

June 29 Town Hall Meeting

30 people attending, Linda M conducting

Linda M introductory comments:

Discuss potentially still open ministry with Jack Ford, discussion about what direction the congregation should go with ministry, answer questions about Ministerial Support Fund. Focus on meaning of ministry. Conversations about what it would mean in the context of the BBUUC.

Delegates to GA bringing back materials regarding Mission and Vision. Identify who we are as BBUUC, where we want to go.

From Annual Meeting, not able to extend offer to Jack Ford to allow him to complete Final Fellowship requirements. Estimated cost \$35k/year for 3 year commitment. Canvass showed majority support for Jack's offer (some dissent), but pledge level did not support the proposal. (This is a contract, not called minister, so the process is different.)

Matching fund gift of \$30k became effective shortly after annual meeting to see if the funds could be raised to pay for the proposal. If the proposal for Jack does not work out, the fund could be used for other ministerial services. Board would also want to feel comfortable that stewardship level growing in a sustainable way that would pay for a minister. Other congregations our size pay for a minister, but we have a large percentage of people who do not pledge/contribute financially.

Pam E:

Question for Finance: Can donors get a tax break if they tie it to a particular program?

Peg:

Tax questions between taxpayer and IRS. Tax benefits available if the restriction is broad.

Linda:

Money would not need to be given back if goal not met, but would be restricted to professional ministerial services.

Pam E:

What would be the impact on the culture of our congregation? Will involve a shift, even if we get a part-time minister. If nothing else, minister becomes face, moral authority within community.

If we have extra money, is it better to spend it on a minister or to spend it in other ways, eg for more administrative support or additional worship support. Maybe custodial help. Maybe additional resources to make DRE full time.

Jack not a good administrator, per his own admissions. Pam likes that Jack would work with the congregation.

Dave A:

Dave enjoys diversity of people in the pulpit. Likes interplay between different belief systems represented. Would hiring a minister restrict that interplay? Jack would respect the lay-led character of the congregation, but a full-time minister would restrict us.

Linda M:

We can write the contract with Jack to set what services we want to receive. We can maintain the diversity in the pulpit if that is what we want. We decide what types of services we would receive.

Mark Y:

Jack's administrative disqualification makes him perfect for us. Dave's concern about diversity in pulpit would be served by someone like Jack.

UUA views ministerial led congregation as the apex of congregational evolution. Mark's experience with UUA ministers has not been great, like buying a pig in a poke. With Jack, familiarity is an advantage.

UUA unilaterally disbanded YRUU. At variance with ideal of congregation-led polity.

Belle:

Likes diversity of experience at pulpit. Important to introduce new minds to our congregation.

Liz:

Be careful not to let selves be governed by fear. Not great understanding of what a professional minister means. Many people speaking based on past bad experiences either within UU or denomination.

Congregation remains in control, not like top-down denominations. Need to decide what we want. Likes Jack.

Congregation decides how we want to grow, what we want to be in the community. We should draw up job description to suit what we decide.

Linda M:

Contract minister can help through the process of determining how we want to grow and defining what we want to be.

Rachel B:

Wonders what happens in 3 years. Is UUA going to push us towards a ministry?

Linda M:

We decide our own future.

Meg O:

Previous experience calling ministers. Jack's offer a unique opportunity. Board is in charge, not minister. Boards can eliminate minister if necessary.

UUA has ministers they want to place at salary congregation wants to pay. Not a congregation-friendly process.

If Jack is ½ time, still leaves a lot of opportunity for diversity in pulpit.

Things change around you, sometimes you have to be prepared for change that is coming, prepare to step outside of comfort zone.

John G:

Likes what Liz said. Most experiences with UU ministers have been positive. Some ministers are bad, but congregation owns the relationship. Congregation needs to define who we are. Congregation needs to support the Board, understand where we are going.

Hannah:

Concern about whether we will be able to raise the money.

Linda M:

We have raised \$7615 in first four weeks of June. Concern with ongoing stewardship commitment for long term.

Peg:

If everyone puts in Fair Share amount, we can fund this.

Nancy:

What is the return on investment for the minister? Higher attendance? Higher membership level?

Usual UUA process for calling a minister not an open, transparent process.

Dave A:

Many people say we are a lay-led congregation, we need to grow, etc. We are what we are, but we can decide what we want? Do we want to grow? Why must we have a full time minister?

Dave thinks things are good as they are. People who decide needs to be the people who are here, not outside people.

Mark Y:

Wherever we go from here, not good to be adamant against full time minister. Encourages process that will help overcome peoples' reservations. Jack a good way to help overcome the reservations.

Lisa C:

Would love Jack, think he would improve church. But we should not hire him unless we can pay for him. This process is us deciding what we want and what we are willing to do.

Scott C:

Stewardship drive needs to be viewed from the context of the depth of the hole we were in. From that perspective, it was successful. We have more to go, but need to recognize the improvement.

Linda M:

At what point do we extend an offer? Do we do a supplementary pledge drive? Preference on an ongoing basis to fold ministerial expenses in operating budget.

Bernie:

Does Jack need 3 year commitment? Do we need full \$105k on hand? Or are terms negotiable?

Linda M:

Certain amount of faith involved. We can consider 1 year renewable with the intent he stays on for 3 years. Most contract ministers have 1 year renewable.

Nancy:

Time limit on matching fund?

Linda M:

Will match whatever we raise in 2 year term of matching grant.

Nancy:

Tipping point when we raise 1st year's salary.

John G:

Disagrees with Dave A. This is a UU congregation. Wants spiritual leader who can speak within that context.

Likes this lay-led congregation because Jack and Liz available. Not as interested in hearing from non-UU ministers or general speakers.

If the congregation comes forward with the money, that is a good indication of intent.

Hard to forecast. Board has to identify intent.

Linda M:

Board's decision informed by Canvass results.

Linda M:

Personal feeling, believes majority opinion of outgoing Board, puts a lot of stress on volunteers as church grows. See needs for professional ministry. Great Caring Cmte, Chaplains, but minister provides a resource that they can't provide.

Volunteers don't have training or knowledge to handle some situations that arise.

Rachel:

Parents got pregnant before they had all the money in hand. Leap of faith that community will pay for minister. Need to have faith in each other that people will step up.

Linda M:

Need to focus on positive. Need to take responsible decisions, make sure we can afford to pay a minister if we commit to do so.

July 19, 7pm will have refreshments and have a further conversation with Jack to see what he is interested in doing going forward.

Will have a series of small group meetings, some with and without Jack, to discuss ministry options.

Will assemble Committee on the Ministry in July.

Need to define “tipping point” dollar number to approach Jack.

Board looking to define long range plan.