

UU Board Meeting
January 16, 2013

In attendance: Ed, Patty, Warren, Jan, Mark, Brenda, Ashley, George
Guests: AJ Galazen, Kevin Stromberg, David Saetre

Minutes approved with one correction: Kristen, not Kristy. Note that conversation regarding welcoming congregation was not an exact reflection of the conversation and nothing reported there set in stone.

Treasurer's report: Warren gave us an updated report. There was an error in the report that Warren needs to correct. He will resubmit when this is resolved.
Pledges: We have collected over 60% of pledges and received several large gifts that were not pledged. Ed motioned to postpone report for one month until revisions are made. Jan seconded.

Ongoing business: Kevin Stromberg regarding the Strategic Planning process

- a) Kevin asked: History of strategic planning among this fellowship? Only history is the one day visioning exercise that was done May 2012 with UU minister from Duluth. This was not specific in terms of timeline and no specific follow-up has been done.
- b) Mark and Ed gave an overview of issues we would like to strategize around: future of ministry, space, programming, relationship with Northland etc.
- c) Kevin suggested that visioning is indeed a great way to start the process. Important to dream of what would be! If no vision, on-going work becomes mundane. Next step: consider a) where have you been b) where are you now c) where are you going. Related to this, mission (who you are) , vision (the exercise we did) & values (guiding principles). Our visioning exercise fits with SWOT analysis: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats. Build on those to help determine goals next 3-5 years.
Process is organic and will be unique to board and congregation. Design plan to seek input from everyone in congregation who want to be part of it.
The process takes time and needs "mulling over" time.

Two phases:

Beginning meeting – mission, vision, values & cornerstones:

Finances, spirituality, social justice, environment, individuality/ diversity, staffing, facility, relationship with college. SWOT analysis

Get input, mull it over: How do we seek input from greater UU community?

Second meeting is goals for next 3-5 years.

Concept of "leap frogging" plans because we don't know what the future holds: so need to continually update/adjust as things change.

Ed discussed: strategic vs. contingency planning

Kevin responded that goals need to be guiding light for where we want to go, though life may throw some wrenches in the plan. If things change, we adjust accordingly. Vision is still needed and is not absolute.

Strategies will be short term to help us get there- and can be adjusted.

Warren asks how we articulate mission/vision for a large group. How do we get the information? How do we summarize it?

Kevin suggested we work with a small group to start and ask for feedback.

Re: how to seek input: a) put info out there and ask for input from congregation; ie: written/on-line survey. b) listening session; town meeting. Invite everyone who wants to, invite feedback.

The topics we address will greatly affect buy-in (especially if this is a capitol campaign) and we need to start very early.

Note: our purpose is written in the by-laws and was read aloud by Brenda. Kevin says this is our "mission". Comments regarding this is from 1998 and may need to be revised. This is a question to ask- is this who we are still?

Also, our UU principles fit as values statements.

George asks if the congregation is really growing. Ed reports that attendance has been increasing. Brenda says our attendance has actually been steady over last several years. We did not have time to analyze the attendance, so these are approximate. Average is currently 70s or so at meetings. RE is stable at about 25 kids or so. Can we anticipate growth pattern?

Kevin says yes, we need to know this data; they are "measures of success". They will inform our planning in all arenas. Pick 5-6 areas; then monitor and revisit these over time. We will see that either do or do not reach goals.

We do have survey from 4 years ago. Kevin suggests we revisit this and look at same questions over time; then we have 2 data points over time.

Discussion regarding why people choose to become members or not, stay in the fellowship or not. The truth is we don't know about the reasons.

Kevin advises forming a sub-committee of the board, with Kevin advising, to make a plan; include a retreat to discuss the above:

- Mission, vision, values

- Goals

- How to seek input from the congregation

- Timeframe structure

This group will be charged with developing a strategic planning Plan to bring back to the board for approval or not.

Mark says we have extended this invitation already so we will have several congregation members on the sub-committee. This is very appropriate and desired.

Jan says she likes the town hall format. Ashley would be happy to facilitate this.

George asked “when do we do the dreaming”?

We have done a visioning exercise already, but Warren brought up that not everyone was able to participate in this. We could use the past exercise as a starting point. Jan reminded that we need to include the previous survey. Brenda reminded us that the purpose of the survey at that point was not necessarily how we would use that now, for instance strategic planning. Agreed that sub-committee will consider this.

David agrees that the survey was about tactics to address certain goals. The mission is older and needs to be revisited.

The full congregation has not yet had opportunity to dream together; affirm and set the goals together.

An example: last year at the annual meeting, there was a discussion regarding starting a building fund. The feedback was that it was premature. There were different views on this. This is an example of that without an affirmed set of goals, the tactics will be hard to agree upon.

Known threats are not far off. Without congregation affirmed goals, it will be hard to address these without individuals being put off.

Kevin affirms that this process has to be open and organic; very transparent. All members have to have needs met. This process takes time. Also, a plan has to have some flexibility. A sub-committee needs to formulate a plan: A Strategic Planning Process. This is a more articulate description of the charge, he says.

The process will include different points where involvement varies: whole congregation vs. board vs. sub-committee.

David shares the opinion that the sub-committee is essential. It's a way to move things ahead by putting specifics to a process plan. The sub-committee would report back to the board. There are many ideas here at the table. The sub-committee will determine the details therein. The board will empower the group to move ahead once the plan is determined, or amend it, along with analyzing the results.

Two action items:

- 1) Charge the sub-committee to determine the strategic planning process
 - a. Short timeframe; by Feb meeting- this committee will meet before then, work for a few hours and present a framework for moving forward
 - b. Members: Mark, Ashley, Henry Quinlin, Mary Wichita, Kevin
 - c. We will send out an email to fellowship to ask for additional interest
 - d. Kevin and Brenda will take charge of setting time of meeting
 - e. Kevin is our champion for this effort! 😊

- 2) Approval/ or amendment at Feb meeting of this plan by the board

Note:

Rumblings re: capitol campaign, building fund, new facility. This is a very specific long-term approach. Kevin says if this the direction we're moving, we should seek someone who is more adept with this particular type of planning.

On-going business: Welcoming Congregation

Confusion regarding what are trying to do? Ed reports that we will do what we can with our current resources. It is not demanding anything from the congregation and it expresses welcoming language to all; with a focus on LGBTQ populations. The list of what can be done is a lot, but it is a work in progress to move toward these things.

Mary is happy to prepare a survey/ language to provide information, get approval/feedback/buy-in from fellowship. This could include: an explanation of what welcoming congregation entails, language we would want to include, get input on educational topics etc.

The board can look at the survey via email before the next service. It will be included in order of service if/when approved.

Open committees:

No interest in social media, PR positions at this time. Will continue to post in newsletter.

Nominating committee: Mark and Henry?

Jan will be completing her term. Erin would like to discuss the possibility of being dismissed from her third year since she will continue teaching RE and starting the new youth program of OWL next year.

Therefore we are looking for 1-2 new members.

Announcements:

-Prairie Star District conference is in Cedar Rapids, MI April 5-7

Discussed benefit of getting a contingency to go to this.

- Consolidation meeting is coming up in Duluth; see newsletter.

March 10 service: this would be an opportunity to discuss consolidation with our speaker perhaps. There will be a hand-out included in the order of service with info.

Paperwork regarding what we are reporting for certification. Brenda reviewed these and noted:

Voting members= number of households that have contributed \$100 or more in that year. In-kind contributions not used in this context.

Patty reports that she got offers for help with refreshments responsibility. Mark states the board needs to contribute to making sure there is sufficient help.

Next meeting Feb. 20, 2013 @7 pm