

Minutes of Meeting of Board of Trustees of
Westside Unitarian Universalist Congregation

December 11, 2013

The meeting was held in the Administrative Office of the Congregation's church building at 7141 California Avenue SW, Seattle, Washington, and was called to order by President Joe Rettenmaier at 7:06 pm with virtual chalice lighting and everyone checking in.

Present were President Joe Rettenmaier, Secretary Lisa Maynard, Vice President Matt Aspin, and Trustees Amy Hance-Brancati, Shannon Day, and John Britt, as well as Rev. Peg Morgan, Intern Minister Michelle Conklin, and DRE Betsy Lowry. Treasurer Eric Winiecki was away.

Transition Committee Presentation and Discussion

From 7:10 to 7:55 pm Transition Committee members Lisa Reitzes and Laura Pierce led a discussion based on the question: *"If we make a successful transition to a program church, what will be different?"*

Social Justice Theme – Discernment Team Results and Approval

SJ Discernment Team members Regina Brennan, Wendy Swyt, and Tracy Nolan joined from 8 pm until 8:30 pm. John reminded the Board of the SJ theme process and calendar and said we are on schedule (Board expresses gratitude to all involved). The task for the Board meeting was to review the recommendations of the teams: Alice Britt, Arlene, and Stina were the Theme Team; Regina, Wendy, Tracy were the Discernment Team (which looked at results from Theme Team, world cafe, and youth discussion/process). The Discernment Team is all in agreement on the focus they presented tonight.

The focus is *Food First: Nourishing Body, Mind, and Spirit* (report attached). Board members were very enthusiastic about the proposed theme and its many opportunities and avenues for congregants to be involved and to partner with other organizations. Board commends the group for the work and the excellent report.

John moved that the recommendations of the discernment team be adopted, motion seconded, Board voted to adopt the focus *"Food First: Nourishing Body, Mind, and Spirit."* The next step in the process is a planning session, which John is organizing in conjunction with the Discernment Team and other folks who have been involved. Michelle Conklin will present a sermon on beloved community in January that relates to social justice work and will integrate this new focus. Matt is thinking about whether auction theme could tie in (e.g., "abundance" or "making our garden grow").

John intends to hold an open meeting to discuss next steps for the congregation. Joe said he has been thinking about having an after-church meeting on Jan 12 to report to congregation on activities, and asked Board to consider whether this would be a good time to announce/roll-out the new focus? Regina suggested tying in with spring emerging.

John asked us to review Article 12 of the congregation's by-laws so that we are all in agreement that adopting the social justice focus doesn't require a congregational vote. Peg said the article was intended to address public

statements of the congregation by groups. John said the process we set out didn't include a vote of the congregation. He believes we don't need a congregational vote, but we do need to be clear on where the authority lies. Board agreed that the authority lies within the process, which was open. We could use the annual meeting as an opportunity to have the congregation affirm the congregational focus.

Minutes

Corrections to the Minutes of the Nov 13, 2013 Board meeting were reviewed (Lisa had sent a revision-marked version in email). Upon motion duly made and seconded, the minutes were approved as corrected.

"Mid-Term Special Report" on Jan 12

Joe proposed, in an effort to increase transparency with the congregation, to have an event to review what has happened at WSUU in the first six months of this church year. It wouldn't be an official congregational meeting – just an opportunity for members and friends to learn about activities, get an update on the strategic plan, treasurer's half-year report, pledge drive status, etc. John raised the question of keeping it short vs. providing an opportunity for feedback. Joe says he would have a Q&A at the end. Amy suggests a podcast or written report to go along with the meeting.

Goals of the event are to increase the frequency and transparency of communicating what WSUU's leadership has been up to and to highlight all the great work/activities. Matt suggested thinking of it as a bit of a marketing event also.

John suggested offering a handout that lists activities on one side and groups on the other and asks folks to match the group and activity, as a way for folks to get more involved and develop a better understanding of what is going on.

Appointments

Moved, seconded, to approve appointment of Kari Kopnick as Pledge Drive Chair. Board enthusiastically approved Kari's appointment. Thank you, Joe, for recruiting her.

Treasurer's Report

In Eric's absence, Matt presented the Treasurer's Report. Expenditures and income are in good shape for the year. Total revenues exceed expenditures by 3% YTD. PCC income at zero – why? Peg will look into it. The explanation for last month's salaries being high is that bookkeeping showed two payments last month and none this month. "Tech management" (Rob working on the website structure) is 165% of budget. This is different from "Web maintenance" (Laurie making content changes to site). Peg will run a report about it. We ordered extra trash and recycling pickup and Sweet Pea is paying us for that, but Peg suspects that the increased income to cover it is showing up in rental income.

Other Reports

Minister's report was distributed ahead of time and posted on skydrive. Peg said the Board needs to give

congregation members the opportunity to recommend the things we want to vote on for UUA study/action issue. John will put together a survey monkey draft and send to Peg to make sure it has the right content. Would be sent out in first week of January, due back Jan 15. Other action is following up with five members who haven't pledged, for which Peg doesn't know the reason. Michelle said Eastshore has a letter to address this situation (helping them understand that membership involves pledging) – Peg will get a copy of that letter to Joe. In future this task could reside with Pledge Committee.

John would like to know what the proportion of "auto deduct" is for our pledges (from credit card, bank account, etc). If more people switched to auto deduction, it would reduce fluctuations in pledge income. Kari is interested in increasing auto deduction. Peg says it should be encouraged through bank transfers, not credit card, so we don't have to pay the credit card fee.

Thank You Notes

Joe will send an email thank you note to the discernment team for excellent work (Tracy Nolan, Wendy Swyte, Chris Rhinehart, Regina Brennan, Eileen Duffy).

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:09 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Lisa Maynard, Secretary

MINISTER'S REPORT

Rev. Peg Morgan

Dec 10, 2013

Here are a few thoughts for this month, and updates. These, besides there being lots of pastoral care that warms my heart for the good things happening by the whole Care Team, and makes me cry for the scary cancer situations. My best to you all and appreciation too! Have I told you how much I love the beautiful office???

Peg

PERSONNEL

The transition from Laurie Radin to Shannon Day has gone well. Kudos to Shannon for jumping right in with courage and talent. We have made a change of simplification in the order of service announcement display, to save the 2-3 hours of labor spent putting together a separate Publisher document...now the eNews document is the master that just gets revised and run off on legal size paper and folded/inserted into the order of service. This actually reduces the chance of error...particularly missing something that was entered into one document and needed to be added to the other also. We launched this new look on Sunday, with -0- feedback, which is probably good news!

Now we have office hours 3 mornings a week, Monday, Wednesday, Friday. It used to be Wednesday and Friday.

The UUA has passed a new retirement plan policy that makes some changes that congregations need to affirm. I do not believe that it will mean any new costs to us. Primarily it allows employees to establish and contribute to an account even before they are eligible for employer contributions (which takes 1 year at at least 50% time). It does require the Board to pass a resolution motion. I thought I would ask Susan Mackey, our Personnel analyst, to review it prior to the next meeting in January. Let me know if you want me to go a different direction on this.

MEMBERSHIP

ACTION: We need to turn in our membership list on Feb 1 or before. We have about 230 on the list. There are perhaps two or three or five people for whom I need info as to whether their non-pledging means they are dropping their membership. I'm not sure who should follow up on this...it is sensitive stuff. We pay \$80 approximately for every member to the UUA and PNWD, so we want to eliminate any who are no longer members. This is a continual problem of the pledge drive not getting cleaned up. I will work with our new pledge drive chair to have some system for us to know what "decline to pledge" means...can't afford or just don't want to? do they know that means not being a member?

GENERAL ASSEMBLY STUDY ACTION ISSUES VOTING

ACTION: We should let the congregation weigh in on voting on Congregational Study Action Issues for General Assembly. How would you like to do that, if you agree? Perhaps a flier in an oos in January and have them turn

it in by the next Sunday? They may wish to look up the issues on the UUA website. In the past we have not participated in this vote. Here is the info:

Congregational Study/Action Issues

Every two years delegates to the Unitarian Universalist General Assembly adopt a Congregational Study/Action Issue (CSAI). The CSAIs are an important way for UUs to work together for Social Justice.

Adopting a CSAI commits UU congregations around the country and the UUA to engage together on a common social justice issue. The commitment is for four years of study and action. Thus, two CSAIs are active at any one time. The current CSAIs are "Reproductive Justice" (2012-2016) and "Immigration as a Moral Issue" (2010-2014).

Delegates from UU congregations around the country will choose a new CSAI at the 2014 General Assembly to be held in Rhode Island next June.

The UUA Commission on Social Witness (CSW) has developed a process for establishing a new CSAI. Proposals for a new CSAI are submitted to the CSW by individual UU congregations in the fall of the year before the General Assembly at which delegates will decide on a single CSAI. The CSW reviews the proposals and selects as many as ten for a vote by UU congregations. The voting for this cycle takes place between Nov 15, 2013 and Feb 1, 2014.

Each congregation can vote for as many as five proposals. The five receiving the most congregational votes are placed on the agenda of the General Assembly for discussion and a vote by the delegates. At least twenty-five percent (25%) of all certified congregations must participate in the ballot vote for any proposals to be put on the agenda. Each congregation determines how it will decide on the five proposals to support.

The CSW has submitted the following six proposals for congregational votes:

- Empowerment: Age and Ability Reconsidered.
- Ending the War on Terror
- Escalating Inequality.
- Gun Violence: A Public Health Issue.
- Renewing and Securing Our American Democracy.
- UU Values and the Pursuit of a Just Peace for Israelis and Palestinians.

The full proposals and a guide to the selection procedures for CSAIs may be found at:

<http://www.uua.org/statements/current/>

UUs should look carefully at the different CSAI proposals and consider how they would like to work together with other UUs for Social Justice.

WEATHER POLICY AND BUILDING CLOSURE.

This is not a new policy...just a reminder. Should you wish any changes, let me know and I can bring an amended policy to the Board meeting! I want to get it into eNews, at least what the membership needs to know—where to check for news...

Should weather or any natural disaster or building condition cause the need to decide upon closing for safety purposes, the following guidelines and procedures will be followed:

- 1) If South Seattle Community College is closed, the church will automatically be closed.
- 2) In other events and conditions, the President will make the decision as to closure, in consultation with the Building Committee Chair, and/or Chair of Safety Committee.
- 3) In the absence of the President, the Building Chair can make the decision, in consultation with the Safety Committee chair, if desired.
- 4) Whenever the church building is closed, the President, Minister or other official will make every effort to post decisions on the website, on the office phone recording, on entry doors, as well as sending an email to the congregation.
- 5) When the closure affects either Sunday morning services or Christmas Eve, the Minister will be involved in the decision making.

In case of power outages in the neighborhood, if the church has power including the stove, and if we have church members to facilitate, we will open our doors for people to cook and be warm. That decision making should be cleared by the President.

RE Report to the Board

December 2013

Highlights

- The Youth Adult Committee (YAC) will take a new shape, building on the passion of our Youth Group advisors. By January, our new YAC structure will be in place.
- Our 2nd – 5th graders created beautiful peace doves made of felt and joined on a beaded string, to send in Westside’s package to our partner church in Transylvania.
- Six new teachers have been recruited, trained, and recently added to the Story Time class roster, and one new teacher has joined the Spirit Play team.
- Several Westside musicians came together with Bert to record some of our favorite UU songs for our teachers to use for classroom sing-a-longs.
- The junior high OWL class just met with a panel of LGBTQ youth for a courageous and open discussion last Sunday evening.
- The Youth Group had great success with their first greens sale fundraiser, netting close to \$1000. They will donate 20% of that to the church, and the remaining amount will go into the youth fund.
- Our teachers of the youngest children – Nursery and Story Time teachers – have been brainstorming about how to engage new families of small children in bonding and connecting. Our attendance has decreased recently in those two environments.
- The RE Council ran a very successful soup lunch the Sunday before Thanksgiving, raising almost \$600 for the RE program, and inspiring numerous positive comments from families and congregation members.
- Bert and I introduced a Chalice Candle Ritual for each Sunday in December that is delivered by a youth/adult pair.
- Our RE classes are studying faith traditions that are common across cultures this time of year.
- Nineteen families are participating in parent orientation sessions for the upcoming kick-off of the 4th and 5th grade OWL class.
- Gabbie Guncay continues to be an invaluable member of the RE team, inspiring beautiful comments that have been shared with me from congregation members.

RE Ministry Updates

- Middle School Youth –
 - Our 7th and 8th graders seem to be bonding beautifully through their OWL experience, and to date our 6th graders are fitting in nicely during classes on Sunday mornings, and in middle school social and social action events.
- High School Youth –
 - Our youth representatives on the YAC (Mia Shaughnessy, Lewis Brancati and Henry Bennett) are working with Shelby and I to restructure how the YAC will work at Westside at this time. We believe it makes the most sense to engage our youth advisors, who bring a passion for youth ministry, on the YAC. The current adult members of the YAC will be considered “friends of the YAC,” and our youth advisors will step up to provide the leadership and oversight to bring our youth ministry vision into reality.
 - Two of our youth are participating in the Common Quest Build Your Own Theology class taught by Shelby Greiner, with other adults.

- The Youth Group built time into their weekly schedule for discussion around the “big questions of life.” They hold this discussion every other week. The youth are alternating in taking the lead to facilitate Youth Group sessions.
- The Youth Room is continuing to be enhanced, with a fantastic wooden platform built by John Monahan, and additional furniture and lighting. Our youth are thrilled and seem to love their new space.
- Babies and Toddlers –
 - We have noticed a decrease in attendance in our Nursery and our Story Time classes that serve babies from 6 months of age to toddlers who are three years old. We had a cohesive, larger group of families deeply engaged in RE whose children are now in kindergarten and have joined the K-1 class. We are considering how to bring our current families of the youngest children together for them to feel bonded and connected in a way that invites a deep level of commitment to bringing their little ones into the Westside community.
 - Our Story Time class is designed to serve our toddlers at their developmental level, with playful instructional components. They learn to light the chalice with felt flames; they have a developmentally appropriate story time in a circle; they do finger plays; they learn to play together in the classroom space; they learn to clean up; they learn what it looks like to share a snack together. We have a couple of younger toddlers in the Nursery who seem ready for the Story Time experience, so we are lowering the age in the Story Time class.
 - This change currently leaves us with few to no Nursery children each Sunday, with two paid caregivers there. Concurrently, despite adding six new teachers to the Story Time roster (most can only teach once every month or once every two months, and Story Time meets every week as does the Nursery), we are struggling to keep the class staffed each week and often call on subs. Lewis Brancati has agreed to assist in the Story Time class once or twice a month for the coming months, to help to balance our staffing. Julie Vance will remain as our consistent Nursery caregiver, and each week Lewis is in Story Time, we will have a volunteer on-call to assist in the Nursery if we have babies there.
- Elementary Classes –
 - Our K-5 Tapestry of Faith classes (K-1, 2nd-3rd grade, and 4th-5th grade) have been actively engaged in interesting, hands-on activities from the rich Tapestry of Faith curriculum, that are taking the class routines a little more out of the typical academic-style model. Our K-1 class recently made birdseed feeder balls; our 2-3 class is using beeswax and cookie cutters to create their own candles to use for joys and sorrows at home with family; and our 4-5 class created prayer flags for their lesson last week.
 - Elementary teachers have been establishing consistent opening and closing rituals that include the chalice lighting with special readings (i.e., the Ghandi Peace Prayer), check-in, meditations, some stretching and yoga movement, deep breathing, and singing.
 - All elementary classes, including our 4-5 year-olds, participated in sessions to learn about WestSide Baby and what it offers for families. We had guest speakers from WestSide Baby visit to share this information.
 - Our Spirit Play class will benefit from a set of new story boxes we are borrowing from Olympia UU church. That DRE has many extras not currently in use, and offered to share them for us to add to our story list. Once we try the stories, we’ll decide which ones we want to make for ourselves in the spring.
- Multigenerational Music –
 - Bert and I continue to meet weekly to plan and implement our collaborative multigen music ministry. We are currently focused on completing the script for the festive, multigen service for December 22nd. We are working with the kids together for all of those rehearsals and preparations.

- The Children's Choir has a schedule for singing in the service every few months this year. They are being led by Lisa Maynard and Liz Bucklew.
- The Ukulele Band is now an evolving open-door group for all ages – children through adult. They will play a song for the prelude in the service on January 12th.
- The Middle School Youth Rock Band is an ad hoc group that comes together specifically to prepare for a particular song. They will play a song for us in the January 26th service.
- The high school youth have not elected to form a group at this time, but individuals are continuing to participate in music in our worship services periodically.

Administration Updates

- Attendance and Registration Data Management –
 - With Gabbie's help, we now have a very clean and accurate database of our RE children, youth and families. We were fortunate to build on the good work of Shannon and Kari in tracking registration and attendance in prior years. At this time, we are changing our tracking process a bit to only include families who are members or who come to church with some regularity. This has resulted in what looks like a slight decrease in our numbers from last year, when the reality is that we have more kids participating in programs this year.
 - Gabbie has created a system for the registration database to feed our weekly attendance sheets, and she adds any new information from families every week. The idea is to keep the attendance sheets updated and current every Sunday.
- Classroom Space –
 - Our classrooms are working well for most groups, with the exception of the two who meet in the Social Hall each week. The K-1 class is on the stage, and many Sundays they have ten or more children attending, which is a large number of little ones for that tiny space. Also, the noise from the Middle School group can be distracting. We are fortunate to have very positive and proactive teachers who are making this classroom space work as well as possible for these kids!
 - The Middle School class struggles the most in their new space – the open area of the Social Hall. We developed panels for them to use each week that hold their posters and work, and a portable classroom kit that is stored on the stage. Those things, and the use of the open space for different seating arrangements and movement have been good. However, there are many people moving through the Social Hall all through their class time, which takes away from their focus and their sense of being in a safe space for deeper level discussion. Finally, this class always ends early – as soon as the first person walks through the doors at the end of the service. Other classes are able to continue until 11:50.
 - The other primary challenge we are experiencing with actual classroom space is in our Fireside Room. We often have 15 or more kids attending our 4th-5th grade class on Sunday mornings, and teachers are struggling a bit with how to best organize their varied activities and the seating arrangements in the Fireside Room. Our Junior High OWL class is the most challenged in that space, on Sunday evenings. With 18 kids attending regularly each week, and two adult teachers, that room has felt a little stifling. Again, we are fortunate to have very positive and creative teachers who are using the space as effectively as possible.
- Web Site Development –
 - I am working with Rob Fenwick to change the structure of the RE pages of our web site to accommodate more images, and bios and pictures of each of our RE teachers at Westside.
 - In January, the RE program will launch two new forums for communications with families and youth –

- A blog that will be linked from the main WSUU site that will contain weekly information regarding all RE activities, curriculum, etc.
- A Westside DRE Facebook page that will allow me to establish teacher, parent and youth groups that can share information easily and privately.

Attendance Data

- Attached you will find a summary of attendance from the start of the fall program in September through the month of November. It displays numbers and percentages collectively and for individual classes. This is a start in breaking out our data a little more. However, there are some areas we are working to strengthen.
 - We have not been capturing attendance at the multigenerational services. We are setting up a plan for capturing those numbers and attendance at our Chalice Chapels.
 - We have not included the participation in OWL classes, or Youth Group in our totals, and we need to do this to show a more full and accurate level of involvement.
- We currently have 122 children and youth total, registered in our program. The number of children attending classes is larger, and includes families who are new, who are exploring this community as a church home, and who only come periodically and haven't registered yet.