

## Unity Church Unitarian: Meeting of the Board of Trustees October 17, 2018

The meeting took place at Unity Church-Unitarian, 733 Portland Ave, St. Paul, Minn.

**Board of Trustees (BOT) members present:** Nancy Evert, Justin Cummins, Bailey Webster, Ruth Kirkland, Jennifer Tong, Terry Linskey, Jill Van Koolwijk.

**Executive Team (ET) members present:** Rob Eller-Isaacs, Janne Eller-Isaacs, Barbara Hubbard, Lisa Friedman, Kathryn Jay (Hallman Intern).

**Others present:** Clover Earl (incoming Board nominee), Joe Mueller (ARLT), Laura Park (Unity Consulting).

Justin Cummins called the meeting to order at 7:17 p.m.

Check-in question: Happiness is...

An opening reading was offered by Ruth Kirkland.

### **Prophetic Leadership**

#### Board Capacity Subteam:

Continuing to work on BoardEffect and getting the meeting book out early enough for everyone to read it.

#### Evaluation Subteam:

Discussion about the ET evaluation. Everything is fairly self-explanatory. The consistent comments came in the values section. Everyone was honest about the issues around limitations, and the general sense was that they were handled well and we would be moving forward in the future.

The issues around limitations dragged the scores down in a way that may not be reflective of overall performance, which led to a comment that we might want to include more questions next year to get a more accurate reflection of general performance vs. special circumstances.

We don't want overt politeness to become the order of the day in order to avoid conflict. We need to have clarity of communication to have constructive conflict.

Overall, the ET feels that the evaluation is an accurate reflection of what we have lived through as board/ET in the last year. They also brought up that they feel that Unity has been a resource and partner out in the community this year far more than in the past, and they didn't feel that that was necessarily recognized in the evaluation.

The revisions to limitations that the financial task force has been working on will give much more direction to the ET for monitoring reports.

Financials Task Force:

It's been a real slog getting all of this together!

Two main themes: strengthening accountability and updating and clarifying language.

The thing that needs the most attention is on reporting: putting more on the ET in terms of reporting and forecasting, and more on the Board to understand the reports/forecasts. The task force plans to have an annual orientation to financials so that board members who aren't up to speed can get there. Board members will have to be willing to step up and do the work to understand it, but the task force will work on making reporting more digestible.

Barbara needs support for the additional reporting that the financials task force is asking for, so it has been decided that Unity needs to increase staffing (15 hour/week comptroller) to respond to the Task Force's reasonable requests.

If the new policies take hold well, we will be able to eliminate several nit-picky policies.

Our board meetings are already very full, where will we get time to go over more reports? It's something the board will have to figure out. This has been an unusually intense year for the board, given the bylaw updates and Ends statement renewal. We should keep that in mind.

It was suggested that the prudent thing to do would be to pass the revisions and then pay enough attention to perfect them over time.

***Nancy Evert made a motion to approve the proposed changes to the financial limitations (Policies II.A., II.C., II.D., II.E., and II.F.). Ruth Kirkland seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.***

Policy Subteam:

The subteam got some good feedback from the congregation about the proposed bylaw changes (held three listening sessions for people to come to). Justin and Sally Scoggins met to go through the feedback and made some "tweaks." There were some really good suggestions.

In the proposed bylaws, staff changes under an interim have to go through the board. In the classic interim situation, there is quite a bit of "housecleaning" needed. Laura asked the ET to reflect on their experience with interims and if that makes sense. The board is concerned about unbridled authority for someone who isn't at the church for very long (a short-term interim). The board ultimately decided to leave out the language regarding this. It's not something that is usually seen in church bylaws and may be a red flag for an interim coming in.

***Ruth Kirkland made a motion to approve the bylaws as presented with the exception of the following language at the end of article V, Section 3 (which will not be included): “provided, however, that an interim minister may hire and remove professional and other staff only with the approval of the Board of Trustees.” Jill Van Koolwijk seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.***

Discussion of president vs. board chair language. We’re calling it board chair, but the bylaws say president because of state law.

There is no proxy voting allowed as the bylaws stand. It could be an option to vote electronically in the future.

#### Transition Subteam:

Should we let the congregation know that we have decided to go with a one-year interim again? Jill wrote an article in the summer, but who knows who read it. We should have an agenda item on the annual meeting to explain it. The team recommends sending out a special email informing the congregation. We could also have this agenda printed out for the annual meeting, and include it on the website.

Rob and Janne haven’t officially announced to the congregation that they will be retiring June of 2020. The annual meeting seems like the correct time to make an official announcement. Then we could get the word out about the interim after that. The board will hold the announcement about a one-year interim until after the annual meeting.

#### ET Compensation Team:

The team recommended that the ministers’ salaries be increased to 100% of NACBA. The ET has budgeted for 95%. The team recommended 100% in preparation of an incoming minister. The ET is dealing with trying to craft a budget that is balanced and in the best interest of the church. Also, the likelihood that we will hire two senior ministers rather than a senior minister and an associate might be low. We also won’t be bringing in ministers of Rob and Janne’s tenure. It’s also much more important to give a COLA to the rest of the staff, and giving Lisa and K.P. raises.

The team wants to send a strong signal to ministerial candidates that it’s a high priority to hire someone really good.

The UUA recommends focusing on ministers and choir directors. Most churches are not staffed the way Unity is, and don’t have program officers or as many staff members.

#### Subteam discussion:

At the beginning of this year, we removed the communications and linkage subteam, and created the financials task force.

There was some discussion of creating a subteam to work on multiculturalism. There was also a suggestion that the capacity and policy teams could be combined. There was a consensus that

we need more time to think about this, and maybe formalize the subteams at the January retreat.

Consent agenda:

***Nancy Evert made a motion to approve the September minutes with the following amendment: remove unnecessary sentence about Danny Givens' relationship with Unity. Jennifer Tong seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.***

***Nancy Evert made a motion to remove the word "draft" 2016 minutes on church website. Terry Linskey seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.***

***Nancy Evert made a motion to approve the ET report on Policy II.B. (Staff Changes). Jill Van Koolwijk seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.***

ET ends interpretation:

***Nancy Evert made a motion to approve the ET's interpretation of the 2019 – 2023 Unity Ends Statements. Bailey Webster seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.***

There were some questions about the definitions of Multicultural Conversation Partners, POC focus groups, and Artist in Residents. There was also a question about what multiculturalism specifically means. We need significant help from outside from people who have thought deeply about what multiculturalism means. The ET's understanding of multiculturalism is intersectional. It isn't just about race, it's about gender, age, lifestyle, etc. Our understanding is dominated by our understanding of race, but it goes deeper than that.

We're approving the interpretations themselves, and an attempt to come up with some measures. The ET is open to suggestions of better ways to measure, which is extraordinarily difficult. The measures are more fluid than the interpretations. The measures will evolve through the monitoring report.

Feedback on Ends:

Justin will send a short email to the congregant who submitted feedback saying thank you, and letting them know that it's too late to change the Ends.

Proposed 2019 budget:

The ET is waiting for more pledges to come in before locking in the budget – they will have a better sense for whether it is reasonable in a few weeks.

Board budget: Barbara passed out a breakdown of board expenses for 2019.

Currier Funds: the ET has consulted with Jack Rossman about money coming in from the Helener Currier Endowment. He said a gift of this magnitude should be reflected long-term in the life of the church. \$220,000 will go into a board-designated endowment.

There was some discussion about the purpose of using Currier funds to reduce the principle on our long-term note. Some board members brought up that it might not be the best use of these funds, and it doesn't directly impact multiculturalism which was the purpose of the bequest. The ET felt that it was an appropriate gesture for congregants who are concerned about paying back the long-term note.

Monitoring Reports:

The monitoring report on financial condition was not submitted – there were technical difficulties.

Barbara has an update on the “alignment plan” for reconciling the endowments. We are deferring discussion to the next meeting in the interest of time. We will spend 30-45 minutes on finance for this purpose.

In the interest of time, the board also tabled the monitoring reports until the November meeting.

Ruth Kirkland offered a closing reading.

Justin Cummins adjourned the meeting at 9:39 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted by Bailey Webster, secretary.*