

After a few years of meeting via Zoom our Board has begun meeting in person again. We try to keep our meetings focused on the big picture and stay within our time frame and we have met this goal. The work of the functioning committees and that of the Coordinating Council, allows us to do this and we are grateful.

Our Board spent our retreat last year looking at the UUCSC Bylaws. We worked to bring them into alignment with our current practices and to change them into the kind of bylaws we need to receive federal tax exempt status. Our treasurer Karen Ellsworth was instrumental in accomplishing this feat. The special Congregational meeting was well-attended in person and on Zoom and the changes passed with a spirit of unanimity.

Some of our committees, the Finance, Worship, Facilities and Membership Committees for example, have been serving the needs of the congregation with teams of helpful members. They can always use new members, of course, but I commend them and thank them for serving our needs. The work they have done this year has been essential.

The transition from our former treasurer, who was doing more than her fair share of work for the congregation, has taken a while. We have spread out the tasks among a few people and we're grateful to them all. During this change we've noticed how complex our budget and accounting process is, so we've developed a goal of simplifying and streamlining. This will make it easier for everyone involved and it may save us money as time goes on.

We have other committees, full teams in the past, which are empty now. We have found ways to have community dinners and coffee hour and post-funeral collations without a hospitality or social events committee like we used to have. This year we had some fun and successful fundraising events, and we did it without a fundraising committee. We had Zoom services without a technology committee! None of this is ideal.

The world is changing around us. We may not need the committee structure we used to have but we do need some organization. We have "fundraising" written into our 26/27 budget as an income line, so we do have to find a way to be organized in this new world. It's important that nobody be overburdened, and it's important that everyone who helps feels respected. We have to match up our capacity with our expectations. Over the next year the board will be addressing the committee structure. We may be able to find ways to restructure and we will surely need to find people to fill the role of organizer. If these roles are intentionally temporary and fulfilling we can meet our needs in a sustainable way.

I was intrigued and inspired by the Kingian Nonviolence training I attended with a group of UUCSC members and local community members. It was a long day and yet I wanted more! The answers to some of our needs can be found in the principles and practice of Kingian nonviolence. We miss Art Stein's presence in our sanctuary and a closer connection between our congregation and the URI Center for Nonviolence and Peace Studies, which Art helped start, will serve us. Let's consider how we can build more connection.

After some years of the nominating committee having to look hard for nominees for various roles it was heartening how quickly the hiring team came together after the sad surprise announcement that our beloved Rev. Denis would be leaving us to head to Flint, Michigan. A dedicated intergenerational group of members came together to do a lot of work in a short period of time, meeting weekly and digging through the lengthy documents and sometimes confusing systems that guide UU ministerial transitions. This kind and diligent crew has brought a fresh new flow to my fountain of hope.