

**MINUTES of the UUCGT Board Meeting
April 19, 2016**

President Karl Love convened the meeting at 5:30 pm.

Present: Loraine Anderson, Mary Grover, John Hoffmann, Karl Love, Richard Miller and Price Watts.

Absent: Phyllis Jessup.

Guests: Linda Fletcher, Hal Gurian, Karl Keinath, Sarah Montgomery-Richards, Judy Myers, Kay Sturgeon, Gail Trill and Linda Wikle.

The Board Covenant was read together.

1. The Consent Agenda was **APPROVED**.
2. Proposed Policy addition: this item was removed from the agenda.
3. Proposed update of the Bylaws: Karl explained that the proposed revisions merely update titles, e.g. Spiritual Leader instead of Minister; Director of Religious Lifespan Experience instead of Director of Religious Education; Office Administrator instead of Congregational Administrator. The Business Administrator will report jointly to the Treasurer and Spiritual Leader.
The proposed revisions were **APPROVED**.
4. Outreach Committee ... Richard Miller.
The Committee requested that (1) its name be changed to Community Needs Committee; (2) the Board clarify who can be grant recipients; and (3) the Board grant the Committee permission to collect objects, not just money. The Board expressed appreciation for the good work the Committee does, and invited the Committee to return to the Board with a proposal for specific language regarding a revised statement of purpose, clarification of grant recipients, and a new name. The Board will be glad to consider the Committee's specific proposed language regarding revisions to its purpose and procedures as described on page 39 of the Manual.
No action was taken.
5. Communications Task Force...Loraine Anderson, Linda Fletcher
Linda represented the Subcommittee on Communications Study. She reported on the findings of the taskforce appointed by the Board in January when the Board asked the taskforce to address three issues: (1) the root cause of our recurrent upheavals, (2) explore ways to implement the findings of the communications task force, and (3) and to recommend whether we should engage a facilitator to assist in our healing process.
The task force worked on the first issue by reviewing the few relevant records they could find, and interviewed various members of the Congregation. In the process they learned that this issue had been addressed by Barbara Child, a UUA consultant whose specialty is transition issues in congregations. Through a number of workshops, the congregation identified the root cause of our dissonance: a rejection by a few in the original congregation of the transition from the fellowship model to the more complex governance and ways of managing larger congregations.
Linda explained that problem resolution was not assigned to this committee but the group recommended that a sub-committee of the Board be formed for the purpose of

determining an appropriate course of action leading to healthy reconciliation. The committee also recommended that this sub-committee be charged with ways to implement improved congregational communications. The third assigned task was to make recommendations regarding a facilitator. The committee recommended that this step be held in abeyance until an approach to dealing with the root problem can be determined.

MOTION by Karl and seconded by John that a Congregational Health and Reconciliation Taskforce be created to determine the way forward with the issues they were given, and their reported recommendations. The Taskforce will report regularly to the Board, be as visible as possible, and its members will include 2 Board members (Richard Miller and Loraine Anderson), Linda Fletcher and Gail Trill. The Taskforce is free to recruit other members. **APPROVED** unanimously.

Richard Miller distributed a statement disagreeing with the finding of the report regarding the root cause of UUCGT's frequent upheavals. His statement is appended to these minutes and is part of the record of this Board meeting.

6. Stewardship Campaign Report...Judy Myers

Judy based her presentation on her April 13th report to the Board on the 2016-2017 pledge drive. The 2015-2016 pledge drive resulted in pledges totaling \$280,700; the total pledges from this year's effort totaled \$198,805, or \$81,895 less.

7. Finance Committee Report...Kay Sturgeon

The Finance Committee recommended three motions that were duly made and approved:

(1) **MOVED** by Price and seconded by Mary, that the Board approve one additional payment to the UUA for this fiscal year, along with a letter notifying them that we are presently unable to pay the remaining 2015-2016 dues, unless the funding becomes available. **APPROVED.**

(2) **MOVED** by Price and seconded, that the Board approve the purchase of hearing assistance equipment in the amount of \$1,050 to be funded with \$789.77 from the Special Collections Sound System account and \$260.23 from the Capital Improvement Reserve. **APPROVED.**

(3) **MOVED** by Price and seconded by Loraine that the Board approve the purchase of a programmable PIN lock system for the front door of the building not to exceed \$1500. This will be funded from the Capital Improvement Reserve. **APPROVED.**

8. Annual Meeting ... Karl Love

Karl asked that an ad hoc committee be formed to plan for the Annual Meeting on June 5, 2016. Although no formal action was taken, there was general agreement. The committee consists of Tom Darnton, Mary Grover, Phyllis Jessup and Kay Sturgeon.

Closing Words Rabbi Chava Bahle

The meeting adjourned at 7:55 pm.

Addendum: Appended to these minutes and is part of the record of this Board meeting.

Preface

I am submitting the following comments to the Board in response to a report presented on this same day by a committee tasked by the Board to investigate causes fundamental to recent upheavals within our UUCGT congregation. The comments highlighted in **red italics** in the attached copy are my own comments in response to statements made within the report which I have highlighted in **blue**.

It is my intent to provide an alternate understanding, or at least raise the possibility of a more complex and nuanced understanding, of what underlies the struggle our congregation has been experiencing since events occurring late last fall. By no means do I hold my views as all-encompassing or all-comprehending. But I feel the conclusions presented in this report are seriously over-simplified, misleading, and will not in themselves advance, and may even provoke, further heavily charged and emotional responses of accusation, dismissal, and marginalization on the part of many among our dedicated and committed membership.

By no means, is it my intent to disparage the efforts made on the part of this committee to fulfill their charge and to have done so with any intent on their part to cause further unnecessary disruption; I recognize that they, like each of us, describes the situation from the best of their understanding limited by their own history and sources available to them. As a community we may never arrive at a common and complete conclusion. We must hold to our best standard of trust in one another to seek the widest truth. Anything less will only leave us with a shallow pretense of completion and will not commit us to our own standards.

Sincerely,
Richard Miller

“Root Cause” Critique

Report of Board of Directors Subcommittee on Root Cause Determination and Implementation of Communications Study Recommendations

April, 2016

On January 19, 2016 the UUCGT Board of Directors created a special task group with the following 3 assigned tasks.

1. To determine the underlying cause of the recurrent upheavals in our congregation.
2. To explore ways to implement the findings of the Communications task group.
3. Recommend criteria for selection of a facilitator to facilitate the resolution of the identified cause(s) and promote healing of residual emotional issues persisting from our disruptions.

The [members of this committee](#) included John Hoffman, Loraine Anderson and Linda Fletcher. Donna Stein-Harris later joined the group.

It would be helpful to note the individual history of the committee members, particularly their length of participation and past roles in the congregation's leadership.

Following is a summary of the committee's recommendations regarding each of these assigned tasks.

TASK I: THE CAUSAL DETERMINATION ASSIGNMENT

It has been widely recognized within this congregation that our current upheaval is the most recent in a chain of similar disruptions spread over many years. In an attempt to understand the present dynamics and to diminish the likely recurrence of such circumstances in the future it was determined important to understand causal factor(s) associated with the periods of discord. This group was tasked with determining the [root cause of these recurring incidents](#).

“recurring” assumes that all these incidents sprang from the same “root” cause. It can be argued that this present disruption is more directly a result of a very specific precipitous action and the resulting conduct of the Board at that time and the Spiritual Leader.

The committee met several times to discuss ways in which historical data could be gathered and analyzed to find common threads. The real challenge was to gather needed data without disrupting the fragile peace that had recently been established. This included informal verbal histories from various long time congregants, review of membership data, review of past minutes and reports from consultants and spiritual leaders and obtaining a sense of the perspective of the UUA on this long standing problem. A summary of these findings, a statement of the problem and some options regarding future actions based on these findings are presented below.

SECTION I. DATA COLLECTION

A. VERBAL HISTORIES AND MEMBERSHIP DATA

Discussions with [several long time members](#),

how many and how representative?

all the way back to our founder, MaryAnn Force, revealed a rich 50 year congregational history that began with a very close knit fellowship. [EmmyLou Belcher](#) was employed as the first spiritual leader in 1990 when the group of about 70 decided to grow their ranks. Although her tenure is reported as having been fairly tranquil, during her 15 years [she introduced little in the way of change to the fellowship model](#) that had been the structural basis of the organization since inception.

During her employment as minister to UUCGT Emmy Lou:

- 1. The congregation's name was changed from UU **Fellowship** of GT to UU **Congregation** of GT. Emmy Lou promoted that change which was supported by the congregation and marked an acknowledgement by the congregation of its evolving culture.*
- 2. Under Emmy Lou's leadership Sunday service attendance grew to approaching seating capacity (175 +/-)* creating a chronic concern for crowding and seeking strategies for accommodation. Dual Sunday services were instituted to address this.*
- 3. In recognition of its growth, Emmy Lou led an effort to establish a "program council" model of governance.*
- 4. During this period both the RE and the Music Programs thrived, the former supported both by Emmy Lou and an active RE Committee and the latter by the talent of the Music Director and the mutually cooperative support of the Music Dir. and the minister.*
- 5. It was during this same period that the congregation felt strong enough to construct its own building, presently occupied, on land donated by generous congregants, Bob and Peta Williams.*
- 6. To accommodate increased administrative load a paid secretary was added to the staff.*

It was reported that from EmmyLou's departure in 2005 until Chava came on board in 2014, some 9 years later, we experienced 4 different spiritual leaders and three periods of significant discord. Only one minister was employed in a permanent capacity and he departed after 3 years. When Chava came on board in September of 2014 our numbers were approximately 140. As of January of this year, some 16 months later, we had 212 members. As of early April, 2016 the total number of members is difficult to count as there seems to have been a significant lack of response to our pledge drive which is possibly reflective of a change in the total membership count. The important point here is that the congregation has grown significantly, in fact [tripled*](#),

1. The membership expanded significantly under Emmy Lou's ministry and then fell off following her departure.

during the past 26 years and that it experienced a surge in membership when Chava came on board. What began as a fellowship that was lay led and structurally simplistic evolved into a program sized congregation that requires not only a designated spiritual leader but also the administrative structure associated with meeting the needs and expectations of larger congregations.

B. REVIEW OF CHURCH ANNALS

A thorough review of the minutes and reports generated through the years was originally planned. However, it appears we might wish to improve our record keeping for little of value was available for review.

John Hoffman, our committee member served as the Board Chair during the 2010-2011 time when Barbara Childs served as a consultant. He was able to provide copies of some minutes that were generated regarding some but not all of the workshops she conducted during that year. We were unable to find any additional documentation of her work with the exception of her initial report that addressed her assessment of how to work with the congregation to deal with the [recurrent unrest](#)...her plan of action.

“Recurrent unrest”? At the time of Barbara Child’s involvement the congregation had experienced Emmy Lou’s departure (she led the congregations for about a decade and was not dismissed) after a successful period of growth, and the departure of Chip Rousch after a brief period (3 years?) and whose leadership style brought discomfort to many more than a few representing the active congregants. That can hardly be considered “recurrent.”

Furthermore, while Barbara Child’s guidance was strongly supported by many of the congregation, including the Transition Team responsible for assisting her consultation, others found the results superficial and reflective of a perspective she brought with her rather than of careful discernment here.

Thinking there was a missing final report which outlined the actions taken and the results there of she was contacted for the purpose of retrieving that summary document. It was learned that no such document had been generated. Fortunately, the minutes John provided clearly stated that the workshop participants ultimately identified the root cause of our dissonance. (See SECTION I below). So, even though there was no follow through to address resolution of the identified cause of our turbulence, it is important to note that as a result of this work not only had the [root cause](#) been identified but it had been [discovered, agreed upon and articulated NOT by an external source but from within our own congregation.](#)

It is arguable that the present disruption is NOT the result of a “root cause” and that it has been a response to a very specific and hugely disruptive event.

C. INTERVIEW WITH LISA PRESLEY

A discussion with Lisa Presley, of the UUA Heartland District, provided a long term perspective concerning this congregation and a wealth of [general knowledge \(from a distance, not from significant or direct participation\)](#) regarding the genesis and resolution of conflicts in congregations. Following are the summation of some of her sage comments:

1. The vast majority of congregational conflict (i.e. > 95%) center around issues of power and control.
2. The UUA has long been actively involved in dealing with the resolution of conflict in congregations and has created a manual to deal with such. Entitled "The Janus Manual", this work is designed to assist congregations and spiritual leaders in transition. One of the primary authors of this work is Barbara Childs, UUCGT consultant for the 2010-2011 timeframe.
3. Because problems of this nature are very complex and highly charged with emotions she recommended the services of a facilitator capable of dealing with these difficult feelings be procured early on in any project targeting congregational resolution of conflict.

4. This is a convoluted situation that has evolved over several decades and irrespective of the method implemented to affect change it will not meet with immediate resolution of harsh feelings. The passage of time as well as openly and honestly facing the root causes can lead to gradual healing.

SECTION II PROBLEM STATEMENT

This congregation is divided into two factions, those who wish to return to the fellowship model that is usually associated with beginning and smaller congregations and those who wish to embrace the standard administrative structure consistent with UUA congregations of program size.

This statement is a gross simplification and not at all reflective of the wide spectrum of viewpoint and vision spread throughout the membership. Nor is the question of growth, its nature and value, in any way congruent with length of time and involvement in the history of UUCGT.

Some of the founding members of our congregation have not embraced the changes associated with the growth of the congregation and have actively tried to preserve many aspects of fellowship programs and governance. This yearning for and attempt to return to the old comfortable and well loved ways by a small group of our congregants has resulted in major conflicts through the years. Unfortunately, the contested issues have been many and varied but to date the root cause of the dissonance has not been dealt with.

In some there still exists a yearning for the closeness that was shared in the fellowship that was created in part by governance via mutual agreement and in unwavering accordance with their holy objectives. Although they originally wished to reach out and opened their doors to the greater community it was found that doing so introduced a new way of decision making that was not always in concert with the very successful and fulfilling ways they had experienced in the past. In short, they felt a deep loss of something that had been very sacred. They also felt disenfranchised because the new way of doing and being also represented a loss of their spiritual home as the voices and choices of the newer congregants gained more strength. Few outside that original group understood or even considered those feelings.

This description is a characterization of a "small group" of congregants that doesn't exist. Certainly components of the above can be found among the membership and to varying degrees, but it is not exclusively and directly related to those with long memberships roots. Furthermore, awareness of experiences related to small communities vs. larger organizations, even missing their loss of presence, does not inevitably cause a refusal to accept the consequences of growth (and efforts to accommodate it), although it may result in continued search for ways to find comparable values within the enlarged context.

That said, at this juncture the majority of this congregation has an agenda and way of governance that is divergent from the one this small group still clings to..... the fellowship model that was so successful for them in the past. The challenge at hand is to find a way to integrate the two factions and create a functional whole congregation.

Yes, that has been, continues to be, and always will be, at least as long as we remain intellectually vital and liberally connected to one another.

SECTION III OPTIONS

This committee has not been tasked with providing potential solution. Ours was only to identify the root cause. We believe that has been accomplished. However, it is our belief that it is time to confront and deal with the root cause until a mutually agreed resolution is instituted. As indicated by Lisa Presley, this is a long term healing process.

It is our assessment that this **issue** (*please specifically restate the "issue"*) is of utmost importance to the welfare of the congregation. Further, it is the feeling of this committee that this issue, although currently less volatile than in recent months, is still very unstable under the surface and is in need of immediate attention. Toward that end we recommend a permanent sub committee of the Board of Directors be expeditiously appointed to address the initiation and ongoing resolution of the problem.

TASK II COMMUNICATIONS

The second task involves developing recommendations for implementing the findings of the Communications task group which, having completed their objective, was disbanded. This includes (1) an **overall rededication to the covenant** (specifically to the communication elements therein) with (2) accentuated emphasis on every person assuming individual responsibility for projecting and receiving **impeccable communications**. Although it does not appear that a permanent committee must be established to execute this mission there does need to be an initial targeted and well supported effort in order to launch and begin integration of this concept into the community. Some options to achieve this integration are presented below:

Agreed!

OPTIONS TO IMPLEMENT THE FINDINGS

1. Reform the independent committee that crafted the recommendations.

Advantages

- a. The group is already familiar with the work

Disadvantages

- a. The group is large (9 members and 2 facilitators) and arranging meeting times is **problematic**.

- b. It is not recognized by the congregation as being a formal committee and it has no established connections

for communicating with the congregation or with other committees

Without diminishing the reality expressed as problematic, it has to be acknowledged that the process by which the "9" were chosen was very carefully designed to inclusively reflect the full spectrum of perspective among congregants over this issue. This was critical.

2. Assign the task to an existing committee

Advantages:

a. Indirectly benefit from association with an established and recognized acting group.

b. Duties assumed by existing members; limited recruiting

Disadvantage:

a. The existing committees may not wish to accept the added work load

b. This project may be accepted but not treated as a priority.

3. Appoint a Board of Directors subcommittee as outlined in the above discussion in TASK I regarding the root cause and

include improvement of congregational communications in their assignment.

RECOMMENDATION

This group perceives that the third option provides an efficient path to maximizing functional efficiency in accomplishing both objectives.

TASK III RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FACILITATORS

It is believed that the selection of a facilitator should be based on the approach selected to confront the issues. We are a step ahead of many such processes as [we have identified our root problem](#). However, recommending a facilitator without knowing what will be asked of their performance may not lead to wise choices.

While the "committee" may believe so, I find that conclusion still an assumption, not at all a demonstrated fact. Many of those among the strongly dissatisfied are NOT "Old Fellowship" members, indeed some are quite new.

Very respectfully submitted,

*Richard Miller
UUCGT Board Trustee
2016*