

2015 September Stewards Minutes

Seekers Church

September 9, 2015 Stewards Meeting

Housekeeping

for September

moderator: Dave

worship: Sandra

recorder: Deborah

angels: Judy * Trish

for next month

moderator : Keith

worship: Dave

recorder: Michele

angels: Kevin & Judy

Next meeting October 4 at 5:30pm

Trish SLT review

The review team consisted of Sandra, Dave, and Linda Nunes-Schrag. Sandra will send electronically the notes from the wider community. The committee posed questions to Trish, which she did her best to respond regarding her comfort with her various roles, and her ongoing sense of being a member of the SLT, and how the rest of community can support her. Trish responded by saying that

roles on the team are not clearly defined. Dealing with the Holy Spirit Fund is complex, raising up many issues about money and relationships. Holy gossip is also an issue – how to support one another, how to know what to share and what to keep close. Being on the SLT allows for a view of the community that is often invisible to others. It is sometimes difficult to know the difference between call and duty. Trish feels particularly supported by a couple of people, but does not feel the need for a standing support group. She has recently obtained a license from DC to officiate at marriages.

There were 10 or 12 verbal and email responses about Trish, unanimously praising her. She wants to continue in her role on the SLT, which the committee affirms, as does Stewards as a whole.

We are encouraged to serve on future SLT review teams, which is both a privilege & a way to both support individual Servant Leaders and hold them accountable as needed. New calls to the SLT are opened when the SLT feels the need for new members. Such calls are issued by Stewards, on the recommendation of an ad hoc discernment committee. Currently, there is a discernment team consisting of Marjory, Peter, Larry, Sandra, Kate, Peter, and Deborah.

Dayspring Retreat House

Pat circulated a proposal asking Stewards to appoint a group to be in conversation with Dayspring regarding making Woodside House serve as a small group retreat center.*(see below for full text of proposal) If the process moved quickly that would be good since the building is currently empty and Dayspring would like it to be in use. Those Seekers interested are Jesse Palidofsky, Joan & Doug Dodge, Denise, Ken Burton, Trish, Larry, and Pat. Pat has also talked with 10 or so others who have indicated their interest. It is hard to know what the actual time commitment

for such a committee would entail. It would involve some initial meetings with people from Dayspring about general issues, followed by a lot of details by select individuals to make particular recommendations and get estimates. A minimal commitment would be 2 or 3 meetings over the next few months.

Why is this a good idea for us and for Dayspring?

We already have Stillpoint, and the Barwick house will soon be available. This house would serve more than Seekers. Currently, Dayspring is for silent retreats, and Wellspring usually needs the cabins for larger meetings and retreats and costs \$5000 for a weekend. A small group retreat center would serve a need for smaller groups. Below are questions that arose from the conversation, with responses from Pat and others.

Where are the folks from Dayspring on this? There are some who are interested in this for economic reasons, while others are excited about expanding their vision, mission, and witness. Kent at Wellspring could do the booking, and in fact is already getting some inquiries for small groups, but nothing is certain. Maintenance & cleaning is undefined. Gale Quist is enthusiastically leading this part of the conversation. Like us, they have a lot of things to work out, so nothing is settled. They are eager to rent this house, but it is not particularly well suited to use as a regular, long-term rental.

What is the current availability for small group retreats? We do not have regular weeks at Rolling Ridge, but we do still have a relationship with them. We have 3 weeks at Still Point. Are there mission groups wanting to be on retreat and having trouble finding places? Yes, there are some. Still Point is hard to get to in winter, and farther away, but some would go to Dayspring even for a 1-day retreat. Pat believes there is a lot of need for small group retreats for groups other than Seekers & CofS groups. This

house can also be made wheelchair accessible.

Is this on the Ecumenical Council agenda? What is the urgency on this issue? Can Dayspring rent it out for a year while this conversation goes forward? If a more solid proposal appears, it will go to Ecumenical Council, but this is now an exploration. It is up to Dayspring how they want to proceed, and it could be helpful for Seekers to be part of that conversation.

Decision:Stewards were split on the formation of a committee to meet with representatives of Dayspring. There have been many general exploration conversations about how we would like to relate to Dayspring. Pat has been in conversation with Gale Quist, but is unwilling to move forward without support and authority from Stewards. Even with this authority, there will be many opportunities for Stewards to say yes or no about next steps. There is concern that other CofS faith communities are not involved in the conversation. They could be, but this conversation was initiated by Seekers. The issue is tabled to next month so that other CofS communities as well as other Seekers can be invited into the conversation. Pat will tell Dayspring that we are not ready, and is not prepared to do anything more on this issue because there is not enough interest on the part of Stewards. Others are invited to pick it up if they are interested.

Outreach, Part 2

What we are talking about:

- Intentional outreach
- different “flavors” of outreach
- sharing the “Good News” of Christ and of Seekers – this is not evangelism in the old-fashioned sense, but sharing our spiritual life and what we are about. What we love about Seekers and about our spiritual lives

We broke into five small groups to reflect on the following:

- What brought/attracted you to Seekers?
- What keeps you here – what's your Good News?
- What types of outreach should we focus on? And what do you have energy for?

Reporting back into the whole:

- Why did we come?
 - Some were directed to CofS and found their way to Seekers
 - Some came because their children's friends were coming
 - many other reasons
- What is our Good News?
 - God loves you just as you are – no one makes you feel guilty or stupid or not Christian enough. Instead, people help you develop what you have and appreciate it
 - Open secrets – a lot of people talk about their lives in mission groups, from the pulpit, and in ordinary conversation. We carry these open secrets in a way that everyone knows we've got feet of clay, have doubts, or have done terrible things, and trust one another.
 - We have tools for being known – there is a 12-Step influence, SCL, mission groups
 - The only way to get all this is through commitment and through regular, daily practice.
 - We support people in practical and spiritual ways.
 - There is an integrity about how we are in the community, in our giving, and to one another. We give where our passions are, and our commitment fuels our passions.
 - We are not bound by a big denomination.
 - Our message is that we encourage the divine

spark within you. Creativity in worship and support for individual creativity. Supporting growing edges.

- Progressive both religiously and socially. We have an expansive understanding of God and a lot of other things.
- We offer an alternative way to work out some of the challenges that are facing Christianity. We are not necessarily the explorers, but the first homesteaders trying to figure out how to build community.
- We want to encourage building relationships to God and to others rather than worrying about what or how you believe. We want to support your spiritual journey.

How are we going to share this Good News? And is there any way to say all that in one sentence?

- A stronger social media presence – we could do more with our facebook page
 - Elevator speeches and slogans –
 - for some people the fact that it's a church will be an attraction, and for others that is negative. Our name can put off those who are looking for a church. It's our commitment to be open, trusting, and forgiving like the one who calls us that keeps us going.
 - Getting people who are visiting
 - quarterly lunches
 - talking to whoever comes in the door
 - Carroll Cafe introductions
 - Making our worship more relevant for young people
 - Focus more on creating our brochures and getting them out into the world
 - Having retreats for the public/new people

- Relevant topics for the wider community, such as:
 - non-Bible related
 - how to date,
 - relationships,
 - Begin to understand ourselves as an adult study center with a more articulated program to deepen the spiritual journey
 - coaches/mentoring
 - Reaching the people who want what we are, such as
 - the LGBTQ community which is not served well by traditional churches
 - refugees from other churches/religions (those burned by toxic faith)
 - More presence at Takoma Park events like Art Hop and Takoma street festival
 - Advertising – the Journal, the Courier, outreach to university students
 - Have an invite-a-friend-to-church Sunday.

Next steps. What do we have energy for?

- It only happens if we actually do it. We also need to bring this conversation back to the rest of the congregation, as members who are not Stewards may have other ideas and other energy.
- Start a new mission group? This kind of thing in the CofS has historically happened through mission groups, eg the old Seeds of Hope mission group
- Come up with a new one-liner to describe who we are

Is there a group of people who wants to continue to meet

around these issues and gather people from the wider community to flesh out some of these ideas and work on them.

- Hold a meeting to share these ideas? Have a Third Sunday conversation.
- Take all of this back into our mission groups to see if any of these ideas fit within our missions
- Adding more news to the website – Peter would be happy to have a “front page reporter” to listen for, gather in, and edit more stories that he can post. The Meet a Seeker section needs more stories, too, if someone is willing to take that on.
- Jackie is willing to work with others on retreats for the public
- Judy is willing to walk the Takoma Park neighborhood to look for places to post brochures and posters. Jesse is a resource because he does this for Carroll Cafe.

SLT report

Trish reported on the follow-up to disturbing emails received by a number of Seekers and negative postings about Seekers on Yelp.

Soul Talk

Vincent and Michele, whose birthdays are in September, have graciously agreed to share more deeply in October, when the agenda will be lighter.

Various Stewards shared briefly about current issues in their lives and the life of Seekers.

**Proposal Regarding Dayspring*

Stewards appoint a group to represent Seekers in discussing with Dayspring representatives the possibilities of retasking and retrofitting the Woodside House to serve as a

small group retreat facility. Such discussion includes the understanding that retrofitting would likely cost in the tens of thousands of dollars and that Seekers would consider making a large donation toward the costs of retrofitting. The Seekers group would ask for a realistic business plan, including adequate promotion, as a prerequisite for considering a large donation toward retrofitting.

The group would be tasked to report each month to Stewards on the progress of the conversations and any plans. The group would make no specific financial offer without approval by Stewards but would try to develop some sense of realistic considerations.