

Prairie Circle Unitarian Universalist Congregation
Grayslake, Illinois

All-Church Meeting Minutes
February 10, 2008 – 10:00 AM

The All-Church Meeting was held on Sunday, February 10, 2008 at the Byron Colby Barn in Grayslake, IL, following a short worship service.

AGENDA:

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| 1. Welcome | Sally Merritt
PCUUC Board President |
| 2. Long Range Plan Status Update | Mike Merritt |
| 3. Membership Committee Update | Rich Fendrych, Sara May, John Crowley |
| 4. Pledge Drive Kick-off | Mark Wilson |
| 5. Concerns from the floor | Sally Merritt & Bruce Moon |
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Welcome – Sally Merritt

PCUUC Growth and Development

With our church currently experiencing rapid growth, it is important to discuss and decide how we wish to move forward as a congregation.

At the September 2007 Retreat, participants explored various models of congregational growth.

There exists no particular model that UU congregations are expected to follow in terms of growth and development, and many churches choose different growth and development paths based on the needs and desires of their congregations.

The Long Range Planning Committee has drafted an update to the Long Range Plan, and that draft has been sent by email to all PCUUC members. At the June 2008 Annual Congregational Meeting, one goal is to vote on a revised Long Range Plan which will describe the direction in which our congregation will go in the next few years.

We applied to the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations in December 2007, and we were granted membership in January 2008. Benefits of UUA membership include:

- Support during our ministerial search
- Help with building financing
- UU World Magazine for each PCUUC member

At the September 2007 Retreat, participants unanimously agreed that hiring a part-time minister first would be an excellent first step, followed by finding or constructing our own building.

The UUA's Central Midwest District will assist us with our search for a part-time minister. Ian Evison, who is with the Central Midwest District, indicated that ministers who are searching for jobs usually do so in the Summer months. As a result, our goal could be to have a part-time minister seated by the beginning of October.

Sally and Bruce Moon (PCUUC Board Vice President) will co-chair the Ministerial Search Committee. Anyone interested in being on this committee should contact Sally or Bruce.

According to information obtained from the UUA website, and verified by Ian Evison of the Central Midwest District, a part-time minister will cost approximately \$30,000 per year, which includes all expenses (housing allowance, insurance, etc.). This salary would be negotiable.

Pledges for the upcoming fiscal year 2008-2009 and the earnings from the March 8 Fundraising Event will assist us greatly in meeting our goal of hiring a part-time minister.

- Items being donated for the March 8 silent auction are due by March 1.
- Pledges for the upcoming fiscal year are due April 20.

Next steps include:

- Building a budget based on pledges and fundraiser earnings.
- Voting on the Budget and the Long Range Plan at the June 10 Annual Meeting.

Anyone with questions about pledging can speak with Sally Merritt or Mark Wilson (PCUUC Treasurer).

Chaplaincy

Contracts are being prepared and will be signed within the next couple of weeks by Lay Chaplains.

Director of Religious Education Position

Selection is being finalized for a permanent Director of Religious Education.

Long Range Planning Status Update – Mike Merritt

The Long Range Plan seeks to answer the question, “What is the vision for our church?”

The Long Range Plan draft that was recently emailed to all PCUUC members includes information for which the Long Range Planning Committee would like congregational feedback:

- How large should PCUUC grow? The Long Range Plan draft indicates a target of 150 members.
- On what should we focus our efforts as we go forward (see Program Goals)?
- How can we effectively support our Program Goals (see Support Goals)?
- Are the goals set forth in the Long Range Plan draft reasonable in terms of hiring a minister and obtaining a building?

Feedback on the Long Range Plan draft should be sent to Mike Merritt of the Long Range Planning Committee by early May 2008 – planning@prairiecircleuuc.org. The Long Range Planning Committee will revise the Long Range Plan based on feedback received, and the revised Plan will be voted on during the June 10 Annual Congregational Meeting.

Sources for the current draft of the Long Range Plan include:

- 2005-2010 Long Range Plan
- Results from the September 2007 Retreat
- Committee mission statements and survey results by committees on the Long Range Plan goals

Membership Committee Update – Rich Fendrych, Sara May, John Crowley

PCUUC's Membership Function – Rich Fendrych

The PCUUC Membership Committee's mission statement is as follows:

The Membership Committee enables and assists the congregation in growing and maintaining its membership base. Additionally, this committee publicizes the church, manages the website, and periodically hosts an orientation for visitors/guests who indicate an interest in exploring possible membership.

The Membership Committee alone is not responsible for growth. All members of PCUUC have an equal and ongoing responsibility to actively engage and assimilate new people into the congregation. Where there is an effective, all-congregation assimilation strategy and process, growth will be the result.

II. Long Range Plan Goals for Membership Function:

- a) Attract new visitors
- b) Welcome new visitors
- c) Encourage visitors to become members of the Congregation
- d) Assimilate visitors, Friends of PCUUC and members into the PCUUC community life

ATTRACT NEW VISITORS

- Achieved membership in UUA, giving PCUUC greater credibility as a full service UU congregation. Thank you to John and Sara for their work on the application.
- The national UUA website identifies PCUUC as a full service UU congregation, identifies as the closest UU congregation serving Lake County and directs visitors to our website through a direct link.
- Our PCUUC Website has dramatically improved and is a welcoming first contact for many of our visitors.
- We have a Yellow Page Print Ad and website links with SBC and AT&T On-Line Yellow Pages.
- We replaced the sign on the entrance road with a very visible red and white sign that includes our service time and website address. Thank you to Lynn for procuring the new sign and to Tony for his diligence in putting up and taking down the sign each week.
- We provide regular notices of our upcoming Sunday Services and the topics to The Daily Herald, Pioneer Press, and Lake County Journal. These notices are printed without charge. Thank you to Lynn for developing the contacts and sending those notices for the past few years and to Janine for recently taking on the task.
- We purchased special advertising these same newspapers for our December 16 and 24 Services. We had a very large turnout for the Christmas-Eve Service and nearly half of those in attendance were first-time visitors that saw our ads.
- We make a point of asking our visitors from what source they learned about PCUUC. We use that information to focus our efforts in future advertising.

- Future advertising will emphasize the factors that differentiate PCUUC from other churches, including: our focus on the environment, liberal religious education, and small size.
- We would like your help in developing "special feature" articles about upcoming speakers, our small groups, drumming circle, Northwest Institute, what the children are doing in their groups and other RE programs and presenting them to local newspapers. These articles would be free advertising for PCUUC.

WELCOME NEW VISITORS

- Active greeter program with assigned Greeters for each Sunday Service.
- The Greeters strive to engage visitors in conversation before and after the Sunday Service, and introducing them to others that may have similar interests.
- A Visitor's Packet is offered with a welcoming letter from the president, the UU card and information about Adult RE, Covenant groups and our website.
- Visitors are offered a nametag for the next visit. Visitor nametags with a black PCUUC logo.
- Nametags are provided for all members, in a convenient location. Duplicate nametags are available if one is lost or forgotten. The congregation will appear friendlier to visitors and new members if the established members make sure to wear their name tags every Sunday.

ENCOURAGE VISITORS TO BECOME MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION

- Encourage visitors to participate in church activities.
- Encourage visitors to come to the PCUUC Orientation Meeting.
- Three PCUUC Orientation Meetings are presented each year. Attendance has been increasing. Our orientation in May 2007 had five visitors in attendance. In September 2007, we had nine visitors and our orientation last month had 16 visitors and new members in attendance. The Orientation Meetings provide an opportunity for visitors to ask questions, learn about the history of PCUUC, discuss the Seven Principles, learn about the requirements for membership and have lunch with the Membership/Publicity committee and the Board President.
- The monthly newsletter has tips on how you can help increase membership.

ASSIMILATE VISITORS, FRIENDS OF PCUUC AND MEMBERS INTO THE PCUUC COMMUNITY LIFE

- New Member Recognition in Sunday Services to formally introduce new members to the congregation.
- New Member Brunch are held twice a year to celebrate with all the new members.
- Encourage attendance at the Social activities such as Dinners for All, Dinners for eight, the Annual Picnic, Post Thanksgiving and New Year's Brunches.

- Utilize Personal Interests and Skills Record Sheet to engage visitors and new members in the activities of the church.
- Involve interested and new church members in church responsibilities.
- We are going to investigate revitalize the Who-Body Program where new members.
- We are going to develop a Junior Member Status for youth between 12 and 18 with the ceremony of the Membership book and be involved in committee and church work appropriate for their age.

Personal Interests and Skills Record Sheet Information – Sara May

The goals of the Personal Interests and Skills Record Sheet are to collect information for administrative purposes, to assist Religious Education and Hospitality in developing events and programming that meet the needs and interests of the congregation, and to assist other committees and Board members in understanding how congregants may be able to volunteer according to individual talents and skills.

The personal data on the Record Sheet is kept private, but data is requested periodically by Board members and committee chairs regarding interests and skills/talents. In short, the Record Sheets are being effectively used.

Any PCUUC member or friend who has not yet completed a Record Sheet can download one from the PCUUC website, or one can be obtained at the front table in the Barn on Sundays. Return completed forms to Sara May or to any Sunday greeter (wearing a bright green name tag).

Assimilating Newcomers into the Church – John Crowley

Based on information gathered from a September 28, 2006 seminar (hosted by the UUA's Central Midwest District) called "Welcome to the Family: How to Assimilate Newcomers into Your Church," John Crowley presented valuable details to assist PCUUC members in understanding how people do or do not become assimilated as members into churches.

Members should be aware of the importance played by an entire congregation when it comes to welcoming newcomers and assimilating them into the church.

A summary of the principle ideas presented was distributed to each PCUUC member at today's meeting. (Summary can be found at end of this document.)

Membership Summary – Rich Fendrych

In summary, the Long Range Plan calls on the Membership/Publicity Committee to develop a strategic plan to strengthen and deepen the membership growth by approximately 13 per year.

We developed and implemented such a plan over the summer of 2007. We intend to continue developing, refining and implementing our plan. The efforts of the Committees and the Congregation have shown success with 17 new members to-date in the 2007-08 church year. Today, we are sharing some ideas where you can help PCUUC to continue growing. Introduce your self to a visitor, encourage visitors to attend our social activities, think about ways we can attract new visitors. The Membership/Publicity Committee meets the first Sunday of each month here after the Service. Feel free to drop in and share your ideas.

Pledge Drive Kick-Off – Mark Wilson

The consensus at the September 2007 Retreat was to hire a part time minister first, then eventually obtain our own building.

According to information on the UUA website, a part time minister costs approximately \$30,000 per year, which includes all expenses, insurance, housing allowance, etc. This number is negotiable.

Ideally, a 20% increase in each person's pledge for the upcoming fiscal year 2008-2009 would provide enough money for a part time minister and keep PCUUC in a strong financial position, allowing us to achieve more of our large goals (such as obtaining a building).

PCUUC's goals might be reached without a 20% increase in pledges, but it would be more difficult.

The pledge drive for the upcoming fiscal year 2008-2009 begins today, and pledges are due by April 20.

Based on the pledges received and the funds earned from the March 8 fundraising event, a budget will be constructed by the Finance Committee following April 20. This budget will be presented to the PCUUC Board at the May 2008 Board meeting for approval. The budget will then be voted on by the congregation at the June 2008 Annual Congregational meeting.

Concerns from the Floor – Sally Merritt & Bruce Moon

Norine Fendrych – Part time minister clarification

Q: What does a part time minister mean in terms of how often he/she will conduct sermons each month and how long he/she will be under contract?

A: (Sally) A part time minister would probably conduct two sermons each month. An annual contract for a minister is standard, and it is usually renewed if the congregation is satisfied with the minister.

Brian Egan – Part time minister net cost

Q: What would the net cost of a part time minister be?

A: (Mark Wilson) We would save money on speaker fees with a part time minister – there would be an average of a 2/3 decrease in speaker fees.

Inge Crowley – Extend members' time on Board

Q: Recommends that the PCUUC Board extend the time of board members to two years instead of one.

A: (Sally) Suggests that the Nominating Committee look into this further. Based on information gathered at a recent Central Midwest District meeting for Board Presidents, Sally explained that there is great variety among UU congregations in terms of Board make up, especially in the number of members on the Board and the amount of time that each member is part of the Board. As a result, there are many options for our own Board regarding how it can be updated.

Norine Fendrych – More volunteers needed

Q: What can we do about urging more people to volunteer? Suggests an alphabetical method for helping with Barn set up and clean up, cleaning mugs, bringing snack, (etc.) on Sundays.

A: (Sally) The issue of urging more volunteers will be discussed at the next PCUUC Board meeting (on February 19). Some congregations have a Volunteer Coordinator whose role is to find volunteers to fill church positions and needs.

Tonia Vershaw – Clearer presentation of event info needed

Q: Is it possible to specify locations and contact information in announcements for events and meetings? Clearer presentation of events is needed.

(PCUUC Administrator Sara May will work on this in the Order of Service and provide a clearer list of events and locations for each week's events and meetings)

Rich Fendrych – Paid website work

Q: Suggests that the website work not be a volunteer effort – that it should be paid work since it is a key marketing tool for the congregation.

A: (Sally) This can also be discussed at the next PCUUC Board meeting.

Adjourn

UU-Sponsored Church Growth Seminar, September 28, 2006

“Welcome to the Family: How to Assimilate Newcomers into Your Church”

This seminar was hosted by the Central Midwest District of the Unitarian Universalist Association at Countryside UU Church in Palatine, Illinois. Seminar Leader: Charles Arn, Ed.D. (Instructional Design and Technology), President of Church Growth, Inc., Monrovia, California. Website: <http://www.churchgrowth.net/index.htm>

Seminar Goals: “To help you (lay or professional church leader) to better understand how people do or do not become assimilated into your church fellowship, and to equip you to develop a workable plan to see more of your church’s visitors become active, responsible members of your church.” Specific goals in list form are at <http://www.churchgrowth.net/seminars/special/welcomefamily.htm>

Principal Ideas:

1. Assimilation of newcomers does not happen automatically. The responsibility for assimilating newcomers rests with the church, not the newcomer. “Assimilation” means “to include into the larger whole; to involve; to make one.” Assimilation is all about connecting people, seeing outsiders become insiders. Simple neglect to actively assimilate a newcomer can lead to dropout. Most churches can improve their effectiveness in assimilating newcomers.
2. Visitors represent 100% of a church’s growth potential.
3. Assimilation is an ongoing process, beginning with the visitor’s first contact with the church and, for those who remain, extending up to 2-3 years forward. It can take up to 2-3 years before a new member experiences a sense of belonging, the newcomer’s earmark of a successful assimilation process.
4. Within this time frame, the first twelve months are of greater importance, the first three visits are of even more importance, and the first ten minutes after the service on the first visit is critical above all else. Surveys indicate that most first-time visitors decide whether they are coming back based on the “friendliness” of a church, and that they determine the “friendliness” of a church during the ten minutes immediately after the first service they attend. “You don’t have a second chance for a good first impression.”

Most people don’t come to church to learn theology. They seek relationship, community, love, caring, and relevance. They may be attracted initially by the theology, but they are retained by the friendships they form subsequently. Every church thinks of itself as a friendly church, but this is not necessarily the newcomer’s initial perception. The friendship factor is probably the most important factor in assimilation.

5. Non-growing churches typically do not have a follow-up strategy for persons who return a second or third time – they concentrate only on first-time visitors. Recognizing that people who come back are increasingly receptive, a church needs an intentional and unique strategy for each of these three groups of people: first-time guests, second-time guests, and third-time guests.

6. When a person has visited a church at least three times but drops out during the first six months, it is usually the result of an inadequate answer to one of more of these three questions:
- Can I make friends in this church?
 - Is there a place I can fit in this church?
 - Does this church really want me?

Continued...

Summary notes, UU-Sponsored Church Growth Seminar, September 28, 2006.

contd.

When a person has visited a church at least three times but drops out during the second six months (months 7-12), it is usually the result of an inadequate answer to one or more of these other questions:

- Are my new church friends as good as my old ones?
 - Are the benefits of remaining involved worth the costs?
 - Does this church feel my contribution is important?
7. Small groups are a key to assimilation. “The more small groups you can offer, the better”; and, “If you want to grow your church, start up a new group!” Churches must create places and opportunities for people to become involved so that they can feel a part of something – they are useful, they are contributing meaningfully. Just limiting people to “watching the parade go by” does not promote assimilation. A healthy small group will provide opportunities for fellowship, intimacy, spiritual growth, community service, intellectual growth, outreach to others, development of meaningful friendships and/or fun that cannot be realized via the Sunday service alone. Additionally, small groups that reach out to outsiders can serve as a “side door” where new people can get connected before considering membership.
8. Getting new members involved quickly in church affairs is also a key to assimilation. Encourage small group and committee participation, utilization of some unique skill a new member can bring to a particular task. “New members should also be well represented in policy-making positions: 20% of your board and committees should be made up of newer members.” No member, old or new, should involve himself in more than two leadership roles at the same time. Reasons: (1) to leave open opportunities for newcomers, and (2) to guard against overextending yourself.
9. In view of the fact that assimilation is a process of up-to-three years in duration, and that every newcomer’s needs and aspirations are unique, effective assimilation calls for church-wide dedication to facilitating, or managing, the assimilation process. Some churches have after-service hosts in addition to their greeters. The after-service host must listen, then “hand off” the visitor to someone similar – single mom, conservationist, senior, RE parents, social activist, twenty-something, etc. Some churches employ “the three-minute rule”: talk to the newcomer, or other person you don’t know that well, for three minutes, then hand him/her/them off to someone else. Other churches assign a “personal

ambassador” to each newcomer/visitor after the initial greeting. Still other churches may have separate committees for “evangelism” and assimilation.

10. “A newer member will be seen by an older member(s) as either an asset or as a liability. This awareness will occur within a year. There is no third option.”
“Generally, someone who does nothing will be seen as a liability.”

Ending comments:

Dr. Arn has 23 years experience in the church growth movement: author, lecturer, seminar & conference leader, consultant (to predominantly Christian churches) on evangelism- and growth-related issues. The balance of this seminar (not covered in these notes) dealt with “how to” type issues, including: modeling of the assimilation process, identifying assimilation problem areas in a church, strategies for the “first-ten-minutes window,” measuring visitor return rates, “Five Guidelines for Effective Visitor Follow-up,” analysis of typical drop-out patterns, developing effective first-year strategies, and “Key Questions to Answer Before Starting Your Next Small Group.” Appended to the seminar workbook is the article “Making ‘Outsiders’ into ‘Insiders’: Six Approaches to the Assimilation of New Members” by Lyle Schaller.