

Allegheny Unitarian Universalist Church Meeting of the Board of Trustees

The regular meeting of the Board of Trustees was held at Unitarian House with the following Trustees in attendance: Kate Tomlinson, President; Sarah-Wade Smith, Vice President; Donald Zeilman, Clerk; Laura Conkle; Donna Badger Kopnitsky; and Sonia Reed.

Excused: Matt Merriman-Preston

Ex officio: John Luff, Treasurer

I Gathering

Kate Tomlinson called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm, and shared words for the chalice lighting. A quorum was present at the call to order. Kate calls for additions or changes to the published agenda. None were offered.

II Administration

1. Minutes of the November 19, 2018 meeting were distributed electronically. There was a correction: Article V, next scheduled meeting should read “7:00 pm.”

2. Financial Report: Treasurer, John Luff distributed Treasurer’s Notes (Dec 14) and a Budget Comparison electronically for Board review. There was discussion about the Giant Eagle program, where there are losses for the reported month and year. John finds this perplexing, and believes that the agreed-upon procedures are not being followed (see Notes). Coupled with the continued losses, this is a cause for concern. He will continue to monitor.

John notes that he is not receiving revenue checks in a timely manner, which distorts the monthly reporting. John and Kate will follow up.

3. Minister’s Report: None due to sabbatical, which will end officially on December 19.

4. Report of the Clerk: Zeilman reports that current membership stands at 67. Further, that the letters to five members that were removed have been prepared and will be sent before the end of the month. Zeilman has met with John Luff about taking over the Icon Membership module.

5. Denominational Affairs: Laura Conkle reports that UUA trustee Christina Rivera has resigned from the Board, effective December 31, 2018, following the recent receipt of threatening messages directed to Ms. Rivera and her family, presumably from within the movement. The UUA co-moderators denounced the letters. DRUUMM (Diverse Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries) called for a restorative justice process to address the harassment of Rivera and her family.

Reports accepted by assent.

III Old Business

1. Reporting Finances. Kate Tomlinson states that the Board would like to continue the discussion about communicating financial updates and information to the congregation at large. John Luff is present to join the discussion. It is Kate's hope that the Board can agree on a process/procedure for communicating to the congregation that includes timing and method.

Discussion as follows:

- Noted that the quarterly *Allegheny Advocate* newsletter is not widely read by the members, but does serve as an introduction to Allegheny for guests. Perhaps not the most effective venue for financial information directed to members and donors.
- The entire Board has a fiduciary duty to the congregation that includes finances and fiscal policy. As Trustees, members must make decisions that are in the best interest of the congregation.
- Reporting on the financial status of the congregation, especially when appeals are involved, should be done in concert with the Stewardship Committee.
- How leadership asks for "help" is important. Should be aware of the tone of the communication.
- Given the deep historical context of deficit budgets, leadership should be forthright and honest about the continuing budget shortfalls.
- The overall financial state in the last four or five months has been negative, and remaining in the same mode is not sustainable. The long-term trajectory, based on recent performance, is not healthy. There should be a Board plan for addressing the financial situation.
- What will be the financial message at the upcoming mid-year congregational gathering?
- The Board values the strategic role of the Treasurer. The Board and Treasurer should be addressing financial challenges together. Need to come to an agreement on the challenges and ways to address them.
- Contributing to Allegheny's lack of financial sustainability are the congregation's size, the extent and kind of facilities it is responsible for, and the non-involvement of the local North Side community in the well-being of an integral neighborhood institution (but... are we?).
- It may not be possible for the congregation to support a return to full-time ministry by the minister.
- Church should find ways to spread financial responsibility across all members. Currently, six donors are responsible for half the stewardship revenue. Congregations are usually sustained by the "middle level" of stewardship. That group does not exist at Allegheny. Need to find ways to spread the financial responsibility.

- Up to this point, Board messaging around finances have been inadequate to the challenges that the congregation faces. Further, the congregation is not well informed on the financial situation.
- Board should provide better support for the Stewardship Committee and the stewardship process.
- The Strategic Plan process has a role in helping to address the long-term financial challenges that the congregation faces. A proposed element in that process is a Board assessment on what it's doing well, and not doing well.
- How is space created in the planning process to address the larger financial issues? Financial concerns have been missing from planning for some time.
- An assessment of the facilities, and choices for their future use, are a vital part of the long-range planning process. Even extending the process has costs (Unitarian House continues to take resources).
- The Board should address and communicate the immediate financial situation, in addition to informing the long-range planning process.

2. Start-up Weekend. Kate Tomlinson reports that there is a tentative plan that has to be confirmed with Rev. Dave and Rev. Sunshine. Currently looking at Friday, Jan 4 for a leadership gathering, and Sunday, Jan 6 for an all-congregation gathering. Board should mark calendars.

Worship Ministry may be in the best position for communicating with Rev. Sunshine around the weekend schedule.

3. Minister's Discretionary Fund. Laura Conkle presents the Minister's Discretionary Fund for consideration (distributed written statement). It is money set aside for the express purpose of providing funds for the Minister to distribute for the material support of those in need. It is common in UU congregations. Usually, a bank account is created with access by the minister and treasurer. Other guidelines and suggestions are outlined in the request.

Rev. Dave supports having such a fund and has asked that the Christmas Eve Worship collection be used to seed the fund. Laura requests that the Board vote to create the fund, and work with Rev. Dave when he returns from sabbatical to set out the documentation.

Question: How much, and how funded ongoing? Funding would be through the Christmas Eve collection, a targeted funding drive and designated gifts.

Motion by Sarah-Wade Smith to establish a Minister's Discretionary Fund, with policy and details to be determined in conjunction with the Minister.

Discussion: Establishing the fund is grounded in Allegheny's mission. Suggestion that the cluster could add to the fund due to its direct impact on urban need and its intention to assist Allegheny's mission.

Kate Tomlinson calls the question. Zeilman seconds. **Motion carries.**

Kate calls for a vote on the previous motion. **Motion carries.**

V Adjournment

Sonia moves to adjourn the meeting. **Motion carries.**

Kate Tomlinson adjourns the meeting and the chalice is extinguished.

Kate asks that the Trustees review the agenda for the mid-year meeting when it is issued.

The next regular meeting of the Board of Trustees will be determined in conjunction with the Minister. Board will meet prior to the mid-year meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Donald G. Zeilman, Clerk 2018–19