

# UUCC CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

## MARCH 8, 2009

### MINUTES

Lisa Furr called the meeting to order at 12:30 pm. A quorum had been reached, with 69 members attending. Lisa gave a reading, while Eric Gee lit the chalice.

#### AFFIRMATION OF SEARCH COMMITTEE MEMBER

With the extension of the time period for the Search committee, one member was not able to continue. The Nominating committee recommends Linda Wolitz as the replacement member. The congregation agreed by consensus.

#### AFFIRMATION OF REV. DR. CATHIE STIVERS AS COMMUNITY MINISTER

Lisa summarized the relationship of a Community minister, and asked for questions.

- Michelle Matthews: What is the relationship between the Called minister and the Community minister? [*Response:* Cathie won't be paid staff; the covenant describes her relationship between Cathie and Terre, as well as between Cathie and our congregation. Cathie added that she will always defer to the Pulpit minister. Her role is limited: she will conduct one class, preach one sermon, etc.]
- Deb Downing: Is the covenant confidential? [*Response:* No. It can be shared with anyone who is interested in seeing it.]

The congregation agreed by consensus.

#### REPORT FROM THE TRANSITIONS TEAM

Rebecca Keller reported for the Transitions team. This team was created to help support Rev. Terre and the congregation through the issues that face us during the transition period. Most of the issues they're dealing with came up during the Search team's cottage meetings. She referred to the handout, while listing the issues they face:

- Decision Making
- Identity
- Communication Issues
- Addressing Conflict
- Addressing Concerns about "Inner Circles"
- Adult Faith Development
- Augment Care Program
- Integrating New Members
- Growth (How big do we want to be? How do we want to grow?)

Colin Ferguson added that the only difference to the working of this team if we change Rev. Terre's status with us, is that they'll have more time to work on the issues.

Dorothy Fillmore: Are these issues traditional transition items? [*Response:* Yes. And there would be an urgency to get them done before the search for a new minister starts.] Colin pointed out that it has been a very “giving” relationship between the Transition team and minister.

#### AFFIRMATION OF SEARCH COMMITTEE’S PROPOSAL

Lee Stevens led us through this discussion. The Search committee has only recently learned of the option of hiring a Consulting minister. Since that time they have studied the information from UUA, discussed it with Rev. Terre, reviewed the responses to the congregation’s recent minister evaluation, checked her references, discussed with the Board, and among themselves. Both the UUA District Representative and UUA Settlement Office representative highly recommend we take this course; we need a longer relationship than we’ve had in recent years. Having reviewed all this information, the Search committee recommends we hire Rev. Terre as a Consulting minister.

#### Discussion:

- Rebecca Keller: So this is only extending her time with us as a Contract minister, not making a decision to Call her? [*Response:* Yes, this is a year-to-year contract for up to four years. We could choose to call her at that time, but we won’t even consider it for at least three years.]
- Elaine Kiziah: What’s the process for deciding that we are ready to search for a Called minister? [*Response:* After 30-36 months, we would take the pulse of the congregation.] What if Terre is one of our candidates? [*Response:* We will either hire Terre as our Called minister, or go to Search. We won’t do both.]
- Kevin Paris: Concern that the handout says the Search committee will “stop”. [*Response:* This search committee would be disbanded, and we would form a new committee when the need arises. We will be able to focus all our attention on the “transition” issues in the meantime.]
- Rebecca Keller: The Transition team work will continue. The role of the Transition team is to report information from the congregation back to the congregation. It’s that work that brought us to the decision to extend the Interim to a two-year period.
- Andrea Westcot: Because she was vocal about some concerns last week, she wanted to state that her concerns have been answered in this meeting, and she now feels comfortable with the idea. She also pointed out that the national economic situation would likely keep good ministers from wanting to move now.
- Michelle Matthews: If we would have previously known of this option, the Transition team would have gone for it at the time we made the decision to extend to a two-year interim.
- Lee Stevens: That was also a concern of the Search committee.

- Peter deFur: We would also have to know very soon that we would be able to pay a minister what they would require.
- Sharon deFur: Supports the recommendation.
- Kathy Ingram: She feels that the committees and leadership are wanting to continue the work they've started, but would like a sense that the congregation is also ready to continue.
- Eric Gee: To that point, this wouldn't mean we would take our foot off the gas, but it would only give us more time to do it well. He and Rev. Terre have had these discussions and are in agreement.
- Lisa Furr: Our church is growing and changing as needed, but we haven't had the long-term relationship to do what we way we want to do: go outside the doors of the church in our ministry.
- Kathy Wimett: (1) The recent meetings about the decision-making process show her that the congregation is ready to consider options. She learned from those meetings that that -- as well as this -- is holy work. (2) Sara Long, who couldn't be here, asked that she express that Sara is in favor of keeping Rev. Terre. (3) She also personally supports our keeping Rev. Terre. She thinks Terre is exceptional in what she brings us.
- Lee Stevens: Rev. Terre is really excited about staying. She could go to larger churches and make more money, but she likes being here.
- Brian Keller: The issues for the Transition team are what we need to deal with. If you refer to the top 10 items from the cottage meetings, and compare Terre to those qualities, it shows us this is what makes sense. She is exactly what we need now.
- John Michie: After Rev. Nancy left, we were stung by the "failed" description. If we continue a relationship with Rev. Terre, it goes a long way toward voiding that stigma.
- Dave Wiskman: As a new member, they haven't come to church as much because of the unsettled situation. But they've been coming now because of what Rev. Terre brings to the church.
- Deb Downing: She also supports the idea. As a past Moderator, she recognizes how distracting minister changes can be to the leadership as well as the congregation.
- John Pimblett: We will decide each year whether we'll continue with Rev. Terre, or go to search. He likes having options.
- Mike Caro: He supports the recommendation, but is wondering what might be the negative? [*Response:* There could be a "perfect" minister out there that we'd miss out on. That seems doubtful.]
- Porter Smith-Thayer: From the moment Terre and Jack arrived, she jumped in to work with us and push us where we need to go.
- Bob Hoover: Emotionally, we need a rest from change in order to pull ourselves together. This allows us to do that.

- Elaine Kiziah: According to the description of the Consulting minister, she would work for the Board, not the congregation. [*Response:* It's the same relationship as that of an Interim minister. However, the fact that Terre (as an Interim) asked for the congregation to evaluate her shows that she responds to the congregation.]
- Diane Pominski: Will we have a Committee on Ministry? What would that role be? [*Response:* We've started having those conversations, but don't have the answers yet.]
- Michelle Matthews: Referring to Elaine's question, because the Consulting minister may need to push us out of our comfort zone, it's good that they report to the Board instead of the congregation.
- Sara Mackey: Expressed her whole-hearted support of keeping Terre. It's also a positive that Jack would be staying with us too.
- Dorothy Fillmore: Is proud of the Search and Transition teams for dealing with these important issues.
- Eric Gee: To Mike Caro's earlier question regarding negatives: (1) The fact that it's open about what we'll do at the end of the Contract period; (2) A Consulting minister can push us in ways we're not comfortable; (3) Rev. Terre is worth more than we pay her now. We'll have to address that issue down the road.
- Lisa Furr: If we stop the Search committee work, it frees up \$10-16,000 from our tentative budget to put to work for the church.
- Andrea Westcot: How do we make right what we pay vs what Terre deserves? [*Response:* That's a difficult question. We're paying more than we did our last minister, but it's less than she made at her last church. We're working on that problem.]
- Michelle Matthews: We'll have to address this issue regardless of who our minister is.
- Deena Ferguson: That brings us another possible negative: Rev. Terre could choose not to renew a contract. If that happens it could be about money.
- Katie Wheeler: What is the perception from the outside of a church who hasn't had a Called minister in five years? [*Response:* (from Kathy Wimett) We've always been known as a good church, so I wouldn't put too much emphasis on one poor relationship. (from Lisa Furr) And, since we took the lessons we learned from that situation to heart and acted on them, should speak well for us.]
- Russ Dowling: She hasn't known a Called minister since she's been here, but comes because of what the congregation does.
- Nancy White: Does the Board or the congregation renew the contract each year? [*Response:* Officially, it's the Board, who listens to the membership. The next time the Board will call a congregational meeting about this subject will be 2011.]

- Andrea Westcott: How does the three-month notice work? [*Response:* The Board will start the process in time to make the decision before 4/1 of each year, since the contract runs through 6/30.]
- Mike Caro: If the congregation want to go to Search, how does that happen? [*Response:* The congregation would petition the Board to call a meeting.]

With no other questions or comments, the Search committee's proposal was affirmed.

Lisa expressed her thanks to all those who have worked so hard on this important issue.

The meeting was ended at 1:45 pm.

*Submitted by  
Montana Higgins, Board Secretary*