

Board President Weekly Update 8/22/18

As you know, we held a Leadership Retreat last Saturday. I figured many of you who were not there would still be interested to hear what went on. A longer summary of the meeting is on the UUFM website, at <https://uumankato.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/UUFM-Leadership-Retreat-18August.pdf>. But here's my short version: We talked about our hopes and expectations for the year, and came to know ourselves a bit better.

A few take-aways: Karen Gustafson, our facilitator, talked about *transitions*, and how every transition involves an ending and a new beginning—but it also involves a third state, a “neutral zone,” where one wanders around in the chaos of the ending, all the loose ends that it leaves hanging, all the loose strands that could become new beginnings, before grabbing hold of one or two and starting anew. If you don't allow yourself to spend time in the neutral zone and try to solve the ending by jumping right to a new beginning, you will almost always miss the growth that was possible because the beginning will just be a linear extension of the old ending. And we are at a new ending—not the ending when Don (our interim minister) left, but the ending of our time as a lay-led congregation. This is an opportunity for us (*all* of us, including our new minister) to explore what is changing, and how we might reassemble the pieces that remain, into something different from what was there before.

As we explored these ideas, Karen pointed out that “old hands” are “quick responders”—they know what needs to be done and can get it done quickly and efficiently (well, relatively speaking). And that is a comfortable and easy path to follow. But us old hands also keep us in the old ways, “the way we do things around here.” We know what works, and what doesn't because “we tried that before.” She challenged our Leadership team to foster the mindset of bringing *new* people and new ideas into the system.

So we spent some time (a good amount of time), not problem-solving and deciding on solutions, but exploring the dimensions of the several questions we raised at the beginning of the Retreat. And when we looped back to those Hopes and Expectations at the end of the day, we settled into the question of *Why* do we care? What is the reason for this place that it has a place in the world? How can we leverage the resources that our religious community commands to make a difference in the wider community? What can we do that makes it so the community *cares* that we are here?

So, expect from the Leadership—the Board, the staff, the Committees—many opportunities for all of us to engage in dialogue around these questions. On October 5, in the evening, there will be a congregational potluck with Phil Lund (from the MidAmerica Region of the UUA) to talk about some the issues raised by calling a minister. Before and after that, the Board will offer Table Talks and Listening Circles to dig more deeply into these questions. But you have a leadership role to play, too. Explore these questions with your friends & neighbors. Join (or empanel) a group to continue the conversation. Share your thoughts—both about carrying on the conversation and the thoughts that bubble up in your conversations—with the Leadership team. And be patient, with us and with yourself, as we muddle through the neutral zone and feel our way into the new thing, the Third Thing, we are building together.