

Minutes of the UUCA Board of Trustees

March 24, 2015

Attending

Board Members: June Lester (presiding), Howard Lewis, Melissa Marion-Landais, Karen Martin (recording), Bill Mengel, Laura Murvartian, Marie Palena, Amelia Shenstone, Erin Stanfill, Christian Harden, Cindy Hoffner

Staff: Senior Minister Anthony Makar, Interim Associate Minister Jane Thickstun, Director of Administration Karen Roy

Guests: Mary Ann Oakley representing Lay Ministers, Bailey Pope and John Duggar representing the Facilities Study Team

Absent: Grier Page

June called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.

Spirit & Community

Chalice lighting: Christian lit the chalice with words from The Power of Our Words by Paula Denton.

Introductions and Welcoming Guests: All Board Members and Guests introduced themselves. All were welcomed.

Announcements: June made announcements as listed in the agenda.

Circle of connection: Why are ARAOMC values important to you? Why do they matter to UUCA?

Responses included:

- They are UU values
- All human beings have similarities and differences that we should celebrate
- Grew up in a family that did not hold these values and never understood why
- One Source, One Destiny, No one left out
- Realization that privilege and oppression are two sides of the same coin
- Here we practice building the world we want to live in
- Self-preservation
- Broaden my world view, same is boring
- We need to keep people aware of issues that can become invisible if you come from a place of privilege
- Enhances my ability to navigate between cultures and to be diverse and inclusive
- It is UU theology and our first Principle
- If one piece of the quilt is missing, the quilt is not whole

This month's *Thank You* cards were written to Jeep Hook and Tony Knuppel for generously sharing their musical talents with UUCA.

Board Education

Pastoral Care: Mary Ann Oakley gave a report on the many ways that our sixteen Lay Ministers provide pastoral care to our congregation. Pastoral Care services include home, hospital and rehabilitation facilities visits as well as phone calls, emails and cards of congratulations or condolences. Conversations are confidential and are meant to provide a listening ear. When appropriate, congregants may be referred to our ministers and possibly on to professional counselors or therapists. UUCA will provide up to three sessions with mental health professionals to our members. Lay Ministers also officiate or assist at weddings, commitment services and memorial services. Members with pastoral care needs should contact one of the lay ministers or professional ministers. The new Pastoral Care line is 404-634-5130 or PastoralCare@uuca.org.

Reverend Thickstun added that she provides quarterly training for our Lay Ministers on topics such as mental health, 6th Source Spirituality, advance directives, pastoral care essentials, listening and credos. Additional support for pastoral care include a “places that can help” document, a referral list of mental health providers, the Minister’s Benevolence Fund, the weekly embracing meditation, Wednesday worship joys and concerns and the joys and concerns published in the Order of Service and Weekly Update.

Decisive Action 1

Approval of Minutes of February 2015 Meeting: The minutes from the February Board Meeting were approved via email with one dissenting vote.

The Work of the Board

In order to honor the time of our visitors, we changed the order of agenda items.

Finance Committee:

Budget Surplus Planning: Bailey Pope and John Duggar of the Facilities Team presented a proposal for the use of our \$149,445 surplus from 2014. The ongoing facilities study has given us ideas from many constituencies within the Congregation on needs that might be addressed using the surplus. It will be important that our surplus spending plan assures congregants that they have been heard, change is possible and generosity has benefits. The Facilities Team also had a joint meeting with Building and Grounds who have been studying accessibility issues. The proposed plan includes suggestions for spending of the equivalent of 4% of the UUCA budget which is at the discretion of the Executive with Board approval. It includes paying off the Endowment Fund loan, new chairs for the upper level seating areas, staff bonuses, improved signage and a new server and firewall among other things. Use of the remainder of the surplus will be voted on by the Congregation in May. Suggested uses include several accessibility improvements, creation of a “living room” casual meeting space, replacing flooring, continuing playground renovations, replacing failed pavement, installing a dumpster pad and full payment of our UUA GIFT. The final plan will be voted on by the Board in April and sent out to the Congregation in the mailing prior to our May Congregational meeting. A suggestion was made that we explicitly connect each spending category to our Ends Statements.

Need to Know

Executive Report: Rev. Makar reviewed the Executive Report sent to the Board via email. He highlighted the following:

- UUCA will host a Leadership Development and Volunteer Celebration on April 12, from 2pm-4pm. We will highlight the importance of service at UUCA, recognize individuals who have made significant contributions of time and talent and debut The City to congregants.
- We will be holding quarterly trainings for the Generosity groups.
- Our Associate Minister Candidate should respond by the first week in April. She is looking at four other congregations as well as UUCA.
- We have adjusted our path to membership. It will begin with “Introducing UUCA,” move to “Finding Yourself at UUCA” (led by one of the ministers), and culminate with “Committing to UUCA” (led by the Director of Congregational Life and other congregational leaders).
- Reverend Makar will follow-up with any feedback from the online survey that went to visitors.

The Work of the Board (cont.)

Fair Compensation Plan: The Board was asked for feedback to the Fair Compensation Plan which had been emailed earlier. Comments included:

- We might want to revisit FTEs in an effort to get to Fair Compensation for all staff more quickly.
- It is not always clear to which UUA Fair Compensation guidelines we aspire and which ones we choose not to follow. Since Section III of the proposed Plan doesn't exactly parallel the UUA Fair comp standards as written, it might be helpful to make sure there is a part of the Plan that does so.
- It could be argued that the position of Director of Congregational Life fits into the UUCA definition of religious professional as written.
- Twenty-four sick days annually seems very excessive. Is that a competitive number for the Atlanta market? (It was later clarified that UUCA's policy allows 12 sick days per year; the 24 cited was historical, not current.)
- The Personnel Manual is posted on the web.
- Who qualifies for Professional Development Leave and Denominational Leave? Response: Any program staff
- In response to questions/comments from Board members at the February meeting, Reverend Makar shared a strong, heartfelt rationale for the change in the Sabbatical Policy which would allow a retroactive accrual of sabbatical leave time for the position of Music Director. His points included:
 - The work of this staff position leads a program area, is directly related to the religious formation of congregants and is primarily creative/programmatic in nature as opposed to administrative.
 - Replenishing of a spiritual leader and their continued religious formation is integral to their role.
 - We compete with every other dynamic, large congregation for the best staff, and we will suffer and shrink if we are not competitive.
 - This is not about the person currently holding the position; it is about now and our future.
 - This is a recognition of the spiritual aspects of the Music Director's role.
 - Making it retroactive is about living into a changing situation and discerning as we go.

- In response to concerns that sabbaticals can be hard on the Congregation, Rev. Makar stated that difficulty is not an indicator of wrongness. Things can be difficult but worth it. There is a benefit to dealing with difficulties.
- Upon returning from a sabbatical, a staff member is re-energized and refreshed and better able to fulfil the role.
- Rev. Makar shared a statement from a Music Director at another congregation attesting to the creative requirements of the position. He also stated that our Music Director makes creative contributions all the time.
- This is fiscally responsible because it adds to our compensation package making us more competitive. Fiscal responsibility is not absolutely linked to dollars we spend or don't spend.
- Churches today are different in that they rely more on paid staff. Full time staff are anchors and worth every penny.
- A staff member's sabbatical plan must be clear to ensure the Congregation that it is worth it.
- The plan does not require a staff member to be credentialed in order to qualify for sabbatical. Any Music Director at UUCA must be highly qualified. The sabbatical is an opportunity to pursue credentialing.
- Each Board member in turn was invited to ask questions and share where they stand on the Sabbatical Policy at this point. Comments included:
 - Sadly skeptical, especially regarding the retroactive piece. We might establish a policy going forward to address the competitiveness issue.
 - We can't afford this. We should be working toward our Fair Compensation goals.
 - We can't afford not to do this. We don't want to lose our Music Director.
 - Not in favor of the retroactive piece. Might favor a shorter timeframe for earning a first sabbatical for our current Director of Music.
 - Supportive of the policy, open to finding an alternative way to deal with the retroactive piece if that is preference of the Board, maybe we could have some kind of ramp-up period for our current Music Director.
 - Maybe we can find a way to do it that is genuine and reasonable. Perhaps ramp up in 2-3 year period. Six years does not address the competitiveness issue. We don't want to come across as the Board not valuing our Music Director.
 - In favor but struggling with the retroactive piece; looking for a way to a deal that does not put UUCA in any undue risk
 - It is financially not a good decision. Maybe we can take the cost from existing benefits so that we are not adding more financial burden. Also, some concern that individuals with a spiritual role are treated differently. Why does the Music Director need a sabbatical more than the Business Administrator? Maybe we should take sabbatical from the DRE role.
 - In a web search, could not find another congregation, (UU or not) that offered the Music Director a sabbatical. What evidence do we have that a sabbatical is necessary for us to be competitive? Rev. Makar named Athens, Portland, and Dallas as congregations who provide sabbaticals for Music Directors.
 - Concerns that we are redefining the category of religious professional to do this. We are reverse engineering a category.
 - More comfortable with ordained and credentialed staff receiving a sabbatical.
 - Can support the policy. Not concerned with the retroactive piece.

- Having a staff member on sabbatical hurts the congregation. Replacing someone causes things to be lost in translation. The replacement may not have the necessary skill set.
- Throughout the conversation, members repeatedly voiced affection and appreciation for our current Music Director irrespective of their view of the policy.

Congregational Life Committee: The Congregational Life Committee will have their first meeting with the Social Justice Coordinating Team on Monday, March 30.

Planning, Evaluation, and Monitoring: PEM has been reviewing the Fair Compensation Plan to help staff prepare it for presentation to the Board. They have not indicated compliance or lack thereof on EL C because the Fair Compensation Plan is not yet finalized and voted on by the Board. PEM is working on the Annual Evaluation of the Senior Minister as Executive of UUCA which will assess his progress towards our Ends and compliance with Executive Limitations as well as an assessment of progress on the Long Range Plan. PEM has requested the annual self-evaluation from the Senior Minister to include key areas or projects that might be considered by the Board as it works with him to select the top three priorities for work on the Long Range Plan for next year. The Board will give input to setting the priorities at the Board retreat. PEM's monitoring has identified more items that should be addressed to get into compliance with ELs than could reasonably be dealt with this year and we therefore want to identify priorities that weigh EL compliance along with all of the other priorities of the Senior Minister. The Senior Minister's Annual Evaluation will be discussed in Executive Session at the April Board Meeting.

Bylaws and Governance: Nothing to report this month. We will bring possible EL revisions to the Board in April.

Finance Committee: Melissa thanked Karen Roy and Rev. Makar for the addition of the Executive Summary to the financial report sent to the Board. The Executive Summary is also posted to the website. Pledged Income and Donations are slightly ahead of budget this month. Personnel costs are slightly high due to January having three payroll periods instead of two. Our first UUA GIFT payment was made in February. All other Department Expenses are within or below budget. The Finance Committee is looking at establishing Key Performance Indicators (KPI) as a high level overview of the financial status of the Congregation. Rev. Makar asked for a format for KPI. The Finance Committee will share information from some other UU congregations which use this process.

Decisive Actions II

Vote on Fair Compensation Plan: No vote was taken. The vote was deferred to the April Board Meeting.

Closing

Observer's Insights: June shared observer's insights.

Extinguishing the Chalice: Christian extinguished the chalice with words from the UUCA Mission Statement.

Next Meeting: April 28, 2015

Meeting Host: Melissa Marion-Landais

Chalice Lighter: Erin Stanfill

Process Observer: Howard Lewis

Above Board [*due April 12*]: Laura Murvartian

Upcoming Committee Meetings:

- Bylaws and Governance: April 12, 12:30 p.m.
- PEM Committee: April 21 or 22, 7 p.m.
- Finance Committee: April 20, 7 p.m.
- Congregational Life: March 29, 10 a.m.

June adjourned the meeting at 9:40 p.m.