

Unitarian Society of New Haven
Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Trustees
December 14, 2017
Accepted January 11, 2018

Board Members Present: Liz Demsky, Jeannette Faber, Kathy Garner, Daniel Gelperin, Megan Lloyd Joiner, Pamela Miller, Peggy Myers, Bobbi Pace, Pat Trotta

Board Members Absent: Bernice Marie-Daly

Also Present: Georgia Jennings, David Stagg

D. Gelperin called the meeting to order at 6:32pm and P. Miller recorded the minutes. A quorum of Board Members was present, and the meeting proceeded with D. Gelperin presiding.

Gather

M. Lloyd Joiner lit the chalice. J. Faber read a poem by Rainer Marie Rilke, "I Am, You Anxious One". Attendees read the Leadership Covenant. We checked in with the question "Who has changed you most this year? How?"

Assess the Past (Monitoring)

Minister's Report

The Minister's report is attached at the end of the minutes. Highlights of the report include:

The Safety and Security team has met. G. Heuss-Severance is chairing the committee.
J. Farrell will leave in May to take another job.
Music is going well.
The 9am service will be maintained.

Rev. Claudia Elferdink, a retired minister and new USNH member, may consider becoming an affiliated minister to help M. Lloyd Joiner. Rev. Elferdink does not live here year-round. She can do teaching as well as ministry. This arrangement would be on a volunteer basis and would be mutually beneficial. Rev. Elferdink will attend the lay ministry meeting at the end of January. The board is supportive of this suggestion. An agreement would have to be prepared and communications would have to go out to the congregation.

A small group for new members will be established. We will look for a new membership coordinator. We may want to increase the time allotted to this position. The board could possibly act as a sounding board for new members. Moving to a mission that pulls us all in will help.

The format of this report was appreciated by board members.

Create the Future & Learning

a. Brief update on safe communication initiative

The Safety Circle gathered around 15 people from various groups. People were receptive and enthusiastic. The last item on the agenda was to create a smaller working group. P. Myers met with Right Relations after the meeting and cleared up remaining questions. There are a few people with difficult personalities and it ripples through the congregation. This is not a pervasive problem. Right Relations would like to bring Joe Brunner to the next meeting. He may also be invited to the next Council of Chairs meeting. The focus would move from repairing a breach to giving people tools to repair issues on the spot.

b. Sign up for board members to be recognized at the second service

Dec 17: J. Faber

Dec 24 morning service: P. Myers

Dec 31: K. Garner

Jan 7: B. Pace

Jan 14: P. Trotta

There seems to be some value to having board members be recognized by the congregation. It will not work at soup Sundays.

c. Need a volunteer to take minutes at January 11, 2018 Board meeting.

P. Myers has volunteered to take minutes.

d. Congregational meeting to vote on USNH joining CONECT.

A letter to the Board of Trustees requesting that a congregational meeting to vote on joining CONECT is attached at the end of the minutes.

There will be a congregational meeting to vote on joining CONECT. Should the board take a position on this subject? It seems appropriate under policy governance for the board to make a recommendation. Does it fit within the mission of the congregation? Does it add to or distract from the mission? It seems like an opportunity to reach out to the community. Looking outward is part of the shift from pastoral to programmatic congregations. It will refocus us in ways that we don't even know just yet.

The Board would like to see a motion which includes monitoring the success of a trial year. What are the metrics that will be used? What difference will it make for whom? The details should be pushed out in advance. Are there educational materials to be pushed out ahead of time? We should vote on a concrete proposal.

This information can be provided at the next board meeting. All materials can be distributed to the board before the next board meeting. A statement will be crafted and voted on at the January 11, 2018 meeting.

This is a potential segue to how we can monitor our own effectiveness.

e. Highlights of Montpelier discussion and BoT's conversation afterwards

Notes from the conversation with the Montpelier Board of Trustees are attached at the end of the minutes.

Montpelier has a culture of strong committees. Communication is of utmost importance. They had town meetings once a month with a few board members available to the congregation.

The Montpelier board did send an org chart. It needs to be distributed to board members.

f. Should we schedule monthly board chats for Jan, Feb, March, April, May?

Getting a room will be difficult. The sanctuary is booked through January. The library is often used by RE. Can we nail down the second Sunday starting in February? Topics for the meetings should be well publicized. Could the board have a table at soup Sunday? It is too loud to have a conversation. M. Lloyd Joiner will ask J. Ross to contact D. Gelperin about room availability in January and February.

Topics:

What are the ramifications of getting larger? What will we lose? What will we gain? What do members think?

g. Should we set a goal date for a draft org chart? If so, what should it be?

We are still working on the org chart. Meetings with the committees may help set the tone.

h. Interface between MT and committees. Discuss the model of strong committees as seen in Montpelier.

The board should be involved with talking to committees. Where is the boundary between MT and BOT? Is this still a good plan? How should we do this and which committees should we start with? What is the relationship between the MT and committees? What is that authority structure if any? How do we communicate it? Does MT have a vision of what it is? MT needs to clarify this. MT is responsible for the Mission, which is too non-specific. We need to think through "reporting". "Authority" has historically been an issue at USNH. What would be the easiest committee to start discussing responsibilities and boundaries? Would Membership be easier than most committees? It is central to some of our long-range concerns. Do they believe they have the freedom to do what they need to do? Personnel might be easier since it has only two members. We need to be clear on what the committees should be required to do. Are the committees effective? These discussions are required because we need strong committees in our current state. We don't ask committees how their work fits with the Mission. Can we tell committees what our focus is to help them structure their work? The Council of Chairs meets 3 times per year. Is there time to allow for teaching during the meetings? Committees are to do the work but not everyone seems to know that. What are our expectations and what can we do under the current model? MT must be able to say where things aren't working and find ways to make them work. The budget is the problem. We can barely afford what we have. Could things like following up on the steps be handled by staff? There are time constraints on everyone. Can we do more leadership development? Who needs to be on committees? Can people allocate a few hours per month to committees? How do we make voluntary service and jobs possible? Staff seems to be needed. We don't have the money for it.

What do we need to do before we start having these conversations? Committee, MT and Bot must know the committee's charge. How does the committee interact with others? When do we want to have this first conversation? January is preferred. Bot and MT needs to come up with what we think the purpose of the committee is, starting with Personnel. Do we start from scratch or is this documented? B. Pace will send information to the Board. J. Rosenthal and B. Pace haven't recruited any volunteers for the committee. The committee is busy when hiring is required. How do you train new committee members? Who wants to be at this meeting? B. Pace will find times when she and J. Rosenthal are available. Homework is for Bot and MT to have an idea about what the committee does. Personnel policies are in the HR manual. There is a place on the web site for operational policies. This will not be done in the context of a board meeting. Expect 1.5 hours for the meeting. We need an agenda.

i. Note to start thinking about: Can we understand what would be necessary to allow us to grow in the future?

Can we work on a grant for an operations staff person? What would the position look like? If we had the money, what would we do with it? This is like the Partnership for Growth program where we did write a grant proposal. We need to do it better. This is a big deal if we are serious about it. We must highlight the fact that the growth is already here.

j. Another note to start thinking about: Are there elements in our organization that are needed but we don't currently have?

Discussion deferred due to lack of time.

Consent Agenda

- a. Nov 9, 2017 BoT minutes
- b. Nov 12, 2017 Congregational meeting minutes

MOTION – D. Gelperin, to approve the consent agenda; **SECONDED – B. Pace**;

PASSED unanimously, 8 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions

The Management Team will revise policy interpretations and present them to the board prior to their publication in a Policy Book update.

Announcements

Schedule for reading Moving on from Church Folly Lane together for discussion at 2nd board meetings:

No meeting 4th Tuesday of December

Pages 107-146 for Jan 23

Pages 147-183 for Feb 27 - this takes us to the appendices

Thank-you's:

Richard Colon and Jane Ferrall for putting together the website. J. Faber will send thank you notes.

Adjournment

MOTION – D. Gelperin, to adjourn; **SECONDED – P. Miller**;

PASSED unanimously, 8 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions

The meeting was adjourned at 8:36 pm.

Attachments

Minister's report

Request for congregational meeting

Notes from Montpelier Board call

Minister's Report
December 14, 2017
Rev. Megan Lloyd Joiner

State of the Congregation (*recent successes, challenges, observations about the congregation's functioning in relationship to the mission, ministries, members, staff, or other Board concerns*)

- Members of the Safety and Security Team met on 12/6 and have begun their work. We expect their work to be complete by mid-Spring at the latest with a site-wide safety plan and lock-down procedure in place.
- Our Membership Coordinator, Jane Ferrall, has accepted a full-time position as Executive Director of Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers. She will continue her work with USNH through May of 2018. We will plan to hold a search this summer for the position.
- I recently met with our co-Directors of Music and reviewed a music survey completed before the staff transition. In general, the feedback our co-Directors and I are receiving has been very good. Jeff and Erica have been particularly tuned in to how the choir is feeling about the difficulty range of the selected music as well as the changed rehearsal schedule. Everything seems to be satisfactory to choir members, indeed, folks have appreciated being challenged and have commented repeatedly on the quality of direction. The music survey is being used by the co-Directors as we continue to shape the program as well as plan music for the spring. It will be shared with the Music Committee but not with the congregation as a whole. Anyone with questions may be in touch with Jeff.
- The on-going one-on-one campaign has been successful in getting members of the congregation to discuss their connection with social justice as well as the benefits and concerns around joining CONECT. The main concerns have been financial. With the matching grant we received from the UUA, my plan to dedicate the Christmas offering to CONECT, funds set aside in the Social Justice budget, an anonymous donor and funds from my discretionary fund, we are confident that we have the funds needed to pay dues for a trial year. Should we decide to join, we would institute yearly evaluations around our membership in the organization to determine the believe membership in CONECT is especially important at this time in our nation's history to help guide our social justice efforts in ways that are truly effective, sustainable and accountable to those most affected by the issues on which we are working.
- In collaboration with Worship Committee and Management Team and Staff, we have decided to maintain the 9am service through the congregational year despite low attendance. In many ways, the main purpose of this effort is to hold the space of having two service. We will most likely re-think the timing on two services for Fall 2018.

Major Accomplishments (*Large, new, or not regular-duty projects*)

- December 10 Music Sunday *Hope of Loving* Directed by Jeff Douma, sung by our USNH Choir in conjunction with the Haven String Quartet.

Primary Ministry Focus (*Areas of intellectual, mental, or spiritual study*)

- The Soul Matters themes have been guiding my area of study. We are currently exploring Hope, Intention and Perseverance.
- I am also looking at what one UU scholar calls "Emergent Sustainable Ministries" and how this theory of congregational life in the 21st century applies to USNH.

Upcoming Time Away (*vacation, study leave, UUMA or UUA gatherings*)

- I will be away briefly during the week between Christmas and New Years for a combination of vacation and study leave.
- I will likely take some study leave in January to prepare sermons and services for the spring.

Activity Report for Areas of Ministry for Preliminary Fellowship Evaluation

(not exhaustive)

Counseling and Pastoral Care

- I continue to work with the Lay Ministry Team to triage pastoral care. We are following a number of members of our community who are struggling mightily with illness, either their own or a loved one's. Pairing people with a lay minister makes it possible for them to get ongoing care and for me to remain updated on their condition.

Practical Arts *(administration, organizational development in and out of congregation, management of staff, attention to detail, support and leadership development, recognition and appreciation of others, delegation of responsibility and authority, follow through and completion of tasks, time management, attention to finances, fundraising, funding ministry, public relations and publicity skills, ability to work with boards and committees, clarity of roles, attention to long range plans, etc.)*

- Stewardship 2018 is underway with a handoff meeting happening on 11/21 and a meeting of the full Stewardship 2018 team (Tam Granucci, Cindy Chelcun, Ann Levison, Claire Bien, Sue Trotta-Smith) to be scheduled for the next few weeks.
- We are in the process of planning a leadership development training for committee chairs in the spring.

Organizational Ministry *(integration of new members and clients, creates a welcoming environment, encourages a sense of community, encourages growth, supports broad variety of programs, involvement of others in planning and conducting programs, nurtures lay leadership, professional presentation of self, pastors to various age groups, etc.)*

- I continue to remain interested in retention of the new members who are finding their way to USNH. We are planning to pilot a small group ministry for new members as well as explore the possibility of "hospitality teams" with everyone in the congregation being assigned a team that would take on the roles of greeters and fellowship hour hosts. This is still in the preliminary stages with work on the project by the Management Team and the Sunday Morning Team.
- This is a congregational effort that will require thought and care by the Board as well as Membership and other committees. Increasing our "retention rate" of new members will require significant cultural shifts around welcoming, integration, living out a shared mission, and covenantal behavior.

Personal and Professional Growth

- I continue my meetings with my professional resources (mentor, spiritual director, coach)
- I have been coming increasingly aware both of how I have grown in my ability to say "no" to tasks or requests and, I have observed recently that this is still a growing edge for me.

Teaching

- I am not currently teaching any classes.
- I see my main teaching avenue as my sermons.
- I do participate in the monthly Community Circles which I view as invaluable for connecting with members of the congregation.

Worship

- Planned and led Founders Day service on 11/12 with members of the congregation speaking
- Multi-Generational Service on 11/19 *For What Shall We Give Thanks*
- 11/26 and 12/3 Off (In future, I will work to not be off two weeks in a row. This worked out this way in order for me to observe one Sunday off in November and because Beth Roth was only available on 12/3 and wanted to lead a service before the end of the year.)

- Offered Music Sunday Reflection on 12/10
- Lead Worship Team meeting each Tuesday at 10am

Attendance

- 11/12: 9am 17; 10:30am 186
- 11/19: 9am 10; 10:30am 241 (Multi-gen)
- 11/26: no 9am; 10:30am 139
- 12/3: 9am 9; 10:30am 227
- 12/10: 9am cancelled due to snow; 10:30am 220 (Music Sunday)

Denominational Activities

- I met with UU students at Yale Divinity School at their monthly lunch on 12/1
- I met with the UU History and Polity class to offer reflections on 21st century ministry on 11/30

Prophetic Outreach

- I attended the CONECT regional assembly on 11/30 in Bridgeport. We had 11 attendees from USNH.
- I continue to work with the CONECT team to build support for joining CONECT in 2018 for a trial year.

Respectfully Submitted by Rev. Megan Lloyd Joiner

12/6/2018

CONNECT Action Group
Social Justice Network
Unitarian Society of New Haven
700 Hartford Tpke.
Hamden, CT 06517

Board of Trustees
Unitarian Society of New Haven
700 Hartford Tpke.
Hamden, CT 06517

Dear Board Members:

We, the undersigned members of USNH would like to schedule a special congregational meeting for the purpose of voting on the question of joining CONECT for a trial year to commence 2/12/18. We understand that according to the USNH by-laws 10 members are required to call the meeting and that it should be requested ~~90 days~~ before the meeting is to occur. We have scheduled the sanctuary for 1/28/18 after the service and would like to vote at that time. We humbly request that you call the meeting for this date. Thank you for your support.

In Faith and Justice,

Patricia Ligg
Maggie Hadwin
Amy Josue
Dorinda
Mildred Tubus
Bryce Sanderson-Corbin
Peter Schwartz
Ariela Miller
Arlene F. deVos
Ruthie
Abbe Lane

Montpelier-

Is vision critical for keeping the organization together and cohesive?

If so, how did you go about defining that vision and getting broad agreement?

How is that vision lived? How do they bring energy to their vision?

Since you transitioned to policy governance and have a minister working with a management team (similar to what USNH has)

1. How have your staffing or infrastructure needs changed? Has your committee structure changed?
2. In moving to your new structure what was your greatest challenge and how did you overcome it? Where did you get stuck and how did you get unstuck?

What is your Skype ID? Do you have an org chart you're willing to share?

Should I bring an external microphone? Try to find external speakers

We should send around a link to their website

When we went through search there is a recent example of the congregation being asked for their ideas about vision and getting it together. Can we use that method again?

Should we look at data that came out of that search process?

Would the congregation be interested in revisiting vision when we are not in search of a new minister?

Confusion about how all the pieces fit together: why do we need to clarify vision? What are the other parts that influence vision?

Need to clarify why we are engaged in this. Not just change for the sake of change. **Action for the BoT: explaining the structure, explaining that we need a clear sense of where we are going and why**

Future oriented- the vision should be energizing

Is the council of chairs a useful place to start this conversation?

Put things into newsletter about articulating the vision that we're committed to. Start the conversation. Invite people to come talk to board members and to each other about the vision.

We need to start right away talking to people about why we are talking about organizational changes and getting bigger. It's happening right now. Look at the parking lot. People are coming here- how do we welcome them and ensure we all clear on our vision?

How are we more than a liberal social club? Although maybe we need that, maybe that is part of our mission. Building community may be critical. E.g. the buddy banquet was a great success with lots of different activities. What would an adult version of that look like? How do we encourage deeper conversations? Community builds? Invite people from other UU congregations? Publicity is key.

Recall concerns of safety, particularly about talking with people with different views from yours. Perhaps one purpose of ours is to practice getting better at talking to others, and those skills are what we take out into the world at this time of increasing polarization.

USNH is a great place to practice respectful conversations. How are we doing this?

What does making transformative connections mean? What are we doing to achieve this?

When we are talking to each other what is our intention? Are we practicing clear, respectful listening? Can we listen to each other without trying to change the other person? At the same time we're going to live our values.

Clarify to everyone where we're going, how we're

12/5/17

Attendees: Dan, Peggy, Jeannette, Kathy, Pat, Pam

Executive and board try not to micromanage

Executive team is equivalent of MT – they work to keep this team from being overloaded

Minister selects executive team members subject to board approval

Committees can do their ministry – they have a lot of power in their culture

They do a lot on their own – relationship to executive team had to be established

Members were clear on lines of authority and organization structure (set clear boundaries); worked on this to make the system work

Minister creates the agenda with input from team – divide up responsibilities and tasks; operate on a consensus basis

One minister only

Church administrator

Multiple staff members

Management team = executive team plus staff – meet 2 times / month to keep keep them on the same page – not part of bylaws

Committees have decision making authority – this is still being worked on

A Board appointed committee kept coming back for permission – each committee is being educated

Committee authority comes from the board as outlined in bylaws and governing board policies

Committees under executive team

Finance committee is under executive team

Stewardship committee is only committee the board oversees

Board is to support the mission – critical for decision making

They will share some governance documents

Post call discussion:

This congregation seems very similar to ours

Communications are key

Clarify the structure for everyone

Have a monthly chat with the board – after the service

They made effective use of committee of chairs – they submit monthly reports

Monitor policies monthly

Executive team uses meetings for leadership development

Board retreat in Feb/March will set goals for next year

Communications committee does not have to ask permission to make changes on web site

Do we need a communications committee?

We could use a stewardship committee – our MT is invested in stewardship

How can we build structure to take details on people to be able to report on possible use of talents?