

Good day to my fellow board members, and happy autumn! I celebrated my birthday early this month, and having officially switched to base 16, I am therefore 38 (again). So far it's a good year.

The church year is off to a fast and furious start, and I really think we are getting our sea legs. I feel very good about the focus we are making on communication, from the various emails we have sent and are planning to send, to Tom's town hall planning, to the great success of Bring a Friend Sunday, to our rotating authorship of the articles for Soundings, I definitely feel like we are walking the walk with our commitment to communicate openly and frequently. From the fiscal stability perspective, it looks like the fundraiser auction is coming together, our outreach appears to have been useful, the energy in the congregation is very promising, and I look forward to supporting the YRSC as they adapt to new leadership and revitalize their charter. And of course, from the view of supporting our ministerial mission, I feel like staff/board relationships are open and synergistic as we feel our way along our governance model shifts, and with our support of the ministerial selection committee's work.

From the governance perspective, I am greatly heartened by the commitment to have all committees formally document their charters in the upcoming months, and feel this (along with the Policy Committee's work on having the relevant parties draft proposed formal policies for our review) will go a long way towards bringing policy governance to life as it should be - which is as an underlying approach to how we do things, rather than the conscious topic of specific discussion it is when it's new to us.

After our October meeting, we can finalize the recipient list for the next outbound email communications from the board (please note: autocorrect attempted to change this to "from the horde" but I held firm).

You have all seen and commented on the drafts of these already but I am including them here for purposes of formal approval:

1. For members who increased their pledge for the current church year:

Dear {congregant name}

We on the Board of the Unitarian Church in Westport want to take this time to recognize you, as a key member of the heart of this church. Specifically, I want to thank you one more time for increasing your pledge to the 2014-15 Annual Budget Campaign. With the support of you, and people like you, we will continue to fulfill our mission as a vital community and positive force for spiritual growth, values-based religious education, social change, and community development.

As we move through this transitional year, we have so much to be thankful for at this Church that means so much to us all:

- *A vibrant and thought provoking interim ministry*
- *A strong and diverse music ministry,*
- *Thoughtful religious education including a dynamic youth group (led, heartwarmingly, by an alumni of that very same religious education program who is himself beginning seminary this year)*
- *A robust Membership Committee simultaneously welcoming new members while appreciating and embracing those with longer roots here*
- *Dedicated and earnest social justice outreach*
- *A trusted and committed ministerial search committee working to learn who the perfect called minister for us would be ... and so much more, with so many things going so well.*

We appreciate your support in all its manifestations - staying active in the RE program, singing in a choir, actively supporting social justice work, being involved in Church leadership, or in whatever way fits you and your schedule - even if it's just attending on Sunday mornings.

If you are looking for deeper ways to get involved, please reach out to the NLDC (Nominating and Leadership Development Committee); they would love to get to know you better and understand what sort of additional involvement would speak to your passion and talents.

Thank you again for your support, financial and otherwise. I look forward to our future, together.

*Yours,
Michelle
Board Chair
TUCW*

2. For members who reduced their current year pledge:

Dear {membername},

Thanks for your support of the Unitarian Church in Westport. On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I would like to thank you for your ongoing commitment to our Church and your continued presence in our community.

In our efforts to understand the needs and wishes of our church members as best we can, I wanted to explore whether there is anything that the board needs to hear from you on how the church is meeting your needs. Specifically, noting that you reduced your pledge from prior year levels, we are wondering if there is information here that we as a board ought to hear about how the Church is, or is not, meeting your needs and living up to your expectations.

Of course, if your pledge reduction is due to your personal financial situation, I am not in any way trying to pry or suggest you pledge any more than you are comfortable with. If, however, there is a message of disappointment here with the church, your board would love to have the opportunity to understand firsthand what you are telling us .

If you would like to talk, please email me at Michelle@uuwestport.org and we can set up some time. And thanks again for your ongoing commitment.

*Yours,
Michelle
Board Chair
TUCW*

Thanks to you, my valued colleagues, for all that you do, and the energy and light you bring to the mix. Please bring your check books to the auction, and encourage your friends to do so :-). If the auction delivers as originally planned/hoped, our fiscal path forward will be much more pleasant. Please do all you can to support this critical venture!

See you soon!

Michelle