

**First Unitarian Society of Newton  
Board of Trustees  
September 13, 2011  
Alliance Room**

Present: Susan Bartlett, Alan Cody, Margaret Costello, Barney Freiberg-Dale,  
Bruce Henderson, Pamela McA’Nulty, Gordon Moriarty, Ann Woodbury,  
Erin Splaine, Barb Greve

Absent: Conrad Buys, Carl Metzger, Strom Thacker

Meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM

**Invocation/Chalice Lighting**

**Covenant**

As we, the members of this Board and staff gather to serve this congregation in leadership, we commit to ourselves and to each other: to be present and prepared for the work of this meeting; to listen well and contribute respectfully; to balance both our short and long-term visions with fiscal responsibility; to support the decisions of the Board; to uphold the democratic process; and to lead with goodwill and faith in the work we can accomplish together.

**Administrivia**

- BOT Pot luck 9/24 at Susan Bartlett’s home at 7pm.
- Sunday morning announcements- Susan sent an email with the Sunday morning script and reminded everyone there is a copy outside Erin’s office along with announcements. If you can’t make it when scheduled please find a replacement.
- Check with Erin before the services with goal of keeping announcements within time allotted for them. Some discussion about other ways to make announcements to get the word out such as a bulletin board and list serve. Getting word out continues to be a work in progress
- Susan also emailed a general contact list, BOT meeting schedule, and snack assignments
- Financial Tutorial- Susan asked if it would be helpful to have a session sometime in October. Alan indicated it takes about an hour and he and Karen will schedule a date if possible before the retreat.

**Staff Update**

- Erin reflected on the opening service. There were 290 in attendance including kids, which was a great turn out.
- Erin is focusing on DLRE search with Barb and Concetta. Erin and Barb are going to the LREDA conference in Portland Oregon to publicize the search and speak with potential candidates.

- Erin made some contacts at the General Assembly. Talked about searching for a good match for the FUSN community.
- Leadership Development-Barbara Bates and Jeff Baker may not be able to continue; will follow-up.
- Alan commented on how much he enjoyed the water service and Erin said that was an example of a good team working together. Bruce liked the use of cards where everyone writes where the water is from and Erin reads them as congregants pour their water into a collective bowl. Felt it flowed really well. Erin said the goal was to create almost a moving prayer.
- A new change in the service will be to invite a volunteer from the congregation to light the chalice each week to include more members in the service and as another way to get to know each other.
- Erin plans to meet with some long-term members of FUSN in an advisory capacity twice a year to gather their ideas and feedback on particular issues.
- Barb updated everyone on staffing. Hired 2 new staff: Beth Walton (assistant DRE during Wendy's leave) and Rebecca Hinds (youth group advisor). RE had an orientation for 20 RE teachers.
- Rebecca Hinds is the New Youth Group Facilitator. She held an orientation for the youth already and 26 attended. The Youth Group meets on Sundays from 6-8pm and they are already looking for a larger room.
- Coming of Age kick off is Friday 9/16 and they still need 3 mentors. There are 25 COA candidates. They have already decided to have 2 Sunday services: 10:15AM and 1:15 PM on Mother's Day. Barney asked if some families are still joining just for COA. Barb said there was one family, that used to be active in FUSN, this year that did that. Barb met with the family initially to see what they are looking for in the experience.
- RE starts on Sunday the 18<sup>th</sup> and he still needs 3<sup>rd</sup> grade class teachers.
- Six new families have shown an interest in joining. Three are ready to register and three are still checking it out.
- Bruce asked about the sign out front advertising Dorshei Tzedek 's RE program and thought it would be a good idea to have a sign with FUSN's RE program. This was in the works and Susan is going to follow up. Alan did note that the payments from Pine Village who rent space have been on time.
- There was discussion about the Vesper service, which was held for the first time on Sunday night, organized by Amy LeClair. Many who attended commented on how wonderful it was. Bruce thought it would be a good draw and Kristin is putting together packets and cards as a way of connecting with those who attend as possible new members. This led to ideas about outreach to community and ways to become more integrated, including use of the Tab to announce events, the FUSN website, educational events and social justice were some ideas.

### **CSA charter amendment**

- Follow up to last meeting's discussion. Barney brought in the charter amendment concerning social action partnerships that he and Lynn Holbein discussed. They proposed a 3 year "sunset" term to partnerships.
- The proposed change is: **"Social action partnerships with external organizations must be renewed each three years, by reapplication with a sponsor from within the FUSN community, affirmation by the CSA and confirmation by the Operations Council; in the absence of the triennial confirmation, the partnership is suspended automatically."**
- Pam made motion to accept the charter amendment, motion seconded and the motion passed unanimously

### **Committee to study FUSN name change**

- At the Annual Meeting, Alan Hartman proposed that the BOT appoint a committee to study whether to change the name of FUSN to more directly incorporate Universalist. The Board discussed ways to determine whether there was sufficient interest among the congregation to engage in this discussion. Pam will consider this further and report back to the Board.

### **Update on Retreat**

- To be held Saturday October 1<sup>st</sup> 8:30-3pm at the Needham Unitarian church. Facilitated by Doug Zelinski UUA who suggested 5 goals:
  1. Understand FUSN challenges as normal (and even predictable) for a congregation in the midst of a size transition.
  2. Describe changes in governance, structure and behaviors that help a congregation through a size transition.
  3. Clarify the roles of the Board, Operations Council, Standing Committees and Minister during and after the size transition.
  4. Name best practices for governance and operation of a congregation that is FUSN's size
  5. Brainstorm multi-year goals given what is now understood about size transitioning.
- Gordon spoke about looking forward to the retreat and expects the discussion to help guide us as we move forward. Ann asked if decisions would be made at the retreat; Gordon and Susan felt the focus would be more on the big picture.

### **Governance**

- Operating policy revisions update by Susan and Gordon who met with Pat and Laurel from Ops Council. One idea to help reduce duplication around financial issues would be to create an Audit Committee of the BOT, which would:

1. Include 2-3 members to facilitate communication between Ops and BOT
  2. Provide oversight re: finances and report back to the board
  3. Fulfill BOT's fiduciary responsibilities
- By-law revisions. Pam went through the By-laws and highlighted the sections that involve the Operations Council and the BOT. Alan asked if the Board of Investments would be a concern. Currently the governance structure and policies indicate that the BOI reports to the BOT and that the BOT approves Board of Investments policies. The ultimate goal is to look at both the OC and BOT roles and develop a way to work together that leads to changes in By-laws.

### **Other Priorities for the Year**

- Growth, member retention, current membership numbers
- Learning about Kristin's Outreach and what she has been involved in to further growth
- Retention strategies. Barney talked about looking at the current population changes in the area and the geographical changes
- Seems there are the same number of pledges over 20 years. Getting a better handle on the Canvas data base and who are our members
- Erin felt that changing the way we do things would hopefully help with growth, retention and connection. She meets twice a year with a study group with other UU ministers and they talk about looking at things like diversity and class and race in their communities. She talked about being open to other cultures, gave an example of how one church added equipment for the hearing impaired not because anyone had a problem but with the idea "if you build it they will come".
- Everyone agreed these are the best conversations to help plan for long-term priorities. How to increase FUSN's profile in the greater community. Having things like the Vespers service, summer bell concerts, Newton serves. Need to be clear and to be able to articulate who we are and this is what we believe. Speak about the great things FUSN has such as the Adult RE program and COA. How to meet the needs of everyone in the congregation.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30pm

Respectfully submitted,  
Wendy Atamian, Board Clerk

