

The Lay Ministry Program at The First Unitarian Society in Newton (FUSN)

Lay Ministers:

- Margaret Costello
- Jay Flynn
- Judy Friedman
- Kathy Hearn
- Jud Leonard
- Kate Mason
- Brenda Roberts
- Greg Sullivan

Senior Minister:

- James I. Ford

Intern Minister:

- Catherine Senghas



UU
New England
Conference

Saturday, October 27, 2007

Outline



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3. Selection / Composition
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10. Communication
 - Email, mailing list, Yahoo group for sharing documents.
11. Wheel of Life service
12. Miscellaneous

Who we are, what we do



- Currently 8 Lay Ministers.
- Care crew of 50+ members
 - FUSN is about 400 members
- Extending the web of caring within the FUSN community.
- Ears, meals, and wheels.

“Is this all there is?”

-- Ex-lay minister

History



- Fall of 1985 (22 years!) Ministerial Intern Carol Egan, spurred on by Minister Gerry Krick.
- Started with 4. Trained by professional ministers regarding death, suicide, loss, substance abuse, hospice, listening skills, and more.
- Started Care Crew in about 2000.
- Now at 8. Terms vary from a couple of years to perpetual.
- Accrued responsibilities
 - Annual Wheel of Life service, Sunday “deacon” duties, Care Crew.

Selection / Group composition



- Desired Characteristics:
 - “wise”, “elders of the church”
 - “people that people go to”
- Represent population
 - old/young, male/female, have kids / post or no kids.
- We’ve tried open invites; but have reverted to self-selecting. Minister does the asking.
- Tension: people may want to be lay ministers, but for the wrong reasons.
 - Want openness, but fiat

Ministerial Relations



- Professional versus Lay ministers
 - Who's in charge? Liturgical role?
Participation on Sundays (in FUSN, like Christian Deacons)
 - All tensions solvable, worth the effort
 - Prof. minister attends monthly lay minister meetings (but doesn't run the meetings).
- Mutual support
 - Professional ministry can rely on lay ministers, and vice versa

Sunday Duties



- Setup
- Announcements
- Occasional Readings
- Chalice lighting
- Purpose: To let congregation know who we are.
- Notes from Candles of Concern. For followup, cards, etc.
- With minister and guestbook after the service.
- Coffee hour - all on duty. Follow up on candle lighters.

Training



- MBD Lay Ministry training
- Consultants from within FUSN
 - psychologist - active listening.
- Rely on old timers (Brenda Roberts)
- Always want more training; mostly rely on being “grown-ups”.
 - we’re all busy volunteers
 - “native intelligence”, rely on wisdom and support of group.
- Annual Retreat - 24 hours, 4 meals, 1 night
 - training, planning, bonding, personal histories, etc.

Confidentiality, Boundaries



- Both a friend, a peer, fellow congregant, and also a lay minister.
- We're not professionals
 - Deciding when professional help is needed.
- Confidentiality, Discretion, Secrecy
 - "Can I share this information with other lay ministers?"
 - A judgement call when to ask for permission or assume.
 - We err on the side of sharing with other lay min.s, unless prohibited.
 - Sometimes have to apologize (twice in last 7 years).

Challenges / Tricky Bits



- Extra needy individuals
- Long term care.
 - acute, not chronic. (there are always exceptions - esp. rides to church)
- When professionals are needed
- People don't want to ask for help.
 - More ready to nominate others that might need help.

Care Crew



- Care Crew book rotates among lay ministers.
- 50+ names, with preferences for rides, meals, etc.
- Monthly notice (invitation) to FUSN email list.
- Expands network. Sense of empowering others. Many volunteers say they get a lot out of it.
- Often focuses on people without a robust personal network.
 - who would otherwise “fall through the cracks”.

Communication, Organization



- Monthly meetings
 - quick checkins about personal lives.
 - ministry - led by current care crew book keepers
 - all “cases” discussed
 - scheduling / calendaring
 - minister attends, but does not lead.
 - Other commitments, conferences, services, issues, concerns.
- Email list
 - Always a background worry about confidentiality
- Yahoo groups page for miscellaneous files

Wheel of Life Service



- Once a year
- Covers births, deaths, other important events in lives of people in congregation
- Interspersed poems, including from within FUSN.
- Order of service available by request.

Miscellaneous



- Starting Mens and Womens groups
 - historically associated with lay ministry.
- Death and Dying workshop, Nov. 10
 - Please come!
 - Flyers available.
- Installation / commission a good idea.

Contact Info



See <http://fusn.org/pages/ministry.html>

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