

Board Report to the Congregation for FY 2018-2019

It is my pleasure to provide a summary 2018-2019 Report to the Congregation.

Our major accomplishment: We are still standing. Actually we are moving forward, sometimes steadily and at other times haltingly. But the direction is forward and positive.

In July, 2018, we started the year with major meetings – An extra board meeting in addition to the regular one, a half-day retreat with Committee chairs, another half day with the Board, and the Special Congregational meeting. An omen, perhaps?

Of course, the extra Congregational meeting on July 29, was the one of greatest impact, and probably the most important meeting we have had in 30 plus years. At that meeting, as you can see in the minutes, Plan B to expand the building was approved by a 59-7 vote; also approved was authorization for the Board to take all necessary action to move the expansion forward, within the dollars available. Thus, the Board read, studied and approved an unprecedented number of contracts – for architectural drawings, cottage demolition, asbestos studies and removal, utility easements, the actual construction contract, and of late, a promissory note, to name a few, all related to the building expansion.

A few have said that all we talked about this past year was the building expansion and money. Well, it *was* a huge part of our discussions – and tiring to everyone, but necessary. However, as you can see in the committee reports you have been sent, it is was far from all that was done. To conduct and expand our normal activities, deal with unexpected events and get the building expansion designed and under construction has been a phenomenal achievement. One we can all be proud of.

And, there were other agreements signed – the most recent and of noteworthy importance – the agreement signed on June 23, 2019 with the Reverend Robin Zucker, our new interim minister! We had no idea when we started the year that we would be looking for a new minister or that we would find one we very much wanted and who very much wanted us.

So, back to the Board and CLC retreat. We started by discussing what our colleagues should know about our work styles and idiosyncracies; hopefully knowing that would assist us in working together. And I think it has, to a certain extent. We also developed a list of what we want for Beacon and from Beacon in the coming year. In July, I gave a 5 minute talk at a Beacon Service about what I want from the Beacon year and then asked congregants (their input is attached) to write what they wanted. The Board and CLC also listed the positives and what they would like to see in the coming year (attached). From all this input was developed a list of five aspirations for the year.

Unfortunately, our aspirations did not receive the attention I had hoped for, due to quite a few un-normal happenings, however, as you will see in the committee reports, committees were out there making things happen. The aspirations and their status are listed here:

Beacon Aspirations for 2018-19

The Beacon Congregation and its committees will, through sharing of our time, talent and treasure,

1. *Continue and enhance actions that create a welcoming place of peace, warmth and unity; of energy and inspiration; of active involvement by all ages; and of fun, compassion and spiritual discovery.*

Action Steps:

- a. Each Board member will serve as greeter at least once per quarter.
- b.. Each Board member will arrive at least fifteen minutes prior to the service or stay 15 minutes after the service, purposely seeking out visitors and engaging in a conversation with one or two of them per Sunday.
- c. Board Members will seek out visitors to sit with for the Sunday Service.
- d. RE is embarking on an effort to involve children, youth and families with programs that may occur at the church or elsewhere in the community in an effort to meet families where they are. Staff will provide information to parents through blogs, emails, etc, to keep families informed, provide information helpful to families as their children explore various faiths, and receive input on what is important to the parents.
- e. RE will seek Beacon member involvement in the RE activities.

Status: The Board member involvement has been accomplished and committees were encouraged to participate. The RE efforts continue, probably the largest new programs have been First Sunday Fun Sunday, and 4th Sunday breakfast. The coming of Age program was successful; we are still looking forward to parental involvement in Beacon from community participants.

Chalice circles continued providing religious exploration and discovery to the adults in the congregation.

Certainly, this is an on-going effort. Genuine warmth and friendliness is a hallmark of this congregation.

2. *Continue and expand community outreach and involvement through social justice, community action, and whatever avenues and ideas may present themselves as needing our attention, and align with our mission and vision.*

- a. Continue to be open to community rentals to organizations compatible with Beacon's purpose.
- b. Continue the Share-the-Plate program with community social services agencies.
- c. Continue to participate in serving meals at the Food Kitchen
- d. Continue participation in community events such as Gun Violence vigils, advocacy for the poor, the immigrant, and other disenfranchised individuals/groups.
- e. Provide a video series on church safety and invite Beacon as well as other community church groups.
- f. Continue to participate in Day at the Legislature; participate with UUJAZZ to stay abreast of justice issues across Arizona.
- g. Launch the Church Safety initiative.

Status: These vibrant committees and individuals continue to thrive and work on their mission. They have vitality and great visions for the future. For detailed information, see the committee reports.

3. *Complete Building Expansion project within budget and with timely updates for, and feedback from, the Congregation.*

Action Steps:

- a. The Building Expansion Team will continue to move toward construction with completion projected toward end of 2018-19 fiscal year.
- b. The finance committee and Building Expansion Team will continue to monitor payment of pledges.
- a. RE will reconfigure their outdoor activities while the construction is underway.

Status: More than half of the donors and more than half of the monetary pledges were paid in the first year. At the end of this first year, only one pledge is not up to date. Remarkable. Plans have been approved by the City, a fun and enthusiastic groundbreaking was held and the project is slowly moving forward. Several unexpected issues have arisen – rain the entire first week of the contract, requirements for electrical access changed by the city (waiver received), additional asbestos testing with one tiny spot of asbestos, entryway footings needing more reconstruction than anticipated closing the front door longer than anticipated, and possible plasticity of soils. With respect to a bridge loan, rather than use a bank, several members have stepped forward to participate in the bridge loan funding, saving the project bank fees and a higher interest rate. Expected completion is now September, 2019.

4. *Explore avenues to provide a more stable financial footing for the organization for now and in the future.*

Action Steps:

- a. Explore new approach to building budget with needs driving the budget rather than pledge amount.
- b. Explore feasibility of establishing an endowment fund (often called Legacy giving); if deemed feasible, establish policies and roll-out plan.
- c. Implement Stewardship pledge drive with testimonials, updates on changes occurring at Beacon so that the congregation is educated about ministerial search, Building expansion, hiring of staff, the basics of pledging, cost of running the Beacon organization and each member and friends' contribution to the success of the organization.

Status: The new budget process, with more involvement from the Board, was put in place and Bylaws amended to reflect the process; the Legacy giving program is expected to move forward in the

upcoming fiscal year. The Stewardship drive did occur; the pledges were not equal to last year's. We were told this might happen. Approximately 12 pledge units who pledged last year did not pledge last year, and this is something that needs follow-up.

Finally, to all who participated in any way, positively working toward any of these Aspirations, thank you.

There was a continuation of the efforts started last year of updating policies and procedures, approving charters, getting these items online. For example, the minutes back to May of 2013 are now on our website. A major accomplishment.

Often Board work is not very glamorous – attending to business items such as budget adjustments, approving credit card limits, etc. Otherwise we were fixing a glitch here, there and there, soothing ruffled feathers, cleaning toilets and covering the office when staff departed for better jobs. In all, three positions were hired and replaced last year: office manager, custodian and music director. We regretted the loss of each staff person, but they have been successfully replaced with well qualified folks. And of course, when Rev. Kevin resigned it threw us into a totally unexpected cycle of replacement and then when he moved up his resignation, even more opportunities presented themselves. Many of you have stepped right up and filled the gap admirably. Just possibly the biggest gap to be filled was the Sunday service message. And the Worship Associates have done this job beautifully. Supervision of staff and general operations has been covered by the Board Vice President. This, too, has been a major task.

Many details have been left out. I am sure I will continue to think of things that should have been noted. If there are major accomplishments that need to be in this report, it can be amended, even after June 30.

Finally, looking toward next year, the Search Committee did a brief survey of two questions and an open-ended question to determine what you think we need to concentrate on in the next year with our new minister. There were many ideas, of course, but certain topics stood out: The need to grow the congregation; our financial health; getting through the construction and into the new space without undue stress; increased volunteer participation, attracting families with kids, and a dynamic minister to keep folks coming! It was overwhelmingly positive. I believe we have a congregation who knows improvements are needed, has the interest and dedication to work toward solutions, while enjoying the warmth and

support that we provide to each other - when things are going smoothly *and* when there are bumps and sometimes unexpected detours in the road.

To all of you who helped this year, in any way whatsoever, *thank you*. It has been a roller-coaster kind of year, but we are ending with positive, hopeful, even exhilarating excitement for what we are and can be. Many, many thanks.

Sincerely,

Dora Harrison

President of Board of Trustees 2018-19

Attachments

Input from Service of July 9, 2018

Question: When you come to a Beacon Service on Sunday morning, what do you want, expect, like, and or dislike?

1. Enjoy the music, time for contemplation, humor and sharing
2. Enjoy the community, spirit. No negatives!
3. Suggest posting title of service and for upcoming services, on a poster outside front wall of church, sufficiently large to be seen by passing pedestrians and motorist.
4. Community, friendship and shared purpose, information on the church, a sermon or program that touches, challenges, enlightens, inspires and surprises.
5. Like everything! Keep up the uplifting messages in these troubling times.
6. I would like for services to be audio recorded, then posted on website. I am always with the kids and cannot participate.
7. Like Eco-spiritualism.
8. To see friends – my community – a welcoming place even for newcomers. I want to be inspired, encouraged, activated to make the world a better place than I find it.
9. At a church in New Jersey announcements/business were at the end of the service (after the service). No one left before the announcements! Announcements at end of service please. They did not clap, but “clapped” by rubbing their hands together.. I really liked that.

10. I expect to come away with a new insight/perspective/learning. I want to be different than when I arrived. We very much like the energy of the church family. Very welcoming to us as frequent visitors.
11. Peace, stillness, community. I dislike using "Joys and concerns" for political statements.
12. Love the community, being greeted warmly, the choir. I don't like the little subgroups that complain and stir up trouble. I wish we could communicate better when there are issues to solve.
13. Community, music, thoughtful contemplation.
14. Ice Cream!
15. I like the new order of service. The slow seems more natural. Everyone is very welcoming. Brief announcements are good.
16. I would like a bigger commitment to diversity (age, race, gender, perspectives, etc.) at Beacon.
17. Connection with Community, important for over 30 years. The essence of Beacon is Heart. I expect an interesting program, lots of friendly people. I like the heart-centered energy of the Beacon community; I feel welcomed and valued.
I dislike the crowding in the foyer. Difficult to have a meaningful conversation.
18. What I want from a service: to expand my thinking, to be inspired, to be encouraged to action.
What I expect: a well-planned and organized service; warm welcome to everyone.
What I like: love and comfort among friends; feeling safe to express myself, acceptance, being part of a local and national movement that works for progressive values; our covenant and seven principles.
Dislike – noise that interferes with hearing the service, some of the music (I am picky), lengthy joys and concerns, but that cannot be helped.
19. Messages that are inspiring, hopeful and that provide food for thought. Services to remind us of why we come together on Sunday
20. Lovely music and inspiring singing.

What do you want from Beacon at times other than the Sunday Service?

1. I want a sense of community and a place to find friendship; a peaceful place.
2. Enjoy the social interchange and opportunities for service.
3. Post-service: Q/A/sharing re: service with worship leader for that day's service.
Expansion of ideas, sharing of individual perspectives about the service.
Anytime: New member outreach that is not necessarily Sunday-Service centric.
4. Opportunities to make meaningful contributions to Beacon and community.
5. Perhaps a few more informal activities for newcomers? I want to meet more members; I'm longing for a church community, but don't know how to meet people and let people get to know me. The post-service social time is sometimes awkward

- when we don't know anyone – more structured activities would help me. I am willing to volunteer.
6. Active families who take advantage of the diverse programming
 7. Working together on important things
 8. A sense of usefulness to my community – moving us forward toward a community goal, both within and without Beacon.
 9. I wish I could participate in more of the different circles/opportunities. My work schedule is too variable. I will try to join in educational/spiritual opportunities when I can. I love that you have Flag Folk Project and Humanist Discovery meetings here.
 10. Beacon offers so much that we already don't take advantage of. This is a wonderful church for us and our needs.
 11. Be visible in the Flagstaff community; be active with social justice; continue teaching/discussion of racial injustice.
 12. More building space for programs. More community and outreach, once we have a bigger space.
 13. Gathering of parents of young children where parent could have tea or coffee and the children could watch a movie in another room.
 14. More active outreach and work within the community – activities that will draw more humans in to see what we do.
 15. I want our building to be busy every day and night, with activities for all ages, for the community as well as the congregation
 16. I cherish the caring that is demonstrated among our membership, not just on Sundays.
 17. Aside from Sunday service what has been and continues to be important to me are things such as singing in the choir, covenant groups, serving at the food kitchen, supper circles, the auction, the yard sale, 4th of July parade, etc.
 18. Beacon provides a place to be reminded that I have many faithful friends I love and trust. I appreciated the caring circle; it feels good to know it's there when I need it.

Beacon Planning Retreat, Saturday, July 14, 2018

In attendance: Kay Johnson, Bill Towler, Terry White, Barry Brennamen, Char Tarashanti, Nancy Paxton, Theresa deBoer, Kevin Lawson, Lynda Dorweiler, Kevin Parkes, Dennis Spurlin, Anne Wittke, Dora Harrison, Diana Roy, Carl Taylor.

Introductions: each person identified two work habits that define their work style – for our future reference in working together.

Soundscapes – we relaxed and were quiet while listening, looking and reading quotes on Music Choices TV channel.

The focus of the morning was to set goals for the year. We started by reviewing what is positive about Beacon. Positive things mentioned were The People, the congregation's commitment to Beacon, a small church that feels like family; a financially secure organization. Looking out the windows seeing the mountains was important, as was location, seeing other members out in the community; intelligent, thoughtful, articulate members. The minister, worship associates and staff were appreciated. Having opportunities to socialize, having a community-involved minister, being in an organization that does things differently – with flexibility and less bureaucracy. We liked the choir, member initiated activities, a solid RE program and chair, humor and laughter, variety of services, and lay services. Tolerance of each other was appreciated as was genuine welcoming and hospitality, accommodation and welcoming of the transient visitor. We liked our good website, having a professional pianist, time for all ages, joys and sorrows, giving people time even if a bit too long, circle suppers, coffee hour and having one service which allows us all to be together.

Dora said she wanted to work from a positive tone, seeing what's positive, and then concentrating on improvements needed.

Background Information. The group reviewed some of the data that exists already in the organization including the concerns expressed to the consultant, Kay Crider, before we started our capital campaign (about 35 people's comments). Concerns that were not about the building project and its funding were about RE, and need for Parents, Young Adults. Middle aged adults, Communication, Growth/Vitality; need to process the changes being experienced, be aware of strong mannerisms that offend. Suggestions from the July 9 service (about 19 respondents) included: a sign or poster outside that has info on services, audio recordings of the service, rubbing hands together rather than clapping, reframing using joys and concerns for political statements, better communication on issues that need to be solved, bigger commitment to diversity, separation of noisy activities from quietness of service, post-service sharing, new member outreach that is not church-centric, Continue emphasis on social justice and continue racial injustice awareness, more space for programming, more outreach to draw people to see what we do, encourage members/friends to take advantage of what we offer and Parent tea/coffee gathering while the children play or watch a movie. Suggestions from the Community Goals set with Rev. Kevin (about 35-40 people) included deepening relationship with congregation, quality Sunday Services, Lifespan RE, Improving Fundraising, Building relationship with Flag Community, etc. A few items from Listening Circles just concluded (12 people attended) – feelings that there is lack of trust, a sense of divisiveness/wedge growing in the church community, that BET is not listening, feeling of not being respected, some undercurrent of unhappiness.

With that input, **the Board and Committee Chairs listed what they thought we should work on this next year.** Items are listed – goals from the items is at end of this document.

- We need Principle based decisions
- Look at the positives of RE.
- concentrate on more ways to bring people in
- more fun
- Beef up CVT

- Do things congregation can unify around
 - Families aren't necessarily coming on Sunday mornings
 - We get wild swings in RE attendance
 - Need more PR about what RE committee is doing
 - Also need to think about adult RE on faith formation i.e. Lifespan
 - Faith Formation is an awkward label
 - our system doesn't have a place for adult programming to land (budget)
 - We need a full spectrum of planned activities for all ages
 - There is a communication gap between what we have done in the past and what we want to do moving forward.
 - Drumming circles – an idea for an activity
 - What do we do with a new person and the info they give us on their info sheet?
 1. met at door, 2. If they fill out form, the information is recorded on a spread sheet 3. By Wednesday, an email is sent 4. Now offering an orientation class. Still have a gap in what is happening to follow through with new folks.
 - the CVT needs help from all of us. Over past year, things have ebbed and flowed – not consistent about how we welcome new people.
 - Connection - compassionate communication -Beacon is different from other organizations we might belong to.
 - continuation of chalice circles – need more leasers; need more greeters
 - we need to recognize that no matter what happens on the 29th of July, we will build our community and recognize what we have done and what we have gone through.
 - Whatever happens, we need to think about how we will unify afterwards.
 - Need to get back to our 7 principles – what is our shared belief? We don't need to reinvent the wheel.
 - Not every person is going to get what they want.
 - think about how each of us have different interests and passions and respect our differences
 - maybe we should try to get to the bottom of people's objections.
 - faith formation – new term for what has been Religious Education – a programmatic change is in the works from UUA.
- (Just as an aside, Dora noted that she feels the vision and mission are fine and therefore she feels we can run with them.)

-Wake Now My Vision is a program at the UUA re legacy giving. Kevin Parkes is aware of it and wants to pursue it in the near future.

-Stewardship and the financial health of Beacon still need work and investment. Need a better organizational understanding of what a healthy budget looks like. Need a stewardship team who will look "long term."

Summary/Goals:

-Focus on: Life Span Education and attraction and retention of all ages. Includes revitalizing CVT –

-Trust and Unity

-Financial Health

-Continue all the good things we are doing and enjoying (added after meeting). Improve if needed.

– operate using UU principles (stated during meeting).

Goals to be further refined. Action plans to be developed. What we did not get to was how each person and each committee can contribute toward each goal.

. And I want to make just one point or two about each.

1. Continue and enhance actions that create a welcoming place of peace, warmth and unity; of energy and inspiration; of active involvement by all ages; and of fun, compassionate and spiritual discovery. I think we are there on the first part; we have some work to do on active involvement by all. The Board has made consciously made the effort to look for visitors to chat and to greet a few times a year.
2. Continue and expand community outreach and involvement through social justice, community action, and whatever avenues and ideas may present themselves as needing our attention, and align with our mission and vision.

Work is ongoing; one new area of concentration this year, continuing into next year and is the effort in the area of Building Safety and training for dealing with disruption up to and including active shooters. Makes me cringe, but necessary. Immigration involvement, living wage, and education continue are continued pursuits, as is the ongoing community support through “Share the Plate”, the Food Center, vigils, marches. Frankly this was done primarily through committees, however, I hope the committees know that the Board has been supportive of these efforts.

3. Complete Building Expansion project within budget and with timely updates for, and feedback from, the Congregation. We are on our way.

4. Explore avenues to provide a more stable financial footing for the organization for now and in the future. One of the new areas of study authorized by the Board is Legacy giving and the “Wake now our Vision”. project through UUA. More info on this coming in next fiscal year

Just one thing to emphasize: this is the end of the capital funds first fiscal year. It you are up –to- date. Thank you. If you can pay your pledge early, like now, it will diminish the amount of money we have to borrow for the bridge loan. And if you have not paid your planned giving on the capital pledge for this year, please do that, too.

What the Board and CLC identified as important for the 2018-2019 year

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 10. Beacon offers so much that we already don't take advantage of. This is a wonderful church for us and our needs.
 11. Be visible in the Flagstaff community; be active with social justice; continue teaching/discussion of racial injustice.
 12. More building space for programs. More community and outreach, once we have a bigger space.
 13. Gathering of parents of young children where parent could have tea or coffee and the children could watch a movie in another room.
 14. More active outreach and work within the community – activities that will draw more humans in to see what we do.
 15. I want our building to be busy every day and night, with activities for all ages, for the community as well as the congregation
 16. I cherish the caring that is demonstrated among our membership, not just on Sundays.
 17. Aside from Sunday service what has been and continues to be important to me are things such as singing in the choir, covenant groups, serving at the food kitchen, supper circles, the auction, the yard sale, 4th of July parade, etc.

Beacon provides a place to be reminded that I have many faithful friends I love and trust. I appreciated the caring circle; it feels good to know it's there when I need it

Brief Speech to the Congregation on 2nd Sunday of July, 2018

Good Morning, I am Dora Harrison, and this is my eighth day as your Beacon President, so you may consider this my slightly late inaugural address. First, just want to tell you how grateful I am for this HUGE, and I mean HUGE crowd. . .

Next weekend, the Board and Committee chairs will be meeting to discuss our wants and needs, and hopefully set goals for this year. Before that I would like to know what you want from this church – so in your program, there are just a couple of questions... Please fill out before leaving today. No, it is not a scientific survey. Just want to see what is important to you. Drop it in the collection basket or give it to me as you leave today.

Since I am asking you, I thought I would share with you what I want.

On Sunday mornings, I want a place of peace – where I am greeted warmly by someone, or several someones, see a host of friendly faces and can sit down, take a deep breath, close my eyes, close out the news and relax.

I want a place where I feel wrapped in the warm cocoon of love. I want love to truly be the spirit of this church.

I want a place where caring is evident even to first time attendees;

I want music, – soft, beautiful piano music, loud, gusty singing, songs that make me want to dance; songs that touch my heart, even make me cry. A choir that soars.

And occasionally, I enjoy a bit of whackiness as we had a couple of weeks ago; I even like announcements – brief ones – they tell me what our church is about, on days other than Sunday!

I want a place that feels alive with excitement; where there is a positive buzz going round.

I long for a place that offers solace to the fit and the misfit.

A place where we can explore differing opinions, appreciate others' viewpoints, discuss things without getting angry. Or if we do, since we are human, talk it out.

A place that has people of all ages, especially children and young adults; for, as you know, they are our future. We old codgers will be checking out sooner rather than later.

More than anything I want to be inspired; energized. I want the Sunday service or even a committee meeting to light my fire; I want to walk out with a bounce in my step, a song in my heart and the resolve to make this world a better place.

I want a physical place that is somewhat comfortable, lovingly cared for and yes, spacious enough to move around in without getting squished; But no matter what, I have always loved this little church and always will.

A place where people say “YES” to the Request. Or Yes, I don’t know how, but I’m willing to try. That is, indeed, music to my ears.

Finally, I want us to move forward through this year with give and take, with tried and untried ideas, with positive energy, supporting each other even if we disagree – for **we** are this church. And **we** are its future.

Thank you. Looking forward to a fabulous year!