

UUFCO December 2016 Board Report - Minister

By Rev. Antonia Won, December 5, 2016

Programs and Ministries

November has been dominated by the election, becoming known as 11/9, a twist on 9/11. Many individuals in the congregation were shaken by the outcome, others less rattled, and all deeply concerned for the future. As an initial response, I created a number of opportunities for people to come together to process, and made it known that my door was open for individuals to come and talk. Numbers weren't huge but the opportunities mattered greatly to those who took advantage of the offerings. How critical communities like this congregation are in the life of a democracy has been highlighted in the wake of the election. It has sharpened people's awareness of our interdependence as people and the value of covenant, even in newcomers who haven't digested the meaning of the word yet. And so, Sunday attendances have skyrocketed as in other UU congregations. I have felt an increase in appreciation for my ministry and an expansion of understanding of the role of minister and spiritual leadership. Spiritual leadership isn't only about communications within the congregation; it includes action. As such, I am connecting with other faith leaders in the Bend in search of opportunities for collaboration.

Leadership Development

This is an opportune time for the leadership and the Board to take up the mission vigorously and seriously and to guide the ministries of UUFCO in prophetic ways. This is the moment to make sure we are not an 'echo chamber,' as one member put it so aptly, but to boldly put as many resources as possible into meeting new and returning people and helping them find hope in our message and covenant. (This falls especially to the Board as you face a change of ministers – helping newer members and friends to bridge into a new ministry.) This is part of the Board's generative and strategic work and so I ask:

- What is the Board's vision of the congregation's future that looks beyond systems of governance and organization and the ministerial transition? Even in the next few months?
- How will you guide and support the ministry of UUFCO in this time when the power of this congregation is so needed by our community at large?
- How can our time together be spent to explore these questions and generate some form of response?
- Or is this something you want to delegate to the minister? If so, how will you back the minister up?

These questions get to the heart of what “shared ministry” means and point to the critical aspect of partnership between Board and Minister. The leadership of UUFCO has yet to embrace its role as a partner and to trust a Minister, still learning to see what a Minister brings to the partnership. The aftermath of the election hopefully makes it easier to see, and to place a priority on the conversations that will eventually lead to a more mature and effective ministry of the congregation as a whole.

On another note, we are beginning the next round of sessions with Rev. Cat Cox, occurring on first Tuesdays of the month. We have also arranged for Rev. Cat to spend a weekend here (Jan. 20 -22, 2017) that will include a day-long all-congregational workshop on the 21st. Mark your calendars!

Staff

- A federal court in Texas has struck down the new labor laws we were planning to implement December 1. This is a relief to our staff but a shame for people whom this was aimed to protect from employer abuse.
- Interviews for the sexton position are poised to happen.
- The office will be closed between Christmas and New Year’s. Staff is being given some extra time off. Phone messages will be checked on an occasional basis.

The Year Ahead

The New Year will bring a major shift for us as the ministerial transition hits high gear. During these next months, I will be fielding calls from interested colleagues, which may take a fair bit of my time. Note that candidates will expect my honest assessment of the congregation and leadership. I will also be turning my communications with the congregation towards closure and preparing them for the unknown. This is new territory for me – as much of this past year has been – and I will continue to bring my best resources to bear and to serve UUFCO to the highest standard I can.

Happy Holidays!

Reverently yours,

Rev. Antonia Won