

## Notes from the Congregational Dialogue:

A copy of the slides and this summary will be added to the website, [www.unityfrederick.org](http://www.unityfrederick.org).

On September 16, 2018, 35 people gathered for lunch and a congregational dialog after service. We are blessed so many joined in the conversation. It is important to the Board of Trustees and the Ministerial staff that those who did not attend the meeting have access to the information shared.

Reverend Toni Fish welcomed everyone and Sarah Phillips, LUT led our opening prayer. Toni shared a slide show detailing Unity in Frederick's journey over the past several years. We are not where we thought we would be and need to make a shift. Kyle Huth, Board President, spoke about the plan the Board and ministerial team has for moving forward. Please review the slideshow and the statement form the Board of Trustees posted on our website and on our Facebook page.

The Board and Ministerial staff are taking two important steps now. They will speak with our landlord about renegotiating our lease for the next 12 months and will rewrite Rev Toni's contract. Her salary will be reduced, and she will work part time. She will remain Senior Minister. With this plan and our current trajectory, we have 8 months of reserves. At that time, we will not make rent or salaries. Below are minutes from the congregational dialog.

1. Opening by Toni Fish with slideshow
  - a. Review of September 2015
    - i. Average monthly income \$12,575
    - ii. Average Sunday attendance 50
    - iii. Voted on the concept of the move for a new space & began visioning new space
    - iv. Kelly Isola's workshop: actions achieved & still to complete
  - b. Review of September 2016
    - i. Average monthly income \$12,987
    - ii. Average attendance 38
    - iii. Decided to move
  - c. New space move – May 2017
    - i. Average Offering \$10,800
    - ii. Average attendance 40
  - d. Today, September 2018
    - i. Average offering \$9878
    - ii. Attendance 33
    - iii. Lost healing ministry
  - e. Monthly attendance curve since Toni has been here 2002 – 2018. Peak at 2009 and has been declining
  - f. Monthly income has declined, and expenses have gone up giving us a shortfall of \$6000-\$8000 per month
  - g. The energy in UIF has shifted

2. Kyle Huth – Read a statement from the Board of Trustees
  - a. The board will rewrite Toni’s contract with smaller financial responsibility moving forward.
  - b. Tom Bugler, past Board President will negotiate on our behalf for a reduction in our rent
  - c. Talked about renting UIF to other churches
  - d. Terri will continue to be Office Manager
  - e. Sarah – Ministerial candidate
  - f. Patty, Jamie – Staff
  - g. Theresa and Chris – LUTs
  - h. We ask for full support and participation from congregation
3. Meditation by Sarah Phillips
4. Questions and Comments:
  - a. Kat – Can we open to AA meetings?
    - i. Answer by Toni - yes, we have one group that meets on Wednesdays. We are open to more.
  - b. Lauren – loves the idea of renting the space, how much time in the day would we have to rent out the building?
    - i. Answer by Toni - We did rent two church groups at 9<sup>th</sup> St and it worked - we would have to be flexible, as well as they.
  - c. Kat – In AA they have 12 steps and 12 tradition banners. Can we get banners? Our meditation focused on the 12 powers. Gayle – Having them posted would be very beneficial. She would love to see banners. It describes who we are.
    - i. Answer by Kyle - We have looked at the 4 panels in entry. We are looking at finances and what would best represent UiF. Also, mentioned the road flag.
  - d. Steve – Frederick County Government and United Way are looking to get involved with recovery. There is a group with Frederick county health and there may be a possibility of finances. Question was thrown out to see if we do have a connection?
    - i. Answer by Toni – Can Steve get contact information? In addition, Jos and Jo are working to get us connected with Hospice to get programs here.
    - ii. Steve- Whenever you make a physiological move there is a 2-5 year old dip.
  - e. Kat – During *In The Streets* – a lot of churches there but we are lacking on marketing and bringing people in.
    - i. Answer by Kyle – He holds responsibility in the move from 9th to here and in preparing this space, we missed *In the Streets* and *Pride*. We missed important outreach opportunities. We have more events planned moving forward. WE would love to see more of congregation participate with us in those events and with that we would be able to do more of those events.
  - f. Maxine – Sharing the building – it did help us. We had limitations to sharing the building. She finds it hard to talk about finances without seeing the budget. The church needs to tighten the belt.
  - g. Naomi – we need families. Not sure what the answer is to that? Maybe a service that is focused toward families. There is a huge hole in missing the Healing Circle. It is a spiritual core and Naomi is willing to step up to it.
    - i. Debra - Linda, Krista, Debra and Mona ran the Healing Circle and got tired. Debra and Linda got sick. No one would step up to take over.

- ii. Jamie – about families: things have changed with families with sports on Sunday. She can't do all age groups. We need more volunteers.
- h. Kat – Why don't we have an Arts festival? Would like to see Unity work with Women in Recovering program
  - i. Answered by Toni - That it is a great idea and she said we need someone to run with it. We had plans for a Summerfest and just not enough people to make it happen. We need volunteers to step in to take over. We are open to collaborating with recovering programs. Someone needs to own that.
- i. Pauline – This is more than just Frederick County, some of our people come from Middletown or Myersville. We need to reach out in those communities. :
  - i. Answered by Toni - If we sign up for events would Pauline help be there? It can't be the same two people every time. We have a program and we know what has to come together to make this happen.
  - ii. Answered by Sarah – Remember when you take on leading an event, you don't have to do it alone or do all the work. Get a team.
- j. Jo – Livestreaming, does this effect attendance? Are people staying home? How much value added does the livestreaming have?
  - i. Answer by Toni – Data from other churches says it doesn't directly impact Sunday attendance. They need to see the donate button. Needs: we need someone to monitor the live chat and that way we could respond to questions.
- k. Jeff – This meeting is about money in and money out. There have been great ideas on how to improve. This meeting means there may not be any long-term if we don't address the now. We need to capture the ideas for the long-term but not forget that this presentation is a more immediate timeline.
- l. Eriana – We have this beautiful space, but it is a bit cold. What about a mural? Have an artist come in and paint something beautiful.
- m. Peter – 8 months before we go bankrupt? Lot's of great ideas, but we need to decide if we personally invest to save the sanctuary. Has the board looked at reaching out to the community for help? Do people tithe on a regular basis? Not to introduce fear into the situation, but we have to ask. Can we reach out to other unity communities to ask for tithing support?
  - i. Answer by Toni – the adjustment to Toni's salary will cover the \$1000-\$3000 shortfall each month. What it doesn't cover is the \$5400 shortfall that we had already budgeted. Her adjustment in salary will still leave us with a \$5000+ deficit each month. Renting the space would help, and getting our rent down could help us get stable. We thought we would cover the \$5000 earlier in this process but it didn't happen, then we added \$1000-\$3000 shortfall on top of that. So now we have to build this. We can put all of the advertising out there that we want, but the best advertising is word of mouth. We need to find a way to support people beyond the basics.
- n. Pauline – This is the largest group of congregants at a dialog. It is amazing that there are so many ideas, and this is positive. This is where it is starting.
  - i. Answered by Kyle – This is the energy we need to see so we can build our future.
- o. Tracey – Not a church person, but she went to church to find like-minded people and to have a social community – grow a community here.

- p. Lauren – She was part of a welcoming committee and she wanted to know what we do to engage with these new-comers? Lauren said she used to send each person a personal card as a welcome and thank you.
  - i. Answer by Toni – We’ve had this bubble up a few times, but it didn’t take off. Gayle - What happens with contact information? Lauren – One issue is having to run everything by Toni, who is busy with other things. It is better when we know we can do something without running it by her. Gayle - We don’t need Toni to go up to someone and talk to them. Speak with Gayle if you want to welcome newcomers. Let’s ask ourselves how we can each help. Kyle – We do welcome bags. Naomi - didn’t know where those bags are. Sarah – Will make sure greeters know where to find bags.
- q. Gayle – We have committees – are there heads of these committees?
  - i. Answered by Sarah – She is working with Patty to reorganize the structure. It will be shared next Sunday.
- r. Eriana – Wants to spread the word, but gets tongue-tied in how to explain Unity.
  - i. Answer by Toni - We have an elevator-pitch card. She can have some to hand out.
- s. Gayle – We can offer to pay for Uber for people who need rides
- t. Betsy – Are we in discussion with other churches in this complex on the rentals?
  - i. Answer by Kyle - We need to run it by St. John’s properties. Kyle is reaching out.
- u. Donna – We have a lot of great ideas, but if we had a large community all of problems would be solved. Our energies should be in marketing. We need people out there doing that on the streets.
- v. Henry – The broader community doesn’t know who we are. Finds there is no infectious energy here.
  - i. Answered by Toni - she can’t give people the energy. She is tired and is running out of ideas. We need enthusiasm. We need those stakeholders. We have the talent and we need more clarity on how to start this energy shift.
- w. Steve – one trend across the county, AA meetings are being told they need to have insurance. Maybe we can market it that way.
- x. Kyle – We will be transparent with our Unity in Frederick Spiritual Community and post our slideshow presentation, the board statement and the minutes from the dialog. We will share contact information for leadership and welcome your questions, comments, and ideas.
- y. Closing prayer by Toni

Added Note from Toni: Clearly another option for Unity in Frederick would be to find alternative space if other options don’t pan out.