

# Unity Church Unitarian: Meeting of the Board of Trustees

## February 13, 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, John Steiner-Manning, Bailey Webster, Jill Van Koolwijk, Nila Gouldin, Ruth Kirkland, Jennifer Tong

**Executive Team (ET) members present:** Rob Eller-Isaacs, Janne Eller-Isaacs, Barbara Hubbard, Lisa Friedman

**Others present:** Laura Park, Arif Mamdani

Justin called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m. John Steiner-Manning offered an opening reading.

### **Prophetic Leadership**

Board Capacity: Brief overview of the subteam's exploration of BoardPaq, a board management software.

**Bailey Webster made a motion to purchase a subscription to BoardPaq.**

There was discussion of BoardPaq, it's cost, and other board management software options. An amendment was suggested.

**The motion was amended as follows: Bailey Webster moved to empower capacity subteam to explore board software, making a decision and purchase before the March board meeting. Jennifer Tong seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

Rob Eller-Isaacs requested to meet with Board Capacity subteam about improving the nominations process. Bailey will follow up.

Evaluation subteam: nothing to report.

Financials subteam: the subteam thinks there is a good bit of work to do to help the Board increase its capacity to understand and deal with financial oversight. It's a temporary "task force" now, going to see if it needs to continue.

- Planning to form a deeper connection with the auditor
- Create a dashboard/information sheet to understand financial limitations in regards to the annual review
- Understand endowment and investment policy better
- Prior to December, create a financial training for board members

**Nancy Evert made a motion to sign annual review engagement letter. Jill Van Koolwijk seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

Policy subteam: Bylaw amendment: need to do more work as a subteam before bringing amendments to the board again. Recommendations regarding changes, if any, will be discussed in the next couple of board meetings.

Transition subteam: Meeting scheduled for Feb. 28. Revising timelines document: John had conversation with Lisa Presley and Jen Crow. Jen Crow advised us to think about some of the pros and cons of the near-term options. Will have an update for the March meeting.

Formation of Unity/Above Every Name liason group: The board crafted a covenant with the leadership of AEN. Danny and other members of AEN have approached Unity about becoming a ministry of Unity Church. A small group with three members of Unity (at least one trustee) will engage the four areas of focus listed on the handout.

**John Steiner-Manning moved to form a “Unity and Above task force,” to explore the evolving relationship between Unity and AEN The motion was seconded by Nancy.**

Discussion: Men’s Prayer Breakfast and meeting, going deep. It won’t scale – one of the questions is what does it mean to come together between a very small group with very little institutional history and a large group with (too much) institutional history, how can we together be clear about the assets – gifts and strengths – that each group brings to the relationship? Financial questions, interpersonal questions. If it becomes a ministry of Unity, we will logically help to build it. What does that mean? Affro-centric universalist congregation.

Question about reporting relationship: they would be under the executive team. Not an independent relationship with the Board.

What’s driving AEN’s request? They don’t feel like equals in the church, and want access to resources.

Affro-centric church: theology of the church is the theology of the preacher. Different from individualistic perspective of Unitarian-Universalists.

**The motion passed unanimously.**

Bylaws amendment of Article III:

**Nancy Evert made a motion to allow for the possibility of 2 successive Board member terms. Ruth seconded the motion.**

Discussion: person could serve a second term, but only after a year of absence. Mandating a gap would be counterproductive to the goal of continuity in leadership. During the coming

transition, it would be beneficial to have as much stability and continuity as possible. People would have to reapply, and be in the running with other (new) nominees.

**The motion passed unanimously.**

Laura: ends renewal conversations: 229 participants in session so far. It should end up being close to 250 people by the end. We are going to have a ton of data to get through. Nila, Bailey, and Laura will be digesting the data for the Board. Laura is asking board members to bring three values words that we think should be in our hearts and minds as we begin our discernment process. Three themes that we should have in our hearts and minds. Example: diversity. One story of a particularly meaningful/powerful moment in this Ends process. Laura will prompt us again a week before the retreat.

**John Steiner-Manning made a motion to approve January meeting minutes. Jennifer Tong seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

Executive Team Report

*I.B. Membership and Program Outcomes*

Due to UUA as of February 1, 2018. Chart (in packet) shows trends and current data. RE enrollment has dropped. Proportion of average weekly attendance to voting members is very high.

ET: what's most important about the membership report? Where does your attention go? Drop in RE registration, viability of church school generally. We're holding our own in a market where churches like ours are not. Not good enough long-term, you grow not by focusing on growing, but by deepening programming. Organizational health floats on small-group ministry.

*II.B. Staff Changes*

No changes to report this month. Interviews are set for a full-time facilities person.

*II.D. Financial Planning*

Variance in pledge projections is higher than last year. Last year was an exceptionally good pledge year.

*II.E. financial Condition*

How to allocate unrestricted gifts – the ET is assembling a team of advisors to address this. They will develop operating policy language. The Board could also create a limitation that says that the ET in this policy must be consistent with the values of the church. This will be developed in concert with the financial subteam of the Board.

*II.H. Communication and Counsel to the Board*

Unity is the fiscal agent for the Poor People's Campaign. We don't have a formal fiscal agent understanding with the Campaign. It would be a good idea to formalize it. It's a program that is

funneling through the church, with temporarily restricted money. It's not really fiscal agency, it's managing a restricted gift.

**Nancy Evert moved to accept the Executive Team Report as compliant with the limitations of I.B. (membership and program outcomes). Ruth Kirkland seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

**Nancy Evert moved to accept the Executive Team Report as compliant with the limitations of II.B. (staff changes). John Steiner-Manning seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

**John Steiner-Manning moved to accept the Executive Team Report as compliant with the limitations of II.D. (financial planning). Bailey Webster seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

**Bailey Webster moved that the Executive Team is not in compliance with the limitations of Policy II.E (financial condition). and the board is satisfied that the plan the ET has presented will move us toward compliance. Jennifer Tong seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

**John Steiner-Manning moved to accept the Executive Team Report as compliant with the limitations of II.H. (communication and counsel). Ruth Kirkland seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

Janne: hoping the Board will read the book Centering, about the experience of ministers of color in our association. By Ruth's daughter Mitra. Friday, March 23<sup>rd</sup> and March 24<sup>th</sup> for events surrounding the books. Inviting all of the boards from the metro congregations.

Heritage society dinner has been moved to May 18<sup>th</sup>. Trustees are expected to attend.

Nila Gouldin offered a closing reading.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted by Bailey Webster, Secretary*