

FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF PORTLAND

Meeting of the Board of Trustees

Regular Meeting, November 17, 2005

Present: Cindy Cumfer (Moderator), Randy Russell (1st Vice Moderator), Lee Fawcett (2nd Vice Moderator), Dave Patterson (Secretary), Don Watne (Treasurer), Kathryn Estey, Helena Lee, Teri Martin, Jean Omelchuck, Pierre Provost, Marilyn K. Scott, Marilyn Sewell (Senior Minister), Tom Disrud (Associate Minister)

Absent: Eric Schmidt

Staff: Candace Clarke (Director of Finance & Administration), Jan Larson (Administrative Assistant)

Guests: Marsha Marzano, Richard Wattenberg, Julia Spence, Robin Henderson, Tricia Knoll, Alan Comnes, Jennifer MacNichols

Minutes: Gayle Nybakken

Process Observer: Kathryn Estey

Timekeeper: Pierre Provost

The meeting was called to order at 7:10.

Announcements

Cindy welcomed back Lee Fawcett from his medical leave, and Lee thanked the Board members for their support during his illness.

Thanks to Dave and Jan Borr for updating the web site.

There is no need for an extra meeting on December 1.

Board Actions

Previous Meeting's Minutes:

Approved after modifying the third paragraph under Board Member Comments as follows:

Randy said there are rules regarding communication. He has received e-mails that seem personally demeaning, and he wants to be treated respectfully as he treats others. Although the guidelines say the moderator appoints people to Board-level committees, there had been no guidelines for the appointment process. The moderator's guidelines were proposed to create an open, objective and auditable process.

Review of Previous Action Items:

No action on Candace Clarke's checking with the Leadership Council regarding interest in the Pacific Northwest District Leadership conference held November 12.

Eric will have the Communications Committee review methods of communication.

Dave will put information about where to obtain a copy of the Membership handbook on the web site. This is pending review of the handbook by Tom.

Kathryn sent a list of skill sets from last year to the Board for review.

Tom prepared talking points about how we welcome newcomers to the church.

New Action Items:

Cindy will talk to Craig about putting notices of Board meetings in the Sunday bulletin.

Teri will provide a report on the evaluations given (probably as part of the December Board packet) at the generosity cafes.

Pierre will be the new Foundation representative the Committee on Generosity.

The Board agreed that we can dialog with congregants in our own name if that is made clear, and, if it is writing, that we would copy Board members.

"Open Mic" for Congregants:

Tricia Knoll stated that four-and-a-half months ago she had asked to be a member of the Finance Committee, and she still doesn't know if she is a member. She is disappointed that she has not received an answer. She asked that, if she is found to be blackballed, people speak now.

Cindy's response: She is disappointed that Tricia's statement doesn't reflect what she had seen. Cindy said that she has spoken to Tricia about the process several times and explained where the request was in the process. Cindy had proposed this to be on the August agenda, but said it was crowded and there wasn't time in the August meeting. In September, Don Watne was out of the country. The Board did not want to make a decision without Don present, since Don is chair of the Finance Committee. Last month also was very busy. The Board had an Executive Session that began after the regular meeting ended at 9:00 but had 3 items on the agenda and only had time to cover one of them that was more pressing than Tricia's request. The Board came in at 5:30 for an Executive Session today to discuss a couple of items, one of which was this topic. The discussion was characterized by Board members who had been leaning toward putting Tricia on the committee, but were now concerned about her reducing her pledge to the church to the minimum necessary to retain voting rights. The Board is an elected body, chartered to carry out the majority will of the congregation. A major goal of the Board this year is to nurture a culture of generosity. Board Committees, such as the Finance Committee, exist solely to help the Board get its work done. The biggest issue with Tricia being on the Finance Committee is that her action of publicly reducing her pledge is in direct opposition to the Board goal that the Finance Committee must help carry out. It is difficult to see how the Board can responsibly put someone on a Board Committee whose actions are in opposition to the purposes of that committee. Nevertheless, a lot of people on the Board would like to find a way to bridge the gap between the Board and dissenters.

Marsha Marzano later said she was having difficulty following the rest of the meeting because of the responses earlier to Tricia's comments. She commented that she previously had said that we had created a climate of fear in the community. She hoped at that time that this was not true. She said she thinks the Board feels that Tricia is qualified to be on the Finance Committee, and wondered what she had done to not allow that. Was it disagreement with the by-laws? She is saddened that a church grown from dissenters would deny a member to be on a committee.

Board member responses: Cindy said the Board's decision is not based on a question of dissent. It was her (Tricia's) working against the Board's goals. Pledging just the minimum to the church is contrary to the Board's goals. Board committees are different from other committees in the church and exist to serve board goals.

Don said that a major goal of the Board this year is generosity, and Tricia seems to be acting in opposition to that.

Eliot Center

Julia Spence reported from the Eliot Committee. The final cost estimates are not ready. The Eliot Committee expects to get the final estimates in early January. The Committee will have "almost final" estimates by the December board meeting. The Board agreed to postpone discussion of the Eliot Center until the December board meeting.

Hiring of a Third Minister

Cindy said that a donation will allow the church to hire another minister, and the process involved is either a hire or a call. Going through the call process would delay when we could get a minister. The Executive Team's recommendation is to hire a minister and then go through the call process. Then the congregation would determine if it wanted to keep that minister, or call or hire another.

Marilyn S. said we need to name a time frame that person would be in "limbo" and recommended a period of two or three years. If we move ahead to hire a minister, we would hope to do this by summer, or at the latest by fall.

One more person has been asked, but the Assistant Minister Search Committee at this time is as shown below:

Randy Russell

Kathryn Estey

Warren Bacon

Corey Cliffe

Frank Nelson

Paul Pitkin

Their first meeting is November 29. We will be ready then to ask for names, and we will get record sheets from interested ministers to review.

We probably will have the candidate come here to be interviewed and to hear him or her preach nearby.

Dave asked if the congregation will be involved at this time, and Marilyn S. said it would not.

Lee asked who makes the decision about length of hire, and Randy said the Executive Team would.

Marilyn S. said that is dangerous if ministers don't get along. We have an unusual situation where Tom has been here for 11 years. She said we are looking for a strong preacher and a person who can coordinate membership and build community.

Lee said he wants candidates to have informal time with congregants. Tom said the custom is not to do that because it is not public. He does not want to do that until the church says it wants the candidate. Marilyn S. said the committee needs to be able to make a choice.

Jean asked if there will be a time for the Board and congregation to add comments about what it is looking for. Perhaps at the next meeting or at a Café meeting. Marilyn S. said she liked the idea of a café conversation in which members indicated what they wanted in a minister.

Marilyn K. said we should publish the names of the Search Committee members when the committee is complete.

Consent Items

None. Cindy and Don have not had a chance to meet about the amendment to the financial policies.

Board Committee Reports

Committee on Generosity:

We finished the round of generosity cafes. There were about 70-75 attendees. Results will be presented in time for the December meeting. Teri will provide a report on the evaluations given (probably as part of the Board packet).

Eliot Center:

Forty advocates are meeting with people, trying to obtain three-year pledges. They have been fairly successful, and we are getting about 93% of what we are asking for the annual fund drive.

For the annual campaign, 31 agreed to a three-year pledge.

For the capital campaign, 30 people donated.

Finance/Treasurers Report:

Candace said no financials were prepared. The Accountemps person has been spending his time getting caught up on the accounting for the Foundation in preparation for the Foundation Board meeting last Monday and did not have time to complete the Church financial statements. It was also noted that the Accountemps person's contract is ending, and Zaida Cooper has been hired as our new comptroller.

The investment maturity ladder projecting cash flows into March of next year has been completed, and Don has reinvested the maturing U.S. Government Agency notes in accordance with it.

Don said the Foundation Board of Stewards feels it needs a representative on the Committee on Generosity. All agreed, and Pierre will be the representative.

Communications: No report.

Policy/Evaluation Committee: No report.

Foundation Board: No report.

Executive Team

Tom handed out the results of the October 30 membership and parking survey.

Questions 1 and 2 (How long have you been coming to First Unitarian? Are you a visitor, member, friend?): Teri would like to see a cross-tabulation of these two questions. Lee said we should have the Committee on Generosity do a more detailed analysis of the survey and see what the implications are.

Question 3 (How do you support the church financially?): Tom noted that **32% are not pledging**. Marilyn S. said a lot of people are coming to church and using the facilities but are not contributing, not supporting the congregation. We need to change how we do pledging.

Question 5 (regarding level of participation): Tom noted that a very large percentage (52%) primarily came only to Sunday services and did not participate in activities at other times. This means that 48% are involved in additional activities, which is a good indication of the health of the congregation.

Question 11 (What is your age?): Tom noted that 24% were between the ages of 30 and 44, which is a sign of a healthy church. However, Marilyn S. remarked that we have no young adult programs.

Lee asked if we should have a small group of people investigate alternate parking options other than the Schnitzer lot in case we lose this space if it is developed. Cindy said that is an Executive Team function. Marilyn S. said she thought it was a good idea.

Cindy asked if the personnel policy review has been seen by an attorney. Tom said it will be and that it was part of the process that will occur this year.

Speaking with one voice in response to member communications

What does that mean? Primarily, it means that we shouldn't undercut Board decisions; e.g., saying, "I didn't agree to that." We should be able, in casual conversations, to preface comments with words that indicate what we are saying is *our own* opinion, not that of the Board.

Randy wants to be able to engage in dialog with congregants. This can be done by making clear that it is his opinion as long as it is not on Board policy-related materials.

Lee said that most of what we do is policy and should require speaking with one voice. He talked about having Town Halls as an opportunity to discuss issues with the congregation. He would like to schedule at least one this church year.

Cindy said she didn't care if the Board decision involved was a policy decision or not. She wants to be able to discuss issues.

Marilyn S. said we need to speak as one voice concerning decisions already made. Otherwise, we should be able to respond to communications.

Cindy said that we just need to use care to make clear it is not the view of the entire Board.

Teri said it is different if something is put in writing rather than said in a conversation. If it is in a letter or e-mail, perhaps other Board members should be copied with responses.

The Board agreed that we can respond in our own name if that is made clear, and, if it is writing, that we would copy Board members.

Lee commented that in his experience face-to-face conversations are the greater problem. We need to support Board decisions at those times, too.

We also need to revisit what Board work can be done by e-mail.

Process Observation

Kathryn said we remained focused on goals of supporting the Eliot Center and increasing generosity. Good humor and optimism was displayed in regards to the Eliot Center. We had a late start, but we ended up OK, and we were flexible when Marsha asked for more Open Mic time.

Tricia appreciated the Board's being forthright on a sensitive subject.

Closing Words

Don said he had Thanksgiving on his mind, so he read a Mohawk prayer from *Earth Prayers from Around the World*.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15.