

Board of Trustees Self-Evaluation

2009 – 2010

One task which the board has been assigned but which it has perhaps never, at least not in recent years, undertaken is to make an annual self-assessment. A goal of the 2009-2010 Board was to create an instrument for the assessment, and to record the result of the attempt. Thus we were asked to evaluate our collective performance in terms of three existing criteria: our [board covenant](#), our [primary functions](#) as listed on page 3 of our governance policies, and our [long-term goals](#).

We were invited to choose from three options in rating our performance in these areas. We were also invited to offer suggestions for improvement, list ideas for assessing progress, express what was most satisfying about participating on the board, and indicate areas of concern.

While in regard to each criterion at least one member of the board felt we had exceeded expectations and at least one felt there was need for improvement, on the whole we were pretty tough on ourselves. Collectively we gave ourselves a slightly better than average overall rating on observing our covenant, while definitely indicating that we could do better in carrying out our primary functions and moving towards long term goals.

Appreciation was expressed for our covenant in terms of reminding us to treat one another respectfully, to assume positive intent, and to model civility when dealing with disagreements. Several board members suggested revisiting some of the covenant's principles. Four were specifically concerned about whether the covenant had been appropriately adhered to in regard to the major personnel issue of the year. They felt that the matter could have been much better handled had the entire board been consulted in advance of the decisions made; in this case many of us had been left outside the process. One thought we should reconsider how we "show support of the board's decisions once they have been made" by permitting minority opinions to be expressed when we bring non-unanimous board decisions before the congregation. We would not be rearguing the issue, but demonstrating that the other positions had been considered.

In regard to whether we were properly carrying out our primary functions, several members singled out the issue of communication and consultation with the congregation as an area of concern. Some feel that the congregation does not understand and support "policy governance," in which we delegate much authority and decision making to staff, and suggest that we need to inform and engage the congregation in this area. One, more simply, said "I think we were not clear communicators." Another specific issue had to do with our responsibility for establishing ethical standards for church operations and being accountable for avoiding unacceptable actions and situations. And one member worried that we had been sidetracked from large picture items of evaluating policies, enforcing them, and setting new vision for the congregation.

In terms of our long term goals, board members generally agreed that we see progress towards strengthening lay leadership, for having widely known and accessible worship, and in improved staffing. We see a more mixed picture in terms of offering strong religious education programs and encouraging a culture of generosity. Our senior minister has taken primary responsibility in three of these areas, regarding worship, staffing and religious education, while the Board has taken direct responsibility for the other two. These were five year goals, set in 2005. A progress assessment, to be shared with the congregation, and consideration of new goal setting may well be in order for this church year.