

**First Unitarian Society of Ithaca**  
**Board of Trustees Meeting**  
May 18, 2022 Minutes

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President Don Barber called the regular monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees (BoT) to order at 6:35pm on Wednesday, May 18, 2022.

**Trustees Present:** Don Barber (President), Therese O'Connor (Vice President), Diana Nier (Clerk), John Gaines, Valerie Graves, Nancy Miller, Margaret Nichols, Walt Peck (Treasurer, ex officio)

**Trustees Absent:** Simon Catterall, Elton Hall

**FUSIT Members & Guests:** Emily Richards (DRE), Michelle Waffner (Administrator), Fred Balfour, Dick Kurtz, Harry D

**Handouts:**

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

Walt Peck lit the chalice and Therese O'Connor read a selection.

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

- None of the members present requested to speak.

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

- Nancy requested a 5-minute slot for the Communications Policy Committee to speak about social media strategies.
  - This will be part of the ministry team report section

### **Agenda Item # 4: Consent Agenda**

#### **CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS:**

- Approve the minutes of the April 20, 2022 Board of Trustees meeting, shown in Google Docs folder as of the date and time of this meeting
- Approve OAT Member Appointments (full text at the end of minutes)
- Approve Vision of Ministry for 2022-2023
- Accept the Treasurer's Report, Team Reports, and Committee Reports

**MOTION:** Approve the Consent Agenda Items. Moved by Don Barber, seconded by Therese O'Connor. **PASSED.**

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

- Communications Committee
  - Sparked by the recent animosity on FUSIT facebook groups and via Breeze communication, the Communications Committee wants the Board to take a look at our social media policy
  - As a congregation, do we want to maintain some digital discussion forum? Or should our Facebook be only for moderated announcements and such?
    - Facebook is notorious for rants and its privacy controls are terrible. Additionally, we cannot afford to have one person or team moderate multiple streams of communication.
    - We have 2 Facebook groups. The public one is already just announcements. The other is an unofficial group for internal discussion, and has not historically been moderated. That is the one that exploded recently
    - Conclusion: Facebook is not a place for discussions and should only be used for announcements/events.
  - Do we have any digital options for congregation-wide public discussion other than Zoom?
    - Not at the moment, and we also have no framework for moderating such a forum
    - We can't afford to have an official forum without a moderator or moderation team. Otherwise it will inevitably go off the rails
    - Suggestion: impose a moderation queue! That would require a formal, written moderation policy
    - Question: Should we ask staff to monitor discussion in online forums, and make decisions about what is appropriate and what is not?
      - No conclusion reached, but if we do implement this, a formal written policy with clear guidelines will be vital
  - Suggestion: all congregation-wide announcements should be run via staff and the office.
    - This will also require a written policy
  - Suggestion: Healthy Congregation Team, Communications Committee, and staff should consider these questions and create a social media policy to bring to the Board for approval
    - HCT feel this is not within their remit and referred it back to Communications Committee

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- It's difficult to allow limited communication through Breeze -- it's geared toward all-or-nothing. We could also create Google emails for specific teams, for people to use instead of Breeze tags
- Morally questionable to punish the masses for the misbehavior of a few -- we should contact the problem communicators directly
- Imperative to protect people's personal information!
- We are currently leaving Breeze mostly locked; only Board and staff have access to send email via tags
- All members and friends are encouraged to participate in the Ithaca Festival Parade as part of FUSIT
- Summer staffing: Michelle will be on limited time, Stephanie is off, Loretta is off, and Emily will be taking a bunch of her banked vacation time
- Ministry Fulfillment Team
  - Team has been discussing part-time ministry options
  - How will this team communicate with the Board?
  - Andy Turner has been chosen to be Chair of the Ministry Fulfillment Team

Date	Event	Comments
5/22/22	Congregational Conversation on Budget	
5/25/22	Annual Meeting	6:00pm

### **Agenda Item # 6: Annual Meeting Final Details**

- Summarize stuff from email discussion
- Speakers at the podium instead of running around with microphones? YES
  - Speakers address the podium, not each other
  - 3 minutes per person on the first round, nobody gets a second shot until everyone who wants a first shot has gone, 1 minute per person on their second round
  - Calling the question (with a second) ends discussion and forces an immediate vote
- The 8th Principle vote WILL be part of the agenda
- In-person voting will involve several separate cards, which people will move forward to cast. Electronic voting will be tallied separately. Voting periods should be timed.
  - Vote results will be announced during the meeting
- Will we allow early ballots, or can people only vote at the end of discussion on any given issue? Early voting is helpful for people with children

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### **Agenda Item # 7: Spring Open Question**

- We received 43 responses to the Spring Open Question
- Therese and Margaret will break down and analyze the questions; Valerie will help as she has time

### **Agenda Item # 8: Establish Process and Responsibility for Annual Ministry & Board Effectiveness Evaluations**

- Board effectiveness: Diana will compile monthly goals at the bottom of each agenda, so we can assess and see if we met those goals
- Ministry effectiveness: Compile monthly or quarterly goals for the Ministry Visioning Team and see if those were met. This can be done in partnership between staff and ExCo
- After assessment, decide whether unmet goals are still goals
- Should the results be disseminated to the congregation at large, or are they for internal Board and Ministry use only?
  - Start small/internal. We can publish wider results later on if it seems relevant
- Why not assess the OAT? Our current remit is to assess the Board and Ministry, not Operations. Also the OAT is required to report regularly to the Board.
- Actually, we could start with just the Board. MVT has only just formed, after all!
- Use the tool Therese provided (in Congregational Leadership Assessment packet) to assess the compiled goals. What percentage have we met?
- Anonymous? Would be more useful if names are attached
- Send results to Therese by June 8th at the latest

### **Agenda Item # 9: Powerful Questions: What do we think our congregation's IDENTITY is?**

- As per David Pyle's talk
- White, privileged, educated. This is an uncomfortable thing to sit with.
- External identity (what are we known for in the community?) versus internal culture (who do we think we are?)
  - External: religious education program, Recycle Sale
- Community and a way to meet spiritual needs without an imposed belief system
  - Importance of snacks, coffee hour, and hospitality teams!
- Rehashing old arguments from decades ago
- Community includes many people who stopped attending FUSIT but are still socially connected with many long-time members

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- Multiple voices, multiple opinions -- many different reasons people are part of FUSIT and many different things we want from it
- We are open and opposed to authoritarianism
- Importance of *society* versus *church*
- Difficult to summarize UUism -- correspondingly difficult to sum up FUSIT
- People feel a strong sense of ownership, that we all have a right to know everything and have a say in everything. How can we channel that into positive leadership and volunteering?

### **Agenda Item # 10: Meeting/Action Summary for Communication**

- Review Board Assessment results
- Plan orientation of new Board members
- Ministry Visioning Team appointments
- Discussion: Renew Communications Committee for another year? If so, should it remain ad hoc or should it be incorporated more officially into the organizational structure
- Spring Open Question result analysis

### **Agenda Item # 11: Closing Words**

Therese O'Connor read a selection and Walt Peck extinguished the chalice.

### **Meeting adjourned at 8:27pm.**

Minutes taken by Diana Nier, 5/18/22.

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### **Operations and Administration Team Appointments**

Pursuant to the Amended Partnership Governance Resolution adopted by the Board on April 20, 2022 which provided the description of the newly forming Operations and Administration Team, the Board of Trustees appoints Michelle Waffner (Congregation Administrator), Walt Peck (Treasurer), Rod Howe, and John Gaines to compose the Operations and Administration Team.

The enabling resolution notes staggered 2-year terms for appointees. Because the OAT 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.

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### **Vision of Ministry**

#### **Proposed Vision of Ministry 2022-23:**

*--Build and rebuild connection and community.*

*--Work toward collective liberation through justice, anti-racism, and anti-oppression.*

*--Provide opportunities for spiritual growth and faith development that inspire transformation in ourselves and the world around us.*