

Board of Trustees
Meeting Minutes

All Souls Church, Unitarian

December 16, 2015

7:00 p.m.

Trustees, Officers, and Staff in Attendance:

Chuck Delaney, First Vice President and Acting President
Ann Bradley, Second Vice President
Ken Ambrose, Trustee
Erin Boeke Burke, Board Secretary
Whitney Cooper, Trustee
Cledwyn Jones, Moderator
Vickie Lindsay, Trustee
Kate Saylor, Trustee
John Strongman, Treasurer
Tracy Zorpette, Trustee
Robert Hardies, Senior Minister
Katie Loughary, Executive Director
Leo Jones, Chief Program Officer

Also in attendance: Bruce DePuyt, former Trustee and member of the committee in conversation with Church of the Advent; Jennifer Bolick, member of Goals Task Force

Not in attendance: Peg Barratt, President; Kysseline Jean-Mary Cherestal, Trustee; Laurie Lester, Membership Secretary; Susan Newman Moore, Associate Minister

Call to order – Chuck Delaney

Chalice lighting and reading – Ann Bradley

Check-in – All

Church of the Advent – Rev. Hardies: Church of the Advent (CoA) approached ASC about rental a little over a year ago, and we signed one-year probationary lease after initial review. Closer knowledge raised concerns about denominational views considerably different from ASC values, namely their opposition to gay marriage and the ordination of women. A committee from All Souls formed to engage CoA to learn more about who they are and what they believe, and to share more about ourselves; the ten members included Rev. Hardies, Vickie Lindsay, Cledwyn Jones, Bruce DePuyt, and Jennifer Bolick, with Sharon as facilitator. Rev. Hardies emphasized the significance of the religious dialogue – some of the most significant in his ministry – especially in terms of conversation of difference. The dialogue took place in a setting of respect, honesty, and intimacy. Following the conclusion of the conversation on the previous Sunday, the committee had to make a recommendation to the Board. They reached the conclusion that we are

in violation of our own policies by renting to CoA, but there are other reasons to continue to rent even though we violate that policy. These reasons include: creating space for reconciliation, and continuing a conversation of difference, which is valuable and far-too-rare in our society. Rev. Hardies referenced the Pope's recent call for the United States to "get its act together" by finding a way to communicate and find space with people who believe and practice differently that we do, and noted that the reconciliation argument was a strong one to him. The committee was of the unanimous opinion that ASC was in violation of its policy; seven of the ten members thought that violation of policy outweighed other goods that could come of that arrangement. Three, including Cledwyn and Rev. Hardies, thought that the other interests could outweigh the value. The committee recommended to the Board to terminate the rental agreement. Noted that we can continue conversation with CoA even if we terminate the agreement, although it is hard to imagine such an intimate and engaged dialogue in that scenario.

Vickie Lindsay: Emphasize that the process was "beautiful;" everyone seemed very open, and noted that was particularly courageous by CoA members to engage so openly as it could not have been a comfortable process for them. She appreciated the opportunity to be part of that group. Difficult to reach decision to terminate lease, but that was her vote.

Cledwyn Jones: Thinks the decision about whether to continue renting to CoA comes down to weighing two different UU principles: allowing the use of our space and pulpit for speech that misaligns with our values, vs. cultivating good in the world by facilitating this conversation. Emphasized the challenge of reconciling these two issues: the beliefs ASC finds problematic are not core principles for the CoA, but do descend from their primary beliefs. Note what good faith partners they were in conversation, and express hope there can be a way to continue conversation regardless of outcome.

Bruce DePuyt: Emphasize how "special" the process has been – we don't have many opportunities to engage with those with whom we disagree, but this was a thoughtful facilitated process. Gave much consideration during the process to how we need to find a way to share the planet – can't we find a way to share the building? At the end of the three meetings, he was still torn between conflicting opinions. However, eventually resolved on the firm conclusion that we have a clear policy with a rational basis, and we cannot allow people who preach odious faiths to preach from our pulpit and fund raise in our pews. We are all custodians of this church space and our values.

Discussion:

Kate Saylor asked the committee members what factors they thought help make the dialogue so successful? Vickie focused on the way we approached it, facilitate by Sharon and Rob, with a focus on first getting to know each other as individuals, then delving more deeply into personal experiences with homosexuality and religious journeys, and finally in the third conversation focusing on points of difference. She noted that even if the answers were ones we didn't agree with, they were honest. Tracy Zorpette later cautioned against overly-idealizing the dialogue: CoA was forced to participate because we have something (space) that they need, as opposed to all parties coming forward voluntarily. Whitney Cooper asked whether anyone attended one of the CoA services. Some ASC members have done so, but no one on the Committee. Rev.

Hardies noted that more cross-over, such as attending each others' services, would be possible with a longer process of engagement.

Kate asked about the relationship between CoA and the Anglican Church, and CoA beliefs. Cledwyn explained that CoA was formed following a division in the Anglican church over the ordination of Gene Robinson, who is openly gay. CoA is a signatory to the Jerusalem Declaration, which describes basic religious principles, including proscribing that marriage is between one man and one woman. There is some disagreement over ordination of women in some Anglican denominations, but CoA is opposed. While beliefs about homosexuality and female ordination are not central to the beliefs of congregants, submission to the beliefs of their religious leaders is.

Ken Ambrose emphasized that when we think about reconciliation, we must think about the "potential for moving onwards." Is there an actual potential that CoA would change those policies with which we disagree, and that are in conflict with ASC policy? The values we have aren't peripheral for us as a congregation – they are key to what we believe. Bruce said that this is ultimately unanswerable, but emphasized the value in dialogue and creating the process for engagement. The CoA participants were thinking about and engaging with issues that are not customary for them. However, a key point in his own decision was when, in response to a question about whether a transgendered individual would be welcomed, the CoA congregant responded that gender is God's decision, and what is intended. Rev. Hardies said that Sharon was [I don't know if this was writing or reviewing] a study on how evangelicals' opinions evolve on issues such as homosexuality, and when they do, it is largely because of relationship. We were engaged in the kind of process that can create change, but the amount and rate of change is something we just can't know. Vickie noted that if CoA were to change their policies with which we disagree, it would be an incredibly long process. A Committee participant said that it would be unlikely to occur in a timeframe that would be acceptable to ASC congregants.

Rev. Hardies raised the topic of differences between individual beliefs, and the doctrine of the church overall. Some CoA members had voiced opinions that differed from CoA doctrine. Kate compared the situation to the Boy Scouts, where specific beliefs are not central to why individuals choose to be members of the church. Tracy pointed out the distinction between CoA members, who would be welcome at any time to attend ASC or engage with us in dialogue, and supporting the church by allowing it to rent our space.

Returning to the Use of Asset Clause, Cledwyn said that as an atheist in a UU congregation, he still feels welcomed and invited, even to positions of leadership. Therefore, he finds it thought-provoking that the policy could be read to only allow us to use our assets in support of other UU organizations, as opposed to more broadly. Where do we draw the lines about whether groups are "in line with us," when one of the Seven Principles is to support a free and individual search for truth and meaning? John Strongman noted that while the ASC policy says that CoA as an institution is not welcome, at the individual level, all souls are welcome. In the real world, if a decision is made to close the doors to the institution, individuals will feel excluded on the basis of their beliefs. John raised the hypothetical scenario of a twelve-month period where we, All Souls, couldn't use our own sanctuary and had to rent from an Anglican church. How would we feel about that church if halfway through the year they discovered we welcome and ordain

atheists, and they decided to kick us out? Erin Boeke Burke pointed out that many UU congregations welcome Alcoholics Anonymous, even though they have specific beliefs about a higher power – Whitney contrasted acceptance of an ambiguous higher power, with rejection of homosexuality and ordaining women. Ann Bradley said that she was also conflicted, and struggling with the statement that all souls are welcome here if we terminate the agreement.

Bruce pointed out that ASC did make the decision to evict the Boys and Girls club during the civil rights movement because would not admit African Americans, and that action is still a point of pride for ASC. Tracy said that she was extraordinarily uncomfortable continuing lease; by renting our resources to any group, it is a form of affirmation that goes beyond dialogue and she cannot support that. Even if it isn't voiced, never having a woman in the pulpit sends a powerful message. Whitney said that maybe we shouldn't evict because it's a formal policy of All Souls, but "because it is wrong." Vickie said that after an upbringing that was very conservative in ways similar to CoA, she had been drawn to All Souls because we were a place that stood for the values that brought her back to church, protected people who are often judged, and made people feel comfortable in their own skins. "No is often just as sacred as yes," and we should not work from the assumption otherwise. She also noted that Jenice had pointed out that Martin Luther King Jr. was very strong in voicing what he opposed – militarism, capitalism, racism – as well as what he supported. We should be comfortable standing by our values. Kate said that we need to actually be "intolerant of intolerance" – that is not in violation of our principles. Rev. Hardies concurred.

Ann pointed out that other congregations must have faced similar challenges, and asked how those congregations have dealt with such issues in the past. Rev. Hardies confirmed that is the case, and this isn't the first time ASC has faced such questions, either. About fifteen years ago, ASC was renting to a 7th Day Adventist congregation, which was one of the reasons we had lower diligence before initial decision to rent and have developed our congregational policy on the use of our space. Kate noted that the First Unitarian Society Minneapolis has made a concerted effort to rent to groups that they support in the community, as opposed to a more demand-driven approach of renting to groups who approach them and are not problematic. She then asked whether renting to COA or other groups with beliefs we find problematic is in conflict with our policy, or what we think our policy *should be*. Terminating the rental agreement with CoA would give All Souls the opportunity to look more broadly and deliberately for tenants that not only don't conflict with our values, but align with our values – we have put a lot of effort as a congregation into making this space exist.

Chuck Delaney noted this is one of the issues of policy governance, and continued his greatest struggle with language in executive limitations concerning the "use of church facilities by individuals... in other ways inconsistent with UU principles." This creates a contradiction with the notion of radical hospitality – if we really want to be a place where All Souls are welcome, can we accomplish that if we only rent under certain situations or to groups that look or think or talk like us? Not certain that use of a facility equals affirmation: but how do we really practice radical hospitality or allow that to exist. Vickie said that the committee did discuss establishing a set of parameters for future groups that would like to rent our space. Cledwyn said the committee did not have sufficient time to really dig into where All Souls should draw the line on different populations and who we CAN work with, and that issue will remain to be confronted. Whitney

argued that going forward, we need to set better boundaries so we don't get stuck in a similar situation. We should engage with a group and know what their beliefs are before entering a rental agreement.

Erin responded, unfortunately, it is too late at this point to have such a front-end conversation with CoA. They are already here, and any decision to change our policy would be a decision to evict them. Regardless, Vickie said, CoA is opposed to our principles and our policy. If we decide to let them stay, we will need to change our policy. She added that this would not come as a shock to CoA – All Souls was in discussion with them for months before we even started the formal conversation, and their pastor has said they would be fine if we decide to terminate the rental agreement.

Ann asked how much CoA pays in rent. Katie Loughary responded \$50,000 annually, but noted the 2016 Budget was prepared under the assumption we would NOT receive that money as the issue was outstanding. John noted that we start paying debt service on the capital loan in 2017. Chuck insisted that while there are long-term financial questions that need to be answered, we can look at other financial sources and potential tenants. We do not have to worry about the financial implications in making the CoA decision, as the funds were not assumed in the new Budget.

Tracy asked what decision the Board was being asked to make at this meeting. Chuck explained that the Committee had made a recommendation to the Board – to terminate the lease with CoA – and the Board must decide whether to continue to lease our space to CoA, as well as how to how to represent the values and limitations and policies and this church. If we continue to have CoA as a tenant, we would need to modify the ASC policy that conflicts with that decision or find a way to explain to congregation why we are in disagreement with the policy. If we choose to evict, we will need to decide how long to give them. Chuck noted that a Board decision to go against the recommendation of a committee of the Board would not be novel. However, any decision by the Board would need to be explained to the congregation.

Ann asked whether there were any conditions or actions that CoA could take that would make the members of the Committee change their recommendation, such as allowing Rob to preach occasionally? Rev. Hardies said he had not discussed preaching at CoA with their pastor, although the two are discussing co-authoring an article on the conversation. Cledwyn said he did not think there were any terms or conditions that would make those members of the committee who voted to terminate comfortable with continuing the rental agreement.

John proposed an alternative option, of allowing the dialogue to continue another four months. Cledwyn said that while it would be useful to continue dialogue, the Committee did feel that they had sufficient information to make a recommendation to the Board.

Kate pointed out that we have the option to move to terminate the agreement “as quickly as is kindly possible.” Chuck recommended six months, to give CoA generous opportunity to find another space. Katie instead requested that the Executive Committee instead have “space to negotiate in good faith,” and that while it may end up taking longer than 6 months, we would

make clear to CoA that we intend to terminate the rental agreement once they have found a suitable alternative.

Chuck noted that after this decision, the Board must be able to stand by and defend this decision as a united agreement on where we stand. Bruce added that the Trustees could use to think about how to engage the congregation on the decision. We could open up the decision to a wider conversation in the congregation, and a congregational vote. Any decision may be too sensitive to enact and have congregational buy-in without a larger conversation and engagement in advance of final decision. Chuck said such engagement may be particularly critical if we are going to develop guidelines about who to rent to in the future.

Motion by Ken Ambrose, modified by Chuck Delaney et. al.: “All Souls move to terminate rental relationship with Church of the Advent with details of implementation and transition period to be deferred to Executive team with consideration to the time needed to find a new home.”

Six in favor (Chuck Delaney, Ken Ambrose, Whitney Cooper, Vickie Lindsay, Kate Saylor, Tracy Zorpette), one opposed (Ann Bradley). The motion passes.

Many members of the Board reiterated how difficult this decision was, and that a lot of work remains as a Board and as a congregation to figure out how to reconcile and implement competing values.

Ken Ambrose requested to add to future agenda a conversation about how we can create a reconciling and engaging space for leaders of different religious communities to come together. Chuck noted that it would be good to have further discussion with Sharon about this topic. Rev. Hardies noted how beneficial a conversation would be and that it can help stretch our community spiritually; Church noted that we could add this topic to the goals discussion when Rev. Hardies returns from sabbatical.

Goal Setting – Cledwyn Jones: The Goals Task Force was convened by Board in February to chart a new course for how we can understand the congregation and what we do in ASC. In light of the disruption due to staff changes and the transition to the new database in 2016, the task force recommends focusing this year on building systems, culture, baselines for comparison/future efforts. The task force will first set a clear timeline for establishing metrics; in February will flesh out ideas about how to develop and utilize the database for reporting; will develop proposed goals for after Rev. Hardies returns from sabbatical; then will develop 2021 goals (ASC centennial).

Cledwyn emphasized that this was a group effort, consistent with shared ministry: the Goals Task Force will fit into the structure of Church Council and strengthen steering committee, and the Executive Team (ET) has started producing annual goals. The task force will work from those conversations to develop a feedback loop between goals, data tracking, and metrics. He emphasized that this is consistent with the narrative budget, as it is another way of communicating how we use our resources to build the beloved community. He asked for two Board members to join the task force; Ken Ambrose and Ann Bradley volunteered.

Discussion:

Jennifer Bolick noted that the ET and task force will continue to track metrics on what we already measure while the goal-setting exercise continues. Cledwyn added that the task force will start sending performance information to staff and the ET by end of January, focusing on completing the previous 5-year reporting period.

John Strongman asked how the task force intends to measure quality. Cledwyn acknowledged the challenge in making sure we are meeting need/ demand, and how to measure more qualitative goals like spiritual growth. Much of the data will have to be derivative, such as tracking whether programs are growing and the level of engagement by ASC members. Ann suggested tracking number of events or participation in leadership roles. Cledwyn added that milestone-driven tracking has been used for pastoral care for the last few years. Jennifer noted that open-ended questions, surveys, etc. may be necessary to track more qualitative goals. The task force will continue to engage with the Board and Church Council on these challenges.

Chuck Delaney said he would add time to the January 27 Board agenda to discuss goal metrics, and asked if it the Board could to review proposed measurements at the January or February Board meeting. Chuck also asked that Katie Loughary and Leo Jones talk to Board and ET about how various metrics would affect staff workload. Cledwyn noted that this will be an ongoing conversation, and emphasized the importance of deriving relevant metrics, including potential diversity targets.

Staff Report:

The ET reviewed the staff report document.

Kate Saylor expressed congratulations to Heather for all of the new members on Sunday.

Leo Jones reported on behalf of Heather that 66 people attended the About All Souls session on Sunday, but noted that there isn't much diversity in the people who have attended those sessions or ultimately joined. Ken Ambrose noted that diversity was one of the goals for 2016, and noted the importance of concrete work to accomplish this goal. Vickie Lindsay noted that this trend is consistent with changing demographics of the community, and we may have a limited ability to impact it. Rev. Hardies said that while the church has been very intentional about outreach to diverse populations, that doesn't mean we can't be more intentional. Chuck Delaney suggested the Board invite Leo and Heather at a future meeting to tell us about their ongoing efforts and what else they have planned.

Rev. Hardies next raised the topic of how the Board will evaluate him, since the Committee on Ministry referred that responsibility to the Board. He noted the UUA policy that congregations not evaluate ministers in their absence. Chuck Delaney said that we will not evaluate Rev. Hardies while on sabbatical, but should re-engage on those questions of how to conduct the evaluation once Rev. Hardies returns from sabbatical. This is a Board responsibility under the Policy Governance document.

Ken Ambrose congratulated the Board on being good stewards of our ASC resources, as well as the continued growth of our congregation despite national trends. Ken recently received a letter from Cedar Lane describing challenging issues the congregation is facing, including an old HVAC, declining membership, and a significant budget deficit. Ken said it would be good for us to try to identify some reasons for our continued growth, as we do get questions from other congregations and others. Regarding the budget, Bruce DePuyt noted that Katie Loughary deserves significant credit for her year-round efforts to keep a lid on expenses, despite numerous small requests.

Katie Loughary noted that the cache-net installation on the steeple will start on July 4.

Annual Meeting proceedings and comments and concerns from participants – Chuck Delaney chose to defer this conversation. He will discuss with Pat Barratt whether to have this discussion in a regular Board meeting or at the Board retreat. Attendees did make an initial list of issues we heard raised at the Congregational meeting:

- Disagreement over use of endowment funds
- “Perennial question” about not funding contributions to the UUA at 100%
- Possible conflict with DC law regarding Board remote participation
- Use of space and whether it aligns with UU values, including whether renting the religious education space to the charter school is in conflict with the RE program
- Membership reports discussed at the meeting were not current and at least one individual was hurt because deaths in the previous year were not reported. Can we be more sensitive about how we describe public data as well as how we report it?
- The meeting was too long

Consent Agenda:

- Minutes of November 2015 BOT Meeting
- Motion to approve Financial Signatory Authority
- Update Contacts List Information

Motion by Ken Ambrose, seconded by Cledwyn Jones and Vickie Lindsay, to adopt the consent agenda. All approve.

Announcements: Cledwyn Jones noted the next Church Council meeting will be January 23.

Whitney Cooper reminded everyone of the Jubilee racism training on January 15. Registration is almost at the 45-person capacity; there will be another training before the summer. Katie Loughary said that gifting attendance fees could generally be considered a donation if an individual gives money to pay scholarship for two individuals, but would not be a donation if they pay for registration fees for two individuals directly.

Rev. Hardies said he would next see the Board at the August 26 meeting.

There was a brief discussion of agenda items for the next Board meeting on January 27, and it was noted that the discussion of whether to have a Board retreat is being deferred until Pat Barratt returns.

John Strongman noted that the Finance committees some promising individuals have contacted the finance and investment committees about potentially joining.

The meeting adjourned at XXX p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Erin Boeke Burke, Board Secretary