

Unity Church Unitarian: Meeting of the Board of Trustees

September 8, 2018

The meeting took place at Unity Church-Unitarian, 733 Portland Ave, St. Paul, Minn.

Board of Trustees (BOT) members present: Nila Gouldin, Nancy Evert, Justin Cummins, John Steiner-Manning, Bailey Webster, Ruth Kirkland, Jennifer Tong, Terry Linskey, Jill Van Koolwijk.

Executive Team (ET) members present: Rob Eller-Isaacs, Janne Eller-Isaacs, Barbara Hubbard, Lisa Friedman, Kathryn Jay (Hallman Intern)

Others present: Laura Park, Jane Thompson (ARLT)

Justin Cummins called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.

Check-in question: what brings you great joy?

An opening reading was offered by Justin Cummins.

Prophetic Leadership

Board Capacity Subteam:

Discussion of nomination process. A decision was made about the three nominees for the board next year. Jill will be the Board Secretary, Jennifer will be Board Chair.

ET interpretation of the Ends:

The audience for the interpretation is the board. The idea is that they could be distilled and used liturgically. The ET will use parts of the interpretations as unison readings.

Feedback: some of the words used are very theological in nature. The ET is using that language consciously, and will be using it in teaching the congregation about the Ends. Example: "salvific." Salvation has been used as a worship theme twice now, many important conversations have come out of it among congregation members.

There was some clarification about the purpose of asking for feedback from the board on the interpretation. The board is supposed to say yea or nay about whether they are a "reasonable interpretation of the Ends." It's not an invitation to rewrite.

There was a request for a measure for religious education in the Ends interpretation. The ET accepted it as a reasonable request, and will develop such a measure. They can probably come up with numbers about the "potential pool" of RE participants, and what a reasonable drop-off is.

A question was brought up about tracking data by the list of identities that we ultimately left out of the Ends statements. We would have to track much more in terms of identity data. The issue is that people tend to feel less welcome the more questions they are asked about their specific identity.

Evaluation Subteam:

Terry worked with Laura on developing the ET evaluation. What they came to is that the survey that we used last year really covered all of the bases. Their recommendation is to use the same evaluation form we have used in the past, with the addition of discussion within the board as well as with the ET. Both the board and the ET take this evaluation.

Last month there were some questions that were quite subjective and more performance-based. They have been removed as not appropriate for the ET evaluation, but the board does want to have more discussion with the ET around individual and team performance, as well as board/ET relationship. The ET had concerns about the board seeming to want to evaluate aspects of their performance that we aren't privy to (because we can't be here all the time to observe day-to-day operations). There was a suggestion that we take more time around approving monitoring reports to do so. There are specific monitoring items that warrant more of a conversation than others, we could star or flag those in the agenda as "discussion items." This is something the Policy Subteam could address.

Board self-assessment: it's ready to go. There was some research on whether to do this in BoardEffect or Survey Monkey. BoardEffect is not sophisticated enough; Martha is going to put it into Survey Monkey.

Financials taskforce:

Nothing new to report, it's a slow process, they're working hard, and they will have an update next month.

Policy Subteam:

Conflict of interest language: inserted "Board Capacity Subteam" in the blank (see September meeting book).

Nancy Evert made a motion to accept conflict of interest language change as presented. Jill Van Koolwijk seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Justin is looking for a buddy for presenting bylaws changes at three upcoming meetings for the congregation in the next month.

The team will be reaching out to a few active congregants with a heads-up about the bylaws to pre-empt some questions. Trustees will also be making announcements from the reading desk on September 23rd.

Nominations team:

Still working, there are questions about how Jen Crow will be paid. A letter needs to be signed for her.

Discussion of shooting outside of Unity:

The ET handled the situation according to the emergency plan, and held a community meeting as well as a meeting with interested congregants.

Danny Givens wants to continue his relationship and work with Unity as he has been. We had conversation in the spring about transition and broadening the relationship between Unity and Above Every Name. When the ET report was written, there was some ambiguity about Danny's relationship with Unity based on Unity's response to the shooting.

There is a large memorial service being held this coming Monday at the church. Barbara is working with Danny to handle it in a way that ensures safety. They will be alerting the neighbors, which is the new policy with any large memorial service.

The board had a rich discussion about the relationship between Above Every Name and Unity. It's very complicated and fragile.

Senior Minister Compensation:

We've been asked to share our senior minister compensation with the board at the UU church in Oak Park, IL. The ET will take this and send back an appropriate response. They will also ask for the same feedback back.

Consent Agenda:

Ruth Kirkland made a motion to approve the items on the consent agenda. Nila Gouldin seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Monitoring Reports:

Compensation and Benefits report: this was passed out at the meeting and will be added to the meeting book. *(Added to the September meeting book on 10/12/18)*

There was a conversation about how the ET sets salaries. They are more based on NACBA than UUA recommendations (which are not based on reality). There is not a formal policy for merit-based raises.

ET compensation report: the goal is to reach 95% of NACBA. A temporary team was formed (Jill, Terry, Ruth), to meet with Barbara to make a recommendation on next year's ET compensation. Barbara will provide NACBA deviation when the proposed budget comes out so that the board can make an informed decision.

The compensation report needs to be moved on the perpetual calendar to when we approve the budget so that we're measuring compliance with the policy around compensation at the time when salaries are set.

We are tabling this discussion until October, and referring it to the Policy Subteam.

Ruth Kirkland moved that the Executive Team is not in compliance with the limitations of Policy II.E (financial condition), and the board is satisfied that the plan the ET has presented will move us toward compliance. Nancy Evert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Conflict of interest report:

Nancy Evert made a motion that the conflict of interest report is in compliance with Policy II.G. Nila Gouldin seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously without discussion.

Financial Report:

Barbara doesn't have July or August statements for us due to unexpected delays.

The ET is pursuing the new End around multiculturalism and the Helener Currier Trust bequest, and are in conversation with some consulting firms about this. The ET will be making a proposal to the board about what they think would be the best use of these funds. They are looking for a consulting firm that does long-term work with institutions that want to do the sort of work we are implying in the new Ends statements.

Communication and Counsel:

Ruth Kirkland made a motion that the ET's communication and counsel report is in compliance with Policy II.H. Jennifer Tong seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously without discussion.

Justin Cummins offered a closing reading.

Justin Cummins adjourned the meeting at 1:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Bailey Webster, secretary.