

Minutes of *That All May Freely Serve* Board Meeting
Downtown United Presbyterian Church, Rochester, NY
Mezzanine Meeting Room
January 21, 2006

In Attendance: Mary, Tyler, Kate, Rebecca, Janie, Beth, Bob, Leigh, Brian, Lisa, Jim on speakerphone, Bruce, Ray.

Absent: Dae, Gabriel, Jenna, Doug, Virginia

- I. Call to Order/Approval of Minutes
 - A. Meditation began with listening to the song **Curren's song** - *All My Wings which Mary Ellen loved*.
 - B. Mary called the meeting to order at 9:48 A.M.
 1. Mary and Janie explained why Dae is unable to be with us at this time. A card was signed and sent to Dae.
 2. Janie spoke of Ginny's recovery and some future plans for her care. All of our prayers are with Ginny in this time of healing.
 - C. Approval of Minutes;
 1. Change spelling of Chuck McLain's name
 2. Minutes approved.

- II. Finance/Fund Raising – Brian Cave
 - A. 2005 Hand Out)
 1. \$2,875 Surplus for 2005.
 - B. Budget for 2006 (Hand Out)
 1. Different scenarios explained.
 2. Finance Committee Goals and objectives were presented
 3. Janie:
 1. Two donors have paid the legal defense funds.
 2. Balance of \$18,000 as of 1/21/06
 3. TAMFS account - \$34,000 (with incoming \$30,000 from DUPC) as of 1/21/06
 4. MIM Program: Training done in early March.
 5. Donation from EJ's Estate is expected: \$15,000
 6. Report and conversation on meeting with Dan Myers (Executive Director of El Sigo Center) to help in fund-raising. (Comments by Mary, Lisa, Kate, Jim).
 7. Janie announced that she is sending a letter to Board Members outlining Mutuality in Ministry (MIM) program. Date is February 28th at 7:00 in Rochester for training

III. Minister Director's Report – Janie Spahr

- A. Minister's Report (Hand Out) – Janie reviewed report.
 - 1. Regional Partnership Coordinator Goals – Janie reviewed.
 - 2. Conference – Janie checked to see who would be attending from the board, also requesting information about whether scholarships or transportation is needed to the conference as soon as possible.
 - 3. CLOUT: We will continue to be the financial agent.
 - 4. Janie's trial is coming up on March 2, 2006.
 - 5. Jim Rigby's trial is not going forward. There is another person in Jim's area that is being brought up on charges, along with Janet Edwards. The group will all be meeting soon to plan together in Colorado.

IV. Personnel: Discussion on Leadership Transition

A. Opening Comments:

- 1. Starting Assumption: Began with the idea that we will look the same after Janie retires. **Want to put everything on the table and open up the discussion and review our assumptions in the light of our financial situation and for the integrity of our process.**
- 2. Other Comments:
 - a. Discussion moved to Co-Director ideas, vs. Minister Director and Regional Coordinator.
 - b. Status of structure continues to be reviewed.
 - c. August 2007 is the planned date for Janie's retirement.
 - d. Hope to set up a search team for September of 2006.

B. Next Steps/Ideas:

- 1. Bring in people from the outside to help us discern where we are. Someone with organizational structure background; someone with an MBA.
- 2. Pray, ask questions,
- 3. Planning for Janie's Gala Love-Fest and Fundraising Farewell Celebration.
- 4. Bruce: Concepts that attach to endowment funds: favor language that is more transitional vs. endowment fund stuff. Endowment funds are a blessing and a curse.
- 5. Ray: I would like to suggest to the personnel committee that they review the process for calling a pastor.

C. Group Activity: The group broke into pairs for a short period to discuss two particular questions:

- 1. Does our mission reflect where we are now?
 - a. Beth: Mission statement does a pretty good job of stating where we are; pointing to an inclusive church that welcomes diversity – but focuses around ordination.

- b. Jim: We are focusing more on the **all** piece than is reflected in the mission statement. Many are saying that we haven't signed on for that.
- c. Tyler: Mission statement reflects where we have been and where we are now.
- d. Lisa: Not interested in the institution of the church, per se; but rather interested in the life and vibrancy of the church. How ordination and other justice issues are addressed and how they reflect upon the overall structure of the church is not as clear – and perhaps not as important as what it brings to the life of the people in the church. What brings life?
- e. Bruce: No comment recorded on this question.
- f. Bob: Talked about our focus and staying on target; Bob feels that we are highly focused.
- g. Brian: At times, felt like TAMFS is doing more than the mission. The importance of addressing “the all” is understood, but sometimes from a fund-raising perspective and others, we need to be more pinpointed in our work and our efforts. Brian spoke to programs that have benefits for individuals. What “products” are we offering that “reward” the giver in some way as effective parts of fund-raising programs. There are still places where we (LGBT) people are fighting to be in the church. There are a lot of people out there who are not where we are in our freedom to be who we are.
- h. Leigh: We are true to our mission and doing more than our mission. What has excited Leigh is the work we do around seminarians. How do we reach young people and help them to come into the church with an empowerment and understanding of what it is that needs to be done for LGBT folks and others. We are a ministry; doing the work of love and justice – one part of that. How do we live out our part with our eyes wide open?
- i. Rebecca: The question of Whom and how we address groups in our mission: “I like it.” However, there is awareness that to honor the task we are saying as LGBT folks – to come in touch with that diversity, we have to do that work ourselves. That is where we can touch and incorporate other cultures and at least become aware of the diversity in these areas and come in touch with our own biases. We have to do the work ourselves. Yes, there is tension out there and some confusion about the “all” and what that means, referring to the splinter groups around us, having a hard time with our own inclusive statements.

- j. Kate: Focus more on the elder and deacon and not all on the minister of the word and sacrament. Create an endowment fund in the name of Janie.
- k. Ray: The public leadership of TAMFS, those we have followed in the growth and work of TAMFS are very committed to “the all” including the broad spectrum of privilege, power, racism, and the great sins of our society in the way we marginalize and dominate groups. For many who became involved in TAMFS, we felt that the work in all of these areas was inherent in our work toward justice for queer folk, not the other way around. It maybe that they are two sides of the same coin. As we have grown, our leaders have seen these societal ills from a broad perspective. Many of us do not have that vision. We are unsure of whether addressing the broader ills will “trickle down” like thundering waters or a light steady rain. But in the confidence we have of our leaders, we seek to understand better this complexity in relation to the work of TAMFS. Personally, I continue to feel strongly that our work as a grass roots movement in working for full inclusion of LGBT folk in the work and worship of this church – is our focus and the all we serve.
- l. Mary: This conversation is helping me to “feel” the next decisions that are ahead in the times that need to be made. Appreciate going back to a broader perspective that surrounds that. In terms of leadership, Lisa is going to be here. There is going to be Lisa and someone/somewhere and there is continuity around that.

[Later, Lisa addressed this, saying that she understood what Mary was saying, but wanted to make it clear that there has been no decision made about whether she will be part of TAMFS in the time that follows Janie’s retirement.]

I want to see the church and the world change, not just our church, churches have been dragging their heels more than anyone else in this country and we are in an important place to make that happen. The backlash against inclusion is coming from the church. The “all” has been about how we do things. The basic question is clear, and it is clear that this work is deeply the right thing to do.

We also need to be in a place that is comfortable about the decisions we make and our ability to follow-through on them, spiritually, financially, emotionally, and otherwise. Financially, we want to be able to offer a financial package that can be met and honored.

- m. Janie: We have grown from ten years ago, from a time where we did what we did so that Janie would come to the DUPC. Then in about the 8th year of TAMFS it was clear that Janie was not coming here.

So we grew in a different way, and continue to grow in response to where we are.

It becomes more important in inter-political relationships to be broader in our vision. The secular community is coming to the church to try and help change the violence, most of which is happening and because of the church. We are coming into the dialogue of eliminating violence in a broad and different time and place than when we first started and along the way.

Our focus is clear, as far as LGBT.

As the movement grows and we claim who we are, comes the question then – “Who else is not at the table?” The secular community has done some very good race work, creating a movement on the outside. The LGBT Task Force was doing huge race relationship work. Really knowing who we are, in a predominately white, heterosexist church – we need to be able to ask the questions around a whole host of questions about where the church is “off.”

We want to be part of the movement that moves forward. We are doing “in reach” to LGBT people, educating church communities and LGBT allies, and more. However, we are not on the outside pleading any more to be in there and in these discussion. We are maturing inside, outside, and in every single way to the point where we are part of these discussions, calling others in, not waiting to be called. Much has changed and with it an amazing leadership of young people has grown with us and continues to come along.

Many people are looking to us because others can’t help them. As long as we are asking the question: “Who is not at the table, as the one who founded this church asked,” we’ll be ok.

It’s the religious stuff that is killing us, and we do need to pay attention to our own (queer community) that are still being hurt and subjected to violence.

2. What would a sustainable TAMFS look and feel like?
 - a. Beth: We would be in a much better financial position; money would be not as “scary” as it is now, each time we get together. Our stories and connections would feel so strong and so grounded that we wouldn’t be having as many questions about what the future holds.
 - b. Jim: Going outside the LGBT community; working with people of color and other ethnicities; holding one another’s hands in solidarity.
 - c. Tyler: I’m uncomfortable with the word sustainable. Move away from something that reflects constant instability. Getting to a place where more people are going for ordination. Moving faithfully forward. Financially, not sure we would ever get to a place of total comfort, but a place with a prudent reserve to do our work.
 - d. Lisa: Alive, deep, vibrant relationships that hold each other up in a different way. Focusing our energies in this important direction.
 - e. Bruce: Looking at what it is, minimally, to be TAMFS, as we know it – to get a better idea of what it would look like in the future. As life continues to be a movie and the ministry of TAMFS continues to be a kind of movie, too, all this will become clearer. It is an ongoing question. Hopefully, it will become a time without anxiety all the time.
 - f. Bob: We have the opportunity to keep the focus going with the leadership change. If we do this right, we will have a great chance to grow. The idea of a capital campaign or something like it for endowment.
 - g. Brian: Looking at church growth and models of churches and things that grow and flourish in today’s culture – would like to see a TAMFS that is reevaluating the culture and the times. More about ministry; plenty about advocacy. See TAMFS as a ministry. Once we get ordination, we still have much work to do. There are still many who do not want to be part of an institutional church but would find us on their faith journey. Long-term goal to differentiate into paths that address different needs.

- h. Leigh: Look to others that need to be sustained. How is our ability to sustain ourselves part of solidarity with others. There always needs to be a balance between the tension of how we support ourselves and how we are accountable. As Janie says, there is abundance and it will come. Our organization can be like a very large passing the hat – when we need it. Not living on the edge of terror. That we continually ask the questions we are asking today.
- i. Rebecca: Appreciated Brian’s insight about growth. One of the strength of TAMFS is ability and willingness to explore new models. Putting fear aside and trying new models is where growth happens. Focus on reaching out and bringing folks in through new models. The struggle for TAMFS and having as its director the founder – to bring in someone new is going to be a challenge. Challenge is going to include mediating visions, missions, money, and more. We run on a theology of wealth and not scarcity: there are resources out there that we have not even begun to touch.
- j. Kate: How do we stabilize within our own movement and so that we present well to those in the future.
- k. Ray: It would be very nice to be at a point where we were no longer needed, that TAMFS could just complete its mission and we all move on. Thinking like that, that we will get to the place where the church will be welcoming, means that there is another kind of work to do – the work “after,” so to speak. There will be a great need for healing and education about LGBT Christians within the broader church. There will be needs for healing, and what better healers are there than those who have been so wounded and still have the heart and spirit for such work. As for the “Terror” that surrounds money issues – take a look around. We are still here. Maybe we just have to let the fear of economic and financial issue slip away and focus on what we do, leaving the rest to the Spirit that has, and always will, provide. If our reliance isn’t, at least, in part on the Spirit – then we are just like any other secular organization – budgeting, projecting, etc.
- l. Mary: Would like to be in a place where we didn’t have to spend so much energy and time around fund-raising. What would it be like to not have to spend so much energy and time around this activity? Not so concerned about long-term sustainability, but is concerned about the steps we make in the near-future for the long term and being sure we are doing this in a way that is right.
Not always easy to discern the difference between acting on rational thinking and acting out of fear.

- m. Janie: How do we negotiate and work with one another – affinity groups, regions – we have to work together, listen in to our network, and create something different. “I think it’s very good timing that the leadership is changing now, because we need to change into something new.” There is a huge amount of work to do, to change a church that is off on gender, class, sexism...and the fabric of the church is b killed by its prejudice. We are talking about more than the church can speak to -- and we need to be able to do it well. We have been called here to live into change and not be afraid of it.

Regional Partnership Coordinator Report – Lisa Larges

1. We have switched to a new web host and web designer. In the process of getting a CMS server, so that we can upload information directly to the website. Expect site to be up in early February.
2. Lisa also coordinated switch in conference calling provider, which is saving us a good deal of money.
3. Lisa and Rebecca are speaking at a variety of conferences and sites around the country in honor of the 50th anniversary of the ordination of women.
4. Lisa is planning a van trip through Albany presbytery and the Presbytery of Hudson River to visit with people in these locations to thank them, support them, and let them know what we are doing.
5. We have many major donors in that area, which will give Lisa a chance to get to know many of these important supporters of TAMFS. This is being planned for early May.
6. Don Stroud and Lisa continue their work with Progressive Presbyterian Partners, creating a liaison system for GA and our participation with other affinity groups.
7. On January 20, 2006, the Maryland Courts upheld/declared that there should be no barrier for marriage for same gender couples. Don has headed the clergy support for the case that this addressed and is to be thanked and congratulated for his efforts.

D. General Assembly

1. Planning for General Assembly: Kate
 - a. Presented comments and general outline.
 - b. Called for an earlier discussion on the strategy than May.
 - c. There is predictable pain that we can prepare for in thinking about GA.
 - d. How will we work with MLP?
 - e. What overtures have been made that have not progressed in some ways?
 - f. How will we make sure that those who might speak for us are empowered to do so, so that what is authentic about us in our mission is represented?
 - g. Please be intentional about being well-organized in the use of the housing and space we have committed to.
 - h. Prepare to be helpful to the seminarians and others who have no – and will soon have – an awareness of the violence and pain in the church.
 - i. Planning for a care team to help those affected by the events of GA.
 - j. Planning for speakers for GA for our events.
 - k. There remains time to be intentional and organized.
2. Strategy for General Assembly: Tabled until February/April meeting.

V. Meeting Adjourned: At about 1:30 P.M.