

**First Unitarian Church of Portland
Meeting of the Board of Trustees
Regular Meeting, June 17, 2004**

Present: Kathryn Estey (Moderator), Lee Fawcett (1st Vice-Moderator), Pat Emmerson (Second Vice-Moderator), Don Watne (Treasurer), Margo Clark (Secretary), Teri Martin, Peggy McComb, Dave Patterson, Elsa Porter, Pierre Provost and Vic Vore

Absent: Linda Roach

Minister: Tom Disrud (Associate Minister)

Staff: Nancy Olson (Church Administrator), Jan Larson (Executive Assistant)

Incoming Board Members (as of July 1): Jean Omelchuck and Marilyn Scott

Minutes: Antoinette Paget

Convene Meeting

Board Moderator Kathryn Estey convened the meeting at 6:30 pm. She welcomed the incoming board members. Cindy Cumfer was unable to attend and sent her regrets. Tom Disrud brought a message of regret from Marilyn Sewell.

Tom invited the sharing of joys and concerns. He then read “Canada” from Billy Collin’s Sailing Alone Around the Room and asked those present to reflect on expectations and the special things of summer.

Meeting Administration

Lee Fawcett volunteered to be the process observer and Pierre Provost the timekeeper.

Peggy McComb moved that the minutes for the previous meeting of the Board of Trustees be approved. Vic Vore seconded the motion and it passed.

It was announced that Stefan Jonasson will join the board for the retreat September 10th and 11th.

The agenda was reviewed. Kathryn suggested postponing the discussion about Policy Based Governance, Orientation and Review/Part 1 until next month to allow more time for the Board Retrospective. Lee asked about a time line from the Communication Committee. Don Watne said that the Vision Committee had nothing to report because their meeting had been postponed until the end of the month. Margo Clark asked about the activities of the House and Grounds Committee.

Board Reports

Bylaws

Lee reported that congregational meetings are planned in October and November to present draft versions of the proposed Bylaws and relevant changed sections of Board policies. It is planned that the work on the final form will be finished by December. The committee will wait until the annual meeting in May to have a congregational vote to adopt the new bylaws. It would be difficult to convene a quorum before then. This will be a companion document to the policies. In some cases, the policies will be more detailed than the bylaws.

Democracy Cafés

The meeting for this committee will be rescheduled for next week. Margo will continue to work on the committee after she leaves board service. Peggy volunteered to join the committee.

Nominating Committee

The nominating committee, the board liaisons (Lee, Dave Patterson, and Kathryn), Tom and Nancy Olson met to hold a retrospective on the work accomplished this past year. They identified the things that had gone well and explored concerns which will be prioritized in an effort to continue to improve the process. The meeting went well.

Communications

Lee asked the committee to have a timeline for their overall plan by the July board meeting. Teri Martin is the chair of this committee which includes Linda Roach and Peggy McComb. Jean Omelchuck has been suggested as an incoming board member to serve on the committee.

Executive Team Report

Nancy outlined the landscape plan of the House and Grounds Committee. House and Grounds has been working on this plan for some time. Over a period of six weeks, the committee had diagrams on display in Fuller Hall and asked for congregational input on the plan which had been developed with professional help. The plan is in place and has been approved. It just needs to be put into effect. It would include more native plants and those needing less water. Three bids have been obtained between \$8,000 and \$12,000 to do the work. There is \$38,000 in the maintenance reserve which could be used. Plans are on hold until there is information after June 30th on the church budget.

During the time that Nancy was giving this information, a discussion evolved about the role of the board and its fiduciary responsibility in reference to the work of committees. House and Grounds was asked to formulate a plan and this is their work. It was suggested that if an individual board member has a suggestion, they could offer it to the committee as a member of the congregation. Ideas were generated around the question of the role of the board under policy based governance and the responsibility of the executive team to work within its budget and parameters.

Board Retrospective

In our church governing policies, the board has a responsibility to evaluate its performance. Kathryn turned the meeting over to Nancy. By having Nancy facilitate the process, all board members were able to participate. Nancy said that the process would be done in three parts. In addition, she asked that everyone be thinking through what it means to speak with one voice.

Nancy asked everyone to form groups of three and talk about what has gone well this past year. Each group kept a list of their ideas and chose one thing to report. The items with stars were mentioned more than once.

WHAT WENT WELL

- The end of the Ends*
- Board became a team
- Communication with the congregation* (Café Conversations*, website, minutes, articles)
- Availability to the congregation
- Staff/minister support—Jan Boor and the 1st year to have Jan Larson to help
- Program reviews with staff and chairs of committees
- Communication on board, well run meetings**
- Board announcements on Sundays, more human*
- Fiscal responsibilities—policies working
- Timing, responsive to congregation
- Nominating process and board involvement
- Joys and concerns added to board meetings
- Meeting at board member's house, board only

- Ministers/Cecilia Kingman Miller bringing messages of generosity

Next, Nancy asked that everyone divide their paper into three parts to list concerns and possible solutions. Each person did this exercise individually and shared one thing from each column.

WHAT DID NOT GO SO WELL

- Development of evaluation policies (except financial)*
- Show appreciation to staff/chairs
- Not keeping congregation informed about policy based governance
- Board knowledge of financial deficit
- Staying focused on policy based governance VS micromanaging
- Ministers identifying problems rather than board
- Communicating to congregation as to what's important to them/engaging congregants
- Difference between grievance policy and conflict resolution (We have a grievance policy.)
- Didn't get the bylaws vote
- Communication between the Board Officers Committee and the rest of the board

WHAT WAS ESPECIALLY CHALLENGING

- Development of evaluation policies
- Working through lack of trust
- Small number of congregants (vocal)/turnout
- Balancing board work and time put in by the board
- Low pledging level
- Amount of personal time on board issues
- Time factor, especially at meetings, personal time
- Ministers identifying problems rather than board
- Information board needs to make decisions, etc.
- Making complex things understandable
- Impact of meeting with ministers in reference to monitoring
- Trust issues between ministers and board*
- Wading through the bylaws
- Board speaking with one voice

HOW TO DO BETTER

- Use trust built on board to finish that process (development of evaluation policies)
- Board development, especially balancing inquiry and advocacy
- Focus on supporting staff toward Ends
- Orienting/training new members
- Leadership involving congregation in stewardship
- Getting bylaws completed
- Figuring out what to let go of
- Taking care not to work so hard
- Board needs to take responsibility for own process
- Communication strategies
- Get hold of monitoring
- Balance budget better
- Facilitated retreat
- Develop common language
- Name lack of trust between board and ministers and deal with it
- Social events

These papers could be handed in to be read by the Board Officers Committee for additional ideas.

Nancy gave the board two things to think about for their retreat time together:

1. To speak with one voice means_____.
2. The challenge for me in speaking with one voice means_____.

Landscaping/Policy Based Governance

After the evaluation process, the talk returned to the previous discussion about the boundaries of a policy based governance board. When does board work end, and micromanaging begin? Sometimes there isn't a clear boundary, and we need to gain skill in dealing with those grey areas. Also, what do board members do when they read the Executive Team report in the packet and have questions? It was noted that there is time set aside in board meetings to raise these sorts of questions.

Nancy passed an envelope with the name of another member of the group to each person. She asked that each write a complementary note to their person. These were exchanged. Nancy brought closure to the process by noting the accomplishments and the fact that a foundation is being laid for the future.

Kathryn warmly thanked Vic, Elsa and Margo for their service on the board. They were given an appreciative round of applause for their work. Toni Paget was thanked for recording the minutes. Kathryn also thanked Nancy for facilitating the evaluation process.

Process Observation

In giving the process observation, Lee noted that the sharing of joys and concerns is a good way to deepen knowledge of each other. There was a passionate but not divisive discussion about the extent and nature of policy involvement. The discussion about the board's year was well moderated by Nancy.

Closing Words

Dave read a Zen story for the closing.

The meeting adjourned at 9:07 pm.