

Senior Minister's Report to the Board of Trustees May 2016

Our canvas is nearing completion and it appears we will make our goal. This will permit me to increase some staff hours and add some needed staff training in the areas of communication and management. If we are successful in our campaign we will also rebuild our web page. In accordance with our policies a request for proposals to design and build that site will be made publically in June.

Thank you to all who were able to make time to be with Mark Ewert our UUA stewardship consultant June 10-12. He will be meeting with the board Friday evening June 10th at 6 pm and with other committees and leaders throughout the day on Saturday June 11th. As I mentioned before, he will make a very brief and preliminary report to the entire congregation at our Annual Meeting June 12th. I hope that many of you will be at a computer or phone to tune in to a full board briefing on Tuesday June 14th at 7 pm. Mark will follow all this up with a full written report which we can distribute widely.

As we near the end of our program year I would like to highlight some of what we have achieved in our various ministries. Our social justice ministry has become even more active and engaged. This is due in large part to the work of David Vita, our Social Justice Director and dozens of dedicated volunteers. My goal in this first year was to widen our civic circumference and we are well on our way. Our relationship with the Church Council of Greater Bridgeport will only enhance our ministry in this regard.

Our pastoral care ministry now has almost two dozen trained and engaged chaplains who have been formally commissioned by the congregation. The pastoral care leadership team designed and ran a four session training program with continual follow up. We are now expanding their ministry to include working with our small group ministry, our neighborhood circles, our senior groups, and our larger community. The team has planned a series of "transition workshops" for the coming year to help people navigate major life changes including job loss, divorce and grief. Our second grief group of the year is now underway. Stay tuned.

Our Lifespan Faith Development (formally Religious Education) is in the midst of change. We have noticed a decline in attendance this fall although attendance seems to have picked up. Working with Mary Collins it is obvious to us that we are dealing with some of the same demographic declines that many other congregations are experiencing. That said Mary has made some important changes to deal with this changing landscape. She has hired three part time assistants that actually teach our pre-k and k-1 classes with parental assistance. Our plan is to expand that to grades 2-3 next year. This will make it easier for parents to attend services (a common complaint) and take some of the stress out of volunteering. The LFD Council is also making changes to how it communicates with our parents and has added some needed social functions. Our youth group is also considering a different time to meet. Our coming of age sequence will shift slightly next year to engage families more fully with OWL, always a big

draw to our church. Finally, Mary and I continue to integrate our spiritual themes into our curriculum and we have plans to draw in our adults through programming and social justice actions aimed at our overall vision for next year “Building Bridges”. Our speaker series starting with Dr. Diana Eck (who we postponed to October 16th) will reinforce this vision.

In addition to my annual report, I will be briefing you on other areas of ministry in my June report to you.

Respectively Submitted, Rev. Dr. John T. Morehouse