

Unitarian Society of New Haven
Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Trustees
August 11, 2016

Accepted September 8, 2016

Board Members Present: Kathy Garner, Daniel Gelperin, Russell Heinrich, Bernice Marie-Daily, Peggy Myers, Pamela Miller, Bobbi Pace, Pat Trotta

Board Members Absent: Carol Cheney, Holly Hawkins

Also Present: Georgia Jennings, David Jones, Megan Lloyd Joiner, David Stagg, Lurline deVos

D. Gelperin called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm and P. Miller recorded the minutes. A quorum of Board Members was present, and the meeting proceeded with D. Gelperin presiding.

Gather

R. Heinrich lit the chalice and did the opening reading. Attendees read the Board of Trustees Covenant.

Meeting Preparation for this evening

There were no changes to the agenda.

Assess the Past (Monitoring)

a. Management Team Reports for past month

i. Executive limitations report

D. Jones presented the executive limitations report which is attached at the end of the minutes. Related discussions included:

- The salary for the membership coordinator will be \$15/hour for 10 hours/week.
- The board asked if the steel beam mentioned in the report is shown in architectural drawings of the building? One set of plans has been digitized. R. Heinrich may be able to help with this process. No asbestos was found in the roof.
- Leakage started again around skylights. MT is pursuing corrective actions. We have \$10,000 in the budget for skylight work. \$1,000 was saved on handicapped pews by doing the work ourselves.
- MT would like input on prioritization of future capital projects. This could be from the board and/or the congregation. What is the preferred timing for this activity? We may not have enough space to live out our mission. How will the capital budget reflect that concern?

ii. Minister's Ends Report

M. Lloyd Joiner presented the Ends report which is attached at the end of the minutes.

- Attendance at summer services has increased over previous years.
- We will be highlighting Linda's work this year in services. Adult RE will use the same themes as the services. The themes could be used for board articles in the newsletter.

- Now is not the best time to join CONNECT. New Haven Rising seems to be a better fit.
- A letter in support of a BLM banner has been signed by about 60 members of the congregation.
- Moving on from Church Folly Lane is a fascinating book on changes within congregations that are about our size. We need to have vibrant shared mission for the congregation. The Mission must speak to people's hearts.

M. Lloyd Joiner will spend some time at both September 17 board and social justice retreats.

iii.G. Jennings presented What was learned from staffing, which is attached at the end of the minutes.

The current budget included an assistant membership coordinator but MT will not fill it because of a shortfall in pledges this year.

The Board asked how will we improve web site and other areas that are important to operations? We could use someone to manage communications but we must prioritize needs. We are moving ahead with web site improvements. Committees all have their own pages.

Is it necessary to spend this much time and detail on monthly reporting? Would it be possible to do it every other month? Could it be handled in the consent agenda if the reports were issued at an earlier date.

Finance Report

K. Garner presented the finance report. There was an issue with access to the site so files were sent to P. Miller to upload.

We are \$1500 short on pledges from last year, however we are \$3800 in the black.

The Balance sheet is preliminary. K. Garner will meet with Antonio in September. She needs to figure out a standard format for a finance report to the board. She is working with M. Losee to learn the treasurer's role. K. Garner is now on the account.

L. deVos joined the meeting at 8:00pm.

Create the Future & Learning

a. Continuation of Interpretation of policy 1.5.2.1

The proposed MT interpretation of policy 1.5.2.1 is attached at the end of the minutes.

Proposal c. could make the accounting complicated. We could do proposal a. but change the percentage. G. Seaman is a proponent of reducing the 25%. \$50K has been the maximum variation of cash flow for USNH. We do have other options to cover emergencies. 25% has provided a "giant" buffer for USNH. Would it be reasonable to ask the finance committee to make a recommendation on the percentage? The Finance committee will meet on August 28.

MOTION – R. Heinrich, to adopt the interpretation in the policy using section a, "In the most conservative interpretation, the liquid funds that are counted toward the 25% operating reserve do not include monies held in temporarily restricted funds (e.g., Emerson, McTigue, Music, Senn, Donations and Memorial Gifts, etc), the Capital Fund, and the Endowment funds."; **SECONDED – P. Myers**;

PASSED unanimously, with 0 opposed, and 0 abstentions

MOTION – R. Heinrich, to ask the finance committee to suggest a number for the percentage for the operating reserves based on that interpretation section a. in 2 months (for the October BoT meeting); **SECONDED – B Marie Daily**;

PASSED unanimously, with 0 opposed, and 0 abstentions

MT members left after at 8:10pm.

b. Discussion of hanging a banner at USNH in support of black lives

D. Gelperin provided background on Social Justice procedures.

L. deVos presented the proposal to hang a banner in support of Black Lives Banner. GA approved an Action of Immediate Witness. Standing on the Side of Love has asked how we will show up in support. Our congregation has taken no position although individuals have taken actions. Sixty members have signed a letter in support of hanging a banner.

Reasons to hang a banner:

1. It is in keeping with our mission and vision
2. UUs are committed to stand, live and work on the side of love.
3. It would invite us to spiritual growth.
4. It calls us to honor our heritage.
5. It telegraphs to visitors of color that we stand with them against racism.
6. It would serve as a source of healing for those experiencing racial trauma.
7. It will remind us to "stay woke."
8. It helps to challenge our sense of privilege.
9. It reminds us that we too are wounded as part of the spiritual web.
10. It invites us to see more and learn more.
11. Years ago anti-racism team was affirmed to help us become anti-racist.

Cons:

1. The Banner might be stolen
2. Some congregants may need support to understand reasons for hanging the banner.
3. Some people might leave.

Forums will be held to allow the congregation to discuss the issue. Periodic discussions would be held after the banner is hung.

Banners have been stolen and vandalism has occurred at some churches. Has it been discussed with Cuddle Time management? Are there any concerns about safety? We believe that our location is removed from areas where safety would be an issue. We worry that some people are afraid to acknowledge their racism. Work must be done to help people learn. We may be missing an opportunity to acknowledge our racism and hang the banner. Standing on the Side of Love has shifted from gays and lesbians to other minorities that are in need of support.

A bulletin board will be put up soon. A service this weekend and another in September. We may need multiple discussion sessions. We may benefit from extending the discussion period to more than 1 month given that it is summer.

Dessert discussion groups were used when we became a welcoming congregation. Sign-up sheets were used and people were invited. Concerns became apparent when representatives were sent to RE classes. All of this was done before the congregation voted on the issue.

White people need to talk to white people about racism.

William Ellery Channing became an abolitionist in the 1820s. He resigned from his church when his board did not allow him to hold a service in memory of his friend.

L. deVos left the meeting.

c. **Reports from working groups**

- i. Governance – Nothing to report.
- ii. Linkage – R. Heinrich reported that the next event will be a small group meeting on membership to be held on Sept. 18 at 9am (the date may be changed).
- iii. Monitoring – Nothing to report.
- iv. Bylaws – P Miller reported that meetings to inform congregational members about proposed changes are listed in the newsletter.

d. **Update on board retreat- Sept 17 or 18 afternoon**

The retreat will be from noon until 5pm. We probably will have a facilitator. The retreat will not involve MT. The focus will be on thinking about mission, visioning, and the future. What does our mission call us to do? The location will be C. Cheney's office in Fair Haven at 20 Grand Avenue. Lunch will be provided.

e. **Update covenant- consider covenant, bring suggested changes to August meeting**

Deferred until the September meeting.

Consent Agenda

a. **July 14 BoT minutes**

MOTION – P. Myers, to approve the consent agenda; **SECONDED – B Pace**;

PASSED unanimously, with 0 opposed, and 0 abstentions.

Distribute Board duties – Deferred until the September meeting.

- a. Sign up for newsletter submissions from the Board – April – July are open
- b. Sign up for opening reading at Board meeting – April – July are open

Thank you's

P. Trotta will send a thank you to Joe Lesiak and Terry Vidal who fixed the podium.

Adjournment

MOTION – D. Gelperin, to adjourn; **SECONDED P. Myers**;

PASSED unanimously, with 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 pm.

Attachments

MT Executive Limitations report

MT Ends report

MT Review of Personnel experiment

MT Interpretation of policy 1.5.2.1

Reaffirmation of Commitment to Racial Justice

Action of Immediate Witness

The Power of the Black Lives Matters Banner

Standing on the Side of Love Open Letter

UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF NEW HAVEN

EXECUTIVE LIMITATIONS MONITORING REPORT TO TRUSTEES

Management Team – May 12, 2016

We are a diverse, multi-generational faith community that

- **inspires lives of compassion and generosity**
- **nurtures spiritual growth**
- **cultivates transformative connections, and**
- **creates a more just world**

1. Recognizing

Policy 1.3: With respect to treatment of staff/volunteers, the Management Team may not act in a manner inconsistent with UU Principles or cause or allow conditions that are inhumane, unfair, or unprofessional.

The Management Team Reports that

- Georgia Jennings no longer acts as the supervisor of Jamie Ross. Rev. Megan has assumed that task. Georgia still graciously donates many hours a week to make USNH run.
- The MT still plans for the membership coordinator position to be filled in the coming year. A job description is being developed.

2. Recognizing

Policy 1.4 ...Management Team may not:

- a. *Recommend compensation and benefits that create obligations over a term longer than revenues can be safely projected.*
- b. *Establish current compensation and benefits that deviate materially from the non-profit, geographic, and professional market for the skills employed*

and

Policy 1.5 ...the Management Team may not...cause or allow fiscal projections that:

- a. *Contain too little detail to enable reasonably accurate projection of revenues and expenses, separation of capital and operational items, and disclosure of planning assumptions.*
- b. *Deviate materially from Board-stated priorities and requirements (see Ends policies) in its allocation among competing fiscal needs.*

and

Policy 1.5.1: The Management Team shall not fail to:

- a. *Use realistic assumptions of income and expenses when creating budgets.*
- b. *Create an annual operating budget for congregational approval at the Annual Spring Meeting of the Society.*

- c. Create an annual capital budget with the means to pay for one to present for congregational approval at the Annual Spring Meeting.*
- d. Consider multi-year financial projections and events that affect future operating income and expenditures and future capital expenditure requirements.*

and

Policy 1.5.2.2: The Management Team shall not fail to establish a capital fund for planned and unexpected facility and equipment expenses.

The Management Team reports that

- **The next Council of Chairs meeting has been scheduled for Thursday, 9/29/16**
- **Planning has begun for next year's stewardship drive.**
- **Changes are being negotiated in ChurchDb so that we can more effectively use it.**
- **The better version of Sign Up Genius has been purchased to assist planning of meetings and events including Columbus House. Training will be occurring at the Council of Chairs meeting.**

3. Recognizing

Policy 1.7 The Management Team shall not allow the assets of the Society to be unprotected, inadequately maintained, inappropriately used, or unnecessarily risked.

And

Policy 1.7.2: The Management Team shall not fail to assure that:

The buildings and grounds and equipment are maintained to allow continued value and use.

The Management Team Reports that

- **Sealtite Roofing has begun work on the foyer roof. More than the expected 3 layers of roof have been found in places, and a steel beam has been found which is embedded in the concrete which will require some revision on the roof. Architect Leland Torrance will be advising us on how to proceed.**

- **The new high efficiency gas fired boiler has been delivered by Environmental Engineering and the old one removed. Installation is due to be completed by 8/31/16.**
- **Additional follow up work on the roof and skylights in the sanctuary will be occurring.**
- **Work on the concrete steps has been completed.**
- **A meeting with builder Alex Babbidge for replacing our front doors is being scheduled.**
- **A new elevator maintenance contract has been signed for the coming year.**

4. Recognizing

Policy 1.8: ...The Management Team may not: Fail to advise the Board if, in the Management Team's opinion, the Board is not in compliance with its own policies on Governance Process and Board-Management Team Delegation.

UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF NEW HAVEN

MINISTER'S ENDS MONITORING REPORT TO TRUSTEES
Management Team – August 11, 2016

We are a diverse, multi-generational faith community that
- **inspires lives of compassion and generosity**
- **nurtures spiritual growth**
- **cultivates transformative connections, and**
- **creates a more just world**

AMONG

USNH is a congregation of welcome and connection, where people of all ages:

- * *Treat one another with respect*
- * *Give and receive support in times of joy, sorrow and transition*
- * *Give generously of ourselves and our resources*
- * *Embrace diversity*
- * *Engage in life-long learning*

- **Jesse Geist and Steve Evans will offer a writing course for 2016-2017 based on the worship themes (see below).**
- **I will offer some sort of monthly conversation on the worship themes. (still TBD)**
- **Small Group Ministry has changed its name to Small Group *meetings* in the hopes of increasing participation. This is reflective of a national shift. Many other local congregations use similar nomenclature.**
- **The Buddy Program will begin early this year (October) in the hopes to build inter-generational connections that will develop throughout the year.**

WITHIN

Respecting different spiritual journeys, the people of USNH find inspiration and a safe place to

- * *Develop our best selves*
- * *Grow spiritually*
- * *Live with more joy and open-heartedness*
- * *Experience a connection to something larger than ourselves*
- * *Find meaning and purpose in our lives*
- * *Articulate our Unitarian Universalist identity*

- **Summer worship attendance has increased for both minister and lay led services**

Attendance by Date

6/26 – 100	7/24 – 120
7/3 – 113	7/31 – 121
7/10 – 71	8/7 – 79
7/17 – 78	

UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF NEW HAVEN

MINISTER'S ENDS MONITORING REPORT TO TRUSTEES
Management Team – August 11, 2016

- The Music Committee has begun working with Linda Pawelek and Bill Braun to prepare for Linda's retirement at the end of this congregational year (2016-2017). The Music Committee will work with the minister and the MT to put together a timeline for the search for either an interim, acting or settled music director.
- The 2016-17 Worship calendar will be arranged by theme:

September – Belonging
October – Faith
November – Spirit/Soul
December – Wonder
January – Action
February – Forgiveness
March – Creativity
April – Earth Justice
May – Curiosity
June – Community

BEYOND

*The people of USNH, together and with our partners, act on our values in the larger world.
We:*

** Advance justice in our community and beyond*

- 40 people attended the Social Justice Roundtable on July 24. Overwhelmingly, attendees were interested in making our social justice work as effective as possible. Folks were interested in focusing our efforts, but also remain invested in individual issues.
- Desire was expressed to follow the Immigration Task Force's example and connect with local justice coalitions. We are in conversation about whether and how to join with the congregation based community organization (CBCO), CONECT which is active in southern Connecticut. We are also in conversation with organizers from New Haven Rising about how to connect our efforts with other local congregations and organizations.
- A Social Justice Retreat will be held on September 17 from 9am-12pm.

** Develop new understanding of ourselves and others through our justice work*

- This Board meeting will include discussion of the possibility of hanging a "Black Lives Matter" banner at USNH. Those present at the SJ Roundtable expressed support for such an effort, as have those who have signed on to a petition circulated by the SJ Council.
-

Here are my thoughts: The Movement for Black Lives (Black Lives Matter) is the civil rights movement of our time. The Movement has just released a policy platform available here: <https://policy.m4bl.org/platform/>

As Unitarian Universalists, we believe in the inherent worth and dignity of all lives. We say Black Lives Matter now because we live in a society that has been built on the devaluing of Black lives, from slave times to today. Life is not a zero sum game. Saying Black Lives Matter does not discount other lives. It makes a statement that contradicts what our society too often says through systemic racism: that Black lives do no matter.

White people are becoming increasingly aware of the inequality, violence, and systemic and institutional racism that Black and Brown people continue to face on a daily basis. In the past two years since the murder of Michael Brown in St. Louis, we have come to understand that Black and Brown people are disproportionately killed in altercations with police. The multiple police shootings of Black men and women is devastating for Black communities and white communities alike.

Our hanging a banner will not end racism. It will not end police violence. It will not reform the criminal justice system. It will send a message to all who enter our doors—ourselves especially—that we are awake, we are aware and we are ready to stand with Black and Brown people in our nation to demand equal justice for ALL people, most especially those who are disproportionately affected by injustice. This is an opportunity for learning and education, for making our commitment manifest, and for action.

Lurline DeVos will present the possibility of hanging a banner and the process by which we will determine if this is a collective action we want to take as a congregation. A forum will be held on September 18, 2016 after the service.

* *Expand our understanding and awareness of social and environmental issues*
(see above)

* *Strengthen Unitarian Universalism*

- I will represent USNH as the minister of the week on Star Island August 13-20.

Minister's Reflections

During my study leave this summer, I read the book *Moving On From Church Folly Lane: The Pastoral to Program Shift* by Rev. Robert Latham. In it, Latham offers observations of characteristics common to congregations right around 300 people who are often stuck in the shift from a "pastoral" congregation to a "program" congregation. The observation that resonated most with me was the import of a strong, shared mission to move a congregation into a vibrant future. I commend the efforts of our Board leadership to engage questions of how we can make our mission come alive for USNH.

Respectfully Submitted by Rev. Megan Lloyd Joiner

August 8, 2016

TO: USNH Board of Trustees

FROM: The Management Team

Subject: Review of personnel experiment 2015-2016

When USNH began implementing Policy Governance in November of 2014, the newly appointed Management Team uncovered a number of areas of concern. Following Rev. Megan's call and enlarging the MT to three lay members in July 2015, the list of items needing focused attention grew. The MT proposed that the Congregational Administrator position be increased to 1.4 FTE for a one-year period. During this time, the work would be divided between two part-time positions. A Director of Operations at .6 FTE would address larger administrative issues, e.g., communication vehicles, facilities management including rentals, stewardship, and the membership program. A second position, Office Manager at .8 FTE, would handle all of the day to day operations and supervise the Sexton. The two would work collaboratively and report to the Minister.

During the year we faced many challenges: Initially four of seven key administrative people were new to their positions at USNH (Minister, both administrative people, one member of MT). This presented a steep learning curve for the team in general. Additionally, the Board and MT were engaged in the early stages of transition to policy governance, we no longer had the support of an associate minister, and we experienced an unexpected medical leave.

Other circumstances supported the Team's ability to address some important concerns: All four members of the MT provided considerable time and support to various areas of organizational need, the bookkeeper left for a new job and a contract accountant was engaged. She has been working to resolve the many issues with our financial record-keeping. A membership coordinator position at 10 hours/week was created and a robust structure to welcome and engage new people was developed. Additionally, working with the minister, a number of key committees began gaining strength.

Consequently, at the end of this one-year staffing period we had only been able to partially implement the staffing model, yet we had overcome many obstacles, thus creating a less complicated structure to administer.

We also learned more about the skills unique to each of the individuals in the two administrative roles. Fortunately, the Office Manager came to us with noteworthy administrative and leadership skills. Thus she has been able to manage more tasks than originally anticipated. This is especially true as more systems become streamlined. Therefore, at the end of the year the Office Manager position was brought to full time along with a title change to Congregational Administrator. The Dir. of Operations position was eliminated due to financial constraints and because this had originally been considered a one-year position. While this employee made some important contributions, we did not feel the need to consider extending this position beyond the fiscal year.

A new part-time position of Assistant to the Congregational Administrator is in the current budget but will not be filled until projected pledges are met. At the moment, with some volunteer help in the office, this delay does not seem critical.

In summary, we greatly appreciate the Board of Trustees providing funds for the additional staffing the MT felt was essential for this initial year of our new ministry. While the plan to have a high level person address high level issues and not become entangled in day to day operations still seems sound, we were not able to fully appreciate this staffing model due to the circumstances noted above.

1.5.2.1 Operating Reserve

The Management Team shall not fail to establish an operating reserve to cover fluctuations in cash flow. The specifications for this reserve are:

- a. The reserve shall be equal to 25% of the annual operating budget.
- b. The approved amount must be deposited in a liquid, conservative, interest or dividend earning account.
- c. The operating reserve shall be secured annually as part of the budgeting process.
 - 1) When in surplus, funds from the operating reserve can be shifted to other reserve funds, or to the operating budget, upon approval from the Board.
 - 2) When in deficit, funds must be shifted from other reserve funds, or the operating budget.

DRAFT:

The equivalent of 3 months of annual operating expenses (25% of the annual operating budget) should, on average, be held in insured bank accounts, including checking, money market and CDs, to cover regular operating expenses and urgent/emergency expenses. It is recognized that cash flows are variable over the course of the year and that there will be months where income exceeds expenses and other months where expenses exceed income. Therefore, the cash reserve may be expected to dip below the 25% number or to exceed it at different times during the year. At least once a year, in July or August following the year end closing of the budget, it shall be determined if available liquid funds are equal to 25% of the approved operating budget for the year. If there is less than this amount, a plan should be put forward for how the amount can be brought up over a reasonable timeframe. It is not envisioned that the approved operating budget would be immediately reduced to restore the 25% operating reserve.

For discussion by MT and BoT:

What monies may be counted toward the 25% operating reserve?

- a. In the most conservative interpretation, the liquid funds that are counted toward the 25% operating reserve do not include monies held in temporarily restricted funds (e.g., Emerson, McTigue, Music, Senn, Donations and Memorial Gifts, etc), the Capital Fund, and the Endowment funds.
 - b. In a less conservative interpretation, the calculation of the 25% could exclude the monies being transferred from restricted funds already in the possession of USNH. For example, if the budget is \$600,000, the 25% amount would be \$150,000. If \$40,000 of income is being transferred from USNH restricted funds, then the 25% amount would be $.25 * (600,000 - 40,000) = \$140,000$.
 - c. In another less conservative interpretation, portions of temporarily restricted funds not planned for expenditure during the FY could be counted toward the 25% amount. However, in the event that the reserve falls below the 25% amount at the end of the FY, there would be the double challenge of planning for the restoration of the full 3 months reserve and making "whole" the temporarily restricted funds which had been diminished.
 - d. Finally, the 25% amount itself could be revisited. Is it important to aim for having a 3 month "cushion," when USNH has other sources of funds that could be called upon at times when urgent/emergency funds
-

are required: the endowment, loans from members, borrowing from restricted funds. What would be the impact of reducing the 25% amount? Would it make us more willing to spend money in amounts that exceed projected income and safe withdrawals from restricted sources?



Reaffirmation of Commitment To Racial Justice

2016 UUA General Assembly Responsive Resolution

WHEREAS, Unitarian Universalist congregations and individuals covenant in our first and sixth principles to affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every person as well as work toward a world community with peace, liberty and justice for all;

WHEREAS, the Unitarian Universalist Association lists as part of its primary purpose "to . . . extend and strengthen Unitarian Universalist institutions and implement its principles";

WHEREAS, in our UUA Bylaws and Statement of Inclusion, we pledge to "replace widening barriers with ever-widening circles of solidarity and mutual respect as well as striving to be an association of congregations that truly welcomes all persons and are committed to structuring congregational and associational life in ways that empower and enhance everyone's participation";

WHEREAS, the Action of Immediate Witness, "*Support the Black Lives Matter Movement*," was passed by the General Assembly in 2015;

WHEREAS, the Black Lives Matter AIW has been frequently referenced as satisfactory proof of our progress towards racial justice;

WHEREAS, the Board of Trustees of the Unitarian Universalist Association, in their 2016 report to the Assembly, called upon the Association to "find the will and the way to do a better job" in the fight for racial justice;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that we hold ourselves accountable to less witness and more action;

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees shall issue a multi-year report on the board, staff, congregational, and denominational responses to Black Lives Matter, and particularly examine the year-to-year growth in these responses, at General Assembly 2017, 2018, and 2019.

Support The Black Lives Matter Movement 2015 UUA General Assembly Action of Immediate Witness

WHEREAS, Unitarian Universalists strive for justice, equity and compassion in human relations;

WHEREAS, Unitarian Universalists have a goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;

WHEREAS, allowing injustice to go unchallenged violates our principles;

WHEREAS, the Black Lives Matter movement has gained powerful traction in conjunction with recent tragic events involving, in particular, police brutality and institutionalized racism that target the black community;

WHEREAS, Tanisha Anderson, Rekia Boyd, Michael Brown, Miriam Carey, Michelle Cusseaux, Shelly Frey, Eric Garner, Freddie Gray, Trayvon Martin, Kayla Moore, Tamir Rice, and Tony Robinson are just a few names of people who were recently killed by the racism that exists in the United States today;

WHEREAS, people of all ages and races are killed by law enforcement, yet black people ages 20-24 are seven times more likely to be killed by law enforcement;

WHEREAS, mass incarceration fueled by for-profit prisons and racially biased police practices drive the disproportionate imprisonment of black and brown Americans;

WHEREAS, the school-to-prison pipeline is an urgent concern because 40% of students expelled from U.S. public schools are black and one out of three black men is incarcerated during his lifetime; and

WHEREAS, we must continue to support the Black Lives Matter movement and Black-led racial justice organizations;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the 2015 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association calls member congregations to action, to become closer to a just world community, and to prevent future incidents of this nature;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 2015 General Assembly urges member congregations to engage in intentional learning spaces to organize for racial justice with recognition of the interconnected nature of racism coupled with systems of oppression that impact people based on class, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability and language;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 2015 General Assembly encourages member congregations and all Unitarian Universalists to work toward police reform and prison abolition (which seeks to replace the current prison system with a system that is more just and equitable); and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 2015 General Assembly recognizes that the fight for civil rights and equality is as real today as it was decades ago and urges member congregations to take initiative in collaboration with local and national organizations fighting for racial justice against the harsh racist practices to which many black people are exposed. No matter who you are, black lives matter, and a system of fair, transformative, and restorative justice that is accountable to communities is something to which each of us has a right. Unitarian Universalists and our greater society have the power to make this happen. Let's do it!

The Power of the Black Lives Matter Banner

“To display the sign, Black Lives Matter, is an act of cultural resistance, of public witness. This action is a symbol of something larger, and a spiritual practice as well—focus, attention, and steadiness. The aim and desire is to keep the spotlight on the complex set of issues affecting Black people in this country, dating from slavery through to 2015 (2016.) Not since the Civil Rights Era has there been such a sustained commitment to make broad change. Black Lives Matter is a statement about that renewed commitment, a vow to keep looking, watching, and struggling.” -- Rev. Louise Green, Minister for Congregational Life, River Road UU Church, Bethesda MD

Spread the word #  



STANDING ON THE SIDE OF

LOVE

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An Open Love Letter to White Unitarian Universalists Struggling With Their Commitment to Black Lives Matter

Dear Friends,

Our commitment to living the values of our faith is being tested. We are standing in the storm of reaction against the Black Lives Matter movement. Now is the time when we must ask ourselves, “do we become even more out and proud for racial justice or do we shrink down in retreat?”

With FOX news leading a media frenzy denouncing the Black Lives Matter movement as a hate group, as terrorists, as anti-white, some of us are retreating from wearing Black Lives Matter buttons and some of us are questioning whether or not to take down the Black Lives Matter banners from our churches.

It would be easy for me to say all of the white UU's who are faltering are just falling back into their white privilege, are sinking back into their liberal white racism. It would be easy for me to distance myself and feel superior. **It is much harder for me to say, that I too, as a white Unitarian Universalist, have been scared. After months of wearing my Black Lives Matter button, I found myself second-guessing whether to wear it.** What if I am challenged at the grocery store or walking in the park with my son. It was much easier to wear my button after the latest police murder of an unarmed Black person. Filled with anger and a desire to “do something”, I wore my button with defiance to racism and a commitment to racial justice.

I held my button in my hand, and I knew that all of this is much bigger than buttons and banners. **This is about breaking a centuries old code of white silence and white consent for anti-Black racist violence and institutional white supremacy and its legal and cultural dispersal of white privilege and white entitlement.** Entitlement to safety and comfort at the expense of people of color having the same. Entitlement to our children not needing to think about the color of their skin or wondering if the color of their skin puts them at risk of socially- and state-sanctioned violence. This is about choosing what side of justice we put our bodies on. And like other white UU's, I don't want to be part of this racist society. I want to stand in the tradition of Unitarian Universalist abolitionists and Civil Rights workers, knowing that even within our faith tradition it has not always been easy. I want to stand on the side of love, like we did on Marriage Equality, even when it was illegal in every state and scary for many of us to be publicly out for LGBT rights.

The Black Lives Matter movement is the leading struggle for racial justice of our times. It is a movement led by Black people who are women, queer, youth, working class, including Black U.S. around the country. It is a movement to end institutional racism and to respect the inherent worth and dignity of all people. It is a movement for collective liberation. And it is a movement that puts a challenge to every white person who believes themselves a proponent of racial equality, every white person inspired by the Civil Rights movement, every white person who believes they would be on the right side of history if an injustice of great magnitude were taking place. It is the challenge to put our values into practice, not just when it is easy, but also when it is hard. It is the challenge to be honest with ourselves and admit that people who espouse All Lives Matter, even in our congregations, aren't always confused, in fact, often they are quite clear. The All Lives Matter reaction, just like the white people who decried Civil Rights as "special rights" in the 1960s, is based in white resentment and anger towards assertions of Black equality and Black humanity, particularly when those assertions disrupt the "normal (racially unequal) order".



Chris Crass stands with L-R Rev. Elizabeth Nguyen, Rev. Osagyefo Sekou and Amanda Weatherspoon at UUA General Assembly 2015 Black Lives Matter Action. Photograph by Chris Walton

We are living in Black Lives Matter times. Times where a movement of everyday people with Black people in the lead is on-the-move, opposing injustices of a great magnitude. To help me have courage in these times, I have created a ritual out of putting on my Black Lives Matter button, and I invite you to create one for yourself, as well. **I put on my Black Lives Matter button as a ritual of re-dedicating myself to daily action for racial justice.**

I hold my button between my hands and pray. I pray for the movement to continue growing more and more powerful. I pray that more and more white people awaken from the nightmare of white supremacy and join the fight for the dream of beloved community. I pray and call forward the names of ancestors from Harriet Tubman and William Lloyd Garrison to Ella Baker and Anne Braden. I pray for the leadership of Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, Opal Tomseti, Elandria Williams, Carla Wallace, Tufara Muhammad, Meredith Martin-Moates, Rev. Osagyefo Sekou, Rev. Ashley Horan, Leslie Mau, Ash-Loe Henderson, and the many others who are building this deeply life-affirming movement, everyday. I pray that the racist nightmare against communities of color ends. I reflect on the moments I'm scared wearing this button, recognize how minuscule it is, and meditate on the daily devastation of anti-Black racism on the lives of Black people in my life and in society. And then I pray for my four year old son, River, and his little one-month old

brother, August. **I remember how when I grew up, the most vocal people in the white community speaking about race, were racists. I pray that my sons grow up with courageous, passionate, visionary, white anti-racists leaders in every part of this society. I pray that white UUs, in the hundreds of thousands act in the tradition of white UU Civil Rights martyrs Viola Liuzzo and James Ray, and not join in the All Lives Matter reaction and act from the tradition of white racism that killed them.**

I re-dedicate myself to actively support UU congregations and members around the country who are standing on the side of Black Lives Matter through banners, weekly vigils, fundraising for Black-led racial justice organizing in their community, inviting Black Lives Matter leaders to preach at their pulpit, writing op-eds for the local newspaper, holding press conferences when their banners are vandalized, and bringing their spiritual and religious leadership into the streets for marches and civil disobedience.

I spoke with a UU minister of a majority white congregation who has had their Black Lives Matter banner vandalized multiple times and who have been in the national press as a result. Tears filled my eyes as I listened to her talk about how the congregation is struggling through fear of feeling under attack, confronting their white privilege, and despite the racist backlash, staying true to their values. **We talked about this being the moment for her congregation, and white UUs throughout our denomination, to either open their hearts more fully and act with courage, or move back into white silence, white consent and white privilege. These are the times that our church was intended for, to help us act with courage in the face of fear and hate. These are the times for us to use our spiritual traditions and rituals and act as a faith, to join the leading movement for racial justice of our time and weather the storm together. We must weather the storm, so we can experience the rainbow of collective liberation. And around our faith today, there are tens of thousands of UUs - Black UUs, UUs of color, white UUs - who are on-the-move for Black Lives Matter. Our church is in the streets and our faith calls us into prophetic action. This is our mission in practice.**

In faith,



Chris Cross

Want to read more? [Click here to read and download ten lines](#) for White UUs taking action in support of the Black Lives Matter Movement from Chris.

Chris Cross is a longtime organizer working to build powerful working class-based, feminist, multi-racial movements for collective liberation. Chris has worked extensively with Unitarian Universalists and in the process, found his spiritual home. He has since delivered sermons and