

Communications Circle Retreat Minutes Wednesday, September 13, 2023

Present: Erin Fitzgerald, Linda Moulder, Scott Fitzgerald, Amy Teel

Minutes recorded by Amy Teel

Welcoming and Hospitality Critique Tool--Discussion

Linda sent us all a Hospitality pdf from the UUA to discuss its section on Outreach

Website

Is it up to date?

Our site is fairly up to date, but this work is always ongoing by its nature.

Can I easily find out how to participate on Sunday morning, and what to expect? Are there past services to watch/listen to?

Past services are a problem on the website because of copyright issues with music. We do have a secure link to log in for past services that is published in the newsletter each week. Sunday service information is fairly easy to find on the website we think, but we should look into having “secret shoppers” test it out, maybe from nearby UU churches (we could do the same for them if they want).

Action (who?): Contact UU Church of the Palouse to see if they are interested in exchanging “secret shopper” feedback on each others’ websites and maybe services

In subsequent discussion, we decided Sunday service information is probably not as clear as it could be to newcomers due to our hybrid nature and varied locations for in-person services. **Action (who?):** write a short blurb explaining our hybrid services and several different locations; put it on the main page and/or under “About Us”

Related to this, we need to talk to Soul Weaving about the importance of always having information on next Sunday’s service and the service after that, so any newcomers checking us out have some idea what to expect. **Who** will do this?

Are there photos of staff and leaders?

We have a photo of Rev. Crystal. **Scott** will update the information with it (half-time instead of quarter-time) and ask Rev. Crystal if she wants a new photo.

We have no other staff. We decided against photos of the current GC members as requiring too much work to get new photos every year.

Are there photos showing church activities?

We had some on the carousel on the main page, but the carousel was broken by the latest WordPress update. **Scott** will wait awhile to see if WordPress fixes it, then will work on it if needed.

We have a few photos elsewhere on the web pages but need more. Scott has a few more.

Action (who?): put out a call to the congregation for photos.

Do we communicate a sense of the church's mission and activities?

Yes

Is there a map, parking and mass transit information?

No; improving this needs to be on our to-do list. We need a list of our locations (Woodland, Westminster, Rockwood, other?) and then set about creating for each: pictures of the buildings, maps, directions, parking information, accessibility information, and any other specific information (such as which door to use at Westminster). **Linda** will work on getting people to gather this info.

Can I easily subscribe to the newsletter?

Yes, but it would be good to have an automated message sent to people to confirm their subscription. **Scott** will look into whether this is possible in MailChimp.

Social Media

Do we have an active Facebook page, YouTube Account, Instagram account, and Twitter account?

A qualified yes to Facebook and Instagram, though we need to post even more content. We do not have a YouTube due to copyright issues with music at our services, though if our minister is interested, we could post videos of sermons only. We decided against having a Twitter account due to the current climate there.

To create more content, **Erin** will go through the newsletter each week and send items to Matt to post on Facebook and Instagram.

Do we need someone to monitor our social media and deal with comments? We could ask Soul Weaving if Matt has time to do it
We need to work on a social media policy

Do we create and post shareable events?

We have some, but we need a policy for creating more (see above)

Community Reputation

Do members of the wider community have an accurate picture of who you are?

We think they are beginning to. **Linda** will ask Liz Moore about the awareness and opinions of us at PJALS.

Has your congregation been portrayed positively in the local press?

We've hardly been portrayed at all. Can we get Rev. Crystal interviewed by the Spokesman-Review?

Is your congregation active in local interfaith groups?

Yes, pretty well considering our small size and relative newness. We are active with PJALS and FAN (Faith Action Network). We want to work on developing our relationship with Westminster's social justice team (as a church, not specifically as the Communications Circle). We could also develop a relationship with Women's Hearth, the only women's day shelter in Spokane. **Scott** will talk to Lee Dominey about the info on Women's Hearth that Ariel Fitzgerald sent him.

Newsletter

The two purposes of the newsletter are 1) communication of information to members, and 2) connecting members to the congregation. The second purpose will be improved by Lee Dominey's upcoming regular column profiling members who work on various social justice activities.

We discussed our previous plan to make the newsletter monthly, with shorter weekly updates. A major issue with a monthly newsletter is that we do not have enough information from Soul Weaving to list a month's worth of services in the newsletter. We decided this was a serious enough issue to scrap this plan for the time being. Furthermore, this plan would not save Scott any work and might even create more work, as the monthly newsletter will take more time but the weekly updates will take almost as much time as the current weekly newsletter.

We discussed how to get regular updates from circles to put in the newsletter. **Erin** will bring to the Coordinating Circle the need to push for this. **Erin** will also call circle leaders to request reports for the newsletter. Scott: these reports should only be a paragraph or so long, not giant reports. We should aim for each circle having a report once a month, though some circles meet less often so will have less frequent reports. We need to write a letter that is emailed a week or so to circle delegates before each Coordinating Circle meeting, with a checklist: what do you want to add to the agenda, provide your brief circle report, provide any calendar events, check your circle's current listing on the website for accuracy. (**Who** will do this?)

Scott: we need a policy about newsletter submissions by individual members that may be advertisements for their businesses. We decided Scott would email the members of our circle when a submission was questionable, so that the final decision is made by the circle.

Website

A needed update on the website is deleting "Social Justice" under Circle Directory since we have no such circle. This sparked a discussion on how to note the various SJ activities that are happening in the congregation.

Scott will change the website menu heading "Act" to "Social Justice" or "Social Action" and create a page listing organizations and activities including: FAN, Spokane Alliance, PJALS, our Spotighting Circle, Bite2Go, Transitions/Women's Hearth, Martha and Sandy Nichols's work on Native Americans, Lannie MacAndrea's work with the Carl Maxey Center, Libby Fitzgerald write up ARE (Allies for Racial Equity). The page will eventually include short blurbs about each activity, and contact name and information. This will also be a resource for new members who want to get involved in social justice.

Linda will send Scott more ideas of people and activities involved in Social Justice work. As Lee Dominey writes newsletter articles, we will link to those articles on this page, as well as have Matt post them to social media.

Linda: MaryLou Johnson would like the website submission form to CC her and her circle with her submission. **Scott** will look into whether an autoresponder can do this.

Linda: feedback at the workshop requested a website section about the UUA. **Erin** will ask the UUA Connections Circle to generate content about the UUA (e.g. General Assembly, etc.). **Scott** will add “About the UUA” on the main menu. Libby Fitzgerald is working with our UUA region so she is also a resource for UUA information.

Erin will review the website calendar regularly to check for errors such as duplicate events.

Advertising and Marketing

We discussed looking into FaceBook ads: what would be the value to us? Can they target the ads geographically?

Meeting Time and Date

We will continue with the second Wednesday of each month from 3 to 4:30 p.m. We will remain open to changing the date and time if we get new members who cannot meet during the workday or can't meet at this time for any other reason.

Calendar of Tasks and Discussion Items

We had a long discussion of these related needs: to create a calendar of actions that need to be done regularly, and to create a list of everything Scott does/knows (and maybe others in the church who do administrative tasks) so it becomes institutional knowledge, and could be handed over to an administrator if we hire one someday.

Scott's and others' administrative tasks:

- Pay for web host, domain name certification, MailChimp, Vimeo, Zoom (all of these on autopay), and sporadic advertising.

- Check emails generated through the website to info@inuuc.org (goes to Scott currently). Usually 90% spam. Same for messages generated through website.

- Maintain permissions document (logins etc. for all our accounts). **Scott** will clean it up and share to the Admin Google doc.

- Use and update Vimeo, website, MailChimp—Scott would need to train anyone else to do this. He will do this when the need arises.

- Check admin@inuuc.org address (currently goes to Scott)

- Handle phone number and physical mail (currently handled by Linda)

Items for annual (or more often) administrative tasks:

- Update insurance each year with GC members, update signers. Determine number of delegates in early January (not February) so there is time to identify delegates and give them training (coordinate with Membership Circle for total member numbers).

Items for regular Communications Circle tasks:

- Update org chart, bylaws after annual meeting, circle data when new church year starts, member directory. Revisit newsletter, advertising, social media, website. Verify that information is correct for minister, church phone & mailing address, membership number.

Erin will put on the October agenda to follow up on making sure these lists are being put together.

Action Item Lists

Each of us will look at our action list at the bottom of August's minutes and delete items that are complete or that we've decided not to do, and add any new items. **Amy** will add the updated lists to these minutes.

Backburner

Breeze—permissions; what flags needed; what do we want to do with the data

Merchandise—what are next steps

Forum

Reassignment of collection of member testimonials

Social Media Manager

To Do List

Amy

- Bring to Membership Circle: We need to tell Scott when people leave membership so he can removed them from the Member email list
- Bring to Membership Circle: What categories do we want for member information entered in Breeze?

Erin

- Tell Coordinating Circle what we're doing with Google Docs, and assess data that we need to corral
- Contact Circle leaders for items they want on the calendar
- Ask Coordinating Circle to come up with a new name for Circle Data Sheets
- Longer term, when we're ready to do a survey: Talk to Coordinating Circle about scheduling survey so we don't conflict with any other such surveys
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Scott

- Set up "Locations" on our website.
- Redo the menu structure for "Social Action" as discussed at our retreat
- Create a menu section for "About UUism" using the same underlying approach as we decided to use for social justice
- Update the Org Chart
- Investigate adding a "CC" function to the newsletter submission form
- Start the process of creating a policy regarding members submitting articles that may be overly self-promotional
- Update the info on the website about Rev Crystal

- Address the issue of the website being more clear about our hybrid Sunday morning nature
- Address the issue of image permissions (Children, members, visitors, etc)
- Write draft policy for newsletter submissions
- Talk to Lee Dominey about coordinating information between our circle survey and her annual reports work
- Send Circle Leader Directory and survey questions out to Circles in September
- Other things on the long-term to-do list:
 - Pew card
 - Member information handbook
 - Member feedback form
 - Other forms
 - Build Brand Asset library
 - Website Menu updates
 - Work on questions to put on survey for congregation about website, newsletter

Linda

- Help Scott with Google docs as needed
- Discuss with Leadership Development: assets anyone might have that need to be in our main INUUC Google Drive account with our ownership
- Look into a Google doc for people to submit social justice/community action items, and pass any submissions on to the newsletter team