

FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF OAKLAND
Board of Trustees Meeting
December 15, 2009 – 7:31 to 10:36 PM
Starr King Room

Trustees Present: Giselle Ampuero, 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), Charles Masten and Charla Weiss (Executive Team), Randall Wright and Liam Alequire (Committee on Ministry)

Charles Williams led the opening and chalice lighting.

Review of the Past

Committee on Ministry's Fall 2009 Report -- The Committee on Ministry has discussed difficulty balancing its charge of serving a supportive and sounding-board role for the senior minister and its other charge of reflecting and giving voice to the concerns of the congregation as a whole. Randall Wright, representing the Committee on Ministry, reported that they have become a sounding board for both Rev. Kathy and the ongoing budget concerns as they impact the staffing of church programs. The minister's salary is a major concern because she is not being adequately compensated for her level of involvement and training and the size of this congregation. The Committee views its function as involvement in worship, developing leadership, and getting active in community. Of concern to the Committee is that there has been no training for how the Committee should work, and members recommend making as a requirement some form of training that could encompass the tasks of balancing support of the minister while being the independent voice for congregation. The Committee, as part of its duties, has responded to several conflicts within the congregation. They feel they were reasonably successful in both dealing with and resolving these problems.

The current work of the Committee includes the following:

- Two new members, Liam Alequire and Charlotte Dickson, who will join the Committee in January.
- Both Mary Foran and Sunshine Jeremiah Wolfe seem like worthy ministerial candidates. It was noted that Sunshie prefers use of the transgender pronoun "ghe."
- A new Letter of Agreement with Rev. Kathy needs to be drafted and will be put on the Committee's agenda.
- The realignment of the Committee's reporting, whether to the Board or the Executive Team is creating some questions and concerns.
- The disruptive person policy is overdue but a work in progress. A few more pieces need to be done.
- Rev. Kathy's workload needs to be reevaluated to better use her time and talents.

Consent Agenda – Rinda Bartley moved, Gail Schulz seconded a motion to approve the following consent agenda. Passed unanimously.

- Approve minutes of November 24, 2009, regular Board meeting
- Remove Church Manager Report from Board Policies Schedule of Reports
- Approve proposed Web site changes
- Acknowledge notice of special Board meeting scheduled for January 9, 2010, at 9:00 AM
- Approve revised Trustee Job Description for use by Leadership Development Team
- Approve Committee on Ministry's recommendation that the Church sponsor Sunshine Jeremiah Wolfe as a Candidate for Fellowship in the Unitarian Universalist Ministry
- Acknowledge receipt of Committee on Ministry's semi-annual report

Ed. note: The item "Acknowledge December 2009 Executive Team Report" was inadvertently passed among the consent agenda items; however, such report was not actually received.

Creation of the Future

Trustee Job Description Policy

Dan Goss moved and Gail Schulz seconded a motion that Section IV.C.5 be added to the Trustee Job Description policy. The addition reads:

The Board may keep a more detailed job description, to be updated from time to time, that will be used to inform prospective Board members of the current expectations of Board service.

Passed unanimously.

Church Ends -- A reorganization of the written Ends was presented for discussion by Board members, for which some editorial changes were suggested. Dan Goss moved and Jon Greer seconded a motion to adopt the following as our church Ends. Passed unanimously.

The First Unitarian Church of Oakland is an intentionally multigenerational, multiracial, multicultural, antioppressive Unitarian Universalist religious community. We work to transform the world within, among, and beyond ourselves.

A. Transformation Within

We transform our inner lives by practicing spiritual growth that is challenging and enriching, and which inspires us to live Unitarian Universalist values.

B. Transformation Among

We transform each other's lives in beloved community through:

1. Fellowship

We continue to expand our circle to include the whole human family in our multicultural congregation. Our religious community fosters development of meaningful relationships among people of all ages and backgrounds.

2. Service

We joyfully answer the call to minister to one another. We use our unique gifts to nurture and create beloved community.

3. Stewardship

We care for our community by giving generously of our time, money, and talents.

C. Transformation Beyond

We transform the world beyond our walls through:

1. Justice

Our congregation actively works to eliminate oppression, such as racism and heterosexism, to create a sustainable, just, and compassionate world.

2. Minister to the World

We joyfully answer the call to minister to the world. We use our unique gifts to nurture and create beloved community beyond our walls.

3. Evangelism

We proclaim the good news of our faith and promote Unitarian Universalism in the wider community.

Jon Greer moved and Dan Goss seconded a motion to have Dan Goss write a brief Board report for the church Web site describing how the Ends were reorganized and why, for posting on the Board's website. Passed with one opposed (Gail Schulz).

Process Observations – Bev Smrha and Noemi de Guzman evaluated the ebb and flow of the meeting.

Staff and Volunteer Holiday Luncheon -- A thank you note to the Board from volunteer Bettina Roth was read aloud. The Board-hosted luncheon was worthwhile, greatly appreciated, and should be repeated. Leadership Development Team will work on the luncheon in the future.

Proposed 2010 Budget -- The Executive Team was finally “heard” by the Board regarding the difficulty of preparing a balanced budget without use of “magical thinking.” The Executive Team prepared, as requested by the Board, three budgets with varying degrees of implications for cuts or financial shortfalls. Once a decision is made, staff salaries will be published on the Web site. A meeting with congregants indicated that staffing reductions may be necessary as they could not support additional fundraisers. The various church retreats have been subsidized in the past but should break even in future years. Fund raisers budgeted for the coming year include Utunes, silent auction, concerts in spring, and fall and a craft fair. The Board sponsored spirit fund has been removed for budget. Bev Smrha stated that she is eager to work on eScrip as a fundraiser. Any future fundraisers will need to focus on community building with income as a secondary consideration.

The Executive Team projects a \$28,000 deficit by end of December 2009. Last year's estimated deficit was \$10,000 and actual deficit was \$13,400. Revenue numbers are down for fiscal year 2010 and a priority list of requirements has been developed.

It has been a common practice to borrow from designated funds when there is a cash flow shortfall for payroll. There is currently \$40,000 to \$50,000 in designated funds. There has been cash flow problem in existence for at least five years. There is a need for a reserve for cash flow purposes. A bank will only issue a line of credit if an individual will guarantee the credit.

Perhaps the only good news is that borrowing only happens in the last quarter. Cash flow is a problem when there are three payrolls in a month.

The Executive Team feels that a balanced budget is a necessity but Charla Weiss, the Church Manager, would like more time to work on the budget before she has to inform staff of cuts. She is no longer comfortable with inflated numbers on the revenue side of budgets and feels that this is the way we have gotten into the current mess. For 2010, we are facing coincidental cash flow and deficit problems.

Action on the budget is deferred to the January meeting.

Discussion Highlights and Decisions for Institutional Memory

- It is felt that we have an unclear policy regarding approval of the budget.
- The Board is unwilling to accept a budget that harms the church and needs to enlist the congregation to expand revenue.
- Communication with the Executive Team needs improvement so that expectations are clear and that there is cooperation rather than isolation between the two in solving a way to balance the budget.
- There is a strong need to balance the budget without reducing salaries and benefits.
- It is important to be realistic in budgeting every year.
- Clarification of the financial limitations monitoring policies is needed.
- It is important to create a reserve so that cash flow is assured.

Next Steps and Agenda for Special Board Meeting

The following items were recommended for the January 9 agenda:

- Plan financial conversation with congregation, 1 hour
- Establish Board annual calendar, 30 mins.
- Revise Ends Policy
- Reflection time led by Rev. Kathy Huff
- Clean up limitations policies, 45 mins.

The special meeting of the Board will be at the home of Jon Greer. Dan Goss will supply refreshments. Bev Smrha will publish the Board's report following the meeting.

Process Observations – Dan Goss and Giselle Ampuero provided insight into the ebb and flow of the final section of the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Noemi de Guzman
Secretary

Approved January 26, 2010