

**First Unitarian Society of Ithaca  
Board of Trustee Meeting Minutes  
October 26, 2022**

Don Barber called the regular monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees (BoT) to order at 6:33 pm on Wednesday, October 26th, 2022.

**Trustees Present:**

Don Barber (President), Valerie Graves (Clerk), Dick Kurtz, Nancy Miller, Margaret Nichols, Walt Peck (Treasurer)

**Trustees Absent:**

Therese O'Connor

**FUSIT Members & Guests:**

Hans Fleishmann, Emily Richards, Michelle Waffner

**Handouts:**

- [Draft Board Meeting Minutes, September 21, 2022](#)
- [Treasurer's Report](#)
- [Team and Committee Reports](#)
- [Committee Appointments](#)
- [Memorial Service Policy Ad Hoc Committee Resolution](#)
- [Draft of Engagement and Outreach Coordinator Resolution](#)
- [Ad Hoc Finance Visioning Committee Resolution](#)
- [Fall Open Question Proposal and Process](#)
- [Adapted Board Policy Book](#)

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

Walt Peck lit the chalice and read a selection.

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

Nothing was brought up from members of the congregation.

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

The following changes were made to the agenda:

- Board approval of the appointment for Choir Director was added as a discussion item during the Team and Committee reports.
- Funding for Babies First was added as a discussion item as part of the consent agenda.
- The need for a second Board meeting in November to discuss options for ministry for the next church year was added as a discussion item during the Process to Address Questions from Finance agenda item

## Agenda Item #4: Visioning Question

What elements define a spiritual community?

### Discussion:

A spiritual community:

- Is defined by experiences beyond ego, space, and time and a sense of selflessness. A spiritual community takes others' concerns seriously, even more than our own.
- Includes a sense of belief that there is something greater than ourselves.
- Offers acceptance of each other and encouragement of growth, so that individuals can share their spiritual journeys openly without fear.
- To be considered a UU organization - must only keep track of members, hold one annual meeting, and must hold worship - a collective spiritual practice. Which is what makes us different from other service organizations. We are coming together to define types of spiritual practice together.
- Focuses on something greater than ourselves. The community is a group in which we can, and must, give as we can and take as we need of each other.
- Is a place where we look at the mysteries of life and our existence, and ask who we are, why we are here, what we are meant to do in this work, and how we are meant to be with one another in this world. It can manifest in worship, practices, and in how we are together - how we treat one another.
- Offers a time to pause and step away from busy lives to see how to be of greater benefit to the world.
- It is a place where individuals can be more in touch with themselves, more at peace, and can focus on bigger questions.
- Is a place where people feel safe. It enables them to set aside burdens and focus on larger issues.
- Needs to have an agreed upon set of values to create a container in which people can be vulnerable.
- Is sacred - but what is sacred? Why is it sacred? What does that mean? And how does that change how we live our lives?

### Other Comments:

- Everything is sacred - even helping the kids get their cereal in the morning.

- There are many philosophical farmers - The farmer gets up to do chores and enters his cathedral and sacred space.

The Board was encouraged to think about a question to ponder for next month and agreed to focus on the fall Open Question.

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

### **Consent agenda items:**

- Board Meeting Minutes from September, 21, 2022
- Treasurer's Report
- Committee Appointments
- Babies First

### **Discussion:**

- The Board needs to annually state members of the personnel committee - so those names are included in appointments.

### **Topic: Babies First:**

The Board was informed that the Christmas Eve service is not confirmed and cannot be counted on for funding Babies First. In the past the service provided \$2,000-3,000 in funding. Options were discussed, including a special appeal starting November 7th encouraging the congregation to share their love over the holidays with a contribution to Babies First.

The option of a shared plate was also discussed. It was suggested that Ministry Visioning Team (MVT) take over assigning of organizations to receive the shared plate because the Social Justice Counsel (SJC) does not currently have a leader. The amount gathered from the shared plate is not substantial enough to cover the funding needed for Babies First and concerns were raised about a shared plate for Babies First causing people to donate smaller amounts than they would with a special appeal. If shared plates for Babies First are done, they could be done at both the pageant service and Christmas eve service, at the end of the special appeal.

Another option was to have a tree in the entryway, with ideas of Babies First donations other than car seats, which Babies First can buy at a good price.

**Action Item:** Emily Richards and Walk Peck will make time to announce fundraising and donation options for Babies First in an upcoming service.

**Motion:** A motion was made by Dick Kurtz and seconded by Margaret Nichols to approve the consent agenda with the inclusion of fundraising for Babies First, allowing the organization to

decide on specifics.

**The motion passed.**

## **Agenda Item # 6: Team and Committee Reports**

### **Discussion Topic - Safety:**

- The building was unlocked when the first Board member arrived, but all lights were off.
- Rachel Seymour, sexton, is currently on vacation.
- The Operations and Administrative Team (OAT) is working with the Safety Team and looking at automatic locks. Safety is a priority for Finance as well.
- The Safety Team needs to know where the money will come from.
- The priority is getting things done to make the community safer, then we can figure out how to pay for it.

### **Other Highlights from the Team and Committee Reports:**

- There is a **Ministry team fair on November 6th** after the service to encourage volunteers. Ice Cream will be served.
- Sue Roenke, Marie McRae, and Fred Conner will be the moderators for the **Listserv on Breeze**. The old listserve will be deleted and members will have to fill out a form and agree to the new digital communication guidelines to enroll in the new listserv.
- In the **hospitality committee report**, it stated that job descriptions would be sent to the congregation life team to be reviewed or redone, but it seems like they should be written by the hospitality committee and then be sent to MVT for review. The Board agreed

**Action item:** Nancy Miller will communicate the change to Fred Balfor.

- **Alley Ownership:** The deed was reviewed and it was clarified that FUSIT does not own the alley next to the annex and neither does Mazza and Mazza. Fusit is paying Rachel Seymour, Sexton, to clear the snow. The alley is owned by the owners of the building on the corner of Tioga and Buffalo. Mazza and Mazza has “access by use” over many years. The law offices are real estate law offices so they are likely to understand their rights. The owners of the alley do not care about its use. Stepping Stones uses the alley to access play space and there is a parking space there for tenants in the offices. There has been no incident, but the effort is to clarify the rights and responsibilities for the space.

**Action item:** Don Barber will talk to Mazza and Mazza about alley use and snow removal.

- **The shared plate** is a ministry function so the Board does not need to be involved, but was asked about whether there were objections to having MVT take over the shared

plate assignments until the SJC group is stabilized. The SJC has done an amazing job finding organizations that need our support.

**Action Item:** MVT members will meet with the SJC to let them know about the shared plate.

- OAT recommends that the Board hire Jayne Demakos as the new **Choir Director**. Several Board members were familiar with her as a harpist and with her experience as a conductor. She would start January 1st, at \$40 an hour because of her extensive experience. The number of weeks she will work was reduced to keep the position within the current budget.

**Motion:** A motion was made by Don Barber and seconded by Dick Kurtz to hire Jayne Demakos as Choir Director.

**The motion passed.**

- Stephanie Ortolano is working on a **concert series**, and OAT and MVT accepted the suggestion to waive the costs for using the space so that the concert series is a church undertaking. The concerts will be an offer to the community. Lauren (last name?) will be booking musicians from all over the country. When there are concerts happening at bigger cities in the area, musicians can stop in Ithaca between other shows.
- The **communication between MVT and OAT** needs to be discussed. The process needs to be clarified. OAT is agile, small, and Michelle is on top of things, and needs to be able to quickly get approval from MVT when a change is requested that requires their approval or insight.

**Action Item:** Walt Peck and Nancy Miller will work on a process for getting MVT approval for items that come up to OAT.

## **Agenda Item #7: Building Use Policy**

**Motion:** A motion was made by Don and seconded by Nancy to approve the memorial service Ad Hoc Committee resolution.

**Discussion:**

- Board has a role and this committee will provide the information.
- There have been issues with long term members or active members of the church and whether they would have to pay for the space and services. There needs to be a clear policy for Michelle and Janet. The group that was listed in the resolution is planning to meet next week. It seems that there is still confusion - we are not asking them to come up with a policy, but instead to gather information about the issues involved.

**Action Item:** Nancy Miller can talk to Nancy Dolge before the meeting to clarify the work of the ad hoc committee.

The motion passed.

## **Agenda Item #8: Engagement & Outreach Resolution**

The job description and proposal for the hiring of an Engagement and Outreach Coordinator were shared with the Board, by MVT.

### **Discussion:**

- An Engagement and Outreach (E&O) Coordinator is currently not within our budget.
- MVT met last Friday and felt that this position could be a 10-15 hr/week job as opposed to part time. If funding could be moved for those hours for the position, the position could be moved into the budget for the following year. The proposal outlines why this is important - it will help with getting new people through the door and engaging those we have that are not active currently. The E&O coordinator organizes some activities, like the Ithaca Festival that reach the community. All the teams are begging for new members - so this function is too important to leave unfulfilled.
- The funding will need to be found somewhere. If cannot be pulled from what was already budgeted will need to be brought to the congregation to adjust the budget. We would prefer not to do that.
- I think the idea is to find ways to fit into this year's budget without going back to the congregation - that can likely be done, but in the future, MVT will need to go to the congregation and share the importance of that role so it can be included in future budgets. This is part of the bigger picture of what we are doing for longer term financial planning.
- The success of the position in the past has been because of hiring the right person.
- Having been on two teams that recently hired people - it isn't going to be quick - and will probably take two months for the search even if the funding is approved soon, before we can find someone good to do this job.
- Regarding the approval, if the funds are available in the current budget, the Board is not involved, other than with the final hiring of the person. This can be decided by MVT if the funds can be found within the current budget.
- MVT has to give Finance a number - the amount that is needed, then a search can take place
- Closer to \$8,000 for less hours, for the rest of the year.

**Action Item:** MVT will bring Finance a dollar amount for the position.

- The goals listed on the second page are more for a director's role. MVT should think about language to better fit a ¼ time position.

**Action Item:** Don Barber will send Nancy Miller suggestions for the job description.

- The E&O coordinator needs to be an advocate for us - has to understand us to go out and do this. That will not be a quick process.
- Beth Pallace was one of the best E&O coordinators we have had. She has been talking to us to help us clarify the qualities we are looking for.
- These discussions are fine tuning how MVT and OAT are working together - that has been elusive so far.
- Maybe someone internal to FUSIT will be interested in being the E&O Coordinator.
- It hasn't worked out that way for the childcare coordinator search.
- The person will need to have a genuinely warm and welcoming demeanor. It should be someone who will reach out and make a personal connection.

## **Agenda Item #9: Process to Answer Finance Committee Questions**

A group of people were identified last month to form an Ad Hoc committee to work on gathering information to help the Board answer the questions from Finance related to the future plans for FUSIT. A meeting has not yet been called. The people who were asked gave the feedback that rather than forming another committee, this should be taken on as a Board project. There are three questions and we need to identify the information we need to answer the questions.

One question is related to our plans for ministry or a minister search for next year. It was suggested that we start out by talking to Keith Kron to see if the story is any different from the year prior. That will help clarify whether a minister search is possible or whether it is more likely to be several years out - which would give more flexibility to spend funds on the ministry talent.

### **Discussion:**

- What does the community think about this? Some folks are eager to get a full time minister - is that just the most vocal people?
- The Board asked the congregation last year what qualities they wanted in a minister and then the Board held discussion with Keith Kron. The meeting to discuss these questions would be in two weeks, which is not enough time to get information front he congregation again.
- Finance would like the Board to weigh in on these questions - What is the long run game plan, and what is the schedule for making these decisions? What is the best way to use the money we have? None of these questions require specialized information.
- Are we having a meeting in two weeks?

The Board agreed to hold a special meeting on November 9th for just the Board as a committee as a whole with no guests. It can be hybrid with people joining remotely. Valerie Graves offered to take notes, but they will not be official meeting minutes.

**Action Item:** Don Barber will gather information from Keith Kron before the meeting on the 9th.

- It is too early to ask the congregation how things are going so far with our current ministry arrangement.
- We will need to make a decision for next year before we know if this is going to work..
- One year might not be enough time to test out the new format.
- If we were to look for an interim minister - when do we need to start that search?  
Response: March.
- The goal is to at least have a timeline for when the Board will have to make key decisions.
- It seems too soon to be deciding whether the current arrangement works. It is just a great arrangement. I wouldn't feel comfortable looking for a settled or interim minister after we spent all this time coming up with a plan.
- We need to have in mind a process and a timeline - not necessarily to make the decisions.
- Having done financial projections - we have to say we are planning to stay with this arrangement and keep going for another year. We will only change direction when we decide we need to.
- A five-year plan is fraught with change, but if we do work to make sure we have finances in place to be able to make decisions And eventually do a settled minister search - right now we cannot afford it.
- We have a huge physical plant here that sits empty and there are needs in the community for space.
- We could work with refugee organizations.

**Action Item:** Walt Peck will talk to Michelle Waffner to gather information about attendance and plate and pledge amounts.

- The trends over several years are valuable too.
- We are still in the early stages of a transition after the pandemic.
- We have held Religious Exploration (RE) for children twice in 3 years - it is a hard time to look at trends and numbers.

## **Agenda Item #10: Fall Open Question Process**

**Discussion:**

- That is a great open question.



- Is 2-3 weeks enough time to gather answers? We should continue into early December.
- There will be Fall and Winter Open Questions this year.

The proposal was changed to increase the time for the answers to the open question to be received and compiled from 2-3 weeks to through early December.

**Motion:** A motion was made by Valerie Graves and seconded by Walt Peck to approve the proposed Open Question and process.

**The motion passed.**

## **Agenda Item # 11: GovCo - Updated Board Policy Book**

GovCo has reviewed all the Board Policy Book (BPB) suggestions from the Board retreat and the suggestions gathered in the comments on the document during the month after the retreat. The new language is in the document. The Board, MVT, and OAT should look this over again and provide any feedback. Should this be discussed again as a group or is looking it over enough? The updated BPB will be on the agenda for next month's meeting.

**Action Item:** The Board, MVT and OAT will all review the adapted BPB.

[Adapted Board Policy Book](#)

### **Discussion:**

- The issue of hiring non-senior staff was resolved. The Board will do the final approval of any new hiring, which will be helpful if there is an issue with a staff member in the future.

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

The closing words were read by Emily Richards.

## **Meeting adjourned at 0:00pm.**

Minutes taken by Valerie Graves, 10/26/2022.

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## **Resolutions and handouts:**

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Treasurer's Report

October 2022

Walt Peck

We have plans, approved by the Board, to set up an account for the money from last year's operating budget through which this money can earn financial return. This money amounts to about \$60,000 that, in one sense, is from the PPP money received after the Covid outbreak and, in another sense, was the result of not paying for a minister for the rest of the fiscal year once Tony Johnson resigned. The plan is that this money will remain in the purview of the operating accounts, but be invested through the endowment books. That process is in progress.

The big question, of course, is what to do with this money in ways that may benefit the church. In other words, how do we invest it? Possibilities are numerous and need to be considered thoughtfully by the Board. Of course, there is no reason that all of it must be used in the same way or at the same time. What we do need to do, of course, is think hard about what the church needs to do to thrive in the long run and then act in that light.

Possibilities include (but will not be commented upon by me here):

- 1) Hire a Membership and Outreach Coordinator.
- 2) Use it at some unspecified point in the future for ministerial search and settlement expenses.
- 3) Save it for the day when some of our bigger donors are no longer able to provide their generous funding.

It will be good to talk!

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The Board of Trustees hereby recognizes that John Gaines and Elton Hall have resigned from the Governance Committee and further appoint Dick Kurtz to the Governance Committee.

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The Board of Trustees appoints these members to the 2022-2023 Personnel Committee: Carolyn Emerick, Susan Murphy, John Gaines, and Jenna Rosenberg. Further Dick Kurtz will serve as Board liaison to the Personnel Committee.

Submitted by D. Barber 10/24/22

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Memorial Service Policy Ad Hoc Committee Resolution

Whereas, FUSIT currently has a Building Use Policy which includes instructions and fee schedule for Memorial Service as well as Pastoral Care contract with Rev Janet Shortall which are not in synchronization with each other, and

Whereas, the language surrounding who is eligible for what fee of the Building Use Policy needs clarification to provide guidance for ministers and staff when applying the Building Use policy,

Now Therefore be it resolved that the Board recognizes a need to review and make consistent our operations policies related to Memorial Services and its responsibility to create that consistent policy which is in keeping with our UU Principles, and

Be it Further resolved that the Board desires to become knowledgeable of the processes and decisions currently being utilized when FUSIT is contacted by a family regarding a desire for a memorial service so that the Board can update memorial and building use policies with best available information, and

Be it Further resolved the Board hereby creates a Memorial Service Advisory Committee to document current policies and practices used when FUSIT is approached regarding a memorial service and bring forward any suggestions to improve the current process or items needing clarification with our current Memorial Service Policies, and

Be it further resolved that the members of the Memorial Service Policy Ad Hoc Committee are: Rev Janet Shortall, Rev Peaches Gillette, Administrator Michelle Waffner, Memorial Reception Coordinator Nancy Dolge

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## **Fund and Hire an Engagement & Outreach Coordinator**

### **Why FUSIT should hire an Engagement & Outreach (E&O) Coordinator -**

MVT requests that the Board approve the hiring and funding for a half time Engagement and Outreach Coordinator. With the congregation and its various programs still recovering from the effects of the COVID pandemic, an E&O coordinator is needed to promote the church to new and more diverse community members; to provide welcoming and orientation to those who seek a liberal church supporting 'the free and responsible search for truth and meaning; and to find meaningful ways for both old and new members to become engaged and fulfilled through service both to the church community and the greater Ithaca community.

As of May 2022 the E&O team disbanded. While joAnn Kowalski, MVT member, has organized people for the Welcome table so far this church year, the other E&O tasks have gone unmet. We think an E&O Coordinator is vital to organizing and carrying out all the tasks rather than trying to engage volunteers. For all of the teams volunteer recruitment has been a challenge. We have new people coming through our door every Sunday. Reconstituting a smooth and timely process of welcoming these folks is critical for us to be the welcoming Church we want to be.

Here is a place where a creative, consistent person in a paid position can really serve us well.

Comments from joAnn from her perspective of having served on E&O when Beth Pallace held that job:

*“Volunteers are a wonderful way to welcome visitors and provide initial information. Where I see this approach lacking is with follow through. Once the member interest cards leave the table and make their way to Michelle's office, the initial email is sent and that's basically the end of that thread. And realistically, Michelle has far too many responsibilities to even add this to her list.*

*Discovering a new member's interests and passions, encouraging them to engage, and forming relationships are lost opportunities. And this is only one function of this position.*

FUSIT needs to grow and we have the possibility to create community because of what we represent to so many, including young people who are our future.”

**Dimensions of the job – see the job description in 10/19 Discussion folder**

### **Hiring process**

1. Finalize the job description. (does this need to be run by Personnel?)
2. Work with OAT and Personnel to establish a salary (range ?)
3. The Treasurer and Finance Committee establish the funding for this position.
4. An interviewing team is formed consisting of ? one MVT member, one CLT member, Congregational administrator or assistant?
5. Advertise the position internally and through non-profit channels and in the community.
6. Interview and decide on a candidate.

**Qualities of the candidate – (also see job description for elaboration)**

Demonstrates understanding and full support of the Unitarian Universalist

mission, vision, values, history and beliefs of the congregation;  
Communicates a sense of availability, warmth, openness and approachability.  
Relates well to all kinds of people, and finds special joy in relating to children and youth;  
Has good communication skills  
Uses time effectively and efficiently; values time and respects the time of others;  
An ability to recruit, support, and develop volunteers  
Organizes the work, sets appropriate personal work objectives, identifies personal gaps in knowledge, understanding and skill and seeks to fill those gaps appropriately.

## Goals

To provide a consistent welcoming response to newcomers with follow-up contact  
To re-establish a NICE program as a pathway to membership  
To recruit and motivate volunteers for teams, committees, and other FUSIT activities.  
To have broader social media presence both within FUSIT and in Ithaca  
To organize events that engage the greater Ithaca Community such as Sundaes Sunday & the Ithaca Festival.  
To be a central person for members, prospective members, and friends to contact about ways to be engaged in FUSIT.  
To support the Ministry Visioning Team our work of implementing the Vision of Ministry – specifically “-Build and rebuild connection and community”.

**Relative merits of this use of the money vis-a-vis other uses.** MVT at this moment thinks that using money for this position would be an excellent use of money at this particular time. Right now it seems like there are too many threads for a team of volunteers to embrace and do as effective a job as A dedicated paid coordinator could more quickly and effectively pull the E&O tasks together than a group of volunteers.

One question, of course is where the money can come from to fund this position. Unless the funds can be found within the total amount of the budget voted on last May at the Annual meeting, the process gets more complex. The Board would have to call a meeting of the congregation to increase the total budget amount. This issue has been put out to the treasurer and Finance Committee.

**What has contributed to previous success or lack thereof in previous attempts to fill this position with a paid person?** Hiring the right person has been critical to the success in previous attempts to fill this position with a paid person. The group interviewing needs to be very aware of the personality and energy put out by applicants. The main qualities that have successful have been the person’s ability to easily connect with people, to follow through with the welcoming process and all parts of their work, and to work well with other staff. Those that have not had these qualities have not worked out.

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Ad Hoc Finance Visioning Committee Resolution

Whereas, Article IX Section 2.2.d state: the Finance Committee shall prepare and maintain an updated five year strategic financial plan to be reviewed annually by the Board, and

Whereas, the Finance Committee has agreed to take on developing a 5-year Financial Plan, and

Whereas, in preparation for that work they have asked the Board to answer these questions: Finance Questions are:

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?

Whereas, the Board would like to create a special ad hoc committee to develop to ponder these questions, clarify what information is needed, and to present their recommended responses within the next couple of months,

Now therefore be it resolved that the Board creates the Ad Hoc Finance Visioning Committee whose task is to develop to ponder these questions, clarify what information is needed, and to present their recommended responses within the next couple of months, and whose members are: Treasurer Walt Peck, Staff Rep Emily Richards, Personnel Committee Rep Dick Kurtz, Trustee Margaret Nichols, MVT Rep Don Rakow, and Stewardship Committee Rep

## **Fall Open Question Proposal and Process**

*Submitted by Valerie Graves*

*October 17, 2022*

The following Open Question is proposed for the fall:

*What would make FUSIT more relevant to your life or the lives of those in your community?*

There are other alternative questions offered by the Board and by MVT. The proposal is to start with this simple question and clarify the questions regarding, offerings here at the church, inclusivity, and spirituality for the Winter/Spring Open Question.

Proposed process for disseminating the Open Question:

1. Share the Open Question with the Team and Committee Leaders and ask them to use a part of their meeting to share answers.
2. Share the Open Question with Small Group Ministry leaders and ask them to incorporate the Open Question into their discussions and send responses to the Board.
3. Include the Open Question in the Weekly Announce and encourage responses to the Board over 2-3 weeks
4. Leave time at a Board meeting to share answers to the Open Question

Proposed process for compiling information:

Therese has said she is willing to compile all the answers in a spreadsheet and code them.

Valerie has agreed to write up a summary for the Weekly Announce.