

Live Oak UU Fellowship

Aug. 2, 2009, 4-6:00 p.m. -- Business Meeting

With District Staff: Cilla Raughley & Jeanelyse Doran Adams
Meeting Minutes 4-6 PM, Applied Research Center, Oakland

About twenty members of Live Oak attended the Aug. 2nd meeting with Cilla Raughley, District Executive of the Pacific Central District (PCD) and Jeanelyse Doran Adams, newly hired District Program Consultant.

Jay Roller started the meeting by leading us in song. Richard Stromer followed with an opening reading and lighting our chalice.

Cilla initiated the discussion with several open-ended questions to learn more about us (asking about our strengths, what we'd like to have more of, how we chose the name Live Oak, e.g.). She then asked people to tell her what she referred to as "the Oakland story." After a few moments of silence (reflecting the pain that this topic brought up), several people spoke. All were respectful, speaking from personal experience. Both Cilla and Jeanelyse reminded us that people -- in both congregations -- are still grieving and that we should be sure to attend to our own grief and healing adequately.

Cilla took the time to explain six ways new congregations begin and that ours, as a "breakaway," brings with it some difficulties. She advised us to continue our forward movement, but not to aim for affiliation as an official UUA congregation too quickly or even the status referred to as *emerging congregation*.

In cases of breakaway congregations, Cilla explained time can be on our side, allowing hurts and anger (on both sides) to subside. Her next step is to talk to Rev. Kathy, probably in late August when Kathy returns from her summer leave. After that conversation, Cilla will again share with us her thoughts.

One of our members suggested we send Cilla periodic reports on our activities and progress and we will do that. Another asked Cilla for concrete suggestions on what we can do to help achieve emerging congregation status sooner.

Several people shared ways that people from FUCO and Live Oak are working cooperatively:

- The mens' retreat was jointly held and sponsored by the two congregations and will continue to be a joint activity.
- A Live Oak member has been asked to teach the high school OWL class with a FUCO member, opening the class to students from both congregations and the Berkeley church.
- Several Live Oak members have participated in FUCO social justice activities.
- One person who is still a member at FUCO shared with us something that happened at a June meeting held by a sub-committee of the FUCO Board: 38 people present at that meeting voted unanimously that they want FUCO to work cooperatively with Live Oak.

All-in-all, the meeting was helpful -- and frustrating.

Live Oak has really been moving forward at a very fast pace and most of us were disappointed at the advice not to become an emerging congregation now. (The primary benefit of becoming an emerging congregation is marketing via the UUA and regional uuba.org website, allowing people who are looking for a UU church on those sites to find us. Live Oak has done good work at self-marketing, so we are not as dependent on those tools as other new congregations.)

We do want to be recognized as an emerging congregation, but Cilla could not provide a timetable for this to happen. We are hopeful that it will occur by next spring.

We more readily understood that there are real benefits to holding off on requesting official UUA affiliation. Cilla said all new congregations are advised to take that step slowly in order to be able to build financial reserves before committing to paying their fair share to the district and the UUA.

We ended the formal meeting with another song, led by Jay Roller, and gratitude to Cilla and Jeanelyse for meeting with us and to Darlene for hosting us in the ARC conference room.

After Cilla and Jeanelyse left, we held a short de-briefing meeting with those who could stay a few minutes longer. In that gathering, we recognized Live Oak can still build our worship, grow our membership, create a vibrant religious education program, and take on social justice activities (by ourselves and jointly with FUCO or others) – all without the official imprimatur of the District or the UUA. As we so often sing, “We are going to keep on moving forward”