

First Unitarian Society in Newton
OPERATIONS COUNCIL + COMMITTEE CHAIRS JOINT MEETING
Alliance Room
11/2/13

Present (in order of seating):

Susan Bartlett - Ops Council Chair
Pat Rohan - Services Auction
Laurel Farnsworth - Buildings & Grounds; Green Sanctuary
Alan Cody - Ops Council, Adult RE, Finance
Alice Wood - Adult RE
Judy Zacek - Membership
Cathy Morocco - Trustee
Nancy DuVergne-Smith - Communications
Barbara Deck - Annual Budget Drive
Kate Mason - Worship, Denominational Affairs
Jonathan Lilienfeld - Budget Drive, Holiday Trees
Andrea Kelley - Ops Council
Kim Shanks - RE Council
Perry Montrose - Director of Lifelong Religious Education
Jeannie Chaisson - Ops Council, Ushers

Susan chaired. The format was to go around the room, each person reporting in turn.

Pat: The Services Auction will be the last Saturday in January 25, 2014. He points out that, as a major fundraiser, it needs everyone's support. Pat would also like to recruit younger folks to be on the committee this year. Planning will shift into full gear after the Holiday Fair.

Laurel: The biggest B&G single project now is organ repair. It will not suffice to do a little at a time. It needs to be taken apart and re-constructed. A capital campaign may be needed to fund this project. The last capital campaign was 10 years ago.
Another issue is that FUSN is not very handicapped accessible. Need upgrades include an elevator and a handicap ramp in front of the sanctuary at the chancel. Under consideration is a digital organ console that is on a tether so it could be moved when not needed. This would allow reconfiguring the chancel space so someone in a wheelchair could speak from the pulpit. A capital goal would be \$1.5 - 2 million.

Alan also suggests setting up a charitable annuity trust.

Green Sanctuary: Several steps are required for a congregation to be UUA certified as a Green

Sanctuary. It takes two years to be certified as a candidate. Also, it is necessary to propose 12 projects in certain areas and then implement them. It is a labor-intensive and is intended to be a three-year process, so that the changes are integrated into the community long term. An example is the rainwater retention system FUSN has instituted. FUSN is almost at the point of certification, with two more projects to do. Laurel expresses many thanks to Carrie Vanderlaan for her diligence in Green Sanctuary work.

Two steps remain for full accreditation: One concerns social justice in an urban setting. Mark Leister suggests establishing a community garden program in Roxbury and recruiting youth to work there. Mark Antonucci proposed a project in Waltham. Any such project needs to get UUA approval. Another step, unrelated to social justice, remains to be completed, as well.

Additional projects that Laurel reports: A new roof was provided over the flat roof this summer; and the hopes are that there will be no more leak. Two classroom ceilings were re-done. If anyone sees brown stains on ceilings, please let her know. FUSN is also working on energy efficiency, such as an attempt to get solar panels on the roof, but space does not permit.

Laurel also proposes setting up a committee to research getting rid of FUSN's commercial refrigerators and freezers. Cost for repairs have been more than \$10K over 10 years. She suggests it might be better to have regular residential refrigerators in a row, with their lower repair costs. Also, the industrial condensers put out a great deal of heat and are energy inefficient, even though they are less than 10 years old.

Judy Zacek says folks use the big refrigerators and freezers quite a bit and that they are especially needed for big events. That amount of capacity is necessary.

Alan: Finance: Alan reviewed routine monthly reports, such as operations statements (spending vs. budgeted). Anything that stands out gets flagged; and utility usage is tracked. Each year, Finance prepares quarterly reconciliations of cash in the bank compared to income/loss for the year. Semi-annually, they do a statement of the flow of funds, excluding Ferry Beach and Sandy Island, which are handled separately. Kevin McCormick is working on a 5-year long-range projection to present to the Board in January, when the process of budgeting for next year begins. Usually, there are three big meetings with B&G, RE, and the Personnel Policy committee that help shape the budget. Alan reminds us that costs for next year will increase, as the new Assistant Minister will be on staff for the full year.

Alice: Adult Ed: Alice mentions that this is the 4th year since the passing of Bob Zeeb, former leader of Adult RE; and the catalogue is still influenced by his efforts. Classes are available in four areas: Liberal Religious Tradition; Faith and Doubt - theology; Faith & Practice - social justice and action; Spiritual Practice and Inner Life.

The committee develops and coordinates the programs and scheduling. One area of concern is getting folks to sign up in advance. If there are not enough sign-ups, sessions are cancelled, even though many intend to come at the last minute.

Alice & Perry recently attended a UU Workshop on religious education at the Walker Center.

“Topic Tuesdays”: This new program focuses on issues uncovered by a FUSN survey and lay ministry input. There are two topics for each semester: Fall = Divorce; Care for the Caregivers. Spring = Loss of a Loved One; Downsizing. For each topic, there are two sessions. The first consists of presenters; and the second is follow-up discussion.

Judy Z: Bill Ducett and she co-chair the Membership Committee. Both were also on the committee that helped select Rev. Megan Cefalu, the Assistant Minister coming in January, whose main area will be membership.

Last year, there were 45 new members, which may be attributable, at least in part, to Kristen Cleveland’s terrific job in that role.

Judy attended all but one of the summer services. She reports good attendance and that two newcomers formally joined after coming to summer services.

Additional items:

The new UU class was well attended a few weeks ago.

The workshop on bullying was open to the larger community.

There is a new member pot luck this weekend and a New member Sunday this month.

Judy points out that there are many who attend and even pledge but do not officially join, and the committee encourages people to join as “full members” of FUSN. The committee also feels that everyone should encourage new membership, not just committee members.

Current membership may be 375 - 400, which is a different number from pledging units. Pat says Fran can generate lists of people by categories: members, friends, newsletter only, etc.

Cathy: Attending to represent the Board of Trustees. No report.

Nancy: She reports that Lesley Sneddon has joined the Communications Committee. It is difficult to get new members on this committee, because people see it as a big commitment. She suggests that people could take on task-based roles. A sample role could be to coordinate where information has been sent, for maximum efficiency and results.

Additional items:

Nancy points out that Megan Cefalu will be part of the Comm. Comm.

Communications will encourage individuals to submit news to Fran for newsletter.

The committee would like to create Event Outreach pages -- a guide on publicizing FUSN events to the community. They would also like to offer a model press release, for sharing news with the media, including live online links to 10-12 media outlets. These would be for events only. A goal is to “regularize” publicity, for maximum efficiency and outreach.

Greg Sullivan is training FUSN committee representatives to do their own web pages. The FUSN Yellow Pages will move from an outside page to FUSN's website. There's also a need to improve the FUSN online calendar.

The Membership Committee will offer three RE sessions in the spring: Facebook (Joyce Pollack, Kevin Osborne); Using filters in email; and How to publicize your event, external and internal.

It was mentioned that Fran does not get FUSN Business emails. Judy suggests it would be beneficial for her to do so.

Alan asks if it is ok to open RE classes to the outside community. Previously, Kristen did this. Such a procedure would need to be coordinated with staff.

Judy says that no one on Comm. Comm. is specifically assigned to do external PR. Andrea Kelley says she will distribute previously-written material about FUSN events to the media. Pat says such messages need to be cleared before they go out and that it may be Erin who needs to sign off. Andrea says maybe Megan might want to be involved, and that she (Andrea) will do it in the meantime. Once Megan is here, it can be discussed.

Barbara: The Annual Budget Drive is getting into gear with Jonathan Lilienfeld and Sharon Siskind as co-chairs. They have already talked with Bruce Henderson, Josie Green, and Bonnie McDonald, who were so successful previously. A title under consideration is "Thanks to U." It was pointed out that FUSN still needs to identify a chair of the Fellowship Dinner.

Jonathan: One proposal is to continue parties in people's homes.

This year, they are seeking a higher increase in the goal. Alan points out that one person closed the gap in last year's fundraiser with a big check, but that person has left the area; and we don't have as many big donors. He says a 2% increase will not meet budget requirements.

Jonathan says that 2 years ago, there was a 15% increase in the goal. Last year's increase was 10%. Perhaps more realistic this year might be a 6% increase.

Alan suggests tapping into the general fundraising community for ideas. For example, invite people to "sponsor" the Fellowship Dinner, an idea that had been previously rejected. He adds that someone could make a gift in honor of someone or something.

Nancy points out that there's an "MIT Loyalty Society" for donors who give 5 years in a row. It is not amount-based. Alan says Cornell does this, too.

Identifying different levels of donors will *not* be considered, as it feels contrary to FUSN's goals.

Jonathan says another option is to have a Speakers Bureau, and funds raised from talks would go to FUSN.

Alan says memorial gifts go into unrestricted funds as "Other Donations," unless specifically designated otherwise. Pat says there is some question about this, according to what Faith and Fran have said. Fran controls minister's discretionary fund. Research is needed, as to where

“in memory of” donations are categorized.

Kate: The Worship Committee currently has five members, active throughout the year. They would like to have a young person on the committee.

Summer is a very busy time, and they are proud of the success of summer worship services. Summer services are mostly expense free, except for some music costs. There was good attendance, with new people coming in and staying. The committee was pleased with the offerings and is confident the coming summer will be of similar high quality.

Currently, there are three Lay-led winter services, one each on Ferry Beach and Sandy Island weekends; and Cheryl Lloyd, FUSN’s Community Minister, preaches at least once yearly, November 17th this year. Other “assigned” services include the ingathering water service in September, two Music Sundays, intergenerational services, Christmas, Thanksgiving, and UUA Sunday. The Solstice, Wheel of Life, and Zambia services do not occur every year. Alan says the monthly Vespers services draw people in from the community.

Alice says that if FUSN doesn’t have a yearly Wheel of Life service, “milestones” information should be shared another way in the “off” years. Pat says it would be a good idea anyway, since not everyone attends the Wheel of Life service. Perhaps it could be published somewhere. Nancy suggests the business email list. Kate suggests a newsletter insert.

Kate now volunteers to take on the Denominational Affairs representative role, that connects FUSN with the district and headquarters. FUSN pays the UUA and district for each FUSN member. It was mentioned that FUSN has good representation in the UUA, especially at General Assembly. Nancy invites Kate to give her district and UUA information, which she’ll put on FUSN’s website. Perry suggests we also let congregants know of FUSN participation in UU events and activities.

Jonathan: Holiday Trees: Ron Mayville and Ron Savage are also on the committee. FUSN offers 420 trees in various sizes. All trees were sold last year. The Board decided that this year’s sign say “Christmas” trees, rather than “Holiday” trees, due to community input.

Andrea: She points out that each Ops Council member is a liaison to several committees, facilitating communication and offering assistance, as needed. Also, representatives from Ops and the Board attend each others’ meetings, for increased communication. She points out that being on the Ops Council is a good way to learn more about the FUSN community.

Kim: The Religious Education committee helped recruit teachers for this year’s new model of assignments. Instead of two teachers working for a full semester, four teachers will share the tasks for a class throughout the year. This provides better continuity for the kids and allows teachers to attend more services.

RE has also begun creating support circles, individuals who will be part of the RE council.

Perry adds that there are seven such support circles: enabling better interaction with other committees and more multi-generational activities, such as the Council on Social Action working with RE's social action component.

He reported the success of the Halloween party - 70 people came. Youth participated, setting up a haunted house and wearing costumes. The event had good atmosphere and energy. One FUSNite brought an excellent collection of decorations.

The Youth retreat resulted in choosing goals: helping younger kids and participating in other FUSN activities, an expansion of what youth programming has included in the past.

Coming of Age visioning last spring helped add ideas to this year's COA program. A new activity is visiting UU Heritage Sites. The visits include talks about the site and UU history. Also, there's an expanded COA leadership team: five plus 1 mentors leader.

Laurel suggests doing UU Heritage visits for adults.

Judy will offer UU history in the spring if someone will join her to co-teach.

Perry says he and Jacki Rohan plan to do something on UU sources in the spring.

Judy added that the Membership + Music Committees hosted the Channing School of London, a UU girls school founded in 1885, for a free concert at FUSN. The school has an exceptional music program.

Jeannie: Nothing new to report. She has been providing the iVolunteer link for usher sign-ups. She takes attendance each Sunday. Typical attendance numbers: a low of 180 and a high of 250. Usually, it's a little over 200. Some congregations count the number of people in the building, i.e., including RE. Jeannie only counts those in the Sanctuary. Attendance over the past 10 years has been around 180 and up. Numbers are going up at this time.

Andrea suggests approaching people to find a chair for the Fellowship Dinner, since no one has come forward. While it is lots of work, it is of limited duration. She has asked people who have declined. She says the planning process mostly follows a template, such as table layouts; and Ron Margolin runs the kitchen. Andrea and Ruth Comstock have offered to help but not chair. If someone identifies a potential chair, please give the name to Andrea or Susan.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Wendy Schwartz,
Assistant Clerk