

Senior Minister's Report to the Board of Trustees

February 2016

Thanks to those trustees who were able to meet with the NLDC last week. I believe the communication helped, although there are still some hurt feelings over the entire incident. I want to especially thank Michelle Garvey and Carol Seiple for their leadership during the meeting. I think that the major points of miscommunication and lack of process were evident and that we will need to fix those if we are to avoid them in the future. That said, there is a fundamental and systemic flaw in our governance regarding authority and accountability. Four groups are elected by and report to the congregation; the Board of Trustees, the NLDC, the Audit Committee and the Committee on Ministry. Since none of these groups are accountable to the other, the lines of authority are unclear and will continue to lead to conflicts. My overall recommendation is to put the NLDC and the COM under the BOT and the Senior Minister respectively, leaving only the audit (and a ministerial search committee) as committees reporting directly to the congregation.

I believe that the "Covenant of Right Relations Task Force" is now in the hands of the NLDC to nominate and for the COM and the Senior Minister to manage. The task force will disband after it has successfully guided a covenant of right relations through the congregation, from input to authorizing vote. I will draw up a charter for this task force for the board to approve. If this is not the board's understanding I need to know that right away.

As mentioned in an earlier email, Lara Fuchs will be joining us this September as our first "Westport Fellow" ministerial intern. As an intern minister she will work directly under me at half time (the other half is her final year of studies) at the church. I will work with her to design a learning agreement which will guide her internship. She will be exposed and asked to work in all areas of parish ministry; pastoral care, preaching, stewardship, teaching, staff relations, and outreach to name a few. I will appoint a five member "Intern Committee" of lay people who will help guide her from the congregation's perspective. Our work together will generally follow the UUA guidelines for ministerial internships as part of seeking fellowship as a UU minister. Far from providing the church with "free professional help" even a great intern requires more of my time. The payoff is a richer ministry for the church and a cultural shift that is focused more on becoming a learning community together.

I am mid-way through my annual evaluations of those staff who report directly to me. The review process uses HR tools that measure the staff person's performance over a wide area of capabilities, starting with a review of their job descriptions and a self-evaluation and goal setting exercise. Recommendations for compensation will be included in the proposed budget later this spring based in part on this review and fair compensation guidelines. I am working closely with Dorothy Adams on this. Those directors who have staff under them are doing their own reviews using the same process.

Respectfully submitted, Rev. Dr. John T. Morehouse