

**Universalist Church of Nashua, NH (UUCN)  
Summer Retreat of the Board of Trustees**

August 28, 2021

*Meeting held outside and socially distanced, due to COVID-19*

**Final Minutes** by Jodie K. Holway, Clerk of the Board of Trustees

**Reviewed by** Victoria Agnew, Cecile Bonvouloir, Burns Fisher, Lindsey Sylvester, Brenna Woods

**Meeting Attendees:** Victoria Agnew, Caro Barschow, Cecile Bonvouloir, Burns Fisher, Jodie K. Holway (Clerk), Lindsey Sylvester (Treasurer), Brenna Woods (President), and Rev. Allison Palm

**Excused:** Andy Capen, Roy Goodman, Lindsey Hedrick (Vice President)

Full Agenda: Appendix A

1. **Welcome and Check-In**
2. **Team Building and Building on Story Telling**, Brenna Woods
  1. Plans this year to tell stories at each Board meeting about the congregation, not individuals
  2. Each of us write down 3 little-known truths about ourselves, then we'll guess whose is whose
3. **Talking about Trauma**, Rev. Allison
  1. UUA video for us to watch: [Dual-Platform Future: Trauma Response and COVID](#)
  2. Each of us and whole congregation are traumatized over the past year-plus of pandemic
    - i. How might we each react when we can come together again
    - ii. Might be overly-high expectations, might be overly-sensitive, might be anything
4. **Preschool Conversations**, Brenna Woods
  1. History of our preschool, Children's Winter Garden at White Wing School (CWGWWS)
    - i. Started 62 years ago, to fill the gap of kindergarten in Nashua
    - ii. We all knew each other, Lori Conrad was the last principal who was a church member
    - iii. Lori's husband was superintendent of Nashua school district; both very involved
    - iv. Then when the first non-member was hired as its leader, the drift apart started
    - v. Tension developed, about sharing space for Sunday religious education etc.
    - vi. In the 80's there was lots of friction over money
      1. Preschool didn't pay their rent, but we weren't even allowed to call it rent
      2. They gave a yearly contribution that was always smaller than we'd have liked
    - vii. The treasurer wasn't trusted
  2. Today the church does the payroll for the preschool, they are part of us
    - i. But doesn't acknowledge they're part of a church, which strikes Caro as strange
    - ii. Preschool board no longer has any parents of preschoolers
      1. One parent left its board due to requirement for 5-year-olds to mask
      2. The other parent was just hired as assistant teacher at the preschool!
    - iii. The teachers are all new to the situation, don't know the history
  3. This year we DO NOT plan to make a decision about our future relationship
    - i. Instead we decided to put in more effort to build our relationship this year
    - ii. We hope they will do the same

- iii. Planning a conversation with a few people on each side, like speed dating rounds
- 4. What will Brenna tell them about ourselves? We'll discuss today in two breakouts:
  - i. What the church has accomplished that we're most proud of
    - 1. We always give away our weekly offering collection, average \$3K monthly
    - 2. We reached out to LGBT community and continue to do so
    - 3. We run monthly community suppers for anyone who comes
      - a. We're not evangelizing or proselytizing
      - b. We're just respectfully feeding people, we're just here for you
    - 4. We shift to meet the audience where it is, we walk the walk
      - a. Changed ourselves to accommodate the intention for young children
    - 5. We value OWL, and we focus on teaching kids as they develop
    - 6. We teach Neighboring Faiths to kids about what is in the world, we teach about people and tolerance
    - 7. We have 7 principles and 6 sources, not only where we come from but also where we learn from
    - 8. Our music program is fantastic!!
  - ii. What the preschool may not know but should know
    - 1. What do we teach in RE? Maybe more overlap with NYAEC than they'd expect
    - 2. We're not dogma-centered, we're child-development centered
      - a. The bible isn't the curriculum
      - b. It'd be awesome if everyone in the world went through the curriculum
      - c. Note they come from a Baptist background
    - 3. Our Religious Educator Sadie Kahn-Greene oversees the whole lifespan
      - a. UUs take a developmental approach to learning
      - b. We have different rites of passage than Jewish and Christian
      - c. It's a lifelong journey , not prescribed, we're more eclectic
    - 4. We're so different that the church voted to offer OWL (@#@??)
  - iii. What makes us stand out, either good or bad, to get to know them and them us
    - 1. Tell about UUism in general: there's a lack of dogma
    - 2. We go beyond the average amount of welcoming
      - a. We did welcome a sex offender by supporting them to come to services, but accommodating to be sure everyone's safe while they attended
      - b. But for people of color we're unfortunately less good at bringing in diverse congregants, and we're not as good at keeping
      - c. Or maybe it's not welcoming, we're affirming to our attendees
    - 3. Numbers show that UUs invite a person to come to church with them every 7 years – we're not promoting our faith very strongly
    - 4. We show up for social justice

## 5. Business Catching Up

- 1. When to meet? Agreed on second Thursdays monthly
- 2. Building our Vision, Lindsey Hedrick
- 3. Nomination Committee Liaisons, Brenna Woods

4. Cemetery Heads Up, Rev. Allison
5. Naming our Goals, Brenna Woods
  
6. **Anti-Racism and Oppression**, Rev. Allison
  1. Everyone read this [White Supremacy Culture handout](#), by Tema Okun
    - i. Breakout groups, read about each of these 15 characteristics
    - ii. Discuss where does this show up in our church, or even in our Board?
    - iii. And how would antidotes show up in an anti-racist way in our congregation
  2. Perfectionism
    - i. Compliment and appreciation ongoing, not just once a year for RE teachers
    - ii. Give people opportunity to lead and make mistakes and learn from it
  3. Urgency
    - i. Not taking enough time in advance to make stronger decisions
  4. Defensiveness
    - i. "How do we protect our perceived power?"
    - ii. But if we never talk about our power, self-effacement plus elitism = conflict-avoidance
    - iii. Need to make space for people of other backgrounds in our church
    - iv. Hard to work on this when not immersed in multicultural environment like most areas of New Hampshire, you're challenged to work on biases you may not know you have
    - v. Ministerial search 7 years ago, the team went to a conference on Categorical Thinking
      1. The lowest area we could envision for a minister was disability
      2. We couldn't envision this for our minister, but we are not welcoming here
      3. We have no wheelchair access for physical handicap, cannot envision a minister with mental health issues, or a speech impediment...
  5. Quantity vs. Quality
    - i. we are showing good quality with check in/out, covenant, policies, ends statements
    - ii. In this meeting we opened up space to process trauma etc., and we intentionally pushed business to later in the meeting
  6. Worship of the Written Word
    - i. "If it's not in the memo/minutes, it doesn't exist"
    - ii. Access to the UU language
      1. For instance, Brenna went a Bylaws, Budget and Brownies meeting
      2. Expecting it to be informative and fascinating
      3. Found herself angry, it was all about words and nitpicking
    - iii. Our policies use high vocabulary
      1. The Monitoring Committee worked to "dumb it down" which itself is a horrible self-effacing way to think of yourself and others
      2. If you try to read the policies you may think, what have I gotten myself into?
      3. People rarely have enough level of comfort just ask what they mean
  7. Only One Right Way
    - i. "Once people see the right way that's the only way"
    - ii. Robert's Rules of Order is THE way to run a meeting
    - iii. Outreach collection talked about shifting to a few-weeks, recognize what's arbitrary vs. what's helping us move forward (@#@ hat was this?)

- iv. We always value Bob Sampson for his recollection/representation of our history
  - 1. Why do we only value the length of time he's spent in the building
  - 2. We shouldn't pigeonhole him to contribute in this way, just like all of us
- v. Another mic-drop by Victoria: "This Board is woke, but we're still in bed" !!!!!
- 8. Paternalism
  - i. Do people know how decisions are made in our church?
    - 1. Many people don't know; some care and others don't
  - ii. Looking at Policy Governance
    - 1. Some of it fits into the paternalistic system, others into the anti-racist
    - 2. How well is our clear system known? It's clear but how can we be more transparent for people who do want to know
  - iii. What does it look like to reach out for feedback to people who would be affected
    - 1. We can ask for feedback in more ways in future
- 9. Either-Or Thinking
  - i. Seems like white supremacy can't be Both-And
  - ii. Illustrated by our desire for the Preschool to be strictly classified:
    - 1. Either a renter or part of us. Get rid of the gray area to correctly label it.
  - iii. Rush to decision-making, to eliminate the gray area.
    - 1. Would sacrifice personal relationships to get the decision done.
    - 2. No, this year we'll live in this gray area to gather info and develop the potential of the relationships to see where it brings us
- 10. Agree to do the other 7 together next time, with all our board members

## 7. Survey Data Analysis – Considering questions

- 1. Questions to consider for all of these survey responses
  - i. What did you find surprising?
  - ii. What did not surprise you?
  - iii. What is your biggest take away from these results?
  - iv. How can we use the results to guide us moving forward?
- 2. These questions were all developed 2.5 years ago in 2019
- 3. 46% people don't participate in leadership.
  - i. Do they think Rev. Allison does it all herself? Yes, probably!
  - ii. Nominating Committee says We asked 5 people to be a given role and each says no
    - 1. When people ask you to do something, this gap in leadership is why!
  - iii. People may think they need to wait to be asked
    - 1. Only 15 people say they've never had leadership role, in the last year vs. ever
  - iv. Lots of people are tired, we recycle these same leaders too many times
  - v. When you take a leadership opportunity, you're willing to grow and to learn more about UUism – it's a bit concerning only 63% felt that UU provides growth as a person
  - vi. See the question after the leadership question –the words you hear is that they're tired; nobody complains about the work nor the people they work with
  - vii. Else the answer means they didn't learn anything – "They're already pretty fly!" (another mic-drop line by Victoria)
- 4. Happy that slightly more people this year seem to appreciate the efforts to educate our kids

- i. Maybe because we're always in Zoom, more people see the Wonderbot
- ii. Now parents are forced to be involved with kids' normal school education on the computer, so maybe they're more tuned-in
- iii. And the art that we share in Zoom services, and driving the At-Home kits to houses we see the kids eagerly waiting to receive it
- iv. Now we flash on the screen what are the kids' options now
  - 1. Back in the in person days, one could bypass the table and not know about it
- v. Last year people just wondered, how can I even know how effective it is?
  - 1. Last year comments said I don't have kids so I just don't have any idea
- 5. One free-text comment asking for services to meet the needs of older folks
  - i. They understand the child focus but need to meet our needs too
  - ii. Rev. Allison 100% agrees but that we need volunteers to do it
  - iii. BUT she says we did ask for some help to make this happen
    - 1. Nobody will organize them – it's a bit like pulling teeth to get people to help
    - 2. Need help since Rev. Allison is full-out busy on zoom and multiplatform
  - iv. Would love to do an evening service, once-monthly in a different style
    - 1. But this cannot be fully minister-led
    - 2. She did it for a year but it was too hard for the attendance
    - 3. Not many people came: first 40, then dwindled to 3 in the chapel
  - v. Older group finds it harder to get used to the kids' area due to the prior experience
    - 1. But new members won't find this bad at all
  - vi. She will do this outdoor in-person this fall, this is a great plan
    - 1. But if it doesn't happen it's not that I'm ignoring it
    - 2. It's that I'm not getting help – and everyone is tired
  - vii. Or she could lead one fewer service on Sunday morning – is that sufficient priority??
    - 1. Would need buy-in from the congregation or Board
  - viii. AND what would be the topic, what do they expect?
    - 1. She's not Don Rowley, cannot deliver a 25 min sermon with footnotes
    - 2. Would need a different minister if this were the desired job
  - ix. Contemplative service could work to fill the bill?
    - 1. Would be different than what we normally do on sun mornings
    - 2. More instrumental, more silence, could work
  - x. Ties in with handling trauma if our services could be contemplative
  - xi. Caro is impressed with our questions! Expressed appreciation for this team.
- 8. Wrapping Up Story Telling**
- 9. Check Out and Closing Words**