

Date: 5/8/15

To: Board, UU Westport

From: Tom Croarkin

Re: Report on Metro District New York Annual Meeting

I attended Metro District New York's Annual Meeting on Saturday, May 2 in Morristown, NJ.

Because of Candidating Week at UU Westport Mary B. Collins and I were the only ones from UC Westport who attended although we were well represented for a while. That's because Ed Thompson and the Youth Choir did an amazing version of The Three Questions, a musical that Ed created from a Tolstoy short story. Every kid did great and all the attendees were completely wowed. They got a standing ovation afterwards that lasted a long time. It made me very proud....and none of them were my kids!

Multisite

The keynote address was by Scott Tayler, who is Director of Congregational Life for the UUA, and his subject was Multisite.

What is it? He broke Multisite up into these categories:

- Temporary
 - *Learning Networks* – shared learning with other congregations
 - *Doing Networks* – shared temporary activities like joint Social Justice or Youth Group work.
- Long Term
 - *Sharing Networks* - sharing programming staff in a more permanent way.
 - *Being Network* – one congregation, multiple locations.
 - *Networked/Merged* – Branch Campus or Satellite
 - *Yoked Congregations* – independent but shared staffing.

Scott positioned Multisite as “Systems of Efficiency”. He said that those that use Multisite:

- Identify redundancies
- Consolidate resources
- Produce capacity through economies of scale.
- To be more than they could on their own.

Why should a congregation do Multisite:

1. Sharing our faith is not optional – it can help with growth.
2. Growth is inevitable.
3. Staffing for Growth is key:

- a. 1 staff per 100 members = Growth
 - b. 1 staff per 150 members = Maintenance
 - c. 1 staff per 200 members = Decline
4. Staffing for Growth is not something most congregations cannot do on their own.

He positioned Multisite as an antidote to the “Seven Horses of the Apocalypse” which are trends we as Congregations are fighting against:

1. Rising healthcare costs
2. Rising energy and building maintenance costs
3. Decreasing giving patterns
4. Adjustment to “None of the Above” (unchurched people)
5. Loss of our Bread & Butter Buffer:
 - a. Converts coming to us who are unchurched are no longer as prevalent.
 - b. More people are choosing no church.
6. Covenanted UUA Fair Share
7. Fair Staff Compensation costs.

How we are dealing with the “Seven Horses” is to break covenant with Fair Share and with Staff.

Multisite offers an alternative to breaking covenant by:

- Count – identifying redundancies between congregations.
- Consolidate – combine and share resources.
- Create – economies of scale.

He gave a couple of examples of how Multisite might work:

Independent Model	Interdependent Model
<p>2 Ministers.</p> <p>Each separately created 3 sermons a month for a total of 6 sermons created.</p> <p>30 hours per sermon times 6 sermons = 180 hours.</p>	<p>2 Ministers</p> <p>They swap pulpits and so they only have to create 3 sermons a month between them. (i.e. you give the same sermon twice)</p> <p>30 hours per sermon times 3 sermons = 90 hours.</p> <p>Time saved can be used for Development, Membership, etc.</p>
<p>2 RE Directors</p> <p>4 Sunday Preps</p> <p>Total of 8 Sunday Preps between the two of them.</p>	<p>2 RE Directors</p> <p>2 Sunday Preps each that they share.</p> <p>Total of 4 Sunday Preps between the two of them.</p> <p>Time saved can be used for volunteer recruitment,</p>

	etc.
--	------

As a result the same staffing levels and the same funding leads to more programs and impact. Better and kinder to the staff.

Stewardship: Moving Beyond the Annual Pledge Drive

This was a session conducted by Tricia Hart who is an Interim Minister currently located in Charleston, WV.

Her premise was that the Pledge Drive Model works less well than it used to. She maintained that millennials don't support institutions – they support causes. Thus giving patterns are changing. You need to connect stewardship with mission.

We got into a discussion about technology of giving and they mentioned that some congregations have the QR Code in the order of service so that people who don't typically carry money can donate using their smart phones. Also, of the 24 people in the session, 5 had websites that allowed congregants to make a pledge online. (i.e. instead of printing out a pledge card they log in and then make a pledge right on the website.)

Why do people give:

- Believe in mission/purpose
- Trust leadership
- Confidant of financial stability
- Get thanked.

She mentioned that we need a mechanism to thank donors.

How we ask makes a difference:

1. Giving is important for everyone but not every giver pledges. We need to treat “gifts” of money as worthy of thanks just like a pledge.
2. People give in different ways for different reasons:
 - a. Invite them to give in different ways. (she mentioned this book “Giving and Stewardship in an Effective Church”)
3. People give freely when they know how their gift will make a difference.
4. It's not always virtuous to do more with less.

Congregations are changing:

- People attend irregularly
- Social media, remote access
- Growing competition for charity \$ - giving to purpose not the institution
- Generational differences.

She mentioned an article: [Churches Need a New Giving Model](#)

Annual Meeting

Charles Klein got an award but he wasn't there to pick it up. It was for maintaining the District website.

Margie Allen got an award.

There was a Jerry Davidoff Award given which was kind of cool.

There was an In Memoriam section of the meeting where they had pictures and names of significant contributors to each congregation. We weren't represented.

No one in our congregation was given any awards except Charles but that wasn't for work he did for us. I don't remember ever being given the opportunity to nominate anyone for these awards.

Overall Impression

This seems like an organization that we could play a greater role in. The opportunity to learn from what other congregations are doing would be great – especially if our membership and stewardship people could be there. There are also opportunities to give our leaders recognition that are not being taken advantage of.