Future Committee Questions for the Congregation

Ron Katz and Rita Rigano (moderator/scribe)

Attendance:

Richard Slade

Gina Piazza

Tony Ierulli

doris staubi

Arlin Roy

Sarita Roy

Michael Carman

Tilda Clark - did not attend

1. As we regroup after FUSW's recent challenges, a basic question to ask ourselves is whether we want FUSW to continue. Do you envision a future for FUSW? Do you want to continue being a part of this congregation?

Yup. Next question

Sshocked at the question.

UU in flushing

Over my dead body

A lot of wonderful things; longtime members; part of our history. There is a shift - is it me? There are aspects that I’d like to see continue, but getting it to thrive again seems overwhelming. I think about merging with another congregation.

Looking at vision for FUSW, seeing country wide is there a future for religion; I’ve been in decommitment mode. This would be my congregation, I wouldn’t go anywhere else if it disbanded. Up in the air.

As much as I go up and down - commitment vs alienation; I cannot imagine my life without FUSW. I hope we continue and I hope to be part of it. It’s part of my life.

2. Some have proposed that FUSW merge with another (presumably UU) congregation. Do you like this idea, or would you prefer to see FUSW continue as an independent entity?

Aspects of fusw we’d want to continue if we merged like program groups. What is missing now from when we joined is fusw was a full community, many ages; feel that missing. Seems overwhelming

I don’t see how we could merge without being subsumed into it. Not practical.

Brings up the issue of our culture very different; especially from white plains. Another congregation might look at our million bucks and promise us the moon (prenup! prenup!)

I would hate to see merging as first step, would like to try to go on our own.

Didn’t want religion, want community; keep ourselves uniquely us and look for ways to expand. Seems the time is good for that. Needs energy. We should not join another congregation; include all ages; how to grow. Young parents may not be religious but want something for their kids; market” ourselves

Build an attractive RE program so place will thrive with young parents with kids; “weaponize” OWL - sensible sex ed

3. Until the most recent surge in COVID cases, we have been holding services in the chapel of South Church.

As the chapel in South Church cannot hold our entire congregation, as South Church meets some, but not all, of our needs, and as our lease at South Church is unlikely to be extended indefinitely, we will need to start actively looking for a new home for FUSW. This would have to be a rented building or space, as we do not have the funds to purchase a property,

 What qualities (location? configuration?) would you like to see us look for in our next home?

RE

Real estate is very tough; build it and they will come; could we rent a space and sublet out part of it? Maybe to a nursery? :-)

Something temporary; three year plan; rent location available on Sunday with space for meetings (Hudson River Museum; Mercy college) large room for meetings, at least two classroom, parking; extra points for accessible to public trans

Needs a kitchen, not office space

Must be quiet during services

What about space we rented during first flood? Now owned by puerto rican cult

Empty storefront - rent from Barvinok

Access to bathrooms; project words to songs or print in program

4. When we complete the sale of 25 Old Jackson Avenue, FUSW's assets will be approximately one million dollars. How should these assets be handled? Do you think we should spend as little as possible in the short term so as to preserve these assets, or would you favor investing some portion of these assets in congregational growth--in a more ideal location, for instance, in staff (including our minister) and in community outreach?

Next two years - put money in marketing and community outreach

Thinking about all our efforts to grow; how to be successful in current state when we weren’t successful when we were in a better place

Part of the problem is we have nothing to market. Hard until we’ve coalesced again, IRL, We have to get our act together, spend more time together; need a space before we can invite people. I have tried during coffee hour to make connections; can’t do that on zoom

Two year plan : year one is build it, year two is bring them (flyers in all real estate office in westchester) have to be aggressive; previous growth was passive

Agreed; would be willing to work with someone to organize RE; so that we have something to market. Is there a deeper way to reach families with kids? Tilda is a good example ( was looking for something not religious, didn’t know how to find it, came to us is now a member)

5. At present, we are a congregation that is predominantly white and predominantly of retirement or pre-retirement age. What would you like the demographics of our congregation to look like? Should we make sustained efforts to create this more diverse congregation?

6. What ideas do you have for attracting new members to our congregation?

Michael’s writing group has strengthened their commitment to FUSW. Let’s do what we can to reach out to and support members. Back when I joined, once I found it, I started converting friends and neighbors, 3 families joined and stayed

Writer's group was asked to do a summer program; group is not performative; perhaps we can do an exercise in a service in the fall to lead an exercise so people can see what the group does; re diversity: greystone apartments more diverse, I’m meeting more diverse people; trying to make friends but some of my ideas don’t meet their culture. Would like to see the congregation expand

When it comes to politics it’s more difficult. I get upset with us when people assume there are no republicans in the room

OWL is a potential to draw people in; would be good if we could make it available; bring youth in and then their parents

A brochure that highlights what we offer (parenting coop)

Where we wind up will have a lot to do with how successful marketing would be (public trans)

Coming back to the barvinok idea

Renting from barvinok would kill us because it’s too far away (Main st example)

Writing group, painting group, choir, parenting coop all “missions”

7. Are there other issues or ideas about FUSW’s future that you would like to raise?

It seems daunting, like we’re starting a church from scratch in one of the most expensive places in the country

Young people can’t afford to live in most of westchester.

Zoning issues have to be considered; made it hard to find a place that could do what we need it to; high emotions leaving the Yonkers location; this is a concern

Strawberry road fellowship up north took over a small school

A synagogue that doesn’t meet on Sunday

Can we afford to pay rent for two years