

Subject: Board of Trustees Chair Report
From: Mark de Solla Price, Board of Trustees Chair
To: Our Congregation
Date: June 1, 2008

Back in March, my remarks to you at our last Quarterly Congregational Meeting were titled "This is Literally YOUR Congregation" and I spoke a lot about Congregational Polity and how the Congregation's will as manifest in daily governance and administration.

The Alban Institute was founded in 1974 and their motto is "If you want to move the world, move a congregation." They are a wonderful group and we've worked with their consultants and materials on many levels. They are a resource for liberal religious clergy and lay leaders who seek new insights and new knowledge through the research-based resources and practical information for improving life and ministry in congregations. Much of their writing uses traditional Christian language, and as an Atheist and UU, I needed to do some translations when I hit words like "Jesus" or "God's Work", but as a UU author, I'm used to that sort of rewriting.

Dan Hotchkiss is a senior consultant at the Alban Institute and he wrote an article entitled "Who Owns a Congregation?" that originally appeared in the March 2008 issue of Clergy Journal (www.logosproductions.com),

When Dan Hotchkiss asked, "Who Owns a Congregation?" My first answer was "you do – you the voting members" After all, we are YOUR board of trustees, and we have a fiduciary responsibility to represent you. Let me read you his wise comment:

"The job of congregational leaders—boards, clergy, lay leaders, and staff—is not to "give the members what they want." For one thing, if the only mission is to current members, the congregation will soon die. And so the mission must be not only to change the lives of members but of others yet to join. A real problem with democracy in congregations is that future members do not vote. If they did, at every meeting they would make up a majority.

Another reason congregations cannot simply "give the members what they want" is that part of the mission is to teach people to want things that they don't want. Members of vital congregations testify to many ways the congregation has drawn them out of themselves into voluntary service, sacrificial changes of career, and hard work for social justice. Sometimes I ask such people, "What would you have done if someone warned you how joining this

congregation would transform your life?" Generally they admit, "I would have run the other way!" Pleasing people—members, future members, leaders, or anybody else—is not the mission. The mission is to change lives."

So Who Owns a Congregation? The Mission Owns the Congregation!

"Our Mission at The Community Church of New York Unitarian Universalist is to grow as a caring, justice-making, anti-racist, diverse, spiritual community."

Let me repeat this: Who Owns **this** Congregation? Our Mission "to grow as a caring, justice-making, anti-racist, diverse, spiritual community" owns this Congregation. That really changed my perspective, so today I'd like to talk about what we've been doing to further that mission.

In early April, BJ's Shelter once again reopened to house 10 otherwise homeless men 7 nights a week. We had been closed for 100 days while we renovated, repainted, upgraded and exterminated our facilities – this was the longest we'd ever been closed in the 25 year history of the shelter and I'd like a round of applause for the great work that **Fred Corden** and the Shelter Committee and volunteers have done and continue to do for the mission of our church. Thank you. This is your Congregation.

Ten years ago TODAY, our congregation set aside a tithe, 10% of our endowment as **The Ethelwyn Doolittle Justice and Outreach Fund** to directly support human rights, civil liberties, racial justice and environmental concerns through advocacy and services. It was the congregation's will that this would help us not lose sight of these larger picture of Justice Making issues while we come together at this time of the year to focus on the fine details of expenses and our annual budget.

It is a great joy and privilege to continue to serve as a member and as the past chair of this committee. Because the committee was inactive for a few years, we had a carry forward balance from the income from this fund and we're able to give away \$90,000 this year. Next year it will be about \$72,000 and then it will level off at about \$54,000 each year.

I'm sure many of you saw the description of this year's grant recipients in the most recent Community Connections and in the annual committee reports distributed today. This year's grants went to: Healthcare Now, New Jersey ACORN, WBAI – Pacifica Foundation, Lower East Side Ecology Center, African Activist Archive, IndyKids, Innocence Project Exoneree Fund, New York Immigration Coalition, New Yorkers for Verified Voting, People's Institute – New York City, Prison Action Network, Interfaith Task

Force for Homeless LGBTQ Youth, and Mujeres en Cambio/Women for Change.

In addition, \$10,000 went out in mostly \$300 checks for our Congregational Memberships supporting 34 organizations and UU affiliations, including the Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office and Unitarian Universalists for Jewish Awareness and lots of others that share our history and mission.

Thank you to my fellow Doolittlers who do so much: **Paul Hampton, Phyllis Andrews, David Strachan** and **David Will**. I'd like a round of applause for the great work that the Doolittle Committee has done and continue to do for the mission of our church. Thank you. This is your Congregation.

On Mother's Day, **Peter Robinson** created a spectacular "Sunday in the Park with George" Lunch and tea dance, which inaugurated our finally once again functional kitchen as a place to cook food so we can break bread together as a community. Lots of folks were responsible for that great event and even more folks worked in getting our kitchen working.

I'd like a round of applause to recognize the folks who actually use the kitchen the most: **Erin Tower, Jennifer Hampshire, Nancy Hough** and **Bill Rothfarb** -- it's their combined great on-going work that has given us back our community hearth around which we can build community for the mission of our church. Thank you. This is your Congregation.

If you missed the event, there are wonderful photos of this and so many great events we'd had together on the bulletin boards in the halls and in Community Connections. Never before have our times together been so well and so timely represented in photos. I'd like a round of applause for the great work that **Connie Moore** has done and continue to do as the acting membership coordinator for the mission of our church. Thank you. This is your Congregation.

Yesterday, our Congregation hosted the 9th annual Anti-Racism & Diversity Committee of the UU Metro New York District **Anti-Racism Conclave** with a record attendance of 125 attending. **Rev. Bill Sinkford**, the UUA President was the keynote speaker. I hope Janice Marie Johnson, our Director of Lifespan Religious Education, will share with you a little about this amazing and inspiring day in her remarks in a few minutes. I'd like a round of applause for all our intentional Anti-Racism & Diversity work we do together to further the mission of our church. Thank you. This is your Congregation.

On May 2, **Anna-Lisa Hafgren, Carol Apicella, David Will, Heidi Siegfried, Ken Wachtell, Sam Kerns** and I were your lay delegates representing this congregation at the **UU Metro NY District Meeting** in Stamford.

Strengthening the denomination and the Metro NY District is really important for the future of our faith. One of the items of business was having the privilege to elect Janice Marie Johnson to our district's board of trustees.

From June 25th to 29th, **Vinny Allegrini, Anna-Lisa Hafgren, Maureen Holder, Laurie James, Reena Kondo, Natalie Webb** and I will be your lay delegates representing this congregation at the General Assembly in Ft Lauderdale, FL. I'm sure we'll have lots to report back to you in the fall. . I'd like a round of applause for the all those who give service to our denomination, district, and fellow NYC UU Congregations to further the mission of our church. Thank you. This is your Congregation.

We have a lot of big changes and exciting things happening over the summer:

Dr. Deborah Gambs, PhD. (yes, she now has her doctorate!) Will tell you about the exciting news about the first phase of our hall of Worship renovation project. **Mary Dugan** will tell you the philosophy behind our new Integrated Budget that shows operating expenses, items funded from special funds, and projects that further the mission of the church, but for which we're in effect subsidizing through less than market rental fees.

I'd like to call your attention to the sheet of community activities that we provide our space either for free or often significantly under market rates. I'd like a round of applause for our congregational generosity if helping these group and building community to further the mission of our church. Thank you. This is your Congregation.

In addition to the General Assembly in Ft Lauderdale, FL we'll be sending nine members to the **Unitarian Universalist Leadership Team Institute**, July 28th to Aug 3rd held at Juniata College, Huntingdon PA **We still have three spaces open**, so if you might be interested in an intensive course in how to help "grow as a caring, justice-making, anti-racist, diverse, spiritual community" there is no better training. You don't have to be on the board or a committee chair, if you're interested in helping lead our congregation mission, we'd like to give you the training to empower you. Our congregation pays all the costs of tuition, room, board, transportation, so if you're interested, please see me and I can tell you more. It was a life-changing experience for me last year.

We have also just started on a new **Congregational and Leadership Self Assessment leading into our Strategic Visioning and Planning**. It's vital that we have a clear picture of how we're doing and where we want to go in order to grow and be healthy. The key here is your input and your

participation in the process. **Jennifer Hampshire, Janice Marie Johnson, Bruce Southworth, Natalie Webb** and I are on this task force. You're going to hear a lot about this during all of the next church year. We're approached **Rev. Stefan Johanssen**, Director of Large Congregation services at the UUA, to work with us on this.

Although Community Church is unique and wonderful, we "aren't as unique as we think" and we're going to look to similar congregations so we can learn from those that are also (1) have large endowments, (2) are urban, (3) are intentionally diverse, (4) have a history of social activism, (5) have long-term ministers **OR** (6) have a strong congregation history and identity.

To help to grow and build a healthy future, the Board of Trustees has over the last many months has re-envisioned the position of our Business Administrator. This replaces the position that **Kay Aler-Maida, Greg Jones** and most recently **Rosanna Rosado** has filled with a more autonomous, empowered, and more senior position. This is a little bit closer to the "executive director" of a not-for-profit. Our new **Business Administrator** may well have an MBA and lots of Congressional Church Administration experience. This person will report directly to the board of trustees, and the Business Administrator, not the Senior Minister, will be in charge of day-to-day administration of the business of the church. This is a big shift for us, and the board is really excited that this is going to make all the difference in the world moving forward to be the mid-sized "program church" that we need to be.

We've started the recruiting process and I'm leading up that team working with **Bruce Southworth**, our Senior Minister; **Mary Dugan**, our Treasurer; **Winifred Zuban**, Chair of Finance and our past board chair, **Rosanna Rosado**, our Administrator and **Brenda Shrobe** of the Personnel Committee. I encourage you to look at our job listing on the website CCNY.ORG/JOBS

Earlier this week, our wonderful visionary **Governor David Paterson** gave the keynote address at the annual **Empire State Pride Agenda** Award Dinner in Rochester. I'm sure many of you read the newspaper coverage or perhaps saw it on YouTube. The Governor issued an **executive order to recognize same-sex couples married in other jurisdictions**. In two weeks, Vinny and I celebrate 15 years together, and we were legally married in Massachusetts at the Unitarian Universalist Meeting House of Provincetown, so it affects us personally. We've also been "Marriage Ambassadors" media spokesmen for Empire State Pride Agenda, we were very proud.

Both the Unitarian Universalist denomination and **Community Church of New York Unitarian Universalist** have been trailblazers for both gay rights and marriage equality. It's one of the main reasons that Vinny and I joined as members.

Unfortunately, the very next day, **Joseph Bruno**, the President of the New York State Senate, issued a press release that he was looking to take legal action to block this executive order. Yes, a press release in favor of discriminations and hatred. That's pretty tough to take. Our world is filled with so much ignorance, and we all face so many challenges.

Our larger community so desperately needs to hear the sane voice of our liberal faith that we have to share. It is our mission to be a beacon of this liberal faith that they can hear, especially in times like these. We do this, and are working to be more visible. During today's service upstairs, we welcomed our new members, who heard that voice and joined us. I'd like a round of applause for these new members. This is your congregation.

Thank you for your time today, and for the opportunity to serve you as your board of trustees chair.

