

**Town Hall Meeting Notes February 21, 2021**  
**Building Our Future Update**  
(On Zoom)

Mary Strieff (President), Sue Schaedler (Vice President), and Neil Schultes (Treasurer) presented today's town hall meeting presentation which was put together by Gary Feder (At-Large Board Member).

Key notes from presentation:

- We have been examining what and how we want to be as we move forward through significant transition, with inputs from congregation, board, leaders, staff, and minister
- It's all about the mission, and how we live it:
  - Nurture the spirit, foster a reverence for life, explore the search for truth, build a spiritual community dedicated to justice, inspire members, friends, and our larger community
- Our strengths are:
  - Free faith, spiritual deepening, beloved community, shared values, strong ministries
- Our goals, based on the inputs, are:
  - Return to the building, full-time minister, support our current staff, create new ways of forming connections, enhance the value of our assets, create a buzz about SUUS

Mary wanted to get any thoughts and any questions from the congregation on this.

**DISCUSSION**

Maria Puziello: Lovely presentation. Agree with everything about the mission. Asked for clarification: what is board looking for from the congregation?

Mary Strieff: Let us know: what did we forget?

Chris Jobson: Reminder that at our last meeting, we supported having a full-time minister without sacrificing Faith Formation and Music.

Neil Schultes: Comments and ideas from the congregation are always welcome and needed to help the board make decisions in the future.

Jennifer Farmer-Etzel: Presentation was extremely well done. Three things that particularly excited her about it: (1) board's thoughts to do contract-to-called minister—very wise; (2) endowment bylaws are being revised; very necessary and will help in our moving forward fiscally; (3) as co-chair of Congregational Life: likes the mention of joint efforts of staff and congregation in greeting and welcoming new people.

Mary: RE: the congregation and making connections/relationships: anybody can find us online at any time; they don't have to come to Shoreline. What is it about our congregation that is so unique to us?: it has to do with connections, relationships—the community. There are so many souls who are looking for connections and relationships, esp. after this pandemic. Need to focus on how each of the members can help with that.

Richard Gressley: Thought after Jeanne retired, the consensus was to look for a 3/4-time minister.

Mary: That is what we have with Rev. Terry. But after the last town hall, full-time is what was shown to be of most interest.

Elizabeth Santoro: We don't have to get an interim minister?

Mary: No, Rev. Terry is our transitional minister. Contract-to-called is very popular with ministers now.

Elizabeth Santoro: RE: on-line services: so many places are doing pre-recorded services. We should emphasize that we are doing live services, and every week.

Mary: We only missed two Sundays: (1) Zoom had overload all over the East Coast; (2) a tropical storm caused a power outage, and the majority of members—including those running the service—were without power.

Mary: Not only is our Sunday worship excellent, but our Faith Formation director and committee have made ours thrive this year even though many Religious Education programs are having a problem with their programming.

Bill Townsend: Has SUUS's name been a problem? Shoreline means wealth, Society means nothing.

Mary: Due to pandemic, changing our name has been on the back burner.

Mary's response to a chat question re: if we are applying for new PPP loan: Yes, Finance is pursuing.

Jill Bowen: What happens to Worship Committee if we have a full-time minister?

Sue Schaedler: Nothing happens; it will be the same as when Rev. Jeanne was here.

Jill: Why a full-time minister, then?

Response from Mary and others: (1) it relieves volunteers' work load; (2) we have the best options in finding candidates; (3) pastoral care; (4) adult ed.

Jill: In mentioning our part in Ann Kadeleck's ordination, might she want to apply as minister for SUUS?

Sue S.: Since she served us recently, she may not be eligible. Our application will be posted on the UUA website, and she is welcome to apply.

Maryann Bracken: Any idea when we'll be returning to the building?

Sue S.: The COVID Protocol Team will start looking at that. Perhaps in the Fall we can do more things outdoors. But no services in the building until we can produce in person and on-line services equitably.

Maryann: SUUS sign out front of building looks outdated; have we considered replacing it?

Mary: That's on the back burner. Actually, it may have not been on a burner. Before that, we need a new roadside pulpit (sandwich board) that looks more professional.

Mary: At yesterday's Committee Council meeting, it was decided we will add a line item in the budget for COVID personal protection supplies and adjustments that may need to be taken in order for us to return to the building.

Laura Martino: When we do our search for a new minister, will we be looking for a candidate interested in racial justice?

Sue S.: There are a standard set of questions in the UUA online application we need to fill out when seeking a candidate (as well as in the application that interested ministers submit) and that area is covered there.

Mary: The next town hall meeting and pledge drive kick-off will be on Sunday, March 21. The results of our pledge drive will impact all of our goals. Then, in April we hope to have a budget in place, and in April or May we will be able to post what we're looking for in a contract minister.

Soule Golden: (1) Seconds Bill's comment about SUUS's name. (2) Do all UU churches have endowments?

Mary: No, most UU churches do not have endowments.

Soule: Does having so many fundraisers turn off people?

Rev. Terry Sweetser:

- If we want to have the minimum cost, we would need to exist entirely virtually.
- If congregation is in person, then he feels you have to tell people what it costs, because that is the only way to be able to pay for it.
- In fact, SUUS has very minimal emphasis on fundraising compared to others.
- But if we want to pay for what we have, we need to have a robust ask.
- He knows of no UU congregations (of the 300+ he's familiar with) to do less fundraising than we do.

Donna Christian: She also doesn't like SUUS's name, and she knows others feel the same. What's the reason it's so hard to make a decision about this?

Mary: Our congregation is made up of independent minds—we have so many different opinions here; it makes it difficult to bring it to a vote. Congregation, Church, Fellowship, Shoreline UU. More research will need to be done to see if there is any advantage of changing the name or brand.

Dave Merrill: He likes SUUS's name; likes "Society". We have to come up with a better choice than the one we have. He likes "Shoreline"; doesn't think it sounds like money. Our address sounds like money (Madison, CT). Shoreline is just the location of where we are.

Mary: Plus, if we change our name, we'd need to change our signage, website, much more—and that's just not a priority in the budget now.

Ellen Creane: Suggested we have a subheading, then, something like "a religious community, a free faith", etc.

Mary: We have a descriptor on the website – "A liberal religious voice on the shoreline since 1962"

*Notes taken by Sue Rosen*