

## Senior Minister's Report to the Board

November 2021

### ***Report on End 1.2.4 We become a sustainable, engaged, growing congregation comprised of all generations.***

In October 2020 I offered the following Executive Interpretation of this End:

#### **Executive Interpretation:**

*"I define "sustainable" as that ministry and financial giving that is sufficient to continue our staffing, plant operations and services at current levels. This includes maintaining income at or near current levels. That income may come from sources other than pledging, including but not limited to targeted fundraisers, special appeals and grants.*

*"I define "engaged" to mean we are reaching at least half of our active congregation through worship once or more a month, that our pastoral care ministry touches up to 20% of our congregation and that our outreach involve at least 30% of our active congregation. Engaged also means we are at least retaining our current number of children and youth, currently approximately 45.*

*"I define "growing" to mean we are reaching three or more new people each month who are attending our services and other programming. Growing also means adding at least two new members every month. I will provide a baseline of these numbers in my November report. Obviously, we want to maintain and grow our young families. This should be reflected in the number of newcomers who are using our programs. We are more likely to see newcomer families at the outreach events we have currently underway. Growing also means adding new programming such as we have been doing with the Soul Matters Sharing Circles and Racial Justice Council.*

*"We will know we are making progress towards this end if we are maintaining current giving, reaching out to our wider community and growing the number of people who are participating in our ministry."*

#### **Report:**

Given these metrics we have made some progress towards this end. While measuring the percentage of the congregation touched by our pastoral care ministry is challenging, the fact that we are currently phoning each and every individual member of our congregation and asking how they are doing means that we are touching well about 20% even if we are leaving a message. The number of pastoral visits has remained fairly constant. Our attendance has remained strong averaging 160-200 with in person and zoom worship. We are investing further in broadcast technology and staffing in order to reach a wider community.

We have seen our overall income drop over the past several years with the loss of many of our older and largest givers. It is too soon to say if this trend will continue. We have increased our giving through targeted fundraisers even as our income from pledges have dropped. We have added about ninety new

comers to our congregation in the last year and a half. In January we will report to the UUA and be able to tell if our net is positive or negative. According to the metric from my October 2020, we are currently well over two new members each month. Until we certify our members at the end of January we will not know if that growth has been net positive.

At this time our Faith Formation for children and youth is about constant with a registration of 45. What has changed is that our program is much better organized and stronger than last year. With the hiring of Heather Hamilton as Lead for Children and Family Faith Formation half time and Nate Pawlek as our Lead for Youth half time we have doubled our staffing for attracting families and youth. Heather and Nate are each leading dynamic programs with many new offerings. It is too soon to say whether this will result in a dramatic increase in young families. We certainly are doing all we can with our resources to ensure compliance with this end. The recent "Children Are Our Future" was fully funded! Meaning we have an extra \$40,000 to put towards programing for young families.

Thanks to Beth and all her volunteers we have a much stronger membership attraction program. We are reaching out through social media, publicity, and intentional membership attraction and retention efforts. November 21<sup>st</sup> will be our first new member welcoming service in over 18 months. We hope to welcome 15 of our newest members at that service. My preaching ministry is geared towards spiritual growth and speaking to what it means to be a UU. Overall, we are attempting to shift the culture of the congregation to being more welcoming and accommodating to newcomers, especially new families. I am very pleased with our efforts in this area.

By the end of the church year we should have a better idea if we are moving towards a financially sustainable future. In any case, I am making staffing changes this year which will begin to reduce our overall people costs in the next fiscal year. Further cuts may be necessary but I would like to see if our efforts at newcomer attraction is bearing fruit.

### **Impact on Limitations**

There are several limitation policies that the pursuit of this end will impact:

3.2 Treatment of Congregants, Friends and Visitors: As we move our culture towards becoming more welcoming we expect that our existing congregants will make an effort to meet and welcome newcomers. What this may mean is a shift in emphasis on what our members need to how we can welcome newcomers. My phrase, "Everyone is a member of the Membership Team", sums up this shift.

3.3 Treatment of Staff: Of course I will continue to treat our staff fairly. In fact, after our last staff retreat we instituted a system of focusing on one staff person a week in which we ask what they need to do their job better. The change that I see continuing is shifting of staff roles. Volunteers already have taken on more of membership development. Next year volunteers will need to assume all the roles in our social justice ministry. This will mean that job descriptions will shift and workloads may increase.

3.4 Financial Planning: As we attempt to lower our people costs we will need to allocate some of those savings to assisting volunteers in doing the work of the congregation.

3.5 Financial Conditions and Activities: We can be sure that our financial conditions will change. I am confident our Finance Committee and our staff can handle these changes within our usual protocols.

3.6 Continuous Operations Plan: No change.

3.7 Asset Protection: No change.

3.8 Compensation and Benefits: While we are reducing our people costs, I will be seeking 3% COLA in the next budget year.

3.9 Communicating and Support of the Board: No change

### **Conclusion**

Our congregation has gone through several culture shifts in the last eight years. We moved from a pastoral size system of governance (Board managing the church, Minister removed from management) to a program size system rooted in Policy Based Governance (Minister as CEO, Board as fiduciary vision makers). We have shifted in our staffing structure to using staff (both paid and volunteer) who act as staff anchors, helping our teams and committees to stay focused on our mission and ends. We are decidedly more outwardly focused not just in social justice but in religious education and membership. We have move from the schooling paradigm of religious education to a more holistic life span faith formation ministry focused on integrating our entire congregation towards a deeper understanding of spiritual identity. We are renovating our building to make it more accessible and more comfortable. We have integrated digital technology into our worship and meetings

Now we are shifting again from being heavily reliant on professional staff to provide us with services to empowering our laity to live out the mission and ends of our beloved community. Any one of the shifts we have made would have been hard, to do all of this in eight year is truly amazing and transformative. My goal in coming here was to help with this vital transformation and to position our congregation to thrive and grow in the new world emerging around us. We have and will hit a few bumps in that transformation, but within several more years I believe we will be even more vibrant, sustainable and forward looking that we are now.

Respectfully submitted, Rev. Dr. John T. Morehouse