's over. Some said "why are you saying this now? We have to have this visioning workshop?" Those of us who were from the UUCM kind of said that we were in partnership with them; what that could mean over the next few years was that both congregations are in a process of discernment. We committed to that last year. It was kind of vague. What's next? We should put something in our newsletter from them but a thoughtful piece, not just announcements. Gordon was going to try to get something in. My perspective is the wounds are still healing. We have kind of plowed into a structural relationship. But our participation would be inappropriate in their visioning meeting.

Question: Are there some from Orange who would want to come here for services? Some already have. Someone teaches RE. When we are speaking to our Interim Minister or Minister, they should know that we are in partnership with this small congregation next door.

Mary: The four-hour meeting with three different ministers from urban ministries was successful in my view. We are all UUs. They're open to ideas and. Gordon offered his view that they will have an outside facilitator for the visioning meeting.

Charlie: Our congregation has had boundaries around functioning and there's has none. They need space to figure it out or that they can't figure out.

Process observation: Sue
There is an extent to which we are self-absorbed and absorbed within the greater community and world. We are exchanging externally, bringing up the Thanksgiving service, the Lima event; the issues of oppression; everything is fine.

Charlie added that there were many things on our agenda: MESH to Vigil to Orange.

Adjourned 9:44

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