

UUCGT Board of Trustees Minutes

06/19/17

President Linda Fletcher convened the meeting at 5:30 PM. In addition to Linda, present were Donna Stein-Harris, Phyllis Jessup, Karl Love, Don Pyne and Kay Sturgeon. Joining the Board were new members, Tom Darnton, Laura Matchett and Mike McDonald. Rabbi Chava Bahle was absent due to illness.

Congregational members present: Paula Jo Kemler, Jamie Kemler, Karl Keinath, Sandra McDonald, Lynette Rhodes, Jerry Schotz, Mary Van Valin, Rick Walters, and Price Watts.

President Linda Fletcher welcomed new and current trustees and guests. Linda noted that this is the last official meeting of the current Board. Linda recognized the service of departing trustees, Donna Stein-Harris and Phyllis Jessup. She also recognized the service of trustee Gretchen Kronk who resigned effective June 4th. Newly elected trustees joined the board in participating and voting.

Phyllis Jessup moved to accept the consent agenda with Kay Sturgeon's support. The consent agenda was approved.

Karl reported on behalf of the Staff Resources committee. Karl indicated that Rabbi Chava's evaluation process was now well established. Linda Fletcher and Karl previously completed this year's evaluation. Karl noted that the UUA evaluation that is the basis for our review incorporates congregational support for changes and improvements. One item noted was Rabbi Chava's availability. It was concluded that our Rabbi makes adequate time available for individual meetings as well as committee work but that it is not commonly understood at what times she is available. Toward that end Rabbi Chava is publishing her schedule and including open office hours where she is available to meet with anyone without appointment.

Karl reported the SRC will next be reviewing the job descriptions of our Director of Life Span Experience and later our Music Director. This will be the basis of creating a more extensive review and evaluation system.

Kay reporting for the Finance committee moved with Karl's support, that the Board accept the committee's recommendation to transfer \$475.00 (50%) of the monies collected to date from the fundraiser dinners from the general operational budget to the Community Needs Reserve Fund. John Hoffmann made this request of the Board. The motion was approved.

Kay then moved that the Board accept the recommendation of the Finance Committee to allocate an addition \$5450.00 our UUA dues and \$2200.00 to our District dues. The motion was then seconded by Mike McDonald and approved.

Karl moved that the "Personal Files" noted as section "P" in the Staff Resources Manual be amended specifically to reflect that accident and injury reports kept on file be amended to be "in accordance with OSHA standards for recording and record keeping". The motion was seconded by Phyllis and approved.

Karl then introduced a revision of the LDC policy (attached below) with support from Donna. Karl explained that the changes were the starting point for discussion to determine board opinion and

intent. After considerable discussion Mike McDonald moved that we table the motion until our September meeting. Kay seconded and the motion was tabled.

Price Watts presented a Facility Committee request for the purchase of a storage shed. The need for the building would allow the storage of gasoline items that are problematic in storing within our facility because of the dangers of the furnace.

Kay Sturgeon moved that the board accept the Facility Committees recommendation to approve funds for the shed project from the Capital Improvement Reserve Fund not to exceed \$2100. The motion was supported by Mike and approved.

Donna Stein-Harris presented her remarks and conclusions regarding a way forwards in cultivating leadership behavior and ethics at UUCGT. Donna said at first her thoughts were prescriptive: developing a list of “dos” and maybe “don’ts”. After consideration Donna recommended that the Board along with Leadership Development train ourselves and each other including committee chairs in leadership behavior and ethics. The basis of our work should be the fine covenant we currently have. It can and should be the basis of our work moving forward. The training could be most of a day with breakouts that are topical or groupings based on special interest. The Board asked Donna would consider presenting further information at the July meeting and she agreed.

President Linda Fletcher ended the meeting with special acknowledgement and thanks to retiring board members Gretchen Kronk, Donna Stein Harris and Vice President Phyllis Jessup. Linda then reviewed the year with prepared remarks included as an addendum below.

Linda adjourned the meeting at 7:38 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Karl D. Love, Secretary

President Linda Fletcher's year-end summary

I would like to end this meeting with a few comments...well perhaps I should say many comments.... to summarize some important things I have learned and experienced during this year of serving as the President of your Board.

It has been an incredibly fast paced year for me in many ways. I first joined the UU in the fall of '14 and quickly fell in love with the congregation and Chava.....I felt like I had finally found my tribe. I served on the Congregational Care team before moving to the Board of Trustees and surprisingly assuming the chair in July of last year. In spite of my lack of history in the congregation the trustees vowed to support me thru the year and they have certainly done that. And I thank you all for that!

Before coming to the board Donna Stein-Harris and I launched a COMMUNICATIONS STUDY to try to address what we believed to be the factor most responsible for the prolonged and seemingly irreconcilable turbulence within our congregation. We believed no extreme hard work or magic was required to begin to reconcile our differences. So, we arranged a 2-hour meeting in one room with 9 people. We identified our basic problem as our lack of discussion of our difficulties. Then we identified an existing mechanism to deal with this problem...our covenant. And then we illuminated the fact that good communications are the responsibility of every INDIVIDUAL.not someone else.

After that I asked the Board to allow me to do a root cause analysis so we could understand why we have continued to have such major upheavals every few years for nearly 2 decades. We learned that the cause of our problems is the #1 cause of discord in UU churches and that in 2011 a UU consultant we hired identified it as our primary source of difficulty. It has to do with transitional issues when a fellowship size organization grows enough to require a more formal structure capable of dealing with larger numbers. The fellowships are very closely knit organizations that conduct their governance discussions around a kitchen table and they provide their own lay services. When growth demands a different way of doing things the closeness they so loved is diminished and a painful void is created and it is nearly impossible to reverse the pain of that loss of yesteryear.

Just before joining the Board I proposed a group be gathered to determine how to address the pain and anxiety being experienced by our congregation. My recent decade of independent study of PTSD in veterans led me to explore Mandella's reconciliation process. One of the main benefits of his work came from simply listening to the traumatic experiences of the individuals involved. That simple process of just being heard was in and of itself a major factor in healing. With that in mind I asked the Board for permission to do a study targeting listening to the pain in our congregation. That request was granted at that meeting and I was to chair the committee with three other members, 2 of which dropped out within the first 6 weeks and Kay joined the group. The remaining original member was much opposed to the project and was openly hostile about it until early autumn when he suddenly announced he had changed his mind and was fully behind it and even came up with a new name....Healthy Reconciliation Task Force. He did have one caveat and that was that all interviews would be documented and that all those unaltered documents would be open for viewing by any member of the congregation. Although that caused an uneasiness in me it was agreed to by the committee with the provision that confidentiality and anonymity be guaranteed to all participants.

Joan Sheard, Jane Watts and myself became the listening team. Together we listened to some 56 people pour forth their pain. Our job was only to listen, not to judge or to share information or

correct any misconceptions. We just listened and many times cried with them as they poured out their pain. Many remarked how grateful they were for being heard and how much lighter their pain burden felt.

We listened until all were heard from late July to mid November. And....while we listened our angst grew as we realized that the pain and confusion we were hearing was derived primarily from indirect experiences and incorrect information. All three of us saw pain, feelings of betrayal, unfounded accusations and regrettably in some, a desire for punishment for horrible acts that never even happened. Further, as we progressed it became apparent that no matter how careful we were about not identifying the people involved in the 56 stories we could not prevent the obvious correlation of the indirect evidence that led to the identification of the individuals involved in the various incidents.

Further, some who came to be heard brought their prepared statements with directions that they were not to be altered in any way. Frankly, this seemed to represent a need to have their agenda furthered by reaching the entire congregation with their version of the story rather than a reflection of their pain.

So, as we progressed the dilemma became increasingly more troublesome and the core question became apparent.....How could we deliver on both promises.....1) public access to all original records and 2) confidentiality and anonymity? Unable to determine this ourselves we did some research on this ethical dilemma and even consulted a medical ethicist. The answer was clear...the promise of greater magnitude was anonymity and confidentiality and that is what needed to be honored.

We, the listeners, were to present this complex issue to the HRTF on the 5th of January. However, another independent task force, one dedicated to challenging the integrity of our process, was formed and showed up at the meeting scheduled on the 5th demanding to be allowed to participate in the meeting. The meeting was not open to the entire membership as we felt our findings needed to be reviewed and agreed upon by the committee before opening the concerns to the entire congregation.

One member became enraged and his threatening behavior caused Joan to declare her fear and she not only left the meeting but she also resigned from the committee. I then cancelled the meeting and ultimately brought the results to the Board.

In retrospect I can tell you that although the results originally intended were not forthcoming, great healing occurred in the congregation and it would appear that a pressure valve was eased so that communications among us began to flow again. It is amazing that a flaw in our original study design may have led to that serendipitous release. In Mandella's model all the stories heard came from those who directly experienced them. We listened to everyone and encountered very few who had actual experiences.....most of the pain we heard was based on hearsay and unfounded tales of malcontent.

Oddly, all this points back to the focus of my original study. We need to talk with each other. Unless required by personnel management law we need keep no secrets and we must deal with our issues fully informed and head on.....not in an attempt to harm our brothers and sisters in this congregation but in an attempt to grow stronger and healthier by establishing and respecting the guidelines and boundaries outlined in our covenant

From a personal perspective I hope you can see that the work of the listening committee was not in any way the unethical venture that some have represented it to have been. Nothing about our actions should have destroyed trust. I believe that if the meeting on the 5th of January had proceeded as scheduled the HRTF could have dealt with all the facts and could have come to a majority consensus which would have been presented to the Board and the congregation. Instead, a small group of people with a far from complete knowledge of the circumstances chose to assume an ill informed angry and aggressive stance, once again, to create discord in our community.

This unfortunate series of events only serves to underscore again the need for communications in accordance with our covenant which expects us to assume good intentions until otherwise proven. In the final analysis 'tis a liberal application of a tincture of truthful talk that will mend our wounds and keep us strong.

As I am certain you will recall, it is Rabbi Chava's intent to target a dialogic community....one where we use multiple avenues to promote the exchange of information, ideas and emotions..... including those that sometimes cause us angst or anger. Let's support her in this effort.

Lastly, I thank you for allowing me the honor of serving this wonderful gathering of feral cats. It has been a hurdling challenge unparalleled in my lifetime and I have learned much from it as well as from each of you...this congregation...that I love so dearly.