

Communications Circle Annual Retreat Minutes – June 11, 2022

Present: Amy Teel, Anna Marie Martin, Erin Fitzgerald, and Scott Fitzgerald

Evaluation of 2021–2022 Church Year

We reviewed our recent Annual Report and discussed what we did well last year and what we could improve. We agreed that we accomplished a tremendous amount this past year. We also acknowledged that because we receive many requests and have only four members on the circle, we had more to do than we could accomplish and some things fell through the cracks. For the past several months, Erin has taken on the task of organizing us and following up on our to-do list, which has been extremely helpful and will likely allow us to accomplish more next year. However, we also need a couple more members to help us get all the work done. We feel it has been useful that each of us is also on at least one other Circle, which helps the Comms Circle be more aware of information that needs to be shared.

Things we would like to improve next year:

- Because we get so many requests, we need a formal process for making decisions about them, at monthly meetings or over email/Slack when urgent.
- We need to improve communication within INUUC because some members feel information is not getting disseminated. About half the members read the newsletter, and only a few visit the website. We would like to increase newsletter readership to about 75% (higher is probably not realistic). A few members have requested some kind of forum beyond our FaceBook page, and we would like to look into options.
- Anna Marie suggested that since everyone is overwhelmed with the current world situation, we should consider working on fun activities for the congregation, and/or a web page on self-care.
- For external communication, we want to work on consistent advertising: postcards, website, etc.

Along the lines of improved internal communication, Scott updated the web site to announce that INUUC will be closed for the month of July.

Purpose

We discussed at length what our Circle's purpose is. Our draft purpose:

“Our mission is to facilitate communication within INUUC to foster inclusion and participation in our growing community, and to share with the wider world the radical welcome of INUUC and Unitarian Universalism.”

Task: Amy will wordsmith this and send out to the circle for comment

Vision

Our vision is where we would like to be in 5–10 years. We each shared our vision:

Amy: We're on top of our tasks and have enough members in our circle. We have a great webpage that is often updated. With our newsletter, other emails, Facebook, and website, we reach almost everyone at INUUC. We have successful outreach to the community; people know about us. Our circle is engaged with our INUU community.

Scott: We are engaged in creating content, not just distributing it. Our focus is on *what* we're communicating; crafting the message vs. just delivering it.

Anna Marie: We have paid staff to work on the newsletter/Facebook/web page. We build bridges to the wider UU community; perhaps we hold conferences for UU leaders, or create a UU TED talk. Active communications.

Erin: We have a structure/programming that ensures information flows within our community, and the greater community knows who we are, what we stand for, and what we do (perhaps things such as OWL, hybrid worship, sociocracy). We promote inclusion in the congregation. We have moved past some of our members resenting sociocracy.

A draft of our vision:

“We move from the mundane implementation to the creation and evaluation of content, in order to create connections and inclusion. We build systems that keep functioning.”

Task: Scott will wordsmith the vision and send to the circle for comment.

Mission

We decided that our Mission is the same as our Purpose statement.

Covenant

The covenant is how we will be together in our circle, and it must be compatible with INUUC's covenant. We spent some time reviewing the INUUC covenant and decided there was nothing we needed to add to it, so we adopted that covenant as ours:

We, the Communications Circle of INUUC,
acknowledge this Covenant
to be our sacred promise
of good relations.

In this diverse community,
we choose
to be accountable—
to be present & listen—
to embrace imperfection & curiosity—
and to create a shelter of joy & compassion.

Leadership Roles

Dynamic Governance/Sociocracy asks circle members to hold various leadership roles. We agreed on these roles:

Leader: Scott

The “face” of the circle interacting with the congregation; makes decisions that can’t be made by the circle

Facilitator: Erin

Fields requests and input, makes meeting agenda, runs meeting, follows up

Secretary/Archivist/Chronicler: Amy and Anna Marie

Takes notes/minutes and distributes for approval, posts to web logbook, posts brief summary in newsletter

Delegate: Erin

Goes to Coordinating Circle, so information flows both ways. Follows up with other circle leaders to ensure they post minutes to logbook, updates to newsletter

Aims & Goals

We each listed our aims & goals for the year:

Scott: New members for the circle. Assess and address INUUC communication needs; transition some tasks to admin; review and refine our accumulated content (writing, art, passwords) and transition to a better system.

Anna Marie: Maintain and create content and calendar. Communicate church’s response to social justice events/mailers. Moderate our Facebook page/manage our social media. Work on graphic design/branding/logo and other aspects of advertising. Make the wider community patently aware of our welcome. Be present to each other and the larger community. Work on a congregational history of individual stories/profiles—shared storytelling. Postcards to advertise in coffee shops.

Amy: Recruit more circle members. Assess and address our social media guidelines and moderation. Advertise in newspapers, with church brochure, and with “merch.”

Erin: Refine administrative tasks for us—following up with us, agenda, facilitating; basically project management

We each agreed to be the “goal shepherd” for one or more goals:

Scott: Assess and address INUUC communication needs; transition some tasks to admin; review and refine our accumulated content (writing, art, passwords) and transition to a better system (these are all aspects of the same task)

Anna Marie: Work on a congregational history of individual stories/profiles—for newsletter, and also website (can go in carousel as testimonials). Postcards to advertise in coffee shops.

Amy: Advertising with “merch” such as hoodies, t-shirts, mugs, pens, etc.

Erin: Refine administrative tasks for us—following up with us, agenda, facilitating; basically project management

Calendar for Our Circle

Erin will create one for us—what we need to keep track of; budget requests, annual report, etc. She will then make sure they are put in the appropriate meeting agendas

Other Items

We identified a few other items to work on this year, which all fall under “Assessing Our Needs:”

Review newsletter for content, frequency, etc. Longer articles will become short summaries with links to the longer article on the web page. Create newsletter submission guidelines.

Research forum possibilities, and gauge degree of interest in them.

Work on web page statements supporting the 8th Principle and the UUA.

Minutes submitted by Amy Teel, 6/15/22