Board Highlights

May 29, 2017

Members and Friends,

Please join us for the Annual Meeting on June 4th, following the Sunday service. We need a quorum of members! We will be approving the budget for the fiscal year beginning this July. We will also be voting for a competitive slate of candidates to lead the Board of Trustees, the Special Funds Committee, and the Leadership Development Committee. (Kudos to the LDC for recruiting such amazing talent!)

On a personal note, I’m completing my third and final year as Board President. It’s been a rewarding and humbling experience, and a privilege to be in service with these dedicated board members: Paul Schneider (Vice President), DeeAnne McClenahan (Financial Analyst/Treasurer), Jessica Nierad (Secretary), Barbara Face, Cliff Allred, and Musette Steger. They have been collaborative partners and valuable leaders.

The current year has been challenging at VUU--we have really had some highs and lows. For the board, our best highlight was the completion of the VUU Vision, following a year-long process that involved dozens of group discussions within the congregation. The result of that work is a guiding document which will inspire and focus the energy of our ministers, staff and volunteers for years to come.

As you know, our greatest challenge this year was the resignation and subsequent reinstatement of our senior minister. At the board level, we were engaged in crisis management—first at the prospect of losing our beloved Reverend Doctor Andy Burnette to the UUA, and then at the work of initiating searches for an interim and permanent minister, and then at the racial controversy emanating from the UUA regarding Andy’s appointment. In the end, our strong relationship with Andy made a difference: he committed another 3+ years to VUU. (Joy!) But the trauma of this crisis will require much time to heal for Andy and congregation.

Our other tough challenge this year was financial. Our revenue forecast was too optimistic—partly because of incorrect pledge assumptions and partly because we did not anticipate the adverse impact of Andy’s sabbatical absence on giving levels. Fortunately, we implemented several corrective actions mid-year that allowed us to stabilize financial performance and end the year well. We learned from the experience and have made changes that will enable greater financial success in the future. These include changes to stewardship structure, volunteer staffing, data, collections and communication—plus improved financial reserves, sabbatical policy, mortgage terms and Special Funds loan provisions.

We are ending the year feeling optimistic about the future, and for very good reasons:

* We have retained our ministers and key staff members.
* We are adding many new congregation members, increasing our diversity.
* Members reported high levels of satisfaction on the annual survey.
* Our operating budget is balanced for this year and next.
* We have a significant and growing endowment fund.
* We have increased community outreach through social justice, denominational and interfaith programs.
* We have a growing number of engaged volunteers.
* We formed a new group—the East VUUs to encourage growth and community development in Mesa and Apache Junction.

These strengths will carry us toward our vision, feed our spirits, and benefit the larger community.

As I reflect on the last few years, the greatest satisfaction comes from a sense that we have evolved culturally as a full-fledged program congregation. We have moved to the next stage of governance, a lay-ministerial partnership that reflects our great trust in the ministers and staff to manage operations. We are more open to innovation and more impactful as partners for social justice in the larger community. The future seems bright indeed…

Faithfully yours,

Janice Miller

President

VUU Board of Trustees