

President's Column by Tim Farnum
August 9, 2017

Hi Folks. We had a meeting of the Board of Trustees on Tuesday, August 8; Board meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month.

The meeting consisted of discussion of the following topics: Rev. Joel gave an Interim Minister's report; Anne Perry presented a Financial Report; John Solberg shared comments received during the Annual Budget Drive, and information from his presentations on Policy Governance to new members of the Board of Trustees; and I led a discussion of a Board covenant for the coming year.

Rev. Joel's report was comprehensive and informative:

- The roof replacement has been delayed by weather delays in the roofers' other jobs. The start has been pushed back from August 1 to September 5, unless weather introduces further delays. Rev. Joel will keep us up to date on any changes.
- Staff and Volunteers:
 - Rev. Joel shared with us that 3 new Religious Ed. staff have been hired: a Coordinator for Middle School Youth programs, a Coordinator for High School Youth programs, and a Coordinator for the Coming of Age program. The Membership Coordinator position is posted in this week's newsletter. Once that has been filled, he will move on to defining and hiring a Social Justice Coordinator.
 - Rev. Joel has started a new Personnel Team made up of members of the congregation, myself and Rev. Joel. As he explained, this involves the congregation in the handling of staff, and gives a circle of responsibility and accountability that includes Joel and the congregation around staff hiring and management.
 - Rev. Tina has established a team of Worship Associates made up of interested congregant volunteers. Some have already helped with services this summer.
 - Demographic trends in congregational makeup and giving will increasingly make it important for the congregation to be active in running the church because we are unlikely to be able to fund enough professional staff to do all of it.
 - We will be implementing a policy on the hiring of sex offenders, based on UUA Safe Church guidelines. Rev. Joel will directly involve the Board if a specific instance arises.
- Membership:
 - As of last winter, we had just over 800 members.
 - A number of people have chosen not to pledge, and people in leadership will call them, not to ask for money, but to get their impressions of the congregation and their own relationship to it.
 - Some folks have resigned, either verbally or in email, and although the bylaws say the process has to be by sending a letter to the Board, Joel will put together a proposal for the Board to accept those resignations at the next meeting.
 - Student members of the congregation have been permitted to ride on the coattails of their parents' pledges. This falls into a grey area with regard to the bylaws. The bylaws allow for young adult members to join at age 16 and to vote at age 18 (per NY State law) and they are expected to pledge just like any other member. Their pledge could be waived by the senior minister or designee, according to the bylaws. There is also an issue around whether the young adult whose parents are also members should be discontinued from membership when they have completed their education. The Board will discuss the issues involved at a future meeting.
- Annual Budget Drive:
 - Incredible job by the Thrive team.

- UUA Consultant, Vail Weller, is coming to meet with the Board in October with ideas about how to follow up on a successful ABD with another success in the coming year.
- Searching for an Interim Associate Minister to take over Rev. Tina's responsibilities:
 - The search committee will work with the Personnel Team, and Rev. Joel would like the committee to include:
 - A member of the Board
 - Participants in Adult Spiritual Development (Soul Matters)
 - Member(s) of the Pastoral Care Team
 - People involved in hospitality and membership
 - The Interim Associate Minister is expected to start next August and will be expected to stay for two years to bridge the third year of Rev. Joel Miller's interim ministry, and the first year of a new called minister, with a possible 1-year renewal.
- The Interim Process
 - Rev. Joel distributed a table showing the progression of tasks that need completion in the interim transition.
 - The exploration of a spiritual approach to diversity will be a priority. Our Black Lives Matter Task Force has been reading *Waking Up White* by Debby Irving, who will be the speaker at this fall's Congregational Meeting on October 8.
 - Changes in staff personnel and structure will proceed over the course of the year. Rev. Joel would like the staff structure and function to be settled for next year, when we will be searching for a settled minister. This will include implementing sensible staff policies and procedures, including a new staff dispute resolution policy.
 - Building a Healthy Congregations team, with an eye toward becoming a community in which resolving conflicts gives us opportunities for growth.
 - The Board will be developing policies on accountability of the senior minister for moving toward achieving the ends defined for them.
 - The Board and Rev. Joel will soon be completing an appraisal of the first year of Rev. Joel's interim ministry. Jo Cone volunteered to work on collecting information from Board members.

Our Treasurer, Anne Perry, presented information about the end-of-year financial situation.

- Last year's budget ended up with a surplus around \$50,000. Anne explained how that happened with various unexpected areas of saving money and some specific donations that combined to result in the surplus.
- She proposed putting the bulk of the money in the Operations Special Fund, which is where surpluses are usually stored, with \$10,000 set aside in a new account to help pay for the costs of our coming search for a settled minister. She also proposed that we pre-approve the spending of about \$15,000, which she explained may be important to ensure cash flow for usual expenses.
- After some discussion, the Board approved Anne's proposal.

John Solberg shared two reports:

- He compiled and summarized comments collected by the Thrive team during the Annual Budget Drive for Board members to review for discussion at next month's meeting.
- He presented to new Board members about Policy Governance, and shared his educational materials from that presentation.
- John was asked to consider making similar educational presentations for congregants at the September and/or October's Board meeting.

I (Board President) led a discussion of elements of a Board Covenant:

- The “One Voice” policy (the Board will speak with one voice) has been quite contentious in the past. To me, this policy reflects mainly the idea that after we’ve deliberated a topic and discussed it and come to some shared understanding of the basis for a decision, we will stand by the decision.
 - When people come to Board members with concerns, we bring them to the board for discussion, but we are willing to stand by the decision until we, as a Board, decide to make changes.
 - One Board member was eloquent in describing that he sees One Voice meaning that we will stand by our decisions, and that if anyone of us feels a decision is so terrible that they just cannot support it, they should take a stand by resigning from the Board.
 - Another Board member pointed out that when an email gets sent to many members of the Board, it will be less confusing and less problematic if one person (the president) responds rather than having a dozen different responses.
- I will pull together a draft covenant for the Board and share it with the group as a Google doc that they can comment on and/or edit. We will take up whether to adopt it at the next meeting.
- We also discussed whether to have meals at Board meetings. There were a variety of pros and cons. I am strongly in favor of eating together — I see feeding one another as a spiritual practice, so fundamental a human activity that it is part of many religious rituals.
 - Jo Cone agreed to bring some food for the next meeting.

The Board will be participating in a Governance retreat with consultant Vail Weller on August 25 and 26.

A draft of the Board meeting minutes will be ready in time to be shared in a link in the following week’s newsletter

The next business meeting of the Board will be held on Tuesday, September 12, with business starting at 6:30pm. As always, this will be open to anyone interested in what we’re doing.

In hope and caring,

Tim Farnum, Board President