

# Annual Report to the Congregation

## Allegheny Unitarian Universalist Church May 2015

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### Ministry .....

#### PARISH MINISTRY

*Rev. David McFarland – Called Minister*

This has been a year of transitions.

- The congregation successfully navigated the return from the church’s first-ever minister’s sabbatical;
- Religious Education Ministry had to say goodbye to Director of Religious Education, Bryan Byers, and was yet able to volunteer staff the remaining year with excellent programs;
- Director of Worship Music, Jesse Landis-Eigsti, secured a full-time position and discovered a new direction for his career, requiring him to dial down his church commitments;
- The Pittsburgh Cluster was created — in no small part thanks to the dedicated efforts of many Allegheny volunteers;
- Our Ohio-Meadville (OM) District staff saw District Executive Rev. Joan van Becelaere move to lead the regional staff while familiar friend of Allegheny, Rev. Renee Ruchotzke, became our new primary contact;
- Finance moved the accounting to a completely new system and Membership created a new directory;
- And although, as I interpret them, survey results indicated a desire to largely keep the program; Rainbow Circles had a significant transition when nobody took over the role of Lead Coordinator.

In the cycle of church growth, this year’s logical next step would have been to build a strategic plan. But that didn’t happen. Perhaps after several years of significant congregational achievements — mission, vision, full-time ministry, covenant, new staff, and sabbatical — it may have just been time to take a breather. Though somehow we still found the wherewithal to reinvent a huge social event, host another “Alternative Spring Break,” apply for and receive our first-ever “Chalice Lighter Grant,” conduct a successful End-of-the-Year stewardship campaign, establish connections with the denomination’s “Entrepreneurial Ministry Program,” and of course welcome new members and guests to the worship, community, and justice-making life of this extraordinary congregation.

We maintained. In the context of congregational life as it’s shaping up in the 21st century, this can be seen as a huge success: We aren’t hemorrhaging members or cutting staff or slashing budget. And unlike many urban congregations without denominational support, we aren’t even close to talking about closing the doors. But we can’t be sanguine. We’re not immune to the huge changes in the surrounding culture, in church culture in particular. We need to innovate and risk. We need to flourish!

Amidst all this, the spirit is high in Sunday morning pews (and, I hope, pulpit). Seems that offering a non-judgmental, spirit-filled, dogma-free gathering dedicated to growing souls and serving the common good is still speaking to our time and place. It’s been another gratifying year of working and playing and singing and praying with such an inspiring group of people dedicated to personal transformation that transforms the world. It’s an honor and a joy to serve as your called minister. I look forward to celebrating the tenth anniversary of my installation with you this coming autumn and to another year of growing together into the church that the North Side in the 21st century is calling us to become.

#### RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

*Peggy Thompson & Lisa Schroth – Co-chairs*

This year has been challenging for the Religious Education Ministry. We have two classes and also the youth group. Marissa Morrison, our childcare specialist, teaches the youngest group with the assistance of a volunteer. They have story time, time to play or color and of course, snacks. The school-age group of children is taught by two volunteers. We have not been using a curriculum for this class but are creating lessons based on the monthly church focus. The UUA has Religious Education lesson plans online from which we also draw. Their classes include a mixture of stories and lessons, discussion or art activities and snack. Both classes begin with “joys and concerns.” Sonia Reed is the advisor for the youth group. They meet on chosen dates for different activities. This is a small but mighty group.

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Marissa was originally hired to teach the younger class but has taught either class as needed. As a teacher herself, she has developed lessons and activities for the kids. Her help has made a huge difference for the kids.

Rev. Dave has made “time for all ages” and “worship for all ages” an important part of Sunday worship. The children have enjoyed this. There are about twenty five children and youth who regularly participate in the program but not necessarily every week. Activities bags are given to the children to help keep them busy during all-ages worship.

With Rev. Dave’s guidance we have been exploring how the RE ministry would best be served by the new professional that is hired. The position includes training and recruiting volunteers. This staff person would be a resource for curriculum development and would communicate with the congregation and the Board of Trustees. Other duties include maintaining and upgrading the RE rooms and being a web presence. The RE Ministry is working towards having the position filled as soon as possible.

The rooms used by the children in Unitarian house are in need of attention. Along with lots of accumulated toys and art supplies the rooms themselves need a face-lift. Unfortunately, very little has been done to the RE rooms for some time.

The Religious Education Ministry is looking forward to the coming year and working towards a vibrant and strong program for the kids.

### **COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY**

*Jane Dirks—Chair, Greg Blackman, Bethany Meisberger*

The Committee members for the June 2014–June 2015 term have been Bethany Meisberger, Greg Blackman (incoming Chair), and Jane Dirks (Chair). While Rev. Dave was on sabbatical, we connected with and helped to support Brian Byers and Jesse Landis-Eigsti in their enlarged staff roles. Upon Rev. Dave’s return, we provided a de-briefing opportunity for him to share his insights gained from his study and reflection period. We have met monthly with Rev. Dave, focussing on issues of concern to professional staff as well as issues facing various committees and the larger congregation. As a group that is charged with being a resource and liaison for both the staff and the congregation, we have tried to provide a “compassionate sounding board” for those with communication needs. In this capacity, we met with one of the church committees, and listened

to their concerns, allowing the committee members to give voice to problems with which they were struggling.

Our main focus this year has been the development of the Covenant Renewal Policy (please see attached approved policy). This policy was developed, in conjunction with the Board of Trustees and the minister, to define a process by which members who find themselves out of covenant with other members or with the congregation, may re-establish their relationship with each other and the Covenant of Right Relations. Along with the development of this policy, a Right Relations Team will be established to guide and facilitate the process. Please see the full document for a complete explanation of the Covenant Renewal process.

In June 2015 we will welcome a new member onto the Committee. It is our hope that the committee can become even more visible and active within Allegheny, so that all members and friends can feel they have a compassionate sounding board through which to bring both their concerns and their ideas and inspirations on how to better grow and nurture this beloved community.

### **RAINBOW CIRCLES**

*Jane Dirks – Circles Coordinator 2014–15*

Thank you to all Allegheny members and friends who participated this year in the Rainbow Circles small groups. We especially want to thank our leaders this year, who were: Red Circle—Charlie Snowden, Orange Circle—Kathy Kozachenko, Yellow Circle—Karl Kunkle, Green Circle—Joy Gero, Blue Circle—John Engberg, and Purple Circle—Kelly Blais

The Circles supported fellowship and community at the church through helping to provide refreshments for fellowship hour, snacks for children in Religious Education, and greeters at Sunday worship. Many of the Circles also gathered socially to get to know each other better, and several groups participated in service projects within the church and in the larger community.

A survey of Circles members and leaders has been done, to assess their experiences and provide information about interest in future Circles or small groups. If you did not get a chance to participate in this survey, and you would like to, please see Jane Dirks for a copy of the survey. The Board of Trustees is currently reviewing the data from the survey, and will decide on next steps for the Circles or small groups. If you would like to have input about future small groups at Allegheny, please speak to a member of the Board. Your feedback and ideas are welcome!

## NOMINATING REPORT

Jay Poliziani – Nominating Chairperson 2014–15

The Nominating Committee is pleased to present the following slate of candidates:

Two-year Trustee position

Liz Dell

Sonia Reed

Mary Jo Sonntag

One-year Trustee position (replacement):

Eric Meisberger

### MARY JO SONNTAG (FIRST TERM)

Mary Jo has been a member of Allegheny for four years. She loves the spirit and welcoming nature of the church. Mary Jo is the Director of Global Talent Management at DDI. She coaches DDI’s leaders worldwide to successfully execute their roles and achieve their potential. Her current focus is the Asia-Pacific region, with an emphasis on China. Mary Jo is also the author of the book,

*Write if You Live to Get There* which traces the westward migration of the Phillips family from Vermont to California through 120 years of letters. The book recently won an IPPY award, a prestigious award given for self-published books. Mary Jo holds degrees from Seton Hill University and The Pennsylvania State University. In her free time, Mary Jo enjoys hiking, biking, and kayaking.

### ERIC MEISBERGER (FIRST TERM)

Eric has been a member at Allegheny for a few years. He currently work at the Carnegie Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Eric lives with wife, Bethany and their cat, Thunder Paws. He plays in a deck hockey league, an over-40s soccer league, and enjoys playing music (“often way too loud”) with friends. Eric is excited by the opportunity to help out in the Allegheny community and offer what he can on the Board.

## Board Administration .....

### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Liz Dell – President 2014/2015

It has been a year of changes here at Allegheny and as this was my first year as Board President, one of them was me! I believe that the majority of Board Presidents spend most of their first year learning, and I am in no way an exception to that – pretty much everything I did, I was doing it for the first time. Even with that learning curve, however, I feel like the Board was able to accomplish a lot this year, and I look forward to what we will do in the year ahead.

Perhaps one of the most important changes was a change back – having Rev. Dave with us again after his six-month sabbatical. We commemorated his re-entry with some discussions over the summer and a welcome home party in the fall, but the work of sabbatical continues even now, with Rev. Dave continuing to challenge the Board and me to continue our spiritual growth and figure out how best to use our talents to serve the church and its evolving needs. It has been wonderful having him back and I am grateful for his insight.

At our retreat in August the Board decided to create two task forces: one to make recommendations on how to improve church communications led by Jay Poliziani, and another focusing on programming led by Mark Tomlinson. Both groups have spent time studying their

issues and the Communications task force has already made some policy recommendations to the Board. I look forward to continuing to work with both groups in the coming year and seeing what they come up with.

Leadership development was also something the Board worked on this year, and to that end a team of four Trustees (Greg Blackman, myself, Sonia Reed, and Mark Tomlinson) participated in a hybrid online/in-person leadership training program offered by the Pittsburgh Cluster and the Central East Regional Group (CERG). Thanks to Greg and Mark two of the three in-person sessions were held at Allegheny, which allowed us to deepen our understanding of the material and make connections to members of the Indiana, Pa. church who also attended. Being a part of the process was not only useful in terms of skills to be gained as a leader, but it helped us better understand how lay leadership fit into the larger working of a congregation and what strengths and talents we could bring to bear for the good of Allegheny as a whole. I would encourage anyone with an interest in deepening their leadership skills to consider attending upcoming sessions in either the summer or fall.

Another project spearheaded by the Board was to apply to the Ohio-Meadville district for a Chalice Lighters grant to make improvements in the acoustics

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in Founders Hall. We received the grant in February (about \$3,000) and raised roughly \$3,600 from members, former members, and friends of the congregation. With this money in hand we are looking to do the improvements over the summer, so stay tuned for more details on progress.

While on the subject of finances, I would be remiss to not reiterate a key point in the Treasurer's Report – that our pledge income has been down over the last few years, leading us to use even more of our savings to meet our operational needs. As with many household budgets (my own included), very little of our budget is discretionary, so we must look to increasing our revenue in order to improve our financial situation. The good news is that with the new financial software we have a better handle on our numbers than ever, so we have a firm basis from which to work. What we need now is commitment from the congregation. I challenge everyone to think deeply about what Allegheny means to you, and to give as generously as you can so that others may find the same meaning and community that you have found.

As in years past, Allegheny was involved in events within the wider denomination. In November delegates from Allegheny went to the first Cluster Assembly at

First Church, where we helped vote the Cluster into existence as a way to share resources and connect more deeply with our fellow Pittsburgh UUs. In addition in March Mark Tomlinson and I attended a joint District Assembly between the Ohio-Meadville District and the St. Lawrence District held at Niagara Falls, N.Y. It was wonderful to meet so many UUs from all over the two regions and to learn more about how regionalization will impact the Pittsburgh cluster and Allegheny.

Finally no Board report would be complete without thanking the people who make the Board possible – the Trustees! Our continuing members this year are Greg Blackman, John Luff, and Jay Poliziani. Thanks to you all for your dedication and hard work, insight and inspiration, and I look forward to the year ahead.

I would also like to give my heartfelt thanks and appreciation to our Trustees who are departing this year: Jane Schwarz, for her diligence with meeting minutes and insight in discussions. Mark Tomlinson, for his dedicated leadership in so many capacities but especially as President during the 2014 Sabbatical, and for helping me find my feet as President this year. Thank you both for your dedication, your talents and your service. Allegheny is a better place because of you.

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## FINANCE COMMITTEE

*Peggy Thompson – Chairperson*

The role of the Finance Committee is to manage the financial matters of the church, make recommendations and keep an eye on investments. The committee consists of three members along with Treasurer John Luff.

There are two accounts at PNC. These are a checking account and money market account. The last two CDs from ESB bank matured and were cashed in.

This year the church started investing in the UUA Common Endowment fund. The church has two accounts. The return on that investment will be significantly higher than if the money had remained at PNC. The Board of Trustees and the committee worked together on accomplishing this. The church has a portfolio of socially responsible stock with Ameritas and for many years we have kept an investment with Oiko credit micro lending.

This year the budget deficit remains but efforts to offset that have helped. Among those are rental of our facilities, the year-end campaign and the fun and successful spaghetti dinner and auction. Betty Schwarz manages the Giant Eagle gift card program. Besides

groceries, the cards can be used for gas, the pharmacy and to purchase other major store gift cards. The church makes money on every card sold. There have been no major repairs on the buildings this year. The actual budget for RE was lower than anticipated but next year will change with the hiring of the new head of the RE ministry.

Our church received a Chalice Lighters grant from the OMD that goes into the fund for acoustic improvements in Founders Hall. Already the church has raised a significant amount of money for the fund.

The transition to ICON is almost complete. It has both financial and membership capabilities and allows access to records by the Stewardship Committee. The software is able to produce payroll tax calculations. This is a savings for the church because for years an accounting firm was paid to do this.

The Finance Committee will be working with the Board on the upcoming budget. The long-term goal for the future is to be financially secure.

Members of the committee include Jill Brethauer, John Luff and Betty Schwarz.

## MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

*Betty Schwarz – Chairperson*

The Membership Committee happily greeted four new members this year, continuing its role of welcoming guests and guiding those who are interested in membership. We explain “Pathways to Membership,” articulating what it means to be a member, and how to become a member. We discuss “Members’ Expectations of Members,” a description of how we interact with and treat each other as members in order to help newcomers in the transition to membership. We want to be sure that those entering into membership are aware of and have an opportunity to discuss these ideas before joining. We also organized community events in the course of the year including the Ingathering Potluck, the Thanksgiving Potluck, and the Summer Picnic.

Membership continues to organize, update and publish Allegheny’s Directory (new print Directory of Members was published in April), as well as maintaining the Membership Book, the UU World Mailing List, New Member Packets, Member and Guest Name Tags. The Greeters Group of trained Greeters, coordinated by Andy Schwarz, works with the Membership Committee to welcome guests and members on Sunday morning.

## MEMBERSHIP REPORT

*Jane Schwarz – Clerk of the Church 2014–15*

As of this report, Allegheny Church membership stands at 78 members. There are 78 qualified to vote, requiring a quorum of 31 members present to conduct business at the Annual Meeting on 31 May.

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## [MEETING] HOUSE COMMITTEE

*Donald Zeilman – Chairperson & Facilities Manager*

Although no major capital or repair projects were undertaken this past year, two significant events required the committee’s attention. At the end of May 2014, a portion of the plaster ceiling in the Emerson Room came loose from the lath and fell. The event required a major cleaning effort by the committee (soot throughout the first floor and broken plaster).

Over the summer, the church experienced a break-in with the object of stealing the large-screen monitor in Founders Hall. The collateral damage to the stained glass window in one of the front doors proved to be the more expensive part of the loss. A completely new replacement window had to be fabricated, and was installed by the committee.

This coming summer, maintenance work associated with the Unitarian House box gutters and porch roof is being considered. The Committee is hoping to do the work, so watch for a notice for volunteers to help.

We completed our second year with the cleaning contractor for the church interiors. We continue to be satisfied with the work. The twice-a-year stripping and finishing of the flooring in the lower level of the church has also been fulfilled.

For the Founders Hall acoustic project, a layout for the panels was completed based on the requirements specified by the acoustical consultant. We are finalizing the project costs and conditions in order to make a recommendation to the Board.

Annual projects completed include fire extinguisher and emergency lighting inspection, and boiler & piano maintenance.

Andy Schwarz takes responsibility for facilities rental and use, and continues to be the primary coordinator of that effort.

Our thanks to the volunteers that helped and led projects, initiatives and planning—without you our facilities would not be as clean, safe and appealing as they are.

## Treasurer's Report for Annual Meeting

Submitted by John Luff, Treasurer

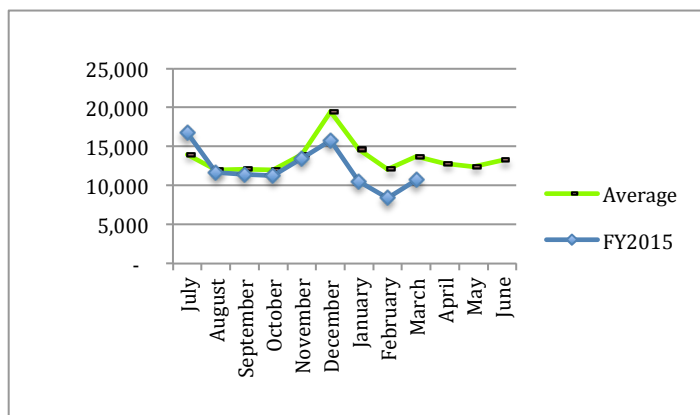
(Notes include results through March 2015 Financials)

### Expenses

Total expenses exceed the budget through March by <\$1,815>. However when staff positions budgeted but not currently authorized are deducted the deficit against budget becomes <\$9,147>. We have very few discretionary expenses, with the bulk of our expenses dedicated to staff and facilities. The deficit represents about 9% excess over income. Actual expenses are about \$3,000 below last year after adjusting for extraordinary costs related to the roof in FY2014. Our total expenses after adjusting for net income from Giant Eagle card are running about \$105,000.

### Income

Our pledge income is down from last year, and significantly below the budget for this year. The chart shows a consistent short fall relative to our average income over the last several years. This is adjusted to not show gifts received for the acoustics project in Founders Hall. 16 of our giving families represent 75% of our total income, a very lopsided result.



### Giant Eagle

Giant Eagle net for the 9 months is positive \$697, or about 1.8%.

### Operating Deficit

Our operations are currently running a deficit of slightly under \$20,000 (estimate includes partial results from April, including about \$2,500 in fund raising income). I am projecting a deficit at the end of the Fiscal Year (June 30, 2015) of about \$27,000.

### Assets

Our total savings are deposited in primarily three accounts, a Money Market account at PNC, at the UUA Common Endowment Fund, and in a locally managed investment account. Our total savings have declined as shown here. We redeemed two CDs and increased our investment in the UUA CEF, while using \$22,865 to support operations. The Endowment Fund balances (\$25,862 total) are not available to fund operating losses. Not shown are restricted funds of \$7,659 dedicated to the Founders Hall acoustics project.

	Mar-15	Mar-14	\$ Change	% Change
<b>Assets</b>				
<b>Bank</b>				
Operating Fund Checking	15,994	39,106	23,113	-59%
<b>Certificates of Deposit</b>				
ESB CD # 1800011663 (March 2015)	-	25,016	25,016	-100%
ESB CD # 1800011676 (February 2015)	-	21,066	21,066	-100%
<b>Total Certificates of Deposit</b>	-	<b>46,082</b>	46,082	-100%
PNC Money Market Account	58,934	57,327	1,608	3%
<b>Investments</b>				
Ameritas Investment Corp Account	45,354	41,412	3,942	10%
AUUC Endowment Fund	700	10,700	10,000	-93%
AUUC Endowment UUCEF Account	25,162	-	25,162	
Oiko Credit Microlending Account	2,804	2,749	55	2%
UUA Common Investment Fund Account	25,564	-	25,564	
<b>Total Investments</b>	<b>99,584</b>	<b>54,862</b>	44,723	82%
<b>Total Bank</b>	<b>174,512</b>	<b>197,377</b>	22,865	-14%

## Allegheny Unitarian Universalist Church Annual Meeting of the Congregation

The 108th Annual Meeting of Allegheny Unitarian Universalist Church was held at the church in Founders Hall on Sunday, 18 May 2014 with the following Officers in attendance: Mark Tomlinson, President; Liz Dell, Vice President; Mac McMahan, Treasurer; Donald Zeilman, Clerk.

### I Call to Order

Mr. Tomlinson called the meeting to order at 12:05 PM, Mr. Tomlinson provided opening words and the chalice was lit. Mr. Tomlinson led the assembly in the recitation of Allegheny's Covenant of Right Relations. The Clerk determined that there was a quorum present at the call to order.

### II Minutes

The Minutes of the May 17, 2013 Annual Meeting were distributed in advance of the meeting for review. There were no changes or corrections, the Minutes stand as written.

### III Amendments to the By-Laws

Mr. Tomlinson states that the proposed By-law amendments, recommended by the Board of Trustees to the assembly, were published by the Clerk in advance of the meeting in accordance with the requirements for amendment. Further, that a *Report on Proposed By-Laws Revisions* was included, setting out the rationale for the proposed amendments. Mr. Tomlinson reviewed the bullet points published in the report.

The Clerk (Donald Zeilman) moves to amend the By-laws as proposed and published in the Annual Meeting packet.

Discussion topics:

- Developing policy for what contribution of record would mean to the 14-to-17-year-old members
- Whether requiring a contribution as a condition of membership is part of our "culture"
- Concern around changing the discretionary spending limit from a dollar amount to a percentage

**Motion Carries** (two-thirds of the members present required: 24 aye, 6 nay)

### IV Delegates to General Assembly

Mr. Tomlinson states that Allegheny is entitled to 2 (two) delegates at General Assembly. Board nominates Mr. Tomlinson, who has accepted the nomination.

The Chair takes nominations from the floor. None are offered.

Liz Dell moves that Allegheny Unitarian Universalist Church designate Mark Tomlinson as its delegate to UUA General Assembly 2014.

**Motion Carries**

## V Covenant Renewal Resolution

Liz Dell states that the proposed resolution was published in the Annual Meeting packet. Ms. Dell explains the process followed for crafting the resolution, and reads the resolution.

Ms. Dell moves that Allegheny Unitarian Universalist Church accept the resolution as published.

### **Motion Carries**

## VI Election of Trustees

Chair calls upon Gail Ward, Nominating Committee chair, to present the Committee's slate of candidates for Trustee positions. The slate as presented and published includes: Greg Blackman, John Luff, Jay Poliziani, and Mark Tomlinson, all for two-year terms.

Gail Ward moves the slate of candidates as presented.

The Chair takes nominations from the floor. None are offered.

The ballots are cast and collected by the Tellers. Poll is closed. Ballots are counted and Tellers report the tally. Clerk reports that all candidates received majority votes and are elected.

Mr. Tomlinson thanks out-going Trustees McMahan, Merriman-Preston and Zeilman.

## VII Sabbatical Update

Ellen Kerr, Chairperson of the Sabbatical Team, reports that the congregation has done well during the course of the ministerial sabbatical, being in month five of six. There was good participation by the members, and the church operated well. Rev. McFarland's preparation and planning, especially with worship, contributed greatly to that success. Ms. Kerr is proud of what the congregation accomplished.

Ms. Kerr further states that the congregation will initiate a process of re-engagement after July 1. There will be a "welcome back" picnic and also a start up weekend with Rev. McFarland.

Gail Ward notes that not only did the congregation survive, but it was vibrant and successful. Much of the credit goes to staff (Landis-Eigsti and Byers) who accepted additional responsibilities during the sabbatical. Credit also to Ellen Kerr, Betty Schwarz, Jill Brethauer and others who showed up and made a difference.

Mr. Tomlinson also offered special thanks to Treasurer, Mac McMahan for his work in preparation for and during the sabbatical.

## VIII Annual Budget

Matt Merriman-Preston, Trustee, made a brief presentation on the financial condition of the church, noting that during the sabbatical the church successfully managed responsibilities and kept financial costs to a minimum.

For the next fiscal year, the church is committed to maintaining fair compensation, supporting justice partners, growing the Religious Education Ministry, and promoting worship and music.



No major facilities upgrades are planned.

On the revenue side, growth and stewardship efforts propose to increase donors and provide greater fund raising opportunities. This effort is essential, with an initial budget projection of up to \$27,000 for next year.

There will be an opportunity to discuss budget at a session planned for June 10, 2014. The budget will be finalized by the Board of Trustees at their July meeting.

The Chair entertained questions concerning Mr. Merriman-Preston's presentation.

### IX Adjournment

Mr. Tomlinson thanked the Board, the Green Circle and Gail & Chuck Ward for hosting the lunch. Chair adjourned the meeting and the chalice was extinguished.

Respectfully submitted,



Donald G. Zeilman, Clerk 2013–2014

# Covenant Renewal Resolution and Policy

## Introduction

The Covenant of Right Relations is:

- A series of promises, intentions and commitments for how we will be together
- An outgrowth of our shared values
- An acknowledgment of the complexity of community
- The means for becoming aware of our expectations of one another and how we affect one another
- An opportunity to reflect on our relationships with one another and to grow spiritually as individuals and as a congregation
- Common ground in times of conflict

The congregation accepted and established the *Covenant of Right Relations* at its Annual Congregational Meeting in 2012. Since that time we have explored the meaning and implications of the Covenant both formally through programing, and informally though integrating it into congregational life. The Covenant did not outline a procedure or policy around how we renew covenant when members fall out of covenant with one another, or with the congregation. It was necessary to “live” the covenant and understand how it fit into congregational life before making recommendations for covenant renewal.

The Committee on Ministry is recommending that policy be established by the Board of Trustees to guide this process of covenant renewal, and has proposed a draft policy along with the establishment of an integral *Right Relations Team*.

The policy would bind members to a process of covenant renewal, with implications around continued membership should members refuse to engage in the process. The Board of Trustees is recommending that the members accept the following resolution by vote, making clear the congregation's commitment to both the Covenant and the covenant renewal process.

**Resolved: We accept that conflict within our church community is both inevitable and healthy. Sometimes members fall out of covenant with one another, or with the congregation. We are guided by the principle that properly managed conflict between people in right relations can be a positive force for creativity, growth and enrichment. Disagreement is not something separate from church life, but is a normal part of beloved community. Members pledge to engage in the Covenant Renewal Process when such members of the congregation are out of covenant with one another, or with the congregation.**

Resolution approved by the congregation 18 May 2014.

## Covenant Renewal Policy [Review Draft, April 2014]

The purpose of this process is to provide clear, written guidelines for managing conflicts and disputes, and for returning members to covenant.

### Step 1

When conflict occurs within the congregation, and members are out of covenant with one another, those persons are encouraged to come together face to face to work through their conflict or disagreements and return to covenant with one another. When one or more of the disputants refuses to engage in this step, or the interactions are not productive of renewal, the process may move to Step 2.

### Step 2

When needed, those in conflict are encouraged to contact the Right Relations Team (RRT). In some cases, such persons may be referred directly to the RRT by the Board or Minister. Confidentiality parameters and rules for interacting during a RRT-facilitated process are defined and agreed to prior to initiating this step in the process. Based on information about the conflict or disagreement, the RRT will determine whether the request for their involvement is within their scope of practice. If it is, the process will move to Step 3. If it is not, the process will move to step 4.

### Step 3

The RRT will provide a safe and structured environment by facilitating the process. In this environment, the disputants can renew their covenant and return to right relations with one another and with the congregation. If at any time in the process, mediation does not result in mutually agreeable next steps toward covenant renewal, the process will move to Step 4.

### Step 4

The RRT will refer the dispute/conflict to the Board of Trustees and Minister. Action on their part could include calling on the conflict management resources of the UUA, its regional body or of the local cluster of UU churches. Where one or more of the disputants refuses to engage in, or follow through with, the process of renewing their covenant, the Board will take action that could result in temporary or permanent removal of one or more of the disputants from church membership.

### The Right Relations Team

A minimum of three mediators will be jointly selected by the Minister and the President to participate as the Right Relations Team. Team members shall have, or agree to obtain, appropriate training as specified by the Board. Mediators with professional credentials in counseling, or training and experience in mediation, are acceptable. Team members shall be willing and available to respond to member disputes.

The RRT members shall serve as neutral parties, holding details around the dispute process in strictest confidence. A minimum of two RRT members shall be involved in every conflict management and covenant renewal process. Mediators are expected to support one another by debriefing after conflicts, and by attending continuing education events as available. The RRT shall meet with the minister at least twice per year.

# **Covenant Renewal Policy**

**Approved by Board of Trustees, 5 February 2015**

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When needed, those in conflict are encouraged to contact the Right Relations Team (RRT). In some cases, such persons may be referred directly to the RRT by the Board or Minister. Confidentiality parameters and rules for interacting during a RRT-facilitated process are defined and agreed to prior to initiating this step in the process. Based on information about the conflict or disagreement, the RRT will determine whether the request for their involvement is within their scope of practice. If it is, the process will move to Step 3. If it is not, the process will move to step 4.

## **Step 3**

The RRT will provide a safe and structured environment by facilitating the process. In this environment, the disputants can renew their covenant and return to right relations with one another and with the congregation. If at any time in the process, mediation does not result in mutually agreeable next steps toward covenant renewal, the process will move to Step 4.

## **Step 4**

The RRT will refer the dispute/conflict to the Board of Trustees and Minister. Action on their part could include calling on the conflict management resources of the UUA, its regional body or of the local cluster of UU churches. Where one or more of the disputants refuses to engage in, or follow through with, the process of renewing their covenant, the Board will take action that could result in temporary or permanent removal of one or more of the disputants from church membership.

## **The Right Relations Team**

A minimum of three mediators will be jointly selected by the Minister and the President to participate as the Right Relations Team. Members of the team shall be willing and available to respond to congregant disputes and shall have, or agree to obtain, appropriate training.

With appropriate training, members of the Committee on Ministry could become the core of the RRT. Congregation members with professional credentials in counseling, or training and experience in mediation, should also be considered for the RRT.

The RRT members shall serve as neutral parties, holding details around the dispute process in strictest confidence. A minimum of two RRT members shall be involved in every conflict management and covenant renewal process. Mediators are expected to support one another by debriefing after conflicts, and by attending continuing education events as available. The RRT shall meet with the minister at least twice per year.

## **Sabbatical Team Report**

Our six month sabbatical with and for Rev. Dave ended at the very beginning of this fiscal year, July 1. As with most things though there is not a clear beginning or end, but a transition to a new place.

In late June we had a picnic to get reacquainted informally. And in late September, three months into our new fiscal year we had a re-entry and rejoicing evening with him to officially welcome him back and to mark the moments of transition and new beginning.

Thanks to many people our first ever sabbatical was a success. The congregation, which pulled together continuing all of the volunteer roles, the cluster ministers who offered pastoral as well as worship services, DZ who compiled and edited the newsletter, Rev. Dave who returned with new worship ideas and renewed energy, and, of course, the sabbatical team, which tried to keep the congregation informed and the church running smoothly.

Team members were Ellen Kerr, Mark Tomlinson, and Jane Dirks.

## **In-Reach Report 2015**

In-Reach is a ministry that Rev. Dave created for the sabbatical to help us have continuity of pastoral care and to cultivate a “culture of caring”, as he puts it.

We continue, now working with Dave, to help strengthen and maintain connections within the community. We may call or write or email you if you have offered a joy or sorrow on Sunday during the service. Or we may contact you at the suggestion of Rev. Dave. We do care and you are not alone.

Please know that we, Ellen Kerr, Suzanne Gais, and Jane Schwarz are available to you, if you want to talk. Contact any one of us by phone or email. Group email is [inreachministry@allegHENYUU.org](mailto:inreachministry@allegHENYUU.org). We, of course, can only help if you participate by sharing with the community.

We also thank Constance Mayer and Brian Byers for their contributions to the service of this ministry.

## Thoughts from Allegheny UU Mid-Year Meeting Strategic Planning Session 2015-01-25

*We are a church that...*

- Has a good time
- Loves each other
- Welcomes
- Sings
- Inspires
- Is inclusive of all religions
- Works to include people in congregation
- Cares about the worship process
- Has great music
- Cares about global justice
- Cares about spiritual growth
- Has a nice group of younger kids

*#1 Thing to Keep*

- Rev Dave
- Jesse
- Each other
- Betty
- Welcoming spirit
- Sunday morning service
- Social Justice
- Small-congregation feel
- Share the Plate program
- Rainbow circles
- Joys and Sorrows
- Moment of quiet
- Advocate email list

*#1 Thing to Change*

- Accessibility
- Finances
- Finding/holding on to teens
- RE Director
- Jesse full-time
- Strengthening ties
- Membership growth
- Strengthen the choir

*Wouldn't it be Great If...*

- We had a new RE director
- We were financially stable
- We had a newsletter/other formal communication
- We had a larger endowment
- Our physical accessibility limitations could be overcome
- We had 100% pledging
- We had greater diversity
- We had more/more participation in evening programs
- The church was still here when the little kids are grown
- We created a family shelter on the North Side