

Committee on Ministries Conference, April 29, 2017

Sponsored by the TUCW Committee on Ministries

Our TUCW Committee on Ministries (COM) is an elected committee under our Constitution. Our charter is to assist the Congregation in looking at how we are fulfilling our mission to Inspire, Connect and Act. Current TUCW Committee members are Tom Hearne, Chair, Marti Bishop, Randy Burnham, Charles Harrington, and Anita Pfluger. As part of our growing and learning we wanted to understand what other congregations are doing with a Committee on Ministry.

We decided to reach out to other UU Congregations in the area. We sent a letter to all the congregations in the district asking about their interest in meeting and what they would like to discuss. We received firm commitments from six congregations in addition to TUCW. We scheduled the meeting for Saturday, April 29, 2017 at the Meeting House. We covered four areas in the time we spent together: 1) introduction of the participants and how their congregation was developing a COM, 2) the concept and purpose of a COM, 3) COM models and basic organizational questions, and (4) COM policies and procedures.

Many participants indicated that the meeting would have been worthwhile if we had only covered the first topic. Sharing what was happening in each congregation not only provided information, but also stimulated discussion and ideas that were helpful to all attending congregations.

These six congregations sent 14 participants. Danbury sent one representative, others sent two participants, and all five members of the TUCW COM attended. This document is a summary of the introduction of each congregation. We will also provide the notes for each topic online and will notify everyone how to access these notes. We will continue to look for ways to communicate with each other to share progress and ideas.

1) 5-Minute Introductions of each group

- **UU Congregation of Monmouth Country, Lincroft, NJ**
 - In the process of redefining ourselves
 - Involved in developing plan with Board of Governors – call themselves a Co Com
 - Every committee developed a 3 year plan
 - COM – developing a grievance procedure, assessing volunteer program which is been ongoing for a year to assess who we are, and developing a procedure manual.
 - Assessed two worship service program and went back to one service
 - Completing a study of volunteers and will have recognition this year
 - Strict confidentiality hindered people knowing what the CO COM was
 - People are not finishing their terms and difficult to find people who have been with the church 10 years.
 - Document created in 2006, committee created in 2003

- **UU Fellowship of Huntington, NY**
 - COM goes back to 2004 and morphing from MRC to COM and now perceived as MRC again
 - Working to go back to being perceived as a COM
 - Have lost people in the past couple of years, so budget has suffered
 - In a situation with tensions, and need to define the COM
 - Need to rework what's in our by-laws

- Congregation is 75 years old
 - Minister suggested that the COM explore the last five ministers for patterns
 - Two new members come on each year – two go off – appointed by ministers and approved by the Board
- **UU Congregation of the Hudson Valley (Croton-on Hudson)**
 - Have 110 members
 - COM formed end of 2005 at the end of a long part time minister
 - Wanted full time minister – called full time minister who is now in her fourth year
 - COM has five members – has transitions committee during the interim between part time and full time minister
 - Minister needed COM and input from her supervisor each year for three years of preliminary fellowship
 - Need baseline data for the congregation - 60% of surveys return and compiled results – asked about worship, RE, music, art, social justice – 70 questions – want to focus on a couple of items going forward
 - Determined the need to focus on communication – held opportunities to talk to the COM – asked members to sign their input
 - Members conference in if they can't attend meetings
 - Also holding potlucks to help people know who the COM is
 - Small church and had conflicts, some very difficult – interim period was very bad – interim minister made a difference
 - Finances are a problem with a small church – tension between minister and Board
 - COM members are appointed by the minister and approved by the Board
- **Unitarian Society of New Haven**
 - Have a new minister – emphasizing organic – felt a need to protect and support her
 - Had a long term minister
 - Have done the ministerial review
 - Minister sets meeting and COM has followed her lead
 - Have had no rules
 - Have policy governance – also set up a right relations team
 - Been very confidential
 - About 300 members – helping minister understand
 - Don't have terms – don't know how we are going to transition off the COM and bring new members on
 - Two of the three attendees have been Board Chairs
 - Board struggled with Policy Based Governance – Board has been having assessment meetings
 - Need more connections – too siloed – minister learning how to be a minister
 - May need to have meetings with Board, Right Relations, Management team to assess how we are doing
 - Right relations focused on the relationships exclusively
- **The Unitarian Church in Westport**
 - Past two years helping new minister understand the territory
 - Also involved in Policy Based Governance – in strict terms under the Carver model, a COM doesn't exist

- Currently charged with reporting to the congregation on how we are doing with the mission
 - This year we are concentrating on Connect – some things were granular – silos, committees not talking to each other
 - Now at 492 members – may be down from that
 - Committee members are elected in rolling five year terms
 - Seen our role as being an ombudsman – a mirror providing the balcony view
 - Had ministerial study in 2005 – found there was a need to be available to look at the congregation as a whole – to look at all the ministries in the church
- **UU Congregation in Stamford, CT**
 - Congregation of about 100
 - Had nine year minister, then an interim who was eventually called.
 - This is first time the group has met
 - Asked to serve by the minister
 - Everything is in the formative stage – had been a committee to support the minister
 - Christine a COM member in Westchester – struggled between push pull, the COM vs. the committee to support the minister
- **UU Congregation of Danbury**
 - President of Board in 2005 – support vision 2020 effort - Had growth and vitality workshops that brought home that the ministry belongs to the congregation – 2/3 of the way between MRC and COM
 - COM not active not because of ministerial search
 - All the work that had been done fell apart – two Board members and two COM members looking to regenerate the COM
 - Call the groups teams not committees
 - New concept evolving – having a social justice council to bring what had been silos together – share look for synergies – now looking at council on ministries
 - Strong Sunday services worship team – group went from two services to one and also overlap with social justice
 - Team on COM and Board worked with all groups to define their mission – still struggle with what will it look like when we reconstitute the group.
 - 150 members currently in the church
 - Incoming Board President ran the 2020 Vision project – need to look at current bylaws

Discussion of Topic 1 – Concept and Purpose of a COM

- Difference between the MRC and the COM – its about assessing the ministry not the minister
- The mission owns the church and the ministry – this year focused on the Connect portion of the TUCW mission
- Raises the questions of who determines the mission of the church and how do we assess that
- Monmouth wrote a mission statement in 2006 but doesn't seem to be relevant in the current situation – thinks that people would be negative about the mission owning the congregation – Monmouth mission statement is aspirational
- Danbury – the mission of the COM must serve the mission of the church – there is a now social justice initiative looking at among other things Black Lives Matter and what we do with that – a segment are negative about that idea, want to come just for spiritual support

- Hudson Valley – COM can give voice to those in the congregation who do not have a voice – can find out that the mission is on “sandier ground” that you thought – there are changes over time at the individual level as well as the congregational level
- Long Island – minister indicates that there is ministerial support from colleagues – don’t need MRC – COM has a covenant that they read before each meeting – the vocal may not be the majority
- New Haven – congregational have people from there 20’s to the seniors – each age group may have specific needs that do not apply to other groups
- New Haven – have trouble focusing on mission statements – focused on how people talk to each other – how we help people talk to each other – need to embrace each other
- Long Island – need to listen to each other, don’t do enough of that
- Westport – not enough listening, need to more checking out with each that we understand what the other is sharing

Discussion of Topic 2--Models and basic organizational questions

- Westport used the Latham model is organizing our COM – There are other models
- The Chair is the member who on their last year on the COM
- Westport COM is an elected committee – nominees are named by the Nominating Committee – members of the congregation for three years – served in a number of capacities and understand the organization
 - Meet monthly and oftener if necessary
 - Minister attends most meetings – share with each other what is going on in the congregation
- Monmouth County
 - One member is long time – wants complete independence, others who are newer are more open to having minister attend
 - Shared ministry is the relationship between the minister and the various ministries within the congregation
- Hudson Valley – this is a relationship, when you say hired, that sets up a very different dynamic
- Danbury also operates with shared ministry – minister attends as ex officio members
- Unitarians generally have a problem of authority in general – needs to be an ongoing congregation – minister is ex officio – many COMs – UUs are overachievers individually, and underachievers organizationally

Discussion of Topic 3--Assessment of a congregation's ministry

- Westport – question for us in how we frame the assessment process – positioned ourselves as a mirror to the congregation – focused on Connection and met with the various committees within the congregation – looked at within the group, within the congregation and the broader world, what minister calls the broader circumference – tried to have two COM members at each Reflection meeting – major mistake was to meet with BOT last and need to meet with them and the staff first
- Long Island – younger people don’t want to be on committees, they just want to do things – can look at conversation cafes – an hour and a half on a topic – do two rounds, one where anyone can talk, second round gets to new ideas that were triggered in the first round
- Danbury – created a template which had a whole section on relationships – also found that it broadened their world

- Monmouth County – last survey a conversation ad members of the congregation where people seemed more comfortable – also find they don't always have the historical data to check on what happened in the past

Discussion of Topic 4--Policies and Procedures

- Westport – shared the Policy Manual outline – and the Conflict Management -- participants asked that the TUCW Policy be sent to all participants
- Hudson Valley – distributed documents that they use with their COM
- Westport – not sure yet if there will be a commissioning for our new member

Discussion of a multi-congregation planning committee for future gatherings

- Participants were positive about putting together a cross congregation committee to continue to network and meet periodically
- Randy encouraged people to nominate people to the nominating committee of the UUA – would love to get the names

Contact Us or Check the Website for More Information

Please contact any member of the COM if you have questions or comments. We welcome your input.

You can find the complete minutes on the Committee on Ministry page in the Getting Involved section of our website.