

APPENDIX

The Unitarian Church in Westport

Committee on Ministries – Reflection on Mission, 2016

How We Connect – Detailed Meeting Notes

The Unitarian Church in Westport is a diverse and welcoming religious community, free of creed and dogma, and open to people of all backgrounds and beliefs.

We INSPIRE and support individual spiritual growth; we CONNECT through worship, music, learning, and caring ministries; and we ACT in the service of peace and justice.

Contents of the Appendix

This appendix contains the detailed notes from each individual Reflection Meeting. These notes provided the content and context for the summary report observations, examples, and recommendations. They are included here in their original format to provide maximum impact. The notes are not in any particular order.

Board of Trustees Reflection Notes

Wed., Jan. 4, 2017

Attendance: K.C. Senie, Bob Trefry, Ken Vogel; Randy Burnham (COM), Anita Pfluger (COM)

Note: There was confusion about scheduling this meeting and who would attend. It was also the last Reflection Meeting and the COM realized that it should have been the first meeting to get the Board's broader view of the focus for this year.

1. How are we walking together to “connect” through worship, music, learning and caring ministries in your area?

The Board members in attendance felt this was a hard question to answer from a committee perspective, as each has had a different experience.

For Ken, the primary driver is Policy Based Governance (PBG). a very different approach from his previous service on the Board of Trustees. The connections are now seen through the lens of PBG. While there were good things about previous Boards, he feels PBG will make the board more effective. A sense of cohesiveness and speaking with one voice are important aspects of a Board of Trustees. Ken is happy to report there don't seem to be any problems with the current board. It is healthy; they have a sound covenant and good relationships. He wonders how they are going to build on that.

Bob is learning the PBG process along with all the other board members. PBG is a more deliberate way of engaging. It is almost like a dance, and he is still trying to learn the moves. There is a lot of 'back and forth' as the Board learns to 'drive the ship in a better way.' He thinks relationships with the staff are very good.

K.C. is also new to PBG. She thought our questions seem related to the ends statements of PBG. She wants all committees to understand PBG and hopes the COM will be available to help with the linkages.

Randy hopes there will be a plan to train new board members and others in congregation on PBG.

2) How well does your group connect and communicate with each other within this group?

Communication within and among Board members is good. The group is very cohesive and very clear about their roles. The Board is definitely connecting around PBG, and they have been very good about speaking with one voice.

A fair amount of work is done via email. Discussions occur before a board decisions are made. Work is generally done electronically in small groups or task forces. These individual groups of 2 or 3 discuss and work on various items needing Board attention. Board President Lynda Bluestein lists the items on the agendas of the monthly meetings; any non-controversial items are put on the consent agenda. Occasionally there are urgent issues that need discussion, and the Board may go into Executive Session.

3) How well does your group connect and communicate with other groups and ministries within the congregation?

This question elicited discussion regarding the Board's responsibilities. Are they supposed to be connecting individually with congregants? As a Board? Should they wait for people to communicate, either on an individual or group basis, or should the Board initiate communications? In any case, the Board is committed to speaking with one voice.

This past fall, for the first time, a meeting of all elected committee members was held in the Meeting House in order to extend communications within and among TUCW leadership.

Communication with John is very good. John is the Chief of Staff, and Dorothy is the Executive Director. She gives a written report at the monthly Board meeting.

The linkages committee is responsible for gathering information and communicating. As part of PBG, the Board sets the 'ends' or the results they would like to achieve. The staff is allowed to develop various strategies for achieving those ends. Within PBG, linkages are important as they lead to better and greater communication.

Ken suggested it might be helpful to frame what the COM is doing in relation to what the Board is doing. This would give a consistent message to the congregation.

Bob and KC noted the Board has been learning about Policy Governance and shares this knowledge with the congregation through Soundings articles and Town Hall meetings. KC believes the more the congregation hears about PBG, the more comfortable with it they will become.

The Board members stated they are looking forward to reinforcing linkages with the various committees and congregation.

4) How well does your group connect with the larger community – the UU District, Unitarian Universalist Association, and if applicable the local community?

Board President Lynda Bluestein and Rev. John have been very effective in expanding TUCW connections to the larger community.

The Board from UU Hamden joined our Board's retreat last summer, and Lynda coordinated TUCW's proposed move from the UUA Central East Region to the New England region. Each of the 3 candidates for UUA President preached at one of our services this year. Rev. John brought about our membership in the Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport, a faith-based, non-sectarian social services agency, and he has been moderating community discussions on racial justice in Norwalk.

This question is about having connections, and it is hard to institutionalize. The Board does not do the actual connecting, but determines in its 'ends' statements the direction it wants TUCW to take. Rev. John is the instrument for accomplishing these goals, but he does not act alone. The Board supports the senior minister in his attempts to expand our connections with the UUA and the greater community. Some actions, however, may be controversial.

PBG is a powerful way of looking at how things are getting done. 'Ends' are now measurable, an important word. The Board is now looking at outcomes. What are the changes in people's feelings? What are the outcomes of the Board's work?

5. How can we connect better?

The Board has to do is define what 'better' means, especially with Rev. John's input. They may have to say we will do some things differently. Our current mission to "inspire, connect, and act" may need to be revised. By writing clear ends statements the board will indirectly influence the mission by directing greater weight to one or another aspect of the mission. For example, given our limited resources where we cannot do everything, the Board may direct that a greater weight be given to the 'inspire' function of the mission for a specific period of time as opposed to an emphasis on the 'act' function. These are the kinds of ends that the Board will be attempting to produce in the future.

Social Justice Reflection Notes

Sat., Sept. 17, 2016

Attending: Marjolijn De Jager, David Vita, Lynne Whitton, Marti Bishop, Randy Burnham, and Anita Pfluger

1. How are we connecting together through worship, music, learning and caring ministries in your area?

16 different committees make up our Social Justice Task Force. In alphabetical order they are: Prevention of Gun Violence; Beardsley School; Compassionate Communications; Environmental Action; Food Access Coalition; Immigration Social Action; KIVA Microfinance; Mercy Learning Center; Racial Justice; Rainbow Task Force; Reel Justice Film Series; Share the Plate; United with Kenya; Voices Café; WestBridge Coalition; and Domestic Violence Task Force. Our current website lists all of these committees.

Committees represented at the meeting were Beardsley School, Compassionate Communications, and Immigration Social Action. The Dir. of Social Justice was also present.

We began the meeting by discussing a brochure from several years ago highlighting the Social Justice Council, which, at that time, included 7 committees (Habitat for Humanity, UU-UN Organization, Eliminating Racism, UU Service Committee, Amnesty International, Green Sanctuary Committee, and Beardsley School.) In 2001 the congregation voted to narrow the focus to three priority programs. The three chosen were Habitat for Humanity, a woman's prison program, and Beardsley School. The Beardsley School program is still going strong.

This brochure preceded the Social Justice Director position, which now provides some stability. The Social Justice Director may, if warranted, step in to lead one of the Social Justice committees. This recently occurred with the Rainbow Task Force which, at one point, was not functioning well. David was able to create a new leadership structure, and it is now functioning extremely well. Three groups were represented at today's Reflection meeting: Beardsley School, Non-Violent Communication (NVC) or Compassionate Communications, and Immigration Social Action.

While billed as the NVC practice group, it is actually much broader than a practice group. It embodies the whole practice of communicating compassionately, learning the language to facilitate peaceful resolution, and avoiding conflict. The group had been in existence 8-9 years. It began with Associate Minister Margie Allen. Training was provided, but the group of 7 or 8 dwindled down to a core of 4-5 people. However, this core was passionate about growing the practice group and promoting the NVC message within the church. John is very supportive of their efforts, particularly in the way they connect with our work to create a Covenant of Right Relations.

They have grown over the past year and have more committed members in the practice group. They are arranging events, such as empathy labyrinths, particularly for the congregation. Their group is now under the Social Justice umbrella; before they were floating.

David is very supportive and helpful in getting awareness of this committee out there and helping them to be seen and heard. Since they had a table at the recent committee fair, more people know about them. Their main purpose is to bring in the language of CC (Compassionate Communication.) Last year through a grant they were able to use a paid facilitator, which made a nice difference. The paid facilitator will continue this year as member Janet Epstein has a foundation and has gotten a grant. On Oct. 2 there will be a 3 hour workshop in the afternoon. It is free. The committee has developed other ideas with David as far as getting awareness out there, e.g. Soundings. About 15 people have committed to the group. Meetings are on the 2nd and 4th Mondays, and attendance averages 10-12 members.

2. How well does your group connect and communicate with each other within this group?

Beardsley-Fantastic. The committee meets once a month at a Fairfield diner for breakfast; they also meet once a month with the principal of Beardsley School. The chair of the committee takes minutes of each meeting and shares them with the committee through email. Communications—email, text, phone--are extremely efficient and effective.

Immigration and Refugee—8-10 people meet once a month after church services. People get along well. There are perhaps 60 names on the email list of people who want to be kept up-to-date on the

issues. Some are more interested in action-oriented activities, e.g. helping to set up apartments and only show up for that. There is a great deal of enthusiasm and advocacy on the part of CT for Dreamers, i.e. getting rights for undocumented students. They've done a lot of letter writing. NVC—this committee communicates primarily by email. ...Lynn Whitton and Janet Epstein are co-chairs. They have been creating a contact list so people who have attended any events are on the list; invitations for new/other events are sent to all. They are broadening their reach to other NVC practice groups, e.g. Stamford and New Haven. They have been invited to participate in some of their things.

Randy asked about interaction of folks within each of the committees. All groups reported engaged and motivated members, anxious to work together. The Beardsley committee gets together socially at a member's home during the holiday season and at the end of the school year. The Immigration Reform group holds potluck lunches to increase connections among each other. The Immigration Committee also meets with refugees who have recently been settled in the area. There are definite connections with other social justice groups.

How well does your group connect and communicate with other groups and ministries within the congregation?

Steven Rosen, a Small Group leader, is in the NVC practice group. As the mission of both groups is to deepen connections, the answer to this question is 'very well.' NVC also connects with RE and the 'heart talk' curriculum. There will be 5 sessions this year over the next 5-6 weeks. Mary Collins is bringing in volunteers to assist her with these RE lessons. NVC is closely related to the development of the Covenant of Right Relations. What happens when things aren't going well? How will people respond? These are important points to consider in crafting the CRR.

One way Beardsley connects with other groups is through a regular column in Soundings. Another avenue for connections within the congregation is the Beardsley Board—a way for teachers to request specific items for their classrooms--located on the Social Justice table every Sunday. Beardsley Committee members also connect with other congregants through members' individual participation in groups such as Small Group, RE, and Worship Associates. Shawl Ministry supports our work at Beardsley with their annual knitting of scarves for Beardsley kindergarteners. Many members of the congregation act as readers, tutors, or mentors with Beardsley students. Each spring the Beardsley committee organizes a Read-Aloud Day; every classroom has a reader from the congregation who reads and then gives that book to the class. Other congregants have shared their skills and talents at Beardsley in musical presentations or other ways such as attending and supporting parent night programs. Our young people collect gently used paperback books for the annual paperback book sale at Beardsley in April, our major fund raiser. In the past our senior minister has participated as Principal for a Day.

Immigration may consider submitting regular articles in Soundings. Marjolijn talked about members of the Immigration committee meeting at the ferry to Ellis Island. It is important for us to connect with other committees...if issues come up, what resources do we have to use?

Is there a way for each of the committees to share a key idea or issue? It would be helpful to have an established method for doing this...Soundings? The website? Perhaps a mention during the Sunday service or an insert in the Order of Service?

Connections with ministers and staff vary with the committee. There are quite a few with NVC, but not so much with the Immigration Committee. Connections with Beardsley committee are good.

4. How well does your group connect with the larger community--the UU district, the UUA, and if applicable the local community?

(UUA) The Central East Region
Team Westport
Greater Bridgeport Area Council of Churches
Interfaith Council
IIConn
Neighbors link
Voices Cafe

NVC is beginning to reach out to other groups. They have sent invitations to congregations in Stamford and Danbury regarding the Oct. 2 workshop.

Several years ago the Beardsley Committee helped the Danbury UU church establish an adopt-a-school program modeled after ours. They did, and it is very successful. We plan to submit for publication an article to UU World about the success of our Beardsley outreach—how it began, what we have done, what we hope for the future. We are also considering establishing an adopt-a-school workshop at the UUA district meeting in the spring.

5. How can we connect better?

The Dir. of Social Justice provides connections to each of the committees. There is no shortage of publicity; it is available to the extent that each committee wants it, e.g. David's regular eblasts. Something that works for certain groups is the "demo" often given between services or sometimes just after the 11:00. These demos are useful, and they take advantage of people already being at church.

Possibly have pamphlets for each committee that could be referenced in the Order of Service. Some of this occurs in David's meetings with new members, or people just coming to church. David holds these meetings regularly and gives new folks ways to connect with others in the congregation. Randy asked if NVC could run short workshops for other committees to discuss the difficulties of talking with each other. This seems like a great way to connect.

There are barriers to holding meetings, e.g. time, other commitments. A suggestion was made to possibly run skype meetings or hold conference calls. The physical time necessary to connect is a barrier. One way around this is to meet on Sundays after services when people are already there.

There were several questions and concerns about how to use IT to communicate more easily and efficiently. Dropbox? Realm? Many questions about the viability of each for what the committees need.

Worship Associates Reflection Notes

Saturday, Sept. 17, 2016

Attending: Doug Flam, Linda Hudson, Connie Rockman, Sudha Sankar, Marti Bishop, Randy Burnham, Anita Pfluger

1. How are we walking together to connect through worship, music, learning and caring ministries?

Worship Associates did not look at their performance in light of this perspective. A suggestion was made that Worship Associates look through the same lens starting from this meeting. What is their role? How do they support the mission? They connect with the congregation through the worship service. They are a liaison to the membership and act in a support role to the senior minister. They also connect very well with Ed. Connections with staff, i.e. Jan, Jeram, the ushers, etc. are serious and very well established. The staff knows how to talk with the Worship Associates.

2. How well does your group connect and communicate with each other within this group?

Very well with most Worship Associates, not so good in others. When the Worship Associates Committee began during Roberta Finklestein's interim, the assumption was all were there with the same level of commitment. They have formed a great circle of friendship and are very serious about their role. Attendance is pretty much 100%. Previously they didn't take minutes or post them and left it to the person missing to get information on their own. They have become more formalized and have decided to now take minutes and share with the group. They are also in the process of writing up a covenant.

Connie Rockman sees the connection as a bigger picture. People in the congregation see the Worship Associates not only working together with the minister, but also as a committee they, too, could be a part of. By bringing in more congregants there will be continuing connections demonstrating the Worship Associates are not an 'elite' group. We are all in this together. They are still learning about planning and conducting worship services. They are arranging a storytelling workshop led by Connie Rockman in order to prepare for the possibility of telling some weekly stories.

They are a cohesive group; new people this year feel very welcome and supported. However, after 3 years, some members are needing to leave, and due to the attrition, Worship Associates is trying to attract new people.

The first Worship Associates begun by Roberta had a 2-year commitment. When John first met with the Worship Associates he very much liked what he saw as he was not used to the support and enthusiasm of this group. He asked them to continue with another 2 year commitment.

There is a selection process to become a Worship Associate. Worship Associates recommend names to the Sr. Minister, but he can also recommend people he's come to know. Worship Associates meet with John to share names; he invites those who seem to be possibilities in for a discussion and then personally extends an invitation to join the committee.

Worship Associates would like to have a once-a-year welcome, with specified time for training, as training is definitely involved. With so much on John's plate during his first year with us, this has slipped by. They will have a welcome in middle of this church year; hopefully there will be new Worship Associates to accept the invitation. Currently there are approximately 10 members on the committee.

3. How well does your group connect and communicate with other groups and ministries within the congregation?

Worship Associates had a table at the Homecoming Committee Fair, and 2 new people expressed interest.

Worship Associates connect and communicate very well with the ministers. John is comfortable with their proficiency and capability. He knows they can talk with him at a moment's notice and in the short period of time before a service on Sunday mornings. There is not much interaction with other committees, other than Ushers and Pastoral Care which are part of regular worship services. While Music and RE (Life Span and Faith Development) are very related, there haven't been formal interactions.

At this time there is no outreach to social justice or other committees. It seems that most people from other areas come to Worship Associates to be involved in the service, either with a message or having someone included in the service. Immigration issues could be a major topic. Worship Associates haven't yet set channels of communication with other groups. Those members at the reflection meeting felt it was definitely one role of the Worship Associates to gather input from other committees.

One problem is the limited number of Sundays available for John to speak his own messages. TUCW has a heavy liturgical calendar from Sept. to June, and it has been the responsibility of the Worship Associates to plan and run all summer services. This may change as summer services become year-round.

The mention of the word Dropbox evoked a chuckle from all present. Discussion about the use of Dropbox illustrated difficulties--problems with editing, using different computer platforms, saving items, etc. Questions were asked about the possibility of using Realm or Google docs. This is definitely a general issue, as it is a concern in other committees as well. We are not leveraging technology as well as possible. Perhaps technology workshop is in order. Perhaps Dorothy could help?

What's the role of technology in the church? What tools are needed? How can we make the best use of this? One concern is confidentiality. This is a church wide issue as other committees have raised similar questions.

Worship Associates are open to suggestions. They do not see their role as rigid or inflexible, quite the contrary.

4. How well does your group connect with the larger community--the UU district, UUA, and, if applicable the local community?

In spring of 2015 six members attended a New England District Worship Associates workshop in RI. They were excited to go, learned a lot, and would like to go to more. They have spoken about formally visiting other UU congregations to observe their worship services, but have not yet done so. Nor have they gone out to non -UU congregations.

5. How can we connect better?

Linda Hudson suggested our Order of Service is under-utilized as an information tool. She would like to read about specific activities or events occurring which would offer more opportunities for people to connect. She would like these notices to look like an invitation. Perhaps we could use larger paper for the Orders of Service. Perhaps there could be a description of ongoing groups, e.g. shawl ministry, meditation, movie night, with name of a person to contact if interested. What can the Order of Service do to make new person welcome, energized, interested?

There was a suggestion to have a unique Worship Associates column in Soundings; this may happen.

Sudha likes that Charles puts Order of Service online a few days before the service.

There is a need to have a welcoming person in the foyer at the beginning of service. How can we greet new people, but not overwhelm them? Perhaps we should not ask first-time visitors to stand up and be recognized when the service begins.

It is important to have symbols of other cultures and communities in the foyer that invite new visitors and make them feel comfortable.

The group discussed which other committees to connect with, and which should be the first one. Randy said this is a great question to ask of all committees.

Worship Associates have so many connections to so many groups, generations, learning styles.

There is also a need for connections between senior and newer members of the committee. Worship Associates also need to be aware of bringing in younger folks.

Linda talked about making connections between or among parts of the service, e.g. “this reading reminds me of what the children are doing today.” Any opportunity to make connections should be taken advantage of and acted upon. It was also suggested that looking directly in the eyes of someone you are speaking about is the essence of connection.

NLDC Reflection Notes

Sat., Sept. 17, 2016

Attendance: Bart Stuck, NLDC; Marti Bishop, Randy Burnham, Anita Pfluger

1) How are we walking together to “connect” through worship, music, learning and caring ministries in your area?

Deb Garskof is the co-chair with Bart of the NLDC. He received input from other NLDC members, Denny Davidoff, Kathy Roberts, and Beverly Lieberman.

This general question asks what your committee is about and how is it working for your group?

Bart suggested the nominating is the easy part, leadership development is harder. The new timing for volunteer fair, immediately after the annual Homecoming service, offers far better connections. He shared the story of a woman, a first-time visitor, who came to Homecoming, attended the fair, and then signed up to become member of church!

Bart said there are lots of ‘doers’ in the congregation. Sometimes, however, new people may not do what experienced members do as well, which results in the new person getting pushed aside or ignored, which is not good. Elected slots are part of policy governance issue...so some of the people who are doers cannot 'do'!!

Bart wonders how many new people actually stay on committees. Where are the new people? He thinks about this as the real challenge to Leadership Development. Bart actually gave a talk at a workshop in Hamden congregation last year about this topic.

Bev Lieberman is an executive recruiter, so she will be a good person for connecting with leadership development.

Terms on the committee have been increased from 1 to 2 years.

Is it possible to use Realm for a database of skill sets? Is volunteering a good way of developing leadership?

After the Committee Fair, each of the committee members got a list of 6 committees with which to connect and discuss results of the fair. Most committees ended up with 2-4 names of people interested in their committees.

It would be good to identify skill areas of those people. NLDC is going to report to the 4 elected committees. How to give structure to what it is the NLDC is supposed to be doing? Finding people for the elected committees is one thing, but what to do with people who are interested in other areas? They are in the process of getting feedback from other committees.

2) How well does your group connect and communicate with each other within this group?

Within the group everyone is engaged and responsive. They meet on the first Tuesday of the month and have positive discussions.

Members are observers at BOT meetings, so that creates good connections.

NLDC usually gets input from elected committees as far as skill sets needed for new members.

Last year they had a surplus of candidates, and they interviewed everyone.

In the past the Board got used to the vacuum of the minister, so they ended up micro-managing. It is different now.

3) How well does your group connect and communicate with other groups and ministries within the congregation?

The committee fair was co-sponsored with membership and NLDC.

4) How well does your group connect with the larger community – the UU District, Unitarian Universalist Association, and if applicable the local community?

Connections with the UUA are more now with Roberta and John here. There seem to be more possibilities of connecting with other congregations in CT and other areas.

5) How can we connect better?

How can we use REALM? Can it be used to catalog skill sets? Committee has not looked at this yet, but it is something they hope to do. This might be a good way to capture skills sets.

Are there goals to focus on this year? The committee has three goals: 1) Document clearly the Committee Fair so it can occur automatically each year. 2) Prepare a slate of nominees for elected committees for Annual Meeting. 3) Focus on leadership development and meaningful process.

At their next meeting they will have a discussion on how to begin the process of finding nominees for elected committees.

They talked about putting summaries of meetings on the bulletin board in the foyer, not the website. They are not sure if this will work. Announcements are read at every service. They are definitely going to write up a summary of the Committee Fair. There are about 30 committees, maybe more considering David and the extent of his Social Justice programs.

Connecting is the job of the NLDC.

Bart was asked what their focus would be if they could only work on 1 or 2 things for the year? Volunteer/Committee fair is one which needs to be 'drilled' into the social fabric of the congregation.

The end game is seeing new blood constructively contributing to the congregation. What is the path to leadership? Serving on 3-4 Committees?

Does information listed on brown cards for membership get entered into REALM?
Good question--How to utilize the doers and the followers and the Policy governance works....

Year Round Stewardship Committee Reflection Notes

1. How are we walking together to connect through worship, music, learning and caring ministries in your area?

Committee is both energized and disappointed. Great enthusiasm and creativity has not created the results this year that were hoped for.

2. How well does your group connect and communicate with each other within this group?

Meet once a month: great interaction, spirit of FUN! Also see each other socially. Some conflict last year with Chair. Weekly communication re visiting stewards.

3. How well does your group connect and communicate with other groups and ministries within the congregation?

Connect with the congregation through visiting stewards, periodic announcements at services, thank you notes.

Dorothy is liaison with Staff and Finance. Dorothy also handles the data.

Kevin is liaison with Endowment

Chuck on Legacy

Ken L with choirs

Denny 'at large'

MJ with Board

4. How well does your group connect and communicate with the larger community?

Have not reached out to the UUA – and could do a better job sharing ideas and experiences.

5. How can we connect better?

More ways to promote 'year round' giving. Longer planning horizon

Connection with younger member families – and representation on YRSC

More networking with UUA and regional congregations

Reach out to Neighborhood Circles and SG

Lifespan Development (LFD) Reflection Notes

February 8, 2016 and Notes Updated by Mary Collins, August 2016

Overview

Lifespan Faith Development is the new name for the religious education function at TUCW. Mary Collins as LFD Director is the lead staff person. We also have: Cal Wacker, Youth Program Director, Ray Hills, LFD Co-ordinator, Alex Garrison & Joanna Fanuko as Sunday Teachers. The Adult Programming has also been integrated into LFD, and there is a new Circle Chair for the adult programs, Kathy Kurzatkowski.

The curriculum for the elementary grades is generally from the UUA Tapestries of Faith program. Curriculums may at times be modified to address our population better. In the youth group, in consultation with YPD develops their weekly topics.

Marti Bishop and Tom Hearne met with the LFD Council comprised of the Chairs of the various Circles and subgroups within LFD. The whole Council meets bi-monthly, alternating months are focused meeting in one, or more of the following areas (Elementary, Youth, Adult, Teacher Support, Connections) as needed to support the programming.

1) How are we walking together to “connect” through worship, music, learning and caring ministries in your area?

LFD has three goals for this church year, which focus on connecting in support of our mission. These goals are 1) Alignment with the broader church, 2) Improve communication with parents, and 3) Identify what’s going well and improve what is not.

The LFD function encompasses the entire congregation and has an immense breadth of responsibility. Our LFD classes are dependent on volunteers to staff each room, in accordance with our Safer Congregation policy (which requires two people in each room where minors are).

NEED GROUP COMMENTS FROM TEACHERS ARE THEY CONNECTING WITH EACH OTHER. SAME WITH COUNCIL BELOW

Adult Programs goals are to have programming for Spiritual practice and the goals of interfaith outreach and understanding. The Council has dedicated members who are committed to improving how we address faith development across age ranges. They communicate to others in their respective areas to ensure that everyone is on board with what is happening.

The Council is very aware of the need to continue to look for ways to integrate the LFD function and the youth into the broader life of the church community.

1) How well does your group connect and communicate with each other within this group?

In addition to the Council meetings members utilize Realm group and email to keep in touch. The Circle Chairs assist the communication from the Council to others. Mary regularly offers ZOOM meeting links to assist participation in meetings if people can’t be here in person. As with any group having this breadth of responsibility, connecting and communicating with all those involved is an ongoing issue.

Because parents are so important Mary as Director actively reaches out to keep parents informed. In addition to information in Soundings, She does a weekly email to parents that includes activities

and suggestions for topics that can be discussed at home (around the dinner table, bedtime, or in the car). There are also monthly half hour meetings for parents between services on Sunday morning. Mary also connects with parents throughout the summer by phone, email, etc.

2) How well does your group connect and communicate with other groups and ministries within the congregation?

The Story for All Ages in the service every week have helped integrate our young people into worship. The connection flow starts with the kids → parents → families → community.

To promote better understanding of what adults are doing, speakers from the Non Violent Communications group, Social Justice groups (the Rainbow Task Force, Beardsley school, Kiva) have made presentations and interacted with the kids about what they are doing.

LFD has also contacted the Small Group Ministry regarding Soul Matters materials for adults.

Polly Cromwell, Connections Circle chair, fosters connection to the families and other interested adults for hands-on social justice opportunities related to Gardening in the Community with Green Village Initiative.

Other activities that reach out include the monthly multi-generational services, Last year's Camp Jewel and holiday party, and drumming event, which was also multigenerational. More are planned for 2016-2017.

LFD will also have a table for the Volunteer Fair this September to encourage broader participation with the kids from adult members of the congregation.

3) How well does your group connect with the larger community – the UU District, Unitarian Universalist Association, and if applicable the local community?

There have also been connections with the UU District. TUCW high school youth are the most connected group attending district/regional youth trainings (Racial Justice, Peer Pastoral Care) and social conferences and events in the Central East Region (CER) and Metro New York Cluster of Congregations.

The Youth Choir (children 8-12 yrs old) performed a musical at a District meeting.

The focus for this church year is Interfaith Connections. Various members within the congregation and other faith communities will be involved, increasing connection and understanding for the children K-3rd grade, and 6-7th graders "Building Bridges" curriculum (an updated Neighboring Faiths curriculum) will also be visiting other churches and making connections. Adults are welcome to join them. Book discussions (UUA Common Read) are planned. And LFD looks to UUA resources for local applications.

Polly Cromwell reached out to the gardening community at the church for involvement with a project in Bridgeport. She felt there was very little response from congregants even though the request for involvement was in Soundin

4) How can we connect better?

There was some discussion about the church operating within silos and the kids help connect with their parents as adults in the congregation. The Council would like to see more adults who do not

have kids become involved with LFD programs. Mary has put particular emphasis on this concept by contacting people directly.

Developing infrastructure for LFD is an ongoing concern. There was concern that the congregation was not committed to the Coming of Age Program (no one volunteered to facilitate Sunday sessions this year, and there were no parent comments about not having it). There is better involvement with the OWL program (parents seek assistance in their role as primary sexuality educators).

Utilizing feedback on the program from various sources, this year the OWL program will meet Sunday afternoon from 1:00-3:00pm to see if that encourages better participation. *(NOTE– after this meeting the 8th grade OWL program is NOT running this year as both planned teachers cancelled their participation)*

In a discussion about building community the idea of online communities that teenagers today are involved in. There is a need to get more sophisticated in this area and support connection for our youth in online media. This included online registration that was user friendly and that more parents filled out, and multiple opportunities for people to connect with each other.

There is a need for a dedicated staff marketing person. Summer programs are a potential avenue for interfaith work.

Human Resources (HR) Committee Reflection Notes

January 16, 2017

Attendees: Rev. Morehouse Dorothy Adams, Betty-Lynn White, Jeff Lundberg, Marti Bishop (COM & HR) and Randy Burnham (COM)

Introduction – The Human Resources Committee was reactivated under the interim of Rev. Roberta Finkelstein and approved by the Board of Trustees. The committee has three members serving rotating three-year terms. The current Chair is Betty-Lynn White who is a licensed attorney with expertise in labor and employment law at the federal and state levels. Jeff Lundberg is a retired Human Resources Executive with knowledge of Best Practices and writing HR policy. Marti Bishop brings functional management experience in implementing HR policy with employees. She continues to serve beyond her term until a replacement with appropriate skills can be identified and approved by the Board of Trustees.

The HR Committee is somewhat different than many other committees in that it has a major fiduciary responsibility to ensure that the church is in compliance with all relevant law and the Church has no legal liabilities where employees are concerned. This means that the members must have knowledge of HR policies and policy implementation and understand the legal implications of these policies.

The HR committee is both proactive and reactive. The committee is responsible for ensuring the HR Manual of personnel policies is up to date. It is also responsible for ensuring job descriptions for all Church staff positions are current and that employee Benefits meet Fair Compensation Guidelines for the denomination.

1) How are we walking together to “connect” through worship, music, learning and caring ministries in your area?

The primary “customer“ of the HR Committee is the Church Staff. The committee serves as a consultant to the Sr. Minister in his capacity as CEO, and works closely with the Executive Director to ensure all legal requirements are met. The Sr. Minister, Executive Director and the HR Committee ask for a meeting with the committee as needs arise, and the Committee Meets at least three times a year.

2) How well does your group connect and communicate with each other within this group?

This is high functioning committee whose members respect each other and who are highly respected by the Staff and the Board of Trustees. Each member has many years of experience in his/her area of expertise and among them all relevant aspects of the development and implementation of HR Policy are covered.

Communication is primarily through email and face-to face-meetings. These meetings occur early in the calendar year when the HR Manual is reviewed and updated to comply with any changes in law passed the previous year. The Executive Director and/or the Sr. Minister/CEO also request meetings as needed.

3) How well does your group connect and communicate with other groups and ministries within the congregation?

The HR Committee primarily connects with the Sr. Minister/CEO and Executive Director concerning HR policy, any necessary changes in the HR Manual or Job Descriptions, and Benefits issues. The committee has also met with the Finance Committee concerning Benefits issues that had finance and employee implications. The committee informs and updates the Board of Trustees on changes in law that impact the HR Manual.

Because the primary relationship of HR is with the staff, there has been little or no need to meet with other committees except Finance. The emphasis has been on ensuring that the legal requirements for the HR Manual and Job Descriptions are maintained and current.

4) How well does your group connect with the larger community – the UU District, Unitarian Universalist Association, and if applicable the local community?

The HR Committee has initiated and maintained close contact with UUA resources in Boston. As a result of the committees work on the HR Manual, Jeff Lundberg has worked with Boston to update the template provided by the UUA and account for differences in policy requirements depending on the size of the congregation. Jeff also checks on Best Practices as documented by SHRM.

The HR Manual has been reviewed twice by UUA Consultants and judged to be one of the best the Consultants have seen.

5) How can we connect better?

The HR Committee may need to consider being more proactively involved with the Director of Social Action and committees such as Immigration. Given some of the areas and projects that Social Action is now involved in, a review of who is covered by the Background Check policy is warranted and this policy may need to be expanded beyond its current parameters relative to working with children and youth and staff positions.

TUCW is not at the 10% Gold Star Level in contributions to the denomination. Anything the HR Committee can do to support getting to that level is positive.

The HR Committee needs to continue to look for and be open to identifying members in the congregation who have the required skills to participate in this committee. Keeping this issue top of mind with the NLDC and the Board can be helpful.

Circles of Cares Reflection Notes

Notes created by William McEvoy

The Circles of Care are not in a good state as a whole. While some sections are meeting, others aren't and haven't been for some time. Once of the members of the steering committee reflected that he felt that there was no energy in the group and he was left with a hollow feeling.

The facilitators connect with each other via e-mail and a monthly meeting. The meeting is poorly attended, at the meeting I joined, there were only two facilitators, including the chair, and a third associate member there to help. No staff attended, and this low attendance was typically a little better, with three or four facilitators and David Vita normally joining.

They feel that their efforts to communicate with the congregation are limited. They are not making much use of Realm and don't seem to have ready access to new members contact information, they mentioned that they wished the directory was kept up-to-date and that they got quick notice when a new member joined so they could put them in touch with an Circle of Care if one was active in their area. They feel that they are crowded out of the public square that is the foyer after services – they

would like to have a regular presence (monthly) at a table, but are told other groups like Voices Cafe take precedence. They also mention there is little bulletin board space. (Observer note: I'm not sure how much energy this group might have to take advantage of greater space – that they could staff a table monthly – but they are correct that CoC's presence in the foyer is limited) They do not contribute a regular article to Soundings, but will consider it.

(Side note observation – we had a discussion about the limited space in the foyer and in particular the choice to put the two antique tables there. It feels like they're “Grandma's antiques” and because of their age and provenance, they feel it is a waste of precious space and the tables aren't accorded any real honor there anyway. Moving those tables, and indeed, assessing how the foyer space is being used weekly is something the COM should consider recommending.)

We talked about the CoC's mission and their charter, and they seem adrift. Originally formed to provide care for other congregants, the group decided early that they needed to develop socially in order to foster the deeper connections needed. That has met with mixed success, and with the rise of the Chaplain group, some of their purpose has gone. We discussed a new purpose, and were excited about becoming part of (or simply becoming?) the Membership Committee. They could function as part of TUCW's expanding civic circumference, the part that connects new members and friends with the church community better. Members of a new person's CoC would look for them at services, connecting with them at fellowship hour, sitting with them at other church events, and generally deepening and extending their welcome. This would also then be supplemented by any social events the group held.

Shawl Ministry Reflection Notes

Friday, June 17, 2016

COM Members Attending: Anita Pfluger, Marti Bishop

Overview: The Shawl Ministry program began in 2006. Since then more than 300 knitted or crocheted shawls have been given to both men and women to offer support and comfort during difficult times or to celebrate a joyous occasion. Meetings are held every other Friday from September through June in the Meeting House. Meetings begin with the lighting of the chalice and followed by silent knitting with music for ½ hour or so. After a reading is offered, “checking in” and conversation occur while knitting continues. As each session winds down, there is a group blessing of shawls being worked on. Jan Braunle is head of the committee.

1) How are we walking together to “connect” through worship, music, learning and caring ministries in your area?

The Shawl Ministry offers many avenues of connection through its outreach. The women (there are no men on the committee, but they would be most welcome!) began knitting scarves for each child in Beardsley's two kindergarten classes, and now they also make mittens and/or hats for the children. Their reach has expanded to Mercy Learning Center as they knit or crochet baby blankets for those women with newborns and small babies. Currently they are involved with IICON and the settlement of refugees. They are knitting and felting pot holders for each of the families coming to our area.

The Shawl Ministry presented individual shawls to each of the members of our partner church in Alsoboldogfalva who visited Westport in 2009.

2) How well does your group connect and communicate with each other within this group?

There is very good communication within and among each other. E-mail is very convenient and accessible. It is a small group of women, and, as one member put it during our meeting, “This is a wonderful way to get to know people.”

3) How well does your group connect and communicate with other groups and ministries within the congregation?

Name tags of Shawl Ministry members are obvious with their attached knitting needles and tiny pieces of knitted material.

While the Shawl Ministry has a presence on the church website which includes photos and a mission statement, the group is discouraged that word about their work and contributions to the care of the congregation does not seem to be getting out. This is a major concern of theirs. Requests for shawls do not come from the Pastoral Care Chaplains, the ministers, the Dir. of RE, or anyone else. As many of the members are involved in a variety of other activities at church, they usually have a great deal of information about what is going on in and around the congregation. As a result, this is how they get names of people suffering ill health or emotional/personal needs who would benefit from one of their shawls.

4) How well does your group connect with the larger community – the UU District, Unitarian Universalist Association, and if applicable the local community?

The Shawl Ministry is committed to empowering and supporting women and children in a variety of ways, e.g. ongoing microloans made through The Kiva Organization and donations to a variety of causes including The Hamlin Fistula Foundation in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and The Religious Institute in Westport, Connecticut. They have connected with the Shawl Ministry program at the UU church in Danbury. The UU Fellowship at Stony Brook, LI, began their own Shawl Ministry program after hearing about TUCW’s, a result of an invitation from Rev. Margie Allen.

All of the women worked on a very special shawl which was hand-delivered to a hospital in Ethiopia by Ellie Grosso.

A new member of the group brought up the idea of knitting shawls for homeless shelters. She also suggested giving knitting lessons to children, and many members thought that was a grand idea.

5) How can we connect better?

They have considered regularly submitting articles about the Shawl Ministry in Soundings as well as asking Rev. John to promote the spiritual work they are doing.

Marti Bishop suggested they do a service about their work. It was something they had not previously considered.

The Shawl Ministry was a presence at last year’s Committee fair but they did not feel it was very successful. A suggestion was made to hand out the Shawl Ministry brochure by a group of people involved in the committee.

Membership Reflection Notes

Participant: David Vita, Membership Chair

Monday, Aug. 29, 2016

1. How are we walking together to “connect” through worship, music, learning and caring ministries” in your area?

Staff support is very strong, and communication among staff is great. Any information relating to members, e.g. who is not doing well, having surgery, etc. is shared with each other

David and Dorothy regularly communicate about the financial side of membership. He and Mary talk at least once a week about anything going on with or pertinent to RE families. It is informal, but they communicate so well. Pastoral Care Chaplains also communicate with David, but on a less formal basis.

This is an area that could use a little improvement. One suggestion was to create a monthly list of those being served by the Pastoral Care Chaplains; the list would be shared with staff only (Mary, Dorothy, Jan, Cal, David.)

Another suggestion is to formalize the process of taking down names of people lighting candles each Sunday. One specific person (or possibly a couple of different people) would write down the names of those lighting candles and the situations they describe. This list would be shared with everyone on staff.

2. How well does your group connect and communicate with each other within this group?

At one point there was no Membership Committee. Now there is, but it is small. As scheduling and attending meetings is a problem, David wants to focus more on tasks than on meetings, e.g. more people sitting at the membership table each Sunday, more orientations and dinners for new members, more follow-ups with new members. Every 3-4 months someone should check in with these new people and see how everything is going. Perhaps there should be a group whose main task is to provide ongoing checking in/follow ups with new people during their first year. David would like to see less in terms of meetings, and more in terms of people signing up for specific tasks such as those previously suggested.

3. How well does your group connect and communicate with other groups and ministries within the group?

David is on both the Stewardship Committee and the Neighborhood Circle Committee. From a membership prospective, there are the two committees where David should be. There are many opportunities for connections within these areas.

The Stewardship Committee talks about how they approach people at different financial levels.

4. How well does your group connect with the larger community—the UU District, Unitarian Universalist Association, and, if applicable, the local community?

We do a great deal of ‘connecting’ here. David is on the Bd. Of Directors of the Unitarian-Universalist Association of Membership Professionals. It is about 4-5 years old, a UU organization similar to Ed’s Musician's Network.

David is in his second year of being on the board; they meet electronically every month and at GA. Once a year they physically meet at a chosen location. They now meet day before GS, have a speaker, and also attend workshops. This coming year they are going to hold a 2-day professional development . In Mar of mid-March 2017.

This may be less expensive for some folks than physically going to GA. Speakers, workshops, skill dev., best practices, they are developing a certification program, there are some regional meetings They work on skill development, how do you handle this or that...

We don't advertise locally in papers...people hear about us word of mouth or visit the website. The Facebook page is a plus; more people seem to know more about TUCW than in the past. Our work is our advertising...marches, parades, demonstrations...that's how people learn about us. David is thinking about listings in local media.

This past week he had the first meeting with a group of five people who are interested in video.

5. How can we connect better?

- A. Better and more outreach and pastoral care chaplains;
- B. The young adult group needs some work;
- C. Bring a friend Sunday;
- D. Get the congregation more involved.

Music Committee Reflection Notes

Participants: Ed Thompson, Committee members, Tom Hearne and Marti Bishop(COM)

Participation in choirs/music is among the highest of all segments of the congregation. Music Committee supports the ministry of Ed Thompson and the music program in general.

1. How are we walking together to connect through worship, music, learning and caring ministries in your area?

The music program is one of the essential features of worship and connection in the congregation. Approximately 20% of the congregation is in a choir. Each choir (there are seven) is, in effect, a small group – a close knit community unto itself.

In addition to rehearsals, Ed offers classes in music theory, sight reading, etc each year and periodically voice lessons are offered as well with Marcella.

2. How well does your group connect and communicate with each other within this group?

The Committee meets formally on an ad hoc basis about four times per year – usually to coordinate special events, such as the Christmas Eve service or fund raising events. The group is high energy and dependable. There are many opportunities for ‘checking in’ at services and rehearsals.

3. How well does your group connect and communicate with other groups and ministries within the congregation?

The many musical needs of the congregation: services, memorials, etc, drive coordination with Staff and Worship Associates. Often this occurs with and through Ed Thompson. The Committee also coordinates with Voices Café as needed for benefits, etc.

4. How well does your group connect and communicate with the larger community?

There is strong mutual support and interaction with other congregations in the area: Music on the Hill, Interfaith Thanksgiving, joint concerts events at Norwalk Concert Hall, Youth at District UUA events,

5. How can we connect better?

Despite the size and breadth of the music program, there are areas that could be better.

It is a challenge to offer deeper levels of participation, especially for the youth. It would be great to have more music in Sunday School. Among adults it is difficult to convey the idea that ‘talent’ is not the prerequisite for being in a choir – there is ample opportunity to learn/grow – you just have to join!

Staff Reflection Notes

Wednesday., Sept. 21, 2016

Attending: Rev. John Morehouse, Senior Minister; Dorothy Adams, Director of Operations; Jan Braunle, Administrative Associate; Lara Fuchs, Ministerial Intern, Mary Collins, Director of Lifespan Faith Development; Cal Wacker, Youth Program Director; Ed Thompson, Minister of Music; David Vita, Director of Social Justice; Marti Bishop, COM; Anita Pfluger, COM

1. How are we walking together to connect through worship, music, learning and caring ministries in your area?

The staff supports all aspects of our congregational life because they interact with all the committees and with individual congregants in one form or another. Because they support the overall work of the church, they are constantly supporting the connection.

2. How well does your group connect and communicate with each other within this group?

As a staff, great. Historically it's been that way, even as staff has changed. The lines of communication are extremely good; staff meetings are very effective. The staff always communicates well and are getting even better. They support each other. They've been developing the concept of horizontal leadership, hoping to counteract the ‘silo’ effect. They work together, talk together, and learn about the different ministries with which they are each involved. There is tremendous trust and respect among group as they hear and listen to each other.

3. How well does your group connect and communicate with other groups and ministries within the congregation?

Connections and communications with other groups depends on who they are connecting with and the area of their specific ministries. Their lines of communication are based on how their ministries connect.

Cal talked about his admiration for Ed's ability to connect and communicate with the choirs, especially the youth choir. It is hard, sometimes, for Cal to communicate with his ministry based on their needs, for example, communicating safely with kids and/or their parents as confidentiality can be a huge concern. He had some suggestions for making it better. The first step would be to create a UU Twitter account. Cal wants us to think about other Social Media applications to use, e.g. Snapchat. These are communications issues. Cal questions how to utilize the new technology to reach the young people (kids) where they are. We need to be very conscious of this.

Mary is trying to get big picture with Lifespan Faith Development. New people are involved this year, and she's finding it hard to educate all on different ways to communicate. She says it's a little 'rocky' right now. One issue of great concern is the lack of response when notices or requests are sent out. This is a real challenge.

Marti asked where are your 'sandpaper' issues. What's come up?

Rev. John--If we could get the congregation's attention, it would help. With all the work the staff is doing, it's surprising at lack of response. He thinks perhaps the Covenant of Right Relations currently being developed will help move the congregation from a 'consumer' culture to a 'participatory' culture.

This lack of response is a recurring issue. Cal has certain requirements for certain events, e.g. adults must be present. If those basic requirements are not met, the events cannot be held. Mary has the same problem. The volunteer base is lower. At the moment there are NO people for OWL program, and this is quite shocking. She will go back to the people saying NO to ask again for their participation.

Dorothy looks at committee assignments and wonders if we have overloaded people with committee assignments. It seems as if the same people participate over and over. Perhaps if this decreases we can concentrate on relationships.

Lara questioned how efficient the congregation can be when this happens. Mary thought this gives us the opportunity to look at other ways of doing things.

David suggested the important thing is connecting with people of passion. He reiterated a story about connecting with a woman passionate about one issue in her heart...immigration. David is experimenting more with having fewer meetings. For example, his "A team" is responsible for setting up apartments. That is all they want to do, even though the pool of people doing this is getting larger. He is focusing on less 'meeting' and more 'doing.' This seems to be working better. However, there are some people who actually do want to go to meetings, and he calls them the 'do it' committee.

Jan noted one change is rentals, which basically is a budget issue. We need the rentals, but sometimes it is difficult to accommodate rentals because of the hours the sexton is available to help. We do not have a 24-hour sexton. Dorothy suggested ways of solving it, but the building is complex. Perhaps committees will have to move their own tables and chairs. This is a 'change' thing, and related to managing expectations. This is important. Someone mentioned the 'duck swimming' analogy. Not everyone understands all the work going on behind the scenes...or under the water.

Managing expectations creates an essential tension within a voluntary organization. The better the staff is, the less the congregation does. This is something we need to work on. We need to tell congregants they can't always get what they want (lovingly of course.) This issue exists in so many areas and organizations.

Marti asked if power shifts were one of the things affecting this management of expectations. She noted that a report from COM is forthcoming. Individual committees will get their reports first. Sometimes, Marti said, change is difficult, especially when it is about power.

Dorothy thought one problem is having 4 separate elected committees. She suggested one elected body is sufficient; it is where the buck actually stops. This body should be the Board of Trustees. Marti described the covenant meeting held by the COM the Saturday before homecoming. It was an attempt to define and examine how all of the elected committees would work together. Dorothy thought this actually should be something the Board could be doing. Apparently they are now talking about how to make this work. There are common themes among different committees. Dorothy wondered why there was an NLDC. The thought that should be a board responsibility. How can we highlight what some of these issues are and bring them to the congregation? Another theme was revealed: there are too many seniors on committees. We need youthful voices and the younger generation to succeed.

4. How well does your group connect and communicate with the larger community?

Cal remarked that our youth are some of the most vocal in contact with the UUA. They have purposefully engaged with neighboring congregations. They want to go to GA as well as other workshops and/or events, e.g. something coming up in Youngstown.

5. How can we connect better?

We need to prioritize the process and determine which are the largest issues. As part of Policy Governance, 'end statements' need to be in place. The board needs to do this, and this will help other groups and committees to know where we are going.

Jan wanted to add that the shawl ministry is actually one committee that connects with every other group or committee in the congregation. It is totally multigenerational.

New information. The board is in the process of realigning committees with different authorities. This is a new mindset, a real shift for the congregation. The committees will have chairs but will direct their ministry toward the ends that serve the means.

Staff are not 'servants'. Dorothy and John compose the executive team. They are examining and dividing up the various committees between them. Marti suggested a chart similar to Sudha's would be helpful. This is something being worked on.

One aspect resulting from Mark Euert's report was there could be too much communication, e.g. too many minutes for people to reasonably read. How can we find the right kind of communication to share? This was one issue covered in the COM covenant meeting last week. Marti has finished the summary of that meeting, and it will eventually go out to all committee chairs for distribution.

Finance Committee Reflection Notes

April 22, 2017

2) How well does your group connect and communicate with each other within this group? (Do you have processes for ensuring that all get the information they need? What works especially well for your group? Have you encountered any issues or problems? What solutions have you defined to address issues?)

Connections are focused on accomplishing the committee's functions and tasks, which are numerous. There is no formal covenant, but no internal issues.

Confidentiality and seriousness of the work create a strong bond among members, as does the feeling of shared purpose.

3) How well does your group connect and communicate with other groups and ministries within the congregation? (What are the groups you need to communicate with? Are you satisfied with these connections? How often do you communicate with each group? How do you connect with ministers and staff? Have you encountered barriers to connecting? What do these barriers look like?)

Staff: Dorothy Information on spending and budgets is gathered from Dorothy, who is very organized. There is strong mutual trust and confidence.

Connection with Endowment: less than in the past. No longer have committee members in common or cross attendance at meetings. Communication is still fine, but could be better. Current proposal: Quarterly 'Council' meeting. No recent action on this. Another proposal: common staff person (Dorothy) to attend both committee meetings.

Endowment is an elected committee, whereas Finance is a committee of the Board. 'Connection' is ultimately up to the congregation – barring mutual agreement.

4) How well does your group connect with the larger community – the UU District, Unitarian Universalist Association, and if applicable the local community? (What contribution does your area make currently? What more could we do to support our denomination? How can you as a group and our church expand out connection to the local community and the wider world?)

Anne has tried to get help from UUA – no response! Catherine O had some ideas which Anne will pursue.

UUA has a 'Money Blog', which has been useful in communicating directly with other finance types.

Dorothy meets with local directors of finance. Reached out to Suagatuck Church re valuations, nursery school rent levels, etc.

5. How can we connect better?

Could be better at saying 'No'.

Wish: Less whining!

Endowment Committee Reflection Notes

Wednesday, Nov. 9, 2016

Present: Sharon Poole Bittenbender, Kevin Connelly, Brian Lasher, Kevin Leddy, and Ted Yang COM member: Anita Pfluger

1. How are we walking together to connect through worship, music, learning and caring ministries in your area?

One way the Endowment Committee connects with the congregation is through its distribution of funds which support specific programs and activities of and for the congregation. A consistent amount from the Bernhard Music Fund annually provides Ed with funds to provide special programming and enhance our outstanding music program. Other recent examples include the distribution of monies for the beautification of the courtyard, the soon-to-be-completed lift, the October lecture with Prof. Diana Eck, and the financial audit conducted before Rev. John's arrival. The total support in recent years was \$750K.

The Endowment Committee's distribution policy supports the budget of the church. The Fiscal 2017 amount is \$25,000, or about 4% of the total market value of the unrestricted assets in the Endowment. In accordance with the Church Constitution and its distribution, investment, and other policies, the committee is committed to best practices, consistency, and predictability. The Endowment Committee supports the Board's move toward a system of policy governance.

2. How well does your group connect and communicate with each other within your group?

Communication within and among committee members is excellent. Communications are sent through an email distribution list and are completely open. There is no triangulation within the committee. While some issues are confidential and the committee must manage right relations with specific donors, the policy of the committee is to speak as one voice.

Agendas for regular meetings (quarterly) are known in advance, and meetings are very well organized. Responsibilities among members are allocated equitably so no one is overburdened.

3. How well does your group connect and communicate with other groups and ministries within the congregation?

As the specific nature of the Endowment Committee is related to financial activities and concerns, there is a specific process for requests from other groups, ministries, or individuals for funds. This process has become more well-defined than it was in the past.

Communication has gotten better over time. The relationship between the Legacy Committee and Endowment is very good. Communication with the Board of Trustees is through the Chair; the BOT makes a formal request of the Endowment Chair, the committee discusses the request, and they respond with one voice.

To maintain good communications with the congregation, the Committee posts minutes of their quarterly meetings on the bulletin board outside the library. Also listed on this board are the names and contact information of all Endowment members, making this information easy to obtain for the congregation. The Committee has submitted their first article to Soundings and will continue to do so periodically. Members are also wearing their name badges with green ribbons on Sundays.

4. How well does your group connect with the larger community--the UU district UUA, and, if applicable, the local community?

TUCW Endowment funds are invested in the UUA Common Fund. The Committee regularly reviews the UUA Common Fund website to survey how other endowment committees are operating.

The Chair of Endowment is now on the investment committee of the UUA Endowment Fund. Several years ago the Saugatuck church had a devastating fire. Our Endowment committee reached out to them to inquire how they handled this emergency in case TUCW had a similar experience. The results of this effort positively affected the way our insurance policy now operates. We are returning the favor now, several years later, by helping them with their healthcare insurance.

5. How can we connect better?

One idea has been to gather heads of the various funding committees together—Finance, Legacy, Stewardship, Endowment-- to consider what the church does in regard to specific circumstances (e.g. emergencies,) demographics (e.g. Millennials,) and long-term plans (e.g. capital improvements.)

New programmatic funds have been created through the Legacy Committee that are dedicated funds for Social Justice, Music, Buildings and Grounds, and Life Span Faith Development.

The first annual meeting in September of all elected committees was effective and worthwhile. The Endowment Committee would like to see this meeting become a semi-annual event. The Committee also agreed that listening to each other and the members of the congregation is always a method for increasing connections.