

Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Montclair
March 29, 2016
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
Meeting began at 7:30 pm

Staff: Revs. Justin Osterman, Judy Tomlinson

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

Motion to accept minutes

Dottie moved/ Chris seconded/ passed

Thank you notes

Deb Ellis and the Poetry Covenant Group for Easter Coffee Hour

President's report: Mike Mernin

Attended CERG meeting (Central East Regional Group). The UUA is revamping and consolidating the eastern region, but it didn't seem to be a cost-cutting measure due to shrinkage in our ranks. Justin did report, though, that this is in part due to the need to cut the budget.

Yesterday was Mike's parents' 65th wedding anniversary.

Minister's Report: Justin Osterman

I am happy for all of you that the process [of selecting the Settled Minister Selection Committee] has led to this meeting. Thank you. Doubling back to something I sent out: *The Suicide of the Liberal Church*. This is a story about seminaries. Justin served on the Board of Trustees at the Meadville Lombard Theological School in Chicago. This was at a point when plans to secure some much needed funding from donors with "deep pockets" were thwarted by the 2008 market crash. They got a consultant in. There are 250 seminars now, 50 will survive. We did 2 things: We had a ruthless assessment of our finances. We were spending down our endowment and would be out of business if we kept it up. Then we changed our way of delivering services to students. We created a system where students could get the education remotely and learn on the ground in a church at the same time with a supervisor. We pursued merger discussions. We realized our culture would not mesh with another UU seminary. We talked to the Historic Seminary. Realized that wouldn't work. They would take us both down. We sold our building to U. of Chicago and moved into the Loop, Chicago's downtown. We were reassessed and got the gold standard. They lifted us up as a model. We watched our students go through this new model. They came out of credentialing with the highest marks, highest standards. This is not an abstract concept to me and shouldn't be to us. My colleagues listened to our reports: Charlie trusted and supported me. In terms of the future, this is very important. You

as Trustees need to talk about what it means to be Trustees in difficult times. We will discuss this in more detail next month.

Judy Tomlinson's report

Because we're about to look at the budget in the coming months, there is a line in our budget for Leadership Leaves. This is the Sabbatical Leaves Program of Northern New Jersey Ministers. Partner congregations agree to cover each other's pulpits. Every six or seven years the settled ministers get a sabbatical. A minister from the other congregation covers one Sunday each month. So each month two services are covered, two are not, by the partner congregation: one by a minister, one a lay lead service organized by the Worship committee of the partner congregation. We pay into a fund over six years, and it comes back to us as three quarters to the sabbatical ministers, one quarter to the congregation to cover expenses while the minister is away. While I was away I created an adult coming of age, and started discussions about me becoming an associate, creating the path to membership, and creating more structure for the covenant groups. April 10 is the time to renew for six more years. It will total around \$3,600 and \$2,200 for the two ministers, about \$6,000 for the two together. Basically this is a great savings account. You get pastoral care, services for free, cash back. Justin encourages you to support this.

Harvest the Power graduation is April 10. We have 16 graduates. We are about to begin recruitment for next year's harvest class. Dates have been scheduled for information sessions. We've decided that we should be looking at leadership over five to ten years.

RE Registration and Recruitment are beginning this weekend. Justin will be visiting our covenant group leaders and talking about our model and others going forward.

Treasurer's Report: Chris Corbett

This year continues to be difficult. We are over about \$5,000, exactly the legal fees associated to the lawsuit (over the development of the parking lot next door).

Out plate collection is still good.

Our surplus is gone and our income is not good.

All our short-term rentals are down.

Auction will be down \$8,000 from what we expected.

Tried not to double up on everybody.

Pledges by check down by \$10,000.

Fundraising coming up:

Dance Party May 21

Music Committee Fundraiser May 7

Pledge drive for next year:

Going pretty well

Could be very good but we need to do a major push.

Budgeting:

We have a lot of expenses that are up.

We are doing a completely clean budget: no one-time funded projects in this budget so we have to make a lot of tough decisions.

We need to have this conversation with the congregation.

Justin explained that the congregation has been living off its savings account for the last couple of months and has explained this to the staff as well. But we should also manage our anxiety.

Mike: Circling back to our board goals. With all the time we've spent on the search committee we've kind of set aside our Board goals. May meeting we should endeavor to spend 40 minutes: 10 minutes per task force. Do the task forces need guidance or just time?

Steve: I don't think 10 minutes will be enough. And we've met three times. One thing we arrived at is our recommendations are really going to be informed by what kind of board we want to be.

Chris: Personnel committee is also waiting for the discussion of what kind of board we want to be.

Denise: The greatest urgency I'm feeling is what kind of board we want to be. We interviewed John Carlton who was so insightful. We need to do that first before most other things can be decided.

Mike: The rest of the work doesn't have to be in a holding pattern.

Sue: We've met and where we are stuck a little: is "this is the status quo" or "this is what we propose"?

Ellen (on organization chart): We're falling into a lot of pockets. We began to think about what it should look like.

Justin: Next meeting will be a check-in from each of the subcommittees.

Arlene: Maybe look again at what we said we wanted to do at the retreat. Look at the actual verbiage.

Motion to go into executive session

Steve so moved / Sue seconded / Passed

Motion to leave executive session

Denise moves / Steve seconds / passed

Motion to recommend to the congregation the following people to be our search committee:

Peter Arian, John Carlton, Nancy Felix, Erin Krupa, Lawrence Ramsey, Connie Thames, Chelsea Vaughn Showalter

Denise moved / Mary seconded / passed

Move to adjourn

Chris moved / Arlene seconded

Adjourned 9:48