

Before Board Meeting

About 4 minutes long

Board chair: OK, let's hear the Treasurer's report. (Name of Treasurer)?

Treasurer: Thanks, (name of Chair). Well, as usual, actual pledges are coming in a little behind what we expected. We're \$5,000 behind or so right now, even though we reduced our pledge goal a little. I'm not really worried yet, but we'll need to keep an eye on it and postpone some expenses if we possibly can. We did spend \$200 to buy a new printer for the office this month which we really couldn't put off any longer. All other expenses have been pretty much in line with our budget, but as I've said we'll all need to cut a little if we don't make up the \$5,000 eventually.

(Pause as people look through the report a little.)

Chair: Well, we've got time, don't we, to make that up? How far along are we usually at this time of year?

Treasurer: The last five years or so we've consistently been short of our expectations at this time, but with a plea at the end of the fiscal year, we've always managed to make up the short-fall. We just have a little more to make up than usual this year.

Finance Committee Chair: You know, I'm hearing people say they're starting to burn out on these extra pushes at the end of every fiscal year to make the budget. People are saying that they're giving all they can and if we can't make do with what they're able to contribute, then maybe we should reduce the budget instead.

Treasurer: The problem is, if we reduce the budget much more, we won't be able to do much of anything but keep the building open and pay the minister's and the DRE's salary.

Membership Committee Chair: Do we need to do anything about the shortfall right now, other than not spending any money if we can possibly help it?

Operations Chair: Problem is, we're going to have to spend some money this fall to repair and maintain the boiler, and we've already put it off because of budget problems.

Programs Chair: I have to say, it's frustrating how much money we continually have to put into the building. I'm never able to say yes to our social justice groups when they want a little money for their programs.

Operations Chair: Yes, but if we don't have a building, we don't even have a place for those groups to meet and connect. It's a pretty fundamental need.

Chair: Do we need to think about another fundraiser?

Finance Chair: I think we'd run into the same problem with another fundraiser—people are feeling tapped out. Although we are looking into something called Good Search. If people do their searches through Good Search, they'll donate a portion of their ad revenue to the charity you choose when you do your search. I was going to talk about it more during my report.

Treasurer: Will that be able to make up our deficit this year do you think?

Finance Chair: It's not really clear yet. Our committee all agreed to do all our searches through Good Search and over the last couple months we've raised \$35. If we could get most people to do most of their searches through Good Search, and if they did their on-line shopping through Good Shop, which is linked to Good Search, we could raise a fair amount of money.

Membership Chair: Were you thinking of rolling this out to the congregation soon?

Finance Chair: Well, we wanted to bring it here first, to make sure everyone was comfortable with it, but it's all set up for people to use it and choose the Fellowship as their charity. You all could start using it tomorrow, if you wanted!

Chair: Is there any reason not to do it?

Finance Chair: We were a little worried about privacy, but the Good Search site doesn't collect any information from the person searching. It does put a cookie on your computer so that it can remember what charity you donated to last time you searched. Their FAQ says they don't collect any personally identifiable information.

Treasurer: Well, it sounds like a good idea. Do you think you can have it out to the congregation by next month's meeting?

Finance Chair: That might be possible, but we couldn't expect much revenue for some time. And we'll have to keep reminding people to use Good Search for awhile before they'll remember to use it.

Chair: Well, why don't we start the process with Good Search, and see where we're at financially next month to see if we'll just have to do another fundraiser by the end of the year?

Finance Chair: Actually, what I was going to suggest in my report is that the Finance Committee do an analysis of all the ways we could meet this deficit and the pros and cons of each so that we have some real information to work with if we need to do something next month.

All: General nods and murmurs of agreement.

Chair: That sounds really good, (name of Finance Chair). Are we ready to move on then? OK, next on the agenda. . .

After Board Meeting
About 5 minutes long

Chair: Let's move on to the monitoring report on our financial condition now. Any questions or comments on what was in the Board packet?

Board Member 1: I was frustrated to see that once again we're behind our projections of where pledge income would be at this point. I'm reassured to see that you're considering a number of options to address the issue. How much worse is the problem this year than in years past?

Executive: Yes, I'm very grateful to the Finance Ministry Team who worked with me to put together the list of options and their pros and cons. Well, because of the economy we're a little farther behind than usual. This year we're \$5,000 behind; last year it was only \$3,500. The Finance Ministry Team also thinks that our membership base, which has been in a slow decline all along, has dropped more than we realize. We'll certify numbers to the UUA in a couple of weeks; then we'll be able to compare apples to apples.

Board Member 2: What's behind the unexpected drop in membership, do you think?

Executive: Well, we're thinking that it's partly related to the drop over the years in RE. We're thinking that the program has gotten small enough that many people finally decided they just couldn't stay with it anymore.

Board Member 3: That's upsetting, since our ENDS have our children as a big priority for us.

Executive: Yes, we're concerned too, especially since the activities we've been implementing to address the drop in RE haven't had a chance to really work yet. And, we're not sure if RE really explains the whole drop in membership.

Board Member 4: What are some of your other theories?

Executive: Well, we're not sure yet. There's a general feeling among the committee chairs that they have a hard time finding and keeping newcomers. It's almost as if they just don't find what they're looking for here.

Board Member 3: Well, it's not like we can be all things to all people.

Board Member 2: What are they looking for that they don't find, though?

Executive: That's what we don't know yet. It could be that we're not as good at offering what we think we offer. Or it could be that we're pretty good at what we want to offer and it's not what our newcomers are looking for.

Board Member 3: We probably need more outreach—need to let more people who would like what we offer know that we're here. Maybe we should do some evangelizing.

Chair: Before we talk about more ways to approach these problems, I'm wondering if we could talk for a minute about what our role is as a Board with an issue like this. I still feel new to policy-based governance and I'd feel better if I knew what we were supposed to do.

Board Member 2: Well, we have three roles: articulate the ENDS, monitor progress towards the ENDS plus the limitations on means, and linkage. Is that right?

Board Member 4: That's what I remember. And, I don't think this is about articulating new ENDS yet—we don't even know what the real issue is, or if it has anything to do with the difference we're here to make in the world.

Board Member 1: I think it has something to do with monitoring progress towards the ENDS. Partly, we need to know if the issue is whether we're just not offering what we think we're offering. We'll know a lot more about that when we do the congregational survey in a couple months, since we're asking people whether they've experienced the difference we're aiming to make.

Board Member 2: Yes, it seems like we'd get part of our answer from the congregational survey, but I think it's only part of the answer we need. The congregational survey will get the people who are still here, but what about the people who came and left—shouldn't we ask them about their experiences? Seems like some of the answers we need would come from the people who have already left.

Board Member 3: I don't know how much weight we should give their answers, though. Aren't we more accountable to the people who are here and who choose to stay?

Board member 4: Well, I thought when we put together our ENDS, that we talked about how much we wanted to welcome people who didn't know we existed, to give them the amazing experience of being in a religious community that has no creed, that aims to heal the world.

Board Member 3: But we can't change who we fundamentally are in order to provide that welcome, can we?

Board Member 1: Seems to me we don't really know which one it is. Are we going to have to change who we fundamentally are to welcome more folks in, or do we just need to actually provide the welcome we say we want to provide? (slight pause) Or maybe, could the people who came and left point us in a direction that's new and changes who we are, but in a way that we might actually want to change?

Board Member 2: I think that's why I was saying we need to talk to the people who left. We need to know why they came in the first place and what they experienced while they were here and what made them decide to leave.

Chair: That's sounding to me like linkage. I'm starting to hear the need to do some linkage with people who have come, stayed for awhile, but then ultimately left. What do the rest of you think?

All: General nods and murmurs of agreement.

Board Member 3: As long as it's about gathering data, and not about finding out how we should be completely different than we already are, I can support doing linkage with the people you're describing.

Chair: I'm thinking this all fits in the "Create the Future" section on our agenda. We've decided we want to do some linkage with people who've come here, stayed for awhile but ultimately left. I think we still need to figure out how that fits with our future focus topic and what other linkage we're going to want to do around that topic. How about we come back to this when we get to that part of the agenda?

All: Again, nods of agreement.

Chair: OK, moving on to the next item on our agenda. . .