

Board of Trustees for Allegheny Unitarian Universalist Church Board Minutes January 24, 2017

In attendance: Greg Blackman, Jay Poliziani, Mary Jo Sontag, Rev Dave, John Luff, Sonia Reed (quorum reached)

- Absent: Liz Dell, Kate Tomlinson
- Check in
- Assent Agenda Approved

Minister's Report,

Minister's Report December 2016/January 2017

Health of the congregation:

There are nice signs of an engaged congregation: There seems to have been a slight uptick in participation at Sunday worship; Worship feels vital and meaningful; There continue to be returning Guests, some of whom are expressing interest in formal Membership; The racial justice efforts of the Justice Council through "Responding to Racism: Get Woke. Stay Woke." (aka, "Get Woke") are getting on solid footing; Trustees are addressing Conflict Management and trying to integrate Conflict Management as a regular aspect of leadership in a healthy congregation; And when a few people heard we didn't have the volunteer capacity to offer a Christmas Eve service, they stepped up and made it happen.

There is of course as always, the flip-side: Members who continue to stay absent from the life of the community; Most of the Worship Music Crew are no longer meeting regularly before Worship; People get upset with one another but are unwilling to engage in Covenant Renewal; Some Members or Guests who don't find what they want aren't willing to engage the congregation to create it together.

This latter is something that the Leadership can assist with: Make sure Members and Guests have access to the ways to go about engaging the congregation; Promote an environment of "permission granting" rather than "permission withholding"; Have clear and intuitive ways for Members and Guests to engage the Leadership (including, but not limited to Trustees).

Congregation in the community:

- Worked with Leaders, Members, and Guests to create a Winter Solstice event with neighboring City of Asylum and Justice Partner, YMWABA (Young Men & Women's African Heritage Association) and continue to engage with neighborhood partners on future events
- Attended a celebration of new citizenship at City of Asylum
- Participated as Board Member with Youth Opportunities Development as YOD negotiated to share organizational resources with neighborhood Justice Partner, Gwen's Girls
- Spoke with the Alternative Winter Break group about their work in the neighborhood

Worship services:

- As mentioned above, Christmas Eve happened after all
- We're continuing the experiment of eight-year-olds-and-up in worship monthly
- A leader has still not emerged among the Worship Music Crew
- Increased use of technology in worship is going to require an investment in more worship technology so we're not relying on volunteer resources
- There is a worship workshop coming to the North Hills UU Church that I'm encouraging the Worship Crew to attend (with me), but it's by no means limited to Worship Crew

How Trustees can help:

- Create this year's Right Relations Team per the Covenant Renewal Policy (below)
- See above, last paragraph of "Health of the Congregation"
- Appoint a Trustee to work with Worship to determine how best to invest in worship technology
- Discuss how last month's "How Trustees can help" went or is going:
 - The biggest help you can provide is to develop your spiritual practice and bring it to the next level of depth
 - With snow months here, it's always a great help when you come to church (and even offer to drive others either near you or close to your route to church)
 - Make sure you have at least one "action item" coming out of each Board Meeting and follow through on that action

- Connect with people who are new and those who have returned. And even reach out to those Members or Guests you haven't seen and miss
- Revive the Leadership Council
- Get that Board of Trustees picture in the Emerson Room
- Follow through on providing the annual Conflict Management workshop
- In short, most all of this comes down to an encouragement to "show up fully!" and in turn encourage others to do so.

Covenant Renewal Resolution and Policy

Approved by Board of Trustees on February 5, 2015.

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 programming, and informally through 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.

Policy for Covenant Renewal Process

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. 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.

● Business

- Mid year meeting 1/29:

Intro-Greg, Prayer- Rev Dave, BOT update- Mary Jo, Financial Overview- John, Stewardship- Tiffany, Sacred Conversation on Race-Shane, Membership-Jay, Congregational Study-Greg, Volunteer Recognition – Rev Dave, Small group Discussion- Rev Dave, open forum- rev Dave and Greg, Closing Words- Greg

Food for the meeting---Sonia –Hummus , Greg Sandwich stuff, Jay Sandwich stuff, Mary Jo veg chili and desserts, Kate Fruit, John drinks

- Rev Dave updated the group on plans for a mini sabbatical – At this time Rev Dave hopes to take two mini sabbaticals during the summers of 2018 and 2019—he will update us with the plans monthly.
- Sonia discussed the possibilities of AUUC advertising on-line for space usage. The group agreed that she should continue to look into that possibility with the clear note that renters of the

space should not be making a profit on sales of items. Jay will discuss with Kate the on-line options for wedding advertising.

- The Board recommended that the Share the Plate for May/June be YMWAHA
 - The Board agreed that we work towards having two levels of membership –Member and Associate Member. The Board will work to adjust the by-laws to reflect these two levels (change to be approved at annual meeting). This will allow that we not have to count those people that do not financially contribute in our UUA numbers which will in turn save the church money. The Board agreed that for the numbers turned in January 31,2017 we will reflect membership based on those who are contributing members.
 - Greg asked the group to help answer a few questions for the UUA report—all questions were answered.
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- Next meeting February 28, 2017 at 7 pm at U House.
 - Meetings for 2017: 3/28 2/25 5/23 6/27 7/25 8/22 9/26 10/24 11/28 12/26
 - john motioned to adjourn, Sonia seconded and all agreed