

Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Montclair
February 16, 2016
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
Meeting began at 7:33 pm

Staff: Revs. Justin Osterman

Members: Judith Rew, Chris Corbett, Ellen Fenster-Kuehl, Steve Ramshur, Dorothy Sommer, Mary Moriarty, Sue Rauffer, Denise Rodgers, Arlene Dodge, Jim Abramson, Mike Mernin, Dennis Drew, Dottie Hiebing

Visitor: John Wodnick; Laura Wilson, Transition Team; Nancy Felix, Pledge Drive update (delivered by Chris)

Call to order: 7:35

Guest speaker: Andrea Lerner, District Executive

Opening Words and Statement of Guiding Principles: Denise Rodgers
Beatitudes for Justice Builders

Motion to go into Executive Session

Chris moves / Dennis seconds / agree

Dottie recommends we invite Andrea / Dennis seconds / agree

Motion to come out of Executive Session

Steve moves / Dotty seconds / passed

Check in

Thank you notes: Gerry McCort for shoveling

President's Report: Mike

Nothing particular to add

Interim Minister's Report: Justin Osterman

I sent an article by Chris Hedge's, *The Suicide of the Liberal Church*. I'd love to send some material to invite you to think about things in a bigger way.

I want to say that I think that it would be good for us to talk again about the book *In The Interim*. I keep coming back to the chief responsibility of the board and transition time is to manage our congregation's anxiety and our own.

Transition Team Report: Laura Wilson

I would say there is a core group of people that is deeply vested in the transition time. That isn't the overwhelming majority of people.

We've had meetings after every service. Every time we offer something like this much of the feedback is day-to-day operational questions. We have to skim off the top people's day-to-day questions before we can get at the questions about the search process. People are saying, "Please let us all have a strong voice in the search." People are very excited about Justin's presence here but there is a lot of energy that could be harnessed. I invite any of you to come to give your point of view. We need a Board liaison.

Invitation came from the Transition Team to have the Board take part.

Justin: I'd love to see more engagement between the Trustees and the congregation around the interim year and process. The Transition Team is a team you created as a Board of Trustees. It's time for us to think again about the Board's role in this Interim year.

(In response to Denise's comment that Justin has been "too gentle") I have been telling Andrea I have been uncharacteristically patient and gentle and slow. I have a strong sense that Charlie ran this church like a pastoral church. But I have read your documents very carefully and I have a strong sense that you are in charge. By-laws say the Board runs pretty much everything but we need an organizational chart. The subcommittees are having the right conversations.

Andrea noted that we can delegate most of the running of the congregation.

Different size congregations:

--Senior minister known from pulpit: 750 members

--Program sized congregation: 250-350 members

--Pastoral sized congregation: 150 members. We have a 2-minister pastoral sized congregation, and about 300 members.

--Family sized congregation: 75 members

A mission driven congregation...we are not. Montclair was a preaching station: The minister was the public face to the community and did no administration: Lee Barker, Norman Fletcher. In the 1950s we had this fantastic volunteer pool of women who ran the church. But now everybody is busy and working and can't run the congregation, can't do a lot of things that Lay Leaders did. We no longer have the human infrastructure to run this way and things start to slip.

Transition Team keeps notes and documents from our conversations. We would like to share them and to have some feedback.

Associate Minister's Report: Judy Tomlinson

The RE Committee is in retreat this weekend and the DRE from Morristown is sharing a resource with us called Orange; about how families and congregations partner together. This can be a model for the future where people don't attend every

week. We are figuring out ways to do that. The Senior Youth are doing the Unity Gallery and they are also doing the Worship Service on March 13.

Harvest the Power is a great strong group and moving the program forward in new and exciting ways.

This weekend we begin our newly revised Path to Membership Class. Four Sunday mornings between 10-11.

Finally, Iris de la Paz is doing a fabulous job.

Treasurer's Report: Chris

In December and January we have fallen off in income. All income is off \$37,000. Much of this we will make up. Auction results will get a little better but we didn't do as well as last year. I'm beginning to believe that we're going to have a deficit of \$15,000 at the end of the year. The Pledge Drive is off to a good start and we're hoping to do really well. Our plate is still great and attendance is not a problem. But when it comes to pledges, there is a bit of a disconnect with people who are more peripheral. They may feel a little cut off. It's a tough year and it's not getting better. What we're spending is what we are taking in.

Packet about canvassing distributed: Who is going to canvass whom. Last year's pledge is there. Dues were \$89 last year; \$100 this year; script. Your job is not done until you have a pledge in hand or they go online. Several things to remember about the pledge: This is the most key pledge drive I've ever been involved with. To do all we plan to do we have set of goal of over \$500,000. We are asking you to go directly to people and make an ask. We are increasing the pledge amount by 15%. We are looking for people to give 3-5% of our gross income. We're really trying to get a substantial increase in pledges.

Arlene described her first one-on-one pledge call. The person she spoke to felt the Board has not informed us about the need for the extra money.

If they say "I'll think about it," try to get them to get the form in. We need to begin working on the budget soon. Jerry told people that the video would not be available on the internet. But Steve mentioned that he "follows" Jerry on youtube and can access it. General consensus is that the video should be more available. We could share the format with other congregations.

Denise: A couple of months ago Justin talked about how frequently we ask people for money. Should we consider doing a Survey Monkey kind of survey about these kind of issues? Sometimes being approached just raises anxiety about their own financial situation. Would you like to be asked once or take part in various fundraisers. I think there is a lot we don't know.

Justin: I like the direction you're thinking is going in. As we get into the spring and on the other side of this fund drive we need to ask how we imagine a whole different way of stewardship.

Dennis Kurtti had first meeting with Chris. He will be fully equipped when he takes over.

We have a little bit of a hole in the donut. We have a good cadre of top 10 or 15 people who are happy to give when needed. We need to get more \$2,000 people into \$3,000 to \$5,000. Maybe a great many people are in the range that they can't give more than that (with salaries around \$60,000). Do we really know who we are talking to? We don't have data on people's income.

In the springtime we can talk about really sophisticated ways to talk about who our congregation is. Do the best you can. Speak from the heart.

Move to accept the Treasurer's Report
Dottie moved / Dennis Seconded / passed

Search Committee process: Justin

Spoke with David Keyes. He gave us two thumbs up and thought we are doing a super job. But then he suggested a tweak in the process that is not in the original handout: That we call every single person on that list of 30 names to make sure that you are willing to serve. You are able to opt in or opt out. The Board then appears on top of it. We are now equipped to answer questions about the time commitment.

So then when 25 are left: Everyone of them has a short interview face to face with two trustees. Ask: 1) do they work well on teams; 2) can they think broadly for the whole congregation and don't have a particular narrow agenda.

We should not have alternates. The search committee could be far along before someone announces he/she can't continue. You would want to move forward on a case-by-case basis. You sit down as a board and decide how you want to proceed.

Mary and Dorothy pointed out that everyone is going to say they work well on teams and think broadly. How do we discern that? How do we ask that?

Justin: Ask them to describe your best experience working on such a committee. I think we are mostly looking for those folks who will openly reveal their real feelings about meetings.

Denise: There is evidence that the way we do job interviews is not very effective. So we need to create scenarios where they have to do problem solving.

Other points raised:

--Phone calling has to happen because many people may say they can't do it. If they can't schedule a night to meet with us we know their availability is in question. Ranking might be an easier process after we do this.

-- 13 trustees making 30 phone calls. Could be knocked out in a couple weeks. If we do two Board interviews per night; done in a week.

-- Each of us have different interviewing skills so we have to standardize it a little among us. And it should be a warm and welcoming interview. We need smart, capable people to come up with the right questions.

-- Ask: Your name is under consideration. Would you be willing to serve? Make it clear that not everyone has to spend 20 hours a week. You could do a task that requires fewer hours. But you should understand that you may be asked to meet once a week for nine months.

-- Point out that without a question most people who serve say this is the most rewarding thing they've ever done for their congregation.

--Need to establish a timeline to decide who can make the calls.

About inclusion/diversity on the committee:

Sue is still questioning the youth issue. But it's too late to discuss something that is so important. It's a conversation that is important to have when the committee is being formed. We need to determine this before we begin calling.

Propose to vote to have more conversations.

Mike proposes we first have the calls to whittle down the list.

Denise proposes that we may also have the same issue with diversity. We need another meeting in order to discuss this issue.

Mike moved to have a special meeting to discuss the diversity or lack thereof /
Dottie seconded / passed

Chris: Point of clarification: That means we go out and do interviews and then have another meeting?

Process observation: Mary Moriarty
Will do it by email

Chris motion to adjourn / Steve seconded / passed

Adjourned 9:45 pm