

Senior Minister's Report to the Board of Trustees

March 2021

We seem to be getting stronger every day as a congregation. We continue to attract newcomers including some newer and younger faces. I attribute this to our increasing ability to connect with visitors through zoom. Both the Membership and the Worship Associates are following up with newcomers, and David Vita formalizes our connection. I also believe that our strong stand on racial justice, women's rights and transgender issues is attracting new people.

Early results from our pledge drive are encouraging. We already have pledges over \$250,000 towards our \$600,000 goal! We have 32 Visiting Stewards who are reaching out to as many folks as they can. I have six zoom pledge parties scheduled in March to tell people about what is happening in the church. We are also so blessed by Beth Cliff's family's generous offer to fund Family Faith Formation. This will help us staff for success.

I am going to report on End 1.3.5 *Minimize our impact on the Earth and work to heal our planet.*

Executive Interpretation: With climate change now a reality and a change in the White House completed, we have a good reason to be hopeful. I take this End to mean that we, as a congregation, conduct ourselves in such a way as to use as few resources as we can. In addition, I take this to mean that we actively engage in coalition building with other organizations that our working to heal the planet. Theologically, our Seventh Principle, "respect for the interdependent web of life of which we are a part", is further grounding for this work.

Report: This has not been a top priority for us since the pandemic. With issues of hunger and homelessness pressing much of our work was directed to those needs. As we rise into the new normal I hope to resurrect the Climate Change Team which has gone dormant and work with them to build coalitions with local organizations that are doing this work, especially those organizations that work with and our headed by BIPOC (black, Indigenous and people of color). In the meantime, I can report that we are working towards reducing our carbon footprint in several ways. First, we are controlling the temperature in our building with a protocol for staff to turn down thermostats when leaving certain areas. Our reduced services have led to a decrease in natural gas and electric consumption. Second, our proposed glass replacement as part of our Capital Campaign will greatly reduce our heat loss. Third, because we are using zoom both for worship and meetings there has been a sharp decrease in building usage and utilities consumption. While that will go up when we come out of the pandemic, I don't expect it to return to pre-pandemic levels. People like having meetings from the comfort of their homes! Finally, there are many small changes that lower our carbon footprint. Our trash pickup is every other week and we are likely to continue that schedule. We do recycle throughout the building. And almost all of our exterior and interior lights have been replaced with low wattage LED lighting. We will make further energy improvements to lighting and sound in our renovations.

I look forward to revitalizing our ministry in this regard in the near future.

Report on Limitation 3.3 *Treatment of Staff: With respect to the treatment of paid staff, the Senior Minister shall not cause or allow conditions or practices that are unsafe, unclear, disrespectful or unprofessional. Accordingly, the Senior Minister shall not:*

3.3.1 Operate without written personnel policies that provide for effective handling of employee evaluation and grievances, and protect against wrongful conditions such as harassment and preferential treatment.

3.3.2 Fail to make available to staff a written copy of the personnel policies.

3.3.3 Prevent staff from approaching the Board when internal grievance procedures have been exhausted and the employee alleges either that:

3.3.4 Board policy has been violated to the employee's detriment, or Board policy does not adequately protect the employee's rights.

3.3.5 Discriminate among existing or potential staff/volunteers on a basis other than clearly job-related criteria, individual performance, or individual qualifications

Report: There has been no substantive change in compliance with this limitation. Each staff member receives a copy of our HR Manual which deals with each of these concerns. We updated our grievance and progressive discipline sections two years ago to be in compliance of CT State Law and best practices. Included in that policy is a provision for a staff member to reach out to Board with an internal grievance should my resolution be seen as insufficient. The current Board policies and my internal protocols do not violate any employee's rights. I use best practices in hiring and dismissal based solely on the staff person's job performance and qualifications. Staff members receive a thorough performance goal setting and review in the late Spring of each year. I do make use of volunteers in quasi staff roles. I do this to provide both the opportunity for a member to offer their skills and to supplement the talent we have in serving our congregation. Those quasi staff people adhere to the same staff covenant as paid staff. The covenant was developed three years ago with the help and professional guidance of Mary Trefry. We are very lucky to have such a talented and dedicated staff and volunteers to help us achieve our ends. It is an honor to lead and work with them every day.

Respectfully Submitted, Rev. John Morehouse