

Board of Trustees Visioning Work Presentation

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Jenny Sour – Member, Finance Committee

Kim Weichel – Former Member, BoT



River Road Unitarian Universalist Congregation

Community, Spirit, and Service

Why Visioning Now?

- Last RRUUC BoT 3-5 year strategic plan May 2015
- Pandemic postponed development of 2020/21 plan
- Given new normal (e.g., shrinking membership in congregations), BoT opted to begin a congregational visioning initiative prior to development of new strategic plan



Phase 1: Dec. 2021 – June 2022

- Visioning question development
- Small group discussions answering questions
- Surveys answering questions
- Reviewing group discussions & survey findings
- Independent theme analyses of group discussions and survey findings
- Presentation at June 12th annual meeting



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Phase 2: July 2022 – June 2023

- Congregants provide feedback on original and new questions (email us at visioning@rruuc.org)
- Interviews with key leaders of longtime community-based partner organizations
- Integration of BoT visioning findings with faith development team visioning findings
- Draft BoT 5-year strategic plan with action opportunities
- BoT approves strategic plan and presents at June 2023 annual meeting



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Who Answered?

- Small groups ($n \leq 10$ participants each)
- RE Families participating in Firepit “Smores”
- Individual congregants ($n=18$) completed online surveys
- Approximately 100 participants

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How Was Information Reviewed?

- Group leads summarized findings from their meetings and surveys
- Team members independently reviewed and synthesized findings into themes for each set of group meetings/surveys
- Team members identified cross-cutting themes across all groups/surveys

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Q1 Cross-Cutting Themes - What has made you feel included/welcomed in our congregation?

- Connections within our congregation
- Connecting in big ways and small, publicly and privately, makes us feel welcome.
- Interactions between staff and congregants -- members and friends -- make us feel welcome.
- Being personally invited to join small groups, social justice activities and committees for special events
- Religious education is a great entry point into the congregation
- The open-mindedness of the congregation, a sense of shared values among the members

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Q1 Cross-Cutting Themes - What has made you feel included/welcomed in our congregation?

- Connections and Community:
 - with the congregation,
 - within the community,
 - with greeters,
 - with staff,
 - with small groups,
 - RE,
 - SJ,
 - Bazaar,
 - 1-1 engagements
- Feeling 'seen'
- Activities or programs in which to participate
- Similar values reflected individually and from the pulpit

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Q2 Cross-Cutting Themes - Are there aspects of our congregation that are not welcoming?

- Not being in covenant with one another, intolerance of differing points of view
- Inclusivity, acceptance and embracing of others remains a challenge
- Meeting and staying connected to others -- before COVID and now emerging from COVID -- remains a challenge
- Coffee hour can be intimidating to people who do not already have friendships in the congregation
- Not enough structured opportunities to develop relationships, especially for young adults and retired congregants
- Being treated differently because one is a person of color



Q2 Cross-Cutting Themes - Are there aspects of our congregation that are not welcoming?

- Hard to get to know others
- Not feeling seen if not volunteering
- Insufficient multi/Intergenerational opportunities
- Intolerance of different opinions, political views
- Pressure to engage
- A bit “cliquey!”

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Q3 Cross-Cutting Themes - What would it look like if we are individually and collectively living the values of the 7th & 8th Principles?

- Increase community-based collaborations with existing and new organizations and congregations
- Need more visibility of our efforts within and beyond the congregation.
- Environmental justice needs to be on par with racial justice -- in fact, they inform one another.
- Stronger emphasis on environmental justice
- More visible commitment to social justice activities
- More willingness to engage in difficult discussions

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Q3 Cross-Cutting Themes - What would it look like if we are individually and collectively living the values of the 7th & 8th Principles?

- Better communications and visibility re: SJ efforts and small group opportunities
- More engagement/collaboration with other congregations, other partner organizations (local, neighborhood, county, state, DMV), outside groups
- More BIPOC engagements (at RRUUC, with other congregations)
- More affinity groups
- Don't be afraid to shake things up sometimes

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Q4 Cross-Cutting Themes - How can we reframe “doing the work” as joyful rather than obligation?

- Celebrations of what we do together; more joy and fun
- Showcasing and sharing successes with a wide array of groups and individuals -- intra-congregationally and inter-congregationally -- will help us view our work as joyful instead of arduous.
- In our activities, focus on getting to know each other as well as the action outcomes
- Broader communications about social justice opportunities and showcasing our social justice successes
- Training about the covenant, leadership and change management

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Q4 Cross-Cutting Themes - How can we reframe “doing the work” as joyful rather than obligation?

- Opportunities for seniors to connect
- Continue eliciting input on visioning and priority setting
- Talk more about/more support about how to experience joy during difficult times
- Intergenerational activities
- Spotlight groups' work
- More education on what RRUUC is all about from multiple points of view

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Where Do We Go From Here (Phase 2)?

- Key leaders of partner organizations interviewed for how they would like to partner with RRUUC in the future
- Faith building team holds small group discernment sessions (like the one held at retreat).

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Where Do We Go From Here (Phase 2 cont.)?

- BoT and faith building visioning teams work together to integrate congregational feedback themes into a set of strategic action opportunities
- Strategic plan drafted, shared at 2023 townhalls, approved by BoT, and presented at June 2023 annual meeting.

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