

FIRST UNITARIAN SOCIETY IN NEWTON
OPERATIONS COUNCIL MINUTES
Wednesday September 9, 2014
Alliance Room, 7:00 P.M.

Present: Susan Bartlett, Rev Meghan Cefalu, Jeannie Chaisson, Judy Curby, Laurel Farnsworth, Anne Hess-Mahan, Andrea Kelley, Rev Erin Splaine, Rowan Van Ness. Guests: Peter Farago & Jud Leonard.

Covenant

As we, the members of this Council 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 Council; to uphold the democratic process; and to lead with goodwill and faith in the work we can accomplish together.

~ 7:00-7:05 **Invocation / Chalice Lighting:** Susan

~ **Approvals:** All
None.

~ Brief discussion of tables set-up in Parish Hall for ticket sales for upcoming events and use of the Alliance Room for coffee hour.

Rowan van Ness was welcomed as Interim DLRE and those present introduced themselves and their roles.

Susan said two Ops meetings will start at 7:30 to allow for music and worship around the topic of the month: October's theme is Evil. Soulful Sundown will go from 7-7:29, in October. An adjustment will be made in March 2015, too.

~ **New FUSN database:** Peter Farago, Jud Leonard
Peter Farago

Our current database is old and no longer supported by technology. Bart Wright has been providing support by himself. Also, FUSN has been using QuickBooks for financial record keeping. Other files include Excel documents, such as RE enrollment, Ferry Beach and Sandy Island, Holiday Fair, etc. The project was to update FUSN's database capability.

Over a year, a committee reviewed 20+ different database options. The members looked at the literature, vendors, other organizations who use them. They have decided to recommend IconCMO, designed to be used by churches, and other non-profits. Peter has been working

with it. There are several reasons it is being recommended. It is totally web-based. It doesn't need software; all info is in the "cloud." The data is kept by the company on its servers. Also, they provide support, including back-ups, security, etc. We can request additional features at additional cost. There are many additional tasks it can do: track membership, households and individuals; organize info about people; track pledges and donations. Over the summer, all data was migrated from the current database to the new system, including the previous 2 years of pledges. It includes all payments to date. Fran Clancy already has daily access to it.

Now, the current database is only on Fran's computer. The new system is customizable, so others can also have access to specific aspects they need. People will be able to look at their own giving history. It can also be accessed on tablets, phones, and home computers; *and* the screen will configure to fit the device it's being used on. It can also provide online access to the directory, with photos that individuals can post themselves.

While not ready for immediate use, other aspects include a full finance module, which could eventually replace QuickBooks for FUSN. RE people can do class enrollments. It can send emails to different groups and track people's activities and involvement in FUSN. So far minimal input has been completed. There is plenty of room to grow its potential usage. The funding module includes accounts receivable, payable, banking payments, finance reports, etc. Payroll is optional at additional cost.

The cost is \$50 per month.

Several congregants have expressed the wish to pay pledges electronically and by credit card. This system is associated with Vanco Services, that processes these payments. Other partners include Constant Contact for emailing, which is built in, and other web-based services.

Peter provided a one-page brochure about IconCMO that lists these capabilities: membership management; donation tracking, members' web access, communication, fund accounting, web integration, etc. It includes unlimited concurrent users, unlimited technical support, automatic software upgrades and enhancements, and free online training

The Vanco fee structure was shared for consideration. It's not currently part of the deal. It costs

\$50 to set up. There's a possibility to get the registration fee waived. Then it's \$25 per month To authorize or change a setup per card costs .25 (cents) one-time fee.

Card rates: Vanco takes a percentage of payments: 2.75% or 3.50%, depending on the card. Fees may be paid by the donor, if s/he opts in for that. FUSN can set that up as a requirement, if desired.

FUSN would also pay a monthly Visa fee based on the amount collected: \$1-4K = \$7. \$4-8K = \$9. \$8-40K = \$15. \$40+K = \$45.

Bobbie asked if there are other options. Laurel said web options always include fees. PayPal is a membership based payment service.

Separate pages can be set up for a \$25 one-time fee, e.g., Ferry Beach, for outside regular FUSN business and finance.

Meghan can share a list of other congregations that have online payment systems. Jeannie points out that it makes sense to use Vanco, since they are affiliated with the IconCMO system.

Meghan says it might be worth the fees to make it easier for people to pay online. Others said most folks know how to do this.

Susan asked if there are any additional possibilities. Peter said Vanco is the main one.

Judy suggests that Erin or Meghan talk with staff to see how they might feel about this system.

Wendy asked about the track record of reliability and security. Peter was able to share that other parishes' experience with IconCOM were all positive. Jud points out that there are no guarantees of 100% performance; for example, Microsoft went down for several days. Also, he said any company could be taken over, etc.

The company is over 20 years old and the founders came from Great Plain Software.

Susan said that research into credit card payment methods should continue. Jeannie suggests that we incorporate aspects of the service in increments, as needed.

For it to be fully implemented by the next fiscal year, a couple of months of preparation is needed.

Laurel points out that it should be as transparent as any other system to those inside and outside the system, i.e., auditable, such as by the accountant who currently helps FUSN.

Judy points out that there seem to be many benefits to the system, including the whole pledge process as part of the financial system. She wants to be sure Fran is comfortable with the system. Also, she thinks there should continue to be a firewall between IconCMO and QuickBooks.

Laurel wants to be sure we would not be losing more money than we take in, because of the fees. She also wonders how much time it will take to use.

Peter asked who makes the decisions about implementing the database. Judy outlined the 3 components.

Database - already set up with membership.
Credit Card payment
Financial package

Judy will reach out to other UU treasurers from Meghan's list to see how they handle online payments and if those methods are satisfactory.

Peter said other fees apply. For example, if a donor's check bounces, the donor is charged a fee (\$25).

Laurel pointed out that there should be backup once or twice a year, as we will be quite invested in all the content that accrues. Jud says we should find a way to keep our own copy and automate it.

Susan said Ops needs to do more research on the credit card aspect and will get back to Peter with a decision.

Gratitude was expressed to Peter and his team for all the work on this project.

Bobbie pointed out that we do now have a functioning Oversight Committee on finance.

~ **Staff update:** Erin, Meghan, Rowan

Rowan: She says things are busy, and she is grateful the RE Council did so much preparation. All teachers are lined up, in a well-oiled system. Coming of Age is organized; the candidates and teachers will be recognized this Sunday. She is talking with the Council for Social Action about ways to incorporate social action into RE. The Youth Group kicked off this past Sunday with Mandy Beal at the helm. The Thompson Island retreat is September 27-28. Rowan's office is set up, and she appreciated the help with that.

Ops Council members expressed appreciation for her storytime at the first service.

Meghan: Dinners for 7 will be relaunched as potlucks. Chalice Circles are almost launched; facilitators are lined up. Affinity groups might also be launched, such as the parenting group. The new member retreat is October 4th. Meghan would like to use a bulletin board for member services in the office hallway. Laurel points out that bulletin boards in hallways must be covered by plastic or glass; by law, there should not be any exposed paper on the wall. Perhaps use a whiteboard?

Erin: She said the staff is functioning well and fully up to speed at the start to the year. Both Rowan and Mandy were actively engaged during August, which helped to get the year going. There **were 7 or 8 fewer people here for the start Sunday** this year vs. last year, which is a good number, since several regulars were away.

She would like to propose a stipend position for a Sanctuary tech-beadle. Currently, a young man is taping Sunday morning services, under Bob Person's tutelage. The audio gets posted to the web. The Personnel Policy Committee is on board with this. Nick has been paid \$25 an hour from the kitchen beadle budget. She'd like the position to go to 2-3 hours at a rate of \$15 an hour = \$45 per Sunday, out of the existing budget. Other tasks will include unlocking and locking main doors, music stands, candles, oil for the chalice, etc., with a backup also trained. Fran would supervise. The kitchen beadle doesn't always handle all the Sanctuary chores, too. Laurel pointed out that that beadle budget was generous, to cover the use of beadles for memorial services, but spending needs to be tracked. Many of these tasks have been handled ad hoc by volunteers, lay ministers, etc.

Anne has started on a draft document describing a Sanctuary beadle. Erin will ask Anne to share the draft with Susan, who will circulate it and later run it by the PPC

It was agreed that, since there's no change in the budget, a vote is not needed, and Erin can go ahead and implement the change in tasks and the rate for the Sanctuary beadle.

~ **Report on September Board of Trustees meeting:** Jeannie

Capital Campaign: the "Next Step" weekend is Nov 14-16. Consultant Mark Ewert has been hired to help FUSN assess its capability to run a capital campaign.

On October 5th, a congregational meeting will be held to vote on FUSN's designation as a Green Sanctuary, required as part of the UUA approval process.

The proposed September FUSN dinner is on hold. It's too soon and there were not enough offers of help beyond cooks.

There was discussion on getting the leadership development committee up and running this year.

There was a good bit of discussion about communication. It was mentioned that there are congregants who don't read the electronic newsletter or use Facebook. Also, further web page development is needed.

Also discussed was the endowment to take care of the Wayside Pulpit. It needs rebuilding. \$8K available. It was asked if there is a way to use some of those funds for web communication, which can be viewed as the current iteration of "sign" messaging.

~ Discussion followed about who could chair the budget drive and the Holiday Fair. Susan will check in with last year's holiday co-chair for that position.

~ **Sunday Collections:** All

The Council approved one Sunday collection each for Coming of Age, Music, and UUA on Association Sunday at the discretion of the minister. Jeannie moved to approve. Seconded. Approved.

Jeannie moved to have a Special Collection for Social Action. Seconded. Approved.

~ **Update Committee issues/reports:**

- No new committee chairs to be approved
- Open Positions
- Committee Updates

The Council suggested the Assistant Clerk [*that would be yours truly-ws*] post the Annual Meeting minutes to the Web, but not share by email or Google docs.

~ **Brief review of parking priorities for this year**, including FUSN's parking lot, Santander Bank's parking lot, and that printed information about parking be made available. The availability of "Handicapped" parking has legal implications.

~ **Thank yous:** ???

~ The meeting adjourned at 9:18 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Wendy Schwartz,
Assistant Clerk