

UUFM Leadership Retreat 8/18/18

Present: Tony Filipovitch, Ken Davey, John Knox, Faye Mattison, Diane Dobitz, Tricia Nienow, Nancy Cramblit (Board); Rita Capezzi (Minister); Carrie Rice, Linda Ganske, Peter Kuhlman (Staff); Kim Evans, Barb Keating, Dick Nienow (Committees), Dennis Cramblit, Jane Schostag, Karen Knox (congregation)

Hopes/Expectations for time together today:

- Calendar (sense of the year)—start it by 2:30 this afternoon
- Gelling/concrete shared understanding/direction/overall focus/"shape of ministry"—yours/mine/ours
- Stewardship vision—development of community vision that will support giving (source of anxiety)
- Create a sense of shared history and shared future
- Commitment of leadership to support change—continued sense of enthusiasm, building “new normal”
- Shared wisdom
- Plan for shared accompanist/different plan for music
- Address transition

Accomplishments/Noteworthy events of year without a minister

- Great worship
- Excellent choir director
- Attended to healing
- Welcomed new people
- Excellent RE Program
- Engaged in community (growing social outreach)
- Focus on children
- Maintained regular staff meetings & performance reviews
- Moved to policy governance
- Gave worship to the congregation—Ole & Lena skits
- Improved communications
- Covenant of Right Relations reinforced
- Regained our stride/rebuilt sense of community
- Continued to build strong financial base—debt >\$100k
- Leader among churches in community in efforts on racism
- Offered 2 OWL classes, planning expansion to 2 more age-groups this year

So, now you have a minister. Distinguish between one-time & ongoing operational activities

Cf. *Transitions*, William Bridges (1980)

- **Every transition has 3 parts:**
 - **Ending**
 - **Neutral zone (feelings—anxiety, burnout, etc.)**

- New beginning

Now, at a new ending point. Spent last year achieving a lot, but now that phase is coming to an end.

- People have different ways of handling transition—some want to push ahead, some are into the “big messy,” some want to “wait and see.”
- When a community is in transition, a lot of feelings come out that aren’t really about the thing, but are reactions to change itself.
- Rita will disappoint us—but it may not be so much about her.

We’ve done a lot. But new minister will require some letting go! On an index card, write

- One thing that is ending now that we have a minister
- One thing that I want or need to let go of.

For example,

- **Ending:**
 - Stress on the Worship Committee
 - Lay led worship & sermons (both a lot of work and an attraction for congregation)
 - Being so responsible for Sunday worship
 - Shortage of adult programming
 - Anxiety of responding in timely/immediate way to crises
 - Feeling of being unsure of our direction
 - Keeping track of so many things
 - Anxiety about our future
 - Stress
 - Working alone
 - Planning worship for the whole year, for the souls of each person in the congregation
 - Working autonomously
 - Lack of focus in our church lives, both outside and inside—scattered shotgun approach
 - Different speakers every week
- **Letting go:**
 - Variety of speakers
 - “Winging it”
 - Individual passion pushing/pulling agenda
 - Some freedom/independence—take /accept direction
 - Committee autonomy/control
 - Fear that Minister will control everything
 - Idea that conflict means things aren’t working
 - Disappointment that some people aren’t here anymore & probably won’t be
 - Instinct to be in charge—trust the Minister, trust others
 - Sense of loss of friends, grieving for friendships that have been broken
 - “This is how we do it”
 - Working autonomously
 - Be able to go into back office anytime
 - Some of the responsibilities I had taken on—make room for others

“Old people” are “quick responders”—but they keep us on the old ways, “the way we do it.” Leadership *needs* the mindset of bringing *new* people into the system.

May need to be a systematic reorganizing of roles & responsibilities. Need to prioritize with Rita what her tasks should be.

Review of “Circle of Commitment” (from last year’s Retreat)—movement through

- Personal agenda
- Immediate needs
- Selfish service
- Institutional concerns
- (UU) Identity

Minister has a lot of preparation—she doesn’t need to learn how to be a minister. But she needs to learn how to be *our* minister.

What are our “Big Questions”?

- How will we meet the needs of our families with children? What place do they have in the congregation?
- Need growth in membership and pledging units to achieve sustainable, balanced budget within 4 years. What are best practices for stewardship? How can we get more people to be serious about donating money?
- Self-care for Board & Committee members
- How will we find a regular musician to play twice a month- so Nancy only have to play 2 or 3 times a month?
- What will our focus be for community outreach?
- How to improve our members' understanding of UUism?
- How do we live our covenant with each other? How do we come back into covenant if we have broken it?
- The responsibility we as members have to help integrate and retain new members

Four “big picture” themes here:

- Covenant
- Children
- Self-care
- Understanding of UU-ism
- Maybe a fifth—Community outreach

So, form into groups to explore one theme, asking

- Why do we care?
- What are the needs/questions beneath this?
- What are the consequences/outcomes you are looking for?

Not a problem-solving session, but an exploration of the dimensions of the question.

Tangent: Burn the bullet-point “new members to increase the budget,” so no new member ever sees it!

- What is the meaning of membership at the UUFM? (it is not to give money to retire our debt)

Other reflections

- How do we use our volunteers—Story about Uncle Charlie who thinks he is a chicken (“We’d have done something about it sooner, but we needed the eggs!”)
- What is the need in the larger community that we can address because of our Principles? Cf. Richard Gilbert, *Social Justice Empowerment Manual* (https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/documents/aw/sje_handbook.pdf), especially the 5 categories of involvement.
- How can we make best use the resources (privileges) we command in our community?
- Purpose of service is insight/education so we can address the issue at a higher level.
- This raises the issue of what is unique about us that we can leverage it into the community.
- “Integrate & retain members”—beyond friendliness, need real opportunities to engage—but not necessarily to join a committee or pay the bills.
- Set time limits for involvement—get out of the “perpetuity bottle.”

LUNCH

CANDLE CEREMONY

The third thing: “The Third Thing” is a new thing, a *relationship* created by two other things. The solution lies at neither pole, but in the synthesis at a higher level—the whole.

- For monotheists, the 3rd Thing is God.
- For us, it is our common creation (covenant)
- How does my way of being in this community feed the whole? How does the whole feed me?
- Schweitzer—“At times our light goes out and is rekindled by another...”
 - Sometimes, we will come to Rita and her light will be low.

Thoughts about “who does what”:

- *Shared* ministry is ministry *with* each other.
- If we hold our candle separately and only go to the middle when we need it relit, eventually the chalice goes out and we are all out of luck.
- How do you balance the rights/needs of the individual against the needs of the whole?
- How do we create a shared ministry? How do we balance the 7th Principle against the 1st? How do we feed the “big” thing?

Roles and expectations

- Rita: I saw an effort and decision by you to *be* something, to persist in this community in a loving and caring way.
 - Sometimes the gears of transition will grind, and it won’t be pretty.
 - But you have a history of drawing on your strengths to heal.
- Having a full-time minister means you now have someone who will get blamed for everything.
 - You have to have Rita’s back. She makes an effort to do her best. But forced into a corner, anyone might behave badly. So protect the space around her.

- No anonymous feedback—if you have a point, make it directly.
- Rita responds best to direct feedback. If we do not give that to her, we will pay the price for her not understanding us.

Return to list of Hopes & Expectations

- Roles & Duties—Rita reviews this with Board
- New member orientation & stewardship—current approach is no pressure, no minimum pledge, here’s the form, make your own decision, here are the mechanics of doing it. No address to “the big Why”
- Message of joy in sustaining the community
- Message of commitment to voice of liberal faith in the community
- Pledge drive focus on *vision*. Can we make it happen?
 - Campaign to make selves visible in community
 - For Capital Campaign, had a thermometer and a picture of the vision. Need something that makes vision *visible*.
- What can we do that makes it so the *community* cares that we survive?
- *Why* do we care? What is the reason for this place that it has a place in the world?
 - What would a marketing plan based on this look like?
 - Set up a process to elicit this from congregation—on a semi-regular basis.
 - Will allow us to be *intentional* about *invitation* to people. (Circle supper? Table Topic? Task force?—not Committee)

Take-Aways

- Short-term assignments with options
- Recognize “neutral zone”
- Letting go is letting go of both good and bad
- Remember that Ministry is shared
- We have a lot of light to share—with each other, congregation, community
- Our collective voice is important not only to us but to community
- Remember that we have Minister’s back!