



Foothills Board of Trustees Meeting
Approved Meeting Minutes
6:00 pm February 4, 2020

Board Members in Attendance: Sara Steen, Sue Sullivan, Glenn Pearson, Brendan Mahoney, Debbie Gentry, Joan Woodbury, and Rev. Gretchen Haley as ex-officio board member.

Others in Attendance: Rev. Sean Neil-Barron

Meeting convened at 6:20 pm with a chalice lighting and check-in.

Glenn Pearson presented the final report of the Restoring Wholeness Task Force, which was convened in April 2019 and met a total of 13 times, concluding its work on Jan 30, 2020. The board received the report and the timelines and summaries of ministerial misconduct (both for former music director Ryan Marvel and retired senior minister Marc Salkin) that were compiled by the task force.

The board then discussed how to move the work of healing and restoration forward and what portion of that work should be held by the Board of Trustees, what portion was the responsibility of the Ministry, and what portion should be jointly owned. There was consensus that the work of congregational and individual healing is Ministry work. The work of writing policy (clarifying how and when misconduct should be reported to the board and the board's authority to decide when misconduct will be disclosed to the congregation, and policy regarding ministerial self-care, for example) are the board's responsibility. The writing and disseminating of a narrative of the congregation's history in relation to ministerial misconduct and its impacts on us is primarily the responsibility of the board. But because ministerial misconduct, its disclosure, and how we speak about it collectively has such a significant impact on the work of Ministry, we agreed that the Ministry should have input in the process of developing and sharing that narrative.

The board also discussed the values that we wanted to be guided by as we moved forward with this work, including protecting the dignity and legacy of the transgressors, protecting the privacy of victims of the misconduct, validating the loss of community and other harmful impacts of the misconduct on them and their families, affirming that such misconduct will not be tolerated or left unaddressed in this church community, that we

will be honest and transparent about what we have experienced and how it has shaped this congregation, and honoring the need for members to heal from unresolved feelings around the misconduct, the disclosures, and the complex grief around the death of Rev. Salkin.

The board considered as guiding questions 1) what the congregation needs to know about the misconduct for internal healing, and 2) what we need to know about our history as a congregation to prevent these patterns of misconduct from continuing to repeat. Rev. Gretchen noted that these experiences of misconduct do not and should not define us as a congregation. Educating ourselves about what boundary violations and boundary issues look like and how they manifest was also identified as an important step towards healing and rebuilding a sense of safety for congregants.

Rev. Sean suggested that the board could set a policy for itself to periodically review the professional codes of conduct of our various ministry professionals so that we are aware of changes to them as they evolve.

Rev. Gretchen stated a need to make a report to the congregation on what has been done by the board towards healing and congregational health since May 2018 when the disclosure of Rev. Salkin's past misconduct was made.

The board decided that a tiered system of reports would be needed to achieve all the aims of respecting legacies and dignity, protecting victims, congregational healing, living our values of honesty and transparency, and ensuring the safety of our members.

At the base of these reports would rest a full archival record of source documents, timelines, communications, narratives, disclosure presentations, resources consulted and any other relevant materials, to be held in the church's archives.

The next level would be a 5-10 page long report of How We Responded and would include: a summary of these events, the board's responses, the policy changes we made as a result of the misconduct disclosures, what we learned about ourselves as a congregation, what values we chose to be guided by, why we disclosed, how we collectively experienced those disclosures, and other lessons learned during the experiences of misconduct and disclosure. This document might be shared with past leaders of the congregation, future board members, and any long-time church members who remain engaged but are still struggling to process the disclosures themselves or the board's decisions to disclose.

A 2-3 page document that is a summary of Foothills' history of misconduct and our collective response to misconduct over the decades, how that affects congregations in general and us specifically, and how we can grow and learn to be different will be helpful for use in the Ministry's healing circles and for sharing information to newer or less-engaged members who might be hearing stories related to the misconduct and subsequent disclosures and wanting context and explanation.

An executive summary, a page or less in length, of what we have done since the last disclosure of ministerial misconduct should be produced before the end of this board year, when the last of the board members who participated in that disclosure rotate off the board. This should go out to the congregation at large, from the board of trustees.

And finally, a very brief "elevator speech" length summary should be developed to help leaders and congregants understand how to talk in an open, honest, and healthy way about an aspect of our collective experience that should not become a shameful secret that gets distorted or feels unsafe to members or newcomers.

Sue Sullivan agreed to take on the project of drafting these various pieces and bringing them back to the board for review, with the first piece, the summary of the board's actions taken towards restoring wholeness since May 2018, due in May.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:05 pm.

Minutes written and presented by
Sue Sullivan