



# FUSN *News*

First Unitarian Society in Newton

*Unitarian Universalist*

May 17 - May 30, 2015

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## SUNDAY SERVICES - 10:15 A.M

### The theme for May is Freedom

5/17 - Rev. Erin Splaine

5/24 - "What's Love Got to Do with it?"

Mandy Beal, Youth Coordinator

5/31 - Rev. Erin Splaine

### The theme for June is Play

6/7 - Laura Wagner

6/14 - Flower Sunday - Bridging Ceremony  
Baby Dedication

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## FELLOWSHIP DINNER

Saturday, May 16, 5:30-9:00 p.m. Please join us to celebrate our community and to thank all our members for their generosity during our recent fund drive. Catered by Blue Ribbon Barbeque (Vegetarian options are included) and music by White Collar Crime. Childcare will be available. Please RSVP to [greggdibiaso@verizon.net](mailto:greggdibiaso@verizon.net) Include number of adults, number of children, and number of those that are vegetarians, also let us know if you can bring along a beverage or dessert.

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## ANNUAL REPORTS

**Calling All Committee Chairs!** Let the rest of the congregation know what a great time you had chairing your committee. The deadline for your submission to the Annual Report is Friday, May 29. Send your submissions to [office@fusun.org](mailto:office@fusun.org). Thank you.

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## ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting and FUSN Barbeque will take place on **Sunday, June 7** after the service.

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## FROM THE BOARD

As we near the end of our society year, the Board is taking stock of where we have been, and where we would like to go as a congregation. You may recall that in November, our congregation engaged with Mark Ewert in a "Next Steps Weekend" dialog to assess the stewardship of our congregation, the processes of the annual budget drive, our need or readiness for a possible capital campaign – in effect, to ask the question "how effective are we in sustaining our mission"? He presented a short summary of his findings at the service. As of this writing, an electronic summary of the report has been prepared, and the full report is available as a printed copy in the FUSN office.

Mark found FUSN to have a strong lay leadership, that we have engaging worship and music, that we exhibit a culture of caring, that our religious education program is strong despite recent instability in professional leadership, among other things. We are happy that Rowan's recent acceptance of her position as the permanent DLRE will continue to build the strength of the RE program. Mark also noted that we have a notable imbalance in congregational giving, and that we have a large number of non-member congregants who may not have a strong sense of belonging. Our annual budget drive continues to be a challenge, and we are not yet ready to undertake a capital campaign. However, one of the most important findings, at least to me, was that we "lack a clearly stated congregational purpose and direction".

As a congregation, we have made a number of very good but largely unsuccessful forays into

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**Staff:** Erin Splaine, *Minister*, Fran Clancy, *Administrator*, Rowan Van Ness, *Director of Religious Education*, Beth Walton, *Assistant Director of Religious Education*, Mandy Beal, *Youth Programs Coordinator*, Anne Watson Born, *Director of Music*, Carson Cooman, *Organist*, Roberta Humez, *Minister of Music Emerita*, Ruslan Crosby, *Beadle*.

**Board of Trustees:** Gregg DiBiaso, Cathy Morocco, Bobbie Sproat, *Chair*, Jonathan Reuman, Jacki Rohan, Lesley Sneddon, Alison Costello and Becca Lozinsky, *Youth Reps*.

**Operations Council:** Susan

Bartlett, *Chair*, Jeannie Chaisson, Judy Curby, Laurel Farnsworth, *Vice Chair*, Anne Hess-Mahan, Andrea Kelley

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## FROM THE BOARD (continued)

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articulating a common vision over the years. Perhaps, though, the difficulties we experienced this year have made it clear just how important it is to express the beliefs and values we hold in common. We care so deeply about a great number of issues, but our many conversations revealed, sometimes painfully, just how diverse, and divergent, many of our opinions are.

This is not a bad thing. After all, don't we strive toward greater diversity? Mark Ewert's report provides us a framework to acknowledge, but see past our differences, and to find and celebrate what holds us together. Achieving that goal will energize us and allow us to engage more fully with each other, and the many initiatives we pursue as a congregation – multi-cultural ministry, social action, a healthy budget, and the ability to address whatever challenges arise - together. We look forward to hearing your thoughts, and to working with you to articulate our common vision.

-Lesley Sneddon

## ANNUAL BUDGET DRIVE (ABD)

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In a year with a variety of challenges the ABD team is most proud of the FUSN community's response to those challenges. Our beloved community voted to continue to talk, to listen, and to learn from one another, as well as to pledge!

We have achieved 95% of our goal or close to \$510,000 in pledges despite the snow and other demands. This will allow us to move forward and continue to evolve in this ever changing world.

Thank You,

*David Morocco, Linda Rinearson, Urban Larson*

## JOIN THE CRE TEACHING TEAM

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“As a current Children’s Religious Education teacher (since 2005) I have definitely deepened and expanded my roots here through the CRE program. Being shy in disposition, helping out in this way brought me into the community and connected me with so many wonderful people I would’ve never met otherwise--and not just other parents with kids the same age as mine. It has also been a chance to witness some of our talented and dedicated youth in action, as they assist in our classrooms. Please consider joining our weary (just kidding) but proud community of CRE teachers next year. Seriously, we’ve got an incredible staff and RE Council supporting us all the way. I’m so excited Rowan is here to stay, and Beth takes amazing care of us CRE Teachers. Please contact me with any questions at all.” - *Tom Yee, 617-820-4157, Dad to Truman (7) and Solace (10)*

## UPDATE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

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The BOT met last night with a full agenda, including the report and recommendation from Gordon Moriarty for the By-Laws Committee. We are very grateful for the work of Gordon, Dan Brody and Dwight Golann in preparation for and during the Congregational meeting on April 26th. Despite limited space here, we want to give you a sense of Gordon's report, its specific recommendations, and the action we took.

Gordon's report outlined the process that brought us to the meeting on the 26th and the five different By-Law change proposals that were before the committee. We were gratified that at least 100 of you were able to attend the meeting. Each of you was able to speak either in the large or small group and did so with great trust in each other and in the process that Gordon, Dan and Dwight laid out. Gordon's report summarized the wide-range of feelings and thoughts expressed at the meeting. The following is the conclusion of the report, which we want to present in its entirety: *see opposite page*

## **PROPOSAL FOR BOARD ACTION**

“Despite the wide spectrum of views expressed by the members present at the April 26 meeting and received via email, there appears to be a desire on the part of the congregation to move forward with meaningful steps now where there is general consensus. There was also a perceived desire for an on-going process of exploration, consideration, and understanding as to other elements of the proposed amendments in view of the lack of consensus and the short amount of time between now and the Annual Meeting.

The By-Laws Committee and the Board propose that the Board include in the Warrant for the June 7, 2015 Annual Meeting a call for a congregational vote as to amendments to the FUSN By-Laws as shown in Attachment 1. The broad statement of welcome found in this amendment paraphrases that found in the UUA By-Laws and is hoped to represent a durable position of inclusiveness for our Society. There did not appear to be a significant number of members who expressed opposition to the inclusion of such language.

Further, it is proposed that the Board promptly consider and approve a FUSN Policy as to Membership, such as found in Attachment 2. The proposed policy includes language for which there appeared to be broad understanding and approval by members of the congregation, at least from those present on April 26 and favoring explicit recitation of groups to whom membership is open.

Finally, it is proposed that the Board charge the Adult Religious Education Committee with engaging the congregation through the remainder of 2015 with a view towards gaining a deeper understanding of the terms “gender expression” and “family and relationship structure” to determine whether the Board shall amend the proposed Policy as to Membership to include one or both of these terms, or some variant thereof. Also to be considered is whether the Board shall include the terms “sex” and/or “criminal history” in the proposed Policy as to Membership.

These proposals meet several important goals. First, meaningful steps are being taken in the near term to reinforce FUSN's status as a welcoming congregation. Second, the By-Laws, the legal foundation for the Society, will include a broad statement of an intent to be a welcoming congregation and to strive to remove barriers to participation based upon identity, age, ability, or history. Third, the Board will issue a Policy of the Society that membership shall be open to all persons regardless of racialized identity, ethnicity, gender identity, disability, affectional or sexual orientation, or age, all of which appeared, at least from an aspirational perspective, to have support among the congregation. Fourth, the congregation will have a better opportunity to discuss and share views as to the meaning of “gender expression” and “family and relationship structures,” and to decide whether to include these expressions or variants thereof, along with “sex” and “criminal history,” in the Policy as to Membership.

It is sincerely hoped these proposals will promote healing and continued growth of the congregation.”

After discussion and full acknowledgement that our work is not yet done, the BOT voted unanimously to accept the By-Laws Committee's report, proposing a change to the By-laws that adds an inspirational and aspirational statement of inclusion to the membership By-law, and moving the anti-discrimination wording to a Policy statement on Membership. This action will bring the By-law amendment to the congregation for a vote at the June 7 Annual Meeting. In addition the Board specifically voted to adopt the recommended Policy language. Doing so mirrors the action of our larger Unitarian Universalist Association as to the structure of the bylaw and its statement of welcome to specifically named groups, while ensuring that, unlike the disorganized and last minute process at 2014 GA of finalizing the list of identities, we reach a fuller understanding and a more meaningful consensus as to the meaning and reasoning for naming and protecting the particular groups identified. The attachments referred to in the report include the By-Law language proposed for the warrant and the Policy language adopted by the Board last night. The entire report, with attachments, is being sent to the FUSN Business list, and copies of both will be available in the FUSN office as well.

There will be some organized opportunities for learning this summer and in the fall, offered by the Adult RE program, and we are working toward offering more opportunities in the fall for sharing and listening, similar to the small groups we had in February and those meeting to discuss issues of multiculturalism. In the meantime, we encourage you to keep talking informally – with people you disagree with as well as those whose views you share; asking questions; and thinking about the By-law amendment proposed, and about what it means to be welcoming and inclusive, and how we treat each other.

With humble gratitude for this community and the trust it has placed in its Board of Trustees,

*Bobbie Sproat*  
*Chair, Board of Trustees*

## COMMUNITY BREAKFAST

**Join us** for our last Community Breakfast on May 17 from 9-10 in the Parish Hall. Our menu consists of scrambled eggs, scrambled eggs with vegetables, pancakes, French toast, home fried potatoes, bacon, sausage, white and whole wheat biscuits, gluten free corn bread, fruit, yogurt, jams and jellies, juices, coffee and tea, and sometimes a special treat. We have high chairs for the tots. The price is only \$4 for adults and \$3 for children. First timers eat free. Clean-up help appreciated.

## CHOIRS & CANTORS IN SONG

This Sunday, May 17, at 7:00 p.m., is the Interfaith Concert: Choirs & Cantors in Song, at Temple Shalom, 175 Temple Street, Newton. The FUSN Sanctuary Choir will be singing, along with choirs from other Newton institutions such as Myrtle Baptist, Temple Emanuel, and St. Ignatius. Joshua Jacobson will lead the Zamir Chorale and a combined choir in songs of different faiths, including a Sufi song and a Georgia Sea Islands spiritual. Tickets are available through [www.newtoncommunitypride.org](http://www.newtoncommunitypride.org) or at the door. All proceeds will benefit the Newton food pantries and several Newton arts organizations.

**Deadline for next Newsletter is May 26 9:00 a.m.**

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