

First Unitarian Society of Ithaca  
Board of Trustee Meeting Minutes  
June 15, 2022

Vice-President Therese O'Connor called the regular monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees (BoT) to order at 6:30pm on Wednesday, June 15, 2022.

**Trustees Present:** Therese O'Connor (Vice President), Diana Nier (Clerk), Elton Hall, John Gaines, Nancy Miller, Margaret Nichols, and Walt Peck (Treasurer, ex officio). Don Barber (President) joined at 6:54pm.

**Trustees Absent:** Valerie Graves, Simon Catterall

**FUSIT Members & Guests:** Michelle Waffner (Administrator), Emily Richards (DRE), James Skaley, Barbara Shew

**Handouts:**

- Minutes of the May 18, 2022 Board Meeting
- [Appointments to the Ministry Visioning Team](#)
- [Proposed FUSIT Digital Communications Guidelines](#)
- [Database Communication](#)

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

John Gaines lit the chalice and read a selection.

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

- Jim Skaley spoke about the 8th Principle recently adopted at the FUSIT annual meeting. We should start working on programming to emphasize this principle so we "walk the walk" instead of just "talking the talk"
  - Do we need to amend the bylaws to incorporate the 8th Principle?
  - GovCo will look into any necessary amendments

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

- No changes to the agenda

**Agenda Item # 4: Consent Agenda**

**CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS:**

- Approve the minutes of the May 18, 2022 Board of Trustees meeting, shown in Google Docs folder as of the date and time of this meeting
- Accept the Treasurer's Report
- Appoint Emily Richards (Director of Religious Education), Nancy Miller (Trustee), joAnn Kowalski, and Don Rakow to compose the Ministry Visioning Team (MVT)

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

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

- Team reports
  - Ministry Fulfillment Team is not chaired by Andy Turner; the team operates on a "leaderful" basis
  - Ministry Visioning Team will adopt the tasks of Engagement and Outreach, since that team is currently defunct.
    - Jess Brown is currently volunteering to do some social media work with the aid of Michelle Waffner and Emily Richards
- Don Barber reported that our lawyers are taking care of our communications with Rev. Tony Johnson.
- Michelle Waffner and Don Barber are working to get our insurance situation in order and sign up for a new policy by July 1
  - Can the sanctuary/parish house and the annex be insured separately? They have very different profiles
  - Answer: unclear, but we're looking into it

### **Agenda Item # 6: Communication Committee Topics**

- In reports and minutes, it is important to use the full version of a committee/team name the first time it comes up, so any future abbreviations and acronyms have a referent. It's also important to use people's full names
- Margaret Nichols presented the proposed Digital Communications Guidelines, and the Database Communication procedures
- Discussion of the proposed documents
  - Revised the Guidelines to change "acting out of covenant" to "acting disrespectfully"
- Is it better to moderate comments before posting or after?
  - Pre-approval takes a little more time, but can short-circuit a lot of potential arguments over deleting posts

- Need a group of at least 3 people to manage a moderation queue. Currently Emily Richards, Stephanie Ortolano, and Sue Roenke are moderating. Jess Brown is also willing to be a moderator
- Need to include a note on the Facebook group notifying everyone that access and posting require moderator approval
- General discussion of moderation policies
- Do we have a policy for use of the FUSIT Zoom accounts? Who can use them? Do we have a system for signing up for meeting slots?
- We will delete the current Breeze-based listserv. If you want to be on the replacement listserv, you will need to sign up and submit a form agreeing to abide by the Digital Communications Guidelines
- Conclusion: we have provided Nancy, Margaret, and the rest of the Communications Committee with some useful feedback, which they will take on board

### **Agenda Item # 7: Board Evaluation**

- Therese explained the Board Evaluation form that we used, which was drawn from the UUA. We can make adjustments for future years if that seems reasonable
  - A section for comments would be very helpful!
- Various questions were deemed non-applicable, such as regular check-ins
- "Building Trust" was rated lowest, which is potentially concerning
- Otherwise we rated ourselves between 8 and 9 on the most important goals
- Don Barber reported that we have met all of our Fall and Winter goals, and are making good progress on our Spring Goals

### **Agenda Item # 8: Spring Open Question**

- John Gaines introduced the process by saying it was a mistake to ask a complicated two-part question, because it produces confused answers
  - This process is best guided by one person, preferably a Board member, who can ensure that the questions are regularly publicized
  - It is helpful to have the whole Board participate in crafting the questions
- Therese reported on the responses to the Spring Open Question: *"In living out our Second Principle, promoting justice, equity, and compassion in human relations, how can we do the vital work of dismantling systems of oppression while promoting and supporting kindness, trust, and gratitude within our community?"*
- This produced a great variety of results, with a stress on personal awareness and collaboration with other community groups and congregations
- The Board will partner with the Ministry Visioning Team on next year's open questions
  - What is our timeline?
  - Start formulating the question in August in order to have it ready in September, rather than in October (which produces a very cramped schedule)

- Would we get more responses if we ask only two questions (fall and spring) rather than three questions (fall, winter, spring)?
  - If we only ask two questions, that gives some time for the congregation at large to participate in crafting the questions
- Small Group Ministry and Adult RE are great resources -- use them!
- John Gaines will write up a summary of the question results for the weekly announcement email

### **Agenda Item # 9: Transitioning Process to 22-23 Board of Trustees**

- We may have taken many people who would otherwise be Board candidates and placed them on other leadership teams and committees
- We need to work on diversity -- we have a good gender/sex balance, but not a good spread of ages or ethnicities/races
- In talking to potential Board candidates, it's important to reassure them that they will not have to slog through the same swamp that we have been dealing with over the past two or three years. We are on much more stable footing now, and they can work on building our exciting new future!

### **Agenda Item # 10: Question: Who Are We During Conflict/Disagreement?**

- Discussion of the recent breakdown of conversation over the 8th Principle prior to the annual meeting, and in the wake of its adoption
- We have lost members in the past over various controversial decisions. We have come through those issues and remained a vibrant congregation, and some people have returned later on
  - The important thing is to have a strong process we can rely upon when making decisions, particularly controversial ones
- Conflicts that drive people away tend to be smaller-scale and more personal (one-on-one). How do we handle those?
  - Accepting people with differing opinions is a hugely important test of our principles
- How can we help people not get scared and angry? We need to feel that FUSIT is a safe space for us to communicate, rather than swallowing down frustrations until we explode
- Health Congregations Team (HCT) workshops?

### **Agenda Item # 11: Work Items for 22-23 Board and Year-end Reflections**

- Open Questions, Vision of Ministry, Board Evaluation, Ministry Evaluation
- We have not made a financial plan; this needs to be handled in the coming year

- Help Ministry Visioning Team (MVT) and Operations & Administration Team (OAT) hit the ground running
- Finalize social media and Zoom policies and procedures, etc.
- Continue to build a culture of appreciation and a spirit of mutual caring

### **Agenda Item # 12: Meeting/Action Summary for Communication**

- Diana will send a "Sense of the Meeting" writeup to Michelle Waffner for the weekly announcement email

### **Agenda Item # 13: Closing Words**

Don Barber read a selection and Therese O'Connor extinguished the chalice.

### **Meeting adjourned at 8:33pm.**

Minutes taken by Diana Nier, 6/15/2022.

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### **Appointments to the Ministry Visioning Team**

Pursuant to the Amended Partnership Governance Resolution adopted by the Board on April 20, 2022 which provided the description of the newly forming Ministry Visioning Team, the Board of Trustees appoints Emily Richards (Director of Religious Education), Nancy Miller (Trustee), joAnn Kowalski, and Don Rakow to compose the Ministry Visioning Team (MVT).

The enabling resolution notes staggered 2-year terms for appointees. Because the MVT is just forming and could use some time to fine tune the working of this new role, all 4 appointees will be appointed to 2 year terms. Two appointees, who are self-selected by the Team membership, will serve an additional year (3 years total) before they are up for reappointment or stepping down. The other two appointees' term will end on June 30, 2024, when they can apply for re-appointment or step down.