

First Unitarian Society of Ithaca

Board of Trustees Meeting

March 2, 2022 Minutes

President Don Barber called the special meeting of the Board of Trustees (BoT) to order at 6:33pm on Wednesday, March 2, 2022.

Trustees Present: Don Barber (President), Diana Nier (Clerk), Simon Catterall, John Gaines, Valerie Graves, Elton Hall, Nancy Miller, Margaret Nichols

Trustees Absent: Therese O'Connor (Vice President), Walt Peck (Treasurer)

FUSIT Members & Guests: Jens Wennberg, Harry D, Marie McRae, Fred Conner, Wendy Salomon, Jim Skaley, Margaret Lay-Doppyera

Handouts:

- [Ad Hoc Minister Search Special Committee \(DRAFT\)](#)
- [Minister Functions Prioritized](#)
- [Minister Responsibility Priority](#)
- [Talking Points for Minister Discussion](#)

Agenda Item # 1: Welcome and Chalice Lighting

Margaret Nichols lit the chalice and Don Barber read a selection.

Agenda Item # 2: Congregational Communication Period

- On behalf of Stewardship, Jens Wennberg requested that all Board members submit pledges before the March 6 service, which will be the Pledge Drive kickoff

Agenda Item # 3: Changes to Agenda

- No changes at this time

Agenda Item # 4: Consent Agenda

CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS:

- Approve the minutes of the February 16, 2022 and February 21, 2022 Board of Trustees meeting, shown in Google Docs folder as of the date and time of this meeting

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

Agenda Item # 5: Reflections on Feb 20, Congregation Conversation

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- The Board discussed the notes of the February 20th congregational conversation
 - The topic shifted from "what we want in a minister" to "how can the congregation pick up more of Ministry's responsibilities?" This was heartening!
 - The video of Keith Kron's meeting with the Board was very helpful for setting expectations
- Heartening that approximately 50 people were present
 - On the other hand, those are the most engaged members, and people who haven't been following this issue closely may be taken aback if we choose options other than a traditional ministerial search

Agenda Item # 6: Top Priorities for Minister Responsibilities

- Don Barber presented the following list gleaned from the congregational conversation and Board discussions
 - Building community, Team focus and Coaching for opportunities for inspiration
 - Spiritual Leadership: top notch celebrations, voice for liberal religion both within and outside our congregation, challenge us to be better personally and collectively.
 - Ministry Leadership: Coaching for opportunities of engagement in keeping the congregation together,
 - Pastoral Care
 - Administration and Operations Director
- Walt Peck created an overlapping list
 - Spiritual Leadership. Provide regular sermons and serve as the focal point of the church, both within the congregation and toward the wider community.
 - Pastoral Care
 - Chief of Staff. Be the person ultimately responsible for the daily operations of the church and monitoring/managing programs. May include staff supervision.
- Mark Pedersen used to act as a lynchpin for FUSIT community and governance; we have been fumbling without him
- John Gaines, Therese O'Connor, and Valerie Graves are working to keep the Winter Open Question responses up to date
- GovCo is researching options and will have an in-person retreat on Saturday, March 5
 - One option includes lay-led congregations -- this may become necessary if we can't find a candidate who fits the requirements we settle on
- Structures that work for a lay-led congregation may not work very well in a minister-led congregation. What if we hire staff and then have to let them go if/when we find a minister who can take over those roles?
- Given that ministers receive minimal training in administration, it may be a good idea to split spiritual leadership and pastoral care off from administration

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- We did this unofficially when Mark Pedersen was the administrator, and it worked very well!
 - Mark often brought issues directly to the Board without involving the minister; his predecessor (under Jack Taylor) did the same
- Whether we promote from within or hire from without, we cannot have volunteer members supervising paid staff
- Splitting admin from spiritual/pastoral issues can be good for continuity, since even settled ministers often leave after 5-10 years
- Additionally, having continuity of administration may make us more attractive to potential new ministers
- On the other hand, how will that work financially? We still paid a full-time competitive salary to ministers while also having a strong administrator

Agenda Item # 7: Ministry Leadership Discernment Process Steps

- We've held one congregational conversation, and intend to hold at least one more
- What do we want to learn from this conversation? What do we want to share with the congregation?
 - If we ask about splitting admin from ministry, we need to be careful about phrasing the question and guiding the meeting or we'll just get another round of "what we want in a minister"
 - Reiterating the Winter Open Question might be helpful, since that will guide our choices if we become lay-led for a while
 - We should start with a report on where the Board, GovCo, etc. are in the ministerial discernment process, and what the process will be going forward
 - Must include discussion of the financial implications of various choices
 - Hiring a half-time administrator and a half-time minister might cost about the same as one full-time minister
- Schedule the meeting for March 20 at 12:30pm, after the next Board meeting
 - We report whatever we're working on at the time -- details are TBA right now
 - This is 1 month after the previous Congregational Conversation. It could be useful to hold regular Congregational Conversations as we move forward
 - We need to communicate our process and results in other ways too!

Agenda Item # 8: Ministry Formation Committee

- John Gaines explained the idea behind the proposed Ministry Formation Committee
- See details in the [Ad Hoc Minister Search Special Committee \(DRAFT\)](#)
- A version of this proposal will be voted on at the March 16 regular monthly Board meeting. It will likely be edited before that date, but this is a good starting point for discussion

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- Many of these tasks must be worked on in parallel, not linearly
 - Concern over how to split spiritual/pastoral duties from admin duties if we end up looking to separate those aspects
- Valerie Graves suggested the Ministry Fulfillment Committee as a better name
- We need to think about who should be on this committee, so we don't have a time lag between creating the committee and populating it
 - We should try to spread these responsibilities out rather than continue looking to the same group of already heavily involved people. This is important both to get a wide representative sample of FUSIT and to avoid burnout from people who are serving in multiple roles already
 - This committee will not be bound by the UUA minister search process, so it is a very flexible role

Agenda Item # 9: Items for Next Meeting Agenda

- Self-care for volunteers to avoid burnout
- Decide top priorities for ministerial role/function
- Vote on creating a ministry fulfillment committee

Agenda Item # 10: Meeting/Action Summary for Communication

- Diana will send a summary of the meeting to Michelle for the midweek announcement email.

Agenda Item # 11: Closing Words

Don Barber read a selection and Margaret Nichols extinguished the chalice.

Meeting adjourned at 7:46pm.

Minutes taken by Diana Nier, 3/2/22.