

Engaging Space Task Force Presentation given Oct 6th and Oct 13th, 2019

Intro:

Hello – we would like to introduce ourselves to you. We are the Engaging Space Task Force (ESTF). There are 6 of us who are on the task force, plus one board liaison: Cathy Carmen, Erin Logan, Sue Langley, Bill Reid, Cathy Sherman, Wendy Shrief, and Sandy Cruise.

We were appointed by the Board and the Strategic Plan Task Force to address how we can use our BUUF spaces to support our mission and vision, specifically to strengthen spiritual connections, and to support justice-making work. We started meeting twice a month in January of this year, only taking a break in July, then hit it hard again in August meeting almost every week. We took a very deliberate look at all of our physical spaces – the offices, religious exploration (RE) rooms, worship/fellowship hall, coffee area, meeting rooms, outdoor grounds, the rental properties which are just East of our grounds on Chelan lane – referred to as the Douglas properties. We solicited information from many different groups and individuals, and took a hard look at the data of membership, attendance, RE enrollment, and RE attendance, and meeting room usage throughout the week. Bob Smith, our BUUF architect, volunteered many hours to draw renditions of options we were considering and provided insight into the structural components and architectural history. We had a video call with our strategic plan consultant, Kay Cryder, who gave us her feedback and advice. And we had good give-and-take amongst us – freely sharing our opinions and healthily debating on items where we disagreed.

So, how can we make our spaces more inviting, sacred, functional, and environmentally sustainable? Can we think bigger than just routine maintenance and repairs and necessary capital improvements? How can the Douglas property best support our mission and vision? How can we enhance our physical spaces where we come together to worship, connect, and engage in justice making? These were all questions we kept in mind throughout the process and now we want to share our findings with all of you.

Before you hear from all the presenters about their specific area of possible improvement, let's look at the data. This chart shows 20 years of BUUF membership, attendance, RE enrollment and attendance, as well as budget and pledging information. This will be an important reference as you hear from all the presenters and complete the survey.

Congregational growth was certainly an important data point in our evaluation. How much growth do we anticipate? How fast will we grow?

Our national organization, the Unitarian Universalist Association, UUA, started in 1961 with approximately 160,000 members; and today the UUA still has approximately 160,000 members. Nationally, the population of the United States has increased by 80% while the UUA has had 0% growth.

In the last 5 years, BUUF added 127 new members, but only increased our total membership by 42 because we lost 85 members during that time period. This represents a 3% net gain per year. Over the last 5 years we have gained 8 new members a year. Considering the last 5 years included a growth spurt when we brought in our new minister, we don't expect to remain at 3% growth when the Boise Metro area is currently growing at only 1.7% yearly. At that rate, BUUF would see 5 new members per year.

Nationwide, church attendance is on the decline – dropping almost 20% since 1999. Adults age 20 to 40 are only 42% likely to attend and join churches compared with people over 70 being 68% church members. BUUF has an aging population. These trends do not support expectations of rapid growth.

We have reserve capacity in our current sanctuary space. Our total membership growth over the last 20 years is about 6 members per year. We can accommodate an additional 150-170 adults in our current worship space if the two services were balanced. That would get us to a total of 320 adults attending with 80 or more youth. Based on our current data that would be about 500+ members (attendance is always lower than the number of members). If that remained constant it would take about 20 years before outgrowing our current space.

The RE rooms were built to accommodate 28-30 children. But RE attendance has not increased as you can see, and enrollment has stayed around 100-110 for many years.

On the other hand, meeting room space is nowhere to be found on Sunday mornings (arranging to use this space was quite a feat!). And office, storage, coffee, and small worship space appears to be needed.

Our goal today is to briefly present each topic that you will find on the survey. We ask that no questions be asked during this portion. Instead, at the end we'll have the presenters stationed around the room and you can ask questions and give your feedback then.

ESTF Sanctuary report:

About 20 years ago, BUUF adopted a design concept for the construction of the buildings that we currently occupy at 6200 Garrett St. The design concept was for a 'campus' of buildings. For financial and functional reasons we first constructed the 'Fellowship Hall' (with some internal classrooms), and then 6 years later, added the two religious education and office wings. The final phase of the original design concept would be a dedicated Sanctuary space with seating for 300 people. We originally expected BUUF to experience relatively rapid growth that would support the completion of our campus plan.

This design concept is now 20 years old.

A 300 seat sanctuary was the phase 3 assumption behind our original campus master plan. Based on current discernment here is what a 300 seat dedicated sanctuary might entail.

A 300 seat sanctuary would comfortably seat 240 people, without feeling 'too' crowded. With our current BUUF mix of adults and youth, this might be 200 adults and 40 youth at each service. With 2 Sunday services, the Sunday morning capacity of a 300 seat Sanctuary would be in the range of 400 adults and 80-100 youth. This would support a Total BUUF membership of 600 to 700 members plus children. We would eventually need to adjust service times, meetings, and building usage to avoid overloading the parking. We would probably need more than the minimum required 148 parking spaces (currently we have 118 spaces).

The current estimated cost for a dedicated sanctuary space is \$2.6 million to \$4.0 million. In accordance with recommendations from UU Consultants: we would follow the same process we followed for phase 1 and phase 2, the buildings we are in now. The process is the following:

1. A multi-year process of study, analysis, and commitment to building the Sanctuary as part of our mission and vision. We would understand the concept and functions of the Sanctuary building, and have Architect's renderings and solid cost estimates; And we would have enthusiastic support from a large majority of BUUF members.
2. A feasibility study by a UU Consultant to verify that we have the financial means and commitment to fulfill the project. (our current understanding of the necessary means suggests that BUUF would need to have more members and a larger financial base, perhaps 450-550 members with a yearly budget of \$450,000 to \$600,000. This would give us a more reasonable chance to accomplish a \$2.6+ million dollar project).
3. As part of the feasibility study, BUUF would hope to identify some major donors (individual gifts of \$250,000 or \$500,000 or more). The feasibility study would also consider local and national economic indicators (growing economy, stable economy, recession economy).
4. If the feasibility study suggests a good chance of success, BUUF would ask for a vote to proceed with a Capital Campaign, that would have a goal of \$2.6+million
5. The Capital Campaign would take place during a 3 or 4 year time span, during which we would hope to raise \$500,000 to \$600,000 per year (in addition to our regular budget of \$300,000 to \$600,000 per year)
6. During the Capital Campaign, sanctuary designs and engineering would proceed. Sanctuary features would be reviewed by BUUF groups, (Some work might begin before all of the pledged money is paid in). BUUF might take out a mortgage or construction loan as part of the financing of the project.
7. Construction would be completed approximately 1 year after the Capital Campaign is finished.

As you can see, this would likely be a 5 to 7 year process.

ESTF Fellowship Hall/Coffee Area Report:

Quoting from the Strategic Plan of 2018 "a key area for consideration includes the importance of dedicated space for coffee, hospitality and fellowship that allows us to deepen connections with each other".

Twenty years ago our campus master plan included 4 buildings: two wings, fellowship hall and sanctuary. Based on financial constraints it was decided to start with a fellowship hall with classrooms tucked in within the umbrella of the building. When the wings were built, the fellowship hall increased its size to the current configuration. It was a well thought out, phased in approach to build what we needed with limited funds.

We want to emphasize that the current worship space was originally designed as a fellowship hall. I say that because the aesthetics of a fellowship hall are quite different than that of a sanctuary. Over the years we have added elements to create a more worshipful ambience. Examples would be the chalice art above the courtyard doors, the seasonal quilted banners, and the hymnal holders. We painted the backdrop red which is traditionally a color associated with worship in many cultures. We have incorporated custom art pieces.

These additions have helped but, we can't go as far to say that the space is a sanctuary. We make do with the kitchen cabinets and tables and clutter.

The question we asked ourselves is – Can we make our Fellowship Hall a more sanctuary like space if consensus is that we are not ready to build a sanctuary?

We do think it is possible. Our consulting architect thinks we can lift the chancel another 6 inches while still being ADA compliant and expand the total chancel area without much financial outlay. We could also hire an interior designer to come up with elements or finishes that would create a more worshipful space. Think lighting, wall finishes, etc. We could also look at upgrading our acoustics and technology. Perhaps a large smart screen that would project hymnal music or video related to the service. Estimated cost is between \$20,000 and \$100,000.

One of the key elements of this transformation would be to establish a separate dedicated coffee area. Our current coffee area is woefully inadequate for its purpose. It is a tight space with limited ability to serve a large number of folks in a short period of time. Having a separate coffee area also solves the problem of overlap between the current two services.

The coffee area also takes up space that otherwise could be used for chairs. A short term solution is simply to reduce the number of chairs in the area. With our current attendance numbers we can afford to reduce the number of chairs without much consequence. But, this won't always work - especially on Holidays and special events. It is important that we remain flexible and try short term solutions until we can agree on a longer term solution.

Our longer term idea is to transform the preschool room into a dedicated coffee area (see the drawing). The room is large enough and water is available. The entrance to the coffee area would be relocated to the vestibule, instead of through the north wing. Changing the entrance would provide ease of movement from the Sanctuary to the coffee area. We can envision some bar style tables along the walls and maybe a comfy couch and/or table style seating. We would like to see the Sabin/Boston Bounder coffee cart incorporated. When not in use, the room could be used for small group gatherings. We think this is a very doable project at a cost between \$10,000 and \$20,000.

ESTF Storage Spaces Report:

Many of BUUF storage spaces are full to overflowing with a variety of items large and small that are regularly used for BUUF's events and activities. For example; tables, chairs, supplies for fundraisers, and activities such as Deck the Halls and RE classes for children, youth. Adult groups that meet throughout the building year-round have also spoken up, asking for space to house their equipment; weekly AA and NA community service groups are two examples.

As BUUF has grown and programs have been either developed or existing ones expanded, additional storage space has been needed. For example; the BUUF choir has used the closet off the south side of the sanctuary to store its music and the accompanying stands, instruments and stools have a spot in the closet on the north

side. Since the addition of Soulful Sundown to the worship calendar 4 years ago, there are more instruments and different needs to add to the music storage mix. Thus, the need for a secure place to house these items (and more) has become a priority. Recently the choir music was relocated from the closet off the south side of the chancel to the former RE closet which can be locked. That might be part of a solution to provide a secure place for instruments and other valuable items, but that closet is small, and the need grows.

Additional or remodeled storage space would better house and potentially expand Social Justice projects such as BUUF's Food Pantry and the very active Interfaith Sanctuary Food Team or the GrUUb CIUUb as they call themselves.

The estimated cost to remodel storage spaces is \$5,000-\$20,000. This is one example of a remodel that could be combined with another project or area of interest.

Look around and ask yourselves "How might we keep those items not always in use, but needed regularly, accessible and in good condition while living our ideals?" Good storage also allows us to keep those areas that are well-used, clutter free which can contribute to more worshipful, sacred interior spaces.

ESTF Small Group Meeting Space & Chapel Space Report:

On Sunday mornings, the current BUUF campus has no space for a separate chapel/quiet meditation space and only limited space for adult small group meetings.

North wing classrooms are dedicated to pre-K through 6th grade RE.

South wing rooms (Sr. High, Jr. High, and library) are open during first service. Between services a meditation group meets in the Jr. High room, but its calm is often interrupted by noise from the hallway or the Sr. High room. The library is always used second service, either by the Humanists or by the Inquirers class.

If we had a small chapel for up to 30 people, it could be used for meditation, for individual contemplation, for wedding or memorial services, for anyone needing time in a dedicated sacred space. A class earlier this year identified a sacred space as one for inspiration, music, silence, awe, sanctuary, celebration, legacy, and gratitude. Do we have a space today that could be remodeled to fill this need, or do we need to add a space?

Committee work, small group ministry, and adult education classes, except for the Inquirer series, are held during the week. BUUF has no dedicated place for adults to meet on Sunday mornings. This means it is hard for adults to join a committee, take a class, or strengthen spiritual connections without making at least two trips a week to the BUUF campus. As the population of Boise and the Treasure Valley grows, weekday commutes across town become longer and more daunting, especially for older congregants or those with children. Do we want to be able to combine committee work, classes, connections, and justice work with Sunday Services? Do we have space today that could be remodeled to fill this need, or do we need to add space?

ESTF Office Space Report:

The current office space on the south entryway includes a large private office for the minister which is sometimes used for small group meetings on Sundays, a small private office for the office administrator, three desk spaces in the open area for the program administrative assistant, the social justice/volunteer coordinator, and our new ministerial intern, and a large work-room with copy machine, work table, and storage for office and music supplies. The Director of Family Ministries (DFM) and assistant DFM have moved over to the north wing due to lack of space and the office administrator needing a private office that the DFM had occupied.

The desks in the open area are in a high traffic area for people needing access to the South-wing rooms and rest rooms. You've probably said "hi" to Nancy as you're passing through!

Working collaboratively as a team is important to our minister to foster employee morale and a mission inspired work environment. Also, being accessible to the public and congregants during the week is a priority. Yet, being a thoroughfare for the south-wing does not lend itself to focused work. Also, our minister is not overly attached to her extra-large office, although she certainly appreciates it.

How can we bring our BUUF employees together in a more inspiring and efficient work space? One idea includes a new southwest addition that attaches into the south vestibule and nursery area where offices are accessible to the public, private when necessary, yet not a thoroughfare to another part of the building (see drawing). This would free up the current office space for small-group meeting spaces, more storage, or a small chapel space. This could also incorporate a more visible location for the food pantry, instead of being hidden in the closet off of the south vestibule.

Another option is to reconfigure the current office space to reduce the square feet in the minister's office allowing more office space, but that doesn't appear to provide the space needed for a long-term solution.

Another idea is to use the Douglas property buildings as office space even though the distance between that property and the church building creates challenges.

We invite you to consider if reconfiguring office spaces should be a priority.

ESTF Outdoor Spaces Report:

The four acres surrounding BUUF are made up of the following features: two parking lots for 118 vehicles (approximately 200 people), landscaped grounds with specific areas of interest; Jeremiah's Adventure Garden, two water features, the Greene Grove, a children's play area including playhouse and the Little Bridge commemorating BUUF Partner Church in Mezsko, Romania as well as a courtyard with memorial brick pathways and more. Adjacent to the west is the Douglas Property; a one-acre strip of land purchased in 2006 with two income producing rental properties. Currently, the house is rented to a family through the CATCH Program and the smaller cabin is rented by a couple with a horse and goat using the corral.

The outdoors surrounding BUUF is truly a treasure; with beautiful spots specifically created to provide sanctuary, inspiration and a quiet respite from the hum of everyday life. We invite you to imagine how we might enhance our use of this treasure. Might we bring the worship experience outdoors by creating an amphitheater to host smaller gatherings or envision a meditation space among the Greene Grove trees? While balancing safety of the existing features, might there be a way to host social justice works such as a community garden or being Garden City's hub for the Boise Bicycle Project onsite? Could the Douglas property expand much-needed housing options in the valley? Could cooperative, workforce housing like the Windy Court container housing units be possible? The need for additional parking as we grow is a reality. How can we best utilize the grounds and Douglas Property to fulfill our vision of justice making in the larger Boise/Garden City community while balancing this reality?

ESTF Wrap-up:

We hope that hearing about all these possibilities generated some questions and excitement. We'd like to now break into small groups so you can ask your specific questions on the areas that most interest you, or the areas where you have the most questions. We will do our best to answer your questions, but mostly we want to record your feedback. There could be issues we haven't considered, or concerns that haven't been brought to our attention yet. If you feel that you have adequate information to take the survey, you can go to one of the laptops that are set-up and complete the survey now, or do it as soon as you can. We will be closing the survey on October 20th and we want as much participation and feedback as possible. Thank you for your time and commitment to our beautiful BUUF spaces!