

**Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta Board of Trustees**

**March 24, 2011 Agenda**

**Room 209-10**

**Call to Order/Organizational Matters** - Marshall called the meeting to order at 6:10 pm. In attendance were Marshall Orson, President, Ellen Beattie, President-Elect, Cyndi McFarland, Secretary, Beth Valentine, Conrado Marion-Landais, Eric Pohl, Penni Dudley, Joetta Prost, Pam Kilmer, Jerry Moore, Clarke Weeks, Kristen Indermark, Rev. Anthony David, and The Long Range Planning Steering Committee - Mary Ann Oakley, Lanie Damon, MaryAnne Gaunt, Jeff Hummel, Wynn Montgomery, & Gary Moss.

**Chalice Lighting – Beth** From the IMPACT Newsletter, “Liberation, Inclusion, and Justice: A Faith Response to Persons with Disabilities” by Nancy Eiesland. To see the text in full, go to this link:

<http://ici.umn.edu/products/impact/143/over02.html>

“Although I began to answer my own question of the meaning of my disability by articulating God’s call for justice for the marginalized, thus including people with disabilities, I nonetheless felt spiritually estranged from God. However, the return path towards intimacy with God began to be cleared as I read a passage from the Gospel of Luke after an encounter with several other people with disabilities. The setting was the Shepherd Center in Atlanta – a rehabilitation hospital for people with spinal cord injuries. I had been asked by its chaplain to lead a Bible study with several residents. One afternoon after a long and frustrating day, I shared with the group my own doubts about God’s care for me. I asked them if they could tell me how they would know if God was with them and understood their experience. There was a long silence, then an African-American young man said, “If God was in a sip/puff\*\* maybe He would understand.” We talked about the image for awhile and concluded.

Several weeks later, I was reading the gospel passage in Luke 24:36-39. It is set within the account of Jesus’ death and resurrection, but its focus is really on his followers who are alone and depressed. The passage reads: “While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them. They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, ‘Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see.’” It wasn’t God in a sip/puff, but here was the resurrected Christ making good on the promise that God would be with us, embodied, as we are – disabled and divine. Reading this passage, I realized that here was a part of my hidden history as a Christian. The foundation of Christian theology is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Yet seldom is the resurrected Christ recognized as a deity whose hands, feet, and side bear marks of profound physical impairment. In presenting his impaired body to his startled friends, the resurrected Jesus is revealed as the disabled God. Jesus, the resurrected Savior, calls for his frightened companions to recognize in the marks of impairment their own connection with God, their salvation. In so doing, this disabled God is also the revealer of a new humanity. The disabled God is not only the One from heaven, but the revelation of true personhood, underscoring the reality that full personhood is compatible with the experience of disability. This disabled God understood the experience of those in my Shepherd Center Bible study as well as my own, and called for justice not from the distant reaches of principle, but by virtue of God’s incarnation and ultimate knowledge of the uncertainties and accidents of human existence.

This encounter with the disabled God was the source of the liberatory theology of disability that I have written about in the book, *The Disabled God*, which calls both for justice and for the recovery of vital Christian symbols and rituals (Eiesland, 1994). This theology is now increasingly read by liberation and feminist theologians as well as growing numbers of ministers and lay persons who have disabilities or are temporarily able-bodied. It identifies that although sometimes Christianity continues to buttress prejudice and exclusion, it can also foster vision and commitment to change toward a better society, a more adequate theology of humanity, and a model of the church in which all participate fully. In promoting this vision, we also counter the

prevailing sentiment that the religious practices and history of the able-bodied constitute the only relevant spiritual pulse and narrative, and that whatever is outside this ambit is of little, if any, significance.

A liberatory theology must support reflection and action to promote justice for people with disabilities and the temporarily able-bodied. What is justice? While we may all have definitions, I contend that justice and just action are primarily virtues and practices of full participation, of persons deliberating about particular visions of human flourishing (fullness of life) and working together to remove barriers in their institutions and relations so that they embody reciprocity and mutual appreciation of difference. Thus justice is first about just listening. Not simply listening, but listening for the claims for justice made in the process of everyday life.

Just listening means attending to the ways in which everyday talk (and sometimes commonly accepted silence) makes claims about justice. They are not theories to be explicated or fully developed agendas to be followed, they are instead calls, pleas, claims upon some people by others. Personal and social reflection on the demands of justice begins in hearing, in heeding a call rather than in asserting and mastering a state of affairs. The call to be just is always situated in concrete social and political practices. Too often temporarily able-bodied people have been eager to devise strategies of response to what they deem as the unhealthy lives of persons with disabilities, before they have just listened. They have attempted to speak for us, deciding how and where we can best serve God, before they have just listened. They have pronounced us sacraments of grace, without listening to our fierce passion to be participants not sacraments. The process of examination of church and society must begin with listening, hearing the calls for justice expressed by people with disabilities who are among us.”

**Finalize Agenda** – The agenda was adopted as presented.

**Review Minutes from February 2011** – The minutes were approved as amended per e-mail.

**Old Business** – There were no outstanding issues from old business.

**Review of Long-range Planning Steering Committee Preliminary Report (LRPSC) - MaryAnn Oakley** – Before the review of the report, Marshall expressed the Board’s appreciation to the LRPSC for all the their hard work, their adherence to the schedule, and the way they have elevated the level of importance of the conversation about Long Range Planning. Mary Ann then asked the Board for opinions about the draft of the LRPSC’s proposed “UCA’s Plan for the Future”.

In response, some suggestions were made encouraging the LRPSC to create visuals representing the raw data received from the listening sessions they held to illustrate how that information led them to the 4 goals in the proposal. Several argued that the summary document should be transparent in that individuals can see their visions as well as the vision of the congregation. Anthony reminded us that this document is supposed to motivate the congregation to come together around a shared vision.

We also discussed the challenge of the proposal and how that ties in with the report’s reminder of UUCA’s beginnings during the Civil Rights Era, which meant to serve as good motivation for continuing the tradition of vision, growth, and engagement in the community.

Anthony expressed that the 4<sup>th</sup> Goal tied in to the other 3, and that Goal 4 really is the foundation of all of them.

Clarification was asked for on the difference between Goal #2 and #3. It was explained that Goal #2 is about the work UUCA does and Goal #3 is more about making UUCA known to the public – Where is our voice and what is it saying?

We discussed the pros and cons of the presentation of the 4 goals and their supporting high level strategies. There were concerns voiced about the possible misinterpretation of the strategies as action items, or that they were written in stone. After a fruitful discussion, we proposed that the word “Goals” should be changed since

the 4 as they stand now are neither measurable nor time-specific. Suggestions for alternate wording were "Emphases" and "What We Want".

The LRPSC agreed to take the Draft Proposal and amend it based on elements of our discussion. They asked that any word-smithing comments be sent directly to Mary Ann. Once redrafted, they will, field test it, then bring it back to the Board in April for a final review and approval.

**Congregational Life Committee (Eric, Conrado, Pam, & Beth) Eric** – Eric had nothing new to report other than another Listening Session is scheduled for this Sunday.

**By-Laws and Policies Committee (Kristen, Cyndi, Penni, Jerry) Kristen** – There were no responses to the Proposed Absentee Ballot Procedures and paper ballot that were sent out via e-mail for discussion between the February and March Board of Trustees meetings. The Committee agreed to resend them for discussion prior to the April meeting so that Absentee Ballot Voting can be implemented for the May Congregational Meeting.

The proposed language for amending the By-Law on interim board appointments was vetted by the NLDC, the Finance Committee, and the BOT's President and President-Elect and all were in agreement with the language proposed.

The proposed language regarding interim appointments to elected positions is as follows:

"In the event of a mid-term vacancy, a [name of the position] may be appointed by the Board of Trustees for the interim period until the next congregational meeting, at which point the congregation shall elect a person to serve for the remainder of the vacated term. The Board shall make this appointment after consultation with the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee pursuant to Article VIII, Section A2 (e) of these By-Laws."

The proposal is for this language to be added to the By-Laws that address the election of persons to specific positions. (Thus, the language may be repeated in more than one place, with the change being the name of the position.)

FYI, the existing Article VIII, Section A2 (e) provides: "Upon request of the Board of Trustees, the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee shall prepare slates for elective-office vacancies arising between congregational meetings, and for other positions as the Board may desire." No changes are proposed to this section.

The Board voted unanimously in favor of the proposed amendment.

**Executive Report** – The report was received as submitted. Concern was expressed about the reported burnout of the Administrative staff and Anthony has asked them for suggestions on ways to relieve this.

In addition to the news in the written report, Anthony reported that he met with the NLDC and they will present a team of seven people to the congregation who will comprise the UUCA Volunteer Program Team. They will be responsible for creating the volunteer development program call Spirit in Service Program and will report to him and he will provide periodic updates to the Board and Congregation. Anthony distributed detailed information on the Team's structure, candidate qualities, the role of the NLDC, and the initial steps to be taken in gelling the team and implementing the program. He drew our attention to the retreat for the Board, Staff, Key Lay-Leaders, and Volunteer Program Team as a way of getting the Board involved with the Spirit in Service Program.

**Finance Committee report (Scott, Clarke)** In Scott's absence, Clarke reported that we have more cash this year than this same time last year, and that we've reduced the mortgage. Ellen and Joetta, members of the Finance Committee, also noted: for the first time, our YTD budget is adjusted for seasonality; the conversation

with Scott about internal procedures is continuing; and we are no longer contracting with our external bookkeeper, as her services were no longer those that the congregation needs.

### **Wisdom Conversation: What Should Congregational Meetings Accomplish**

There were no handouts for this discussion.

**Other Business** – Eric suggested that “Serving With Grace” by Erik Walker Wikstrom be given to all new Board Trustees upon their election to the Board.

**Large Congregational Conference** - Marshall gave a report on the Large Congregational Conference attended by 3 staff and 3 lay leaders from 3/17 – 3/20/11. Overall, it was more about the UUA than about the congregations in attendance. There was hardly any emphasis on Large Congregational issues at all, and Marshall concluded that it will be up to the Large Congregations to organize their own conferences, to support each other, and to come up with strategies to face the challenges that are facing Large Congregations in our denomination.

**UUCA Endowment Fund** - Marshall reported that the Endowment Fund Trustees approached us with a formal request for our nominations to fill 3 slots on their Board that come open next month. Marshall suggested that we would like to be more intentional about approving them as opposed to our past behavior of a pro forma approval. He also said the conversation has been had about a task force regarding the relationship between the Endowment Fund and the Board of Trustees to align us and clarify the relationship. Trustees were asked to provide any names they consider would serve well on the UUCAEF Board prior to our 4/26 Board meeting.

**Adjourn** – 9:20PM.

### **Calendar Items**

**April Board Meeting (will start at 6pm with dinner served-note date change) April 26<sup>th</sup> (Tuesday)**

-- April chalice lighter - Jerry

--May “Above Board” article (final due 4/17/11) - Penni

**Wisdom Conversation for May: Who Does What for Stewardship**