

First Unitarian Society of Ithaca

Board of Trustees Meeting

October 20, 2021 Minutes

President Don Barber called the regular monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees (BoT) to order at 6:34pm on Wednesday, October 20, 2021.

Trustees Present: Don Barber (President), Therese O'Connor (Vice President), Diana Nier (Clerk), Valerie Graves, Simon Catterall, Nancy Miller, Margaret Nichols, John Gaines, Elton Hall, Walt Peck (Treasurer, ex officio), Rev. Tony Johnson (Minister, ex officio).

Trustees Absent: none

FUSIT Members & Guests: Emily Richardson (DRE), Matt Hare, Wendy Salomon, Fred Balfour, Hans Fleischmann

Handouts:

- [Resolution for Standing Committee Appointments](#)
- [Resolution Appointing Members to the Communications Policy Committee](#)
- [Sexton Hiring Process Status Report](#)
- [FUSIT Attorney: Potential Hire Information](#)
- [Minister's Report](#)
- [Resolution to Appoint Members to the Ad Hoc Open Questions Committee](#)
- [Mutual Goals from the Espresso Meeting](#)

Agenda Item # 1: Welcome and Chalice Lighting

Elton Hall lit the chalice and Therese O'Connor read a selection. Round robin checking in.

Agenda Item # 2: Congregational Communication Period

- None of the members present requested to speak.

Agenda Item # 3: Changes to Agenda

- Margaret Nichols requested an item to appoint members of the Communications Policy Committee. This item was added to the Consent Agenda

Agenda Item # 4: Consent Agenda

CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS:

- Approve the minutes of the September 15, 2021 Board of Trustees meeting, shown in Google Docs folder as of the date and time of this meeting
- Accept Committee and Team Reports
- Approve the Resolution for Standing Committee Appointments (full text appended to the end of minutes)

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- Approve appointments to the Communications Policy Committee (full text appended to the end of minutes)

MOTION: Approve the Consent Agenda Items. Moved by John Gaines, seconded by Diana Nier. **PASSED.**

Agenda Item # 5: Minister's Report and Upcoming Dates

(Newsletter deadline has passed for this month.)

Reverend Anthony Johnson updated the board on:

- All compliments to staff and members for helping him learn his way around FUSIT
- Don drew attention to the idea of a FUSIT attorney. Michelle Waffner has requested legal assistance with some tasks, and Jennifer Streid-Mullen suggested Emily Rockett.
- Request for volunteers to keep in touch with Loretta Heimbuch and ensure Board communications are in the newsletter
 - Therese volunteered to make a Google Form for Board members to sign up to write short articles for each monthly newsletter

Agenda Item # 6: Increase Volunteer Engagement

- Fred Balfour presented the Nominating Committee's efforts (in partnership with the Engagement and Outreach Team, as represented by Angela Zhang) to create easier ways for people to volunteer
- The main idea is to use Breeze data about member interests and skills to recruit and identify volunteers. This would involve a new section of Breeze, and we are unsure how it would work and how public any data will be
 - If data isn't searchable, it's not very useful. Conversely, if data is searchable, there may be privacy issues.
 - People are still unfamiliar/uncomfortable with Breeze and getting them to enter data may be difficult
 - Suggestions from people who would use this system to develop/recruit volunteers are very welcome! Please send them to NomCom
- This is also relevant to Hospitality Teams
- Angela Zhang is prepared to have detailed propositions ready to present at the November Board meeting
- NomCom intends to reach out to Committee and Team chairs who have expressed a need for more members, or for new leaders
 - NomCom will bring a proposal to the Board to have the Board appoint an additional NomCom member as per the Bylaws
- Suggestions for creating a broad base of leadership among the congregation:
 - Start people off with one small defined task to create a sense of accomplishment and participation. Then gradually ask for larger and more open-ended tasks

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- Set people up for success with small tasks to build confidence
- Pair new volunteers so they can create a mutual support structure
- Appeal to sense of community
- Appeal to ambition: volunteer positions look good on a resume!
- Training programs
 - Youth leadership development can help inspire adults to pitch in
 - Find outside training opportunities
 - Identify newer/younger members who are interested in deeper participation and responsibility
- Make volunteering feel fun!
- Create a culture where volunteers are honored and respected
 - Create a culture where volunteering is a norm
 - Talk about volunteering to new members
 - Ministerial support via sermons
 - Ask for the opinion and advice of people on the front line
 - Personal one-on-one recruitment; make people feel wanted
- Childcare options are vital in order to get parents involved!
 - Hospitality Teams are great for this, since kids can participate
- Database of skills and interests
 - Establishes the possibility of being asked to volunteer
- Orientation Training (hybrid session) upcoming on Wednesday, November 3 at 6:30pm. A local attorney who specializes in nonprofits will talk about Board responsibilities and expectations

Agenda Item # 7: Open Question Committee and Listening Circle

MOTION: Approve the Resolution to Appoint Members to the Ad Hoc Open Questions Committee. (Full text appended to the end of minutes.) Moved by John Gaines, seconded by Elton Hall. **PASSED.**

LISTENING CIRCLE: John Gaines presented the question and explained the circle process.

- **"In these pandemic times and beyond, how can we as a congregation connect more deeply, inspire healing, and engage all our members?"**
- The Board and guests shared responses to the Open Question, going around the circle twice. Elton Hall acted as scribe.
 - Individual responses are not recorded in the minutes but will be published later as part of the Open Question process.

Agenda Item # 8: Mutual Goals from Espresso Meeting

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- Don presented a document summarizing goals from the Espresso Meeting. (Full text appended to the end of minutes.)
- Congregational leadership expressed three main goals for the 2021-22 fiscal year:
 - **Find ways to gather safely in person**
 - **Prioritize pastoral care**
 - **Build a covenantal community**
- Discussion of options for gathering safely in person, and ways to increase member participation in Zoom/streaming services
 - Add pre-recorded videos of greeting to services and to announce emails
 - May need to provide tech support
- We may not have time to address this in full during tonight's meeting, but we encourage everyone to continue brainstorming ideas

Agenda Item # 9: November Meeting Agenda Items

- Goals from Espresso Meeting
- Budget process review/start
- Role of the Healthy Congregation Team, especially relating to Listening Circles
 - HCT will coordinate with Rev. Tony in re: Listening Circles and their team charge
 - Need for a general congregational meeting?
- Ministerial Search timeline, for both settled and interim ministry
 - Staff reiterate desire for a developmental ministry
- Open Questions (small segment, related to planning)
- Vision of Ministry: rewriting based on our current congregational goals
- Staff and minister are working on holiday celebrations (Xmas Eve, Xmas pageant, Solstice, Hanukkah, etc.)

Agenda Item # 10: Meeting/Action Summary for Communication

- Diana will post a summary to Slack by noon on Thursday, October 21.

Agenda Item # 11: Closing Words

Therese spoke some extemporized closing words.

Meeting adjourned at 8:09pm.

Agenda Item # 12: Executive Session

- At 8:12pm, the Board of Trustees entered executive session as per the agenda, to discuss concerns about Rev. Tony's interim ministry.
- The Zoom meeting was adjourned. Rev. Tony and non-Board members left the parlor.

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- Minutes are not kept of executive session discussions, and no official business is transacted during an executive session.

Executive Session adjourned at 8:45pm.

Minutes taken by Diana Nier, 10/20/2021.

Resolution Appointing Members to the Communications Policy Committee

Whereas, the charge for the Communications Committee was approved by the Board of Trustees at its meeting on September 15, 2021;

Whereas, the committee's ultimate purpose is to arrive at policy recommendations and advise the Board on communication issues, rather than to be in charge of communications by the Board or in the First Unitarian Society in general;

Whereas, two Board members, two staff members, and one representative from the Membership/Outreach Team have agreed to serve thus far;

Be it resolved, that the committee be renamed the Communications Policy Committee, and that the Board appoint as its members Board members Nancy Miller and Margaret Nichols, staff members Michelle Waffner and Loretta Heimbuch, and Membership/Outreach Team member Angela Zhang, to serve for one year or until the Committee has accomplished its goals, whichever comes first. If the Committee has not yet finished its work by the end of one year, and if its members agree to continue on the Committee, they may be reappointed for a second year.

Resolution for Standing Committee Appointments

Whereas Article IX, Section 2.2 of FUSIT bylaws states in part "This committee's membership must be confirmed annually by the Board and shall include a member of the Board and the treasurer."and

Whereas Article IX also states in part " Chairpersons of these committees shall be empowered by the President of the Board and then confirmed by the Board..."

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Now Therefore Be It Resolved that the Board of Trustees appoints the following congregants to the Finance Committee: Jim Skaley, Jennifer Streid-Mueller, Walt Peck, Jens Wennberg, Rich Dolge, Nathan Fawcett, chair, and Elton Hall, ex officio, and

Further Resolved, the Board of Trustees appoints Matt Hare as Chair of the Stewardship Committee.

Resolution to Appoint Members to the Ad Hoc Open Questions Committee

Whereas, the Board on September 15, 2021 adopted a resolution to create and charge an ad hoc Committee on Open Questions, and

Whereas the motion creating the ad hoc Committee specified that *“the Open Questions Committee will consist of 5-6 members appointed by the President of the Board, including at least one representative of each of the following: the Board of Trustees, the staff, the Way Forward Team, the Team Leadership Council, and the congregation at large.”*

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Board hereby rescinds that portion of the September 15, 2021 resolution quoted above, and

Be it further resolved that the Board appoints to following as the ad hoc Committee on Open Questions:

- each elected trustee of the Society;
- the Treasurer of the Society; and
- the Minister of the Society. and

Be it further resolved that the ad hoc Committee members will serve for one year or until the Board takes further action to restructure the Committee.

Mutual Goals from FUSIT Espresso Meeting on October 16, 2021

- 1. Find ways to gather safely in person.** (Way Forward Team + minister)
 - 2. Prioritize pastoral care.** (minister and care team)
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3. Build a covenantal community.

- Congregational small group meetings (both in person (with child care) and on Zoom)
 - Peace/Healing/Listening/Trauma Circles with Interim Minister
 - Healthy Congregations team working on recovenanting and how the community promises to be with one another (lay led, minister optional)
 - Need facilitators and logistical support (lay leaders)
- Ad Hoc Communications Committee.
 - How to do things differently.
 - Communication needs to be multi-faceted.
 - A lot of people got information on Sunday morning.
 - Encourage people to tune in to what is going on.
 - How to consider the “receiving” side of communication. Culture of complaining about communication.
- Membership/Healthy Congregations/Minister
 - How to People 101
 - What are the obligations of a member?
- Shift to a culture of curiosity and gratitude.