

# 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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1. Overview
2. History
3. Selection / Composition
4. Ministerial Relations
5. Sunday Duties
6. Training
7. Confidentiality, Boundaries
8. Challenges / Tricky Issues
9. Care Crew
10. Communication
  - Email, mailing list, Yahoo group for sharing documents.
11. Wheel of Life service
12. Miscellaneous

# Who we are, what we do

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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

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

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