

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

October 10, 2012

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 Jill Fleming at 7:15 p.m. with chalice lighting by Rev. Peg Morgan, reading from Moving on From Church Folly Lane, a copy of which will be given to each board member. Matt Aspin provided delicious pizza and green salad.

Present were President Jill Fleming, Vice President Candace Sullivan, Secretary Karin Cumming, Treasurer Matt Aspin, Trustees Laura Matson, Eric Winiiecki and Joe Rettenmaier and Rev. Peg Morgan. Also present were DRE Natalie Briscoe and RE Council co-chair Betsy Lowry.

Jill noted that proposed minutes of the September 12, 2012 board meeting had been distributed to the members of the Board for review. Karin said she made the correction Jill had requested subsequent to that distribution. Upon motion duly made and seconded, the minutes were approved as submitted with the correction Jill had requested.

Treasurer's Report

Jill distributed copies of the report that Matt had distributed by email. In addition, Matt reported that he sent out a capital campaign letter, that it had been well received and responses had been received, and Rev. Peg said that some payments had been made. Upon motion duly made and seconded, the Treasurer's Report was approved as submitted.

Minister's Report

Rev. Peg had distributed her report, a copy of which is attached to these minutes. Also, she made a request to recategorize her Salary/Housing allowance for tax purposes, at the request of her accountant, to show up to 15,000 as salary in connection with making contributions to her retirement account. Upon motion duly made and seconded, her request was approved and it was agreed that she would work with the Treasurer to determine the exact amount.

Religious Exploration Report

A copy of the RE Report is attached to these minutes. Rev. Peg commented that we are so fortunate that Natalie is here as Director of Religious Exploration and that Betsy is co-chair of the RE Council. Natalie commented that we have a fabulous team on the RE Council that is willing to take risks and it is really working out. With respect to the Coming of Age program that Natalie has designed, culminating with a trip to Boston, as further described in the Report, there was discussion of fundraising activities that will start soon and it was agreed that we should notify committee and group leaders that the RE Council will be offering some lunch-type food during Sunday social hour to raise funds for a youth program, but that other committees and groups who would like to offer food as a fundraiser may schedule Sundays through office@wsuu.org. Also, Natalie mentioned that they may be needing

deposit of \$250 per child by January to make reservations for the Boston trip.

### Committee Reports

It was noted that Karin had distributed reports received from Music Council, Social Justice Committee, Kitchen Team and Monthly Church Charity. Rev. Peg reported that we have a great candidate for Safety Committee chair, Will Giammarese, who is a retired Army Lt. Colonel, lives on Vashon Island, and is very energetic and committed to safety with a high priority for safety of children. Upon motion duly made and seconded, Will Giammarese was unanimously confirmed as Safety Committee chair.

### Executive Session

The board adjourned to executive session for a report on a safety matter, after which the regular meeting reconvened.

### Strategic Planning

Jill F. suggested that although Jill Jackson had subsequently submitted a proposed revision of Goal II, we proceed with the revised plan as received from the SP committee and circulated to the board on October 8, 2012. Laura suggested we ruminant on it along with comments from the congregation received after posting. Jill Jackson reported that two omissions in the document as currently drafted were (1) a Program Council of committee chairs and group leaders and (2) Financial Stewardship (raising money within the church from the congregation). Jill noted that we are hosting a stewardship conference in January, which may be a good tie in or starting point for that subject. Upon request from the committee it was decided that the Plan would run to the end of the third fiscal year after the current fiscal year. Upon Laura's suggestion, it was agreed to remove some descriptive narrative in Goal II to the Executive Summary, along with setting forth the goals and objectives, which are expanded later in the document by delineating the strategies, as bullet points with icons to make it friendly. The Goal II subgroup will meet to add back some details that were dropped in the committee's version and expand the objectives to include why that objective is important. Jill J. asked the other subgroups to similarly look at objectives to add why that objectives is important. Candace suggested we have everything back to Jill Jackson by a week from today so that we can maintain the schedule described at the last board meeting. Jill suggested an announcement at service on October 28 service to announce the town hall style meetings on November 4 and November 7 and Jill Jackson will let Peg know who will make that announcement.

It was suggested that we may need an extra board meeting. Jill F. suggested Tuesday, November 20, at 7:00 p.m. and the board members concurred.

### Thank You Notes

A thank you note was written and signed for Regina Brennan to recognize her work on the pancake breakfast fundraiser for Nicklesville.

### Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Karin Cumming, Secretary

Minister's Report

Rev. Peg Morgan

October 2012

Pastoral Care: Busy busy busy...lots of pastoral care, loss of jobs, big life mistakes, relationship anxieties.

Social Justice: We've finalized the clergy letter for Ref. 74. Attached. I've been active in the public demonstrations at the Alaska Junction...very moving conversations with people. The Spokane UU Church sent us the billboard they are putting up in three places. Attached.

Regina and her crew raised \$875.00 from their pancake breakfast for Nickelsville. Wow!

Sunday Services: We are having a retreat later in October...too much to talk about just one evening a month. We are getting feedback of problems with Joys and Sorrows. People giving committee activity announcements, and not so important life happenings...and too long descriptions....we get feedback that it is the same people also....We are talking about a focused questionnaire about joys and sorrows to the congregation. People have responded well to the silent joys and sorrows. Should that be expanded?

Membership: Some more new members this month: Patti Hooper and Larry Murphy, Will Giammarese, Liz Berggren. We will have a new member welcoming at service on Nov. 18<sup>th</sup>.

Programs: Covenant Groups are thriving...4 in the works, Tuesday morning, and T, W, and Th evenings. They are well subscribed, with one having 13 people (the day time group)...and three evening groups of 9 each for a total of 40 people involved! Leaders are Joe Rettenmaier, Shannon Day, Mark Mackay, and Liz Bucklew.

Wider Association: I spoke at the Pacific NW UU Justice Summit a couple weeks ago on a Saturday morning...the structure was a conversation between three of us UU ministers on the theological underpinnings of social justice and how we sustain our energy over the long haul. It was well received.

On Oct 7, this past Sunday afternoon, I went to the Vashon UU congregation to lead a workshop in figuring out what they want their part time minister to focus on, and what lay leadership should focus and prioritize. It's called a Covenanting workshop. It went extremely well. Minister is Carmen McDowell. The District Executive wants more connection between Vashon and West Seattle and sees our journey as instructive to them. The District paid me \$60/hr to do this workshop. The workshop went VERY well. Carmen is doing well there.

Stewardship Training: Hopefully all board members will attend the stewardship training that the district is holding at our building on January 26<sup>th</sup>.

Regional UUA Assembly: San Jose, April 26-38.

Seabeck Family Camp: We will probably be invited by Shoreline and Evergreen (Marysville) congregations to join their Seabeck weekend...it is either last weekend in April or first weekend in May. Vashon also would like us to join theirs, which is a weekend in August. I suppose we could do both...what do you think?

Building Improvements: appreciation to Patti McCall for refinishing the wood and installing new numbers for our address over the south office door. To Barth Sherwood for hanging our banner on the wall that has the light switches for sanctuary just inside south office door; and hanging our Habitat plaque and our certificate of occupancy. To Lyndol Pullen for cleaning the slopped paint off the baseboards in front office hallway (something that has bugged me for a long time). To Cliff for monitoring the garbage/recycling pickup processes including filing for our \$50 refund. To Patti McCall and Dan Gage who live across the street practically for being back up to move the garbage, greens and recycling out when the preschool people forget (The preschool staff volunteered to take that on since they are there everyday, but sometimes lately have forgotten, thus I have a back up plan). To Michael Armstrong for cleaning out and painting in the east storage inside the walls.

## Religious Exploration Report October 2012

### RE Council:

Members – Julie Forkasdi and Betsy Lowry (co-chairs)

Kimberly Frappier, Heather Hisatomi , Jeanette Hitch, Joe Nabbefeld, Laura Pierce, Wendy Swyt

The Council is already demonstrating a high level of energy and commitment as we support Natalie and our teacher volunteers in the transitions of our 2012-13 RE program. With the combined efforts of Peg, the Council, the DRE transition team, Kari and Shannon, and Betsy as summer RE coordinator, WSUU has offered rich and reliable programming for our children and youth without missing a beat through the evolution from Kari's valued leadership to Natalie's capable hands. Our greatest challenge in this process was filling the teacher volunteer roles needed to offer a full range of Sunday morning RE classes. Our goal was to have at least four volunteers per team to allow for one lead and one assistant each week, and some free Sundays for each volunteer to participate in the service. With some creative thinking, persistence, and help from the Board and others, we were able to recruit the volunteers necessary and bring them into their roles with positive spirit, good energy, and solid support.

This year WSUU is implementing the free, UUA developed curriculum called *Tapestry of Faith*. As described on the UUA website, *Tapestry of Faith* is a "series of programs and resources for all ages that nurture Unitarian Universalist identity, spiritual growth, a transforming faith, and vital communities of justice and love." Natalie and Betsy both have experience with this curriculum, and Natalie already has resources and curriculum supports prepared to scaffold our teachers' instruction. Each week, Natalie organizes and prepares all materials necessary for the teachers (with the valued help of Stina Lane-Cummings), to allow them to focus on the content of the lesson and reflections of their own UU experiences, values, and their beliefs as they prepare to teach.

With the core programming settling into place, the RE Council is turning its focus with Natalie to strengthening our offerings and rite-of-passage activities for our youth. Though this will require another immediate and significant effort, we believe it is important to push through the initiation of this program so we can grow this pathway as a solid benchmark for our future 9<sup>th</sup> graders, while providing the opportunity for current high school students and their parents to explore our UU roots and our own evolving UU branches this year. The program we are contemplating includes a trip to Boston in the summer of 2013, which will also require fundraising activities through the year. We invite your input as we plan for the significant addition of this program to our RE offerings.

Finally, the RE Council is thrilled to have Natalie at our helm. We are all appreciating her depth of knowledge about Unitarian Universalism, her extensive experience with running the engines of effective RE programming, her openness and positive energy as she links arms with us, and certainly her proclivity for laughing and taking things in stride as we find our way through a maze of change!

### From the DRE:

This past month was a busy time for me as I continue to get my bearings in a new position and learn about Westside. The end of August was very, very busy, and I was working 12 to 14 hour days many weeks just to catch up with RE start-up and teacher training. Now that the program is running more smoothly, I am better able to set appropriate boundaries and maintain a high level of professional

programming while continuing to be involved in my home life.

I participated in the Leadership Assimilation Exercise with Nan Fawthrop, and I believe it was very productive and informational on both sides. The participants asked good questions and gave me some great information about the congregation and its past that will help me move forward and meet the educational needs of the members.

One of the pieces of information that came up during the meeting was that the leadership (which included parents and teachers) really appreciated the collaborative leadership style of the past RE staff. The RE Council was an important part of the RE staff, and the teachers and advisors were able to contribute to significant decisions. I am going to try to preserve that spirit, which is somewhat of a change for me. In my old congregation, which was mid-sized but functioned as a campus-sized church with policy-based governance, our roles were very prescribed, and staff carried out most functions. I like the team model much more because it puts the responsibility for the program in the hands of the congregation, where it belongs. I feel my job is to support the faith development of those leaders so they can more effectively lead in the classroom. In many congregations, the RE Program becomes less a cooperative offering and more of a program that people can come and “consume,” which I believe is not a healthy trend for any congregation.

I feel very positively about the past 60 days. The congregation has been receptive to our direction for the year, and the teachers have been excited about the program and teaching this year. While I had intended on waiting a year before making any major changes and I do feel that in some ways I am still playing catch-up, the RE Council and I have been setting some major goals for this year that will beef up the programming and bring added excitement, fun, and growth opportunities.

My primary focus for the last 30 days was to get the teaching team solidified, trained, and confident for the classroom. This goal will certainly continue throughout the year, but we are off to a great start. For the rest of the semester, I will be focusing on communication with parents, getting the children and youth fully registered under our new system, and getting the new youth programming ready to launch.

### **Last Month's Wrap Up: September**

1. **New Registration System.** We launched the “once-registered, always registered” system this year, with a long-form to be completed for each minor in the congregation. This long form provides information about the child's medical history and contains the covenant of behavior, liability and image releases, and other important information which will help us make the program welcoming for all children. In subsequent years, parents who are registered will only receive a letter (possibly electronic) that asks for any changes to their information, such as new allergies or a change of address. If there are no changes, the parents do not need to do anything. Children and youth will remain registered until the family notifies us that they would like to be removed or they do not attend Westside activities for six months.
2. **Teacher Training.** We conducted two teacher training sessions that focused on helping the teachers gain knowledge and techniques for teaching Unitarian Universalism to children and youth. I had very positive feedback after both sessions. I am offering ongoing training for the teachers in the form of once-a-month conference calls and once-a-month meetings. The calls focus on the nuts and bolts of teaching, and the meetings focus on the deeper concepts of Unitarian Universalism that will help the teachers feel supported and spiritually fulfilled. I also give the teachers weekly emails to support their work that contains teaching tips and UU trivia.
3. **Safety Policy.** Last month I spent a good deal of time working with our safety policy. I have

sent a revised draft to the RE Council for input, and we will also be talking with the safety committee. I preserved the original policy in its entirety (including its wording and spirit), and I added the best practices and standards from the UUA and several district policies that I have used in the past. I am hoping to put it before the Board by next month's meeting. The revised version contains policy that will cause some changes in procedure, so I need to gather feedback before it is presented. Ultimately, of course, those matters will be up to the Board as it approves or does not approve the policy.

4. RE Start-Up. September was our ingathering service and RE start-up. I believe the ingathering went well, and everyone seemed to get a lot out of that service. RE start-up was a little shaky as we dealt with new procedures and I learned the nuts and bolts of Sunday morning. We also had large numbers that first Sunday, that proved challenging with some classroom spaces. After hearing feedback from the teachers, I made some adjustments to the room assignments that worked out really well.
5. The DRE's Blog. I now have a blog up that is titled “Westside Religious Exploration for Children and Youth” on blogspot. This blog features announcements for families as well as a summary of each lesson and take-homes for parents to extend the Sunday lessons into the home. I have also been doing a family resource of the week which features books and websites to help families grow in faith. I have posted my answers to the questions posed of me from the Leadership Assimilation exercise on the blog as well.

### **Looking Forward: October**

1. High School Youth Programming. Over the course of October, I will be working with the RE Council to prepare for our new High School Youth Program – a focus area that this community has identified as a priority in many conversations with me. I have designed a Coming of Age program that is basically a UU 101 class. The class is 37 90-minute sessions that focus not only on Unitarian Universalist history and theology, but also discussions centered on the “big questions” of religion. The program will involve worship, service, class time, fund raising, and two overnights. It culminates in a Credo Service at the end of the year and a trip to Boston to explore our religious roots. We are going to begin having parent meetings and mentor/advisor trainings in October with a hopeful start-date for the program on the first Sunday of November. This program is for all high school youth this year, but will only be for 9<sup>th</sup> graders next year. My hope is to use the COA program as a rite of passage in the congregation and solidify the relationships in the group to fortify our youth programming. This “COA-REMIX” program will be a gateway to leadership training and other programming possibilities for our older youth. Youth group will continue on Sunday nights.
2. Ongoing Training for RE Volunteers. As I stated before, I will continue the weekly emails and the monthly calls and meetings in October.
3. Continued Support with the LREDA Cluster. I will continue to meet with my LREDA cluster this month, although I will not be attending the LREDA conference in Virginia at the end of this month. The conference lasts for a week, and I just felt that it is too early in our new relationship together for me to be away for that long. In addition, my family is not financially in a place where Sean and Ian can come with me, and I'm not emotionally ready to be away from Ian for an entire week yet.

### **RE SNAP SHOT**

DATE	TOTAL NUMBER of CHILDREN	PERCENTAGE

	<b>PRESENT</b>	
9/16/12	55	52%
9/23/12	28	26%
9/30/12	43	41%

RE Enrollment for this year: 106

Average Total Number of Children Present on a Sunday Morning: 42

Average Percentage Attendance for September: 40%

You can clearly see the impact the first day of overcrowding had on the attendance, which dropped by half after the first week. My feeling is that as we continue to educate the families about our new rooms and our new space, they will feel more comfortable and return. As the program begins to take shape with activities and the children become more bonded, I believe attendance will increase as well.