

Unitarian Society of New Haven
Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Society
March 30, 2014

Approved June 1, 2014

Attendance: 50 Members

President Alison Cunningham called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm and Peggy Rae recorded the minutes. A quorum of Members was present, and the meeting proceeded with A. Cunningham presiding.

Presentation of Revised Draft Statements of Values, Mission, and Ends for Vote of Affirmation

Members of the Board of Trustees reviewed Policy Governance work at USNH and presented revised statements of values, mission, and ends. The statements are modifications of those introduced at the January 26, 2014 Special Congregational Meeting, reflecting input from congregation members the Board received after the January meeting and after publication of its first set of revised statements at the beginning of March.

A. Cunningham thanked members of the congregation for providing feedback at the February cottage meetings and by email. She emphasized Policy Governance work cannot be done in a vacuum, but must be done collaboratively with the participation of Board, staff, and congregation. She noted that the Board will continue to engage/involve the congregation through newsletter articles, cottage meetings and congregational meetings such as those held this winter as it begins to write policies, determine leadership models and establish roles and responsibilities more clearly.

Before presenting the revised statements, Board members explained how the Ends statements function within Policy Governance. Ends policies are written statements of vision and of where we want to go. They provide the direction by which we measure everything we do. Together with the values and mission statements, they reflect our aspirations. Our operations and programs are the means by which we achieve our ends.

Board member Mary Donohue gave examples to show the connection between two proposed Ends statements and the programs by which the ends might be accomplished:

- *Ends statement* - Experience a connection to something larger than ourselves. *Means*- Sunday services, meditation, music, Small Groups Ministry.
- *Ends statement* – Engage in life-long learning. *Means* – Religious Education for children, youth and adults, Common Reads, Book Club, Tuesday Conversations.

A. Cunningham pointed out the statements will grow and change over time as they are reviewed and tested to make certain they reflect our deepest and truest aspirations. This will be especially true as we build a relationship with our new minister.

The Board finished its presentation with an outline of the next steps it will be taking in its Policy Governance work. It is currently researching and discussing how other congregations structure their executive/operational leadership under Policy Governance. Some have the senior minister as sole Executive/operational leader, for example, while some others have an Executive team comprised of the senior minister and other operational leaders. The Board will also begin drafting policies to define the Executive/Executive Team role, the relationship between the Executive/Executive Team and the Board, and the ongoing engagement between the Board, the congregation, and the ministers and staff.

Vote of Affirmation

A. Cunningham asked for a motion to affirm the statements.

MOTION by Meredith Fahey: To affirm the statements of Values, Mission, and Ends drafted March 23, 2014 as guideposts for our future; **SECONDED** by Peggy Myers.

Discussion of the motion ensued. Among the points raised were the connections to USNH bylaws, measurement of achievement of the Ends, and concerns about how an unclear executive structure will impact the ministerial candidate. Members also spoke of their concern that the statements made no specific mention of children and families. Board members responded that (i) bylaw revisions will come before the congregation soon; (ii) Ends statements will become more specific with respect to means and metrics after further input from the congregation and new minister; and (iii) prospective candidates are aware of the situation, having already learned from the ministerial search committee that the Board is examining the question of executive structure. Board members noted the language in the statements is designed to be as inclusive as possible and although no specific mention of children and families is made, the statements allude to people of all ages at several points. Board members stressed that although religious education and other programs for children and youth are viewed as “means” rather than “ends” and are not included in the Ends statements, they are an important part of USNH, and several spoke of how valuable their own children’s experience at USNH has been.

A motion to end the discussion passed 39 for, 9 opposed, 2 abstentions, and the original motion was brought to a vote.

MOTION PASSED 43 for, 6 opposed, 1 abstention.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:45 pm.

Attachments: Draft USNH Values, Mission, and Ends Statements (3/23/14)
Policy Governance Work Timeline

Draft USNH Values, Mission, and Ends Statements (3/23/14)
for
3/30/14 Congregational Meeting

Draft Values (As delineated by the work done at the Values Workshops in the Spring of 2013)

- Justice
- Connection
- Generosity
- Compassion
- Spirituality

Draft Mission Statement (What do our values call us to do?)

We are a diverse multigenerational faith community that inspires lives of compassion and generosity, nurtures spiritual growth, cultivates transformative connections, and creates a more just world.

Draft Ends Statements (What specific, measurable differences will we make and for whom?)

Within

Respecting different spiritual journeys, the people of USNH find inspiration and a safe place to:

- Develop our best selves
- Grow spiritually
- Live with more joy and open-heartedness
- Experience a connection to something larger than ourselves
- Find meaning and purpose in our lives
- Articulate our Unitarian Universalist identity

Among

USNH is a congregation of welcome and connection, where people of all ages:

- Treat one another with respect
- Give and receive support in times of joy, sorrow and transition
- Embrace diversity
- Engage in life-long learning
- Give generously of ourselves and our resources

Beyond

The people of USNH, together and with our partners, act on our values in the larger world. We:

- Advance justice in our community and beyond
- Expand our understanding and awareness of social and environmental issues
- Develop new understanding of ourselves and others through our justice work
- Strengthen Unitarian Universalism

USNH POLICY GOVERNANCE TIMELINE
(as presented at 3/30/14 Special Congregational Meeting)

2004-2005 Governance Task Force

Nov. 2005 - Governance Committee Report recommends a new governance model

2012

Board announces at the Fall 2012 Congregational Meeting that it will start working on a governance initiative

2013

Feb. 22-23: Board Governance Retreat (2012-13 Board)

March – May: Board works to set up workshops for Congregation to articulate its values

May 5 & 11: Congregational Values Workshops (results summarized in Word Cloud)

Sept. 20-21: Board Governance Retreat (2013-14 Board)

Sept. – Dec.: Board works on articulating the Draft Values, Mission & Ends Statements and publishes newsletter articles about Policy Governance

2014

Jan. 2: Newsletter article about Ends Statements

Jan. 26: Congregational Meeting – Board presents Draft Values, Mission & Ends Statements

Feb. 2 & 8: Cottage meetings to solicit feedback on draft statements

Feb. – Mar.: Board deliberates comments received from cottage meetings and e-mails

Mar. 13: Board publishes revised Values, Mission & Ends statements and asks for additional comments

Mar. 18-23: Board deliberates additional comments and prepares final draft statements for vote at 3/30/14 congregational meeting

Additional Communications:

Newsletter articles by Board members (6 articles in newsletter Oct. 24, 2013 - Mar. 13, 2014)

governance@usnh.org set up in Jan. 2014 to receive emailed comments for review by the Board

Board of Trustees Bulletin Board postings (hard copies of newsletter articles, drafts of Values, Mission & Ends)