

**Report Summary to the Board of Directors
From the Interim Co-Ministers**

Unitarian Universalist Society of Geneva

The Reverends Jennifer Innis and Patrick Price

February 11, 2019

The structure of this report is based on the developmental tasks of the interim congregation and the priorities listed in the Application for Interim Ministry.

The developmental tasks of the interim congregation include:

- HERITAGE– Reviewing how the congregation has been shaped and formed.
- LEADERSHIP– Reviewing member needs and the congregation’s ways of organizing and developing leadership
- MISSION– Defining and redefining sense of purpose and direction
- CONNECTIONS– Discovering and nurturing the relationships a faith community builds outside of itself
- FUTURE– Preparing for the next era of leadership
- In addition to the above list, the sixth task is to oversee the ongoing life of the congregation.

The ministerial priorities as stated in the Application for Interim Ministry include:

Of greatest importance is preparing the congregation for new ministry after 40 years of service by our outgoing Senior Minister, the Rev. Dr. Lindsay Bates. Our rolls show 2018 membership levels at a 10-year low. In this interim period we need to evaluate and better understand the underlying factors for this trend and how to best address them as part of our vision for our future. In addition, a 2017 fall survey of lay leaders listed the following areas of preferred focus:

- Building and healing relationships and developing emerging lay leadership
- Retaining and involving UUSG membership
- Strengthening our lay-led LRE program
- Building increased and committed pledging by members and friends
- Expanding a sense of responsibility within the congregation for the success of the church
- Providing an objective perspective to develop new ideas and address areas for improvement

General Comments/Observations

- This report covers the highlights since the last report to the Board on January 8, 2019. This report is separate from the mid-year report on the interim ministry as specified in the agreement between the Board and the Interim Co-Ministers.
- The three-part sequence of events around engaging the interim process went well. During the Question Box sermon on January 6, Patrick and Jennifer received several questions about interim ministry, our experience as interims, and the length of the interim period. The Coffee with the Ministers conversation on January 13 included details about interim ministry and the search process. Roughly 8 members and friends participated in the Coffee with the Ministers. The Town Hall on January 20 included about 76 participants plus presentations by David de Coriolis, Brian Doyle, and Rev. Jennifer. (Rev. Patrick had a previous commitment to preach at DuPage UU Church.) The Board’s own

discussions and planning of the town hall were worth the effort. The congregation learned more about interim ministry, the search process, and possibilities for adding a professional religious educator. Many thanks to Brian Doyle for putting together the PowerPoint presentation and the poll about staffing and additional pledges. The Board published Brian's summary of the town hall and the poll results in the newsletter and the mini-Pioneer and on the website. The Board expects to use the funds in the current budget for hiring LRE support staff in this fiscal year.

- Bringing on Becky Hruby as Temporary Church Administrator went well. Christine Imielski, Lisa Rittenberry, and a number of volunteers completed Becky's orientation before Christine started her family leave. Becky is doing a great job. Lisa also is doing well with her additional responsibilities.
- Interim questions for this month include: What are the lines of responsibility, accountability, and authority in the congregation with regards to programs, such as the Women's Retreat, that does not have a history of reporting to a specific team? How do new programs get started?

Worship

- Jennifer led worship on January 20 and February 10. Patrick led worship on January 13 and February 3.
- Patrick led a program on UU Worship in Theory and Practice on January 19. Eleven members and friends of UUSG participated in spite of difficult winter weather. In addition to worship, the conversation included a wide range of topics related to the church and to Unitarian Universalism.
- The Worship Team meeting in January was canceled due to icy weather.

Lifespan Religious Education

- Patrick and Jennifer are in active conversations with members and leadership about how to add a professional religious educator as soon as possible.
- Jennifer participated in the mid-year teacher training meeting for Lifespan Religious Education on February 6. See the related addendum in this report.
- Jennifer led the program for the Women's Retreat on February 1-3. See the related addendum in this report.

Pastoral Care

- Jennifer and Patrick are visiting with members and friends when approached. As is typical in a congregational setting, most pastoral care happens in brief moments and conversations before and after events or worship.
- Patrick met with a member with significant financial and mental health challenges around possible support issues.

Rites of Passage

- Jennifer led the memorial service for Stuart Mansfield on January 26, 2019. Those in attendance brought a good spirit regardless of the frigid weather. Many thanks to Jeanne Neltner and Vohny Moehling for organizing refreshments for the visitation and the reception.

- Vohny Moehling, Jeanne Neltnor, the WOW Team leaders, and others are putting together a set of guidelines and a timeline for planning memorial receptions.

Stewardship

- The Stewardship Team and the ministers are working on the plan for the annual budget drive. The budget drive will kickoff on March 10 and conclude on April 14. The Day of Service on March 30 will include an all-church dinner as it has in the past. That dinner may serve as more of a supportive mid-point event for the budget drive instead of a beginning or end as it has been in recent years. Kathy Cornell is coordinating the drive in consultation with Revs. Jennifer and Patrick and several volunteers. The theme and schedule of trainings for visiting stewards should be determined this week.

Welcome Team

- The Welcome Team hosted their regular Pathway to Membership program on February 10. Participants included 7 visitors and friends along with Jennifer, Patrick, the Welcome Team, and Kevin Beyer from Stewardship. Jim Swick and Marian Whittet signed the membership book.

Continuing Education and Denominational Activity

- Patrick and Jennifer expect to attend the UUA Mid-America Regional Gathering in St. Louis on April 5-7. Given UUSG's limited participation in denominational events, the ministers are encouraging in attendance by UUSG, too.

Minister's Schedule

- Expected Sundays off include February 24, March 31, May 5, and June 2.
- Jennifer will be out of the area for March 21-24 as part of her work with Spirit Play. Patrick expects to attend the UUA Retirement Planning Seminar in New Braunfels, TX on March 25-29.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Innis and Patrick Price

Addendums to the Interim Co-Ministers Report include:

- Report from the Lifespan Religious Education Teacher Meeting
- Report from the Women's Retreat
- Action Items from the Interim Ministry Startup

Report from the Lifespan Religious Education Teacher Meeting

- Jeff Stanley led the mid-year teacher meeting on February 6, 2019. About 11 members and friends participated, including Rev. Jennifer Innis.
- Agenda items included:
 - Jean Pierce's presentation of the social justice curriculum for the last quarter from March 31 – May 19
 - Reviewing the general calendar, including Teacher Appreciation
 - Checking in with lead volunteers about their teaching schedule
 - Asking whether current volunteers would continue teaching in 2019-2020
- The social justice curriculum is "To Know You Is to Value You: Living in a Global Community." This program is designed to connect the children and youth with the larger world by getting to know the context of the Kenyan student being sponsored by UUSG.
- All classes are going well. Teacher morale is good.
- In reviewing the end of year calendar, discussion included OWL, Teacher Appreciation, Moving Up day and recognizing graduating seniors, Coming of Age, and Easter.
- Amanda Slaiher agreed to coordinate the Coming of Age program for 2019-2020. This program will be open to any youth who have not yet had the chance to be part of Coming of Age at UUSG. Additional volunteers and staff support will be needed to offer the program.
- Rev. Jennifer asked about holiday activities such as an egg hunt at Easter. She introduced the idea of a canned food hunt with Easter treats as a way to offer an activity for children and youth. The volunteers in attendance embraced the idea and started to work out the details. Jennifer will coordinate with help from Jeff Stanley. Easter will not be an all-ages worship this year. The children and youth will leave the service after the Sacred Story as they often do. Rev. Patrick will offer the sermon.
- All volunteers are willing to return as teachers for 2019-2020. Jeff Stanley will remain as a Co-Leader for the LRE Team.
- Rev. Jennifer encouraged the volunteers to review the reports of the January 20 Town Hall. She pointed out how they are UUSG's best advocates for paid professional religious education staff.

Report from the Women's Retreat

- The Women's Retreat took place in the Nazareth Retreat at the Servants of the Holy Heart of Mary on February 1-3. 19 people participated, including Rev. Jennifer Innis as program leader. The theme was Awakening Joy by Embracing Change. The focus on theme came from UUSG's current context of being in transition. Rev. Jennifer was able to lead the program after the previously scheduled leader withdrew from the event in late November.
- The retreat went very well. The planning team did a great job with managing all details of the event.
- Along with exploring both "joy" and "transition" during the retreat, Rev. Jennifer provided the experience of a typical Unitarian Universalist women's retreat. She added to the spiritual practices and craft resources by bringing in drums, percussion instruments, additional craft items, and a small library. She brought music to the retreat for the first time and along with creating an altar inspired by the theme.
- For the workshop on change, Rev. Jennifer presented an introduction to the Transition Model created by William Bridges. UUSG now has another body of people who have reflected on change and transition and have a better vocabulary for communicating their experience and that of the congregation. For more on William Bridges' work, see: <https://wmbridges.com/what-is-transition/> Revs. Patrick and Jennifer will expand on this model in the course of their ministry with UUSG.
- Most of the participants attended the second service at UUSG on February 3. The women brought a very positive spirit to church.

Action Items from the Interim Ministry Startup

This is a list of Action Items from the Interim Ministry Startup with Dori Davenport Thexton on November 4, 2018. These action items are not in any particular order.

- The role of the council - what is its function; is it necessary to add responsibility and accountability to its role? Or create something different to serve the purposes desired (a group to empower committees/ministry groups to make decisions and to coordinate congregational activities, not just report to each other.
- Religious Education - staffing is needed along with everything that entails.
- Communications - central coordination and functioning of all aspects of communication to/from the board, administration, ministers, council, publicity.
- Supervision and accountability for staff - clarify and communicate.
- Covenant - expand understanding of covenant to include promises about being in right relationship along with strengthening Care Committee.
- Membership committee - reinvigorate, clarify and institutionalize its duties.
- Lay pastoral care - WOW committee, same as above bullet point (?)
- Worship team - develop worship associates program and become more structured.
- Deal with staffing needs and issues during administrators maternity leave.