

Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church

Board of Trustees

Minutes

July 23, 2013

Attendance:

Board members present: Don Bliss (chair); Ariel Mora; Kate Curtis; Michael Murray (Communications Coordinator); Lyn Peters; Tim Persons (Chair elect); Paul Strella (Asst. Treasurer); Maryann Dillon; Susannah Vesey (Asst. Secretary), Michael Thoryn

Board members absent: Stew Grubman (Treasurer); Anne Fretz (Secretary); John Wing.

Staff members present: There were no staff members present.

Staff members absent: Rev. Heather Janules; Karen Lee Scrivo (Interim Director of Religious Education); Sara Deshler (Church Administrator).

Others present: Vicky Strella (Chair, TTC); Barbara Mazer (Co-Chair, Religious Education Council, REC); Bernadette Sweeney (Co-Chair, REC); David Devlin-Foltz (REC member, RE teacher); Arlene Schneider (Chair, Adult Education Committee, AEC); Linda Gianessi (RE Council member, RE teacher); Bob Harrison (Co-Chair, Stewardship Committee).

Opening:

Assistant Chair Tim Persons chaired the meeting to allow Chair Don Bliss to recover from hip replacement surgery the previous week. (Don attended the meeting, nonetheless, walking in virtually limp free.)

The meeting convened at 7:35 p.m.

Board members read together the BOT Covenant.

Board members and visitors responded to a question raised in *Governance and Ministry* by Dan Hotchkiss: How has this church moved your spirit in the last month?

Approval of Consent Agenda: The Consent Agenda contained the following items:

1. June 25, 2013 Minutes (**Appendix A**)
2. Associate Minister Report (**Appendix B**)
3. Interim DRE Report (**Appendix C**)

All Consent Agenda items were approved.

Discussion of the Religious and Adult Education programs and the search for a new Minister or Director of Religious Education

I Transition Coordination Committee update

(Vicky Strella, TCC Chair)

Vicky presented minutes from the most recent TCC meeting (**Appendix A**) and brought the board up to date on work the TCC has been doing to facilitate the search for a new Religious Education leader, which is to begin in the fall. She will continue as the TCC chair until October, by which time a Search Committee will have been formed and the TCC will disband. TCC subjects she discussed:

~ **Nominations for members of the RE Search Committee:** As of July 22, a total of 26 nominations had been received, eight of which were self-nominations. "We have very good

candidates,” Vicky said. The nominations are being turned over to the Leadership Development Nominating Committee (LDNC) for vetting as they come in. The deadline for submitting nominations to the TCC was July 31. The LDNC has until September 6 to submit recommendations to the board.

~ **Congregational Survey:** A “Survey Monkey” questionnaire to elicit wishes for the future of the RE and Adult Education programs and their new leader was sent to members of the Congregation July 17. (**Appendix B**) As of July 23 there had already been 87 responses. Vicky asked the Board to consider three questions:

1. *The results of the Congregational Survey will go to the RE Search Committee in mid-October; how long should the survey stay open for response?*

The general consensus of the board was that the survey should remain open to responses as long as possible after school resumes in the fall, but to allow time for the results to be tabulated and then analyzed before turning the data over to the RE Search Committee in mid-October.

2. *Survey Monkey will tabulate the results; who should analyze the data?*

It was felt someone familiar with the RE and Adult Education programs should analyze the results; Carolyn Morrissey’s name was suggested.

3. *The Interim RE Task Force is planning a series of Cottage Meetings to discuss the future of RE and Adult Programs in the fall. How many such meetings will there be?*

The Interim RE Task Force should follow up on this along with the TCC and the RE Council.

~ **MRE/DRE Job Description:** The TCC is preparing a proposed job description for the Board to review in September. The job description will be finalized by the Search Committee, including Rev. Abhi Janamanchi. To that end, the TCC has been reviewing job descriptions for similar posts that it considers to be well executed. In particular, these include those written for Rev. Susan Archer (retired MRE), Karen Lee Scrivo (Interim DRE), and two from other UU churches, in Long Beach, California and in Morristown, New Jersey.

II RE Council

Barbara Mazer (Co-Chair)

Bernadette Sweeney (RE Co-Chair)

Linda Gianessi (RE Council member, RE teacher, was transitional RE leader between Rev. Archer’s retirement and appointment of Karen Lee Scrivo as Interim DRE)

David Devlin-Foltz (RE Task Force, RE teacher)

~ RE Council split over future Mission

Historically the RE Council has deliberately not been involved in substantive issues, instead supporting the RE program and its teachers through social events. Some RE Council members want to keep its mission as is, while others favor becoming involved in more substantive issues, such as curriculum and teacher training.

Barbara Mazer said she prefers a more substantive role, and added: “Bernadette and I feel the need for direction from the Board.”

Don Bliss suggested that under the new Policy by Governance, perhaps two groups could be formed – a committee on substantive issues that would report to the Board and a team that would report to Cedar Lane staff.

~ Status of Curriculum

A round table discussion of the curricula followed, and whether and how it should be updated. Until now, RE curriculum has been strictly under the purview of the MRE, although to some degree, noted David Devlin-Foltz, individual teachers “own it.”

Sometimes curricula have evolved because of need, Lyn Peters said, such as recently when Second Session Kindergarten and First Grade classes were combined because of a lack of students and the two curricula were compressed into one.

Some class curricula were more problematic than others, for example in the Seventh Grade. “Some curricula is good,” said Maryann Dillon.

Barbara Mazer reported that there is not an “institutional structure” that would allow curricula to be discussed or changed outside the MRE’s office. Other UU churches have adopted more up-to-date curricula, in whole or in part, than Cedar Lane has, it was noted.

Future Discussion: Don Bliss suggested the conversation should be regarded as the beginning of a longer discussion, and asked if a focus on curriculum be a part of the job description for the new MRE/DRE.

~ Publicity and Outreach:

Linda Gianessi said she believes Cedar Lane's RE program is the "best kept secret in Montgomery County". It was suggested efforts could be made to let the wider community know about it.

Asked if publicity and outreach should fall under the RE Council's domain, Barbara Mazer said it should be the Board's responsibility. Michael Thoryn said questions about curricula and outreach should be asked of the prospective MRE/DRE candidates.

Future discussion: Tim Persons and Michael Murray said there should be a communication strategy.

III Adult Education Committee

Arlene Schneider, Chair

There will be significant changes in the Adult Education Program in the near future, Arlene Schneider reported.

The quantity of offerings will be reduced, with a new emphasis on high quality classes of a more spiritual nature that align more with Cedar Lane's mission.

Online registration will be introduced.

Stewardship

Bob Harrison, incoming Stewardship Committee Co-Chair

Don Bliss told Bob Harrison that in June the Board had approved a provisional budget that included a \$134,000 deficit, and suggested that Cedar Lane needs to rethink its entire strategy regarding fundraising and the pledge drive.

The Financial Task Force is working on a four-year plan, he said, but in the meantime if there is not a successful new stewardship plan, there will have to be "drastic cutbacks in staff and services."

Bob Harrison said he hoped to hear good ideas from a brainstorming session the Stewardship Committee is planning in the fall with Rev. Abhi Janamanchi and the Board. He is also looking forward to inspiration from a number of talented CL members who have expressed interest in joining the Stewardship Committee, and hopes to formulate a roadmap by September.

He said it is important to understand that a fundraising drive that appeals to the value of belonging to Cedar Lane will be more successful than one based on guilt. The drive should be driven by personal contact, adding, "People give to people, not to programs."

Don Bliss agreed it is important to personally ask members for financial support and acknowledged that fundraising is difficult in the summer when people are on vacation, but emphasized more needs to be done. "We need to at least meet our goals," he said. For example, he asked, was there a fundraising drive that could piggyback on the excitement accompanying the arrival of Rev. Abhi Janamanchi.

Communications Activities

Michael Murray (Communications Coordinator) reported that plans continue to launch a new Cedar Lane website. He has rewritten the description of the Board's structure and duties (**Appendix C**). He asked Board members for feedback via email.

Welcoming Rev. Abhi Janamanchi

Tim Persons reported that Allison Cox (Member Services Coordinator) had asked that the Board help welcome visitors to Rev. Abhi Janamanchi's first service, August 11.

Labor Day Parade

At the recommendation of the Board, Member Services Committee is proceeding with plans for Cedar Lane to participate in the Kensington Labor Day Parade. Maryann Dillon offered to liaise with Rev. Heather Janules and the Member Services Committee.

Cluster Teams

Don Bliss reminded Board members to organize their newly created cluster teams and delegate liaisons to committees.

Personnel Committee

Michael Murray said the Personnel Committee presently has no work and is waiting for guidance from the Board.

Closing Words

Michael Murray offered a reading by Carl Sagan.

Respectfully submitted,

Susannah Vesey
Assistant Secretary

Appendix A- Transition Coordinating Committee Minutes 7/16/13

Appendix B- RE/Adult Programs Questionnaire

Appendix C- Board Structure and Duties