

UU Nashua Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
April 09, 2013

Present: Ellen Fisher, Lance Pratt, Mary Licking, Jenn Morton, Pat Ladew, Kathleen Griffis, Kate O'Shea, David Hudson, Mike Wilt, Donna LaRue Excused absence: Reverend Olivia Holmes, Harry Purkhiser

Note: There are two vacant positions on the BoT. Ellen noted during the February meeting, and the BoT voiced no objection, that since Rev. Olivia and others had suggested that a 13-member Board might be too large and a bylaw change ought to be considered, and since the year was more than half over, the Nominating Committee could be notified that the Board has chosen not to appoint new members in mid-year.

Timekeeper for each agenda item of the meeting was Lance. Kate performed the chalice lighting and Ellen gave some words. A Check In was performed during which a BoT member could share a word or two with the group. Some members did.

A motion passed made by Kate and seconded by Lance to approve the consent agenda. The consent agenda consisted of the March 12, 2013 minutes.

Mike gave the Treasurers Report. When asked, Mike voiced support for the Investment Review Committee proposal that the Norma Rowley Scholarship Loan Fund become a scholarship fund, rather than a revolving loan fund. Mike said that he would work with the Investment Review Committee on details.

The BoT received reports from Working Groups (see below) with an emphasis on evaluation of current priorities and discussion of future priorities. Note: Discussion of the social justice project, Ending Hunger & Homelessness has been deferred to May. One-half hour was spent regarding the Working Group (WG) report on Improving Communications that was completed by Pat and Mary. Another one-half hour was spent regarding the WG report on Retaining Youth & Attracting Young Adults that was completed by Kathleen & David. The WG reports will be add ons to the minutes.

Evaluation of Improving Communications Report

The following ideas received support from the BoT that were generated in the one-half hour discussion regarding the Improving Communications Report: We need to let people know it is a responsibility on the part of the congregation to be receptive to the information that the church puts out. We need to work on a covenant of right relations that includes the above thought and put it up for a vote (ratification) within the next year. Our executive team is responsible for delegating out the communications work. A couple of key spoken announcements prior to the service may be something we want to take up again. Our goal needs to be non-prescriptive, and we can mention some ideas we talked about, but not direct they be used. An example of something that worked was the notifications made the morning of a service being held on a snowy day, because the facebook page, the e-mail list, and the telephone message put out the same information about the fact that the service would still be held. An example of something

that required more support involved getting information out to people who have not “opted in” to the e-mail list. A suggestion from the floor involved membership concerns, specifically, letting visitors know of members willing to meet with them and answer their questions.

Evaluation of Youth and Young Adults

David and Kathleen presented highlights of the report. Also mentioned was that this priority had no owner (no committee serving as its champion, such as the PR Committee serving as champion for the idea of Improving Communications, the subject of a report discussed previously in the meeting). It was reported that Rev. Olivia had made a suggestion to focus first on families with children younger than 18 and integrating those parents and children with others who have no young children. It’s about building a community that wants to be here. An example of something that needs work is improving attendance at intergenerational services. Language is highly important. An example of language that may not be helpful has appeared in schedules printed by departments of the church that say, “Blank day off” where the blank is filled in by the classification name of the volunteers who are not to be serving in traditional roles on a given Sunday, with such classification name possibly being “Teachers” or “Choir”. It needs to be a trivial note on the priorities.

Ellen presented on the idea of policy handbook revision and creation. Appendix 2, Dan Hotchkiss [topics that should be in every policy book] was handed out. Ellen and Harry are working on a draft policy on fundraising that is partly based on an idea from that Hotchkiss handout. Also, Ellen and Harry are continuing to look for ideas on handbook revision and creation.

David Hudson, Co-Chair of the Stewardship Committee for 2012 – 2014, gave an update on this year’s campaign which spanned the Sundays of March 3, 10, and 17, and in which the Board played a role at the March 17th service in terms of leading the congregational walk down the aisle to deposit pledges in baskets, that the BoT then held so that others could deposit their pledges. On April 21st there will be a last ask, an extra push designed to help meet the total goal. May 12th is the final day of the extra push. Kate Messner is the other Co-Chair of the Stewardship Committee for 2012 – 2014.

A request was made for BoT members to give the announcements at the beginning of church services (see List #1 below).

A request was made for BoT members to evaluate and revise priorities by serving in three (3) Working Groups of at least two (2) people each. The effort should include communicating with stakeholder groups, soliciting input, and creating a draft wording to be circulated to the Board by May 9th. The suggestions by Rev. Olivia at the last meeting are to be given consideration: Becoming a more welcoming congregation. Create a covenant of right relations. Fund raising policies and a policy book in general. Adopt a healthy employee review process.

The next scheduled BoT Meeting is Tuesday, May 14th, 2013 (see List #3 for other important near term dates).

Donna gave the closing words and Kate assisted in extinguishing the chalice.

Lists #1 through #3

List #1

Church Service
Announcements:

April 14	Kathleen
April 21	Mary
April 28	Ellen
May 5	David
May 12	Jenn

List #2

Priorities Evaluation and Revision

(communicating with stakeholder groups, soliciting input, and creating a draft wording)

Team A. Ending Hunger and Homelessness

1. Jenn – May 14 report on evaluation of current priorities similar to what Teams B & C presented at this meeting
2. Mike - May 14 report on evaluation of current priorities similar to what Teams B & C presented at this meeting

Team B. Improving Communications

1. Mary
2. Pat

Team C. Youth and Young Adults

1. Kathleen
2. David

List #3

Fri.-Sat., April 12-13th, Portsmouth, NNED Spring Conference including Panel on Social Justice

**Registration required

Sat., April 20th, Concord, Leadership Development Workshop PotLuck Lunch

Tues., May 14th, Next Regular Board Meeting,

Evaluation of Social Justice priority, Discussion of Future
Priorities, 2013-14 Budget, Annual Meeting Planning

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Mary Licking,
Clerk, Unitarian Universalist Church of Nashua,
New Hampshire

4/5/13

Improved Communication Project

At its January 10, 2012, meeting, the Board of Trustees adopted the following:

Within the next 18 months the congregation, the Public Relations Committee and the church leadership will work to identify communication needs and opportunities within the church and with the larger community.

1. Improve communications between the church committees and the congregation.

Metric: All committees are contacted and encouraged to:

- Contribute articles to the newsletter,
- Place announcements about committee activities in the Order of Service, and
- Utilize the monthly congregational response card

How are we doing?

- Many committees regularly submit articles to the newsletter about their activities and events.
Score: Satisfactory, with opportunity for improvement
- Membership Coordinator scans the newsletter for events and puts them into the Announcements page that is enclosed in the Order of Service.
Score: Satisfactory
- Monthly congregational response cards have not been used this year. According to Membership Coordinator, she was not getting feedback from church committees regarding what to put on the card. And, after some initial success with the cards, responses tapered off dramatically.
Score: Unsatisfactory

What do we need to keep? What do we need to change?

Recommendations:

- Continue to encourage committees to contribute articles to the newsletter and submit events for the weekly Announcements page. Contact each committee chair at least twice a year with a reminder. Membership Coordinator to be tasked for this.
- Consider putting congregational response cards in the pews with the hymnals and contribution envelope and asking people to fill them out every Sunday.

2. Improve communications from the Board of Trustees to the congregation.

Metric: BoT minutes and announcements will be posted in the dining room

How are we doing?

- Draft minutes from the August BoT through December meetings were posted in the Dining Room within one month after the meeting. As of the second week in March, however, the latest minutes that had been posted were the December 2012 minutes.
- In addition to posting its minutes on a regular basis, the BoT has contributed an article to every monthly newsletter this past year.
- Room labels have been placed above certain doors in Parish House and White Wing
Score: Satisfactory, with opportunity for improvement re: posting of the minutes.

What do we need to keep? What do we need to change?

Recommendations:

- Continue to post minutes, submit articles, and label rooms.

3. Improve external communications about the church and promote the community to visit the church.

Metrics:

- 12 new people will visit the church after seeing church advertising, information, and articles about the church
- Three articles about the church will be submitted to the local press

How are we doing?

- According to Membership Coordinator, 21 people attended our Open House Sunday on October 14, 2012. We had seven visitors the Sunday after Thanksgiving, 1, on December 16, and six at the March 17 service.
- 30 people attended as mourners at the March 3rd service after an ad appeared in *The Telegraph* that was placed by the daughter of the deceased saying that the March 3rd service would be a memorial service for her mother.
- This past fall, an article in *The Manchester Union Leader* featured Rev. Olivia Holmes.
- We placed ads in the *Hippo Press* and *the Telegraph* before Christmas UU Nashua services. At least six people attended on Christmas Eve after seeing an ad. (According to Bill Kennedy, chair of the PR committee, the bulk of the PR committee's budget is spent on advertising in *The Telegraph*, the *Hippo Press*, and the *Hudson-Litchfield News*.)

Score: Well on track for increasing attendance via ads.

Lagging in terms of submitting three articles to local papers. [See Appendix 1.]

Recommendations

- Identify newsworthy happenings in the church and enlist the help of church members who are writers to help draft or "pitch" stories to submit to *The Telegraph*.
- Make sure our church services and events are listed accurately) in *The Telegraph's* Religion section every Saturday. [See Appendix 2.]
- Make better use of the sign out front. Consider investing in the "Wayside Pulpit" messages again (they are free <http://www.uua.org/worship/wayside/27210.shtml>).

Examples of successful communication efforts:

- UU Nashua's website <http://www.uunashua.org>
(When asked how they find us, some visitors credit referrals from friends, some say they saw our sign, but our biggest source of visitors is the website.) [Keep]
- UU Nashua's Facebook page <http://www.facebook.com/groups/UUChurch.Nashua/> [Keep]
- E-mail
 - UU Nashua announcement e-mail list
 - UU Nashua's "UU Cares" e-mail list[See Appendix (3).] [Keep]
- "Snail" mailings – regarding Steve's retirement "fund," the all-church meeting with Joe Sullivan, and the 2013 Stewardship Campaign (pledge drive) [Keep]
- Bulletin Board in the Dining Room [Keep]

- “Opportunity Table” in dining room that gives news of events, projects and opportunities for members and friends to participate. [See Appendix 4.] [Keep]
- Nominating Committee led the committees in publicizing roles. [Keep]
- Advance notice given (physical posting and a mention in the newsletter) for March 17, 2013 Congregational meeting. [Keep: (mandatory)]

Additional Recommendations:

- Continue the occasional use of snail mail – it gets people’s attention.
- Review what is included in our Welcome Packet. Consider adding a one-page listing of all committee/social “opportunities” with a contact name and phone number and/or e-mail address.
- Support Rev. Olivia’s recommendation to create a Covenant of Right Relations and use it to improve communications with various church-related groups such as Simple Gifts organizers and White Wing staff and tenants.
- Policy and procedure manual could be developed to clarify how the congregation implements its communications goals

For the Record:

- Although it is not a recommendation of this subcommittee, we received a recommendation that committee chairs send bullet-point summaries of their committee meetings to the BoT

SOURCES

March 15, 2013. Interview of President, UU Nashua, Ellen Fisher, by Mary Licking.

March 14 and March 17, 2013. Interview of UU Nashua Membership Coordinator, Sherri Woolsey, by Mary Licking.

March 19-20, 2013. Interview of UU Nashua Membership Coordinator, Sherri Woolsey, by Pat Ladew.

March 20, 2013. E-mail from Mike Ballentine to Pat Ladew.

March 29, 2013. E-mail from Bill Kennedy to Pat Ladew. (On a scale of 1-10, Bill estimates the PR committee is at a 7, while the church as a whole is at a 6.)

September through March 2013. Eyewitness accounts of UU Nashua communications efforts. Pat Ladew, Mary Licking.

Appendix

- (1) According to Bill Kennedy, “The Telegraph has turned down reporting stories about our new interim minister and the White Wing furniture gift to Sierra Leona, and has not called me back on a story I want them to cover about the cemetery open house. We are working on using other media outlets for future stories, such as the *Hudson-Litchfield News* and the *Nashua Patch*.”

- (2) The evaluation committee realizes that the local newspaper has editorial control, but UU Nashua can do its best to provide an accurate submission.
 - (3) Recommendation: Keep the E-mail lists and also keep policies in place for subscribing. A yearly reminder placed in the newsletter and in a prominent place on the Opportunity Table that states one must “sign up” to be placed on one of the e-mail lists is in order.
 - (4) Membership Coordinator cited this communications attempt as a hub of activity initially, but then interest tapered off. Recommendation: Keep as part of the “mix” of communications methods and possibly switch it in and out among other methods during the year.
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Goal Review: Retain Youth & Attract Young Adults April 2013 – Kathleen Griffis & Dave Hudson

Board Goal

Retain Youth and Attract Young Adults Create opportunities and encourage all potential 18-35 year old members to actively participate and formally join the church. This has three parts: transition from R.E., Social justice projects and Communication.

1. Within the next 18 months interested high school students reaching the age of eighteen (18) will be formally welcomed into the church as members. This ceremony and celebration of membership will create sense of enduring acceptance and belonging wherever the wind may take them.
 2. Within the next 18 months at least 2 social justice projects will be created with active young adult (18-35) participation and direction the goal.
 3. Within the next 18 months every committee will have youth representation. This representation will keep the young adults’ lifestyle in mind and utilize current social media, communication options for participation.
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How are we doing?

Our overall assessment is that, while we’ve made some progress, we’ve fallen short of our stated objectives.

1. **GOAL:** “...formally welcome [young people] into the church as members...”
PROGRESS: Last spring several young people joined the church. Three of them are still in the area and one of them, Katie, still attends regularly.
2. **GOAL:** “...2 social justice projects...”
PROGRESS: We don’t believe there have been any new, formal projects to speak of. The youth group continues to hold it’s annual re-gifting sale at Christmastime and donate the proceeds. Several young people also help out at the monthly community dinners. Monica Staples reports that she receives “a lot of emails from members of our church inviting our youth to participate in events of all kinds.” She adds, “More often than not, I’ve mentioned an event and some of the youth have been interested, but already have another commitment.”

3. **GOAL:** "...every committee will have youth representation..."
PROGRESS: One young adult, Julia Fletcher, has not only joined a committee but chairs it. However, the well-intentioned idea behind this objective may not align with the many time pressures young people are under.

It's likely that our ministerial transition diverted at least some energy and focus away from this goal. It is entirely possible that some of our objectives were too grand or too broad, especially for such a challenging task. Indeed, given the complexities involved, success will likely require a concerted effort of many parties over many years on many fronts. Ultimately we believe progress floundered because there weren't any stakeholders to champion the cause. Considering the breadth of the problem and the lack of easy solutions, the goal suffered for lack of a dedicated committee or passionate individual(s) driving towards the fulfillment of these objectives.

What do we keep?

There is no reason to stop doing anything that has been or is being done. Even if this doesn't remain the focus of the priority, our efforts are still having a positive impact. Monica Staples noted that she has, "pointed out to the youth many times that throughout my years working in youth empowerment programs as a youth and as an adult, I've never encountered a church I feel is as welcoming to youth as ours is."

The best thing may be to take the long view, redouble our efforts, and augment our sub-priorities with additional, targeted goals.

What do we change?

Olivia has suggested changing the focus of the priority from pulling in youth to integrating children and their parents into the 'wider church' and non-parents into the church lives of children and their families. Once this has happened and we can do this well, we may have more insight as to how to attract "youth" and a few young adults might be ready to join.

A few efforts are already being made toward the "family integration" goal.

- ✓ Olivia has involved young people in some of her more creative sermons, with themes such as President's Day and Harry Potter.
 - ✓ A Sunday morning "conversation with the children" has become a much more regular occurrence.
 - ✓ This year the Stewardship Committee tried to include young people in our "community sharing" by asking them to decorate shamrocks and the committee has discussed other ways to integrate young people into stewardship programs.
 - ✓ The Worship and R.E. committees have a meeting planned for April 28th to specifically discuss the two-way integration: young people into the church and non-parents into youth experiences.
 - ✓ The music committee is also attempting to coordinate a musical for next year's Stewardship Sunday Celebration.
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Other thoughts

Our challenge is not unique. Young people often drift away from institutions at all levels when they graduate from high school or college, returning only when they begin families of their own. For our existing under-18 members, we must ask how we (a) prevent that separation, (b) reduce the distance drifted (by keeping in touch, for example), or (c) reduce the duration of the

separation. For young people who had no relationship with us prior to 18, we must ask how we (a) create an atmosphere that would entice them to engage with us, (b) provide 'services' they need and (c) let them know we're here.

We are reminded that many social organizations are facing declining enrollment and support across all ages and backgrounds as larger societal forces tug at us all. We move more often, change jobs more often, settle further from home, travel more, and have more involved children. In addition, there are more things vying for our attention than ever before and our young adults must surely feel these pressures too.

In terms of focusing on young adults, we really have two groups: those that still live at home (youth under-18) and those that don't (young adults 18-35). Two of the sub-priorities clearly focus on the 18+ segment, this is precisely the group we have the hardest time reaching. At 18 or 19, many of our young people are away at college, tied up with their first job, or out exploring the larger world. It's possible that our best success may come by focusing on our under-18 demographic in the hopes of building stronger ties that last longer or lead them back sooner.

We wonder if we've asked the right questions and focused on the right things. Have we prepared our young adults (functionally, culturally, etc.) to serve on committees by providing them leadership positions at an earlier age? To Olivia's point, have we engaged them and integrated them into our church life in such a way that extending their connection with us beyond age 18 feels natural? Do we want them here because of what they represent or would we miss them because we are somehow diminished without them?

In terms of reaching young people who have left home, there are lots of different segments. The difference between a 35-year old and a 39-year old may be negligible, but the difference between an 18-year old and a 22-year old or 26-year old can be huge. What's of interest to a 22-year old, may not be what draws in someone younger or older.

We believe this priority is an important one for the church and we have a considerable amount of work left to do to accomplish our stated objectives. We recommend renewing our commitment to this priority, but rethinking/retuning the objectives and making sure there are stakeholders and champions vested in its success.