

Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Montclair
May 17, 2016
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
Meeting began at 7:35

Staff: Revs. Justin Osterman, Judy Tomlinson

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

Visitors: Dennis Kurtti, Treasurer Elect; Laura Wilson, representing the Transition Team

Reading/Statement of Guiding Principles

Mary Moriarty

From "Governance in Ministry"

Check in

Adoption of April 2016 Board Meeting minutes

Sue moved / Dorothy seconded / adopted

Thank you notes

Music fundraiser, Stearns; Transition Team

President's Report: Mike Mernin

District dissolved; we're now a region: Central East, combining four districts. Andrea Lerner is our primary contact and we have access to various professionals.

Annual meeting went well. Good job, Chris.

Sunday evening new member dinner was very nice; 5-6 new members attended plus 4 board members and 2 ministers. This was the first one.

Kimberly Johnson's ordination is on Saturday.

Mike communicated with the new trustees who have not formerly been on the board. We'll have a brief orientation and we'll invite them to our June meeting where we have in the past had a potluck. But we have a dinner for Donna on Thursday, June 16 so maybe we'll just have a regular board meeting on June.

GA is coming up June 22-26. It is so energizing. It sells UUism.

Solitary Confinement Installation Project:
Becky Doggett and Joe Thomasburger

A few months ago Joe made a presentation to the board to get your support putting together a solitary confinement replica as part of our campaign to get rid of solitary confinement in New Jersey. This process is moving along pretty well. Sen. Resniak will be there. He is sponsoring legislation to restrict solitary confinement in New Jersey. The event will now be held on June 12. We want to have the replica ready on that date. We plan to have it start here with us on our grounds and then have other churches sign up to put it on their grounds. We believe it would be best to have this replica outside. But I want to bring that to your consideration and get the Board support. One, it would attract some attention, get noticed. It would be out there for maybe a month or hopefully less than that, starting on the 11th or 12th. It will be built to take the weather. When it's not staffed it will be locked. But we plan to staff it a lot. We will have specific hours based on volunteer availability. There would be some signs on it explaining what it's for and how to reach us. There was one at the district meeting; this will be the same type. When people go in it they can feel that enclosure.

Questions and concerns:

--It would be stable but would it be connected to the ground? We would be afraid of vandals stealing it, or people going in it and it tipping and it becoming a liability.

--Would our insurance cover this? We will talk to the insurance company once we know we are doing it. It will be pretty heavy. We would disassemble it so that when we're not using it we can take it apart and store it. But not during the period we are using it. The more organizations we can loan it out to the better.

Do we need permission from the town? If we give it to somebody else are we liable? (the UUCM, Gary Sanderson, who is building it, etc.) We need guidelines and waivers.

We will make sure that we have appropriate coverage for all the different possibilities. Chris says we have broad coverage from Church Mutual.

If no other group wants it have we given any thought to just disassembling it and putting it in storage?

Justin: Had you discussed having it indoors and elected to do it outdoors? We first thought indoors with the May date. When we had to change the date we had to move it upstairs. We'll be in the Rotunda and putting it outside makes it more accessible.

It will kill the grass placed on the front lawn... But it probably won't be that long. Gary is building it as an outdoors structure.

It's really important to do it outside and for the duration. It's not going to fall apart, weighing the risk vs. the importance of the issue.

About the lawn not being flat and stable; I wonder if we would be available to use the back part of the driveway?

Dennis will have Gary send him the drawings to review. The insurance and liability issues will be reviewed.

Justin: You came to the board months ago and we need to have it out there for the day of the event.

We support this issue and approve it subject to the due diligence of the Executive Committee (including Dennis checking the plans) and insurance issues cleared.

Tomlinson: In the grand traditional of prison reform in Unitarian Universalism.

Motion to approve. An anonymous donor from the congregation is funding it.

Sue moved / Ellen seconded / passed

Associate Minister's Report: Judy Tomlinson

Thank all who helped host coffee hour for COA.

Our religious education program is vitally important to share. This week is RE Sunday.

Recruiting for Harvest the Power and RE teaching staff for this coming year.

Retreat in Ocean Grove in June to help COA bond with Senior Youth.

One person (a youth) has been secured to help teach RE over the summer.

We had the nice Membership dinner for new members

Judy will be at Kimberly's ordination and will offer the right hand of friendship and we are giving her a stole made by the QUUilters.

Minister's Report: Dr. Justin Osterman

I'll see you in August: Away in June at GA and on vacation in July.

Sending us an evaluation form about the interim ministry process. This one was supposed to come in February. We'll send it off and use it as a topic when we get together in August.

Went to the annual interim ministry seminar in Texas a couple of weeks ago: For many years any time there was an open pulpit there were 2 or 3 ministers looking for every open pulpit. This year 83 congregations are looking at 95 ministers. The

pool is dwindling rapidly. A huge number are retired ministers. The pool of potential parish ministers is shrinking. This congregation is good and healthy—you will have a lot of interested ministers who are going to want to come here. There are some congregations in New Jersey who should be alarmed that are smaller, pay less, are less healthy.

Where are we right now as a congregation? I was grateful to all of you who were able to come on Saturday afternoon [for the Quantum Leap workshop]. I was inexpressibly proud of the individuals who you tasked to work with me. (Laura Wilson is present as a guest). The feedback I got was: If you meant to give us a splash in the face we felt like we got water boarded. So I dialed it back.

There is work to be done: We must continue the work on our goals. You will do wonderfully well if you get yourselves better focused and organized. Doubling down on your board goals will be a great gift to the congregation as a whole.

Questions: (Steve) Numbers of community ministers are rising, why is that?

Answer: CM's are a variety of different types of ministers; like Jackie Lahey who is a skilled chaplain and likes it; real growth in military UU chaplains. You saw the presentation about what's going on across the religious landscape. There are frankly a lot of dispirited ministers who don't look with great optimism on congregational life. The people in seminaries who were helping us understand what life would be like put a whole lot of energy into developing parish ministers and we have a dwindling number; we put no energy into religious education development.

Sue: What happens next in their transition process [if you can't secure a new minister]? Do they extend their search for another year? What does the UUA recommend?

Justin: The ones most at risk are those with part time ministers, or congregations that are very remote. You are going to get lots of interest. But when a congregation has a reputation for being strong and healthy, ministers want to go there; but the opposite happens too, and it doesn't necessarily have to do with money. So you end up getting your last choice. How do you get your first choice? Work hard in the interim. You are well positioned now to do this.

Denise: I came away from Saturday with some themes: I don't want you to think I am writing a new mission statement but these are the themes I heard:

Themes: Our goals are to offer a transformational... (ask Denise for exact wording)

How do we get people to take care of pastoral care, stewardship, coffee hour, etc. while also taking financial stewardship seriously?

Dennis Kurtti: How can we get north of 50% of the congregation to say okay, I think we are on board with where you are going. We need to get the next concentric circle of congregational leaders on board.

Laura Wilson described how the Transition Team has been meeting with committees to present the same issues without Justin's PowerPoint so without the full context of the presentation. She has written a lovely column for the *Gazette*, which will give opportunity to follow up. Justin has been communicating this all year from the pulpit to convince folks that there is a problem.

We had some consistent themes across all the breakout groups at the Quantum Leap workshop.

Dottie: On Sunday night one of the new members brought up what are the challenges we are facing. It was a perfect opportunity. You did it in an interesting way. As much as we can we should get that message out.

Denise: This provides this with an opportunity to make a timeline for the board. We could create a deadline about when we have decided our four goals; have a coherent plan for how to role this out in the fall.

Dennis Kurtti: When people were talking about the budgeting process and the transparency around where money goes. There isn't real transparency around what people do. I was a senior youth advisor but I don't know what effectiveness I had.

Ellen: There is so much going on here we sometimes can't find a room. This is absolutely fantastic. But most of us don't know how much. We should make everything we do here very visible.

Treasurers Report: Chris

Our expenses are okay but our income is not.

We are still trending about \$30,000 below where we should be.

My guess is we'll end with about a \$10,000 deficit.

I feel very good about next year. But now we have to deal with this year. We might have to hit the phones and get some more money in. We have to decide how to bridge that gap: reserve fund, push for more pledges and not close the books until late July, a pretty common process. Do we reach out directly to the people who aren't current? Yes. There are two large givers who haven't yet given because of some cash flow problems.

Auction results were \$10,000 short of what we budgeted. Net it's \$25,000, not the \$29,000 that we hoped. We had a math error on the night of the auction. We caught that within a week.

The big unbudgeted expense this year was the legal fees.

This year we have expenses under control expenses but low income.

Justin: We need to look at how we send out statements, etc. Do we get this out on time? We do it quarterly and sometimes do an extra. This year the December one didn't go out until January. That's when our deficit started yawning. These are the kinds of issues that need to be put in place. We just don't have that policies and procedures quite down.

Motion to accept the treasurer's report.

Dottie moved/ Mary seconded / passed

Hear from each of our task forces:

Organization chart: Ellen

We've met a number of times and tried a number of organizational charts. We have come up with what we think is a pretty comprehensive chart of what we are now. We are struggling with whether or not the org chart should indicate lines of responsibility.

Sue: We were sorely tempted to look to examples on the UUA website and say this one is what we should be like, but we dialed ourselves back. There is a little bit of difference between what we think we are and what actually happens in reality. We could present it at a board meeting soon.

Justin and Mike summed up the process: This is a dialogue that will be returned to again and again while the taskforces work between meetings. There will be opportunity to do more deep thinking in the summer.

Justin: A quote from University of Chicago: That's fine in practice but how does it work in theory?

What Kind of Board do we want to be: Dottie

We had a great discussion at our first meeting and also talked about our need for a mission statement that we can all get behind. We referred to two documents:

Five Types of Church Boards

Principles for Choosing a Model of Church Board Governance

We agreed that we can't come up with a new mission statement but that should happen after we get a new minister.

Communications: Steve Ramshur

The Comms Task Force started our work by being tactical, focusing on the tasks and communication tools that we believed would improve communication within our congregation, and with the larger community.

However, after a course correction from Justin, we narrowed our focus to asking the question, “What is the Board communicating regarding the Interim process, and with whom?”

However, as we dug deeper into this question, we found that the answer to that question should be aligned with and informed by the organizational structure, as well as the kind of board we decide to be.

Having said that, we determined that our communications should be informed by our mission (which we agreed should be revised: We are a liberal religious community, seeking transformation in our hearts, our homes, our community, and our world).

We feel the Board should be in communicating the following information:

- The transition timeline
- the transition process
- individuals involved

This info should be shared with, in no particular order:

- Ministerial transition team
- Committees
- Covenant groups
- Senior youth
- UU District
- UUA “mothership”
- Montclair community

One question that was raised is whether the Board should be sharing with the Congregation:

- Financials
- Board meeting agendas
- Board meeting minutes

It was our conclusion that the Board should be aggressively transparent with the congregation in communicating these items.

We feel at a bit of a stopping point for the time being, until we learn more about what direction the Board will be moving in.

Subcommittee on building stewardship: Dennis Drew

We did it; we’re done for the time being.

We will have to address the problem with the floor of the stage and the sanctuary.

Justin (summing up): What I heard was that I think that your group [communications] did a major reset. And we do need to get more info from the other groups.

How do we repopulate these task forces with board changes?

The org chart can be presented at the next meeting.

Motion to go into executive session

Chris moved / Dottie seconded / passed

Motion to come out of executive session

Mary moved / Dottie seconded / passed

Process observation: Ellen

Yes yes yes

Move to adjourn

Move to adjourn Chris / Steve seconded / passed