

UUCC CONGREGATIONAL FORUM

NOVEMBER 15, 2009

NOTES

Eric Gee called the meeting to order at 12:25 pm. As Barbara Lent lit the chalice, Eric read the UUCC Mission and Vision statements.

Eric outlined the budget issue in front of us, summarizing the points he had made in the letter sent out last week.

UPDATE OF THE BOARD'S ACTIONS AT THIS POINT

The Board has focused on actions that are as sustainable as possible, and support future growth of UUCC.

We made the decision to eliminate the Music Director position as of 12/31/09. Those impacted by this decision were told last week.

- This decision has sustainability; it will cover about one third of the gap for this year as well as the future.
- However, this decision in no way makes the statement that we won't want that position again in the future, when our financial position can support it.
- Making this difficult decision gives us the ability to support the rest of our staff.

Other possible changes, if we can't generate the revenue to cover them, are:

- Putting a temporary freeze on funding the Long Term Maintenance Reserve fund. We would look at doing this for the remainder of this church year only, which would save about \$5500.
- Cutting the discretionary budget by 10-15% for all church programs.
- Reduce the dues paid to UUA and the TJ District by 15%.
- Putting the staff on partial furloughs. We would be looking at a 2-week furlough without pay. Rev. Terre has made the offer, and we have discussed the possibility with the rest of the staff.

ASK FOR ADDITIONAL REVENUE SUPPORT

Brian Stevens' message was that increasing our revenue will help relieve the pressure. The Auction results from last night are a good start, since they appear to be about \$5000 higher than the amount we'd budgeted for.

He reminded us that the reason we've gone over budget is because we've planned for growth. The budget was done including the estimate of some late pledges which haven't materialized. He reinforced the intent to fund the Long Term Maintenance Reserve again next year. And we would love to not have to make the other changes we've contemplated. The point was made that putting the staff on furlough would require that some of us would be picking up their work while they're off. If we can save only some of the possible changes, this would be first on the list.

Therefore, we're asking anyone who can, to add at least \$10 per month to their current pledge. He passed out cards to complete; they will be mailed to those who weren't at the meeting.

QUESTIONS

- Shain Scully: Would like to understand whether we can make a profit. [*Response:* John Everett said the problem is with the tax rules. He will help with research of any questions we have.]
- Lisa Furr: Is it worth having an evaluation of our maintenance reserve program? [*Response:* Diane Pominski said it had cost us \$1000 to have the original report done, so there would be some cost. It might be worth looking into.]
- Wendy Sprout: What are the implications for cutting back on our dues? [*Response:* The immediate response is that we wouldn't be a Fair Share Congregation. Eric will talk with Annette to get more answers to that question. John Everett mentioned that First Church went several years without meeting the Fair Share goal.]
- Rita Hull: The Long Term Maintenance Reserve fund is invested in CD's, so cutting back on that reserve would also cost us the interest we would have made on them.

IDEAS TO RAISE FUTURE REVENUE

Eric opened up the conversation to get ideas for ways to increase revenue.

- Angela Kepus: We could look into renting the building for other purposes. She knows of people who need inexpensive venues for training programs. [*Response:* We need to market that, and find a Champion to oversee the work.]
- John Schuiteman: Made an offer to be on a committee to give handouts to local neighborhoods. [*Response:* Sharon deFur heads the Marketing/Publicity committee; he should talk with her.]
- Robin Allman: Although we make some money from Shady Grove Coffeehouse, we can't assume we'll always get it; it's Scott Hammer's labor of love. We could also find ways to use our grounds. She suggested we think about doing some kind of Food Festival. If we have to cut the LTMR fund, she'd like to see a provision to repay it.

- Andrea Westcott: Committee members often eat their expenses. Because it's important to know how much they actually spend, she'd like us to add a line on the reimbursement fund for "gift in kind". That way we would encourage full accounting, but still give the committee member the ability to pay the expense personally.
- Michelle Matthews: Encourages more people to fill in the blank spots of the open Auction events. Would like us to put on a little more "push" to fill any spots left open. She also encourages those donating events to consider increasing the number of people invited. As another idea, she suggested people could give their credit card reward points to the church.
- Joy Ware: We should look into more ways to conserve. For example, turning off unnecessary lights; adjusting the temperature.
- Wayne Barbee: We should be sure to bring out pledges up to date. We can remind people of the simplicity of using the direct debit method.
- Shain Scully: Has just learned about the website unclaimedassets.gov. She suggests we ask people to see if they have anything there, and ask them to donate half of what they receive.
- John Everett: Thanks the nominating committee for putting the right people in the right place at the right time, to deal with this important issue. He will help with the program John suggested. We need to be known in the community.
- Deb Downing: We should look into the possibility of grants or funding for some of our initiatives (ie: green). It bothers her to see how we waste the candles.
- Elaine Kiziah: Our most sustainable improvement is growth of the congregation. Keeping people here should be a more-concerted effort. [*Response: Although that can't be the solution to the current budget issue, it is what we commit to in our mission and vision.*]

Eric emphasized that we're doing the right stuff, and that we'll be fine. Not just because of the work we do today, but because of the work we do on all fronts.

He gave a reading, and closed the meeting at 1:30 pm.

*Submitted by
Montana Higgins, Board Secretary*