

**First Unitarian Society of Ithaca  
Board of Trustee Meeting Minutes  
September 21, 2022**

Don Barber (President) called the regular monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees (BoT) to order at 6:35 pm on Wednesday, September 21, 2022.

**Trustees Present:**

Don Barber (President), Valerie Graves (Clerk), Dick Kurtz, Nancy Miller, Margaret Nichols, Therse O'Connor (Vice President), Walt Peck (Treasurer)

**Trustees Absent:**

None

**FUSIT Members & Guests:**

Rev. Peaches Gillette, Michelle Waffner, Emily Richards, Fred Balfor

**Handouts:**

- [Minutes of the July Board meeting](#)
- [Minutes of the August Board Meeting](#)
- [Team and Committee Reports](#)
- [Fall BoT Goals](#)
- [Confirmation of Finance, Endowment, Stewardship Committees](#)
- [OQ results Sp & Winter 2022](#)
- [Treasurer's Report, September 2022](#)
- [Items from Treasurer's Report](#)
- [Board Policy Book Updates](#)
- [Board Committees/Partners -Chair -Liaison](#)

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

Emily Richards lit the chalice and read a selection.

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

- There were no topics discussed.

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

Don requested that the following items be removed from the consent agenda and moved to the agenda section entitled: Babies First & Potential Actions Section.

- Open Question Process
- Liaison and Chair appointment

The Treasurer's Report will be discussed several times during the meeting, as related to MVT and OAT, and Babies First. The included Fund Transfer Resolution will be addressed as a separate agenda item.

## **Agenda Item # 4: Visioning Questions**

The Board is elected by members to represent them in guiding the direction and activities of FUSIT. To that end, what venues and strategies should be employed to connect with the congregation? How often should communication happen? What is the best way to organize that communication?

### **Discussion:**

- Board members are planning to scoop ice cream at Sunday Sundae this Sunday.
- If we would like to connect with those we have not seen since before the pandemic, we could pick up the phone and call people. There were several people who were always here before and a call might be the way to check in.
- There are people who have not attended in-person, who were following along via zoom - there may be people that are connected to the church and we might not be aware. There are benefits and detriments to social media, and hybrid meetings and church functions.
- This Board has been doing a good job of communicating with the congregation in comparison with other boards and other years but there is always room for doing better. The statements during services, information in the weekly announcement, and articles in the newsletter have all been good avenues for communication. It would be good to also have a physical presence with the congregation in an informal way. In the past, the Board has had some brunches and gatherings that were informal and made board members available to the congregation with a topic put forward for discussion. At the brunches, a member would sit with one board member and talk. It would help to have some events where the Board had more physical proximity and was available to the congregation.
- Last Sunday, while walking around the parlor, several people approached me about things that were important to them, and I didn't have a notepad. There might need to be a space where congregants can leave messages for the Board.
- Members could be asked for feedback - how do you think we are doing so far? Or they could be asked what would you like to see accomplished this year? What are your top priorities?
- The open question process is a powerful one and it engaged a lot of people with Board members last year. Two-minute videos in the weekly announcement about things that are happening are also a great way to share information. We should encourage

congregants to come to the Board meeting if they have ideas, suggestions, or complaints.

- It could help to have the “Sense of the meeting” in the order of service. It might help congregants be motivated to share issues ahead of the next Board meeting and might bring people in to talk to the Board.
- The Board has been doing a great job informing the congregation, but it would be good to move toward building personal connections. Our congregation needs a foundation of trust and opportunities to really connect as people and human beings. It is easy to lose sight of the humanity of our leaders.
- There could be a quarterly meal in the annex with board members spread out at different tables to connect with people. Meals are a great way to create community.
- It would be great to reestablish the ministry communication through the newsletter, and for leaders to be present every Sunday. There could be chairs set up so that congregants can come sit together with leaders.
- Would it help to have office hours?
- Margaret used to have a lunch date available to the congregation. We can revisit those ideas as ways to spark connection again.
- Rev. Gillette - I would be happy to do that.
- Pub theology is well attended. People are looking for ways to be together.
- When in a group, conversation can get side-tracked. Stopping by the office would allow a personal conversation.
- We should be aware that holding things during the workday is hard for people with full time jobs or have young children.
- Personally I met a lot of people during classes, such as building your own theology, and voluntary simplicity. Even with a theme it was possible to get to know people. .
- Social, multigenerational events that bring families in can be fun and joyful and allow lots of interaction. Events like meals and the gingerbread house making event, and the solstice celebration have been enjoyable in the past.
- And those without children should be encouraged to show up - to give the entire congregation a chance to break bread together. Events like cookie decorating, chili lunches, and other meals together have been well attended in the past. Diners club is also starting up again.
- At a recent service we had 70 people and there are greeters again.
- The music was great, and when the choir comes back, some people will want to come to that. Maybe we need to share more about what is coming back and encourage people to join us again.
- After the service, people often congregate in clumps in the sanctuary and kept on talking. Some people do not like coffee hour because it is too overwhelming. Board members can stay in the sanctuary and wander and talk to people.
- Snacks are important to children and families - they meet that basic human need for sustenance.

- Hospitality teams also bring people together.
- Anytime you can add a personal touch, it makes a huge difference - I saw a friend who used to come and hadn't because she didn't feel connected. I invited her and she came. If we have opportunities to let people know that they are invited and that we will connect with them, that can help them feel welcome.
- It is important to talk to those who are here for the first time.
- As a greeter, if I met someone who was new, I would seek them out to engage them afterwards, that should be part of the function of greeters.
- People have said that it feels like committees, teams, and groups within the church are groups of existing friends and are hard to break into.
- Hospitality teams are a great way to meet people in an organized, flexible, yet informal way. But now we have a dishwasher, so there is less for people to do together.
- Board members need to be on hospitality teams as well.
- Rather than scheduling more events during the week, we could encourage people to come early for events before the service, like choir rehearsals or coffee and conversation. For many people it might be better to lengthen the time they are here rather than add another time to come.
- The adult religious education class - is starting up before services. But there is no childcare and no childcare coordinator yet.
- Hospitality teams have a designated greeter, but there should also be other people.
- New people often sit in the back rows, so Board members could make a point of sitting there as well. Or hospitality could ask team members to sit in the back rows to engage with new people.

After the discussion, the Board members were asked to think about the visioning question for next month. Visioning or Powerful questions are a chance for the Board to develop their own spirituality and better understand the spiritual work of the Board, and to deepen their service to the vision and mission of the church.

- What assumptions do we make or practices do we have that are exclusive as opposed to inclusive?
- What are the elements that go into a spiritually community?

Board members were reminded that if they would like to put something in the newsletter, today is the deadline. Last year, each Board member signed up for a month to write a piece for the newsletter. If interested, the deadline might be able to be extended. Rev. Gillette is also writing a piece this month.

## **Agenda Item # 5: Consent Agenda**

**Consent agenda items:**

- [Minutes of the July Board meeting](#)

- [Minutes of the August Board Meeting](#)
- [Fall BoT Goals](#)
- [Confirmation of Finance, Endowment, Stewardship Committees](#)

**Motion:** A motion was made by Don Barber and seconded by Walt Peck to approve the consent agenda.

**The motion passed.**

## **Agenda Item # 6: Funding Resolution**

A section from the Treasury Report was read requesting approval of the transfer of surplus funds to interest earning accounts.

### **Discussion:**

- There is no sense in not getting a return on investment. Some funds will be put into long term investments, others will be tied to checking accounts and continue to be fluid.
- There is no problem with earning interest, but why are we not spending the money on programs?
- More details will be discussed later in the meeting, when discussing the 5-year plan. But we need to think wisely, the church cannot spend money on continuous things if the money can not be relied upon continuously. That would cause us to run into a deficit in the future.
- It is confusing, because sometimes it seems that we do not have any money, but now we are hearing that we have extra.
- The PPP loan was forgiven and does not need to be paid back.
- The money should be invested and we should pass the resolution to invest in the church. We should be funding programs as well, but we cannot spend more than the congregation has approved in the budget without going back to the congregation.
- Were there stipulations with the PPP loan, that it had to go to salary concerns?
- Jennifer Streid-Mullen worked on the loan and can answer any questions we might have.
- Whenever it was decided that the loan was forgiven, at that point the stipulations went away. Now the loan is unrestricted.

**Motion:** A motion was made by Don and seconded by Walt to approve the funding resolution.

**The motion passed.**

## **Agenda Item # 7 Monitoring Function - Committee and team reports**

There were 16 reports submitted from teams and committees for Board members to read over as part of their monitoring function. Some reports were highlighted:

- Thank you to NomComm for suggesting leaders for open positions. If any team or committee is looking for volunteers, as some stated in their reports, they should contact NomComm for ideas.
- The first Library Team report was submitted.
- The Communications Committee is blending the new policy with what already existed.
- Govco spent some time to organize policies.
- There is new energy for the care team, more people are needed.
- Area Congregations Together (ACT) is having a fundraiser this coming Sunday at Ford Hall.
- Most congregations donate \$125 to ACT - the donation doesn't require a board resolution.

Action item:

Walt Peck will ensure the donation is made.

- The Administration report was thorough - we are all so grateful for Michelle Waffner's work.
- In the P&L statement, There was a large over expenditure for legal work to establish the relationship with the congregational life team, and ensure offer letters were compliant with HR law. Thanks to the legal counsel the letters can be templates for use in the future.

**Discussion:**

- Many of the reports have no names and no dates, so there is no way of knowing who wrote them - these are historical records and should include names and dates.

Action Item:

Nancy Miller has gently reminded each person writing reports and will continue to do so over the next couple of months.

- In an effort to be more efficient could include the creation of a template.
- Ministry will be working on it.
- There are many unexplained acronyms that need to be clarified.
- Documents about report writing were sent out, but there was no change.

## Agenda Item # 8: Treasurer Report

The Treasurer Report was reviewed:

1. Nathan Fawsett is not doing well, he broke his shoulder. He was organizing plate collection, but the Board will need to set up a schedule of people to be the plate collection counters and to put the money in the bank.
2. The FUSIT computers are outdated and there is some money in the budget to invest in new computers, which will be selected with Michelle Waffner and Walt Peck's help.
3. Regarding the 4-5 year financial plan, not much can be done until the finance team has more information about the following topics:
  - Plans for outreach and growth of the church.
  - Plans for the Ministry in the coming years.
  - How hiring issues will be addressed.

### Discussion:

- The Board will need to work on answers in the next couple of months. Right now we need to clarify what information we need to make educated decisions.

An Adhoc Committee was formed to discuss the timeline and vision for the future and to formulate a proposal.

### Discussion:

- OAT is supposed to evaluate people at 3 months, 6 months, and 9 months. That process is not yet set up. The timeline will help that process.
- The committee will help determine what the Board needs to know and when it needs to know that information.
- Should the whole Board be involved? It is not that big of a board.
- The response to finance should be from the whole board.
- OAT cannot advise deficit spending for an outreach coordinator, but if this committee feels it is important it could be done.
- Is it appropriate for staff to be on this committee?
- The Board will need information from Stewardship, the staff, MVT, Finance, and OAT.

The Adhoc Committee includes Walt Peck (Treasurer, OAT), Emily Richard (Staff), Dick Kurtz (Personnel, Board), Margaret Nichols (Board, Stewardship - will join if available). The charge will be presented to the Board next month.

There will still need to have representatives from Stewardship and MVT. Rev. Peaches Gillette is available for support and reference.

Action item:

Don Barber will talk to the Stewardship Team about membership in the committee.

Action Item:

Walt Peck will call the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee.

## **Agenda Item # 9: Babies First and Other Possible Actions to Support New Organizational Structure**

Babies First accepts donations of new and used baby supplies and distributes them to anyone who asks. It is a very well known program and has existed for years. The Christmas Eve service at Sage Chapel was the biggest fundraiser for Babies First and that has not taken place for a couple years. Last year, the congregation was asked to donate to Babies First as part of a special appeal and the program did get enough funding, but with no promise of a big holiday service, are there other funding ideas for this important program?

### **Discussion:**

- There are no services listed on Christmas Eve for some of the larger local churches. Maybe their buildings could be rented?
- They will have services.
- It is not clear whether we can use Sage Chapel. A couple years ago, they said No, but the staff keeps changing.
- Are we taking advantage of all contacts with Cornell?  
Response: Yes, we are exploring all avenues.
- Why did they kick us out?  
Response: The use policy changed and excluded us from using that space.
- There are bake sales, but they are not large money earning events.
- A special appeal can be made to the congregation again, but we do not want to be asking too much.
- The Christmas Eve service is too big for our space. Some years we hosted up to 1000 people.

There could be an appeal for Babies First in November, if we are reasonably confident that there will not be a service as Sage Chapel.

Action Item:

Walt Peck and Emily Richards will connect by October 24th with clarification of Christmas Eve plans and the special appeal can happen in November if the large Sage Chapel service cannot



happen.

Regarding Memorial services, Those involved in planning would like guidance about the costs for memorial services. It is uncomfortable for Rev. Janet Shortall not to know if we are charging for the service. The current policies are complicated and in conflict with each other and what constitutes as a member is unclear.

**Discussion:**

- This was also brought up in GovCo and it is clear this is a Board issue that cannot be passed off to a team. Rather than attempting to resolve this tonight, a plan needs to be established to gather information and deliberate on the issue. The documents that need to be reviewed are known - who would be involved in looking over the policies and bringing clarity, consistency, and vision for how we want to engage with our community.
- Whatever decision is made it will need to be shared with the community. If members need to sign the guest book, they will want to know ahead of time!
- The Engagement and Outreach Coordinator needs to know all the membership benefits.
- This came up recently with people who had died and it was left to the administrator to decide the benefits.
- The Care team should be available to consult with Michelle Waffner and will discuss this at their meeting next week.

A Memorial Service Policy Committee was formed. The members include Rev. Janet Shortall, Rev. Peaches Gillette, Michelle Waffner, one of the reception coordinators, and a member of the care team. The charge will be presented to the Board next month.

## **Agenda Item # 10: MVT and OAT Reports**

There were certain roles that were given to OAT that the members believe are not within their purview, specifically, the communication issues related to social media and the Listserv.

**Discussion:**

- The Communications Committee will look at this and decide.
- The Database should be open. If this doesn't fall to OAT, it should fall to MVT.
- The guide rails are the responsibility of the communication committee, but MVT feels that the guardrails are there.
- The question is who finds a monitor for the Listserv, and who deals with issues that arise? This should fall to MVT.
- The Communications Committee should think about it and maybe they will still want to assign this to OAT.
- The Healthy Congregations Team could also assist.
- Then it could be handed to them as well.

Action Item:

The Communication Committee will review the social media responsibilities and the Listserv moderator position and decide where the responsibility falls.

## **Agenda Item # 11: Resolutions of Committee Appointments**

**Motion:** A motion was made by Don Barber and seconded by Nancy Miller to approve the committee appointments

**The motion passed.**

## **Agenda Item # 12: Board Policy Book Updates**

There were additional OAT questions that were discussed by GovCo and included in their report. Any additional comments on the Board Policy Book can be made in the document draft. The Board Policy Book was not reviewed during the meeting.

## **Agenda Item # 13: Open Question Process**

The results of last year's Open Question process were placed in the discussion folder. The vision of ministry is on the Board agenda for every meeting. The Open Question for this fall will need to be developed. A person from MVT will be needed to work with Therese O'Connor on the open question for the fall.

Once the question is determined, Therese will follow the framework set up by John Gaines last year and will send the question out to Small Group Ministries, Teams and Committees, and will put the Open Question in the weekly announce.

The formulation of the Open Question is on the agenda for MVT this coming week and everyone is welcome to contact Therese with ideas for the fall Open Question. Trustees can use the Slack channel to share ideas. Congregants can send emails to the Board with ideas. Therese will compile the data and Valerie Graves will write up the summary.

### **Discussion:**

- During this process, it is important to look at the answers from last year and notice how many of them focused on spiritual development.

## **Agenda Item # 14: Communication**

Nancy volunteered to write a piece for the newsletter for October. Walt agreed to write about Babies First in November. Members were reminded that the piece should be fewer than 200 words and that they are due on the 3rd Wednesday of each month.

Action Item:

Don Barber will send out a sign up sheet for each Board member to use to sign up to write a piece for the Newsletter.

There is a Congregational Conversation on Thursday the 29th at 7pm. It was included in the weekly announcement as a way to inform the congregation about the new organizational structure.

## **Agenda Item # 15: Closing Words**

The closing words were read by Emily Richards.

## **Meeting adjourned at 8:26pm.**

Minutes taken by Valerie Graves, 9/21/2022.

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## Resolutions and Handouts:

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### Fall BoT Goals

In collaboration with MVT, develop fall open question

In collaboration with MVT and OAT and Congregational life staff, develop an organizational statement

Support the finance committee with the development of a 5-year strategic plan.

Try to discern FUSITs purpose – identify a process and begin working on it

Board will open its meetings with a powerful question.

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### Items from Treasurer's Report

#### Resolution

Resolved, Due to the PPP loan (\$60,000), the cash balance at Tompkins Community is substantial. The Finance Committee proposes to the Board that this money be transferred to the Endowment books as a source of funds for future operating needs of the church (e.g., ministerial search expenses).

Further, this money will be supplemented on an annual basis with endowment funds designated in the budget to be transferred to support the operating fund should they not be requested by the treasurer during the fiscal year. In recent years and this year, the budgeted transfer of funds has amounted to \$14,000 per year. Note, this transfer has not been requested in many recent years. Given the Board's approval, Rich, Patrick, and Walt will arrange for this transfer.

Further in recognition of the desire to accrue returns on this cash, Finance Committee requests the Board's approval to research and place these funds in interest bearing liquid vehicles for

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short-term investment.

### **Notices**

Plate Count: As stated in BPB, Trustees are expected to participate in Plate Count with members of Finance Committee

OAT has recommended and Finance has concurred a new policy of purchasing computers for staff. Estimated amount is \$4000. This expense will occur within the congregation approved budget, therefore coming from other lines in the budget. (See OAT report for more details)

### **Board Discussion**

FC will work to develop a 5-year financial plan. To frame their thinking, they are asking 3 questions of the Board.:

1. What plans will the Board pursue to 'grow' the church? Such possibilities may include engaging a marketing consultant, hiring a Membership Coordinator, or expanding programming aimed at the wider community.
2. What is the Board's timeline for making decisions regarding the future of the church's ministry, and all the financial implications of such a move?
3. Hiring of already-budgeted and much-needed staff members is moving slowly, due to the challenging job market and by the quite understandable concern that positions only be offered to truly excellent candidates. How will the Board approach additional financial demands that the hiring of such persons may entail?

What process do we want to use to develop answers and who do we want to bring into the process?

Babies First: discuss process to gather ideas for funding

Memorial Services: GovCo has discussed, within the Adapted PG structure that this decision is, in their opinion, a Board function. Discuss process to discern overarching policy and then operations sections like fee amounts, etc.

OAT & Database Communication Policy- OAT is asking Board to reassign responsibilities- discuss process to discern whose role this is

**Finance Committee Resolution:**

The FUSIT Board of Trustees hereby confirms Walt Peck, Jens Wennberg, James Skaley, Rich Dolge, Patrick Jordan, Elton Hall, and Nathan Fawcett, as chair compose the Finance Committee.

**Endowment Committee Resolution:**

The FUSIT Board of Trustees hereby confirms Nathan Fawcett, Jim Skaley, Pat Jordan (treasurer), and Rich Dolge (chair) compose the Endowment Committee

**Stewardship Committee Resolution:**

The FUSIT Board of Trustees hereby confirms Jens Wenneberg, Jack Roscoe, Jeanette Knapp, Margaret Nichols (Board rep), Wendy Schaerer, Rich Andrulis, and Matt Hare, chair compose the Stewardship Committee

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**Open Question Results from Winter and Spring 2022**

<b>NOTE:</b> This question was complex with several parts. While there were 44 persons responding, there are 60 response "types" coded as best I could. I think speaks to responses as well as possible.	
Code	
<b>CODE KEY Spring 2022</b>	<b>Totals</b>
Communication improvement specifics: suggestion box; sermons, small group discussions, post-it notes	9
Personal anti-racism work, awareness and interaction	19
Collaborate with other community groups and congregations	10
Work for awareness, inclusion, and action within the FUSIT congregation.	18
Political action of some type	1

Call out microaggressions or call into covenant	3
	60
<b>CODE KEY Winter 2022</b>	<b>Totals</b>
Spiritual growth, learning, wholeness of individuals	21
Move from individualism to community; provide community	6
Transforming world/bring change to a larger community	18
Improve or foster community within	21
Social justice focus	10
A spritual home; internal focus	8
Spiritual exploration, environmental issues, diversity, comfort, etc.	1
Anti-racism; anti-oppression focus	1
misc	6
	92

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## Notes from Governance Committee meeting 091822

D. Barber

GovCo amendments to Draft Adapted BPB

Section 1.2.4 The section describing the Treasurer's duties: "and therefore plays no direct role in financial management ." Has been removed

Section 1.3 Board Committees has been changed from: Committees exist to help the board to govern and not for administration or program management or to make decisions on the board's behalf. (To manage programs, finances, and operations, the

Society uses Ministry Teams *which are coordinated and overseen by the Ministry Visioning Team.*) The standing board committees are:

to: "Committees exist to help the board to govern and/or make decisions on the board's behalf. (To manage programs, and operations, the Society uses Ministry Teams *which are coordinated and overseen by the Ministry Visioning Team.*) The standing board committees are:

Section 2.1.1 and beyond the suggestion was made to call MVT and OAT Leadership partnering Teams or some other phrase from "Ministry Partnering Teams" GovCo suggests that Ministry Partnering Teams is the proper terminology and could use an acronym (MPT) for rest of the document

Section 3.4.2 add Finance to list of collaborators in recommending Compensation and Benefit Changes

Section 3.4.3 Removed the word Policy in Personnel Manual title

Section 3.4.3.3 Grievances was not changed. This grievance section is only about a law or board policy that has been violated. The language in the Personnel Manual is mute on this specific topic.

Section 3.5 Care for Members, Friends, and Guests: Ministry Teams was added to this section

Section 3.5.9 and 3.5.9.1 are not recommended to remain in this document as this policy as written speaks to other groups than just Trustees. This policy should be place in with other congregation related policies

3.6.1.3 OAT was removed from representing the Budget and The Budget Team" was inserted

Section 3.6.2.4 and 3.6.2.5 In both sections OAT was removed, and "Treasurer" inserted. At the retreat there was discussion of the Finance Committee being added. GovCO thought the Treasurer would ask Finance for advice, but Finance plays no direct role in these decisions



On a related topic, GovCo discussed the Building Use Policy. While, the Board can call on its committees and Ministry Partnering Teams to provide counsel, the decision here belongs to the Board.

Based on feedback from the Board on these items, GovCo will work on incorporating these topics and other suggestions, which were mostly alternate language, into a clean document for Board consideration/discussion.

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<b><u>Board Committees/Partners</u></b>	<b><u>Chair</u></b>	<b><u>Liaison</u></b>
Finance	Nathan Fawcett	Walt Peck
Endowment	Rich Dolge	Walt Peck
Stewardship	Matt Hare	Margaret Nichols
Personnel	Jenna Rosenberg	Dick Kurtz
Governance	Laura Free	Don Barber
Communication Policy	Margaret Nichols	Margaret Nichols
Ministry Visioning Team		Nancy Miller
Operations and Administration Team		Walt Peck
Nominations Committee	Fred B. & Therese O. will discuss this.	
Open Questions Lead	Nancy Miller (MVT)	Therese O'Connor
Voice for the Board on email response		Therese O'Connor

Prepared by D. Barber 9/19/22