

**Unitarian Church of Evanston
Minutes of May 18, 2011
Board of Trustees Meeting**

The regular monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Unitarian Church of Evanston was held on Wednesday, May 18, 2011, at 7:30 pm in Room 3 of the Church.

Trustees Present: Marc Rolfes, Chairman; Steve Serikaku, Chair Emeritus, Michael Anderson, Cathy Deamant, Bill Hartgering, Harry Jones, Ann McCallister, Betty Walker, Trudi Westwood, Rhiannon Wilk

Trustees Unable to be Present: Mike Tracy, Nicole Lange, Sandy Danforth, Jean Brophy, Jean Butzen, JoAnn Schalk

Staff Present: Barbara Pescan, Parish Minister; Sandra Robinson, Executive Operations Director; Eileen Wiviott, Membership Director

Process Observer: Bill Hartgering **Action Items:** Jean Butzen **Snacks:** Marc Rolfes

1. Welcome and Opening Reflection

Chairman Rolfes opened the meeting at 7:34. Connie presented the opening reflection.

2. Approval of the consent agenda

Betty Walker moved and Bill Hartgering seconded the approval of the Consent Agenda. The Consent Agenda was unanimously approved.

3. Interim Minister Contract

Marc reviewed the interim minister contract. Final contract language was clarified and the final contract was signed by Rev. Newman and Marc, on behalf of the church, on May 10.

4. SAC and Membership Update

Eileen reviewed the highlights of her written report which is included in these Board of Trustee minutes.

5. Special Report by the Executive Operations Director

Sandra presented a more detailed report than is usually given. (See the written report attached to these minutes.)

6. ISC projection for end-of-the-year financial position

Michael reported Financial Management Goal 11 (see goal). Probably not meet the goal. However, the next budget will include the 1% surplus.

7. Update on Board Goals

Marc briefly reviewed and highlighted each of the 2010-2011 Board Goals and the progress made toward accomplishing the goals.

8. Minister Reports

Barbara presented her final report to the Board.

This is my last report to the board as I complete my ministry with the congregation. I am glad for what I have been able to accomplish collaboratively with board leadership, colleagues and the congregation over the last almost 16 years – first with Ann, and then as solo senior minister.

I am sad and disappointed for the way things have gone this last two years. I have thought deeply about my experience and want to share some of that with you.

In the summer of 2009 the just-forming Integrated Stewardship Committee surveyed a selected group of members that surfaced, among other comments, negative comments about my ministry and about me personally. Those who made comments were promised anonymity and so, the comments were anonymous. Near the end of summer a group of leaders asked me to meet with them, and I did so, along with Charlotte Tyksinski, Chair of the Committee on Ministry, to talk about those comments.

In that meeting I expressed regret for anything I had done to hurt or offend members; I committed to being more mindful; and said strongly that I would welcome the opportunity to meet with anyone who made a criticism who would like to meet with me. Since I had no idea who those people were, I asked Marc Rolfes specifically to go to those individuals and issue that invitation. After several weeks I asked Marc if anyone wished to meet with me. He said he had not asked. {Sentences were crossed out after my conversation with Marc on 5-24-11, when he corrected my memory of what he said two years ago.} [Bracketed words were added after my conversation with Marc: Marc said he had asked three of his four interviewees and they had declined. I did not hear that anyone else interviewing the summer of 2009 asked. I did speak with two others who came to me after these interviews.]

In the 2010-11 pledge canvass, while I was on sabbatical, more comments were elicited or emerged from the meetings with pledging members. Again, the comments were

anonymous. The comments reached me initially when Connie Grant phoned me and read them to me; then she emailed me a copy.

I know I am not always an easy person. And, if I have hurt someone or offended them I am disappointed with myself and want to make amends, to reconcile if I can. I don't like giving criticism. And, I don't know how other people would respond in such situations, but criticism is not easy for me to receive --- I take it to heart, I am disappointed with myself. Anonymous comments are particularly difficult --- they hurt, and I bleed internally. There is nothing I can do about the criticism if I don't know the person and the specifics, if I don't have the chance to be in relationship, face to face, with that person.

First, my experience has been that those hearing the criticisms, and promising anonymity, have assumed that the criticisms are objective fact rather than coming from a subjective experience of a moment and a relationship.

Second, anonymity does not require of or allow the person making the comment that they take responsibility for their speech. So, whatever interaction may have occurred between us stops right there.

And, third, if I have done something, wittingly or unwittingly, to offend or hurt, receiving anonymous criticism of what I have done does not allow me any opportunity to respond to the person face to face, to apologize, to reconcile, and to thank them for bringing less-than-ministerial behavior to my attention.

As someone who values deeply the relationships formed here, I feel all this as a profound loss, both for me and for the church and the ethics of community-making. I feel that I and we have been robbed of respect, and robbed of the opportunity for ministry among us. Anonymity is a betrayal of the covenant we say each week ("to seek the truth in love, and to help one another, and of the covenant we make with new members, especially the part that says "In the spirit of our faith, I promise never to close my heart against you..." It is my experience that anonymity does this very thing --- it closes a pathway to relationship, it leaves me standing before a note nailed to a locked door.

Another unintended consequence has been that my trust in your leadership and in whatever relationships we had formed over the years has eroded. I have become wary, guarded in your presence. This has been painful for me to experience.

The church's life exists in large part to connect people with themselves, and with what is highest and deepest in their lives, however that gets expressed --- through classes, in worship, through social action, covenant groups and friendships. Encouraging any critique of the ministers or the church to be anonymous betrays our covenant and the whole enterprise of the church.

We human beings are made of light and shadows. We do have a fear of mucking around in the shadows, but both conflict and concord can make pathways to growth and understanding.

The Covenant of Engagement is a good beginning. I am glad it passed at the annual meeting Sunday. The objections I heard to the idea and its content raised for me how much it is needed.

My hope is that it creates ongoing conversations among the leaders and with the congregation at large to help everyone better understand what such a covenant can come to mean for the health and growth of the church. [Marc said, and I agree, that what is needed, along with the Covenant of Engagement itself, is a larger conversation led by some complement of ministers, Committee on Ministry, and the Board as part of a regular practice of the congregation. This is so the idea of the covenant and its behavioral aspects become part of the ongoing life of the congregation.]

Marc asked for comments from the Board. Michael, Bill, Ann, and Harry presented comments on Barbara's statement.

Connie's report included a review of her vacation and study leave time. She requested to hold vacation time to be used during the next year.

9. Announcements & New Business

Rev. Newman will visit the church to meet staff on June 6. She will also attend the Board Retreat on August 5 and 6. New Board Orientation on June 11. Voting on the Board President position will be conducted at the June meeting.

Harry reported on the sermons which will be included in the book of Barbara's sermons that will be available on June 4 at the Celebration of her ministry at UCE.

10. Action Items

None

11. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:52.

Executive Operations Director Report

Financial Management and Fundraising

The following are highlights of activities related to financial management and fundraising:

Expense Control: In April, expenses totaled \$45,546.05 compared to budget of \$45,705.41 resulting in \$159.36 under budget. For the year-to-date expenses are \$14,811.60 under budget.

Year-to-date net income is -\$17,599.44. As of May 13th we are still ahead of budget for Rummage Sale budget of 20,000. This will help our net income in May when Rummage Sale Income and Expense will appear on the Profit and Loss statement.

Pledge Drive: Carli Magel has prepared thank you letters to all who pledged in for the 2011/12 fiscal year. Chris Isely and I will communicate with members who have not pledged, requesting that they sign the pledge form to confirm their membership. Those who do not will be removed from the UCE records.

Information Working Group: Input given at that meeting was integrated into the document. Sandy Danforth, on behalf of Capital Campaign has submitted key metrics requested to be included.

I will be working with members of the Information Working Group this summer to research databases for potential use at UCE.

Capital Campaign: I have met with Linda LaPlante to discuss ways in which the Capital Campaign Continuation Committee can educate the congregation on the many accomplishments made by the pledges of the Capital Campaign.

Fundraising: Rental income is behind budget year-to-date. Rental income for the month of April is \$449. Year-to-date rental income is \$20,400, resulting in \$87.50 over budget for the year. It is probable that we will meet our \$25,000 goal. A contract for a memorial service in May has been let this week, two larger deposit checks are expected for an event in May and one in June, Baker Graduation balance due will arrive the first week of June, and we have several smaller rentals whose checks will be received prior to June 30th, the end of our fiscal year Photographs and revised text has been added to our new website to enhance our promotion of UCE space for weddings, fundraisers, workshops and other events.

Communications/Office Management/Technology

Website: Our new website was unveiled at the Annual Meeting. Staff continues to refine the content and will update with Endowment and Capital Campaign information as well. Our first goal is to produce a site that will attract guests to UCE, be more user-friendly, easier for staff to manage and be an attractive resource for potential ministers who may wish to apply to UCE. We hope to make this site available as a template for other churches in the district to show our leadership role in the UUA faith. We are on budget for the site development and have funds still available for the near-term maintenance and expected updates over the next several months.

Governance and Policies

Governance Book: The second set of new policies passed by the Board at the April meeting are now housed in a binder in my office for reference.

Facilities

Rain Garden and Cistern: Ground was broken on Mother's Day after the service for the new Rain Garden, which is dedicated to the memory of Marjorie Fisher. The project is funded by members of the Fisher family as well as Dick Whitaker, Alex Sproul and the Marjorie Fisher balance sheet fund.

Copier – A new copier will be installed in the office shortly. After cost comparisons with multiple copier companies, Canon will remain our provider. The cost is approximately \$6200 and we have a more favorable monthly maintenance program than our existing copier. The new all-inclusive maintenance program is \$0.008 per copy with no monthly minimum. The unit will be purchased outright as approved by the Board, and a monthly expense will appear on the P&L for the monthly maintenance cost and to reimburse the cash loan that will reside on the balance sheet.

I will present a more detailed Executive Operations Director report at the May meeting relating to the year behind and the year ahead.

ISC Working Group Reports

CJ Presto presented the draft budget to the church's annual meeting on Sunday, May 15. We're pleased to report that it was unanimously approved; this despite some controversial elements, including a drop in our Fair Share giving, and only a partial restoration of staff salary reductions. One is inclined to conclude—given these elements—that a unanimous vote indicates an endorsement not only of Board and working group leadership but also of the ISC concept: the coordination of all aspects of church finance. Also, we suspect many members of the congregation felt more engaged in the budget process. Again this year, we started early (in November) we held two prior town hall meetings, we published numerous newsletter and listserv articles. In addition, fifty trained stewardship visitors met with our congregation, giving them, face-to-face, another opportunity to have input in the that process.

Working Group Updates

Annual Pledge Drive (APD): Jean Butzen (chair), Sandy Danforth, Harry Hirsh, Lori Nelson. No update from this group.

Budget: CJ Presto (chair), Michael Anderson, Harry Hirsch, Chris Isely, Lori Nelson, Sandra Robinson. See above.

Education and Communication: Lori Nelson (chair), Barbara Butz, Susan Comstock, CJ Presto, JoAnn Schalk. No update from this group.

Endowment: Susan Comstock (chair), Barbara Butz. At the May 15th annual meeting, out-going chair Susan Comstock informed the congregation that during the course of calendar 2011 the Board may use up to \$7,000 for projects that meet withdrawal criteria. ISC remains committed to the judicious use of these available funds

Capital Campaign: Sandy Danforth (chair). No update needed for this group this month.

Fundraising: Sandra Robinson (chair) and Chris Isely. Working with Sandra Robinson, the budget working group reduced by \$2,000 the music fund-raising income target for 2011-2012 budget. As Sandra reported to the annual meeting, she believes this revised goal is more realistic and she is confident that she can reach it.

Information (formerly Record Keeping): Jean Butzen (Chair), Peggy Bocard, Tom Carlton, Brian Nielson, Sandra Robinson, Rhiannon Wilk. No update from this group at this time.

Social Action and Membership

Membership

30 new members have joined this year (since September)

The last OTM class had 9 participants. 6 of those nine are joining 5/15. We also have a long time visitor joining 5/15 as well. The other 3 participants still plan to join but were not able to attend the covenant Sunday.

We have another Intro to UU class on June 5th, and August 14th and an OTM class on August 20th. Several are signed up already.

Total Membership number after 5/15 will be 409

New Member Covenant Group has been positive and there are several new and old members interested in joining a covenant group in the fall.

Social Action

We are continuing our Saturday baking days with an average of 7 participants each month.

We are considering helping to re-do the kitchen at the Jonquil Hotel with donated materials and skills to improve the experience of the baking days.

Our list of donated food and clothing through the giving house is long and posted on the volunteer bulletin board and in the newsletter. Thank you to the Board along with the RE Board in helping us to donate 110 pairs of boxer shorts to Hilda's Place.

We are currently supporting Northminster Presbyterian for the third time as they host Family Promise. We have 7 new volunteers this time from the Butzen/Strickler covenant group. We have had a total of 31 people volunteer (some more than once) with Family Promise so far.

Our film series continues on Friday, the 22nd with the film, "Preacher's Sons" followed by a panel of our members who have families formed by adoption or foster care. On June 3rd we will be showing, "Bag It" and member, Mike Drennan will speak about Evanston's proposed ordinance to reduce the use of plastic bags.

The Earth Day Celebration was a wonderful event and we are already making plans to make it even better next year.

I am taking a workshop on Civic Reflection to become a trained facilitator. Cathy Deamant and I will co-facilitate a monthly group starting in October using the book, "Hearing the Call Across Traditions." I will also be organizing an Interfaith Dialogue Potluck at the end of October as part of Interfaith Action of Evanston's interfaith dialogue initiative.

Peace & Justice is planning 10 days of peace activities between 9/11/11 and 9/21/11 (International Day of Peace).