

**Minutes – March 8, 2011**  
**First Unitarian Society in Newton -- Board of Trustees**

Trustees present: Susan Bartlett, Jeannie Chaisson, Alan Cody, Margaret Costello, Phil Davis, Barney Freiberg-Dale, Jonathan Lilienfeld (Ch), Pamela McA’Nulty, and Carl Metzger. Gordon Moriarty arrived during the meeting, as noted below.

Also present: Rev. Erin Splaine, Mr. Barb Greve, Gayle Smalley (Asst. Clerk); Bill Horne and Pat Rohan were present for part of the meeting.

1. Meeting opened: Jonathan called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. Barney lit the chalice and invoked Robert Frost’s “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening.” Attendees read the covenant aloud together.

2. “Administrivia.”

*Email votes:* Jonathan noted for the record the following two email votes, which took place since the February meeting:

✓ Appointments to Committee on Ministry: Bill Horne, Brian Gill, Margaret Ruttenberg, Kate Mason, and Liz Marshall. Approved unanimously.

✓ Adoption of job description for Consulting Director of Lifespan Religious Education: Approved with 9 yeas and 1 abstention.

*Annual Meeting schedule:* Scheduling the date for the Annual Meeting was considered. It was noted that the meeting must take place after May 1 and before June 15. A brief discussion revealed that the office calendar already carries it on June 5, and Jonathan announced that that would be the date unless he learned of any problem.

*Canvass:* Jonathan spoke about his interest in having 100% participation, and shared his concern about giving special attention to those members who don’t regularly pledge. Jonathan asked whether Board members would be willing to divide the list of “non-pledgers” in order to send letters and make follow-up calls. On a show of hands most Trustees indicated a willingness to take part. (Gordon arrived at the meeting during this discussion.)

Carl raised a related idea about the Canvass, suggesting that the Board show leadership via their own pledges. Emphasizing that he was open to various approaches, Carl mentioned as one possibility that each Trustee commit to increasing his/her own pledge. A show of hands indicated interest in some type of arrangement in this spirit. It was the sense of the meeting that a particular approach could be chosen and incorporated in the Canvass next year.

3. Candidate for Membership Coordinator: Pamela briefly described the search process, and announced that an offer has been made to Kristin Cleveland, contingent on approval by the Board. The position calls for 20 hours/week, on a 10-month schedule. The compensation will be \$16,500 per annum. Assuming approval, Ms. Cleveland will be able to begin her duties very soon.

Rev. Erin Splaine stated that Ms. Cleveland has already met some of the staff. She has knowledge of UU congregations, great presence and the right energy.

In response to an inquiry, Pamela stated that she had checked references.

**Motion:** Barney moved to approve hiring of Kristin Cleveland as Membership Coordinator; Alan seconded.

**Vote:** Approved Unanimously.

4. Discussion: “Serving with Grace”: Rev. Erin Splaine led a discussion about the book by Erik Walker Wikstrom, which treats lay leadership and service to a church “as an integrated aspect of a fully rounded spiritual life.” Most of the trustees had recently read the book, and their impressions included the following statements:

- Interactions with others can be a source of energy;
- It’s not just what gets done, but how we speak of it;
- As it takes time to build rapport within a new group each June, a suggestion was made to include a few informal minutes within each meeting for personal reflection;
- The book spoke about members and spouses going out for dinner;
- Reciting the covenant together has been useful for the Board; perhaps committees might find it helpful to follow a similar approach;
- Letting old events go is not always easy
- “No is just as sacred as yes.”

5. Social Action Development Committee (“SADC”): Barney spoke regarding a 3-page document distributed to members prior to the meeting. Noting that it contained only minor changes from the February version that the group discussed last month, he directed Trustees’ attention to section 17, regarding the nominating process for members of the new Council for Social Action (“CSA”). By-law amendments are anticipated in approx. 2014; thus, the current issue concerns the interim period. Barney stressed the importance of the election component in the long-run.

Moderator Bill Horne shared his thoughts with the group. Having reviewed the by-laws, Bill explained that the Board has power to appoint a committee and delegate power to it. With regard to election of CSA members, while Bill does not see a mechanism for such a formal vote, he has concluded that a straw vote/poll could be used. In response to a question, Bill clarified that the by-laws may be amended to establish elected CSA members, but the limit being discussed relates to the short-term situation.

In the course of the discussion, various aspects of the proposal also were considered. Pamela inquired who will control the social action budget under the new system; Barney replied that the CSA will allocate money. Discussion ensued about a variety of issues involved in transition to a new system, including the CSA’s role in approving particular projects; the pace of ramping up; and the role and timing of congregational meetings to endorse Task Forces under the new system. Carl suggested an open meeting to allow members to see the final proposal. Jeanie and Phil spoke in favor of a letter from the Board. Trustees thanked Barney for his work on this project, and he replied that it was a great team.

**Motion:** Jeannie moved to amend subsection c of section 17, by adding a final sentence as follows: “Taking into consideration such nominations, the BoT shall appoint the seven CSA members.” Pam seconded.

**Vote:** Approved Unanimously.

**Motion:** Pamela moved to approve the document, as amended; Alan seconded.

**Vote:** Approved Unanimously.

6. Growth: Moving from Pastoral to Program sized congregation: The Ministerial Start Up session that Trustees attended in February highlighted the fact that churches face certain predictable needs as they change size. FUSN is moving from a “Pastoral” type congregation to a “Program” type. Barb mentioned some typical changes: Moving away from a culture where everyone knows everything about everyone; confronting the need to add systems, because the need for a safety net increases with size.

Jonathan asked whether we should enlist support of the UUA. Carl commented on the broad scope of the issue, suggesting it’s appropriate to step back to look at the forest. Jeannie mentioned that the issue has been discussed for 15 years, and she stated that progress has been made, including hiring a membership coordinator, establishing the Leadership Development Council, and moving ahead with governance changes.

Rev. Erin Splaine pointed out that while the process has already started, strain and burnout can be associated with running an operation on a model suitable for a smaller congregation. Barb pointed out that having systems in place can free people from the burdens of a patchwork arrangement. Rev. Erin Splaine offered three suggestions: establishing this item as a topic for a joint Board/Operations Council retreat in September; seeking assistance from Doug Zelinski, of the district office; and carrying out a workshop for staff. Barney asked about a “common read” and Rev. Splaine volunteered to provide information.

7. Board led worship service: Jeannie led a discussion of plans for the April 3 service. Pamela will take charge of a skit for the Children’s Story. Carl, Barney and Jeannie will provide 5 to 7 minute reflections. Susan will give a reading. Alan indicated interest in any remaining component. Erin volunteered to help the group decide on flow and structure. A “run through” will take place the prior day. Carl offered to host a potluck on the prior evening.

Respectfully submitted,  
Gayle Smalley, Assistant Clerk