

CommComm meeting Dec. 11, 2013

Present: Neil, Deborah and Marcia.

This committee report will attempt to summarize our meetings and discussions to date, and hereafter, we will provide a monthly report to the Board, in time for Board meetings. We have used technology to our advantage, communicating via Google hangouts or FaceTime when physical distance was too great for a sit down meeting. We have not as yet established a regular meeting time. We have been meeting as necessary, although we will soon come to a consensus as to a regularly scheduled meeting.

The Communications Committee ("CommComm") grew out of discussions in the Resource Committee on ways to improve the financial support of the church, starting roughly in January of this year. Peter Rousmaniere and Neil Stannard had much of the background knowledge of how this might work. We felt that improving outreach to all members and providing a way to contribute electronically, much like Public Radio does, would be beneficial to all. Deborah Rice brought up possible barriers to the change in terms of impact on Donna Atwood, or whoever is in the church office. She suggested possibly taking over one function of the office, rentals, or possibly just wedding rentals, to ease the burden of work. That idea led to discussions with Donna and the formation of the Rental Task Force, where the rates charged for various uses of the building were reexamined and the policy was rewritten. (The issue of charging for various uses of the building by various individuals and groups became a highly charged one, as it brought out conflicting opinions and philosophical discussions among church members and board members in particular, about the purpose of doing rentals, and the implications for our insurance policy.) Deborah withdrew her suggestion of taking over the rental functions, because it was too complicated to separate this from other office functions. Since Donna Atwood is looking forward to retiring next year, the whole office routine will be reconsidered.

To get back to the origins of the CommComm: In a Resource Committee meeting, early in this year Neil described the use of electronic donations by the UU church in Burlington, and after discussion with that church's office, suggested we could use Vanco, the company that provides this service for that church. He also spoke to Ann Wynia to see how this would affect her system for tracking pledges. At the same time, Peter Rousmaniere urged us to consider improving and updating the church website, and pointed out that a weekly enews letter, with links to the website, would shorten the enews and be more engaging and appealing to our members. He volunteered to do the editing and provide guidance toward this end. We discussed how to make a "donate" link work, and the implications of "pledge" vs "donate". By May of this year, these discussions were moved to a subgroup of Resource, now known as the "CommComm". Neil

recruited Dave Sullivan as our consultant on website upgrades and maintenance, and Deborah recruited Marcia Peterson, who has lots of experience as the media center expert (formerly known as librarian) at the Ottaquechee School. Deborah, Neil and Marcia took photos around the church property that were ultimately used for the website and for the newsletter, which was named "In Touch". Neil has worked with Dave, who made the actual changes to the website. Peter volunteered to edit a trial version of the weekly enews which was sent to a select group of members to get feedback on how it looked and worked, and a parallel website was created by Dave, with WordPress, a program Marcia was familiar with.

Another topic we have been considering at various points is how to put Daniel's reflections on the website so people can listen to them, just as they now have the option of borrowing the CD's that Alan Perkins has kindly done for years. Daniel agrees with this idea, so details are being worked out between Neil, Alan, and Norwood Long for recordings to be made. We anticipate that this task could easily become one of the future administrator's responsibilities. Over the next few months, we expect to streamline the process so as not to add much work for whomever takes it on.

Through the summer months, there was email contact among CommComm members but no formal meetings. This fall, meetings between Donna Atwood and the CommComm worked out the details of using a database of members with email addresses, and with Ann Wynia to clarify the electronic donation and pledging system. Ann advised us to emphasize ongoing pledging, with certain one-time donation a separate option.

That brings us to the present, where a meeting took place on December 11 with Neil, Deborah and Marcia in attendance. Dave and Peter were unable to meet. We discussed how the new recording device can be configured to link to the office computer to allow someone to transfer the reflection to the website. Neil and Marcia will investigate further. We discussed the need to have several people, i.e. our committee plus others, learn the recording procedure and make a schedule so someone is available each week to monitor the system for recording.

Neil has also uploaded some of the reflections to Sky Drive which gives us 7GB free of storage. This would allow several different people to go there and download them to another computer, to do the transfer to the website. Or Neil can store them all and they can be "fetched".

Alan Perkins has been making the CD's for some time now. Once reflections are regularly uploaded to the website, we would prefer to provide a CD only upon request. It does not seem that they are presently being borrowed from the library

with any regularity, and once they are available for website listening, perhaps the CD's are not necessary.

We briefly discussed the possibility of recognizing Alan for the volunteer work he has done over the years to make the reflections available on CD. He will conclude this effort at the end of December. Donna brought this up to Neil a few weeks ago. We think it would be a good idea and ask the Board to consider this.

We discussed how to handle the recording once it is made, and the fact that the work of putting it on the website should be done on the following day. Ideally, whoever becomes the new Administrative Assistant should be able to do this. In the meantime, we will have to find out if Donna is willing and/or able to do this in her remaining time in the position. There is an initiative underway to revamp the recording process and connect it to a computer, most likely the office computer. More to come soon.

We wondered if there is any advantage to having a YouTube channel for church related videos. (Peter Rousmaniere has been advocating for some time to use videos on the website, with a link from the newsletter, such as the recent interview with Somnieng.) We will investigate this in the near future. Marcia will gather more information.

The topic of how to make committee meeting notes available to members on the website was mentioned. This is a good time to mention that at the very beginning of our existence as a committee, the possibility of using a member password for access to some pages of the website was brought up, in case someone thinks there is anything to be protected. (Perhaps the membership list?) That concern has dissipated and the password is being taken off, unless someone thinks we do need to keep some material protected. Presently, there is a Committee Reports subpage and a Board Reports subpage under the main Committees page. Donna will be able to upload the Board "packet" as a pdf document. Other committees can have their meeting minutes there as well simply by emailing them to [northchapelcommunications@gmail.com](mailto:northchapelcommunications@gmail.com). The Social Justice Action Committee has been very proactive in this endeavor.

The committee has stayed in touch by email, and we decided to report any committee news or anything of note that has transpired in the interim to the Board.

We discussed how the In Touch newsletter could be compiled and assembled by one person. Presently, Neil creates the weekly news with the assistance of Donna Atwood, who gathers the material during the week and sends it to Neil in a timely and efficient manner on Tuesday afternoon.

In conclusion, we discussed, very briefly, the possibility of incorporating the use of the website in the Storytelling project. It would not be difficult to upload audio recordings of stories if there are folks who wish to share them.

Respectfully submitted,  
Deborah Rice