

Unity Church Unitarian: Meeting of the Board of Trustees January 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, Terry Linskey, Jennifer Tong

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

Others present: Andrea Johnson, Arif Mamdani, Lisa Presley, Sally Scoggins, Jen Crow

Justin called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m. Terry Linskey offered an opening reading.

Prophetic Leadership:

Discussion question: What makes the best environment for open engagement and full participation during Board meetings given time constraints?

- Get board packet out earlier so it can be digested with ample time.
- Time to process board packet together?
- Pause to go through topics (especially financial) with more time, deeper understanding. Environment where people feel heard and respected, being conscientious of each other.
- Quarterly meeting time devoted to financials – will talk with Justin to find time in the agenda.
- This is not a new discussion. It's important to open with a check-in question. Take advantage of time when we are together in other capacities. Paths always crossing, if we see each other in other functions, check in with each other, ask "how are things going with you?" Little moments of attention to each other allow relationships to build within and outside Board meetings.
- Concept of Board wholeness depends on us meeting as a whole Board, not having side meetings. Subteams help get work done outside of the Board so we don't have to meet constantly as a whole Board, but most of the work has to be done as a whole Board.
- Excited about the prospect of using BoardPaq as a way to connect and become more cohesive as a Board. According to Rob, BoardPaq works really well (has used it for UUA Board), and he's not very tech-savvy.
- If those folks who need more time to process aren't speaking, those who take up more space need to shrink back to allow that to happen.

Remaining proposed bylaw amendments: 5 changes being proposed: presented by Sally Scoggin
Discussion of Articles III, IV, and V

Article V

- Right now in bylaws we have executive team. Plan for calling new ministers wasn't entirely clear, rewrite of bylaw allows for Board to set up an executive structure for the church. Structure must include: one called minister that reports to the Board, flexible beyond that. Up to the Board to decide what the structure would be. Designed to be maximally flexible. These documents don't get changed very often.
- The Board could create a structure where only a called minister reports directly to the Board, but other executive positions that don't report to the Board. Or have more people report directly to the Board, as we have now.
- The Board would convene a search committee for calling (a) minister(s), doesn't really come back to the Board for approval.
- Discussion around the Board's role in "approving" the candidate(s) for minister: bylaw change removes the language about the Board first approving the candidate(s) before bringing them before the congregation.
- The search committee is answerable to the congregation, not to the Board.
- Interim minister is the responsibility of the Board.

Article III

- There wasn't anything explicit about term limits. Having the explicit possibility in the bylaws of two consecutive terms, but no more, seemed important.
- Committees (III.5): Two committees in the bylaws: nominations and search committee. This sections adds flexibility so that the Board can create other committees, to help the Board do its work, NOT to do the work of the Board. Board decides what the scope of the work is, but not delegating work to the committee. Help us do our work, don't do our work.

Article IV

- Must have a treasurer by Minnesota Law. Bylaw change says treasurer must be a member of the church staff. Chair and secretary will be members of the Board.

Article VI

- Expenditures over \$20,000 must be approved by Board unless previously approved in the budget.

Jill Van Koolwijk moved to approve the language change in Article VI. Nancy Evert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Tery Linskey moved to approve the language change in Article V. Jill Van Koolwijk seconded the motion. There was brief discussion about a couple of typos, which Sally Scoggins said she would fix. The motion passed unanimously.

Nancy Evert moved to approve the language change in Article IV. Jennifer Tong seconded the motion. Nancy amended the motion to correct typos in the draft, which Sally Scoggins will fix. The motion passed unanimously.

John Steiner-Manning moved to approve the language change in Article III. Jill Van Koolwijk seconded the motion. Discussion followed, making it clear that the Board was not ready to make a vote. John withdrew his motion for further discussion at the February meeting. Motion withdrawn.

Formation of Above Every Name Task Force: tabled until February meeting due to time constraints.

Discussion with Transition Consultant Lisa Presley: related considerations, timelines, and next steps.

- Lisa Presley is the Transitions Consultant for the Mid-America region. Oversee a team of transitions coaches. Jen Crow is our transitions coach.
- A congregation has the absolute right to call whoever they want and follow whatever process they want.
- Ministers in the UUA must follow the process that the UUA articulates.
- If we want one of those ministers, we also have to follow the settlement process, or ask them to violate their relationship/good standing with UUA. Gives access to the “ethical” group of ministers. Ministers in fellowship: ministerial fellowshiping process where ministers get the right to call themselves Unitarian Ministers. Certification process. Like doctor passing their boards.
- Through the UUA settlement system, congregations only have access to UUA-approved candidates.
- We’re in a unique position as a large congregation transitioning Senior Ministers, Executive Director, Music Director, and Facilities.
- If we don’t extend Board terms, there will be no one on the Board at the time of transition who was in on THIS conversation.
- Lisa Presley’s job is to help us navigate this transition well.
- One option for us is to bring in someone to overlap with Rob and Janne. Some large congregations have done this. Overlap usually lasts two years. Must have the intention to elevate this person to senior minister so that people don’t feel like it’s a bait-and-switch.
- Other option: bring someone in immediately when Rob and Janne leave.
- Final options: Interim for 1 or 2 years
- Traditionally new minister starts in the summer. Also an option to start in January/February. Can be hard for people with a family, pulling kids out of school.
- 10% of congregation typically leave. When ministers to whom people feel a loyalty are not there, it’s easier to sneak out without feeling guilty. A lot of people will take advantage of that opportunity. People who left years ago may find their way back in. New minister may bring influx of new people. The transition time can present real challenges to growth.
- Call to overlap can work very well.

- Bringing someone in 3-6 months before current ministers retire, to bless their ministry and welcome them in. Different from calling an “heir apparent.” Can mess with the length of the overlap, might have to do with cash availability.
- Most of the instances of transition with overlap have been two years. We don’t have data to know what is preferable.
- After a long tenure, next minister often becomes an “unintentional interim.” 3-5 years is common. Doesn’t have to be, but some times turns out that way.
- There will always be a grieving period, the resolution depends on how well we say goodbye, how much conflict is in the church.
- Executive team and staff team will need a lot of support to figure out how they work together, what their roles are.
- We will be inventing this way with Lisa Presley, there isn’t one prescribed way.
- Interim timeframe: often very hard for congregation members to dream and figure out how we want to be while current ministers are in place.
- Ends process might change some of what the search committee needs to do. Might also restrict the ability of the congregation to dream. People often won’t say things that they would like to have different because they don’t want to upset the incumbents, but also might not be able to dream of what could be different. How can people imagine this place without Rob and Janne’s gifts as a defining feature?
- Some candidates will not consider a congregation without an interim, others are confident enough in their abilities that it won’t matter to them.
- Some lack of trust around interim ministers based on our past interim – abuse of power.
- If we go the interim way, talk with Lisa about who, so that we don’t get someone who doesn’t have a good reputation.
- We’re going to be seen as a “great catch” of a congregation. There are ministers who will want to be here, because of the history of our congregation and clarity around who we want to be and what our ministry is.
- Role of Janne and Rob in this succession: it is incumbent upon the departing ministers to not influence the choice of any successive minister – interim or called settled minister. It is great to have their help figuring out the process and helping us understand this. If they are true to the covenants, they will never offer comments on the candidates. They can offer people we may want to talk to. They can encourage colleagues to consider applying for the job. Jen Crow also cannot make comments about any of the candidates. Lisa Presley can give us any feedback we want from her about any of the candidates. We can talk with her without permission at any time.
- Once we are officially in the search process, members of the congregation can go to the search team and recommend candidates. The church team will take the recommendation, say thanks, but it’s confidential.
- Subteam of the Board hires the interim (transitions subteam). Interim search process takes about 4 weeks, need a smaller and more nimble group. Better chance of getting someone good if we go with an accredited interim. They have had substantial training in being an interim.
- We would be looking for two interim ministers to fill Rob and Janne’s roles.

- Deadline for interim minister(s): mid-April 2020.
- Have a meeting between Jen Crow and the Transition Subteam soon to talk through timeline and make a recommendation to the Board this spring.

Ends renewal process and observations of religious education

Drew Danielson and K.P. Hong gave a brief presentation on what to focus on as Board members observe RE activities. They distributed a handout on “Children’s Spirituality as ‘Relational Consciousness.’”

Business Matters:

Consent Agenda

Ruth Kirkland moved to approve the December minutes. Jill Van Koolwijk seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Shared Drive

- Accessing/preserving and saving documents on the shared drive – Barbara will send out instructions and a link for accessing this drive.
- This is important because of the subteam work that we do, this is a way to try to have more board wholeness.

Monitoring

Executive Team Report

II.B. Staff Changes

Teresa Connor has joined the staff as hospitality and security. The ET has decided to let Derrick Sanders go.

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.

II.E. Financial Condition

- Rewrite of financial condition limitation. #6 – will take it up at the February Board meeting. Made substantial progress in refunding the Hallman Endowment. Not at our goal, but getting there.
- \$48,000 reduction in loan principle due to private gifts.

Nancy Evert moved that the Executive Team is not in compliance with the limitations of Policy II.E. and the board is satisfied that the plan the ET has presented will move us toward compliance. John Steiner-Manning seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

II.H. Communication & Counsel

Beloved community staff team – met with ARLT, candid and difficult conversation. Have asked the ARLT to do something really difficult, they want to do it well. ARLT recommended to ET that they develop measures for our work on antiracism.

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

Debriefing

Placeholder as a reminder to talk to Justin about improving board process, etc. Thoughts or feelings?

- Haven't heard much about our sanctuary status. Would like to put that on the table again so she can get informed.
- Shortsighted of the ET not to include racial justice efforts in Communication and Counsel to the Board. They will include that in next month's report.

Terry Linskey offered a closing reading.

The meeting adjourned at 1:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Bailey Webster, Secretary