Staff Conundrum

Creative Responses to Challenging Problems

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Jan Gartner, Compensation and Staffing Practices Manager
Connie Goodbread, Congregational Life Consultant
Your Hosts

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Opening Words

Unitarian Universalism

Covenantal not creedal
Pluralistic not fundamentalist
Living faith

The faith for the 21st century?
Working Mission Statement

Guided by the values of our faith, we equip congregations for excellence as employers and their staff for financial competence and well-being.
Congregational Life Staff Group

Mission

✓ Cultivate connections between congregations

✓ Inspire and coach new & innovative models of “doing church”

✓ Midwife & empower existing congregations & their leaders to next level of impact
Who’s In the Room?
Our Time Together

- Economic Sustainability
- Staffing Trends
- Staff AND Lay Energy: *Polarity Thinking*
- Greater Purpose
- Technical Strategies and Adaptive Mindset
- Your Questions
Cultural Context

- Decline of middle class
- Less stable employment environment
- Benefit costs shift to employee
- Fewer pension plans, more 401(k) plans
- Higher ed costs skyrocketing
- Rise of the “nones” (religiously unaffiliated)
- Rise of progressivism
- Need for community
Challenges to *Congregational* Sustainability

- Staffing trends (*more on this later*)
  - Reduced volunteerism
  - More staff
  - Greater professionalization of positions
- Rising cost of personnel, especially health care
- Cost of staff turnover
- Tension between personnel, Associational giving, and other costs
- Flat budget and membership
Challenges to Professional Sustainability

• Ministers
  – high cost of entry (education and more)
  – seminary debt
• Other pro positions – academic expectations
• Limited number of full-time positions
• Salary increases not keeping up with inflation
• Increases to employee cost of benefits (esp. health care)
• High-cost items: housing, child care
Economic Sustainability: An Adaptive Challenge

Technical Problem
• Easy to identify
• Solved by “expert”
• Solved with known tools
• Organizationally isolated

Role of leader
• Define problem and solution
• Maintain/restore order
• Maintain norms
Economic Sustainability: An Adaptive Challenge

Adaptive Challenge

- Hard to describe
- Community must be involved
- Requires learning and change
- Systemic

Role of leader

- Frame questions and issues
- Allow conflict & disorientation
- Encourage challenging of norms
Economic Sustainability Conversations

• **2015 Summit (St. Louis) of 50 UU leaders**
  – Creative thinking, no simple solutions
  – Metaphor: Sky falling or sky opening?

• **2016 Gathering (Boston)** focused on:
  – Lay ministry
  – Lifespan Financial Literacy (like “OWL for money”)

• **2017 GA – This Workshop**
  – Focus on staffing
Remember, adaptive challenge means:

- Community must be involved
  (Thank you for joining us!)
- Involves learning and change
- Leaders frame questions
- Norms are challenged
- Can be disorienting
Evolution of Staffing (over the last 50-ish years)
Staffing Today

- Professionals and professionalization
- Greater coordination and collaboration
- Specialized positions
- Needs ever-expanding
- Reduced volunteerism
Polarity Thinking

Greater Purpose Statement
Polarity Thinking

Greater Purpose Statement

Staff energy

and

Lay energy
Greater Purpose (Mission)

Our Mission is why we are doing what we are doing.

Mission should be grounded in Transcendent values.

Unitarian Universalist Transcendent values
  Hope
  Love
  Justice
  Courage
  Joy
Staffing for Today and Tomorrow (Technical Strategies)

- Do less/stop doing
- Bivocational professionals
- Hybrid positions
- Shared staffing
- Creative Hiring
Staffing for Today and Tomorrow
(Adaptive Thoughts)

Mindset and Conversation

• Optimize staff energy.
• Mobilize and re-engage the laity in new ways.
• Part-time does not mean unprofessional!
• How can 2 or more congregations support each other?
• Mission!
Sustaining Staff

• Information-sharing and transparency are key.
• Treat staff well. Retain them. (Turnover costly!)
• Involve staff directly in discussions about resources.
• Pay attention to equity across staff team.
Your Questions
Thank you!