

Minutes – Sunday, March 25, 2012
Congregational Meeting -- Live Oak Board of Trustees
The Home of Truth, Cottage

Board Members Present: Kris Arrington, Lisa Fry, Peter Hand, Darlene Pagano, and Jody Savage
Others Present: David Fry, Bill Hieb, Sally Kennedy, Niels Kjellund, and members of the Social Justice ad hoc team: Nanci Armstrong-Temple, Richard Arrington, Nancy Balassi, Renee Harper, Judith Heller, and Debra Temple.

We were called to order at 3:35 p.m. Judith Heller read our opening words, we lit the chalice, and Peter explained the purpose of the meeting was to get reactions to the statement the board had sent out earlier as a start on our mission statement and to hear about ideas from the Social Justice ad hoc team.

Mission Statement Discussion: The statement previously presented to the congregation was: “Inspiring youth and adults to engage in meaningful worship, building community, making music, and working for justice.”

After listening to a number of comments (some examples follow), the board recognized while this statement may be an accurate description of who we are, it is not adequate as a mission statement. (Sample comments: This describes “what” we are doing, but not “why” we are doing it. This group is so much more than this statement shares. Live Oak is “richer” than this. Needs to be in more active voice. One person who was not there thought the word “spirit” was missing. What does “meaningful worship” really say/mean?)

We decided the meeting scheduled for Sunday, April 22, will be used to work on a mission statement. Jody suggested we all do some homework before that date, looking at mission statements and thinking about Live Oak and what we might like ours to be. Lisa will send out a word doc with sample mission statements from around the country.

Social Justice Ad Hoc Committee: We reviewed again the different levels of social justice work possibilities for Live Oak: 1) charity (giving money); 2) community service (addressing immediate needs); and 3) social action to address the underlying causes of issues (changing the system, the world). Nanci talked about the need for both education and being sure we are looking at this work not as “for them,” but “for us.” She also wants us to connect whatever work we choose to do not only our values, but with the larger UU movement (e.g., decisions made over the years that affect why we do this kind of work). Judith noted that she wants to “be transformed” and to learn things about others and herself through our SJ work.

We discussed process. We are looking for the SJ ad hoc team to make recommendations to the congregation as a whole. The congregation will be asked to vote on the SJ team’s recommendation. Once that is done, the board will affirm a decision as a priority and work to see that it happens.

A number of people spoke about an opportunity to work with the Alameda Point Collaborative (APC) which would provide many points of entry and activity for Live Oak’ers. Many are picturing Live Oak working at APC one Sunday a month. Lisa noted a concern that visitors might show up at Christ Episcopal expecting Live Oak to be there. This is a separate issue and will be talked about further, but folks felt we could make it clear on our website that the 4th Sunday of each month, we will be off doing social justice as a community. Lisa suggested if we do that, that we see if we could use one of the rooms at APC to hold a brief opening ritual and chalice lighting to begin our work there on 4th Sundays and that

we all come together again at the end of the work time to reflect on our activities and its impact on us personally as well as on others and finish with an appropriate closing reading.

At this point, Debra Temple asked that the SJ ad hoc team be allowed time to meet and discuss organizations and options they had bounced around in an email discussion. Because all our meetings are open, the rest of us listened, but did not participate in the discussion. Debra asked the team members to speak, one after the other.

- Debra sees APC as a “gift” to Live Oak.
- Nancy Balassi feels good about APC, but notes the Alameda County Community Food Bank always needs volunteers and wants us to consider that as an option, too. She was a bit concerned about the process and how APC came to be the leading contender.
- Renee Harper also was somewhat concerned about the process and that some choices did not get investigated thoroughly. But she felt there was a lot of opportunity for Live Oak with APC and that it was a good choice.
- Richard Arrington firmly supports APC, seeing many strong opportunities there.
- Judith Heller knows and likes APC’s Ploughshares Nursery. She added “It doesn’t matter what we choose. Let’s just do it!”
- Darlene supports APC, but noted we still need an ongoing SJ Committee. She also noted Kathryn Duke, who is out of town, supports APC, and that Ximena Rossi who was not able to be there would support it, but wanted to know APC’s stand on immigration status. Darlene will check on that.
- Nanci Armstrong-Temple noted we are actually making two decisions: 1) to partner with an agency on SJ; and 2) to select APC to be that partner. She also said she hopes we will not lose this seed committee. Further, Nanci suggested we are building a model of how we are going to act as a congregation and as part of the larger UU community. Last, she noted the need to establish a process for self-analysis of our SJ work as we progress: to evaluate if we are doing what we set out to do, if we are growing spiritually, e.g.

After each person spoke, it was clear that APC was a good starting point for our work. Debra will be sure to get info on the wish list to Lisa for distribution to others at the April 1st service. The plan is to ask people to bring items on the list on April 15th.

The team will look into the immigration question and get back to us as soon as possible.

The board has scheduled another special meeting for Sunday, April 22. The main purpose of this meeting will be to move forward on identifying our mission, but the SJ team will present APC (and perhaps 1 or 2 other projects) for the approval of the congregation at that meeting.

Nanci shared words for our closing: We will change the world. We will do it with loving kindness. We closed the meeting at 5:30 p.m.