

Leadership Retreat Agenda (Saturday, August 21, 9:00 AM to Noon)

Attendees: Rev. Jennifer Johnson, Bob Messing, David Wilson, Jan Thompson, Eileen Hiney, Rachel Tedesco, Heather Mehdi, Louella Mann, Lisa Troy, Laurie Lessner, Diane Roza, Betty Gilson, Kat Gillespie, Debbie Baumgarten, AJ Derby, Sonia D'Alarcao

1. Opening Words (Rev. Jennifer)
2. Review of Agenda and Meeting Schedule (Bob M)
 - Bob - Creativity is the buzzword for today - rebuild participation after covid, or rather now, since it's not over. Challenge of getting people back in the church and interested in church activities.
3. Roundtable Check-in Focussing on the Impact of the Pandemic on Individual
 - Rev. Jennifer - sound check for those online and in-person. Acknowledge we're in challenging times - soul-care. We need to take care of ourselves and to reflect on how this past year has impacted your heart, mind, body. Are there burdens you'd like to lay down while we're together? We're a church and your concerns are shared and cared about by our community. - Check-in will not be recorded in the minutes.
Blessings were naturally included, though we shared our burdens, it was hard not to think of the good as well..
4. Participants - what's one positive thing you experienced during Covid? (Rev. Jennifer)
 - Rev. Jennifer is writing the list of what we loved during this Covid time
5. Envisioning Our New Shared Ministry - Opportunities and Challenge (Rev. Jennifer)
 - We're in a moment of big change - large and small, feeling grief, letting go... We need to acknowledge this change/turning. Opportunity to take a few min. to reflect on our challenges, hopes, fears, gratitude and grief.
 - Rev. Jenn's observations so far - one word rises - "energy" keeps coming up in conversation here. Excitement about opportunities and new energy a new minister brings. She's had drains on her energy as well, so she's been learning how to renew her energy by taking care of her body and spirit. She's heard people here are tired - same people doing the same work. Fatigued with Covid on top of all of this. People are thinking about what they have to give. That's a challenge we'll be working on this year and Rev. Jennifer looks forward to working on that together. And we can share our energy with each other and conserve our energy and balance the two. Bring her the hard stuff - she's looking forward to getting to know us.
 - Bob relayed his concerns about finding the people who aren't scared of stepping up since the bar's been raised by so many people doing such good things.
 - Jan - admits to fatigue - certain parts - membership - doesn't feel she's a natural leader or creative with projects. Good with responsibility and working with the UUA part, but recognizes her reluctance for outreach. Most people come to us and she feels pressured to do the outreach. Stay together and make as many opportunities for us to do that as we can. People are still attached though they may not be physically involved (even online).

- Lisa - feeling guilty and anxious because the RE program is so small and she's feeling the burden and responsible for making it stronger. Overwhelming what to do next. Rev. Jennifer said this is an issue with the denomination, not just you.
- Rachel - we've done well doing zoom but her energy is tapped - wants to find another chair for the Worship Committee and others are worried about stepping in and being able to do the job.
- Heather - First Parish Players dealing with internal conflict, and that they're skipping the fall production and focusing on the spring production and heading towards a very good place.

6. Celebration of Committee Accomplishments over the Past 18 months (Bob M.)

- Eileen - search committee - that was a very positive experience and thought they did a great job and had a wonderful outcome with finding Rev. Jennifer. Great group - Heather, David T., Pam HB, Kate M. - it was a joy. All the candidates thought there was great energy from the committee and felt warm and welcomed.
- Jan - membership - it's been great during covid with tea times, getting together on zoom, 4 members joined during Covid, book clubs were great, there was actually a lot going on.
- Kat - finance committee / treasurer - contingency budget based on so many questions - that was a very big success - 2 years in a row! Happy they decided to be more conservative seeing where we are with Delta.
- Lisa - RE - April did tremendous work and offered a wealth of events online. Joint work with Taunton church on events was rewarding.
- Betty - Social Justice - Thank you to the lunch crew. BLM films and thank you to Rachel and David W. with the Juneteenth Celebration. The two dedications of the BLM banner and we've done amazing things in spite of Covid.
- Heather - gratitude to the PC for allowing the summer arts program.
- Laurie - Thank you to the PC for keeping the communication flowing and keeping the PC in the role of church leadership
- Bob - Facilities - all the wonderful things Quent and facilities have done to keep this place beautiful and in good shape.

7. Break (10 min.)

8. Brainstorming on Planning Ideas for 2021-22 (Bob M):

- 1. Religious Education Planning
 - Reposted the position - had feedback that what they were asking was too much. Because of the lack of kids, looking at a one room schoolhouse. RE Committee has good ideas and they're in limbo but know they need to get moving. Star Island contact shared DRE's on FB group for the south shore. Lisa's been corresponding with someone who's being supportive. The UUA region has support calls available and gave contact from NE Region UUA, who Lisa will follow-up with..

- Need to figure out now how to let people know we have an RE Program. Heather spoke to April about creative ideas and Heather really likes the idea of the one room schoolhouse. Older kids can help younger kids. Less stress for teachers. Brings kids from the community together. When people talk about expanding the community, they're often talking about getting older members, people with more time - multi-generational. Do you stop offering Sunday morning RE?
- Rev. Jennifer's been giving a lot of thought to this - loves hearing and learning what RE is saying, and Lisa wants to hear what Rev. Jennifer has to say. Lisa and Jenny offered to be available for youth chapel and do we even have them start in the adult worship service. Guilt shouldn't be felt about this. This is a systemic problem, especially in the northeast. Kids don't need church zoom to find connection. Rev. Jennifer's happy to hear RE is reaching out to other creative educators. You are serving the mission of religious education. She consulted colleagues about what to do with the position. Rev. Jennifer wants to be a part of making things happen here and not hire a DRE right away. We're not there yet and we have the volunteers so we can do it with what we have and just hold off. \$ in budget can be transferred to activities. Can we use other spaces in town? Theater and arts seems to be a special thing about this church space. What about a children's choir instead of RE? Dreaming, experimenting time can be had.
- What should we tell April, for beyond August? We could still do programs with their kids. They can still consult with her. We're going to be returning to the one room schoolhouse for now.
- Sonia wants to advocate keeping the job posting still up and invest more \$ in it. Rev. Jennifer wants to say taking the job down would be temporary. We still need to keep the position in the budget. Heather got feedback that the position was too intimidating to people. People on Star Island gave the same feedback and getting people to fill positions is really hard right now in general.
- Keeping line items in budget is great - Laurie suggested keeping the \$ that would be going towards salary flexible, for the planning of immediate activities.
- Next step -- Rev. Jennifer will meet this coming week with the RE committee to get the plan for the fall ironed out.
- Reviving Fun Activities - formally skipped but discussed throughout meeting
- COVID Task Force
 - Rachel reiterated the discussion Worship Committee had about needing help in making these decisions and wants to have someone with a medical background on the committee.
 - Bob and Rev. Jennifer explained it would be an advisory taskforce, headed up by the Parish Committee. Betty recommended Andrew Harding to the taskforce. Bob is worried that people won't volunteer to be on the committee because they're overburdened. Rev. Jennifer said there are tools available to make these decisions and also making the decisions around the UU Principles. Someone versed in healthcare is good but not crucial. Someone interpreting recommendations is crucial. What are our guiding values in our decision making? Rev. Jennifer is happy to be on the task force. She wants 2 other people. Jan volunteered to be a part of it. Lisa asked how much our decisions

would be made on the UUA's recommendations. Rev. Jennifer said they recognize each church can't be the same - the environments are different. They have guidelines - "when the data says this, we recommend doing this..." Heather was talking with Ravi and he doesn't want to be on a task force but will be happy to consult. AJ is in agreement that we have the taskforce and there is someone from the medical community on it. And AJ volunteers as well.

David W. is concerned about the physical issues - who's going to be setting things up and is it going to be more organized and coordinated better with the Worship Committee - are they going to take more of a lead role? Rev. Jennifer heard from others the tech team has been leaned on heavily and how can we sustain this.

- 4. Ideas for New Initiatives (for your committee or others) in 2021-22
 - Bob - he remembers about a year ago last fall, a forum on water conservation. We should find more uses for the space for these types of purposes
 - Jan - membership - just hanging in there - don't know where we're going to end up. Wants to start circle dinners but she needs to wait or have others do that. Reach out to those people who were thinking about becoming members right before the pandemic. She's also finding out who drifted away from the church during all of this.
 - Eileen - events committee - organizing holiday fair, auction, what's really going to happen? Laurie - maybe events can help coordinate between other committees and have events on similar themes, topics.
 - Lisa asking if we can do something at the space we had Juneteenth - a fall festival, potato sack races. David said we could use it - Debbie - is it accessible or bathrooms? No, that is an issue. Rev. Jennifer suggested we could take that extra \$ from RE and put it towards making this family event accessible - portapotty.
 - Social justice committee - they're doing a lot of things and if they had more people they could do more but they are doing what they can handle now. UUA and church of the larger fellowship. Neighboring churches - we should get more of that - joint coordination. And churches in bridgewater. Rachel does a lot on her own and same with peace committee - need more people
 - Bob - we need to do something about security. - Laurie said to summarize what's already been done. Rev. Jennifer said the next step would be to communicate the policies, best practices to others.
 - Lisa wants to know about sound and what happened at Bob's service doesn't happen again. David W. said Alan's put together a system for zoom services and the amp is being replaced - still talking about the best way to do that. David's been using the Bose system (sounds like it's Jim Quinn's) in the UPH. AV is an issue we have to address step by step.
 - Rev. Jennifer - Hearing (sound) for people who aren't in the building and a need for a system for hybrid meetings as well. Can't keep passing Rev. Jennifer's new laptop around the table!

- Next Steps (Bob M)

Hope this leads to a productive fall and thank you all for coming out today and doing this work.

We have some really good ideas.

9. Meditation and Closing Words (Rev. Jennifer)

From "How to Love the World". - Poem from Barbara Crooker "Promise"