

**First Unitarian Society of Ithaca**  
**Board of Trustees Meeting**  
February, 16 2022 Minutes

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President Don Barber called the regular monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees (BoT) to order at 6:37 pm on Wednesday February 16th, 2022.

**Trustees Present:** Don Barber (President), Therese O'Connor (Vice President), Elton Hall, Simon Catterall, John Gaines, Nancy Miller, Valerie Graves, Walt Peck (Treasurer), Margaret Nichols

**Trustees Absent:** Diana Nier (Clerk)

**FUSIT Members & Guests:** Angela Zhang, Emily Richards, Fred Balfor, Marie Benedetti, Michelle Waffner, Robert Parks, Preston Wilson, Kathy Hopkins, Jens Wennberg

**Handouts:**

- Documents were shared over Google Drive.

**Agenda Item # 1: Welcome and Chalice Lighting**

Walt Peck lit the chalice and Simon Catterall read a selection.

**Agenda Item # 2: Congregational Communication Period**

- Preston Wilson shared that he had joined FUSIT several decades ago at an inspiring time, when Jack Taylor was minister. After that minister left, inspiration decreased. FUSIT now finds itself without a uniquely inspiring leader and members might have to run the society ourselves. Preston would like to offer service to FUSIT. He will work as a celebration associate. Was formerly the volunteer chair of the adult education committee. He would be glad to do this work again.

**Agenda Item # 3: Changes to Agenda**

- Valerie will take notes for open questions.

**Agenda Item # 4: Consent Agenda**

**CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS:**

- Approve the minutes of the January 19, 2022 Board of Trustees meeting, shown in Google Docs folder as of the date and time of this meeting
- Accept the Treasurer's Report
- The Board of Trustees hereby appoints Jens Wennsburg and Preston Wilson to the Governance Committee.

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- The Board of Trustees hereby authorizes its President to sign the Engagement Letter dated 1/25/22 with Ms. Whitney Kummerow of Hancock & Estabrook

**MOTION:** Approve the Consent Agenda Items. Moved by Therese, seconded by Margaret.  
**MOTION PASSED.**

### **Agenda Item # 5: Ministry Reports and Upcoming Dates**

- Team reports
  - Marie Benedetti highlighted the auction team report and the recommendations for the Spring Online Auction for the Board's awareness. The auction dates are set and the Board was asked not to schedule anything else that weekend: April 29-May 1st.
- Listening Circle reports
- Staff reports
- Committee Reports.
  - Individuals were invited to come to the special meeting for finance and stewardship on Monday, February 21st at 6:30 PM.
- Administrator's report
  - \$250 worth of forever stamps was found!
- Governance committee
  - Current work is related to the organizational structure while FUSIT is without a minister. The governance structure has to be flexible. The committee will partner with the personnel committee and have discussions with staff about how to spread ministerial responsibilities.
- Theme of appreciation - Walt Peck was appreciated for his finance and administrative work while we are without a minister.

### **Agenda Item # 6: "Sense of the Meeting" in Weekly Announcements**

**MOTION:** The Board hereby resolves to place the "Sense of the Meeting" column into the weekly announcement email and remove the "Updates from the Board" column from the monthly newsletter. The "From Your Board" column (also referred to as "Your Board is Listening") will continue to run in the monthly newsletter. Moved by Therese O'Connor, seconded by Simon Catterall. **MOTION PASSED.**

### **Agenda Item # 7: 8th Principle**

- The Board was reminded of the Public Witness policy, which was employed here by the AntiRacism Ministry Team (ARMT). ARMT has asked the Board to decide whether the

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topic of the adoption of the 8th Principle is worth bringing to the congregation for discussion and has outlined actions steps for doing so.

**MOTION:** Resolution that the possible adoption of the 8th Principle is an issue that deserves congregational discussion and input. Moved by Don, seconded by Elton.

Discussion:

- We appreciate the ARMT team for highlighting our policy and bringing this forward in an effective way.
- I am really concerned about this as a political scientist. The 5th principle is most important. Congregations that are focused on the 5th principle facilitate the compilation of pro and con arguments to allow for meaningful discussion. This process has been primarily activist. Other concerns with the submission from ARMT were shared. I ask the board to express a desire to encourage a discussion of the pros and cons. Congregational conversations often do not allow equal time to both sides of an argument.
- All these points are valid and need to be part of the congregational conversation on this topic. The decision about adoption of the principle is not being made tonight. This motion allows the process of consideration to take place.
- It is good to have discussion throughout this whole period. Suggest multiple small groups gather to discuss this topic. More discussion time might be a good idea to arrive at a decision as smoothly as possible.

**AMENDED MOTION:** Resolution that the possible adoption of the 8th Principle is an issue that deserves congregational discussion and input, with ample time and equal consideration of all sides of the issue. Moved by Don Barber, seconded by Elton Hall. **MOTION PASSED**

### **Agenda Item # 8: Process for Developing Ideas for Fostering a Culture of Appreciation**

- Ideas for creating a culture of appreciation were shared in the Board Google drive folder. At the meeting the Board addressed the question of how to get a group of people to volunteer to implement these ideas.
- **Discussion:**
  - This could fit into the communications committee or a separate group of 3-4 people could be recruited.
  - Could we enlist the hospitality teams while they are not employed as much through the services. Everyone in the congregation is on a hospitality team.
    - Response: Once FUSIT opens up, the hospitality teams will be busy. It can be considered, but the core goal is to provide hospitality.

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- Bring this idea to the Team Leadership Council.
- This could fall into the scope of both the communications committee and the healthy congregations team.

Nancy volunteered to bring this topic to the Team leadership council and the healthy congregations team.

Emily suggested that a segment of joys and sorrows could be “appreciations.”

### **Agenda Item # 9: Ministry Leadership Discernment Process Steps**

- Board has had several discussions, met with Keith Kron, and shared his video to the congregation along with FUSIT history from Walt Peck. The first congregational conversation will be on Sunday, February 20.
- **Discussion:**
  - Walt offered to provide a financial summary for this year and the next for the congregation by Friday. For the Monday Board meeting, a more explicit summary will be needed. On the basis of that we can move forward on the budget, which depends entirely on the decision about the plans for a minister.
  - It was recommended that the summary for the congregation should be sent out as a special announcement ahead of the congregational conversation.
  - The Board will need to be educated on common lay-led congregations.
  - There were links in the Gov-co work space. Gov-Co can begin to take a look at those at the meeting tomorrow. Someone from Gov-co will be at the conversation prepared to share preliminary information with the congregation if requested.
  - We should ask participants their top priorities for a minister.
  - We could have a focused question, but we must also be open to ideas that are outside the box. This should be a creative process.
  - We should start out with the assumption that some people who come won't have absorbed any of the material shared with the congregation. Might want to start by providing some context, such as a summary of the discussion with Keith Kron and other topics.
  - Walt offered to share the financial facts and facts about the financial reality of a minister search.
  - There is also a related newsletter piece coming out before conversation.
  - The Keith Kron video was long so many people likely didn't watch it all.
  - We should phrase the opening question as: what we need in ministry in general for our community.
  - We will need someone to facilitate the conversation. We do not want to come across as heavy handed.

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- Valerie offered to take notes.
- Therese was nominated as a facilitator, she agreed to the role.
- When to have additional congregational conversations will be discussed after the special meeting on Monday.

### **Agenda Item # 10: Governance Structure Position**

- Don and Therese met with Dan Hotchkiss. Therese addressed the Board: He advised us to create our own structure of governance: Governance that is flexible during transitions and consistent for operations. With partnership governance, who is the board partnering with in the absence of the minister? It should be three people at the most. The cost of additional consultation was more expensive than expected. We would be better served putting resources into our own governance design than hiring a consultant.
- Discussion:
  - We can have gov-co involved in discussion about a consultant. Partnership governance does not need to be dependent on a minister.
  - Do we have the right staff and enough staff, will they continue in the same role with or without a minister?
  - One model would be to have a senior staff person as a partner.
  - There are examples of a professional church administrator.
  - Will the meeting scheduled for March 2nd be canceled?
  - The Board might still need that time to discuss plans - stewardship needs to know what is happening going forward.

### **Agenda Item # 11: Board Responses to Winter Open Question**

- Each board member and guest shared their response(s) to the winter open question.

### **Agenda Item # 12: March Meeting Agenda Items**

- Defining out top priorities and goals for ministry
- An update on the winter Open Question
- Discussion of the spring open question topic. The discussion will begin over Slack.
- Update on the budget
- Organizational update from Gov Co and personnel committee - There will be an executive session on staff salaries and benefits soon.
- Revisit the culture of appreciation for an update - maybe appreciations can be included in joys and sorrows in the meantime?
- Check in on where we are with governance issues and policies for what happens when we do not have a minister. Gov-co could present.

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### **Agenda Item # 13: Meeting/Action Summary for Communication**

- Valerie will contact Diana to work on a "Sense of the Meeting" communication

### **Agenda Item # 14: Closing Words**

Walt extinguished the chalice and Simon read a selection.

### **Meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM**

Minutes taken by Valerie Graves, 2/16/22.