

Northeast Iowa Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
Board of Trustees Meeting
December 6, 2011
Minutes

Board Members Present:

President Ellen Macdonald, Sue Peterson, Tom Wahlberg, Lynda Sutherland, Mary Jorgenson, Jenna Sicuranza, Bill Jurs and Sarah Corbin

Non-members Present:

Fellowship Coordinator Otter Dreaming, Ministry & Programming Committee Chair Sue Otte

Chalice lighting

Call to Order: 7:15

Approval of Agenda

Approval of minutes of November 1st meeting:

Need to change date of minutes we were approving last month from “approval of minutes of June 7th meeting” to “approval of minutes of October 4th meeting.”

Minutes approved with above changes

Committee Reports

Finance & Stewardship – Tom Wahlberg

Passed out updated budget

Received final payment from Al Bergan estate. Al will be honored at our upcoming Sunday service. He has donated \$54,500 total to our Fellowship. Our cash position is great thanks to Al, but we need to be careful. This was a big month of expenses.

Jenna: Move that we put the newest money we received from Al Bergan into a 6 month CD. Motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Ministry & Programming – Sue Otte

See Appendix, Board Report A

As the report says, Sue O is planning to step down from her role in programming at the end of the fiscal year. There are various possibilities for how we can accomplish what we need to in the area of programming and ministry. Erin is interested in doing training in the very type of thing that could be a big help to train some members in ministry and programming. She sent a letter outlining what she would like to offer.

See Appendix, Item B Erin’s Letter

The board tabled this discussion for consideration in January after we have time to give it some thought.

Sundays that Erin will be preaching: January 8, February 19, March 18, April 29

Social Justice – Jenna

See Appendix, Board Report E

SJ had a meeting last night with others from the community. February 16th is the proposed date for the first Community Meal.

Jenna: Move that the board match what is raised from the auction on the 11th from our Charitable Giving fund up to \$200 to donate to the Heating Assistance Program. Lynda seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mary will send an announcement through Otter that funds will be matched.

Membership – Ellen

Maybe around Feb. 1 we will look at our membership list again. Jenna gleaned some great ideas at the membership breakout session at the Small Congregations Workshop.

Religious Education – Lynda

Lynda has volunteered to be on the RE Committee. Beth Wahlberg is looking into a UUA call for congregations to pilot their newest version of OWL for 7-9th graders.

Old Business

Welcoming Congregation –Otter

This is moving along with at least two Sundays set aside for education related to the goals of becoming a Welcoming and Affirming Congregation.

Web Committee – Sue P

See Appendix, Board Report C

Richard Simon Hanson DVD project – Mary

Launch at Dragonfly Bookstore next week and it looks like it will be on the Bookstore Website and orders may be able to be processed through that website. Kate does not expect exclusive sales rights. Ellen will be at the launch party to take pictures. We may need to be looking at the Al Bergan resources (to be reimbursed from sales revenues) to print more. We are going step by step. RSH is quite pleased that this is going forward.

Small Congregations Workshop report – Jenna Sicuranza and Lynda Sutherland

See Appendix, Board Report D

Webinar on proposed changes in PSD structure – Ellen

She was apparently the only one who registered and no-one ever came on the line.

Attendance for November - Otter

November 6 (To Be A Hero, with Erin Dajka): 27 adults, 2 children

November 13 (Jim Scott Circle Program): 25 adults, 1 child

November 20 (WWOOFing Down Under, with Steffen Mirsky): 39 adults, 9 children

November 27 (Potluck): 21 adults, 0 children

New Business

Email submission of minutes with email correction and addition process and email vote to approve.

Lynda proposed that when the Board Secretary sends out minutes to the board members, everyone submit corrections within 2 days. The corrected minutes will then be emailed out for an email vote to approve the minutes. The approved minutes will then be posted on the website. The goal is to have them up within a week of the Board meeting, so that the congregation can see what is happening before it becomes obsolete. Everyone agreed to do this.

Request for assistance from a young person with ties to the congregation

Otter will follow up on this and send a request to the Fellowship for individual contributions and let us know a little more.

Request for our congregation to become a Supporting Congregation for the NE Iowa Peace and Justice Center.

Requesting a monthly pledge. Board needs a written request; Lynda will follow up on this.

Request for aid for 5 returning Guatemalan families

Otter will email everyone with the info about what is happening and what is needed as he receives information from those in charge of this project.

Request from a member to consider a “mini-retreat” in January to inform members about recent happenings on the board.

Two Saturdays in a month sounds like too much. Could we combine our weekend with Erin with a “mini-retreat?” Maybe January is too soon.

Possible subjects to discuss at a congregational retreat:

- Mission Statement
- Charitable Giving
- Job Description for Ministry/Programming person

Groundwork needs to be laid with several proposals/options brought to the table. Tabled the discussion of a retreat until January.

Action Items - (what is each person taking away as an assignment?)

- **Otter** will send a request to the Fellowship for individual contributions for the young man wishing to go to camp, and will gather more information on this
- **Mary** will send an announcement through Otter that funds will be matched on the animal auction for donation to the Heating Assistance Project.
- **Lynda** will get written request from P&J Center for the donation they desire
- **Jenna** will look into the possibilities for software for facilitating posting and discussion of minutes
- **Ellen** will be at the RSH launch party to take pictures

- **Tom** will arrange for the purchase of upgraded capacity on the Web Newsletter software as requested by Otter.

And three items we forgot to add to “Action Items” last month:

- **Board** will take a greater responsibility for welcoming visitors and new members. On a Sunday morning if any of us see someone we don't recognize we will introduce ourselves and offer a visitors card and say “here is how you can know what's going on”
- **Otter and Sue O** will give us updates on new people they talk to
- **All of us** will do the same

Extinguishing the Chalice: 9:03

*******Closed board session to hold yearly discussion of the Fellowship Coordinator position.***

Otter requested we pay an extra \$5 per month to upgrade our web program so he can post more pictures in the weekly email. That is within our budget so it does not need a motion. Tom will take care of this.

Tom: Move that we approve 3% raise for Otter effective Jan 1, 2012. Ellen seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Next meeting: January 7, 2012 at 2:00 PM; Location TBA

BOARD REPORTS - ADDENDUM

A) Board Report 12/6/11 Ministry and Programming

Our committee met 12-1-11 to plan for the Dec-March programming, and to evaluate how things are going. (Present: Otter Dreaming, Bill Musser, Mary Jorgensen, Lynda Sutherland, Carl Peterson, and Sue Otte).

We talked about several themes and topics, and will be working on the arrangements in the coming days. We planned several programs that will move us along with our Welcoming Congregation initiative, and tried to incorporate some of Erin Dajka's suggestions concerning her areas of expertise.

The most important idea to come out of the meeting was talk of a plan for the future of ministry and programming activities in our fellowship, as Sue O prepares to step down from her role.

Sue Otte's statement: “I have been involved in programming since the beginning of the fellowship, some of the time alternating services with Bill Musser, as we both took on the board chair duties in the early days for a few years. I have enjoyed being able to create

services, orders of worship, and rituals for NEIUUF, and have found many willing to help with this, especially Bill and Otter.

Now that I am spending more time with my mother and grandchildren, I feel it's time to move into another role. I would like to devote more time to the ministry part of our committee, and leave my programming duties. I think one of the reasons I've stayed in this role for so long, is that I feel a need for continuity in our fellowship, from one Sunday to the next. With no minister on staff (and probably not in the near future), I have tried to play that role in part, so that the services have a connection, and that new people coming in are not lost. I think this is very important for our growth, as well as for developing true community within our fellowship."

Erin Dajka has expressed an interest in leading worship and sermon writing classes with interested members, and two of our members are very interested- Lynda S and Carl P. We will speak with Erin to get this going, and invite others to join, too. We are very interested in working with the Board to develop a plan to move forward with a more formalized position in Ministry and Programming. We talked about a volunteer position, but also a paid position that could be tried out for the next fiscal year. We also spoke about using some of the funds from the Al Bergan estate to help move forward with this plan. We would like the Board to consider this possibility and determine if such a plan would be feasible. Carl Peterson has expressed an interest in working with the Board and others in Min and Prog should the Board decide to pursue this option.

B) Erin Dajka's Letter

I'm writing to get the ball rolling on determining programming for the remainder of my visits this year. I spoke with Sue last month about providing programming of a different nature than the topics that you determined. I am happy to help your committees on areas with which the fellowship feels that it is struggling, but it is also important for me to develop programming out of my own interests in a more explicitly ministerial role. I've copied a list of potential areas that I would be interested in sharing with you below. You may already have it, but I want to make sure that everything is at your fingertips.

Based on feedback at the session on religious education that we did earlier this month, it sounds like there are at least three members interested in learning more about worship planning and leadership. I'd like to be sure that I am able to offer this topic. One or more sessions on preaching might also pique some interest.

In addition, I am also quite interested in offering an hour of small group ministry on Sunday morning starting at nine, before the scheduled gathering time. Small group ministry is an opportunity for a group of people to intentionally come together over topics of meaning-making in our lives. It includes ample time for sharing of stories and reflection to deepen our understanding of one another. SGM is intended to go deep and may be a nice way for interested members to explore relationships with one another in a different way. This would be in addition to other programming that I would offer.

Please review the list below. Feel free to contact me with questions, and we'll go from there in determining what I can offer. Don't worry about making sure that a bunch of people always show up. I'll be more than happy if a topic only interests three or four. Your congregation is, indeed, small, and everyone is busy. This programming is intended to add something different to what your congregation does and to allow me the opportunity to develop programs in these areas.

Additionally, I would particularly appreciate the opportunity to engage the board, and ideally the entire congregation, on the topics of purpose, mission, and vision. The programming that you brainstormed, about the nuts and bolts of growing a congregation, is useful to pursue, but so much of what allows these areas to work well stems out of a deeply understood and shared sense of purpose. As you know solidly why you come together and to what ends, you have a solid foundation upon which to build things like religious education, outreach, social justice, and stewardship. Without a shared purpose, these things will continue to flounder.

Thanks for all of your hard work. I look forward to hearing from all of you about your thoughts on this planning. Blessings - Erin

Possible Programming:

1) Small-group Ministry Model - This is similar to the circles you offer, but more structured as a time for deep sharing and listening about topics of meaning-making. It includes intentional facilitation with guiding topics and questions for reflection. I would want to offer this each time I am in Decorah to allow for a sense of group cohesion over time. If this is something you are interested in exploring, it still opens the possibility of offering additional programming at a separate time. (Might be particularly effective either as a before or after Sunday morning service offering)

2) Exploring spiritual practices together - I would use this as a time to share approaches to spiritual practice that can be experienced as a group. You mentioned that many of your members engage in individual spiritual practice and meditation. I would see this as an opportunity to create a shared environment for spiritual practice. Some of what I would want to bring would include Taize chanting (the UU-friendly songs, at least), a possible joint labyrinth walk (if I can borrow a portable labyrinth from a colleague), collective art, etc.

3) Worship Theory and Creation - A consideration of what worship is and the ways in which it is helpful to us, both sociologically and psychologically. This session would lead to exploration of how to apply the theory to the practice of creating worship.

4) Sermon-writing Workshop (2 sessions) - A practical workshop in sermon writing and presentation for anyone who has ever preached or even considered with trepidation the possibility of preaching. The first session will consider approaches to writing and/or

construction from a "thematic preaching" model. The time between sessions will allow participants to write at least five minutes of a sermon. The second session offers the chance for participants to preach what they have written and receive gentle, constructive feedback from the group. This serves as a chance to explore creativity as well as to deepen group bonds.

5) Doing Theology - Theology is not and never has remained static. It does not sit out there as something fully-formed that we accept. This should seem familiar to most UUs. How do we actually do the task of theology, though? A session on this topic would explore this question and apply it to our work meaning-making both individually and as a community.

6) Obscure Board Game Night - An experience informed by geek-dom, but accessible to all. I am a lover of board games of which only geeks are aware. As an inter-generational, social event, I would be happy to bring some of my favorite "obscure" board games to share and teach. (An evening activity, or possibly earlier in the day on Saturday)

7) Re-considering Newer Testament Texts - It's easy as UUs to abandon the Newer Testament as something no longer relevant to our faith tradition. This session would cover some of the history and scholarship regarding the Newer Testament and would invite participants to consider ways in which we, as UUs, might re-consider our relationship to Christian scripture.

8) Book Study: The Death of Josseline: Immigration Stories from the Arizona-Mexico Borderlands - The UUA encouraged congregations across the country to group-read this text last year as part of the study period on a Study-Action Resolution proposed at General Assembly. GA this coming summer will be in Phoenix and will center on immigration as a justice issue. We would jointly read one or more chapters from this text and come together to explore the issue in discussion.

9) Exploring Ethics - What are the ways in which we might consider ethics from a UU perspective? How can this inform how we live our lives?

10) Anti-Racism Discussion (loose possibility) - This is an important topic for UU congregations as well as the world. I'm not sure how I would approach this, yet, but I would be interested in exploring possibilities to engage a difficult topic.

11) Linking Hobbies and Faith - How can we live out our UUism through our hobbies? I will share about role playing games (one of the hobbies I share with my partner and friends), the ways we can explore meaning-making through them, and play a short scenario with the group. From there, we will dialogue on how to look at other hobbies enjoyed by participants through the lens of UU faith.

C) Board Report 12/6/11 Website Committee

As the Website Task force, we are proposing:

* Changing the domain name of www.neiuuf.org to www.uudecorah.org. Web experts generally recommend having a domain name that is easy to spell and easy to remember, and PSD suggests that our domain name include the name of the community where the fellowship meets.

* using the chalice picture from the Sunday, December 4th bulletin for the home page of the website

* Using a description of "who we are" such as

We are a liberal religious community seeking spiritual growth through diversity, curiosity and respect for honesty and difference as we share joys and sorrows and celebrate together the events and seasons of our lives. In our work for understanding, peace, and justice, we strive to transform ourselves, our community, and the world. We live our faith by caring, connecting, giving, learning, acting, and worshipping together.

Attached is our first draft of the webpage organization. Remember:

* It's in process! Remember, it's a draft! Remember, this is the FIRST draft!

* Our intent is to inform you, not to take time at the board meeting to discuss nuts and bolts. It's not that we don't want to talk about it. We just are concerned that the meeting would last until dawn!

* We would welcome input via email, conversation (as long as we have pen & paper or a computer nearby) or meeting with us

* We would hope to do a test run at some point but by then we would not want have to rewrite everything.

* It is not a static website. There will be frequent updates.

We will be developing webpage menus and text.

* Do you want emails of future working drafts or just the final product?

* Do you want to be involved in developing and/or choosing text?

We've met with Niki and are in the process of creating menus and text, putting up pictures, choosing colors, etc. We would like to be efficient as possible but we also don't want to just force our ideas onto the fellowship.

We have the dream of having it up by Christmas but no guarantees!

Northeast Iowa Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

About Us Worshipping Caring Connecting Giving Learning Acting

Welcome, Guests!

We have a [Special Section](#) to help you learn more about us and plan your first visit.

Sundays at NEIUUF

10:00 Coffee &
Socializing
10:30 Service

We are a liberal religious community seeking spiritual growth through diversity, curiosity and respect for honesty and difference as we share joys and sorrows and celebrate together the events and seasons of our lives. In our work for understanding, peace, and justice, we strive to transform ourselves, our community, and the world. We live our faith by caring, connecting, giving, learning, acting, and worshipping together.

Rotating pictures

UUism in 30 seconds video
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V43LA3PQAPA>

Facebook
Sign up for weekly email newsletter
links to:
PSD
UUA
UUSC

Address contact info

About Us

- Services
 - hours and services
 - Sunday childcare
 - what lay-led means
 - Wheelchair accessible
 - wheelchair available
 - directions
- Organization
 - leadership and Erin
 - contact info: Otter, Sue Otte?
 - Erin: who, why, when, how long, bio, blog, contact info
 - Board
 - Committees
 - Ministry & Programming
 - Social Justice
 - Religious Education
 - Membership
 - Welcoming congregation Task Force
 - Seminary Student Task Force
 - Board
 - Board members (with term)
 - board meeting agendas
 - Board minutes
 - congregational retreats minutes/summary
 - articles of incorporation
 - Bylaws
 - covenant of right relations
 - equipment owned by congregation
 - Annual meeting (Schedule, minutes and what they represent?)
 - PSD
 - UUA
- Beliefs and principles
 - What we believe (link to UUA)
 - explanation of the chalice as a symbol of Uuism
 - our banner/history
 - our covenant
 - our mission
 - our values
 - our vision
- History of NEIUUF
 - NEIUUF chalice history
 - NEIUUF history
- photos

Visitor

- Welcome!
 - Time of service

- This Sunday's service
- What to expect
 - Bethania
 - Picture
 - Why we meet there
 - history
 - Coffee Hour
 - Signing guest book
 - Name tags
 - Email signup
 - Available reading resources
 - Services
 - Description of service/ elements of service
 - what lay led means
 - chalice meaning
 - circle explanation
 - What to wear
 - Sunday services current and upcoming
 - Sunday services past
 - hours and services
 - RE or lack thereof
 - Kids stay in service and will be "sung out"
 - Sunday childcare
 - RE OWL program
 - Wheelchair accessible
 - wheelchair available
- Getting here
 - Directions
 - Google map
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Becoming a member
 - expectations of members
- Who We Are
 - Beliefs and principles
 - What we believe (link to UUA)
Voices of a Liberal Faith (video)
 - explanation of the chalice as a symbol of Uuism
 - our banner/history
 - our values
 - Someday
 - our vision
 - our covenant
 - our mission
 - Leadership
 - contact info: Otter, Sue Otte, Ellen
 - Erin: who, why, when, how long, bio, blog, contact info
 - Board
 - Committees

- Ministry & Programming
- Social Justice
- Religious Education
- Membership
- Welcoming congregation Task Force
- Seminary Student Task Force

➤ Decorah info

- Newspaper & decorahnews.com
- DecorahNow
- Chamber of Commerce
- Welcome in Decorah – A wedding resource for ALL couples
- Food bank
- Free clinic
- Habitat

Worshipping

➤ Sunday services

- This Sunday's service
- Upcoming services
- Past Sunday services

➤ Elements of a Sunday service

- chalice meaning
- Circle explanation
 - Service Sundays
 - circle members
 - circle name histories Learning our UU heritage
 - RE or lack thereof
 - Kids stay in service and will be "sung out"
 - Sunday childcare
 - RE OWL program

➤ Ministry and Programming committee

- Responsibilities
- Members and contact info
- Meeting time

Caring

➤ Caring community

➤ Congregational care

- Joys and sorrow (with if need help blurb)

➤ Welcoming congregation process

➤ Covenant of right relations

➤ Social Justice Committee

○ Projects

- food bank
- free clinic

- habitat
- Committee Members with contact info

Connecting

- Groups and activities
- Service Sundays
- joys and sorrow (with if need help blurb)
- photos
- Saturday retreats with Erin
- Welcoming congregation process
- Caring community
- circle
 - Description
 - Circle Names with history links
 - Circle members
 - How to join a circle
- Membership committee
 - Updates
 - Committee members with contact
 - how to get a directory
- congregational retreats minutes/summary
- Facebook
- how to sign up for facebook link/how to use facebook
- PSD
- UUA
- UUSC
- Decorah Info
 - Newspaper & decorahnews.com
 - DecorahNow
 - Chamber of Commerce
 - Welcome in Decorah – A wedding resource for ALL couples
 - Peace & Justice Center
 - Food bank
 - Free clinic
 - Habitat

Giving

- Giving of our means
 - Expectations of members
 - Giving of our time
 - time on projects
 - Service Sundays
 - Giving of financial support
 - pledge annual process with link
 - pledge explanation why and what we do with the money
- Giving -kids give too e.g. pumpkin project
- Social Justice Committee

- Projects
 - food bank
 - free clinic
 - Habitat for Humanity
- Committee Members with contact info
- PSD
- UUA
- UUSC

Learning

- Saturday retreats with Erin
- Religious Education
 - Singing with Liz
 - Childcare
- Circles
 - description
 - Name with histories Learning our UU heritage
 - Members with contact info
- RE for adults
 - How the Bible Happened
 - Explain importance to us of How the Bible Happened
- RE committee
 - projects

Acting

- Projects
 - Welcoming Congregation Task Force
 - Circles
 - Service Sundays
 - Sustainability
 - backpack lunch program
- Saturday retreats with Erin
- Board
 - Board members (with terms)
 - officers
 - board meeting schedule
 - Agendas
 - Minutes
 - annual meeting minutes (and what they represent?)
 - congregational retreats minutes/summary
 - equipment owned by congregation
- Social Justice Committee
 - Projects
 - food bank
 - free clinic
 - Habitat for Humanity
 - P&JC
 - Giving -kids give too e.g. pumpkin project

- Committee Members with contact info
- Ministry and Programming committee
 - Responsibilities
 - Members and contact info
 - Meeting time
- Religious Education
 - Projects
 - Children
 - Adults
 - Committee members with contact info
- Caring Community
- small congregation workshop report
- how to form a committee/an action
- Membership committee and updates, directory
- PSD
- UUA
- UUSC

D) Board Report 12/6/11 Small Congregations Workshop

**Report To Board of Directors
December 6, 2011
Lynda Sutherland
PSD Small Congregations Workshop in Des Moines**

Here is a brief summary of the most important and relevant information we gleaned from this great workshop. We came away with the conviction that we are already heading in the right direction. The main message we brought away was that we have something wonderful that people want and need, and that it is possible to share that message in a way that attracts many of those people to us. It is also possible to make changes NOW that help ensure that they will “stick” (want to stay) once they find us.

By coming together we have the power to save lives and change the world for the better.

Growth

“Congregational growth is a systems challenge.” There is no ONE thing that we can do in order to see growth- it’s not just the building issue, or the family programming issue, or any other single issue- growth is not amenable to simple solutions.

A systems challenge requires EXPERT and ONGOING attention- paid professionals with dedicated time- the value of spending some money to get people educated and to hire experts.

It is important to take chances! If you don't, many will drift away.

Say, "Let's experiment. Let's try it for 6 mo."

Do something really different.

Stop being trapped by trying to please everyone

Don't create a structure that is designed to prevent problems from happening because then nothing will happen.

For everything you do, think about what it will look like to visitors.

Every congregation needs a mission statement to guide their priorities and to energize the congregation.

How (& why) to move toward ministry

Why consider moving toward hiring a minister?

- Continuity
- Pastoral care
- Internal workings of the congregation
- Creates more opportunities for congregational involvement
- Give people meaning and community without doctrine
- Help you become a hub for social justice

Can help attract new people

Growth will help you afford it; even part-time minister or worship leader will help foster growth

One small UU congregation took these steps to foster growth:

- Jill started as a 1/4 time consulting minister while still a seminary student, leading services, workshops, etc. They made a firm commitment to growth
- They started a capital campaign to build a new space
- They made a 5 year plan – committed to look 5 years ahead and set goals
- Hired a 1/2 time RE person
- Held focus groups – Nancy Hagee came twice to explain pros & cons for consulting vs. hiring a minister
- They hired 1/2 time minister (Jill) that they know they can keep (continuity)

Leadership Training – 3rd week of July – send your RE people

Youth Leadership School for Teens – send an adult & youth together

PASTORAL CARE is very important

A consulting minister can help with development/growth

Take it in steps

PSD has district financial consultants (and a demographics analyst) free of charge

Web & Social Media

Why should we care? We need to answer peoples' questions, ie

- Who are we

- Does anybody there care about ME?
- What's going on
- Is there a place for me?
- What do we stand for?
- Am I welcome?

We need to communicate- who we are, what we care about, what we do- we need to tell people what's going on- we need to let people know they are welcome.

Advertising is expensive and not credible

News stories are great but may be too localized (& not seen by young/busy people)

Social media reaches a different demographic, esp. the young

Can have an account that appeals to each demographic – targeted

Feels like a friend's recommendation

Your Web page is your Church in “the Cloud”

Our Mission

The Why

Inspiring

Larger than self-interest

Regularly reinforced

Not just a slogan; informs everything we do

First Steps:

- Create welcoming, warm, up-to-date webpage
- Create a minister's page/profile/blog

Word will get around that this group of people has positions & viewpoints not usually expected from “religious” people

Attracting Young Adults

Do we want to change the world? Or only have a bigger congregation? Changing the world requires getting the next generation(s) engaged and excited.

At New Unity they attracted young adults by offering a Wednesday evening poetry and meditation spirituality group with a meal afterwards- this brought young people in and once they learned more about the church, they were curious about Sunday services- got rid of the church stigma.

Attracting young adults requires adjustments- keeping young adults requires full-fledged culture change- not to a youth-centric culture, but to a culture that works for everyone, an inter-generational culture that blends “old” and “new” ways. Need a dedicated staff person for youth and Young Adults to insure their engagement.

There must be a synergy, an engaging spiral

YA are interested in LIVING their values, contributing to the earth, making a difference

The congregation is everyone's, and has to work for everyone

Consider a YA lay leader for some services or portion(s) of each service

Include youth in service planning & participation

Consider having a YA Board member

Integrating children into worship is important as it creates the next generation of young adults

Faith Development & RE

Abundance follows mission; lead with what your mission is

The only way to grow faithfully is being prepared

Spiritual Vitality – (Free Range Uus: “It wasn’t religious enough”) hold conversations on where life intersects with your beliefs and ‘the holy’; concentrate on what we DO believe, not on what we DON’T

Faith in Action – Incarnational growth, embodiment; stop with the words, SHOW me; what do I do to live my faith?

Reflect and Keep Authentic – how does our Board, our budget, our kitchen, etc. reflect our UU values?

A spiritually mature person knows what they believe and makes room for others to explore their own beliefs.

Always tie back in to our Foundational Beliefs (1st & 7th Principles)

Be intentional. Be inspired. Be inspirational

Board Report 12/6/11 - PSD Small Congregations Workshop (Jenna)

Lynda and I went to the PSD Small Congregations Workshop in Des Moines on 11/4-5 and we are very grateful to have had the opportunity to represent our congregation there. If any of you have spoken to either of us since then, you know how much this workshop energized us. This was a wonderful experience for me personally (it really was a spiritual experience as well as intellectual), but I also think it was incredibly relevant to the issues we are facing as a congregation. As much as it gave us a lot to think about and some great ideas, it also reinforced with me that we are doing a lot of things well already.

For me, the biggest thing I took away is to remember WHY we want to grow- it is not just about numbers- it is because we feel that we have created something wonderful that many more people could benefit from- it is because by coming together we have the power to save lives and change the world for the better- it is because we have such a powerful message that it would be a shame not to share it.

Reverend Andrew Pakula gave the keynote talk on Friday night and two other talks on Social Media and Attracting Young Adults. Andy is the senior minister of New Unity-Unitarians, a small congregation in London, England which is grown from 35 to 100+ members in just five short years. He had a lot of great things to say about congregational growth. There were also several break-out sessions on various topics such as membership and religious education.

Lynda and I both have pages and pages of notes, but I will try to keep this report brief by listing some of the main messages and ideas- I think these messages are important for the governing body of our congregation to keep in mind as we face the changes that will come with growth. (And again, I think we are already doing some of this stuff.)

THE MESSAGES

- “Congregational growth is a systems challenge.” There is no ONE thing that we can do in order to see growth. A systems challenge requires expert and ongoing attention; this could mean hiring professionals and staff or spending money to get willing members trained.
- Personal invitations from members are especially important in getting visitors (who may eventually become new members); don’t be shy about spreading the word! And always keep visitors in mind when planning services and events.
- Do you want your congregation to be the same only bigger? No! Growth means change- the congregation becomes new every time someone new joins, it is no longer yours as it once was, it is a different yours- have the faith to give your congregation away.
- Don’t be afraid to take chances and say “Yes!” when members have ideas- have faith and trust people- everything worth doing is risky and you have to be ok with making mistakes now and then and with possibly upsetting a few people, maybe even losing a few who don’t like the changes. Don’t create a structure that is designed to prevent problems from happening because then nothing will happen.
- Never put your vision up for a vote.
- Why should we care about social media? We need to communicate- who we are, what we care about, what we do- we need to tell people what’s going on- we need to let people know they are welcome. And using social media is a very effective way to do this especially when you want to reach young adults and youth. Social media also provides an additional and easily-accessible platform for communication between members and potential members; it creates and strengthens community.
- Attracting young adults requires adjustments- keeping young adults requires full-fledged culture change- this does not mean a change to a youth-centric culture, but to a culture that works for everyone, an inter-generational culture that blends “old” and “new” ways.
- “You don’t become a member when you sign the book, you become a member when you are disappointed in a service but you come back anyway.” This is not a Utopia- you will not always agree with everything that happens- it takes work and faith.
- Always be thinking, how is your building / board / budget, etc. a reflection of your UUism?

THE IDEAS

Lynda and I have A LOT of ideas. I will share here some of the bigger, more pressing ideas.

- This workshop was especially affirming that hiring a professional to help with our website was the right thing to do.
- But alongside this website development, we should consider writing an official MISSION STATEMENT- this should be front and center on our website.
- Once the new website is established, we should consider creating a congregational facebook page- I am willing to be the dedicated facebook person for our congregation page.
- Cut down on standing committees- instead, have working or task groups, with a clear mission and a mandate to dissolve when that mission is completed.
- Consider making a 5 year plan.

E) Board Report 12/6/11 - Social Justice (Jenna)

We will be having a meeting regarding the Community Meal project on the Monday right before board meeting; this meeting will include members of other faith organizations who are interested in helping us get this project off the ground. So, I will probably have a brief verbal update about that meeting to give at the board meeting on Tuesday. However, I also have two ideas for congregational social justice action that I would like to share with the board. I don't think these ideas need board approval, but I would love to hear what you think of them and if you have any suggestions or concerns.

While I am excited about the Community Meal project, it is a project that will take some time to grow, and it will be bigger than just our fellowship. I think this has wonderful potential, but I have also been thinking about other ways in which our congregation can be more regularly active on social justice issues. I think these ideas will be helpful for keeping us active in the community, which is something we value as a congregation. I also think these ideas have excellent potential to increase our visibility in the community and possibly attract new members. These ideas are:

(1) Quarterly Service Projects

Every 3 months, the SJ committee will organize a service project for the congregation- for example, helping at the food pantry or helping to stuff backpacks for the backpack food program or pulling garlic mustard. The congregation will be encouraged to invite non-member friends to participate in the service activity. We can submit a photo to the newspaper (and post about it on facebook eventually!). And at the end of each year we can say, "Our congregation contributed regularly to our community in the following ways..." I will be sending out an email asking for suggestions from the congregation about possible service projects and would be glad to take the lead in making arrangements for the projects.

(2) Annual Fundraising Event

This idea came from thinking about the stuffed animal auction we will be having on the 11th. I think it would be great if we sponsored a fundraising event each year (details to be worked out later, but things like food, music, a speaker, an auction...) that would benefit a local charitable organization- possibly the heating assistance program- this is such a pressing seasonal need each year and it comes right around the time we are especially thinking of giving and sharing- the event could happen before Thanksgiving, before the holiday season gets too crazy. In addition to benefiting the community, I think this has great potential for increasing our visibility and bringing new people in because it could become a well-known event that the community comes to expect each year that they will associate with UUs. And all it would take would be to rally a handful of members each year to get it organized.