

## Parish Committee Minutes

First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Arlington

September 19, 2023

First Parish – Parlor

**Attendees:** Sara Galantowicz, Anne Quaadgras, John Stutz, Celia Wcislo, Jeff Keffer, Joanna Pushee, John Anderson, Al Tosti, and Carolyn Hodges, with Rev. Erica, Rev. Marta and Rev. Stevie.

**Guest (to arrive at 7:30):** Alice Panniello, Music Committee (joined via Zoom).

**Guests:** Arlington Children's House (in person)

7:03 Call to Order (Sara)

7:05 Reading and Chalice Lighting (Jeff and Rev. Marta)

Review of financial report & dashboard (Carolyn, 15 minutes)

- August financials show that expenses are favorable as expected as it is the beginning of the program year. The Trustees are on track with the automatic distribution process for trust funds to the operating budget. The Property Committee has a list of expenses and the necessary funds to get everything on the list done.
  - Property Committee has about \$88,000 planned expenses including the following: replacing windows, finishing the spire painting [update: the spire painting has been completed], fixing the broken refrigerator in the kitchen, and fixing the dishwasher [which now works]. The deposit has been paid. All good news. The funds come from both infrastructure and rollover from funds unspent last program year.
  - The Treasurer revised the financial report based on the Parish Committee's suggestion that we show the accurate \$23,000 net surplus (rather than the inaccurate \$90,000, which includes previous surpluses). Reporting this way will be easier to understand and will be included next May in Annual Meeting materials.
- The Parish Committee reviewed and discussed some known budget overages and were made aware of some approval dates to be determined as follows:

- **Speaker Honorariums:** First Parish was not paying a current rate. The Parish Committee was asked to vote on budgeting for 5 guest preachers and increasing from \$300 to \$400 per guest preacher per service. This would increase this line item from \$1,200 to \$2,000.
- **Delayed Artapalooza costs:** July/Aug 2023 - A total of ~\$1,500 in receipts from the September 2022 Artapalooza event were submitted at the end of June 2023.. The Treasurer noted these should be reimbursed, even though there is no money left in the RJCC budget from last year and multiple communications about submission deadlines. The Parish Committee will include this item as a known overage.
- **Website upload** (Anne Q via Marie Meteer): The Office Associate, Joe, is poised to do updates and the Parish Committee his extra time complete these tasks (~6 hours) will be compensated.
- **A celebration of Marta and Charlie's marriage (on hold):** Members have surfaced a couple of ideas; for now, the congregation-wide celebration is on hold until a January/February timeframe. The Parish Committee has this potential celebration on its radar.
- **Significant tech expenses (to be reviewed):** Office manager Sara Hidalgo has researched a few options to upgrade First Parish's IT system, to address known challenges. These include fixed costs and larger subscription costs for WiFi and tech support. Parish Committee Executive will reach out to some First Parish memebbers who are in the field as the quote of \$8,000 is a significant amount and expert input is requested to review the proposed pakage.

Discussion followed with the following highlights regarding the tecninal expenses:

- The technology that First Parish has in place is inadequate, and the need to support that and update it goes over the current staffing capabilities. First Parish would need IT support on the scale of a small business.
- First Parish has received a couple of quotes from vendors. Parish Commitee and Parish Committee Executive do not want to approve without more input and are looking for a review of line items.
- The fixed costs were quoted at around \$3,500; the subscription with WiFi backup, firewall, and tech support were quoted at about \$4,350/year.
- The Parish Committee anticipates that First Parish's need will only increase in the coming years. We do not want to rely on a patchwork of staff and volunteer support.

The Parish Committee agreed to vote on the known overages which include the change in amount for the guest preacher Honorarium, the Artapalooza receipt reimbursement, and the website upload being done by current staff.

Parish Committee notes that the discretionary fund currently has \$ 10,000 in it; and the contingency fund has \$23,000. The overages would reduce the discretionary fund to a total of \$7,500.

The Parish Committee voted to approve paying out the honorarium increase to \$400 per guest preacher per service, the Artapalooza expenditure that was not captured last program year, and the website upload using current staff for a total of \$2,500 additional expenditures..

**(Vote 1, Discussion) I move that the Parish Committee approves some known budget overages totaling \$2,500 to be paid from the discretionary fund. (Carolyn). Seconded (Jeff). 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed.**

**(Vote 2, Discussion). I vote that we adopt the consent agenda, minus the Lead Minister's report which is to be received by the Parish Committee. (Celia) Seconded (Sara G. and Jeff K.) 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed.**

[Update: The Parish Committee received the minister's report from our Lead Minister, Marta, at the end of the meeting.]

7:33 Update on Interim Music Staffing (Alice P., 10 minutes)

The Parish Committee chair, Sara G, welcomed Alice Panniello, chair of the Music Committee and the Interim Staffing Committee.

- The Interim Staffing Committee includes: Robin Baker, Bob Rowlands , Carol Seitz, Paul Franzoza, Carolyn Hodges, and Alice Panniello.
- The Interim committee is meeting once a week via Zoom on Wednesdays 7-8pm.
- A comprehensive search is underway and involves compensation research. The committee surveyed UU congregations in the area to determine that First Parish UU Arlington is in line with proposed salary and confirmed we are. The committee is researching UUA recommendations for the mid-point benchmark for a music director, adjusting for a part-time schedule..

- The Interim Staffing Committee has reached out to First Parish's Human Resources committee to run the numbers by them and discuss benefits eligibility.
- A job description has been written and will be reviewed with a target date of publishing it around 9/22/23.
- The Interim Staffing Committee has spoken with Rev. Stevie and determined that an all ages choir could be skipped this year only, to reduce the workload for an interim hire.
- The process to conduct a formal search is underway and there is already some interest in the position, based on word or mouth, which suggests a hire should be feasible. Two people have expressed interest and the Interim Staffing Committee will be reviewing their resumes along with any other candidates who emerge after posting the job advertisement.

The Parish Committee acknowledges and expresses gratitude for the amount of work that has already gone into this candidate search process.

Some discussion followed:

- The Interim Staffing Committee is looking for guidance on the compensation and to verify the mid-point benchmark and its currency for a 25-hour per week position through the end of the program year which concludes in mid-June.
- There was discussion around whether the hourly rate or a salary would be posted in the job advertisement. It would be an hourly rate or range.
- The Parish Committee expressed gratitude again to Alice and to the Interim Staffing Committee; The Parish Committee suggested the Interim Staffing Committee post the job description for the music director after connecting with Human Resources again.
- The Lead minister will continue to be the point person for this position and will likely conduct an evaluation sooner with a new employee than the typical review schedule.
- A question about the celebration of the current music director, Jonathan Colby, arose.

The Parish Committee offered to help and can help identify a couple of volunteers to coordinate a coffee hour especially for Jonathan's celebration after the October service. Marta, Alice, and Jonathan to coordinate and discuss planning for the October 22 service.

Thank you reiterated - these surprises! Members are responding to them with such grace and such speed.

The Parish Committee thanked and said good-bye to Alice P. around 7:52PM.

**7:52 PM - Hosting a Potluck and a January "Big Event" (Sara, 5 minutes)**

- The very successful summer potlucks are being extended by the STAR Committee.
- The STAR Committee is asking other committees to host these monthly social potlucks. The Covenant Groups will host in November.
- The Parish Committee extended enthusiastic support to the potlucks being continued and eagerly embraces the idea to step in and host the January potluck on 1/31/24, if this initiative continues into the new year.

#### Celebration of Marta and Charlie's Wedding / Celebration of Love and Justice:

- Anne Q was approached by some enthusiastic First Parish member party planners.
- The idea of holding an afternoon tea has surfaced.
- Parish Committee Executive has suggested January as a timeframe, after the holidays.
- The party could be a wider church event with a fundraiser for Love and Justice.
- A Saturday evening with music and dancing.
- The celebration is on the Parish Committee's radar.

#### 7:58 Parish Committee Retreat follow-up (all, 15 minutes)

- Two working groups formed as a result of the Parish Committee Retreat on 9/16.
- The working groups are embracing priorities that emerged during the retreat. These groups are: Volunteerism and Engagement Working Group and the Long-term Planning Working Group. The latter group will focus on planning across a five- to ten-year period. They met on 9/19 as a kick-off meeting. The Volunteerism Working Group met via Zoom on 9/26. Both groups will continue to meet regularly and will be requesting input from the congregation throughout the process of engaging with these priorities.
- The Parish Committee was graciously hosted by Vice-Chair Anne Quaadgras for its retreat and much gratitude was expressed.
- The Parish Committee chair contacted the Leadership Development Committee chair, Helene Newburg, to let LDC know about the retreat outcome and discussion on the upcoming terms ending for LDC folks in 2024.

#### 8:00 Break - Molasses Clove cookies from the [Dancing Deer recipe](#) were passed around.

#### 8:03 Montessori Children's House of Arlington (30 minutes) - Hannah, Christina, and Joe

- Introductions: Hannah LaFranzo (Director/Head of School), Christina Yuan (co-founder) and Joe Li (co-founder, Adventures in Montessori in Jamaica Plain)
  - The Parish Committee briefly introduced themselves.
- MCHA philosophy and plans (Hannah and Joe)

Hannah gave a brief overview of the Montessori philosophy and spoke of the benefits of mixed age groups (preschool and kindergarten). MCHA is happy to be in Arlington, where there are no other Montessori programs other than a home daycare that has a maximum of 20 children. There is a lot of opportunity to grow in this community.

MCHA's vision is to expand the school while keeping the focus on quality and an authentic Montessori environment: teaching training, classrooms that are big and bright, and nature exposure along with love of learning.

Joe Li spoke about the first year being in this location in Arlington. [Applause from the Parish Committee] The schools has been working with existing families. Some families have left in the transition from the prior program (Mariposa). There have been challenges hiring teachers.

Gratitude was expressed to the Parish Committee around getting acquainted with the town of Arlington, especially learning about Town Day last year.

MCHA communicates regularly with First Parish's Office Manager, Sara Hidalgo, as well as the new Minister of Religious Education, Stevie Carmody. All involved are working well together as a work in progress: from moving furniture and moving it back, to developing trust, coming up on the one year anniversary discussing how things are going, a vision for the future, and MCHA is requesting the Parish Committee's support.

The Parish Committee chair expressed gratitude.

- First Parish overview and programs for children and families: MRE Stevie spoke to the commonalities between Montessori and First Parish's education programming (10 minutes 8:25 PM) and asked MCHA what questions they had for the FP program folks.

Stevie described values and religious exploration, along with the structure of classes (nursery, preschool, elementary grades, middle school grades, and OWL -- Our Whole Lives, from middle school to coming of age: consent and sexual education).

The FP curriculum includes grounding stories in many wisdom traditions, including Bible stories; it is a pluralistic and interactive curriculum that explores "What does my faith mean to me?" Youth empowerment model for high school. Safety is a core attribute. Curiosity is sparked.

Among members of First Parish and MCHA guests, it was agreed that Montessori and FP RE curriculum are very compatible. Hannah would like to observe in a Sunday classroom

sometime. Joe Li commented on multidisciplinary education and basically respecting each individual. Rev. Marta added belonging in the world and a sense of wonder.

Discussion continued and included such items as:

- MCHA has spoken to other area schools and often refers families to area schools if MCHA is not a match for their needs.
- Christina asked about the ratio of kids to adults and additional staff being available (for First Parish RE). Stevie confirmed there are always two adults at least per room, and that First Parish aligns with state guidelines.

The Parish Committee expressed gratitude to Hannah, Christina, and Joe for coming in.

#### 8:35 Reflection on the Start of the Program Year (Ministers, 15 minutes)

- Rev. Erica spoke to the state of the Parish, including celebrations such as 293 folks were at Ingathering and 212 people were in attendance at the 9/17 worship service.
- There is a continued need for Zoom services for Sunday worship, based on ongoing attendance numbers.
- Gratitude from the Parish Committee was expressed to the ministers.
- Discussion around how many people are joining online: 38-47 people (as defined by staying online for at least 30 minutes).
- Many committees have done retreats to kick off the program year.
- Lots of children are present in the meeting house again: about 60 on average.
- Donations and welcome bags were swiftly collected and distributed by Eric Segal and Arcs Cluster folks to Massachusetts hotels where refugees are staying. The nimble volunteers put in a great amount of work to fill the welcome bags, the Social Justice Committee approved the effort on a Thursday night, and 16 bags were ready on the following Monday at 1pm.
- Potlucks, coffee hours, and more social events throughout the summer were successful.
- The Parish Committee Retreat on Saturday, 9/16; Rev. Stevie preached the following Sunday; 18 people in the Reckoning and Repair working group are still working and grappling with difficult questions.
- Spiritual depth, learning from one another, finding synergy and shared common purpose are all salient themes.

#### 8:50 Calendar review and hosting (all)

The October meeting will be on Zoom. A volunteer came forward to host: John Anderson.

Al volunteered to host the December meeting, which will be in person. January will be on Zoom.

The Parish Committee commented on the quilts adorning the walls of the Parlor in the Meeting House and expressed awe for Rev. Wendy Page's and others' talents.

**8:55 Adjourn -**

**I move we adjourn the meeting. (Carolyn). Seconded (Celia). 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed.**

Attachments: Last month's Minutes, Financial Documents, Ministers report

## **MOTIONS**

**Motion 1:** I move that the Parish Committee approve some known budget overages totaling \$2,500 to be paid from the discretionary fund. (Carolyn). Seconded (Jeff). 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed.

**Motion 2:** I vote that we adopt the consent agenda, minus the Lead Minister's report which is to be received by the Parish Committee. (Celia) Seconded (Sara G. and Jeff K.) 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed.

**Motion 3:** I move we adjourn the meeting. (Carolyn). Seconded (Celia). 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed.