

FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF OAKLAND
Board of Trustees Meeting
November 24, 2009 – 7:41 to 10:10 PM
Starr King Room

Trustees Present: Giselle Ampuero (by phone), Rinda Bartley, Claire Eustace (President), Dan Goss (Vice President), Jon Greer, Noemi de Guzman (Secretary), Gail Schulz (Treasurer), Bev Smrha, and Charles Williams

Others Present: Eva Bunce (scribe), Kathy Huff (Senior Minister and Executive Team), Charles Masten and Charla Weiss (Executive Team)

Bev Smrha led the opening and chalice lighting, and everyone checked in.

Review of the Past

Senior Minister's Report, October-November 2009 – Rev. Kathy Huff presented her report and asked for Trustee reactions overall and particularly to the areas identified into which we would need to shift more time and resources, in order to become a thriving church: (1) ensuring dynamic, radically inclusive, art- and spirit-filled, welcoming worship; (2) extending “beyond our walls” ministries and widening our voice in the public square; and (3) developing the leadership capacities of our membership. Board members affirmed their appreciation of the circumstances and of the need for something different to be done because the status quo is untenable and not conducive to the health of the congregation. Rev. Kathy is challenged with balancing the demands on her time as an executive and the desire to lead with our vision and create the most meaningful religious life for the congregation. Claire Eustace noted that review of the Letter of Agreement between the church and Rev. Kathy Huff is overdue. Rev. Kathy expressed her continuing openness to input and feedback and intends to work with the Committee on Ministry to find ways to deal with the dilemma.

Consent Agenda – Dan Goss moved, Jon Greer seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the October 27, 2009, regular Board meeting; of the October 27, 2009, Board meeting executive session on church manager salary; and of the October 27, 2009, Board meeting executive session on senior minister salary; and to acknowledge receipt of the Journey Toward Wholeness Transformation Team report.

Creation of the Future

Board Accessibility and Communication – Ways to move forward both to publicize Board meetings and to allow interaction between visitors and Board members while maintaining working meetings were discussed. First and foremost was the need to post the agenda in an accessible manner. The how and when of allowing individuals to address the Board generated many ideas, and the manner in which this happens will need to be re-evaluated on an ongoing basis.

Rinda Bartley moved, Gail Schulz seconded a motion that the Board's accessibility package include posting agendas at all appropriate places, prominently declaring that meetings are open,

inviting members to submit comments in advance to the Board President for distribution to Trustees in advance of the meeting, and inviting visiting members to hear Board deliberation on a topic before offering their own comments within a two-minute time limit per visitor. Passed with one opposed (Noemi de Guzman).

Jon Greer will write a statement describing access to the Board meetings for publication as a standing item in the Sower newsletter.

Status of the 2010 Budget – Previously at this time of year the Executive Team would typically report on the deficit in the current year’s budget. This year, while noting the status of the 2009 budget, the Executive Team is focused on the future and projecting a large deficit in the 2010 budget as it is presently constructed. Several activities are planned before the end of the year to address the shortfall: an end-of-year appeal for extra funds, promoting eScrip signups, a music and storytelling fundraiser, and a special pitch during “Miracle Sunday” on December 6. At the moment it is impossible for the Executive Team to present a balanced budget to the Board as required by policies in November. The purpose of presenting honest numbers without hiding the deficit in inflated income items such as rentals and fundraisers is to elicit fresh thinking into the process. A few Executive Team and Board members stated that the requirement to present a balanced budget by the November Board meeting might be unrealistic and that December or January would be better for it. It was suggested that future budget meetings with the congregation may be more effective before the stewardship kickoff.

Process Observations – Gail Schulz and Jon Greer commented on the meeting.

Longer and/or Extra Board meetings – After some discussion it was felt that an additional Saturday morning meeting on a quarterly basis could be a catch-up meeting. The date for the first meeting will be decided online. Because this would be a special and not a regular meeting of the Board, it would not need to be publicized. These additional meetings are being scheduled on a trial basis. Rinda Bartley offered to begin a written record of Board working practices.

Board Meeting Agenda Setting Process – According to recent policy based governance, the “holism of the Board” is preserved when work is not delegated to Board subgroups. The current practice of having the Steering Committee create the Board meeting agendas runs contrary to this. Noemi de Guzman moved, Jon Greer seconded a motion to have the Board as a whole set its meeting agendas and that each meeting include time for identifying next steps and items for the next meeting. Passed unanimously.

It will now be the Board President’s responsibility to put the agenda in writing, consult with the Executive Team about any items they need to place on the agenda, and send to the Board listserv the draft agenda for comment prior to the Board meeting. In light of this action, the Steering Committee will discontinue its monthly meeting; however, the authority of the Steering Committee as described in the bylaws will not change.

Suspension of Existing Monitoring Reports – Dan Goss will conduct an online poll of Trustees to determine which reports are appropriate to suspend immediately.

Reorganization of Church Ends – Tabled to next meeting.

Responsibility for Evaluation of Shared Ministry – The evaluation of shared ministry, for which the Committee on Ministry is currently responsible, is redundant to monitoring that the Board and Executive Team propose to conduct jointly. The Committee on Ministry agrees with relinquishing the responsibility. Noemi de Guzman moved, Jon Greer seconded a motion to remove this evaluation from the duties of the Committee on Ministry. Passed unanimously.

Committee on Ministry Reporting Structure – Tabled.

Discussion Highlights and Decisions for Institutional Memory

In addition to the comments already expressed, the following points were emphasized:

- Senior Minister's Report highlighted the tension between what should be focused on and the demands on her time.
- The 2010 budget difference from 2009 of \$128,000 is based on projected decreases in pledges (\$76,000), endowment (\$26,000), and rentals (\$26,000).
- The budget preparation calendar needs review as it is difficult to have a workable balanced budget by November.
- The Board's only advisory committee, the Journey Toward Wholeness Transformation Team needs greater linkage with the Board.
- An annual calendar is needed prior to redesigning monitoring processes.

Next Steps

Assignments – Sower article due December 10, Gail; Board report, Noemi; December opening/closing, Charles; thank-you notes, Noemi.

Next Meeting Agenda – Claire Eustace will allocate time to the following topics:

- Reorganization of Church Ends, Dan
- 2010 Budget, Executive Team
- Board Annual Calendar, Rinda and Dan
- Appointment of Endowment Committee Members, Gail
- Journey Toward Wholeness Transformation Team Linkage, Charles

Process Observations – Charles Williams and Rinda Bartley commented on the meeting.

Bev Smrha led the closing, and the meeting adjourned at 10:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Noemi de Guzman
Secretary

Approved December 15, 2009