

Start Up Retreat in Review

The start of Rev. Barbara's first year of ministry was punctuated by a well-attended Friday night start up event at The Lodge at Richmond Heights on October 25. More than 160 members joined for dinner, followed by swimming, a movie and games for the children, while the adults shared their hopes and aspirations for the Chapel.



Rev. Ian Evison of the Midwest District facilitated the event and commented on the spectacular turnout – like none he had seen at other UU start up events – and how well that reflects on the health of our congregation following three years of interim ministry. The event featured broad representation of Eliot members, from newcomers to families with children in the RE program to long-time attendees.

The “hopes” exercise asked participants to think about what changes they envisioned at Eliot, writing them on cards, discussing them at their table and later presenting to the full group before posting them for all to see. Rev Barbara is already working to incorporate some of the many great ideas into the programming of the church. It was both a fun and productive event, and a strong indication of health as Eliot embarks on its next phase.

Rev. Barbara, Rev. Evison, a group of Eliot lay leaders and the Board then met on Saturday in Adams Hall. William Lemon and Steve Mennerick gave brief overviews of Eliot's governance model. We then focused on staff and congregational case study scenarios and discussed how these situations would be handled under Eliot's governance structure. Attendees also enjoyed an opportunity to discuss some of the unwritten rules that pervade Eliot's culture.

In addition to programming ideas, many of the hopes raised at the congregational retreat reflected long-range visions for the Chapel, which is mainly the domain of Eliot's Board. Our Mission and Ends Statements are meant to capture the goals of Eliot, but these targets are not static. The Board classified the hopes statements [here](#) according to the Chapel's five End Statements, and will be studying them for possible adjustments to our goals. Under Policy Governance, the Board is focused on the long-term vision, health and direction of the church (the Ends), while the lead minister and staff see to the operational excellence of all aspects of Eliot life (the Means). It was interesting to note how often the term “community”

Start Up Retreat in Review

was cited in the hopes.

Among the items for future discussion are whether Eliot should step up its leadership role among Unitarian Universalist congregations in the St. Louis area, what the long-term look of our social justice efforts is, how we define the Moral Ownership to whom we should answer, and many other topics of import to the church and community.

Comments? Questions? Email eliotboard@eliotchapel.org

