

FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF PORTLAND
Meeting of the Board of Trustees
JUNE 15, 2006

Present: Cindy Cumfer, Randy Russell, Lee Fawcett (outgoing member), Dave Patterson, Kathryn Estey, Helena Lee, Jean Omelchuck, Eric Schmidt, Teri Martin, Pierre Provost, Don Watne, Ron Yoder, Marilyn Sewell (Senior Minister), Tom Disrud (Associate Minister).

Absent: Marilyn K. Scott

Staff: Candace Clarke (Director of Finance and Administration)

Guests: Leslie Pohl-Kosbau, Trisha Knoll, Robin Henderson, Robin Lindsley, Kathy Parker

Minutes: Kathy Parker

Process Observer: Teri Martin

Timekeeper: Jean Omelchuck

To do list

Teri Martin: Compile notes from Board discussion on goals and distribute to Board members. Send summary of comments from “naming meeting” to Committee on Generosity and Board members.

Reminder

All Board Members: Mini-retreat on Board goals—Sunday, July 9th, from noon to 2 pm. For preparation, study the goals summary to be sent by Teri Martin. No July Board meeting.

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM. Cindy read a poem by Adrienne Rich.

There was a quorum present with 11 of 12 Board members present. Lee Fawcett was acknowledged and thanked for his long service to the Board.

Minutes: The minutes from the May meeting were reviewed and approved with the following amendments:

p. 1 – add exact date (May 25, 2006) to header

p. 2 – remove ‘See handouts: “Annual Meeting Election 2006” and “Comments on Ballots” ’ under section “Report from Jean Omelchuck on Election Procedures...” and add the list of actual vote tallies as reported at the meeting

p. 2, 3rd sentence from the end – add word “new,” so that sentence reads: “Cindy asked if the Board was in agreement on naming the **new** building the Buchan Building.” [POST MEETING NOTE: the full name of the building is the Melissa and Colin Buchan Building.]

p. 4 – Special Report on Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon. David Leslie’s name is misspelled throughout this section. Marilyn Sewell clarified that David Leslie invited First Church to apply to join the Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO). He does not have the authority to invite First Church to join without our going through the application process. The 6th sentence in that section should be amended to read “...inviting First Church **to apply** to become a member.”

p. 4, same paragraph – “(See handouts.)” should be deleted.

Since the Board reaches most decisions through consensus, rather than through motioning-seconding-voting, motions and seconds should not be recorded unless that is actually how an issue to be decided is introduced. Some discussion occurred as to the difference between saying an issue was “approved unanimously” versus saying the Board “reached consensus” on an issue.

Review agenda: The agenda item “Congregant Comments to the Board” was deleted. The item “Questions from PNWD to Board” was moved to the beginning.

Review action items: Kathryn resent e-mail that came from Marilyn Scott to Board members regarding Board evaluation process as promised.

Questions from PNWD to Board

Leslie Pohl-Kosbau, President of the Pacific Northwest District (PNWD) and member of this congregation, was introduced. The PNWD is made up of 60 congregations from Alaska, Washington, Oregon, and part of Idaho. Board members are elected by the congregations and are supported by staff. Board members are currently visiting all of the church Boards to gather their responses to three questions.

Question 1: What makes your church unique and special? What are you known for in your community?

- Great preaching
- Social justice programs
- Large staff
- Outstanding music program
- Large footprint in downtown
- Religious education/strong youth program
- Tradition/history in community
- Size—large and growing
- Emphasis on the spiritual
- Best attended church in nation—1/3 higher than any other UU church
- Establishment church since its founding

Question 2: What is the greatest obstacle in the way of the congregation living out its mission in a powerful, public way?

- Space
- Money
- Too much time looking inward
- Hesitant to reach out/don't want to be seen as evangelical
- Not as much “hands on” in the community as might be expected for a church of this size
- Get caught up in dealing with negative feelings of small groups within the church
- Parking
- Labyrinthine building

Question 3a: How are decisions made in the congregation?

Congregants call the minister, elect the Board of Trustees, approve the budget and bylaws. Then those groups function as delegated. For big decisions and projects, the Board and Executive Team go back to the congregation.

Question 3b: Where do you go for assistance as a Board?

- Alban Institute
- Unitarian Universalist Association
- Networking of ministers and Board members
- PNWD
- Other churches
- General Assembly

Randy asked Leslie to discuss PNWD's involvement with planning for next year's General Assembly (GA), which will be held in Portland. The publicity surrounding the meeting will be a chance for area congregations to become more visible in the community.

Open Mic for Congregants: Robin Lindsley thanked the Board for its good work this year.

Election of Officers and Committee Appointments

Cindy turned the meeting over to Randy Russell. He explained that BOC members had spoken with each Board member regarding their interest in serving as a Board officer and serving on the various board committees. Cindy was the only Board member currently interested in serving as moderator. Cindy was unanimously re-elected to that position.

Cindy then recommended a slate of nominees for the other positions:

1st Vice-Moderator: Randy Russell

2nd Vice-Moderator: Marilyn Scott

Secretary: Kathryn Estey

Treasurer: Don Watne

Cindy noted that Dave Patterson and Teri Martin were also interested in serving as secretary and were well-qualified candidates, but they deferred to Kathryn due to her deep knowledge of policy-based governance, which will be an asset to the BOC.

The slate of officers was approved unanimously.

Committee appointments were presented and approved as follows:

Finance: Don Watne-chair, Ron Yoder, Lee Fawcett, Karen Unger, Pat Malone, Camille Wright

Communications: Teri Martin (chair), Kathryn Estey, Jean Omelchuck, Linda Roach, Eric Schmidt, Helena Lee

Policy Evaluation [referred to on the meeting agenda as the Policy Review Committee; Policy Evaluation Committee is the correct name]: Marilyn Scott (chair), Teri Martin, Dave Patterson, Kathryn Estey, Marilyn Sewell (ex-officio), Tom Disrud (ex-officio)

Other non-standing committees will be appointed later.

Adoption of Board Goals

Working groups at the last Board retreat drafted four goals for the year and outlined objectives and steps for achieving those goals. Teri Martin led a discussion, which is summarized in part below.

Goal #1: To strengthen our church community by deepening the connection between the congregants and the Board.

Goal #2: Plan for growth to support our vision.

Goal #3: Enhance First Church's public witness from the Board's perspective.

Goal #4: Ensure that the church is adequately funded.

Marilyn Sewell stated that the Executive Team has made a conscious decision not to reach out in the community because there has been no room for growth. Now that a third minister has been hired, the church has more possibilities. More services will need to be added. Adequate funding and growth go hand-in-hand.

There was discussion as to whether this year is a good time to develop a membership covenant (suggested as a step under Goal #1). This year is a time of change with a new building and Marilyn's sabbatical, which can bring anxiety. It is also a time of inward looking as many conversations have taken place regarding the meaning of pledging and the capital campaign, which may make this a good time to work on a covenant.

It was decided to remove Goal #3 as a Board goal. The first objective (to develop a statement of who we are as a church) can be folded into the membership covenant that is part of Goal #1. The remaining objectives (leadership development at GA, representation of the Board of the EMO, and forming a collaborative group to evaluate survey results) do not involve the entire Board.

Marilyn expressed concern that the Board may be taking on too much for one year. All three goals are needed and interrelated. A mini-retreat was scheduled for July 9 from noon to 2 PM to discuss these goals. Teri will write up the notes from the easel, flesh them out, and e-mail them to Board members.

Based on discussion held at the retreat, Cindy suggested that it might be valuable to alternate Board meetings with mini-retreats. There will be no Board meeting on July 27.

Board Committee Reports

Policy Evaluation Committee

Their report will be discussed in August. The Board agreed that this committee should be a standing committee, since policies must be evaluated every year.

Communications Committee

A small but interested group attended a meeting to discuss the church's policy on naming church spaces. The Committee will distill the comments and send to the Committee on Generosity. Teri will also send a summary to the Board. The Committee recommended that a working group be formed, made up of interested congregants who could make recommendations to the Board regarding how the names of buildings should be determined. A few large donors should be included in this working group. The decision for forming such a group rests with the Committee on Generosity, which is charged with bringing naming proposals to the Board.

Finance Committee

Don distributed updated financial information and shared three issues from the latest committee meeting, which was held June 13.

1. The church is in excellent financial condition.
2. The question had been raised as to whether the church was violating church investment policy by engaging in an interest rate swap for the construction loan, which involves derivatives. The church is prohibited from participating in investments that involve derivatives. However, both the Finance Committee and Candace Clarke agree that since the

construction loan is not an investment, the policy does not apply to this circumstance and does not put the church in jeopardy financially or ethically.

3. The Finance Committee has determined that Tom's compensation is not a problem under the IRS Excess Benefits Policy.

Executive Team Report

Nothing was added to the report distributed in the Board packet.

Process Observation

Teri noted that spirits were good at the beginning of the meeting and that people seem tired now. The discussion of Board goals was good and progress was made. Teri enjoyed meeting in the Daisy Bingham room, a sentiment shared by others.

Closing Words

Cindy read a poem by William Stafford.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 PM.