

Unitarian Society of New Haven  
Minutes of the Board Meeting of the Board of Trustees  
August 14, 2014

*Accepted September 11, 2014*

Board Members Present: Suzanne Miller, Holly Hawkins, Dan Gelperin, Rod Groff, Alison Cunningham, Merrily Kaplan, Peggy Rae, Mary Donohue, Mary Losee, Russ Heinrich

Board Members Absent: David Jones

Also Present: Fritz Hudson, Jean Rosenthal, Carol Holloman, Sarah Beaulieu

M. Donohue called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and P. Rae recorded the minutes. A quorum of Board Members was present, and the meeting proceeded with M. Donohue presiding.

Report from Personnel Committee

Personnel Committee members J. Rosenthal (Chair), C. Holloman, and S. Beaulieu spoke to the Board about (1) Associate Minister Marion Visel's departure, and (2) Administrative Staffing.

(1) J. Rosenthal reported on the Committee's conversation with Marion Visel regarding her activities as Associate Minister and on how her departure may impact congregational life at USNH. The Committee's complete report (Notes on Conversation with Marion Visel July 26, 2014) is attached to these Minutes.

Marion's responsibilities fell within three areas: pastoral care, Small Group Ministry, and spiritual development. More than half of her 20 hours/week work time was devoted to pastoral care, either through direct contact with USNH members in need of help and support or through her support of activities by lay groups such as the Lay Ministry Team and caregiver groups. As staff liaison to the Small Group Ministry, she provided guidance to the Steering Committee and facilitated the formation and function of the groups. She also organized and led discussions, workshops, and retreats on various topics relating to spiritual development.

Marion's departure leaves gaps in these areas as well as in less visible areas of administration where she provided structural support and organization. In addressing those gaps over the next few months, the Committee recommends assessing what lay groups need in the way of pastoral support and developing a realistic plan for providing critical pastoral care and support that doesn't overburden the interim and incoming minister.

(2) Jean presented the Personnel Committee's assessment of current administrative staffing, which is detailed in its August 12 report to the Board, Update on Administration, attached to these Minutes. A number of new systems have been put into place this past year that increase efficiency and accuracy, particularly in the area of finances, and written

procedures will help make the job of Congregational Administrator more manageable in the coming year. However, understaffing remains a major challenge. Volunteers assist in administrative tasks, but without additional paid staff or recruitment of additional volunteers, USNH's administrative support will continue to fall short of what's needed to match congregational expectations.

During discussion, it was noted that there are certain administrative tasks that must be handled by the paid staff for the sake of accuracy, consistency with business practices, and adherence to legal requirements.

It was also noted that there needs to be clarification of what the Congregational Administrator should and should not be expected to take care of when providing support to committees. In light of the current staffing situation, committees may need to be told to handle more of their own administrative tasks.

R. Heinrich suggested that a daily log be kept at the office, and then analyzed to see how time is spent; such an analysis could reveal whether or not there are inefficiencies, too many things to do, and/or priorities that need to be reordered. Jean responded that such a log had been kept last year, although it has not been analyzed in this way.

M. Donohue thanked Jean and the other Personnel Committee members for their work, and the three departed the meeting at 7:20 pm.

#### Consent Agenda

Approval of Minutes of 7/15/14 and 7/24/14 Board Meetings.

**MOTION** by S. Miller to approve; **SECONDED** by M. Kaplan; **PASSED** unanimously, with two abstentions.

#### Board Liaisons to Committees

M. Donohue reminded the Board that USNH bylaws require the presence of Board members on certain committees. Board members agreed that it would be valuable to have a liaison to the Building and Grounds Committee, as well as to continue to have representation on the Personnel and Nominating Committees.

M. Kaplan agreed to be liaison to Building and Grounds. No Board member was appointed to the Personnel Committee, but M. Kaplan will attend the Committee's next meeting, scheduled for late August. It is expected that D. Jones will agree to continue serving on the Nominating Committee.

There was some discussion of the Board liaison's role with respect to the Buildings and Grounds Committee and how the Board's role would change under Policy Governance. It was agreed that M. Kaplan should familiarize Committee members with the Charge to the Facilities Committee drawn up by E. Melcher and the Board last February, which spells out expectations in some detail. F. Hudson explained that under Policy Governance, direct oversight of matters having to do with Buildings and Grounds would not be the province of the Board but instead would fall to the executive/executive team, who would

also be responsible for deciding on structure. He suggested this can be a year of transition for us.

### Board Covenant Development

The Board began the process of developing its covenant for the year, and members contributed many ideas. These are to be written up by M. Donohue and posted on the Board website to remind us of what we said and to be revised as time goes by, if we wish.

### Congregational Meeting Dates

The Fall Meeting is tentatively scheduled for Sunday, Oct. 26, to permit timely congregational approval of a Ministerial Salary and Compensation Package to be used in the negotiation phase of the Ministerial Search; salary and benefit information must be included in the job posting at the end of October.

The Annual Meeting is tentatively scheduled for Sunday, June 14, 2015.

### Board Goals for 2014-2015

The Board discussed goals for the coming year. Preliminary brainstorming generated a number of suggestions, particularly in the areas of policy governance and right relations. M. Donohue will write up notes for review, and the Board will continue its discussion at its September meeting.

### Budget Meetings with the Congregation

The Board discussed holding cottage meetings with the congregation in mid-October and early November in order to educate USNH members about the budget situation and to have a dialogue about solutions. It was decided that a subgroup of the Board will work out ideas for how the meetings could go and present these to the Board at its September meeting. The subgroup members are D. Gelperin, H. Hawkins, and R. Heinrich.

### Other Business

Thank you notes will be sent to members of the Lay Ministry Team for organizing Marion Visel's farewell lunch.

### Executive Session and Adjournment

The Board adjourned its regular meeting at 9:02 pm, then met in Executive Session to discuss Ministerial Search Committee nominations. The Executive Session was adjourned at 9:15 pm.

## **Attachment: Personnel Committee Report, 8/14/14 Board Meeting**

NOTES ON CONVERSATION WITH MARION VISEL July 26, 2014

For August 14, 2014 Board Meeting Unitarian Society of New Haven

As Marion Visel is leaving USNH, Board President Mary Donahue asked the Personnel Committee to describe the activities of Marion Visel and summarize her role in congregational life.

The Committee met with Marion on July 8 to look back at her experience with us. Since many of her activities were not visible to all members, we've described below detailed notes of our conversation, to help define activities and roles going forward.

### BACKGROUND

- Marion Visel had initially been part of the congregation as a community minister, affiliated with USNH but not on USNH payroll. She came on the USNH staff under our Partnership for Growth grant from the UUA, which provided resources for USNH to increase staff to encourage congregational growth. She initially was an employee hired by the board. Subsequently she became an associate minister, called on by the congregation.
- Specific assignments of responsibilities were worked out by the Senior Minister and Marion, looking for areas that needed more support.
- As a called minister, Marion's assignments were not defined by the Board. However, the Personnel Committee did coordinate her bi-annual reviews by congregational members.

### ROUGH ASSESSMENT OF TIME FOR ACTIVITIES (20 hours/week)

- Pastoral care 50% or more
- Small Group Ministry 20-25%
- Spiritual development 15-20%

### RESPONSIBILITIES – PASTORAL CARE

- Marion ensured that USNH members were connected and supported by the congregation, particularly in times of particular need or crisis. She was the first contact, sharing with the senior ministry issues, assessments, ongoing support, and potential follow-up for those needing help.
- As she became aware of individuals who were "going through something" or for health/aging reasons were unable to attend USNH regularly, she provided personal visits and connections to ongoing support and resources. She followed up regularly and made sure that these individuals remained part of the USNH.
- Marion supported lay activities for members who provide pastoral care for each other, including the Lay Ministry team, Caring Connection activities, as well as Joys and Sorrows, the About Us segment of newsletters, cards in the social hall, and other outreach. She provided or supported elder support and caregiver groups.
- Marion provided short-term spiritual counseling to congregation members, helping individuals define their personal challenges and goals.

**Attachment: Personnel Committee Report, 8/14/14 Board Meeting (cont.)**

**Update on Administration - Unitarian Society of New Haven  
Personnel Committee Report for Board of Trustees  
August 12, 2014**

USNH made progress in its administrative functions last year, creating and documenting systems to make the congregation's work more efficient and accurate – but we are not yet at a resting place. Even with systems defined and in place, we have not reached the point where available administrative support matches congregational expectations.

**DETAILS OF ADMINISTRATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF 2013-2014**

- Congregational Administrator Tisha Ferguson, interim minister Emily Melcher, Board Treasurer Greg Seaman, and Finance Chair Sandy Frawley have created and implemented systems to make it easier for critical financial transactions to be accurate, timely, and verifiable, including payroll, tax and pension payments, and bank deposits.
- Tisha Ferguson, Bookkeeper Leslie Hueffman, Greg Seaman and others have created a new installation of QuickBooks, which will allow for more accurate financial records, including details of payroll.
- Tisha Ferguson, Board Secretary Peggy Rae, and others have installed and verified information on a new congregational database, which will allow for more accurate and more efficient tracking of activities, donations, and contact information of members and friends of the congregation.
- Tisha Ferguson oversaw bidding and installation of a new telephone system and printer/copier and continued oversight over building and grounds.
- Volunteers and staff are developing a new website, designed to be more useful for members, friends, and newcomers looking for a congregational home.
- Many volunteers have taken on administrative tasks, such as Pam Niles' coordination of Sunday morning activities, bulletin boards, etc.

**CHALLENGES FOR 2014-2015**

- The development of written procedures and growing familiarity with new systems will make the job of Congregational Administrator more manageable, but we expect USNH to continue to be understaffed without additional staff or recruitment of additional volunteers.
- We depend on a number of lay individuals who take responsibility for a set of administrative functions.
- The impact on administrative requirements from Marion Visel's departure is unknown.
- A number of congregational functions could benefit from additional ongoing volunteer or paid administrative support, such as membership coordination, newsletter and communications editor, showing occasional rental space. In addition, many lay functions need administrative as well as ministerial support. Without resources for those additions, we will need to share reasonable expectations for administrative support with the congregation and lay committees.
- The Personnel Committee would like help in recruiting one or new committee members.

*Personnel Committee (See Annual Report for overview of Personnel Committee activities.)  
– Jean Rosenthal, Chair; Peggy Rae, Board Liaison, Sarah Beaulieu, Carol Holloman*