

# Unity Church Unitarian: Meeting of the Board of Trustees

## January 14, 2017

The meeting took place at Unity Church Unitarian at 732 Holly Ave.

**Board of Trustees (BOT) members present:** Nancy Evert, Angela Newhouse, Stu Alger, Justin Cummins, John Steiner-Manning, Peter Heege, Bailey Webster, Mark Foster

**Executive Team (ET) members present:** Janne Eller-Isaacs, Rob Eller-Isaacs, Barbara Hubbard, Lisa Friedman

**Others present:** Laura Park, Unity Consulting; Jessica Clay, ministerial intern

Justin called the meeting to order at 9 a.m. After a brief check-in, Peter Heege offered an opening reading.

### **Discussion question:**

What makes the best environment for open engagement and full participation during board meetings?

The question was presented by Justin Cummins, followed by a discussion by the board. Themes which emerged from the discussion included:

- The importance of a good agenda
- The value in receiving materials early enough to think about questions ahead of time
- Different processing times for individual board members; taking a few moments to think during discussions
- Not getting into a “group think” mentality; voicing differences of opinion when they arise
- Continue the practice of check-ins at the beginning of meetings
- “What is in the best interest of Unity Church?” should be central to every discussion
- Balance between formal meeting structure and smaller (just board or subteam) meetings; some people are more comfortable speaking up in a small group

### **Prophetic Leadership**

#### Transition subteam report and discussion

Peter Heege presented a report from the Transitions Subteam, and led the BOT in a discussion of the report. The Transitions Subteam is working on planning for the transition of the senior ministers (Janne and Rob Eller-Isaacs) to new executive leadership in June of 2020. Highlights of the report included:

- There are four potential transition models, of which the BOT will have to select one
- A decision on whether to keep the ET model or move to a CEO model will have to be made this year
- A list of other tasks for the BOT to complete in 2017 to reach our transition goals

## **Business Matters**

### Consent Agenda

The Merrill Lynch authorization (under corporate resolutions) requires Estelle Bruower's signature. As she was not present at the meeting, this was put off until the February meeting. The Ameriprise authorization was approved.

Stu Alger moved approval of the consent agenda.

Peter Heege seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

### Accessing/preserving and saving documents on the shared drive

This discussion was tabled until the February meeting; Barbara will give a tutorial on how to access the shared drive, and provide copies of written instructions.

Question for board to consider: do we save draft documents on the shared drive, or only approved documents? Barbara Hubbard suggests that we save only approved documents. Exception: draft minutes, which would be replaced once they are approved.

## **Monitoring**

### Executive Team Report

#### *II.E. Financial Condition*

Barbara Hubbard highlighted key financial indicators, noting that the current ratio is down because we have recently paid down a large amount of the Unity Tomorrow construction loan. It will increase in future. She also noted that 2017 pledges are looking very good; predictions are holding, and we only have \$50,000 to make up by the end of the year.

Mark Foster moved to accept the Executive Team Report as compliant with the limitations of II.E. (Financial Condition).

Peter Heege seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

#### *II.H. Communication and Counsel*

John Steiner-Manning moved to accept the Executive Team Report, but remove Policy 3 for discussion, as compliant with the limitations of II.H. (Communication and Counsel to the Board).

Nancy Evert seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

Policy 3 will be moved to the February Board meeting. John Steiner-Manning will write something up to frame a discussion of Policy 3 for the February Board packet.

## **Prophetic Leadership**

Spirit Map survey presentation and discussion in light of the within, among, and beyond frames incorporated into Unity's policies

Laura Park presented the BOT with our results from the Spirit Map survey. A discussion followed about the shared signature strengths and shared key opportunities of the Board. Highlights of the discussion included:

- Shared signature strengths:
  - lots of diversity, % shared not that high
  - High % about acting in the world; outward
  - Generally SS have a more inward focus
  - Not a lot of "God"
- Shared key opportunities
  - More to do with "God"
  - High % with inward focus
  - Potential to use key opportunities as reflection questions every month
- Repeat spirit map exercise every year or every other year?
- Discussion about the purpose and intention of the spirit map would make for a more meaningful experience.

Policy Governance refresher and application

*Congregational Board Commitments in Policy Governance*

Laura Park continued training begun at an earlier training session on policy governance. She talked us through items 5-9 in the Congregational Board Commitments in Policy Governance:

- #5: Delegate exclusively to the Executive Leader
  - Board relationship is with executive leaders ONLY
  - All other staff report to ET
  - Foundation of the practice is trust
  - This board has a unique structure to the executive team
- #6: Control means through executive limitation
  - limitations, not prescriptions
  - written to liberate creativity yet control
  - In policy, stop talking as soon as it's reasonable
  - "These are the values that you may not violate"
  - Meant to be permission-granting, not punitive or shaming
- #7: Develop policies as nested sets
  - Establish policies broadly, then narrow focus
- #8: Monitor Executive performance effectively
  - The ET's performance is the same as the organization's performance in the eyes of the board
  - Ends: how does this manifest operationally

- #9: Commit to board discipline
  - This is something we do well, through our self-evaluation, development of new board members, and continuous training

## **Prophetic Leadership**

### Discussion in Subteams

*Each subteam spent a few minutes in discussion around the following question: what question(s) should be answered this year and what question(s) should be answered in the coming years?*

Policy subteam: Does the language of the governing policies clearly express what we want as a board?

Evaluation subteam: What are the most effective ways to collect and analyze data from the congregational survey and Executive Team evaluation survey so as to be useful to the Board of Trustees, the Executive Team and the Congregation?

Topics to consider:

- What is the most effective way to administer the Spirit Map?
- What is the utility of the Spirit Map for the ET and the BOT?
- Are there more useful ways to analyze the congregational survey data?
- Are there questions in the congregational survey that might be changed?
- Are there ways to make the ET evaluation more useful to the ET?

What is the most effective way to administer Spirit Map? What is the utility of the Spirit Map for the ET and for the BOT? Should we consider changes in how the congregational survey data is analyzed? Do we want to consider changes to the questions (the survey instrument)? Are there ways to make the ET evaluation more useful to the ET?

Transitions subteam: Have we identified the proper timing and sequence of transition decisions and have 2017 decisions been made?

Communication and Linkage Subteam: How will the Board communicate with the congregation about board work and transition preparation?

Board Capacity subteam: Is everyone on the board fully engaged in the work of the board? Is everyone equipped to bring their best selves to the table, both individually and in a group dynamic?

## **Debriefing/ Potential Future Training Topics**

Justin Cummins led the BOT in a short debrief about the meeting, and asked for input on potential future training topics.

Concern was raised that the language in the Spirit Map report is very dense; could it be rewritten for a larger audience?

Angela Newhouse offered a closing reading.

The meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted, Bailey Webster, standing in for Estelle Brouwer, Secretary*