

Meeting Minutes
Board of Trustees of Mount Vernon Unitarian Church
8 March 2011

Board members present:

Joan Darrah, Board Chair
Becky Brandt, Board Vice-Chair
Tamara de la Camp, Program Council Convener
Keith Brophy
Al Robbert
Bill Alsmeyer-Johnson
Dan Cohen
Ian Anderson, Youth Representative

Board members absent:

Peg Bartel
Lisa Gillispie, Board Secretary

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

1. Intern Minister Karen Rasmussen gave opening words.
2. Lauck Walton, Finance Committee, presented a slightly updated budget from what was distributed to BOT members earlier by Joan. A YRUU Coordinator and summer music are included in this budget as are small increases for some of the program areas. Another change is increasing health care coverage to bring us into line with UUA Fair Compensation guidelines (which BOT voted to approve in 12/07). No additional money is budgeted for the Property Major Maintenance (PMM) fund nor for the Minister's sabbatical which she is authorized to take after four years but has not yet scheduled. This is a balanced budget, which the Board voted unanimously to approve.
3. Dianne Brown and Georgia Pourchot presented a Membership Development Council proposal. The membership program needs to become more comprehensive and visible. Therefore, the proposal was made to upgrade the committee to a council. The rationale is so that focus can be placed upon different aspects of membership—new visitors, existing members, etc.—and form committees to specifically focus on those issues. Al Robbert suggested that Stewardship might be a good 4th committee under Membership. It was generally agreed that this makes sense and should be further discussed in the coming year once the Membership Development Council is up and running and fully functioning. Nominating Committee will need to put a Membership program area coordinator on the slate for the annual meeting; fortunately Dianne Brown is willing to fill this role. The Board voted unanimously to approve.
4. Social Justice Policy changes were proposed. The updated policy changes intend to clean up old references to task forces and clarify who can approve public positions on social justice issues. Discussion ensued; people thought it was important to have an appeal mechanism built in so that if SJ and Minister/BOT Chair do not agree as to a position on an SJ issue, the matter can be brought to the full BOT for a vote. The Board voted unanimously to approve.

5. Communications Policy changes were proposed. The Board voted unanimously to approve.

Items discussed and/or reported included:

- Spring Stewardship Campaign Update: To date, 23 pledging units have responded for just over \$57K. A fair number of the pledges have been made via the link on the MVUC website.
- Building Renovation Update: Al Robbert reported that an initial meeting was held and several subcommittees were set up with the purpose of researching various ways to improve the building. The goal is to have some options pulled together so that at the annual meeting we may be able to get a preliminary sense of what the congregation wants to do with regarding to building renovations.
- GA Delegates Selection: Meg Clontz, Bill Clontz, Sandy Peterson, Georgia Pourchot, Eric Pourchot, Dick Schaeffer, and Karen Tyson were proposed as MVUC delegates for GA in June. The Board voted unanimously to approve.
- Sustainable Energy Project Update: The weather slowed down the progress of the project, but it is now back on track. There is a wedding on April 9th, so things need to be back in order by then. The church is purchasing sod for SST to install in some key areas because seeding will take too long.

The meeting was closed by the recitation of the MVUC covenant and was adjourned.

The next regularly scheduled Board meeting will be on April 12, 2011 at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Gillispie

March 8, 2011

Proposal to Improve Health Insurance Plan Offered to Employees

Prepared by Rev. Kate R. Walker and Ron Brandt

Proposal: The UUA has two types of Health Plans -- Standard and High Deductible -- that can be offered to staff members of UU congregations. According to the UUA, 90% of UU churches offer the Standard plan. Employees of MVUC are currently offered the High Deductible plan, which is less expensive to MVUC but makes health care more expensive for the employees. It is proposed to offer the Standard plan instead.

Background: At present, besides the minister, only two staff members -- the Director of Lifespan Spiritual Growth and the Music Director -- are enrolled in the UUA health plan. Four others (including the new Church Administrator) are eligible to participate but have waived the opportunity because they have access to another plan. The UUA Health Plan provides for three levels of coverage: Individual, Individual + spouse, and Family. As recommended by the UUA, MVUC pays 80% of the premium for Individual coverage. The Dir. of LSG will need to wait until open enrollment in November for the to make the change, Dir. of Music is already paying for Standard plan.

CURRENT MONTHLY COST TO MVUC (Kate and Mark as current, Meagan after 80% SELF/50% SPOUSE adjustment)

Kate --\$441.70

Meagan -- \$404.16

Mark --\$203.93 (prorated for PT)

MONTHLY COST IF ALL PLANS ARE STANDARD DEDUCTIBLE

Kate -- SAME

Meagan -- \$501.13 (increase of \$654.79 for 8 months)

Mark -- \$251.34 (increase of 568.92)

Discussion: There are several reasons for making the proposed change. The Minister is provided the Standard plan as part of her benefits package so, in the interest of consistency and fairness, it should be available to other staff members as well. An excellent health care plan is an incentive for staff members to stay with MVUC, while the current plan, with its \$2500 deductible, is a financial burden to them. Health care premiums paid by employers are more valuable to employees than salary increases because they are not considered taxable income.

It should be acknowledged that, as an employer, MVUC is lucky that four staff members choose not to enroll in the health plan we offer. If they did, the additional cost to MVUC would be about \$25,000 for the High Deductible plan and \$31,500 for the Standard plan. (All four have said they do not intend to make this change.)

Conclusion: At relatively modest cost of \$1223.71 a year, MVUC can provide a significant improvement in health care benefits to valued staff members.

Recommendation: Change the type of UUA health plan offered to MVUC staff from High Deductible to Standard.

PROPOSAL TO BOARD OF TRUSTEES **TO CREATE A MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL**

Prepared by Dianne Brown, Chair, and Georgia Pourchot
Membership Development Committee, February 24, 2011

I. SUBJECT/ISSUE

The Membership Development Committee as structured is focused on welcoming visitors, educating prospective members, and welcoming new members. The Committee recognizes that while we have numerous returning visitors, we are slow at turning them into new members. UU consultant Larry Wheeler has pointed this out to our leadership several times. In addition, MVUC needs to address the fact that as we are welcoming new members in the front door, we are losing substantial numbers of members out the back door. Member retention has become a problem for MVUC.

Since 2004, membership figures show that MVUC membership has been shrinking. At the end of 2010, our records show a net loss of members, in spite of welcoming more than 400 prospective members and visitors through our doors. A shift in the focus of membership development and the involvement of the congregation is needed today! Raising the profile of membership development will help the congregation focus on the importance of involvement in recruitment and retention. In order to address these areas of need, our committee's operational capabilities will benefit from structural changes. Membership must become a function of the entire church, not just that of a small committee.

At the February 21st meeting, the Program Council supported the structural change from a committee to a Council with three committees to work in tandem in several areas of membership development. We hope the Board of Trustees will support this decision to expand our membership functions.

II. BACKGROUND

Reports indicate that churches across the nation are losing membership due to various causes. Our UU religion nationwide has been able to hold steady even in this challenging economy but MVUC as a mid-sized congregation is challenged to do so. We have a very successful church in our area, Fairfax UU, which was recently recognized as a "Breakthrough Congregation" for its outstanding membership growth. This success means growth in our geographical area can be achieved. We believe MVUC has the potential to turn around our membership losses, engage and retain new members and sustain our congregation for the future if we adopt a structure that better enables us to focus on specific areas of membership growth while recruiting new members.

The current structure of the Membership Development Committee is inadequate to fulfill the various membership functions needed for the growth of MVUC. Current committee members are working to their capacity. The main goal currently of Membership Development is to welcome new members at the Greeting Table, organize *Meet and Greet* events and New Member Dinners, and support Welcome to Our Community.

MVUC will benefit from initiating retention policies to support these new members in their first year and continuing to track them and engage them in their second year. Retention of these new members and engaging those on the fringes of congregational involvement will help our church thrive: people will bring fresh ideas to our programs, person-power to our volunteer needs, and money toward successful stewardship campaigns.

III. DISCUSSION

At the end of January 2011, Rev. Kate, Dianne and Georgia visited Rev. Mary Catherine Morn and the part-time membership staff member at Fairfax UU to learn how they successfully have sustained their congregational growth in the past three years. We learned that MVUC welcomes new members in a similar fashion to Fairfax, offers monthly opportunities to learn more about the church and offers introductory classes. Differences between Fairfax and MVUC became apparent in the following areas:

A. MVUC does not have a paid staff member to support all aspects of membership work, from data collection to tracking and following up with new members in the first and second years by letter and phone. We understand there is currently no financial ability for MVUC to hire a membership staff person but there may be some support provided by existing staff members in the near future.

Meanwhile, our volunteers help us get a better understanding of prospective new members, for example, with a tracking system of a simple Excel chart. All the names and dates of attendance from visitor nametags were collected at the end of January 2011 to create a list; this information is then updated weekly from information collected by volunteers at the Greeting Table. This list becomes easily accessible to the minister, the Board of Trustees and committee members about how often a prospective member has attended services. By circulating this list to those who hold *Meet and Greets*, Introductions to MVUC, the RE and Adult Activity Programs, information may be added to round out the picture of those visitors who may be “ripe” to be asked if they wish to become members.

B. MVUC was not “making the ask” to prospects to become members until November/December 2010 when Rev. Kate began an “Introduction to Membership” gathering. At this event, invited prospects were asked if they wished to sign the Membership Book and take on the responsibility of membership: nine new members signed the Membership Book. Beginning in April, Rev. Kate will host “Introduction to Membership” luncheons on alternate months to the *Meet and Greets* so that more prospects who are ready are asked to become members and given the opportunity to sign the Membership Book.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The committee structure of Membership Development is inadequate for membership growth. As a Council, Membership Development volunteers will extend our congregational work to engage new members, track them in their first and second years to engage them, and open up avenues to retain current church members who are not fully engaged in the congregational community.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Membership Development Committee requests the Board approval to restructure as a Council and be represented on the Program Council. The Membership Development Council will have the following areas of responsibility and each area will have its individual team and lead person:

1. Welcoming Visitors and Prospective New Members
2. Tracking Prospects and Engaging Them as New Members
3. Retaining New Members over Years One and Two, and provide outreach to retain current congregational members

Each team will work in tandem with related aspects of membership goals. Team leaders will meet quarterly with the Council representative to assess progress toward overall annual goals.



SOCIAL JUSTICE POLICY

Changes noted in red bold italics or with cross outs

Social Justice is an important part of the life of Mount Vernon Unitarian Church. Much social justice work is integrated into the worship, religious education, caring community, and social programs of the church.

- 1) ~~Action Groups~~ ***Social Action Task Forces***

Some aspects of the social justice program are led by self-selected ~~action groups~~ ***social action task forces approved by the congregation and***, which in turn are coordinated by the ~~Program Council~~

coordinator for Our Larger World **Social Justice Council**. Action groups **Task forces** may employ a variety of strategies to focus on a particular problem or issue (such as affordable housing, environmental concerns, or education of students in high-need public schools). These strategies may include direct service (such as helping remodel housing units or tutoring individual students), fund-raising, training and publicity, or maintaining alliances with community organizations and interfaith groups.

2) Statements of Advocacy

Church staff members or members of the congregation who engage in public policy advocacy are ordinarily expected to speak only for themselves. With **authorization from** approval of the chair of the Board of Trustees **the Minister**, they may present spoken or written statements on behalf of the church only if the statements are fully consistent with adopted position statements of the church, the UUA, or an agency of the UUA. If the chair **Minister** is not available, the chair of ~~unsure whether the statement reflects the views of the church as a whole, he or she may refer the question to the full~~ Board of Trustees may provide such authorization. Appeals should be brought to the Board Chair.

3) Identification at Public Meetings

If recommended by the Our Larger World **Social Justice** coordinator and authorized ~~approved by the chair of the Board~~ **Minister**, action groups **members of the congregation** attending public demonstrations may identify themselves as affiliated with the church by means of banners and signs bearing the name of the church. However, if they identify themselves in this way, they may ~~not also display~~ **only** messages that **do not** go beyond official church positions. *Adopted March 4, 2003*

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Proposed Policy on COMMUNICATIONS

The Communications Council will establish the types of media used to inform congregants about church programs, events, and activities. The content and format of each publication will be determined by its editor in accord with guidelines established by the Communications Council.

Policies, such as the one below, will then be the purview of the Communications Council not the BOT.

Policies Newsletter

Newsletter

The content, editing, and format of each issue of the church newsletter will be the responsibility of the appointed newsletter editor. Priority for inclusion of items in the newsletter will be:

Announcements of future church events, News of church programs, events, members, and Board of Trustees actions, a column by the minister and occasional columns by other professional staff members, comments submitted by church members and friends, and brief notices of community events or events at other UU churches of probable interest to members of the congregation.

Adopted March 4, 2003

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Minister's Board Report
Mt Vernon Unitarian Church
March 8, 2011

Best news:

We have Carol Graves in place as our new Church Administrator. I am delighted to have her and invite you to take a moment to either call or stop in to meet her.

Reflection on Stewardship, Membership and Staffing:

As the BOT you're charged with oversight of stewardship and the budget in addition to our mission and vision. Sometimes these are in tension, next year's budget is presenting one of those years. In the proposed budget for 2011/12 there are four staff expenditures: 1. a Summer Music Coordinator; 2. a Youth Advisor Coordinator; 3. an

increase in health insurance cost to standardize our benefit plan; 4. an increase to cover a sabbatical for the Dir. of LSG.

Individually none are significant. Collectively they contribute to an increase in the budget in a year when our goal is to minimize an increase in the budget due to our recent escape from a deficit budget. They also increase the number of staff. Both the budget increase and the number of staff pose challenging tensions with stewardship, membership growth and our vision/mission.

In the world of church research and analysis (ex: the Alban Institute and the staff at the UUA amongst other resources), there is no consensus on how many staff a church should have according to its size. There are formulas: for every X number of members, there should be Y number of staff. The "X" varies in how one counts a "member." Is a "member" someone who is in the membership book, or someone who shows up regularly and is an active participant? How do you count children since they are not members, yet they utilize a high percentage of church resources? The "Y" varies depending on if the church wants to grow, maintain or is dying.

By most formulas, no matter how you count the "Y" or "X," MVUC is currently staffed for growth, or slightly over. However, it's important we have either a consensus or at least a common understanding on how many staff we want to have for our size. Other variables are our Mission and Vision which influences any consensus we reach, as well as the reality of our financial resources, and volunteer resources (if no staff person for X job, who will do those tasks?). And, there are changes in generational differences in financial and volunteer commitment that necessitate serious reflection on how a church manages its resources and expectations.

Finally, each church has unique issues that may require a shift in resources in program areas, for example: if a church doesn't have many children, but lots of older members, resources are allocated differently. Or a church such as ours with over 7+ acres requires substantial resources for its grounds.

I've attached a short essay from a UUA leader who gives further explanation about the staff to member ratio. Please note the difference between Professional Program staff and Administration. The minister, Dir. of LSG and Music Director are program staff.

My ministerial advice is to remember this is a tension of values or interests. It's actually healthy to have this tension and the conversation around the tension.

Personal: reminder that I'm taking some vacation days, March 7-11.

Kate R. Walker
Minister

Staffing the Large Congregation

Rev. Stefan Jonasson

UUA Director for Large Congregations

For many years there has been a debate among church consultants about just how many staff members churches need. To be fair, estimating how many is like shooting at a

moving target. Additionally, the needs of larger congregations are obviously different from those of smaller ones. Moreover, society has changed so much that it has proven difficult to come up with a formula that withstands the test of time. Add to this our tendency to romanticize volunteering and we soon find that staffing is a complex matter. In the past, churches – including many large ones – relied on a cadre of dedicated volunteers to meet their staffing needs. But congregations of all sizes are finding it difficult to recruit, train and manage the number of volunteers needed to do all that is required. I often hear people wax nostalgically about the good old days when there was a volunteer for every job and a job for every volunteer. While my reading of dusty old newsletters and annual reports tells me that things were never *really* that good, it would be fair to say that the volunteer pool has been shrinking – and that it continues to do so for most churches. While it may be tempting to blame people for this decline by somehow attributing it to a lack of volunteer spirit (or worse), doing so is neither fair nor profitable. The simple fact is that lifestyle changes have reduced the time available for volunteering. And Unitarian Universalists have been affected by these changes more than most other faith movements! As churches grow larger, their staffing needs grow larger and more complex. Not only must large churches deal with the shrinking volunteer pool, they also face increased expectations for service by both members and the larger community. Individual positions may grow so large that it is no longer reasonable to ask a volunteer to fill them, nor may it be practical or possible to break a position up into “volunteer-sized” pieces. Even when church programs do rely heavily on volunteer staffing, such as in the case of religious education, the task of coordinating and training calls for a paid professional. There is a greater need for specialization among staff, along with the training and skills that specialization demands. Each of these factors, in addition to others, point to the need for increased staffing levels in most large congregations.

In his book *Staff Your Church for Growth*, Gary McIntosh observes that churches follow one of three policies for staffing, whether or not they are even aware of it. The most common strategy among churches is to staff for *decline*. The next most likely approach taken by churches is to staff for *maintenance* (in other words, to remain on a plateau in size). There are comparatively few churches that intentionally staff for *growth*.

Encouraging churches to be intentional about their staffing strategies, McIntosh offers a simple staffing formula. If a church is staffing for maintenance, it needs the equivalent of one full-time program professional (minister, religious educator, membership coordinator, and so on) for every 150 active participants (measured by average weekly attendance, including adults and children), assisted by one full-time support staff person for the first program professional and one half-time support staff person for each additional professional. (This staff complement does not include custodial staff, since the caretaking needs are largely determined by the size of the facility rather than the size of the congregation. Nor does this staff complement include those employees who are staffing a “subsidiary” of the congregation, such as a daycare center or social service agency.) If a church wishes to staff for growth, the basic program and support staff formula remains the same but the ratio shifts to one program professional for every 100 active participants. When adding staff, McIntosh encourages churches to strive for balance. For instance, the gifts and talents of an associate minister should ideally complement those of the senior minister. It is also important to strike a balance between *maintenance* positions, which serve the needs of current members, and *growth* positions, which expand the congregation’s ministry. Yet another need is to balance relationally motivated staff with task-oriented staff.

The staffing needs of a church are not met simply by complying with a formula, however sound. Staff must be *empowered* with the authority necessary to accomplish the goals developed for their positions. This can be a growing edge for some Unitarian

Universalists. It can be especially challenging when staff assume tasks and responsibilities that formerly fell to committees.

Staff members also function best within an environment where the lines of authority are clear. The ideal staff is one that functions as a team, where goals are shared, communications are clear, and working relationships are collaborative. But all good teams have leaders and in a large church the team leader is the senior minister, or co-ministers as the case may be.

Interestingly enough, churches that are well staffed usually find that their volunteer pool increases! We can speculate that this is because the quality of the volunteer experience improves when there is adequate staff to coordinate and support the work of volunteers.

However we may feel about the increased reliance on paid staff in our churches, there can be little doubt that the quality of congregational life is enhanced by an adequate, balanced, well-trained, fairly compensated and strongly motivated church staff.



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Kären Rasmussen

February Board Report

Small Group Ministry- the "Our Spiritual Journey" daytime group continues to be steady. Our attendance is good and the conversations deepen as people connect with their personal spirituality and how they live their faith in community.

Spiritual Retreat- I assisted Kate in the spiritual retreat from Friday to Saturday evening a couple weeks ago. It was a great experience and I led a guided meditation as well as provided readings at the meals.

"The Critters We Love" – this initiative will meet for a brainstorming session on 9 March. It will be interesting to see what ideas people have for a one time, low maintenance effort to help animals in the local community.

California- I attended the weeklong ministers retreat in Monterey, California. I participated in UUA Presidents Peter Morales's workshops on effecting change and growth in our congregations. It was very well done and the discussions with ministers from all over the country were very interesting and informative. The worship and sermons were excellent. And I'm enjoying working with the MVUC membership committee a great deal.

Immigration workshop- I assisted with the Immigration half day of worship, discussions and workshops held at MVUC this past Saturday. Everyone was very impressed with the great job MVUC did at hosting the event.

Respectfully submitted, Kären

-----Original Message-----

From: Mark Zimmerman <mszofnote@gmail.com>

To: Ron Brandt <brandtron@verizon.net>; X Kate Walker <minister@mvuc.org>; lauck walton <lwalton4@usa.net>; Joan Darrah <jedarrah@aol.com>

Sent: Wed, Feb 23, 2011 1:52 am

Subject: 2011 music budget request

Dear Board, Finance Committee, Rev. Kate, etc:

Uncharacteristically, Music is not seeking increases for our general budget for 2011. :-) We have been very grateful for the significant increase last year and it has worked quite well. In fact, I am proposing we transfer all the non-salary expenses for summer music 2011 to general music fund. This puts a smaller request to the church operating fund for this new budget item.

Separately I have filed the request for Summer Music Associate 2011 funding. I have collected apx \$2,250 toward the estimated \$5-6K needed for the Piano Restoration Fund. I anticipate more funds soon in honor of Leila Goodman.

The only other item in the future would be a small reasonable increase for Yee Von Ng. She is contract, not salary, and I try to provide some visible increase for her each year due to her extraordinary talents and willingness to help with any music needs at MVUC. As usual, I

work this with Kate and Personnel, etc. Just wanted to include it in my report.

Thank you so much for your heroic efforts to provide for MVUC's many needs!

Mark Zimmerman
Director of Music

MT VERNON UNITARIAN CHURCH
Proposed Budget 2012

Ordinary Income/Expense	2011 Budget	2012 Budget	% change	COMMENT
Income				
4100 - STEWARDSHIP PLEDGES	470,000.00	472,000.00	0.4%	slightly aggressive
4200 - CONTRIBUTIONS	17,500.00	20,000.00	14.3%	current pace
4300 - FACILITIES USE & RENTALS	123,971.00	124,000.00	0.0%	estimate only
4400 - FUND RAISING INCOME	10,075.00	10,000.00	-0.7%	
4500 - ADMINISTRATIVE INCOME	2,400.00	2,500.00	4.2%	
4515 - UUA Grant for Intern's Stipend	6,500.00	0.00	-100.0%	
Total Income	630,446.00	628,500.00	0.3%	
Expense				
5000 - WORSHIP PROGRAMS	11,550.00	12,000.00	3.9%	
5100 - RELIGIOUS EDUCATION	5,000.00	4,500.00	-10.0%	\$500 more than req.
5200 - HOME COMMUNITY PROGRAMS	1,250.00	1,750.00	40.0%	increase for membership comm; young adults
5300 - DENOMINATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES	27,880.00	27,632.00	-0.9%	
5400 - OLW/SOCIAL JUSTICE	750.00	1,150.00	53.3%	increase for SJ
5500 - ADMINISTRATIVE PROGRAMS	10,075.00	1,000.00	-90.1%	
5600 - CONFERENCES & CONT ED	1,300.00	800.00	-38.5%	as requested
5700 - PROFESSIONAL EXPENSES	17,366.00	16,256.00	-6.4%	
6100 - OPERATING COSTS	52,025.00	49,000.00	-5.8%	
6200 - COMMUNICATIONS	7,000.00	7,000.00	0.0%	\$300 less than request
6400 - INSURANCE	9,303.00	10,000.00	7.5%	
7000 - SUPPLIES	5,500.00	6,000.00	9.1%	
7200 - PROPERTY MAINTENANCE	47,200.00	52,500.00	11.2%	as requested
7300 - UTILITIES	30,300.00	32,000.00	5.6%	
8100 - EMPLOYEE COMPENSATION	342,608.00	347,020.00	1.3%	includes YRUU, RE sabbatical, summer music
8200 - PAYROLL TAXES	17,266.00	18,117.00	4.9%	
8300 - EMPLOYEE BENEFITS	43,758.76	42,166.00	-3.6%	health insurance finalized
Total Expense	630,131.76	628,891.00	-0.2%	
Net Ordinary Income	314.24	-391.00	-224.4%	
Net Income	314.24	-391	-2.2442719	