

FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF PORTLAND
Meeting of the Board of Trustees
Meeting Minutes, September 27th, 2007

Present: Randy Russell (Moderator), Marilyn Scott (1st Vice Moderator), Cindy Cumfer (2nd Vice Moderator), Pat Malone (Secretary), Helena Lee, Teri Martin, , Jim Shorr; Allison Frost, Tom Disrud, (Associate Minister), Marilyn Sewell (Senior Minister)

Absent: Don Watne (Treasurer), Dale Wright

Staff: Candace Clarke (Church Administrator), Jan Larson (Administrative Assistant)

Guests:, Linda Fitzgerald, Bob Townsend

Process Observer: Allison Frost

Time Keeper: Pat Malone

Minutes: Jan Larson

Summary of Decisions:

The Board agreed by consensus to the following:

To-do List:

- BOC will review idea of an ad hoc committee re: possible goal of enhancing radical/welcoming hospitality.
- Allison will send to Randy “wordsmith” item for Board announcement.

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 p.m.

There was a quorum of 10 of 12 Board members.

Teri Martin read a piece on hospitality.

The August minutes were approved.

Announcements:

- The Committee on Generosity workshop with Aggie Sweeny is this Saturday, Sept. 29, at 9 a.m.
- Kate Lore’s call to ministry vote will occur this Sunday, Sept. 30, between services, 10:30 a.m. Board members are organizing the vote counters. We need a quorum of 30 percent.
- Kristen Guest will be leading a workshop for us on Healthy Congregations on January 12th, 9 am to 12 noon. There will be a Board piece centered on appreciative inquiry.

Action Items:

- There were none reviewed.

Agenda Review:

- Bob Townsend, Nominating Committee member, will speak first.

Congregant Comments: None offered.

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Consent Agenda:

1. **The Board agreed to dissolve the Assessment/Compensation Committee as recommended below:**

"The BOC recommends that the Board dissolve the Assessment/Compensation Committee. The Committee was established two years ago to assess Marilyn's compensation and to make recommendations to the Finance Committee about her compensation, the latter a task previously handled by the Ministerial Relations Committee. The Committee performed an assessment of Marilyn the first year and made a recommendation based on the UUA salary scale.

The Board decided last year that an assessment of the Senior Minister was not appropriate under our policy-based governance. The Board's assessment should be of the ministry of the church, a task carried out by the Policy Evaluation Committee, and not of an individual minister. The Assessment/Compensation Committee did continue to function to make a recommendation on Marilyn's salary to the Finance Committee. The A/C Committee made the recommendation based on the UUA salary scale.

However, the Committee's recommendations both years were overruled by the Finance Committee. While the Finance Committee agreed that the A/C Committee's recommendations were warranted by the UUA salary scale, the Finance Committee felt that using the same scale would mean raises to other employees that the church could not afford. Marilyn agreed with the FC that she did not want her salary to be disproportionate and declined the recommended raises. The FC's recommendation came to the Board both years and the Board agreed.

The BOC believes that the Finance Committee has a broader picture of church finances and should be the committee that makes recommendations for Marilyn's salary, based on its larger view of church finances. The FC will document its recommendation using the UUA salary scale to comply with IRS requirements. The Board's approval of the FC's recommendation would continue to be required."

2. **The Board agreed to the following *Board Welcome* Revision:** (Allison Frost will send a slight "wordsmith" to Randy which was approved as well.) In the interest of brevity, the text below should comprise the bulk of our comments:

Greetings, I am _____, a member of your Board of Trustees. I am here to welcome you all today. It is our custom to ask those of you who are new to our church or visiting for the first time today to stand so that we might acknowledge your presence among us. (Pause for standing and applause) Thank you. Following the service, I will be at the Welcome Table in the narthex (lobby) to answer any questions you might have. We also have coffee hosts who will be happy to accompany you to coffee hour which is held just below us in Fuller Hall. Stairs are located on both sides of the narthex and an elevator, should you need it, on the north wall (point). Thank you.

Criterion for additions is they must be OK'd by Tom who will pass them to the moderator.

3. **The Board agreed that the October Board Meeting be an Executive Session.**

Review of Action Items: Action items completed.

Board Agenda:

1. Bob Townsend, Nominating Committee, informed the Board that the committee has a goal to maintain a list of 50 potential leaders for both future Board and Nominating Committee members. Direct your name recommendations to Board liaisons Dave, Cindy and Randy. Nominating Committee members are visiting various church groups and asking for their suggestions as well. Recommendations need to be turned in before October 24.

2. A “Conversation with the Board” will be held on October 14, 2 – 3:30 p.m. in the B102. There will be a brief comment time for new board members.

3. Teri Martin, chair of Board Covenant Committee presented their goals for the year. The Committee plans to hold a Covenanting Café Conversation on January 27, 2008, 2 – 3:30 p.m. in room B102. The Committee will present a full report to the Board in June. (Report noted here below.)

Developing a Congregational Covenant First Unitarian Church of Portland, OR

The Board of Trustees has given its Covenant Committee the responsibility for engaging congregants in developing a congregational covenant. We began our work earlier this year, and we aim to complete our process by the end of the coming church year, in June 2008. The Covenant Committee is chaired by Board member Teri Martin, and its other members are Ameena Amdahl-Mason, Kathryn Estey, Linda Fitzgerald, Kevin Lawson and John Thompson.

According to the UUA, “a covenant is a statement of how members of a congregation will interact with one another, as well as what is promised, or vowed, by one member to another and to the congregation as a whole.” Our Committee plans to work with the congregation to develop a covenant that will:

- Provide a positive statement of how we, the members and friends of First Church, expect to interact with one another,
- Deepen our connections with one another,
- Express our shared values,
- Honor our differences and diversity of viewpoints,
- Support our spiritual work together,
- Demonstrate to the larger world how we choose to be in community with one another.

The Covenant Committee began its work by learning about the ways other churches inside and outside our denomination developed covenants, and we have obtained a wide range of examples of covenant statements. Several of us also attended a workshop at General Assembly in Portland on “Creating a Covenant of Right Relations”, presented by Rev. Cathleen Cox Burneo. She underscored the importance of covenant to our Unitarian-Universalist tradition, stating that we are “a liberal religious faith based in *covenant* rather than *creed*.” In other words, we say how we want to be in community with one another, not what everyone should believe.

The next step in our Committee’s covenant development process is for us to learn from the many First Church committees and groups how they have chosen to be together, and to use this knowledge to help shape the covenant development process for our whole congregation. We plan to attend one meeting of each Church committee or small group during the fall of 2007, to:

- briefly present what we have learned so far about covenants and their development,
- learn from these active church members what they feel is most important to include in a covenant statement for our church community, and
- gather ideas about processes that we may use to engage a broad cross-section of our congregation in covenant development.

In advance of these meetings, we will compile the written covenants, ground rules or other statements that committees have established to guide their work together.

In addition to attending committee and group meetings, the Covenant Committee will sponsor one café conversation on the topic of covenants that will be open to all interested congregants. By early February 2008 we expect to provide a written summary of our work to the Board and congregation, and to initiate the next phase of congregational covenant development. This process, which is yet to be finalized, will incorporate the creative ideas we expect to learn from committee and group members and from participants in the café conversation. We look forward to collaborating with members and friends of our church as we together develop a covenant: a statement of how we will be in community in order to call forth our highest and best selves!

4. Cindy Cumfer, chair of Committee on Generosity, presented the committee's goals for the year (noted below).

**COMMITTEE ON GENEROSITY
GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR 2007-08**

The Committee on Generosity's goals and objectives for the year are:

GOAL 1: To advance a message about generosity.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Sponsor a workshop on generosity for the Board and congregants.
2. Make generosity and stewardship central to all of our objectives and activities.

GOAL 2: To exercise broad oversight of annual and capital giving.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To encourage the Annual Fund Drive to develop and communicate a values-based budget so that congregants can see more clearly how their financial commitments support church values.
2. To finalize naming recommendations that honor generosity for the Eliot Project.

GOAL 3: To enhance stewardship of our congregation's donors and participants.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To invite Barbara Miller to join COG or act as a consultant. (this item has been completed)
2. To integrate thinking about endowment planning into our messages about generosity.
3. To make a recommendation to the Board for a minimum financial commitment that will encourage generosity and sharing of each congregant's resources. COG plans to gather information on this topic from other large congregations, to find out what the direct financial cost of eliminating the minimum pledge is, and to hold a café conversation to get input from congregants about how to call congregants into sharing and what the relationship between pledging and voting should be. COG will then make a recommendation to the Board on the minimum pledge.
4. To encourage financial generosity outside the church through a Sunday plate donation and possibly a survey and publication of information about First U generosity outside the church.
5. To appreciate church leaders and volunteers for generosity of time and energies. This shall include a "Thank You" to church leaders from COG and other efforts to be developed by COG.

5. Helena Lee, chair of the Communications Committee presented their goals for the year (noted below).

**Communications Committee
Goals and objectives for 2007-08**

GOAL 1: To promote dialogue among Board members and congregants

OBJECTIVES:

- a. To sponsor Conversations with the Board in the fall of 2007 and in the spring of 2008 to provide an appropriate venue for dialogue about Board goals, objectives and related issues.
- b. To encourage Board members to participate in other events where interactions among congregants and Board occur naturally, e.g., coffee hour, new member orientations.

GOAL 2: To ensure the development and maintenance of healthy communications in our church community.

OBJECTIVES:

- a. To facilitate a Healthy Congregations workshop with leaders from the Healthy Congregations NW team and interested members of our congregation for January 2008.
- b. To arrange a workshop with the Healthy Congregations NW team on Appreciative Inquiry for church leaders the same weekend as above.
- c. To work with the Covenant Committee to facilitate congregant and Board communication on relevant covenanting issues, possibly through a Café Conversation.

6. Discussion Item: Should the Board adopt as a goal enhancing radical welcoming/hospitality, especially to those who may not feel welcome (race, class, disability, etc.)? Discussion comments:

- Cindy led off the discussion with a review of discussion points: 1) how do I respond personally to key points in Marilyn's 9/9/07 sermon, and the article on class in the *UUA World*? 2) where in our lives have we stretched ourselves beyond our "tribal limits" to be more welcoming? what was the result? 3) what kinds of things are we as a church doing now? 4) as a policy board, what would be the board's role in this? 5) do we want to do this? 6) if so, what is our next step?
- how open-minded are we? how do we share with others who may not hold the same values?
- we want to be welcoming but hold true to our church's values
- some of our values may be seen as the Buddhist tradition of compassion for others
- have we done enough of our own personal work to truly embrace others?
- what are the values we do hold in common with others – find a common place to start
- we do share values but differences may appear due to various cultural influences
- some of our difficulties may center around class issues rather than race, for example
- what benchmark would we set for ourselves? is it some standard of success?
- how do egos get involved?
- we already are stretching in many ways (examples: Buddhists come to our church; Senator Smith was a welcome speaker on mental health issues, the visiting gospel choir) – community activism and music/arts are avenues
- the church is growing and including people from different social/economic levels
- our RE program for children and youth is very welcoming; Creative Combustion
- social justice groups are partnering with a diversity of community groups
- membership department is intentionally looking at how we are doing to be welcoming
- the church continues to look to those who live on the margins – we are improving our consciousness about who we need to be to stand in solidarity with those on the margins
- we are attracting those with similar values
- we are building on our strengths and want to be intentional about it not get moving too fast
- a favorite question to ask visitors is "How did you end up here today?"
- a "pinch point" -Linda Fitzgerald, church member shared some of the past experience of the racial justice group becoming burned out, feeling that their work was often not in synch with the rest of the congregation; although the church felt itself to be welcoming, people of color have not always viewed us as such
- our denomination has not had an easy time with these conversations
- we may have more questions than answers, so what are the principles we might focus on? how might we determine success? is part of the goal having more people of color become members? the discussion has centered mostly on race; what benchmarks would have real purpose?
- how can we have something transformative? what would be transformative to the congregation?

Ideas for starting exploration: a small group could form to research what other churches are doing regarding these issues; partake in some form of intentional inquiry; visit Augustana Luthern Church (Rev. Mark Knutsen) in NE Portland – they have a diverse congregation; review our strengths and decide on how to proceed from our strengths.

As a policy board, what is our role? this focus could become part of the church visioning process; it could be part of our covenanting process; more discussion can follow at a designated retreat time; an ad hoc committee might be formed to frame further discussion. The ad hoc committee idea is referred to the BOC for further review.

Process Observation:

Board moved through the agenda efficiently. Cindy led the major discussion item well – many thoughts and ideas were shared.

Closing:

Teri read from *Welcoming the Stranger*.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.