

Minister's Report to the Board
January 2015

The Board has a really full agenda this month, and the agenda reflects the Board's commitment to being a policy and strategy body. I offer you some thoughts and information, but make no demands on your time.

Communications Committee discussion – I am pasting in here what I wrote last month when the conversation about the purpose and nature of a Communications Committee was tabled. We will have this discussion as the Board development topic this month. I was asked to give you some thoughts about what the purpose of a Communications Committee might be. In some systems the Communication Committee, like the HR Committee, exists simply to advise the Board on communications policy and practices, and leaves the implementation of communications to staff and appropriate other committees. In this system, the Board would approve policy, and identify the people authorized to carry it out. Communication policies are pretty complicated given the use of social media, so initially this would not be a simple task. Once the policies were all written, the Communications Committee would be available to consult on matters that would come up (particularly on web and social media) and would regularly review and update policies as new forms of communications became available. Given your desire to move towards a policy governance based system, this is what I would recommend.

In the initial term of a Communication Committee they could also look at all the possible forms of communication (both internal and external) and make recommendations as to what is missing completely, what is underutilized, and what is out of date in our current practices. They could recommend to the Board which group or committee or staff person should have primary responsibility for the various lines of communication. These folks could then be empowered (and I assumed given the resources) to communicate! Right now it is an open question as to where publicity and public relations falls. And we are seriously underutilizing the most contemporary forms of social media, video-casting, etc. These are all forms of communication that require some expertise, and also some funding.

The Role of the Board in the Search Process: Michelle will be leading you in a discussion of the role of the Board at this point in the search process. You may recall that this is the time in the process when the MSC is working in complete confidentiality as they sort through the names and

resumes of people who have indicated interest. They will narrow down the large number of applicants to a smaller number for phone/Skype interviews, then narrow it down to 3-4 pre-candidates they will interview in person before making a decision about the final candidate to present to the congregation. During this time, it is essential that all Board members respond to questions from the congregation by reminding them that they elected the members of the MSC based on their trustworthiness. Now is the time when all must trust them to do their work. If you need a reminder as to how the process works, you can go back and review the Settlement Handbook at uua.org.

Staff Updates: Our new Buildings and Grounds Manager (formerly known as the Sexton, a word that just doesn't translate in the modern world) is on board and getting oriented. He is going to be working some Sundays to get a feel for the place 7 days a week. If you see Joe Takacs please introduce yourself and welcome him.

I am currently in the process of doing mid-year performance evaluations with program staff, based on the goals we set together back in September.

Program Updates: This month I am providing you with program updates in Membership and Religious Education.

The Membership Committee, chaired by Bob Welsh, collaborates with the Director of Membership to attract people to the congregation, welcome visitors, and integrate people into the life of this community. Under the guidance of our Membership Director, they are making great strides in developing an intentional approach to membership development. The Committee has been sending out publicity about big congregational events; they hope to move to a more regular practice of publicity by the end of the year. They sponsored and advertised the very well-attended Campo Beach service, and the equally well-attended Bring a Friend Sunday. They are in the process of creating a Path to Membership process which will make it easier for new people to navigate the steps in the membership process, while being flexible enough to accommodate differing needs. In the meantime, they continue to offer the Newcomer Orientation classes on a regular basis. We will welcome new members into the congregation on Sunday February 1th.

Plans for the spring include offering a series of workshops on UU history; as a number of people have pointed out after my recent history sermons, knowing the history strengthens UU identity.

The Director of Membership has put considerable time into the staff's efforts to wrangle the data base into some kind of order. We plan to have a Directory available by the end of January. You can get either a paper or electronic copy. David has also taken the initiative to start a conversation among program staff about the number of emails that are going out to people; he wants to make sure people get the information they need without being overwhelmed by email. We are imagining more coordination among staff regarding the flow of information.

David continues to meet one-on-one with all individuals/families considering membership, to make sure they are finding their way into this large and complex system, getting the information they need, and understanding the nature of a self-governing and self-sustaining religious community.

In early February we will certify our membership number to the UUA for the year. When we have this number I will make sure you all know.

The Religious Education Council collaborates with our DRE to coordinate the religious education program for children, youth, and adults. The Council has co-chairs (Jerusha Vogel and Scott Bryce) and consists of five Circles: Connections, Elementary, Youth, Teacher Support, and Adult Education. Highlights of the year so far include:

- Integrating children into the overall life of the congregation by having them attend worship weekly. This has been a huge logistical and cultural challenge; our DRE has done a great deal of work to adapt the curricula, rethink the timing, create dynamic Reflections For All Ages, insure an orderly departure of children from the sanctuary, etc.
- The RE Council hosted the barbecue on Homecoming Sunday. Everybody has a wonderful time, and the food was delicious.
- Scott Bryce is collaborating with our Director of Operations to create evacuation and lock down plans for both buildings.
- We had a large contingent of youth attend the People's Climate March.
- The Holiday Caroling Party was sponsored by the RE Council. 90 people attended a pot-luck dinner; the children had crafts projects, and then there was the ever popular caroling led by Ed.
- We are thrilled to have co-chairs for the Adult Education circle. You saw their debut brochure on Sunday. They have lots of great ideas and lots of energy, and are feeling well supported both by the staff and the RE Council.

Coming up in Religious Education:

- The Boston Heritage trip was originally scheduled for one of the week-ends of candidating week. The change in schedule is causing some problems for some families; it is possible the trip will be moved to the fall.
- Our Pre-K teacher Sarah Andrew will be leaving at the end of June. Mary has plans for recruiting and hiring her replacement.

And just for fun, some numbers. The RE staff are improving the registration process for families. We have 82 families registered this year (compared to 64 last year). These 82 families have a total of 138 children (compared to 119 last year.) We have 170 children who attend regularly, and have welcomed 28 guest children, for a total of 198 kids served. Last year we served a total of 208 children, so I am guessing that by the end of May we will have exceeded that.

Let me know if there is anything else you would like to know about the ministry end of things.

In Faith,
Rev. Roberta