

St. Lawrence District Board of Trustees
Board Retreat
August 17, 2007

Notre Dame Retreat House
Canandaigua, NY

Attending: Ernie Hall, Robb Smith, David Friedman, Casey Asprooth-Jackson, Jerol Kent, Karen Palmer, Rev. Tom Chulak, Debby Herman, Jeanne Crane

Opening Words: Karen read about vision from Tom Owen-Towle's book "Growing the Beloved Community"

Jeanne Crane facilitated visioning and goal planning:

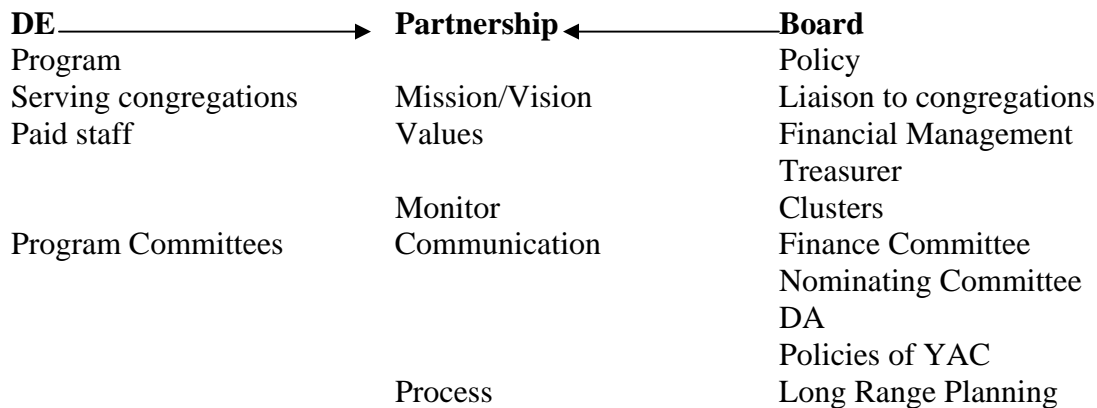
Covenant

Jeanne led us in a process to develop a covenant statement. She will take our ideas and provide a draft for us to review.

Roles

Jeanne emphasized that trust is key. Roles need to be clear. It is important to do role clarification periodically as we move forward.

We agreed that while we are engaged in forming policy, we are also active as a board in monitoring and understanding what is happening within the District.



Some additional thoughts: It's important to keep up with what's happening in other Districts (Ernie H.) and with the UUA (David F.). David reminded us that the Board has fiduciary responsibility according to NYS law. Tom would find it helpful if requests to staff are copied to him. He will get the generic DE job description to Ernie.

Mission/Vision/Goals

Board members brainstormed as a start to developing an expanded District vision, Thoughts generated included: a focus on others, “one”, community, connections, shared ministry, beloved community, interactions among all generations, multi-cultural/anti-racist, expanding, inclusive, outreaching

Board Goals for the coming year

1. Cluster building
2. Intentional leadership recruitment—Nominating process
3. Stewardship initiative—single ask (APF/District Dues)
4. Transforming DA
5. Developing a District vision utilizing the cluster structure

We will consider sending leaders to the Summer Institute in the Ohio Meadville District to research the possibilities for our District.

Minutes

Approval of DA minutes—April 28, 2007—MSP

Approval of SLD Board Meeting-April 28, 2007—MSP

Approval of Conference Call Minutes—July 31, 2007—MSP

Appointment

Approved appointment of Katie Replogle to the Nominating Committee to serve the term vacated by Debby Herman —MSP

Fiscal Year Close

Reviewed the current status of end-of-year financial closing ('06-'07). There are still some remaining details to work out. Roger Thielking will provide a final report. We also reviewed the approved '07-'08 budget—see attached. Ernie noted that there will be some challenges related to this budget. We'll need to watch our expenses carefully.

Reports

DE: Tom is experiencing some shifts in his time allocation due to being back to ¾ time with the District and not having the ability to partner with Jeanne. Tom will have to put more time into building and renewing relationships and greater committee involvement. Five ministerial searches for part-time ministers are going on. We have a smaller pool of ministers than usual. Two new ministers are coming into the District to serve the Ithaca and May Memorial congregations. Start up sessions are being planned.

Lifespan RE Program Consultant: [See Attachment #1](#)

UUA Trustee Report:

David highlighted the main issues being addressed by the UUA Board:

Independent affiliates: UUA Board is turning down many previous affiliated relationships due to re-evaluating the criteria for affiliation. The UUA is also re-evaluating whether other organizations should be under UUA that are not currently.

Theological Schools: UUA Board wants to fund more initiatives with schools rather than non-designated funding. Concerned that Theological Schools have not been as viable financially. Trying to track more carefully how UUA monies are being used.

International associations: Looking at these organizations and re-evaluating the effectiveness of each of these for our congregations. Also examining the financial soundness of each organization.

Governance: Exploring policy governance or some form of it.

Congregations Come First: Learned from last survey that some initial ideas need to be thought through more carefully. Also looking at pilot projects that are happening in our District and others. David felt Tom's presentation to the team was very helpful.

President's report: [See Attachment #2](#)

Cluster reports:

Robb, Jerry, David, Karen, and Ernie presented cluster reports for the North Country, Metro, Rochester area, Southern Tier, and Mohawk Valley clusters. Tom relayed news of the Syracuse area congregations in lieu of Ken Mochel's absence. The congregational stories are being passed on to Ellen Asprooth (our new District Reporter) for inclusion in the newspacket.

General Assembly Feedback

Ingathering: Refreshments would have been nice. Chairs should be arranged in a circle. Make it more of a social and interactive time.

Karen attended the Wellspring workshop offered by Rochester Unitarian which was very well attended and well received.

We would like to have a District workshop on the Study Action Issues. Tom suggested that this be raised with the Social Justice Council.

Association Sunday is October 14. We need to promote this in our congregations.

UUA President Bill Sinkford is committed to settling more ministers of color. Ernie mentioned that Schenectady and Albany have larger congregations that might be willing to expand their ministerial services and are also centers of diversity.

District Assembly planning

Tom stated that we've doubled the size of DA since our separation from Canada. Feels it would be good to hire a DA coordinator as a stipend positions. Last year had \$2200 in revenue from DA. The understanding is that the coordinator would be paid from the expected revenue from the upcoming DA.

Possible network model:

The Leadership Development committee has agreed to develop the DA program again.

We need a local area representative and the help of our office administrator, Sue Tabone.

Christy would continue creating the brochure. It would be good to have a clergy person involved. Possibly we would add a youth or young adult representative. The new coordinator would pull everything together.

The board would continue to develop the theme.

****Motion: To hire a DA coordinator and pay a \$2500 stipend to be paid from the funds raised at DA and work with a network system. MSP**

Tom suggested that Linda Friedman (past chair of GA planning committee) would be a great candidate for the DA coordinator.

****Motion: Authorize Tom to offer the DA coordinator position to Linda Friedman. MSP**

We considered several themes for the 2008 DA including Beloved Community, Earth Ministry, Family Ministry, Conscience in Public Life, and Spirituality and Justice. Tom will check with Tom Owen-Towle to see if he would be available as the keynote speaker on the theme of Beloved Community.

We thanked Debby for arranging the Owego Treadway Inn for DA.

Shared District Ministry project

The Four District project is being funded by UUA Congregational Services. Tom is the coordinator. The UU Leadership Team Institute has been the first successful initiative of this project. This appears to have been a breakthrough based on very positive participant feedback.

The UUA is funding a staff person in Young Adult ministry for each District. Three of them were present at the Institute and acted as resources to the participants. There is an effort to connect the Lifespan Program Consultants and four Youth staff. Casey mentioned that Jody was interested in trying to collaborate on providing UUA youth workshops between the four districts. There will also be initiatives to bring UUA staff together with District staff to work together. Different staff groupings are going to be training together.

Cluster Development

Karen facilitated a discussion of how we might help strengthen the cluster relationships that have been building over the past couple of years. Karen will act as an overall coordinator and will work with Tom, the board, and others to activate some of the clusters that have not been able to meet in a while. The clusters will be publicized in the Directory. So far, four of the clusters appear to be working very well and have developed shared ministries through joint projects and strong relational connections.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Palmer

Attachment #1

REPORT TO THE ST. LAWRENCE DISTRICT BOARD OF TRUSTEES From the Acting Program Consultant for Lifespan Faith Development August 17, 2007

- **DRE Transitions:** Albany has hired Leah Purcell as their new DRE, and I have been able to connect with her quite often, at the Albany church, at the RE Leaders retreat, and via phone and email. Leah is choosing to immediately embark on the RE Credentialing program, and has just attended the 4-district Leadership Institute – she promises to be a great asset to the Albany congregation. Schenectady has hired an RE Coordinator, Melissa MacKinnon, to serve this year while they continue the search for a settled DRE. Melissa is also very excited about the job, and plans to attend all of the RE training opportunities coming up this fall (RE Ingathering, Renaissance module on Administering an RE Program, New DRE Workshop, etc.). Utica has replaced former DRE Josh McKee with an RE Coordinator, Julie Pawalek.
- **Young Adult-Campus Ministry:** I am very excited about the hiring of our new YACM consultant, Robbie Brydon. As I mentioned during our phone conference call, Robbie was selected from a very competitive pool of applicants. Robbie and I are already planning a quick start-up for this fall, including reaching out via letters and email to all of our congregations and working with individual young adult and campus ministry leaders, scheduling a leaders' meeting in Syracuse, and recruiting members for a district YACM steering committee. He will be connected via email list-serves to colleagues in the four-district project, as well as continentally through the UUA's program. I believe that he and the Metro and JPD YACM consultants plan to meet with each other at ConCentric (the continental YACM annual conference), this week in Toronto. Robbie will be providing you with a separate report, introducing himself and outlining his plans in more detail. I'm wondering if the Board will be sending Robbie some kind of letter of agreement, confirming his employment, amount of stipend, etc.?
- **Youth-Adult Committee:** As Jody Brown will mention in her report, the YAC has chosen two new advisors, one to replace Jen Crowe and the other to fill the third advisor slot – one of the new advisors is Jody's son Casey, and the other is a former Ithaca youth advisor. I've talked with Jody about her joining Tom and me in visiting some of the cluster meetings this fall, so that she can let people know about the YAC's activities and resources they can provide, answer questions about youth issues, etc. As I mentioned in my last report, she will be leaving the Youth Coordinator position in June of '08, so she has offered to write up a job description based on her experiences. We will probably want to tweak this to reflect additional thoughts that Tom and I and/or the search committee may have, but it will make a good starting point. I will convene a search committee in early spring – I think it will be good to have a couple of youth members on the committee, but I do not want to make this a YAC responsibility. I don't think we'll have any trouble filling the position, based on interest in the advisor positions, and the positive response to the YACM coordinator search. Jody will fill you in on other YAC details – I would just add that I'm pleased that our teens are reaching out to nearby districts in an effort to coordinate youth events and trainings.
- **Religious Education Committee:** The RE Committee has two new members on board – the new DRE in Saratoga Springs, Dari Brennan and Jan Hutslar from Canton. No one on the committee wants to serve as treasurer this year, so Lisa Horne, the chair, plans to stay in close touch with the district treasurer and informally monitor committee finances. However REC expense vouchers will no longer go through an REC treasurer before being passed on to the district treasurer, as has been done in the past. The committee wants to continue to handle the registration and income/expenses for its trainings and events however, with their Training

Coordinator, rather than Sue Tabone, performing that task. The committee will continue to budget for and disburse scholarships for RE trainings, directly through the district treasurer. The annual RE Fall Ingathering is scheduled for September 29th, and will feature Rev. Deane Perkins as keynote speaker. I will meet with new DREs during the ingathering, and also co-lead a New DRE workshop in October. The RE Committee is sponsoring a Renaissance module on Administration in October, and we held a very successful OWL training in June, and Spirit Play training in July.

- **Safe Congregations:** I think the Safe Congregations workshop I led in Amherst went well – feedback was quite positive. About 15 people attended, from Amherst, Buffalo, Hamburg, Canandaigua, Rochester and Syracuse. I attended the June meeting of the Southern Tier congregations, at which time they asked me to offer the workshop again, so that has been scheduled for October 27 at the Athens-Sheshequin church. I also plan to begin work on a district safety policy this fall. Although I could adapt another district’s policy on my own, after looking at what other districts have done I realize I should convene a committee and develop our policy in collaboration with stake-holder groups. This process, although it will take more time, will provide broader input as far as our district’s particular needs, and will be more likely to result in buy-in from our constituents.
- **Unirondack Retreat:** The RE Leaders Retreat (3rd annual!) at Camp Unirondack was again very successful, and enjoyed by all who participated. 32 people came for the weekend - a mix of DREs, RE teachers and committee members, Board members, children and teens from nine congregations. The new camp director (Don Gottfried) and his assistant are excellent – both have extensive training and experience in education, and in particular working with special needs children and youth. Don led an extremely useful and well-received workshop on classroom management, Mindy Whisenhunt led one on social justice projects for youth, and we also scheduled a time for sharing resources and ideas – in addition to all the time spent socializing, hiking and canoeing! Although this event always coincides with GA (it’s the only available weekend), I think there is a lot of potential for this retreat to become bigger, a real networking opportunity for the district.
- **Clusters:** Next fall Tom has suggested that he and I go on the road and together attend all of the fall district cluster meetings. This will provide a good opportunity for us both to make congregational leaders and staff aware of the services and resources the district can provide. As I mentioned above, I hope that our district Youth Coordinator, and possibly even the YACM Consultant, may be able to occasionally join us - or perhaps make separate visits.
- **Website:** If possible, I would like to have a page on our district website where I could post important lifespan RE information - upcoming trainings and events, new resources, and other newsletter type information. I currently send our DREs long email notes with this information, and events are posted separately on the calendar, but I think having easy access from a webpage would be much more convenient for them.
- **District Assembly 2008:** As we discussed at the April Board meeting, I will be working with the Binghamton congregation as a staff liaison on next year’s District Assembly. I was not able to find a hotel/conference center in the city of Binghamton which was affordable, large enough to accommodate us, and available that particular weekend. Therefore I have reserved the Owego Treadway Inn and Conference Center for us. Owego is about 20 miles west of Binghamton, and 30 miles east of Ithaca. Although it would obviously be preferable to hold the meeting in Binghamton, I think this arrangement will work well. I am providing details of the proposal (which I have agreed to, with Ernie’s approval), in a separate Word file.

Travel completed since April 28th Board meeting, or currently planned:

May 19: Led a district-wide workshop on Safe Congregations/Risk Management in Amherst, at the request of the western NY cluster.

May 21-24: Attended a retreat/conference for UUA district RE Program Consultants at Murray Grove.

June 1: Participated in the recognition service for Albany's departing religious educator, Ann D'Attilio.

June 14: Attended the Southern Tier Cluster meeting at the Athens/Sheshequin church - focus of the meeting was religious education.

June 22 – 24: Planned and attended a retreat for SLD RE Leaders at Unirondack

August 15: Will drive to Youngstown, Ohio to pick up the Gould Library from Karen Lapidus, prior to driving to the Board retreat.

September 28- 29: RE Committee meeting followed by the RE Fall Ingathering at the Ithaca church. I will meet informally with new DREs during the afternoon of the ingathering.

October 11-15: LREDA Fall Conference, preceded by meeting of UUA Program Consultants in San Antonio, Texas.

Oct. 27: Will lead a repeat of the May Safe Congregations workshop in Athens, at the request of the So. Tier cluster

October 30-31: I will co-lead a New DRE Workshop with Pat Ellenwood in Syracuse.

November 3 or 10 (date tentative): Meeting of YACM leaders in Syracuse, led by our new YACM Consultant. I will attend, and meet separately with Robbie.

November 8-9: LREDA Seaway chapter meeting in Buffalo, followed by Board meeting on Nov. 9-10.

Early November: Expect to lead a congregational DRE Start-up workshop in Albany – date TBD.

Respectfully submitted, Deborah Herman

Attachment #2
President's Report
August 2007

My main activity over the past few months has been trying to figure out exactly what this new role entails! I've attended meetings of the Financial Resources Group and the Metro cluster, and met with Tom and Karen to plan this retreat and discuss other business. The search for a bookkeeper was a significant task. I've had numerous phone calls with Sue, Tom, Roger, Deb, Karen, and others, as well as, as you might expect, many, many emails. I've discovered that the District Presidents Association sends a few emails each day on a wide variety of topics and often expects a response.

I've tried to keep you updated regularly on recent activities that I am aware of, but here's a quick recap:

- The Nominating Committee has nominated Katie Replogle from Athens-Sheshequin to replace Debbie Herman on their committee.
- The search committee for the Young Adult and Campus Ministry Consultant nominated Robbie Brydon from Toronto for this stipend position, and this has been approved by the Board.
- The search committee for the Bookkeeper position recommended Patrick Roach of Little Falls for this stipend position, and this has been approved by the Board.
- Roger Thielking is close to closing the books on 2006-07, and has issued preliminary news that we will not need to draw from reserves (\$6200 had been budgeted) and are very close to a break-even year.
- Reports back from our representatives at General Assembly in Portland have been very positive, with a good turn-out at the District in-gathering. Among other activities, Tom and Karen met with Lauren Amabile of the UUA to talk about a fresh strategy in SLD around the APF and District giving.
- The inaugural session of the four-district UULTI we held with very good attendance and reportedly a very positive outcome for all.
- Tom, Karen, and I had a chance to attend a meeting of the Metro (Capital District) cluster where Tom had invited Rev. Ken Belden, minister of the Wellsprings new-start congregation in North Chester County, PA to talk about starting a new congregation. It was an animated and exciting conversation, where we were able to talk about the most recent thinking on launching and sustaining a congregation. The Metro group is very focused on starting a new congregation at some point in the future, probably in Clifton Park, which is south Saratoga County, the fastest-growing county in NYS.
- Tom's sabbatical plans that he discussed with us have been approved by the UUA Leadership Council.
- Deb Herman has made good progress on local arrangements for 2008 District Assembly, and we'll discuss this at the retreat.

That's it for now, there will be much more news and discussion coming up during the retreat.

Ernie