Future Committee Questions for the Congregation

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Attendance:

Paul Gross

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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?

Yes to everything

yes to all

Yes to all

would like fusw to continue, not sure I want to continue with FUSW. It’s hard to integrate with a place

would like fusw to continue in some form, maybe not as it’s been; envision a future that may be different

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?

not firsthand experience, father was an interim/contract UU minister in North Carolina; he felt merging was a viable solution

not so much in favor. We have our identity, something very special; also practical aspects; commuting distance, where would the location be. I feel we have something to offer; let’s grow what we have rather than merge.

same general feeling. Something attractive about joining forces, but the issues of congregational personality and location need to be considered. I wouldn’t rule it out, but I think we should try to give it a go on our own. I think it’s trickier than it sounds. It strikes me that the wording of the questions is limiting the way I was thinking. Rather than merge, perhaps. collaborate with one or more congregations, creating partnerships. Something more intermediate, not as drastic as merging, to give us energy, strengthen us. Maybe down the road. Not ruling out other denominations (black gospel congregation would be great)

It’s even been hard to work with South Church, and we’re very similar. That experience has made me feel we’re better off sticking with uu’s.

I had similar thoughts that the Westchester congregations work together involved with each other but separate.

I’m of two minds. I don’t know how we can grow without a permanent location (that will take time to find). I recognize our congregational personality and location issues. On a practicality basis, I don’t know how we can grow ourselves. It will take a lot of effort and a number of years. Part of me is not afraid of the idea of merging (not being absorbed, a real partnership/coalition) to carry forward into the future with new blood and ideas.

I’m iin an I-don’t-know place. I used to think we should merge with Croton but I don’t think so anymore. We have to think outside the box.

I could not support connecting with a presbyterian congregation. we’re never gonna grow if we just worry about older people, we’re never going to grow or attract families without kids. Think outside the box. Driving/location has to be off the table.

I agree. We looked at a place in Tarrytown and someone said “I’ll never drive here”

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?

Aren’t there any old churches hanging around, use the money from the sale/flood

there are. They come and go off the market. WE could consider other buildings, like a bank. Something with a “stately” presence. Is this being considered.

It has been on the back burner, it’s coming forward again. There are churches, we looked into them, but they were not interested in renting or selling to us.

Q- what do you want this place to have

I like a great space, a large room (not necessarily a sanctuary) a kitchen, rooms for RE, an office. Mainly you need a space that has presence for people to congregate. Personally I like a pulpit or semi pulpit. Like what we had before.

Maybe a common room separate from sanctuary for dinners etc. I’ll be funny and say how about a soccer field or basketball court to get young people to come. Adequate parking. Prominent location. I think ideally, have a room for the choir to practice in. Additional offices, beyond the minister’s i.e. administrative, re director, choir director; possible space that we might want to rent out. I’m thinking about how to bring the community to us.

has anybody looked at the synagogue in hastings?

I think so, I can’t remember what the issue was. We did look at a synagogue in Yonkers. Nice room, Jewish religion regalia etc on the walls. We’d have to determine if it would be ok

there’s a Korean church at five corner

that church was willing to have us if we worshipped on a weeknight.

synagogue up the block is very large, we could rent

space is critical. My fantasy is to have a space that could include other community groups having offices. Like minded people (environmental, social action) Place should be attractive. I don’t mind driving but we should draw a circle around hastings. Right on Main street so people could walk in. Nature is nice.

maybe there’s a restaurant going out of business in Hastings and we could buy that. Probably a lot of oppty with businesses shutting down.

Funny how closely what we want resembles 20 old jackson (except for main st). Yes, we need a sanctuary, attractive; parking; office for minister and admin; one or two classrooms. There should be greenery and play area (to attract families). In a way I reel the Masters school has everything we want. ;-) I think there’s something to the idea of working with other non profits to share a building. Energy is being put into that.

It would be nice to have a place that we call home and that looks like our home. Even if we are sharing, at least our part of it is ours.

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?

buy a building. NOt totally seriously, but start the conversation.

I think we should be penny pinching as much as possible while we look to find something worth putting the money into. We should do our best to find something that

I think we’ll know. Be consertive now, hold onto it. Something will become apparent. We have a lot of homework to do

I agree

I agree but we can’t wait for years. There has to be a timeline. Rapid decision making. I don’t think we can waste time. You will see a swindling of energy and commitment to FUSW

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?

I’d certainly like to see more racial diversity, but I don’t know how to get them in.

UU congregations are predominantly white, as we know. We’ve always been accepting or different secual orientations. I think ethnic diversity is something to strive for but will be a long road.

Unless the demographics in our area change, I don’t see the racial mix in our congregation changing. I would certainly be open to it; perhaps if we had a model where we bought a building and another group, a non-profit shared it, that could change the mix.

I agree about racial and ethnic diversity. To attract different people, have a minister or staff member who looks like the people you want to attract. I think we all long to go back to the days of a great RE program. It’s going to take awhile. We should feel good about attracting whoever we attract. Retirees may be looking for community. May be a low hanging fruit for us. To attract kids, do something for their parents. (like the parenting coop)

well, I think (previous) has named most things I agree with. Attract people by having interesting speakers and refreshments. We don’t talk about UUs tend to be well educated, professional. The fact of the matter, mostly, that’s the kind of people who seems to be part of UU congregations. Think of things that appeal to those kind of people. Cultural or intellectual.

it’s great to be honest about who UU attracts. I think what (previous) said is our wheelhouse. And there are many intellectuals of color. We are not excluding anyone.

It’s a major challenge.

the reason I feel hopeful is that with what’s happening in the world means people are hungry for what we offer. How do we get the word about? We have to be creative to let people know we are here and here’s what we offer.

I agree. People have “ptsd” after covid, and longing for community. So I think we really need our own physical space. We can go from there. Obviously we have to be thoughtful about it. Pet friendly from time to time.

my thought run along similar lines. Sometimes I see us offer courses, classes, writing workshops, be a cultural center.

A course on all religions so people could learn about all the world’s religions. In person.

somehow have an event or series of event or workshop about how to get along.

there's a guy who has a podcast called conversations with people who hate me. People need to learn to talk to others on opposite side of the spectrum

Braver angels

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

this is an odd thing to say, but what brought us new members was renting space to a nursery school. Not a bad model.

We could do a prayer experiment where we bought ten lottery tickets from the plate and have dedicated people to pray over them for a year. Sometimes irreverence is the sincerest form of reverence.