

**[FIRST UNITARIAN SOCIETY IN NEWTON
Meeting of the Board of Trustees
February 11, 2014**

Present:

Board: Charlie Watts, Ann Woodbury, Jonathan Reuman, Strom Thacker, Cathy Morocco, Michael Costello, Bobbie Sproat,

Staff: Erin Splaine, Perry Montrose, Meghan Cefalu

Absent: Maura Hess-Mahan

Clerk: Sheila Ardery

Guests: Alan Cody, Elli Crocker, Ann Hess-Mahan, Dwight Golann

Introductions and Check In

The Board members read the covenant and lit the candle. Strom provided the inspirational reading.

Approval of the Minutes

Bobbie made a motion to approve the January minutes. They were passed unanimously.

New Members

Charlie read the application for membership of Althea Silver. Jonathan made a motion to approve and it was unanimously accepted.

Procedural Issues

Charlie reviewed the recent round of emails that ensued from the request from Social Action to approve, on behalf of FUSN, an endorsement of a proposed Congregational Study/Action Issue (CSAI) as part of a congregational poll being conducted by the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) in advance of General Assembly. It was decided that more input would have been needed from other committees in order for the Board to take up a vote like this. Kate Mason has volunteered to help revitalize the Denominational Affairs Committee; in that capacity, Charlie will be in touch with Kate to discuss how we can handle similar requests in the future.

Ministry Review Committee

Elli Crocker, chair of the Ministry Review Committee, attended the meeting, along with fellow committee member Ann Hess-Mahan. Charlie thanked Elli and the committee for agreeing to take part. Elli opened by listing the members and acknowledging Cathy and Ann as Board liaisons. She explained that the committee plans on having five community meetings and has identified dates for these forums but is still working on the structure of the forums. They will also be meeting with staff. The committee will also develop a process to incorporate thoughts of people who won't be able to get to the meetings. In preparation for developing questions for the Ministerial Review the Committee will contact the search committee for Erin's position, to learn what criteria they considered. The MRC will meet with Erin to better understand her perspective on the goals of the review.

Elli reported that, in the initial discussions with Cathy and Ann, there was some confusion on the scope of the project. The committee members initially thought that we would be focusing on Erin's role but the Board seems to want to have a broader scope to reflect the concept of "shared ministry". Elli and Ann asked the Board for clarity on the scope.

Charlie responded that the Board would like the exercise not to be a traditional performance evaluation but to be open to what comes up in the forums. Ann Woodbury asked whether, with the action steps the committee members are going to take, starting with a conversation with Erin, the committee feels more comfortable with the process. Elli stated that the goal is that everyone feels that this is a good process. Cathy stated that she and Ann had a conversation with Erin last fall and it was enlightening and helped them develop the information that was given to the committee. Cathy also said that, in retrospect, she and Ann may have inadvertently deemphasized the importance of Erin as the focus of the project (vs. the broader concept of "shared ministry"). The Board agreed – and clarified for the committee – that the focus should be on Erin *in the context of* "shared ministry" at FUSN.

There will be notices going out to the congregation and Ann Hess-Mahan will announce it at the March 8th committee heads meeting.

Erin asked if any of the input would be anonymous. Erin felt there was a limitation to anonymous feedback. She felt that evaluation is a moment of vulnerability for both the minister and the congregation. Keeping feedback attributed would insure that everyone is equally vulnerable and has an equal stake in the process and in what comes out of the process. There was general agreement, in this context, that all input should be attributed (i.e., not anonymous).

Staff Reports

Perry reported that the Justice RE support circle met for the second time to see what the multi-generational events would look like. There is a suggestion for child ushers. Seventh graders have begun visiting other temples and congregations. There were spirituality practice classes introducing Tai Chi, meditation, and other practices. A Valentines Party is planned. A multi-generational book group was held. There was a reunion for the ninth graders, unconnected with Youth Group, and fifteen showed up. They want to do it again during a community breakfast and want not to focus on religion. The Youth RE support circle met to discuss how to connect better with youth. Families will visit homebound FUSNites again.

Perry noted the recent Newton teen suicide, the third this year, and the staff is responding to individuals' comments and thoughts through emails, etc. Newton Cares is a multi-disciplinary group that has been formed to address the issues related to teen suicide. Perry is involved with this group. Other FUSN members are showing up also at Newton Cares meetings. Perry, Meghan, and Erin are going tomorrow to a workshop focused on how ministers reach people in their lives beyond Sunday.

Meghan reported that she continues to get oriented. She and Erin will host a soup lunch which had been happening last year and is being restarted. Meghan will be reaching out to members who have not been recently active. Membership committee and Meghan are looking at the application/bio sheet to put it online and modify it. Meghan is also the lead on the Facebook page and is looking at the website. She is also analyzing how we interact with people walking into the service for the first time.

Erin stated that the three are working together to have one of them attending each of the Budget Drive parties. She has begun conversations with Jacqui James and Meg Holland about Race and Class educational events.

A group of about 8 FUSNites and Erin, plus about 1,300 other UUs attended the Mass Moral March in Raleigh on February 8. Their experience will be the topic of the sermon on Feb. 23rd. On Feb. 18, Erin will be a speaker at a panel discussion at the Newton Library on civil rights, along with the pastor at Myrtle Baptist Church and Mayor Setti Warren.

Conflict Resolution

Jonathan reminded the Board that we are trying to carry forward the work of the former Conflict Resolution Committee. He stated that he invited Dwight Golann to comment on this effort. Jonathan stated that the goal is to get the congregation to develop competencies in handling difficult conversations. They are recommending that volunteers be trained to develop skills around dealing with difficult conversations, so that they could be called upon to assist in such situations. The group explored the role of the ministers and how they might be involved. Dwight agreed that it would be an integrated group and not a SWAT team that swooped in to resolve a conflict. The goal would be for the team to develop the ways we listen and talk to each other, and to help the congregation develop skills that could be used outside of FUSN as well. This would be a culture change approach and would include developing educational opportunities on the relevant topics. Erin stated that we want to take the good work of the previous committee and build on it. Jonathan stated that the next step is to find and gather a small group of people who would be willing to be trained and take this project on. Dwight noted that personality is important, and that there are people in the congregation whom others would view as likely to be successful in resolving conflicts. We should reach out to them and offer them the training. Alan Cody stated that the challenge is the conflicts that **don't** happen while the injured parties hold their hurts privately. The challenge is to ferret these hurts out and avoid letting them fester.

Financial Oversight Committee

Strom opened the conversation by stating that the goal is to create a committee that is removed from FUSN's financial activities and can look over these processes on a periodic basis to make sure financial activities are in line with applicable policies. In addition, the Board might occasionally hire a firm to conduct an audit; the committee's oversight and recommendations would help prepare us for that possibility. Strom circulated the proposed charter including the purpose and scope of work. The hope is to organize a committee of three members by the spring. There should be a Board member on the committee. Alan noted that there are things that need to be addressed; for example, we do not have a physical inventory of items. He stated that there are experienced people in the community who could be called upon to help the committee identify and carry out its responsibilities.

Strom moved that we approve the committee charter and create the committee. Ann seconded and it was passed unanimously. Strom stated that we need to think about who would be good to be on the committee and asked Board members to send potential names to him via e-mail.

Membership Database

Ann, reporting on behalf of Greg Sullivan who was not able to join the meeting, shared the following: The committee is scheduled to meet this Sunday after the service. Either they will be putting forth a recommendation for a database or recommended action steps. They have contacted different congregations and gotten feedback on databases. There are several databases being discussed but they have significant differences. Regardless of what the decision is, there needs to be a person who can spearhead the implementation.

Misc. items

Charlie gave quick updates: Charlie will attend the Committee Chairs meeting on March 8. For people going to GA, he noted that the ByLaws state that we have to elect our delegates to GA, which happens at the June annual meeting; but the registration for GA is in March. For this year, since it's in Providence, it's not as much of a problem because it's the hotel registration that becomes a problem if it's not done early. But, we need to address this timing problem in the coming years. Charlie will take this up with Kate Mason, chair of Denominational Affairs.

Another pending item is the motion to consider changing the name of FUSN to add "Universalist." Allan Hartman made a motion for this in a previous annual meeting. Charlie is hoping Allan will help to bring some folks together to take on this issue and has reached out to Allan to have a conversation on this topic.

In regard to the joint Board-Ops Council retreat, Erin stated that we will use peer facilitators. Another congregation gave the peer facilitators a good recommendation. Erin will have to check their availability, but she recommended that we try to have the retreat in May. No date has yet been set.

Jonathan asked what we are doing about the fossil fuels divestiture study that was voted on at the last annual meeting. This issue will be addressed at a later meeting.

Pledge Drive

Charlie passed out the pledge cards for the Board to complete and stated that the ABD team would like to launch this year's campaign with the message that 100% of the leadership group (Board and Ops Council) has already pledged and that all members have increased their pledge over last year.

The meeting adjourned at 9:34 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Sheila Ardery
Clerk