

## USG Board Retreat Minutes - 11/9/2019

The President opened our retreat with the quote “If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.” [Antoine de Saint-Exupery](#)

### Staff Goals - Kent

Kent identified 5 main big picture goals:

**1) Making USG a community spiritual and justice center 7 days a week** - Partnerships - USG has partnered with many other organizations including CAMI, Springboard (mindfulness, mediation), and POWER. These partnerships are being strengthened and we are working to expand existing partnerships and develop new ones.

**2) Sunday morning innovations** - USG has a newly formed Music Committee. The approach will be to give people menus for what they like about music. The focus will be on identifying what people like, rather than spending time talking about what they don't like.

Kent will be thinking about Roots and Wings. An example of Roots would be the “hymn sandwich”. An example of Wings would be how to use the screen in the sanctuary more effectively.

**3) Connecting and Caring** - Kent encouraged everyone to approach our work with loving kindness and in a spirit of appreciative inquiry.

**4) Communications (sharing the news)**— weekly E comes out each Thursday, highlighting the many good things happening at USG, as well as people taking care of each other. If more people knew about us, etc., Our Breeze software is being more widely used, and an effort is being made to target email. We are growing our social media presence, including twitter, facebook, and instagram, as well as making more videos. There will be emphasis on doing marketing of rental opportunities.

**5) Housekeeping**— this includes taking care of the building, Mike and Loida's (her cleaning company) work, trying to make sure everything is legal, having solid financial procedures, and contracts and job descriptions for staff. Many good systems and people are in place. It's possible that we put too many tasks and responsibilities on the Administrator's position. We should also consider more checks and balances. We need to rethink and reconsider administrator's responsibilities, as well as think about best practices, including a review financial system best practices, and include MET, the Board and the Treasurer in those discussions.

The board was asked to review staff goals (attached to recent email from Jenn) and submit feedback to Kent.

**Attendance** - Kent explained that attendance is down. This past year was the lowest average attendance in 13 years. This is not a cause for alarm, but it is certainly a concern and needs to be examined. USG is not alone. Attendance at many other UU churches and churches in general is down; it is an ongoing, nationwide trend.

USG is moving from an 80/20 situation (80% of work is done by 20% of people) to 90/10 situation.

Kent is striving to approach his work with a Non-anxious presence, respect, gratitude, and a spirit of generosity. What do you like about what Kent does in the pulpit?

### **ASD/CSD - Ryan**

**ASD** -- Exit strategy for ASD leader - Gerry Whelan has been the ASD leader for several years and now wishes to concentrate on other areas. We need to find a new ASD chair and efforts are underway. Let Ryan know if you have suggestions.

The Breathe Program(mindfulness) has had great presenters and solid attendance. Esther Wyss-Flamm had 20 attendees for example. Howard Silver has organized the mindfulness program and is developing the USG Center for Mindfulness.

Elderhood is going well with monthly programs that are well attended. Difficult Conversations will continue with Gerry Whelan.

**CSD**— There has been a big turnover in CSD leadership. A number of new teachers started this year. The CSD committee is discussing shifting to a new Sunday School model. Janet Haas is the new CSD chair and has been in dialog with Ryan. The new model is called “Way Cool” and will require fewer teachers to run programs. Therefore this model will require fewer volunteers and older kids will help younger kids.

Some church members are leading programs and different cultural practitioners (Andrea Durham, Parvathy Menon) and social justice leaders (Lois Murphy) are coming in to work with classes. An example of innovative curriculum is a session about democracy in church which talked about voting, highlighted our Fifth principle of democratic process and gave the kids a chance to vote.

CSD attendance is down 15-20%. This is part of the trend happening in church as a whole. However, on the positive side, there is also more continuity (i.e, the families that do come are coming more regularly).

Ryan wants to move toward supporting the whole family, as well as the child and try to provide resources so the family can continue spiritual development at home. Family challenges include sleep deprivation and time pressures. What does a shift to family ministry look like in terms of structure, program, etc.?

Dinner conversations - sometimes conversation happens waiting for the bus, tying shoes, etc. Emphasizing trying to accept people as they are. Use the practice of covenant; as a group we co-create how we want to treat each other in this space, here's what we'll do when conflict arises. Trying to provide teachers with cultural sensitivity training. Training took place this spring about recognizing child sexual abuse. We have a safe congregation policy and we need to be proactive about keeping safe space, that's a part of living out our faith.

DSAREC is a regional organization for DSD's to help them support each other and bounce ideas off each other as well as providing networking opportunities with peers. Ryan has been active in this group and finds it very beneficial.

Creating a children's library is one of several potential projects for this year.

Jenn asked how the Board can support Ryan. He could use help with statistics, office work, and administrative details. A retired person, who can be given regular tasks to do might be a possibility. If you have someone in mind who could work with Ryan on these tasks, please let him know.

Ryan mentioned the idea of OWL for elementary ages, but this is something that would require much additional thought and planning and is simply an idea at this point. Future Adult OWL programs were mentioned as possibilities.

**Nominating Committee** - a position needs to be filled due to Howard Silver's resignation. There have been changes to procedure (new procedures attached to Jenn's recent email). There is a shift to make the responsibilities broader, with the intent of identifying potential leaders for other committees (as well as potential board members). Proposing that Nominating committee be expanded to 3 year terms and would work year round. The Board approved a draft update (11/06/2019) of the Nominating Committee Procedure, as well as moving ahead with approaching a candidate for Howard's vacated spot.

### **Discussion of next year's budget**

- \$0 deficit per reduction plan
- Fair compensation (UUA) for staff
- Dues do not need to be Fair Share (because of formula change increase).

A general discussion regarding challenges and opportunities was begun and then tabled until the next board meeting due to time constraints.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Sam Stormont

