

Senior Minister's Report to the Board of Trustees

October 2016

I will not be with you for this month's meeting as I am out of town at a fundraising conference. I did want to explain my reasons for erecting the Black Lives Matter Banner and my intentions to work with you and the congregation as we move forward.

I made the decision to call for the displaying of this banner based on several reasons. The most important reason was timing. With the shooting deaths of black men in Tulsa and Charlotte I felt that our country was reaching an inflection point in which we would need to stand with other progressive faiths in supporting a movement which stood up for African Americans everywhere. The culture of hate that I saw being promoted in the media as it was covering the presidential race moved me to take immediate action. Many in our own congregation were feeling hopeless in the increasing presence of that hate. I weighed the option of bringing this to a congregational discussion and vote but felt that we needed to take a stand as soon as possible. I felt that if we waited for a congregational vote this critical moment would pass us by. I wanted us to be a leader in change and this seemed like the most expedient way in which to become that leader.

I felt that since our UUA had resolved to take this stand over a year ago we had an imperative to act sooner rather than later. I did inform you the board before I went any further with this action after I announced I would be taking this action on September 25th. The following Sunday I held listening circles after each service to hear concerns both for and against my action. I realized that some of you and many in our congregation were uncomfortable with the process I had chosen.

I then spent a considerable amount of time working with community leaders in order to involve them in the action we were taking. Last Sunday October 9th we had a well-attended and useful dedication of the banner with many community leaders present. The banner was finally erected on Wednesday October 12th.

The banner is up and it has generated a community discussion on race and is providing some impetus for community leaders to be in conversation. A forum to do that is being planned for early December. We have had an increase in the number of visitors since the banner went up. All in all we are engaged in the community in a way we have not been for some time.

I take full responsibility for this decision. Had I to do this over again, I would have involved the board earlier on. Given the history of this congregation, I can see why my decision is causing discomfort. With or without a policy that ensures more buy in, I am certain I will not make such a decision this way again.

So now comes the work of reconciliation with you the trustees and those in the congregation who felt the action was the right one but the process was flawed. I am willing to repair this in most any way the board sees fit. Some of those possibilities I have discussed with Lynda your president. Let's find a way forward through this together so that we can continue with the mission before us.

Respectfully yours, Rev. Dr. John T. Morehouse