

BIC/UFP Cross Community Workshop on ***getting to know one another***

February 10, 2018, 775 Weller Street, hosted by Kendra Fry

Present: Mark Siegel, Larry Gilman, Michael Fox, Rev. Julie Stoneberg, Fred Kooy, Oleg Chernyakhovsky, Karen Fisher, Casey Summers, Dana Capell, Joan Higginson, Kate King Fisher, Michael Rosen & Scott Donovan (recorder).

This event was planned and scheduled by the Beth Israel/UFP Co-visioning Task Force* as an effort in broadening the dialogue between our faith communities about our future together. We contracted the services of Kendra Fry, an expert in forging new relationships between secular and non-secular groups and in supporting efforts at sharing resources, including the development of creative management and co-ownership solutions. Kendra works for Faith and The Common Good and Trinity-St Paul's Centre for Faith, Justice and the Arts, Toronto.

Mark (BIC) and Scott (UFP) first met Kendra Fry at a workshop in Peterborough on February 25th, 2017; Regenerating Places of Faith presented by Faith and The Common Good and the National Trust for Canada. Kendra's presentation was Space Sharing Models and Strategies for Successful Re-use: how to avoid the pitfalls and reap the benefits of having space with others. We were most impressed with her knowledge and ability. Mark and Scott were present because we were invited to participate in a session titled Hope and Inspiration: The Peterborough Context.

**The BIC/UFP Co-visioning Task Force is seeking to illuminate a path toward a more collaborative and long-term relationship, the limits of which none of us are yet aware.*



Following is a statement by the BIC/UFP Co-visioning Task Force from October 10, 2017:

When our two communities, Beth Israel Congregation (BIC) and the Unitarian Fellowship of Peterborough (UFP), came together in 2004 we envisioned a mutual relationship. Left unattended, we allowed that intention to lapse. We are now defined primarily by a tenant-landlord relationship.

Beth Israel has aspirations for a community where congregational size, resources and leadership capacity is sustainable and a home for Judaism in Peterborough is assured well into the future.

The Unitarian Fellowship is seeking greater control over property-related matters which would support a greater sense of feeling at home in the building. The Unitarians also want to feel settled in the question of where we call home.

The intention of the joint leadership task force (not yet formally named) is to explore precedents and models for partnering around shared space including co-management, co-ownership, and anything else that comes up along the journey. We would do this in collaboration with our respective congregations and support opportunities to bring both together in dialogue and decision making.

The workshop began after sharing a lunch together.

After introductions and opening words, Kendra opened with a number of questions. We were all invited to respond with a word or brief phrase written on sticky notes. One colour of stickies was assigned to Beth Israel participants and different colour to UFP.

SESSION I:

The questions are intended to be simple and open-ended, meant to evoke a variety of responses. Each participant could submit as many responses as they liked and were asked to cluster them on the wall.

The first question: “On its best day, this building provides _____”.

A couple of people were instructed by Kendra to quickly arrange the stickies into themes.

The themes that emerged and the number of responses from each are recorded below.

| | Beth Israel | Unitarian Fellowship |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| inclusivity | X X | X X X |
| values, vibes, support | X X X X X X X X X X X X X X | X X X X X |
| faith | X X X X X | X X X X |
| welcome environment | X X X | X X X X X X |
| community | X X X X | X X X X X X X X X X |

The question points to our shared values.

Kendra explained that the outcomes are meant to offer a glimpse into the minds and hearts of people. (it's not hard data).

The next question ... “What is the one thing that makes being here difficult?”

| | Beth Israel | Unitarian Fellowship |
|------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| inequality | X | X X X |
| governance | X | X X X X X X X |
| volunteers | X X | |
| physical accessibility | X | X X X |
| Physical plant | X X X X X | X X X X X X X X X X X |

Again, a couple of people grouped the responses into categories. There were clearly more blue stickies than green.

Kendra pointed out that it's not unusual to see more Unitarians comment on challenges (they have lack of equality, lack of accessibility). She asked us to remember that the first question brought up the many shared values we carry – and not to lose sight of that.

The next question ... “In my dreams, this building and the congregations within them would do more _____.”

| | Beth Israel | Unitarian Fellowship |
|-----------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------|
| Joint work & play | X X X X | X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X |
| Accessibility & inclusivity | X X | X X X |
| Shared social activities | X | X X X X X X |
| governance | X X X X X X | X X X |

Kendra observed that Beth Israel is governance-based. Julie (UFP) pointed out that our two groups use the building differently: UFP is here frequently and BIC not so much. We carry different perspectives. Kendra thought it would be a good exercise to map the time and activity use of the building for both groups.

Kendra asked if our stories align.

The 3 questions... *on your best day, ...problems with the building... & your biggest dream:*

- What comes up for you?
- What are the differences, and where is the common ground?
- What are you willing to do to change the situation?
- Where are you most disparate?

Oleg (BIC) offers the observation that one group is in survival mode, just keeping up, and carries the perception that the building is closed most of the time. The other group, he continues, is busy, using the building a lot, and wants to be included in more decision making because they have much at stake. He adds that it is clear that there are many shared values.

Kendra posed the question:

HOW IMPORTANT IS THIS BUILDING? IS IT FUNDAMENTAL OR CENTRAL TO WHO YOU ARE ?

Mark (BIC) offered that the building is important for BIC, but ownership may not be.

Julie (UFP) suggested that to Unitarians the building may not be so important.

Kendra noted that the stakes are higher for Beth Israel than for UFP. BIC has challenges keeping the place open for a relatively small number of families. UFP remains relatively happy to be here as the space suits the group, they have little commitment to it, and not a strong attachment.

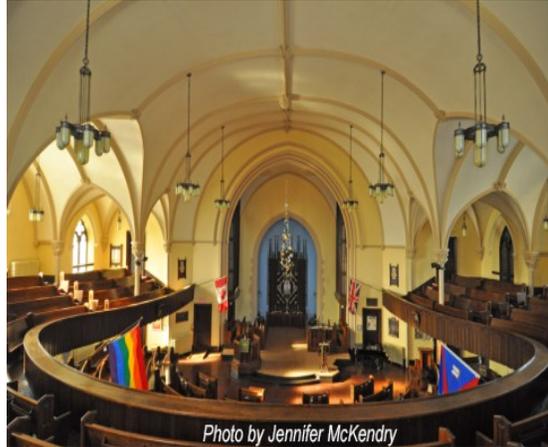
SESSION II: Local examples

Kendra presented an illustrated talk about faith communities that went against the odds and created new spaces and better relationships through collaboration and creativity. Below are a few highlights.

1. Joint relationships involves communities communicating and imagining together and planning long term (at least 5 years). Tenant-landlord relationships are short term, based on *ask & receive*, and people work separately. Karen (BIC) pointed out that BIC's move to relax the kosher kitchen constraints worked well for both communities, yet the power relationship between the two of us was recently manifest in the decision to upgrade security at the building.
2. Kendra described Trinity-St. Paul's, where she works, and how power structures shifted over time based on the strength and economics of organizations. The two organizations, TSP & Tafelmusik, have a positive co-dependent relationship. Trinity-St. Paul's owns the building but they hold a living agreement regarding use of the building. The management board that runs the facility recently funded \$3million in building upgrades. Tafelmusik has a 23 year lease. They rely on one another for success.



3. Sydenham United Church, Kingston. A community board is responsible for the upkeep and leasing arrangements, while the church retains ownership in the building. The secular management board is able to access public funding. There is general support in the community that the building should remain standing and have a common use.



SESSION III: Open dialogue.

Some questions that Kendra floated:

- what is your level of understanding of each others' financial situation?
- what is your understanding of the physical condition of the building?
- What is the one thing I/we cannot let go of?
- What do you hope to gain?
- What is the long term viability of your community?

Julie (UFP) wondered how we would ask these questions, and Kendra responded; “it depends on how you have discussions in community”.

From Kendra, some concrete propositions worth considering:

- set up a not-for-profit to run the building
- BIC transfers some aspect of ownership or management of the property to UFP
- consider a long term lease with increased input from UFP (build a stronger relationship)
- Beth Israel needs to ask itself what they are willing to give up.
- Start with planning: Where do we see ourselves in five years?

Kendra recommended we start with the following;

- do a building condition assessment (that can't be avoided)
- collect information and provide opportunities for sharing
- talk to your respective communities and get a sense of what's next

Kendra believes we need deep reflection.
She cautions that some people will feel alienated (that can't be avoided),
but engage deeply nonetheless.
Reflect on what we have learned from one another.
Consider what it is that makes us want to continue this journey.

Dana (BIC) asked “When can we meet again?”

