

## Focus Discussion 3 – Individual Break-Out Group Points

### Group 1

#### Opening General Remarks from Group

- Concern regarding initial meeting [analysis presentation] = hard sell – Transition Team has made up their (our) minds
- Transition Teams’ approach/view is based on congregational input so far.
- Smoke and mirrors? A small error in assumptions could impact the probability of meeting projected goals.
- Belief is that action will be taken by the Governing Board to address misconceptions or false assumptions.

#### Ministry 1A – Should we commit to increase the number of staff ...

- Yes – 3
- Not without resources to pay for it.
- Yes, to help keep minister
- Only if we have the confidence to pay, otherwise no.

#### Ministry 1B – Should we commit to increase the amount of space available ...

- Yes – 1
- Only if needed – 1
- Maybe, as needed – 4
- No – 1

#### Ministry 1C – Should we commit to increase the resource base of our community by ...

- Yes – 4
- We should TRY (not COMMIT) – How can this be something to which we can commit? The word commit is too strong. – 2
- Maybe we can start down the road with the potential of reaching the goal. [Analysis] presentation was hopeful.
- [Channing] currently doesn’t feel crowded. Concerned about reclaiming space until it’s needed.
- Concern about Coffee Hour crowding.
- “Commit” is a bad word in Channing – 1.
- Having a goal is one thing. Making a commitment is another.
- Surprised at the intensity of the sales job [by Transition Team] and assumptions.
- [Have been] hearing resistance [about giving] during canvassing – concern with the pace and over-reliance on the top pledgers.
- Concern about the accuracy of pledge number assumptions [in TT analysis].

#### Property 2A – Should we commit to remain at our current site in Newport, RI ...

- Yes – 5
- Yes, but without the steeple – 1
- No – 0

#### Property 2B – Should we empower the Governing Board to develop a plan ...

- Yes – 5
- Not sure – only if: The plan must be brought back to the congregation for approval.

#### Property 2C – Do we, as a congregation, commit to implementing the plan ... over 20 years?

[The group had reluctance to try to answer this up or down, yes or no]

- Yes – We commit to “try”, take the first step with the Board’s plan
- No – We need to first know what the plan is, before we can commit to it.

Property 2D – ...what do you recommend?

- Complete a successful pledge drive for '07 and then move forward. – 2
- [Would like to see] plans with options.
- Congregational approval [is a must].
- “Green” social consciousness concerns [should be in plan, missing so far]
- [We would need a] contingency plan.
- Need the master plan

Ending question from Bill to group: Do you feel the Transition Team has an “agenda”?

- No – 6
- Yes – 1

**Group 2**

Ministry 1A – Should we commit to increase the number of staff ...

- New budget includes more staff hours and 3% increase – already have made this commitment.
- Must increase staff to increase pledges.
- Staff increases should follow growth.

Ministry 1B – Should we commit to increase the amount of space available ...

- Need space for fellowship
- More efficient use of the sanctuary and for fellowship

Ministry 1C – Should we commit to increase the resource base of our community by ...

- Yes – increase!

Property 2A – Should we commit to remain at our current site in Newport, RI ...

- Yes – stay

Property 2B – Should we empower the Governing Board to develop a plan ...

- Yes – leverage
- Don't sell the property
- Congregational vote to make big decisions – mortgage, etc.

Property 2C – Do we, as a congregation, commit to implementing the plan ... over 20 years?

- 20 years, or more, as needed.

[General notes at the end]

- Does everyone consent to be a part of the capital fund drive committee?
- Identify the gap.
- Make the numbers clearer.
- Put explanations under the charts [presented] on the website. [*Already done - Bill*]
- The goals may exclude participants
  - The method for achieving goals may need further analysis and understanding.

**Group 3**

Ministry 1A – Should we commit to increase the number of staff ...

- Qualified yes, if outreach gets its fair share.
- Should pay staff based on UU guidelines.
- Yes, because [there is a] need for even now - and certainly to expand.

- Yes, want to have as many [staff] on board and fully paid as we can afford.
- Property and programs should be taken care of, before increase [to] staff.
- Yes, balance all needs.

Ministry 1B – Should we commit to increase the amount of space available ...

- No, keep space as is.
- Channing House room we have and 1<sup>st</sup> floor Parish Hall. Fix playground.
- (Housekeeping needs to be improved.)
- Yes, keeping RE needs uppermost, renovating.
- Parish Hall into adult spaces and study undercroft.
- Yes, with input of congregation.
- Space we have, but improve it.
- Space as is, but look into undercroft.
- Remove some rear pews for space – or remove all pews. – 4.

Ministry 1C – Should we commit to increase the resource base of our community by ...

- Yes & yes – not limited to space and staff. – 4
- If have space, can attract more to church – flexible seating.
- AV [audio visual] equipment – more quality program.
- Not just to pay for staff and space.

Property 2A – Should we commit to remain at our current site in Newport, RI ...

- Yes – feel glue is this place. Very special.
- Yes & yes – do what we want to do.
- Not to exclusion of ministry and outreach.
- Yes – Separate steeple (moral and architectural issue) – Restore sanctuary. Need more info on steeple options, grants. – 3.
- Yes & yes.

Property 2B – Should we empower the Governing Board to develop a plan ...

- Yes – with congregational approval. – 1.
- Congregation needs to approve mortgaging. – 2.
- Yes & yes. – 2.

Property 2C – Do we, as a congregation, commit to implementing the plan ... over 20 years?

- Yes. – 6.

**Group 4**

Ministry 1A – Should we commit to increase the number of staff ...

- Yes – definitely over time.
- Yes – 2.
- Yes – especially due to “things we know” IF.
- Yes – ASAP.
- Yes – necessity.
- Yes – to maintain continuity (IF).

Ministry 1B – Should we commit to increase the amount of space available ...

- Yes – 5.
- Yes – for hospitality.
- Yes – no question.

- Also noted: Which should be pursued first – seeking additional members, or improving facilities and programs? Other group members responded that it should go hand-in-hand.

Ministry 1C – Should we commit to increase the resource base of our community by ...

- Yes – 5
- Yes – grants for space, pledges for ministry. Strongly recommend that individuals be given the option of where their money should go, to buildings or ministry or both. That way people who don't feel strongly about the buildings will not refuse to participate.
- Yes – intend invest in programs to increase ministry.

Property 2A – Should we commit to remain at our current site in Newport, RI ...

- Yes – I love the sanctuary.
- Yes – hard to imagine [being] comfort[able] with alternative.
- Yes – definitely; plus leaving would [conflict with] UUA re: memorial to William Ellery Channing and historical significance.
- Yes – plus [it would require] an increase in \$ to relocate anyway. Can't imagine not doing what we can.
- Yes – unique, historic, precious. How do we attract some share of the wealth in this area?
- Yes – I love the sanctuary. Do whatever we can to keep/improve
- Yes – because of what others I care about here value – but in deciding what to do about the steeple, keep in mind a steeple's significance – (consider points toward heaven) and that is not in keeping with UU.
- But – building ornate-ness [conflicts with] UU values.
- Also raised question: Who would buy the sanctuary, if we decided against staying at 135 Pelham?
- Also discussed taking steeple down.

Property 2B – Should we empower the Governing Board to develop a plan ...

- Yes – 6.
- Yes – as long as you're in [communication] with us
- Also noted: We're lucky that we're in a wealthy area – need to tap into that wealth to support our building stewardship.

Property 2C – Do we, as a congregation, commit to implementing the plan ... over 20 years?

- Yes. – all – but best timing unclear.

**Group 5**

Ministry 1A – Should we commit to increase the number of staff ...

Yes – as needed on an incremental basis.

- More staff commitment, if congregation enlarges.
- Type of staff depends on activities at the time.
- Depends on amount of volunteer commitment.
- \*\*Office administrator is needed at least half time or more.
- To get grants we will need to open the church (someone to be ther).
- \*\*Very important to spend church resources on RE
  - Attracts new donors for the future

- Keeps congregation vital
- Current RE director works more hours than she is contracted for.
- We have more RE children than other congregations (esp. in kindergarten) with less RE support.

Ministry 1B – Should we commit to increase the amount of space available ...

Yes – with qualifications.

- **\*\*Important to increase efficiency of use of space.**
  - Coffee hour space is very crowded.
  - Primarily for RE and fellowship (both children and adults).
- We could get rid of some buildings?

Ministry 1C – Should we commit to increase the resource base of our community by ...

- Increase members but not with primary reason to get \$ out of them.
- Membership should require a certain level of financial commitment.
- More people would make more efficient use of available space (sanctuary holds 500). Increase in cost [does not equal] increase in revenue.
- Present membership will age – fixed incomes – need new members to replace old.
- Important for community outreach to include new members.
- Need new people of all ages and family configurations.

Property 2A – Should we commit to remain at our current site in Newport, RI ...

Yes – STAY. Yes – Restore sanctuary and steeple.

- Stay – we have to meet somewhere – might as well stay here and maintain facility.
- This church is a tremendous responsibility.
- We are stewards of a wonderful heritage – values, history and beauty incorporated in buildings.
- This is a central space in Newport – it would be hard to find another space centrally located like this one.
- Re-visit parking issues and solve them.
- A center in Newport is better for social justice programs. Public transportation is available.
- Don't know where the \$ will come from, but committed to staying.
- Yes – fix the steeple.
- Capital campaign should be community-wide effort.

Property 2B – Should we empower the Governing Board to develop a plan ...

Securing Needed Capital

Borrowing, selling? Rents, hosting weddings? Leveraging the value of assets.

- Yes – with reservations – we don't want to become too commercial (no outrageous fees for weddings).
- Don't wear out the minister with weddings (get a congregational intern).

Loans? Debts?

- As private individual – live without debt.
- Debt is a useful instrument in some cases.
- If we defer property maintenance, it becomes much more expensive in long run. Borrow now and save in long term.
- Debt is fairer way to distribute cost of property over time.

Property 2C – Do we, as a congregation, commit to implementing the plan ... over 20 years?

- We commit to giving the Board the authority to implement this plan. But what are details of “the plan”?

- Yes – but cut back on amount of property and develop space in sanctuary.

We authorize the Board to go forward to implement a plan that includes:

1. Staying in Newport (135 Pelham Street).
2. Repairing sanctuary and steeple.
3. Commit to a program for restoring sanctuary and developing remaining property (see 2B)
4. Expanding programs, ministry and outreach.

## **Group 6**

Ministry 1A – Should we commit to increase the number of staff ...

- [Real?] catch – of needed (time) (or compromise of quality & availability) if time and volunteers too short.
- Governing Board / annual budget
- Staff costs
  - Congregational input method needed for spending and priorities.

Ministry 1B – Should we commit to increase the amount of space available ...

- Yes / strategy.
- Input on major decisions.
- Past increase in Channing House.
- Consider ratio of rental income to cost and change effect.

Ministry 1C – Should we commit to increase the resource base of our community by ...

- Can it happen? How?
- What could we do to make it happen?
- [We need to pay] attention to keeping current members and build involvement and support (\$).

Property 2A – Should we commit to remain at our current site in Newport, RI ...

- Yes – Stay here.
- Yes – restore property.
- Historic preservation.
- Steeple repair funding from grants, too.
- Rental costs and income.
- Future demographics and property needs (and how related).
- Green Sanctuary.

Property 2B – Should we empower the Governing Board to develop a plan ...

- Want to have congregation informed of plans as developed and options/alternatives offered.
- Income (like weddings) from outside for property use.
- Public Relations and Marketing.