

# **USG Widening the Circle (WtC)**

**May 5, 2021 Meeting Notes: Treva Burger and Lisa Dutton**

**Topic: Governance – Session 1**

Present: Elaine Hills, Gerry Whelan, Andrea Parry, Eric Foster, Andrea Barsevick, Ryan Hurd, Lois Murphy, Kent Matthies, Jim Salom, Dev Howerton, Carla Campbell, Nancy Anderson, Shobhi Kanal, Margaret Thompson, Lisa Dutton, Treva Burger

During Check In there were thanks expressed to group leaders, there was a concern that translation of the materials to the larger congregation will be a challenge.

**Discussion began with conversation about the Lay Leader of Color Avatar, the group was asked to reflect on your experiences when you first came into leadership as a UU:**

- What would have improved your transition to leadership?
- Do you see any similarities between the avatar congregation and USG?

When I was new to USG in the past, in a meeting about replacing a minister, I spoke up out of order and I was sort of ostracized.

The avatar is very sad. Some of the behaviors/occurrences were true of USG in the past, maybe better now. People of color are thought to represent whole groups of people.

We can delude ourselves that this isn't still happening now.

8<sup>th</sup> Principle. People felt unheard. Miscommunication. Sometimes what may appear by those in authority to be postponing can feel like not prioritizing.

We need to be clear about our priorities.

Intersectionality is not recognized.

Tokenism, pulled into leadership quickly, not currently happening here.

Inclusivity and welcoming needs to happen in the pews, not just by committees.

Then we moved to more questions about USG leadership:

- How do we encourage practices towards diversity, equity, and inclusion in the work of our groups and governance?

Forums to come together to talk about issues such as those brought up by the avatar.

Nominating Committee (NomCom) looked at the whole congregation and talked to a lot of people, not just thinking of people who were well known. If you're new, it's not clear how people with potential, but not experience get mentored and developed.

Committee Chairs should cultivate those who are in their groups.

USG has a lot of informal communications. That can reinforce the power of the dominant group(s).

Some people with less education and without polished presentation are not given the same latitude.

There's an accountability piece, watch new leaders, identify those who should be mentoring them, watch to make sure it's happening, make sure needs are identified.

A program committee (Ministry Executive Team-MET?) could place new leaders and identify mentors. The NomCom could identify leaders for committees other than the Board and NomCom.

We also need standardized training and orientations

- One of the recommendations is for more support across congregations for youth and young adult leaders. How are we tapping into the resources available, regionally, and beyond, especially for youth, young adults, those in the LGBTQ community and people of color?

We need funding for things like GA (General Assembly) for youth, young adults, people of color, LGBTQ+

- The report says, "GA is not really democratic in that delegates are neither representative of their congregations, other than being members, nor are they accountable to them." How can we support delegates with a structure that enables them to represent the interests of the congregation?
- Should our congregation support all delegates financially to attend GA, if requested?

We have a small GA fund.

GA is not compelling enough for people's time.

We need to reform the way of selecting and supporting the people who go. We need to look at our Bylaws.

We need to provide training of leaders, encourage members to be active members.

## **Theology Goals update**

- Do you have any suggested modifications?
- Are you interested in leading any action items?

We should revisit the White Audit. Treva will send it to the group.

We should look back over the three years since the white audit to see how we're doing with diversity in our worship services. Some thought would make more sense to take a sample of services than to try to look back at all of them. There are 150+ services since the last audit. Nancy A will look back, she needs data points. Others asked: what's the goal of doing this?

We should develop relationships with local organizations like The Race Institute. What is the current mission/charge of the Committee on Ministry, could it be expanded to cover right relations?

Not sure what we need, need to be open to creating new groups, need accountability process.

Create a poster of the covenant of right relations after it has been updated.

## **Check out:**

Group agreed we needed another session on Governance. Leaders asked people to send possible actions to support the recommended changes to USG's governance.