

Unity in Edinboro  
Special Board Meeting  
December 2, 2008

Present: Jim Aucutt, Ray Sammartino, Carol Boyer, Jean Kimura, Cheryl Wenslow

Other: Joanne Rowden, Gary Rowden

Absent: Leona Bickel

- Jim shared the financial information that he has been organizing. He thought he might discover a pattern between decreased attendance and decreased giving. However, it appears that there is very little correlation between the two. Carol shared that there are supporters who contribute a large portion of the finances who continue to participate in the church.
- This led to a discussion around whether we have lost “core” people. Although there are certainly a couple of core people who have chosen to leave, the majority are still participating. Of those who left, some have said that there is a different “feeling” at the church. There is something different that they do not like. The discussion centered around the idea that this is true, there is something different. As long as we as a congregation are growing spiritually, change is inevitable. Things do not stay the same.
- Ray brought up a concern that we may be latching onto to many ideas rather than simply focusing on core Unity Principles. Joanne did point out that the different authors that we have presented are in alignment with Unity. The New Earth is one of the books suggested in the bookstudy program for Thriving in Unity. Deepak Chopra was just interviewed through Unity FM for the Third Jesus. Perhaps there is some way that we can let people know the correlation between these more contemporary authors and books and Unity’s teachings. Joanne did share that she is planning several series in 2009 centered around basic Unity teachings knowing that there are many new people who have begun attending and may not have a good basis yet in Unity. There also needs to balance the basics with something interesting and new for those who have been in Unity for a time
- Discussion around the Together we Thrive Program:
  - Perhaps we oversold the program
  - The book was very complex and intense
  - People may have stopped coming to church since they did not feel like participating in a book study and we were very much promoting that opportunity
  - Jim did say that the small group study allowed him to get to know the people in his group in a very intimate way
- Discussion centered around an idea that Rev. John Brown has shared for some time-there is no hook in Unity. There is no guilt or hell if you do not attend. However, what we do offer is an opportunity for people to explore their spirituality and change their way of thinking. How can we emphasize this more on Sunday?
- Discussion centered around some of the ideas that have come back from various conferences. When you go to conference, you are filled with excitement around that idea. However, it is

difficult to convey that vision and excitement to the rest of the congregation. Sometimes we have tried too hard to make something work rather than simply recognizing that it is not working sooner. However, there is also the idea that people resist change and sometimes you need to give it a period of time for people to grow more comfortable with the change that is being presented.

- Discussion moved to the Thriving in Unity Program. There was a thought that following the program exactly would take away some of the spontaneity or individuality of our church. There are some great areas that we could use the material to guide us to explore more deeply. The areas that we thought we could begin to focus on include:
  - Unity Themes
  - Welcoming Practice for our ministry
  - Guest events
  - Congregational Service Opportunities
  - More book studies but keep them casual, or hold one with Joanne at church
  - Ministry Prosperity
  
- It was decided that we, as a board, would focus on 2 areas.
  1. Welcoming Practice for our Ministry
  2. A Guest Event (i.e. Friendship Sunday)
  
- Joanne shared her frustration at getting a system organized at church. She expressed that it might be in part due to her lack of managerial skills. When a system is put into place (ie-Sunday volunteers) it seems to fall apart. People do not continue to do the tasks assigned to them. Joanne asked that as we move forward in these two areas outlined above, the board be involved in providing their expertise in building a thriving system.
  
- Jean shared that Diane requested a consideration of dividing the Sundays by alphabet and encouraging people to bring a dish to pass on their respective Sunday. We would like to simply focus on having food once a month without so much emphasis on there needing to be food every week. We would rather not stress Diane out about this. It is not necessary to plan something weekly. Jean encouraged the other board members to talk with Diane about this.
  
- The next board meeting is set for January 4 at 9:00 a.m.