



**Expression of Interest by  
Candidate for Board of Trustees**

**Barbara A. Gawinski**

**1. Why are you interested in being a member of the Board of Trustees at First Unitarian Church?**

- I was first approached to consider running for a position on the Board of Trustees several years ago. My professional and family life were very full at the time; so, I declined. When I was asked for a second time in January, the invitation came right in the middle of my participation in the Wellspring program. The readings and discussions in this forum have challenged me to use my voice to deepen my spiritual life. BAM! Things happen for a reason. At this time in my life, I am eager to commit to a deeper involvement in the church leadership. I have skills as a leader from my professional life as a relationship therapist and as an educator of physicians and mental health therapists. So, things happen for a reason, the time seems right to begin to use my time, my voice, and my skills to participate in the governance of this congregation along its journey to serving needs greater than our own.

**2. What part of the work of the Board are you most passionate about and hope to be involved in?**

- I am confident that the initial year on the BOT will be a learning year. Our congregation has evolved over my 20 years of participation. I know the Board has worked very hard with various Transitional Leadership Teams to develop a stronger governing body. I trust

this work, and through observing the BOT my first year, I will identify those gaps where I can offer my skills. Over the past decade, I have been most involved in community justice work through the Honduras Ministry. I hope to continue to engage in the work of supporting social justice work, perhaps as a liaison to the immigrant and refugee ministry or in outreach to community connections. I have learned that listening and learning are important skills to use when I first join any leadership team. These observations will help prepare me for more active and effective participation in the Board during the subsequent years. I will come with a commitment to join a diverse group who share a passion for serving this congregation. I hope to add to our history of evolution to meet the current congregational needs.

**3. Describe your experience working to consensus, representing and helping to implement policies which may differ from your own original concepts.**

- As a young professional, I served as the Vice President and later President of the Genesee Valley Chapter of the New York Association for Marriage and Family Therapists in the mid-1990s. As a local leader, I also served as a member-at-large on the Board of the New York State Association for Marriage and Family Therapy during that time and eventually I was elected to serve on the Board of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy in 2001-2003. These groups of local, state, national and international family therapists come from diverse backgrounds with special interests and ideas. Working to create consensus by creating and modifying policies for each of these groups was a great learning process. Although I was not always able to make the changes I hoped for in some of the more traditional policies, I learned to listen for other pressing areas that needed my attention and focus. I was able to share my vision and lay groundwork for the future of my field, while also learning to be an ally in other areas of importance. I often collaborated on committee work in areas that were not my primary focus, but were the established goals of policy governance.

**4. First Unitarian uses a policy governance model of management to support its work on the mission and values of our congregation. The model defines the board's authority and responsibilities. Written policies, including outcome expectations, determine board conduct, expectations of staff, board delegation and monitoring. Please address your ideas about working within such a framework.**

- While working on the national Board of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, I worked under the policy governance model. Policy governance made focusing on the macro issues easier and stopped spinning wheels in areas that did not need the attention of the Board. Following well-established rules also made the focus more clear and direct. Following an in-person retreat and forming a trusting working relationship on the Board, we held in-person and phone meetings to efficiently use time and resources in the expansive operation of the national organization. Goals and expected outcomes were clear and each member's role was to work toward achieving those ends. I appreciate being on a team that has a history and a future direction that is not recreated each year.

**5. Describe your participation in this church (past and present) and other relevant community or work organizations.**

- First Unitarian Church has been part of my family life since we moved to this side of town in 2000 and began attending regularly. Our children enthusiastically participated in RE from elementary school through high school and we all attended services, listening to many ministers over the years. I taught in the elementary classrooms and later my husband and I helped in the RE high school CONs. Our family has volunteered with RAIHN, Cafe Veritas and First Muse in various ways.
- In 2008, I became involved with the Honduras Ministry and served as Chair and Co-Chair of that Task Force/Ministry. As part of the Ministry, I and half a dozen other church members have traveled to Intibucá, Honduras representing our congregation in support of our partnership. We work to help the community move toward their goals of higher literacy rates and improved health (decreased mortality). Through the efforts of this small group and the support of the larger congregation, over 150 children have attended school beyond 6th grade, more than a dozen graduated high school, and several enrolled in university. Over these years, I have passionately worked with various ministers and congregants through these activities. I have participated in a few leadership development programs and have enjoyed the possibilities of growing and supporting the group of others in this beloved community.
- As part of the Social Justice Ministry during the Transitional Minister's tenure, I was recruited to develop a new model of application for becoming a supported small group in the congregation (Task Force/Ministry). Along with the Honduras Ministry committee, we vetted the application process for establishing new Social Justice Ministries and our application served as a model for other groups. I was very proud of this work as a longstanding Task Force and Ministry.
- More recently, I was invited to participate in the re-writing of the Policy on Sex Offenders for our church and serving on the committee on an ad hoc basis. This invitation highlighted the effectiveness of a small group of people focused for a short period of time in an area that is very important to the church. I was honored to join this group of experts from our community to do this work and be able on an as needed basis.
- Outside of congregational life, I served as faculty in the Department of Family Medicine for 32 years. I was one of few social scientists in the community of dozens of physicians and health care practitioners. I quickly learned what it meant to be an outsider with a different language and goals for patient care. I recognized a different set of educational objectives for the physician learners, compared to those of the physician faculty. I spent my career developing a teaching model that was consumable for these physician and health care learners, while including social scientists who might find themselves in similar communities. Being an outsider can be a very difficult experience with struggles to be understood, yet I found many opportunities where our different perspectives could enhance the care of patient families and the education of all participants. Though I found the work very difficult at times, the improvements to patient care and our education

model were deeply meaningful. When I value the anticipated outcome, I am not afraid of hard and difficult work.

- Most importantly, over four decades my clinical work focused on connecting with and serving the underserved people of my communities. My patients included children who had been sexually abused in their own homes as well as people who had no home. I met families with four generations living in the same home and single people without much community to lean on. I worked with people who were sent to inpatient stays at mental hospitals and people who were just released to the community finding their own way. Finally I sat with people and families facing death and those welcoming new life into their homes. Listening to the stories of these precious community members taught me how much I can learn through listening and honoring the diversity of our humanity. I hope to be able to listen and serve in this congregation in a similar manner.

**6. Which service do you regularly attend?**

- ZOOM-A-ZOOM-A-ZOOM!