

# First Unitarian Society of Ithaca

## Annual Meeting

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 Minutes

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Board President Don Barber called the annual meeting of the regular annual meeting of the First Unitarian Society of Ithaca (FUSIT) to order at 6:06pm on Wednesday, May 25, 2022. This is our first hybrid annual meeting, with members attending and voting both in-person and virtually.

**Scribe:** Diana Nier

**Parliamentarian:** Don Barber

**Quorum:** 71 members present (37 in-person, 34 virtual)

### **Handouts:**

- [2021-22 Annual Report and Proposed 2022-23 Budget](#)

Opening words of welcome and chalice lighting by Director of Religious Education (DRE) Emily Richards.

### **Item #1: Year in Review Presentation by DRE Emily Richards**

- Gratitude to all team and committee leaders for their hard work in a year full of unexpected challenges and transitions
- We have increased our virtual attendance
- Coffee hour has resumed, thanks to the revived Hospitality Team program coordinated by Fred Balfour
- Celebrations Committee has organized and led services through the year
- Successful online auctions coordinated by Marie Benedetti have raised over \$7,000
- Anti-Racism team has continued to facilitate the Living the Pledge program and brought the 8th Principle to the annual meeting for a vote
- Adult RE is resuming under Preston Wilson's guidance
- Adult Choir is resuming and the Music Team has formed a new house band
- Small Group Ministry continues to provide spiritual homes for many members
- Care Team and Rev. Janet Shortall have provided spiritual care
- Stewardship has exceeded 92% of their 2022-2023 fundraising goal to date
- Sharing Sundays have raised money for local causes
- Buildings & Grounds Committee and volunteers have kept our sanctuary in good repair, upgraded our internet connection, and repaired the Stepping Stones bathrooms
- Thank you to all staff: congregational administrator Michelle Waffner, admin assistant Loretta Heimbuch, and our new sexton Rachel Seymour

### **Item #2: Year in Review Presentation by President Don Barber**

- A year full of changes, starting with the resignation of Rev. Margaret Weis and our Congregational Administrator, and 5 of 9 Trustees stepping down

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- Interim Ministry slowly unraveled over the fall, and the Board turned to finding ways to keep FUSIT united and moving forward in uncertain times
- Thanks to the staff for their incredible work this year
- Re-evaluation of Partnership Governance structure, to allow for more flexibility during times of ministerial transition
  - Creation of 2 Ministry Teams (Ministry Visioning Team and Operations and Administration Team) to act as partners to the Board
  - Creation of Ministry Fulfillment Committee to search for people to fulfill our spiritual and administrative needs both locally and in ways out of sync with the UUA search cycle
- Thank you to outgoing Trustees: Diana Nier, Elton Hall, John Gaines, and Simon Caterall

### **Item #3: Overview of Hybrid Meeting and Parliamentary Procedure**

- Members attending in person must queue on either side of the podium so that when they speak they will be visible and audible to members attending virtually. Don Barber will call people up in turn.
- Members attending virtually must raise their hands (using the Reactions in Zoom) so they can be called upon. Therese O'Connor will call upon virtual speakers
- Explanation of parliamentary procedure

### **Item #4: 2021 Annual Meeting Minutes**

- The minutes were presented in the Annual Report

**MOTION:** Approve the minutes from the 2021 Annual Meeting. Moved by Carsten Hess, seconded by Arthur Woll.

Votes were tallied both in-person and virtually. **MOTION PASSED (61 yes / 0 no / 3 abstain)**

### **Item #5: 2022-2023 FUSIT Budget**

- Walt Peck presented the proposed 2022-2023 budget
- Both Walt and Nathan Fawcett (Finance Chair) separately worked up a tentative budget and compared/combined them. This was taken to Finance Committee, to the Board, to the staff, and to the heads of various teams and committees
- Goal is to return to a vigorous and active congregation
- At this time, we do not have the revenue to pursue a full-time minister via the UUA. Even if we did, we might not be able to find a good candidate -- many ministers have retired or left ministry over the past two years

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- Instead, we set aside \$80,000 for the Ministry Fulfillment Committee to find people to meet the needs of ministry: spiritual leadership, pastoral care, and administration
- We will end the 2021-2022 fiscal year in the black, despite low revenues, due largely to reduced ministerial expenses.
- We believe that 2022-2023 revenues should rebound toward pre-Covid levels (thank you to the Stewardship Committee and all members for a very successful annual pledge campaign!), thereby allowing us to give all staff members raises and dental coverage, though we are not currently planning to hire an Outreach Coordinator or an RE Assistant

**MOTION:** That the Proposed 2022-2023 Budget be adopted with spending of \$418,079, of which \$80,000 of expenses are reserved for the Ministry Fulfillment Committee, with the purpose of hiring a person or persons to meet our essential ministry needs for the coming year. Moved by Therese O'Connor, seconded by Jim Skaley.

The floor was opened for discussion:

- How will the Ministry Fulfillment Committee work?
  - The MFC has 6 members who will be searching for a person or people to fulfill the three main areas of ministry: spiritual leadership, pastoral care, and administration
  - We are trying not to constrain them to specific visions of ministry, so they are free to explore many options

Votes were tallied both in-person and virtually. **MOTION PASSED (69 yes / 2 no / 1 abstain)**

### **Item #6: Candidate Slates for the Board of Trustees and Nominating Committee**

- Fred Balfour presented a brief explanation of the role of Nominating Committee
  - Current estimate of FUSIT membership is ~275 people
  - NomCom talked to over 100 people about Board and NomCom positions
  - NomCom only found one person to run for the Board, for a 1-year term
    - Is this a sign of lack of leadership?
    - The Board created and staffed four new committees this year (Governance, Personnel, Communications Policy, and Ministry Fulfillment), as well as two teams (the Ministry Visioning Team and the Operations and Administration Team) This shows a deep culture of leadership among FUSIT members
- Candidates for the Board of Trustees
  - Dick Kurtz for a 1 year Board Term, 2022-2023

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- Candidates for the Nominating Committee
  - Elizabeth Bixler for a 2 year term, 2022-2024
  - Barbara Shew for a 2 year term, 2022-2024
- No nominations from the floor

**MOTION:** Vote on the slate of candidates as presented by the Nominating Committee. Moved by Fred Balfour, seconded by Kathy Hopkins.

The floor was opened for discussion.

- Why should we not be worried about the lack of new Board candidates?
  - First, we will have 6 elected Board members plus the Treasurer (ex officio), which is a good and experienced decision-making body
  - Second, the new committees of the Board help spread some of the governance responsibility off the Board's shoulders
- Remember that NomCom can recruit and the Board can appoint members during the year if they see fit. Additionally, there has been prior discussion about reducing the Board to 7 members rather than 9, so there is no reason to think a 7-member Board cannot operate successfully.

Votes were tallied both in-person and virtually. **Results: all candidates were elected. 61 votes for Dick Kurtz, 61 votes for Elizabeth Bixler, and 61 votes for Barbara Shew.** Welcome to our new Board member and NomCom members!

### **Item #8: Proposed Adoption of the [8th Principle](#)**

- Jennifer Streid-Mullen presented a brief history of the 8th Principle, which was born as a grassroots movement and will be voted on by the UUA in 2023.
- Emily Richards read the text of the motion to adopt the 8th Principle
- If discussion continues past 8:10pm, the meeting and discussion will be continued at a later date

**MOTION:** We, the First Unitarian Society of Ithaca, adopt the "8th Principle," to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions. Moved by Jennifer Streid-Mullen, seconded by Susie Kosack.

The floor was opened for discussion.

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- Each person who wanted to speak received a 3-minute slot. Don Barber and Therese O'Connor organized the queue of speakers, both in-person and via Zoom
  - Preston Wilson spoke against adopting the 8th Principle
  - Beth Howard spoke in favor of adopting the 8th Principle
  - Tiff Brown spoke in favor of adopting the 8th Principle
  - Bob Parks spoke against adopting the 8th Principle
  - Phil Terry spoke in favor of adopting the 8th Principle
  - John Gaines spoke in favor of adopting the 8th Principle
  - Jennifer Streid-Mullen spoke in favor of adopting the 8th Principle
  - Jackie Jablonski spoke in favor of adopting the 8th Principle
  - Diana Nier spoke in favor of adopting the 8th Principle
- After all attendees had had a chance to speak, people who previously spoke were given a second chance to speak, this time for 1 minute:
  - Preston Wilson spoke against the 8th Principle for a second time
  - Jennifer Streid-Mullen moved to call the question

**MOTION:** Call the question. Moved by Jennifer Streid-Mullen, seconded by Jack Roscoe.

Votes were tallied both in-person and virtually. **MOTION PASSED (61 yes / 10 no / 1 abstain).**  
The question was successfully called and discussion ended.

**MOTION:** We, the First Unitarian Society of Ithaca, adopt the "8th Principle," to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions. Moved by Jennifer Streid-Mullen, seconded by Susie Kosack.

Votes were tallied both in-person and virtually. **MOTION PASSED (60 yes / 9 no / 5 abstain)**

### **Item #8: Closing Words**

- Emily Richards led the meeting in a short period of reflection.

**MOTION TO ADJOURN.** Moved by Diana Nier, seconded by Carsten Hess. Votes were tallied by voice and by a show of hands. **MOTION PASSED.**

**Meeting adjourned at 7:54pm.**

Minutes taken by Diana Nier, 5/25/2022.