April, 2017

Board Report

Rev. Sheri Prud’homme

Dear Board of Trustees,

Can it be the third Tuesday in April already? This month has been very full. Full of good things. Easter Worship and the upcoming Coming of Age service on April 30th have taken time and attention. The Administrative Visioning Team is making good progress and has a timeline for the search for a Congregational Administrator. We now have a Community Connections Team (formerly Membership Team) that is meeting monthly. I produced a “Making Connections” brochure, a directory of groups and activities designed to connect adults with the heart of our community. A New Member Visiting Team has piloted one-one conversations with new members to follow-up with them on how they are (or are wanting to be more) connected and to encourage them to make a financial pledge. Jane Voytek and I are working through policies around the database so that there can be greater clarity about various statuses and the database can be more useful. In Children and Family Ministries, we are preparing for next year’s OWL (Our Whole Lives Sexuality and Relationship Education Programs) courses by recruiting the necessary teachers.

One area that I would like to call to the board’s attention is the need for our congregation to look broadly at our practices around being a “Safe Congregation.” This includes many kinds of safety… training for ushers to deal with emergencies, building and grounds safety, care for our children. I know that we are juggling many things and it may not be time right now to engage in the kind of thorough congregation wide self-assessment that is called for, but it needs to be on the church’s agenda sometime soon. In the meantime, in response to the incident with the UU minister involved in child pornography, I wrote a letter to our families with some resources for talking with their children and outlining what we do at church to prevent sexual misconduct with our children. In general, I believe we have been doing fine with our Sunday morning program, though even there Nicole and I plan to increase our volunteer participation to ensure we keep with the best practice of two adults/caregivers with a group of children.

But in assessing our care for children to write that letter, I realized that there is one area where we are not providing a standard of care that is acceptable. When church groups provide childcare for church events like First Sundays or other church-wide activities, there is often only one caregiver and sometimes only one child in the room and very few other people around on the second floor. This puts both the caregiver and the child in an unacceptable situation. I believe we should either commit to having two caregivers or we should not offer childcare. This is broader than a Children and Family Ministries issue, as childcare for events outside the Sunday morning program is the responsibility of the group planning the event. In a multigenerational community, it is important the congregation as a whole takes responsibility for the care if its children, including when and how we provide childcare. Over the next 90 days, I recommend that the board take up the issue of the safety of our children in childcare for church events. I suggest the board identify a board member to lead a small working group to research our current policies and practices, consult UUA safe congregation resources, and offer some recommendations for next steps. We can take up the broader question of a Safe Congregation self-assessment at a later time.

Sincereley,

Rev. Sheri Prud’homme