

**FUUSN Board of Trustees**  
Tuesday, November 14, 2017  
Children's Chapel, 7:30 PM

<b>Staff</b> Erin Splaine, Minister, absent Rowan Van Ness, DLRE	<b>Visitors</b> Susan Bartlett, Operations Bobbie Sproat
<b>Board</b> Cathy Morocco, Chair Eric Haas, Vice Chair Amalia Basch, Youth Brian Burba, absent Josie Greene Chris Krebs Leah Lakomski, Youth Brooke Foucault Welles <b>Clerk Kit Ryan</b>	

**Highlights**

**The FY18 Annual Budget Drive will be a FUUSN-wide team effort.**

**The Board is fine-tuning a new covenant to guide our work as Trustees.**

**With great enthusiasm, the Board approved the Refugee Immigration Program.**

**Invocation / Chalice Lighting/Reading Of The Board Covenant: 7:33pm**

**Staff Updates**

Erin was unwell and not able to attend the meeting.

*Rowan Van Ness*

· Youth Programs Coordinator, Dani Patrick, has had their first month and is working well with the Youth.

· Our Whole Lives (OWL) sexuality education has been part of the Coming of Age program for seventh- and eighth-grade youth for many years. Last year it was offered for fifth-graders for the first time, and it will be offered at this level again this year. In addition, this year RE will offer OWL for kindergarten and first grade students for the first time. Staff will hold an information meeting for parents this weekend to

help determine whether the program will be for both grade levels. The OWL curriculum for seventh- and eighth-graders is 24 sessions; for fifth-graders, 10 sessions; and for K-1, 8 sessions.

Expanding OWL has put additional demands on the RE budget: three teachers have been trained for elementary OWL at a cost of \$400 each. Curriculum texts are \$40-85 apiece. Rowan has been contemplating instituting a tuition fee for the program. She noted that each fifth-grade participant receives a book, *It's Perfectly Normal*, for which there is a \$15 charge.

This question stimulated a wide-ranging discussion regarding fees, costs, and benefits for RE programs in general. Eric asked how the decision would be made, and by whom. Rowan said that initially she and Erin will discuss the matter, and then have a conversation with the congregation if they decide a charge is appropriate. Considerations include whether to create scholarships, whether tuition fees might discourage participation, and whether they might have an impact on any families' pledge for the Annual Budget Drive. She noted that some congregations do charge for OWL, and that one FUUSN COA participant this year is being charged (\$100); the youth's family are members of another congregation that is too small to support OWL.

A Board member queried whether the Board should have a role in the decision about tuition fees. This led to a discussion of whether the decision on fees was in effect a policy decision, especially because instituting them might have a significant effect on the Annual Budget Drive. Susan, representing the Operations Council, reminded the Board that the recommendation to discontinue fees for RE classes some years ago came from the RE Council, and suggested that perhaps the decision-making role should be taken by the Ops Council.

Rowan noted that the issue ties into larger questions of how we discuss money and finances. For example, the costs of food for "Pizza and Principles" or "Family Fun Fridays" are often absorbed by congregants as donations, which makes it difficult to calculate implicit versus explicit costs. Josie asked whether or not we know if, some families come to FUUSN specifically for RE--including the Coming of Age program and wondered how many families stop coming after their children complete the program.

· Rowan attended the Liberal Religious Educators Association (LREDA) fall conference during the preceding weekend. She considered it an historic event, because of the group's ability to respond effectively to discord. Roughly a quarter of the attendees were new. At the initial session, some participants perceived that themes of white supremacy and patriarchy were embodied in the presentations. Attendees raised these issues from the floor for nearly an hour. Subsequently, LREDA's Board asked the speakers to leave, revised the program, held conversations with participants of color, and organized restorative circles on Sunday morning. Rowan was proud of how the organization was able "pivot" the conference in reaction to unexpected events.

## **Procedural**

### *Mandy Beal Ordination.*

Bobbie Sproat, chair of the Ordination Committee, updated the Board and asked for a vote to support the ordination and fund the costs. Mandy was the Youth Programs Coordinator in 2014-15 while attending seminary. She completed her internship with the Lincoln, MA congregation. The final step is for a

congregation to ordain the minister-candidate. FUSN's Board voted to sponsor her last year; Lincoln is not involved in this part of the process. The ceremony is scheduled for 22 April 2018.

The Ordination Committee has met and engaged volunteers and is planning the reception. The cost for the reception, food, flowers, childcare, and Beadle services is estimated between \$1300 and \$1400. The Ops Council has talked with the Finance Committee and determined that we may use part of the \$8000 contingency monies for this purpose. Cathy noted that it is important to support new ministers. The Board unanimously approved, with great enthusiasm, a motion [made by Chris, seconded by Brooke] supporting Many Beal's ordination, with a budget of \$1300-1400.

*Vote on August, September and October minutes.*

Chris moved to approve the minutes and Brooke seconded the motion. Josie's caveat: Cathy will consult notes from Barbara Bates' presentation to clarify a distinction between congregational and Board priorities. All others approved. (Note: That correction in the minutes has been made).

*Final approval of Refugee Immigration Ministry (RIM).*

The Refugee Immigration Ministry (RIM) received 35 volunteers to participate with the Newton/Brookline cluster to sponsor asylum seekers. Three congregants/families (Julia Huston, Richard and Lynn Bail, and Eileen Kurkoski) have volunteered to host asylum-seeking families in their homes. Motion: Given that volunteer commitment to RIM exceeds expectations, the Board enthusiastically approves FUUSN's participation in the Newton-Brookline interfaith cluster to support asylum seekers [Moved by Cathy, seconded by Eric, and unanimously approved].

*Approve co-sponsoring "Students of Color Speak Out."*

The Newton Library is sponsoring an event on January 24, 2018 at which six students of color from Newton public schools will describe their experiences at the high schools. FUUSN has been asked to co-sponsor, among many other co-sponsors. Meg Holland will be the FUUSN representative. Cathy will send the Board members the electronic letter from Meg addressing the topic. Trustees voiced no objections.

*Approve new member applications.*

Sam Foster is coordinating new member recognition for this upcoming Sunday's service. The Board unanimously approved (moved by Josie, seconded by Chris), new applications from the following people:

Megan Dolan and Daniel Sanchez de Muniain Dolan, children Katherine, Anna  
Amalie Gubbels, spouse Marc and child Camille  
Rand Stone, spouse Veronica Chao, children Maxim & Robert  
Joanna Lloyd, child Miranda  
Amy Stuart, children Shannon, Carter  
Eli Wolf and Chari Blaumet, their child Stella

*Fall Committee Chairs Meeting.*

Chris confirmed that he plans to attend and represent the Board.

*Opening the Sunday Service:* The list was noted on the agenda.

*Upcoming Board Meetings.* Eric and Cathy have mapped the Board's upcoming work in a meeting outside the regular Board meeting. The December meeting will address financial policy. The Board of Investment and Finance Committee will present a joint policy proposal for withdrawing funds from the Endowment to support the annual budget. Stewardship will be an ongoing focus for the Board, as planning for new approaches to the Annual Budget Drive Begins.

The Board requests a final Financial Summit Report from the Planning Team.

### **Generative**

*Communicating with the congregation.* Handout from October Meeting: Brainstorm of ways to communicate more fully with the congregation.

Trustees continued a discussion begun at October's Board meeting, which included a brainstorming session. Josie suggested that using a ceremony to introduce a new Board covenant would also be an opportunity to introduce plans for better communication between congregants and the Board. Cathy noted that hard copies of Board minutes are posted in a notebook in the office hallway and that she intends to resume posting them on the FUUSN website and in FUUSN News.

Brooke observed that, while it would be ideal to pursue all the strategies proposed, doing so would entail a huge time commitment on the part of Board members. She pointed out that commentary and lively discussions often take place on FUUSN's Facebook pages, with topics ranging from Ferry Beach and Halloween family events to gender issues, including the lack of a gender-neutral restrooms and its impact on how welcome people have felt. She suggested that FUUSN's Facebook presence could be used as a listening tool, instead of a means of broadcasting, to help keep track of what congregants—especially the younger ones—are concerned about. She volunteered to keep an eye on our social media and report any interesting findings.

### **Generative.**

#### *Board Covenant*

Chris has been revising the new Board covenant begun at the fall Board retreat. The covenant is to be read in unison at the beginning of each meeting. In developing a draft, he reviewed examples of covenants received from other congregations and has devoted a lot of effort and thought to the process. He distributed a first draft several weeks ago and absorbed comments, particularly from Cathy and Eric, both of whom thought the text was too lengthy for its intended purpose. The latter reviewer circulated an edited version.

Chris brought a shortened draft, although he did not necessarily agree that word count should be an issue. As the next step in the process, Cathy asked that the Board read the new draft aloud in unison, then comment briefly, beginning with what worked well in the text, trying to keep all comments constructive.

Josie noted that while the draft is longer than our current covenant, she found the content inspiring, and thinks that all of it is important and worth including. Several Board members found that the final paragraph, affirming our determination to learn and grow with our role, even in failure, was very

important. Eric commented that the text was powerful overall, especially the promise to serve as stewards, and the reminder of our shared responsibilities. He also noted almost all sentences are compound, may benefit from restructuring.

The Trustees did not come to agreement on the statement of the the Board's mission or vision, and the Board's role in defining, discerning, or setting priorities for the Congregation. Barbara Bates introduced the concept of "congregational priorities" at her presentation to the Board in October, and some Trustees are experiencing confusion about the distinction between Board priorities and congregational priorities. Board members differed widely in their interpretation of the concept, and discussion devolved into a "the chicken or the egg" conversation, trying to clarify which comes first: the Congregation's goals or the Board's. No clear consensus was reached.

Josie noted that Barbara Bates has offered to return to respond to any questions or issues that came up during her presentation, which might help us focus on our aspirations as a Board. Cathy suggested that Barbara recommend some readings to help us refine this issue. Eric was not sure that this would simplify the process. Chris noted that refining the covenant draft is an interactive process

Cathy decided that the discussion should continue in future meetings. Chris was energized to work on the draft some more, based on our comments. All Board members were grateful and expressed thanks to Chris for his hard work.

## **Strategic**

*Continuing the work begun at the Financial Summit by Planning for FUUSN's FY18 Annual Budget Drive (ABD).* Cathy had prepared a Handout: "Elements of a successful budget drive," and a diagram, "Supporting the ABD."

"Element of a Successful Budget Drive" is a wheel image, with Successful Drive in the center Theme/Message around the circumference and the following six strategies as "pie pieces:"

- A Dream Team
- Strong Plan
- Prepared Hosts and Stewards
- Information about Donors
- Understanding why some don't pledge.
- Connected/Educated Congregation

All of these are in progress.

Josie referred to an older document outlining FUUSN's annual financial cycle, including a timeline for setting fundraising goals, the annual drive, and finalizing the budget. This was most recently seen in a presentation Karen Bottar gave to the Board. It shows clearly that fund-raising is a year-round activity.

She reported that Saul Lookner—the only identified member of the FY18 ABD team—is concerned that future drives will continue to have shortfalls if there is no change in the process.

Some concrete ideas surfaced in the ensuing discussion:

- Hold a clear "kick-off" for the drive, for example at a Community Breakfast (rather than a traditional Fellowship Dinner which is time and volunteer intensive) (NOTE: The Fellowship Dinner was discontinued several years ago when the size of the congregation made it unwieldy.)
- Use the Pledge Parties as an opportunity to listen to congregation members.

- Update information cards to differentiate and describe the benefits of membership, including the various ways congregants can support FUUSN and be supported by the Society.
- Although the topic of outreach can be seen as separate from fund-raising, a three-pronged focus on attracting new members, fostering ongoing welcome and engagement, and being responsive to people's cares, concerns and the retention of members all contribute to long-term sustainability.

Eric noted that ongoing care of the congregation was a priority identified at the Financial Summit, second only to the establishment of a long-term Stewardship Council to support, educate, and inspire the yearly ABD teams. Community care ideas included:

- Effective volunteer reward strategies, such as public recognition of jobs well done (which the Ops Council presently does with hand-written thank-you notes.)
- Exit interviews for members who leave the congregation, and reaching out to those who have been absent. Lay ministers may be helpful for the latter.
- Recruitment of a chair for the Communication Committee; that group specific tasks, but lacks direction without a chair.
- Ideally, organizing a team of 15-20 members for outreach (as suggested by the Adult Faith Development survey) to reach five members apiece.
- A recommendation relayed from Saul that a Board member contact all new members shortly after they enter the community, for this year and last year's new members, to enhance engagement. (NOTE: The Board has not taken up this suggestion, which would add another task to Board members' considerable load.)
- Josie remarked that we need to remember the power of the "ask:" tapping people for jobs specifically can be more effective than a general call for members to participate.

Cathy noted that the focus of the evening's discussion was to be on the ABD, but it was clear that FUUSN does need outreach to all members, old and new. She was gratified that lots of ideas were coming forth.

**Close**

Meeting adjourned: 9:40PM