

Channing Memorial Church
2010-2011 Governing Board Meeting Minutes
Parish Hall; Jan. 20th, 2011

Present: Jim Freess (President), Susan VanDerhoof (Vice President), Dave Banister (Fin. Comm.), Chris Laudon (Property Co-Chair), Mary Benson (Fellowship Comm.), Sally Hanchett (Program Comm. Chair), Barbara Nowicki (Membership Comm.), Sarah Mermin (Trustee), and Kathy Takata (R.E. Chair).

Guests: John Burnham (Transition Team Member).

Staff: Rev. John Nichols (Interim Minister), Michele Dubuc (Office Admin.), Halcyon Westall (R.E. Director).

Process Observer: Barbara Norwicki.

Approval of Minutes: December Minutes approved.

Minister's Report: Rev. Nichols reported Sunday Attendance is averaging 120-130 (as good as many Protestant congregations on Aquidneck Island). He listed some of the his observations in his interim Minister's Report (see it at the end of these minutes) as follows:

- Channing must grow and it can have an impact on the community
- Excellent Small Group Ministry Program
- Channing is a more welcoming congregation than others
- Fine professional staff—overworked and underappreciated
- Leadership must emanate from the Governing Board
- Governing Board must look ahead and set goals for future growth
- Pleased with work of the Governance/By-Laws committee
- Need an adult program committee
- The church must have more money to maintain the facilities, especially R.E. spaces
- Find a way to use the renter's facilities for church functions/activities instead of as a source of income
- Give serious thought to what kind of new minister the church wants—a facilitator, an empathic people person, a strong personality, an ambitious minister whose eyes are on the prize down the road or a minister who wants to settle at Channing
- John thinks we have a bright future ahead

President's Report: Jim referenced the book Governance in Ministry and requested inputs from the board members on this subject which will be addressed in the upcoming special board meeting on February 5th. He also wants suggestions on the church's strategic plan and new member binder.

Vice President's Report: Sue reviewed plans for "Celebration Sunday" and upcoming meetings to brainstorm options for the next canvassing cycle.

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Treasurer's Report: The treasurer, Russ Milham was not there, but his inputs are included in the Finance Committee report below.

Program Report: There is a new housing facility for the homeless on the Island and three more are planned to open next month. See Program Committee Report at the end of these minutes.

R.E. Report: There are many new R.E. teachers this year and so far nearly 100% of parents are contributing to the RE program. OWL has started for K and 1st graders. Mentoring for the Coming of Age Program is beginning. R.E. children will participate in the Celebration Sunday activities through a historical play. R.E. is collecting clothing donations for Boys Town through the Faith in Action program.

Property Comm.: Chris presented information on the contractors' bids to remove the wall in two small R.E. classrooms to create one larger classroom. The bid had three options—just remove the wall (\$1495), remove the wall and one closet (\$2595), and remove the wall and two closets (\$3595). **A motion was made to allocate \$3000 for use by the property committee exercise one of these options. The vote was unanimous.**

Membership Report: UU101 will be presented to new members via workshops scheduled for this Spring.

Finance Report: The profit and Loss statement for the 2010 year end (Dec. 31) is attached to these minutes. The finance committee is working a few issues:

- Capital Campaign Pledges delinquent as of Dec. 31, 2010
- Property management: replacement for former manager (Pat Padilla?)
- Preliminary budget for 2011-2012

Capital Campaign Pledges: Including most recent 1/16/11 deposit (but essentially end of calendar year 2010 received):

Total Capital campaign Pledge and Steeple Fund Donations expected: \$392,449.43 consisting of \$384,798.82 Capital campaign Pledges and \$4,163.61 Steeple Fund Donations. This is up some from recent Steeple Fund donations and Used items sale.

Total Received: \$257,691.61

Total indicated in 2009 but not yet received: \$8,294.00

Total indicated in 2010 but not yet received: \$28,442.01

resulting in total "behind" as indicated on pledge forms: \$36,736.01

Total expected remaining in 2011 the 3rd year: \$51,934.87

Total Expected in last years 4 and 5 (2012/2013): \$23,621.00

I record 101 pledges and show 48 completed, 65 either completed or up to date, leaving 36 behind what expected by 12/31/10.

By-laws Committee update: The By-Laws subcommittee (David Pedrick, Chris Ariel, John Burnham, Betsy Leersen, Sarah Mermin, Robert Thorson and Sue VanDerhoof) has

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drafted updated by-laws and a new governance model. These items will be reviewed during a special board meeting scheduled for February 5th at the Parrish Hall. The drafts by-laws will be finalized by Feb 17th and distributed to the congregation at the beginning of March after the congregation approves the governance model. If all goes well, these church documents will be approved at the annual church meeting this year.

Jim thinks the by-laws should be approved before the annual meeting to give the incoming officers time to know their responsibilities. John thinks the property committee should have a seat on the board.

New Business: Michele wants to prepare a fee schedule for special church services like Memorial services and events like concerts. Most board members thought the best way to handle this is to generate a list specifying fees for each type of service.

Adjourned: 9:14 pm.

Minister's Interim Report

INTERIM REPORT TO THE BOARD
Channing Memorial Church
January 2011

Though I've been here only six months I feel as if we've been together a lot longer, because our work together seems to have gone through two distinctly different stages. At first, there seemed to be a time of disorientation caused by Amy's absence and my presence but since November I have sensed congregational energies being gathered, attendance increasing and perhaps a renewed confidence in the essential strength of the congregation. Several people have asked about my preliminary assessments of that strength and of Channing, and I think I owe you this midterm report.

To get a better sense of what has gone before I have read through the materials associated with the Year of Decision and the Year of Action. I've also had many conversations with congregation members, staff and others who know you and wish you well. It appears to me that for the last several years you have done an enormous amount of good work, bringing everyone on board, hearing their hopes and dreams and laying the groundwork of a new, even more productive phase of your lives together. Then the tower began to crumble, and it became necessary to raise money to fix it. Then after an enormous fund raising and logistical effort got it fixed, Amy gave notice of her intention to move on in June and she left. Many people were sad. Some were bereft. Some felt betrayed. So I've been told anyway.

Then I turned up, a blind date sent by Boston with good credentials but no familiarity yet with the congregation. Now where do we go from here? You have significant strengths, which make your future potentially brighter than might be the case

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in other congregations with similar circumstances. At 120 to 130 adults in church on the average you have an attendance that probably compares favorably with many if not most of the Protestant congregations on the island. And there is a sizeable additional constituency who are aware of what you do and care about it. You are well known and I am guessing that much of what is known is favorable. You are already a force for good in this area. If you are able to own that power and use it well there are many who will be grateful for your presence.

The potential impact of Channing Church on this area is exciting for anyone who cares about liberal religion but it will also be no small consideration for your next minister. In many parts of the country the UU congregation is just too small vis a vis other religious or secular powers to make much difference. Not here. Your next minister will lead a congregation that could make an impact in its community and he/she should know that coming in.

Another advantage of how you are situated right now is that you've got to grow and you can. I know a lot of people are on board with that thought but let me just give it a little push. You are a middle-sized congregation with beautiful and very expensive historic buildings that will not get cheaper to maintain over time. I know that many UU congregations of your size hope they can replace every year the members they lose, but I think Channing needs to be better than that in order to keep pace with the costs of being what you want to be. I think you are well positioned to do that if you are willing to do what you need to do to make it so. I'll get to that.

Second. Because your Small Group Ministry program has operated the way it was conceived and designed to run, encouraging widespread participation, fluidity among the groups and leadership from a coordinating council, the culture at Channing Memorial is permeated with the culture of Small Group Ministry. There is just better understanding at Channing about how successful groups work than one often finds elsewhere. Though I am sure everyone can think of one or two significant exceptions there is less non-productive wrangling here than there is in many other congregations.

Third. The congregation is more welcoming than many I have served. I can tell that visitors are being greeted. Many are introduced to me. They get to question and answer sessions if they are ready. We're doing well in these areas. The membership committee has set up a system that works.

Fourth. You have a fine professional staff. They are committed to their professions, to improving the quality of their work and to this congregation. They are also overworked and under appreciated because most people do not realize that Michelle and Halcyon, particularly, are not full time staff though they have a full time commitment to helping Channing achieve its visions and goals. I am hoping that our recently established Personnel Committee will help resolve staff issues or bring questions to the board's attention in a timely way. As our committees and their creative imaginations get

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going the requests for staff time pile up. Staff members have to deny or delay action which confuses folks who do not realize that they are not being paid for full time work.

If I thought you had little chance to be more than you are right now I would have little else to say other than to encourage you to limp along into the future. Because I do believe you could a more productive and exciting congregation I make these recommendations.

1. A growing congregation needs leadership and that should come from the board. I have the impression that for many years the board has been an adjudicatory body, deciding minor issues, but casting no particular influence over the larger direction of the congregation. In a growing congregation the board must look ahead, choose certain projects or directions and lead in that direction. "Shared ministry" does not relieve everyone of the responsibility of exercising leadership and getting projects rolling. Someone has to make that call, keep the pressure on and evaluate the results and, for my money, that is the board – eventually in cooperation with the new minister.
2. The board needs to be a group of people who work well together because together they have made a commitment to be present at meetings, study the issues and attempt to resolve their differences. Members of a congregation need to feel that their board takes its work seriously and strives to function as effectively as possible. They need to feel that their board takes them seriously enough to communicate regularly and give them a chance to ask questions.
 - a. I am generally pleased with the work of the governance study committee and now think this goal can be achieved easily.
3. This congregation needs an adult programs committee. Amy had done this in the past. As far as I can tell she did it on her own. What you really need is a group of four or five members, who have attended and enjoyed adult education to meet several times a year and set up a program. This will mean recruiting presenters and setting up the logistics for each course. More often than not the minister will be involved, but there are many others in the congregation who are more than capable of offering programs. Adult education is like Small Group Ministry in that it is another way of strengthening our ties to one another.
4. You need to make religious education for children an important priority. I know that many UU parents are extraordinarily ambivalent about what they want their children to learn if anything, but they do want their children taken seriously as they want to be taken seriously. That means classrooms that are both comfortably warmly decorated and functional. It also means that your DRE is

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perceived as a valued member of the professional staff and is compensated accordingly.

5. All of this requires money, and I am well aware that this congregation has lived close to the margin financially for many years. Unfortunately this seems to have created a kind of “Depression Era Mentality.” My mother lived through the Great Depression as a child and teenager and is convinced to this day that – that despite all evidence to the contrary – the financial roof is always ready to cave in. A Depression Era mentality in congregations creates leadership, which believes “We are poor. We have always been poor. We will always be poor and we ought to plan that way.”

What I want you – the board members – to be doing is thinking, “Where can we get more money?” whenever you feel inclined to think, “Where can we cut the budget?”

Let me put it more directly. I would hope that you could look ahead and plan how you can get the money to take back the space that is now ceded to renters. Think of it as program space that is temporarily occupied. Perhaps you will never get all of it back, but if you can reclaim some for children’s religious education, adult religious education and committee work I think many will accept it as a real victory and a step forward.

Lest anyone misunderstand, I am in awe of the financial prestidigitation that has kept this congregation in the black, more or less, over the years. I am saying it has created more caution than you need and that caution is not helpful to you when you think about taking a step into the future.

6. AND FINALLY, I hope the board and congregation will spend between now and October figuring out how you want your next minister to fit into the larger picture of ministry here. My own experience has been that “Shared Ministry” at Channing means different things in different areas, and what might be thought of as shared ministry in other congregations is different here.

Where do you want your minister to lead – put forth ideas, directions, opinions—and where do you want your minister to be an equal part of the decision making process with everyone else. Are there areas of church life where you do not want your minister involved at all. I can tell you that while ministers of Amy’s generation were encouraged

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to facilitate, ministers being trained now are taught to be a lot more direct in casting a vision for the church and pushing for it.

Think about what you want. Do you want a preacher with a strong personality in and out of the pulpit? Do you want a facilitative pastor, an empathic people person whose sermons are certainly acceptable but rarely memorable? Do you want someone who may have his/her eyes on a bigger professional prize down the road a ways or do you want someone who wants to settle in and love you? You can save a lot of misunderstanding by talking these issues through.

There is a statue of William Ellery Channing in the Boston Public Garden across the street from the Arlington Street Church, a congregation which he served all his life. It is a very cold, austere likeness almost as if Channing is disapproving of what is happening across the street. Your Channing – located across the street – is a welcoming Channing, a warm and inviting spirit. If that continues to be the spirit of the congregation I think it has a very exciting future ahead.

Written by John H. Nichols

Program report: December

Worship:

We are well on our way towards Christmas Eve, and on 1/9 will begin our Strategic Goals for the transition team.

Small Group:

Bill Peresta has asked all to save the date for end of semester all SGM participants potluck gathering in Parish Hall on Wednesday January 12th. The next semester is planned to start the week of January 23rd with theme of "Eternal Questions" using series of topics from the past. Bill is suggesting groups stay pretty much as they are unless people have reason to change.

BCD News/Update

The BCD has a new user-friendly website that is available for district leaders and members.

A Chalice Lighter call has gone out to ask BCD district people who donate to support this district grant program to help congregations to give to help Brewster build a handicap-accessible ramp. Chalice Lighters are asked to give \$10 at least three times a year to help the BCD district make these grants.

There will be a canvass workshop in January.

Mary Alice states that if people wish to receive the BCD In Brief email they can let her know and she will have the district office add them to the email list.

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Interweave

Good turnout for initial potluck and movie.

Green Congregation

Met with Transition Team and will be reporting back on progress towards identified goals. Beth will be completing application to be an official "Green Congregation" probably in the New Year, though all the action steps have been completed. Visiting So County church regarding possible initiative "green cleaning supplies/toiletries" distributed to people who can not purchase w food stamps (With faith in Action)

Social Action

Legislative House parties in March being planned. (MERI with Interweave)

Soup kitchen serving turkey in Dec and giving out toiletry gift bags collected by RE Faith in Action with RE. Dec green toiletries Jan Undie drive for Boystown

Share the plate 175 Haiti. Amount collected still shows increase above average donation amount. Can we continue Share the plate past the initial four approved collections?

Housing Focus group: The Dec. 9th Forum in the parish hall consisted of a panel followed by questions as to what is MOST needed IMMEDIATELY and in the long-term to address issue of homelessness. The panel included Jimmy Winters (Housing Hotline); Steve Ostiguy, director of Church Community Housing Corp; Cheryl Robinson, president, Turning Around Ministries; Eric Hirsch, professor of Sociology, Providence College; and Don Boucher, director of Housing First in Providence. John "Bud" Cicilline, director of the Newport County Mental Health Center said that Crossroads, the large homeless shelter in Providence, notified Newport agencies in November that it no longer would be able to accept people because it is full and its budget is "strapped. People come to the Housing Hotline as a last resort but there are insufficient funds for emergency shelter. Bud Cicilline estimates that about \$5000 is needed immediately this year to deal with emergency shelter alone. He suggested sending to City Hall a PETITION, signed by individuals in local congregations, asking for FUNDS to pay for EMERGENCY services this year. Also to seek church and individual donations for emergency shelter this winter. On the spot, \$327 was collected for emergency shelter via Housing Hotline.

Besides this urgent need, Eric Hirsch gave concrete reports of his research on homelessness in R.I. Don Boucher spoke about the possibilities of Housing First model. Steve Ostiguy (Church Community Housing Corp.) presented the idea of Newport County churches pairing up to provide half of one year's rent ---possibly matched by Newport Hospital--- to provide housing for 2 chronically homeless men (of 12-15 locally) in a 2 bedroom apartment (about \$10,000 a year} in the Housing First model. As more churches became involved, another apartment could be rented, and "one apartment at a time, a serious problem could be resolved."

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Next meeting THURS. JAN.13@7P.M.Channing Church Parish Hall. A COMMUNITY MEETING: HOMELESSNESS .Update on what actions are being taken to implement Habitat for Humanity is building locally and we are meeting on site to learn what Channing can do to support this project.

Hunger focus group

Barbara Baum working to identify local need for budgeting/healthy cooking workshop. Salve offering something at Housing Authority so we do not want to duplicate services. Planning underway for organic/local foods potluck. Info on CSA's. Create list of needed foods for food drive. Contact food bank regarding their initiatives locally.

Creative Connections Gallery (Sue Kieronski)

The Gallery is currently working things out for Chris Laudon's show without a budget request - Chris is doing her framing of the Channing renovation photos on her own.

Music (Sue Kieronski)

Jan and I have met, at Betsy Leersen's request, and I am currently writing up our response to Strategic Goals for Music. I emailed Janet to see if she had any additional thoughts at this time, and will pass along anything else I get.

Soulful Sundown

Reports no major news in particular, has confirmed dates for the winter and spring, Dec. 17th, January 28th, April 1st. They are looking forward to the series!