

First Parish UU Arlington

Parish Committee Meeting Minutes

April 21, 2026, 7PM - 9PM, In person and on Zoom

Attendees: Marie Meteer (chair), Kate Tranquada (vice chair), Carolyn Hodges (treasurer), Joanna Pushee (clerk), John Anderson, Susan Moore, Amy Speare, and Allan Tosti

Minister: Rev. Dr. Jonipher Kwong (Interim Lead Minister)

Guest Presenters: Lissa McBurney and Steve Pillemar (Finance Committee)

First Parish members on Zoom: Kiki Giatis, Briana Walsh

7:08 PM – **Call to Order** (Marie)

7:09 PM **Reading and chalice** (Amy S) – John lit the chalice; Amy did the reading.

7:12 PM **Financial Review** (Carolyn)

- The Treasurer presented the indicator template as of March 31. The numbers are that will be presented to the congregation at Annual Meeting on May 3.
- Pledges are running a little low. Expenses are running favorable, so there has been offset there.
- First Parish is on track with revenue.
- First Parish has \$67,000 budgeted to use from the surplus. In reality, First Parish is running at about \$40,000, but there are three more months remaining in the fiscal year with April, May, and June. Annual Meeting is early this year.
- Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) fees: Annual Program Fund commitment
 - The Parish Committee is working with the UUA to review the calculation including member count, what to include and not include in operating costs, pass-through mission related expenses. The plate should have been adjusted out of expenses in the calculation.
 - First Parish is consistent as an honor congregation.
 - The UUA is happy to meet First Parish. We are in the top givers level.
- Adventures in Montessori: First Parish proposed an amendment to the lease for AIM to pick up the cleaning cost: Greg Ruccio, Ebiere, and Carolyn met with them; amendment to be signed by July 1. Negotiations have been going well.

Questions/Comments:

- Is there a range for the UUA fee? Yes.
 - In 2016, the UUA went from a per capita charge per person (“fair share”) to an “honor congregation” to make things equitable. Could be even a 75% range.
 - Phone banking updates: Joanna updated old phone numbers from the Stewardship and the Settled Minister Search Committee nominations phone banking efforts and removed any members who requested to be removed from

the rolls. Adult members are in the total number. Not children or adult children.
[Clerk's note: There were 453 members before the updates and 416 after inactive members were contacted and removed.]

- In the last quarter of the year, we closed the gap. Annie Hewitt and Carolyn look at the pledge report. Last year, we closed the gap from 5% under to 1% under.
- The Treasurer answered questions about intended use: \$22,000 for accessible and audio updates. This comes from a one-time gift (current program year).

7:25 PM – **Consent agenda items:**

MOTION 1: I move to adopt the consent agenda: minutes, financials, and the two minister reports from Rev. Jonipher and Rev. Stevie. None opposed. (Joanna) Second (Al) 8 of 8 in favor.

7:29 PM – **Covenant**

The Parish Committee read the recently approved covenant.

7:33 PM **Short reports**

- **Summer tech upgrades and schedule** (Rev. Jonipher)
 - o Three-part project to test upgrades to tech:
 - Upgrade the sound system in the sanctuary
 - Experiment with projection
 - Install a monitor screen by the workroom to advertise to visitors; also, for visitors to know where to go.
 - o Group of 3 FP members will help with tech upgrades and testing:
 - Paul Franzosa
 - Bill Licea-Kane
 - John Shriver
 - Rev. Jonipher will be preaching in person the last Sunday of each of the summer months to take part in the tech upgrades. There will be a survey.
 - Rev. Erica will be preaching three Sundays in the summer on Zoom.

Discussion:

- First Parish will rent the equipment first; we built the expense into the current budget (the \$22,000 Carolyn mentioned). A professional audio consultant will be hired.
- It will likely be very hot in the sanctuary. A lighter version of regular worship services with one volunteer music person, a couple ushers, and minimal hospitality with water and lemonade (no coffee) will be offered to minimize custodial costs.
- To clarify, just the 3 services that Rev. Jonipher will preach will be in person with a Zoom component. The rest of the summer services will be virtual only services.
- Cost savings: we won't need to hire a summer minister. Rev. Erica and Rev. Jonipher will be available for pastoral care. They are not taking the summer off.
- Childcare question and availability: to be discussed at the next Worship Associates meeting. It was noted that for childcare staff: put them on payroll or do a W-9.
- First Parish will have the cost of the part-time AV tech person for the summer.

- How will First Parish input the data to the monitor without adding more to the Office Associate's workload? The discussion in process.

Tabled the second vote of approving the new Transition Team member. Moved agenda item to end of meeting.

7:42 PM – **Employee Handbook** (HR Committee, Sara G)

- The Human Resources Committee returned to the Parish Committee with updates to the employee handbook, which was shared in advance of the meeting.
- The preamble comes from UUA template.
- The new employee training will be rolled out in fall.
- The new item: vacation carryover
 - Vacation carryover: employees will not be paid that carryover if they have not used it. Only unused in current year. No budgetary impact.
 - Payout is restricted to the program year. Employees have carryover of sick time.
 - Vacation time is used in the order it is earned.
- The handbook is not on the website. The staff will have copies in the office.
- Going forward, all staff are required to sign a document saying they received the handbook.

7:48 PM **MOTION 2:** I vote to adopt the new Employee Handbook, as it has been advised, including the vacation time policy update. (John A) Seconded (AI) 8 of 8.

Question of when the changes will take effect: immediately? In the fall?

First Parish will wait until July 1, 2026 for the changes to take effect. This is also when the bimonthly pay cycle is used for all staff rather than some as it had been previously.

Many thanks to the HR team, Sara Galantowicz and Sara Whitford.

7:51 PM **ANNUAL MEETING:** Suite of votes, format, add articles, and adopt the warrant.

MOTION 3: I move that we adopt all five votes related to Annual Meeting. (Joanna) Seconded (Carolyn) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

1. I move to adopt the format of in-person only voting with Zoom livestream on May 3rd at 11:30 am.
2. I move to adopt the published voting procedure for the Settled Minister Search Committee.
3. I move to add the Settled Minister Search Committee item to the warrant.
4. I move to add the oral updates to the warrant: Transition Team, Front Corner Project, and Reckoning & Repair Working Group.
5. I move to approve the warrant.

7: 54 PM - Discussion:

The question on whether Zoom voting could be used in the future came up. According to the bylaws, Article IV, section 5: members must cast their votes in person.

[Clerk's note: ParCom met for a planning meeting on April 20th at 4:00 - 5:00 PM to discuss annual meeting preparation. Due to the limited timeline for preparation, and to keep in line with the First Parish bylaws which state the warrant must be sent at least six days before an all congregation meeting, the regular "warrant meeting" of ParCom was moved up one week.]

7:55 PM - State of the Parish (Rev. Jonipher)

- Rev. Jonipher submitted a written report.
- There are two adjunct ministers who are working on a part-time basis. Rev. Carolyn joins us at First Parish on Sundays and Mondays. She joined a Worship Associates meeting.
- There is an increase in pastoral care requests from Rev. Jonipher.
- Rev. Carolyn will be doing an adult education workshop and there will be a drop-in session "Tea with a Minister" so that congregants can get to know her.
- Rev. Emily is already certified to do OWL programming. RE is going well.

Questions / Comments:

- For evaluations of staff this year: Rev. Jonipher, as supervisor, is responsible for conducting evaluations of the staff. The office manager is responsible for doing the evaluation with the office associate.
 - The Parish Committee recommended involving the Music Committee as members of First Parish to provide input on the Music Director.
 - The Parish Committee requested that it be queried for input on the parish minister's evaluation since we do not have a Committee on Ministry this year. This comes down to being consulted rather than just informed.
 - When are evaluations due? The end of April.

8:01 PM - Break- coffee and sweets! Thank you, Kate Tranquada!

8:07 PM – The Proposed Budget, FY25-26 (Finance Committee, Lissa McBurney)

- The Finance Committee presented the proposed budget.
- Personnel costs are itemized and were shown separated out in other areas compared to last year's budget presentation.
- The approach that the Finance Committee took was to start out with a big number and then pull that down, freeing up funding for staff increases. The original number the Finance Committee worked with was showing about \$90,000 or so in deficit.
 - Finance Committee took the approach of not wanting to use more than half of the retained surplus.
 - The committee made many one-time choices to get the budget in line.
 - The committee made cuts right down to the known typical expenses; First Parish does not have the little cushions it had in the past several years.
 - For FY25, we used a fraction of the surplus we expected. Finance Committee warns the Parish Committee not to expect that reality for this coming fiscal year. Expect the surplus to be approximately \$77,000.

Personnel costs:

- The Finance Committee proposed no COLA increases this year.
 - If First Parish were to include COLA increases, it would mean a cost of about \$12,500, and it would not bring all staff to midpoint.
 - The Finance Committee proposed that hourly staff get some increases.
 - The Finance Committee recommends that the Human Resources Committee and the Parish Committee look closely next year for FY27-28 and if First Parish is not securing equity, living wage, etc., for staff look into whether the Parish Committee would vote on a policy to do so.
 - Staff are aligned with UUA guidelines, but may not have the same titles as UUA guidelines currently show. There is an opportunity for the HR Committee to review staff and at which position each was hired, when they might change levels, and to look at which staff are experienced and over midpoint level. Everything is in line with UUA Size C for the congregation size.
- The Finance Committee looked at the sabbatical reserve and recommended that it be put on hold for FY 2026-27. ParCom is skipping the annual deposit this year and the sabbatical reserve will be reviewed again in a year.
 - The Finance Committee looked at the amount currently and factored in the hiring of adjunct ministers. The committee recommended that the funds go to staffing number increases rather than sabbatical funds. The adjunct minister covering Rev Erica's sabbatical will be paid from the sabbatical fund. The adjunct minister covering Rev. Stevie's leave will be paid from the Operating Budget (salaries/benefits) as Commonwealth of MA, topped up with accrued paid time off compensation, will cover approved PFLMA salary expense for Rev. Stevie during his leave.
 - The Finance Committee recommended that the Parish Committee recalibrate the sabbatical reserve relative to the minister staff eligibility with, for example, the Director of Religious Education being eligible in 2028-2029 for a sabbatical. The current interim lead minister will not be taking a sabbatical. It is expected the next lead minister would not be taking a sabbatical for five years per a letter of agreement.

Questions on personnel:

- What is the expectation for percent of salary? 10 percent of the salary goes towards a sabbatical.
- How much did health insurance go up? It went up significantly: 20%.
- Someone asked when the last time First Parish negotiated the parking payment with the Town as something to keep in mind for the future.
- Bookkeeping Costs
 - Bookkeeping has gone up significantly. First Parish underfunds the administrative staffing needed. A recommendation was made to right-size the materials and office staffing, such as for payroll, reconciling the credit card, and billing.
- Cleaning Services:

- The Finance Committee pulled about \$33,000 out of personnel and put it into cleaning services. So what looks like a reduction in personnel costs is really a transfer of the sexton cost applied towards the cleaning vendor.
- First Parish will move payroll for staff from a 24 week cycle to a 26 week cycle (bimonthly for all). It is costly to do two different cycles. All staff will be in the 26 week cycle as of July 1, 2026.
 - It was noted that First Parish has had a lot of transitions with staff on the payroll this program year: many ins and outs including adjuncts and one adjunct who lives out of state. Some staff had start dates off of the payroll cycle.

Stewardship campaign:

- The Finance Committee requested input and guidance from the Parish Committee on the stewardship campaign of 2026 for FY26-27. The original goal was \$840,000 which was brought to a realistic goal of about \$800,000 towards the end of the campaign.
 - As of today, the campaign brought in pledges of about \$781,000.
 - There may be some adjusted and increased pledges after an email went out from the Stewardship Committee - thanks to Megan Rising - requesting households to consider pledging more. The office staff have to make the adjustments in Realm.
 - Historically, there have been some members who pledge late in April or May.
- Several years ago, First Parish was in a position of moving towards additional programming and we were planning for a lead up to a long-term capital campaign.
- First Parish has set aside a surplus for emergencies. In the contingency fund, we have two months saved for keeping the lights on and paying the staff.

Overall view from Finance Committee:

- The solutions that First Parish has used in the past will not be available to us next year.
- First Parish may want to consider a Spring Fundraiser in 2027.
 - The model of Taste of First Parish was effective.
 - The amount of work, enthusiasm, and collaboration yielded about \$5,000 for First Parish. The other \$5,000 went to World Central Kitchen. There was a silent auction and bidding points were accessible to many income levels.

8:36 PM - Question on solar panel income

- The Property Committee is researching the solar panels. The person who set it up is no longer a member at First Parish. Mark Wilke, chair, is digging into it after the Finance Committee did some research on it. There is still a solar power purchase agreement. We break even paying \$5,000; getting \$5,000.
- Eversource did not have useful information.
- Someone may reach out to our former archivist, Jeff Roberts, for guidance.

Question on borrowing funds from the Trustees:

- The Parish Committee borrows money from the Trustees. Where does that pay back to? Line item 5530: about \$20,000 a year from Property Committee.

MOTION 4: I make a motion to approve the budget as presented. (AI) Seconded (John) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

There will be two Listening Sessions for the budget. The in-person session (April 26, after coffee hour); the Zoom presentation will be Wednesday, April 29 at 7PM and the Zoom room will stay open beyond 8PM for anyone who needs to join late.

Brinana Walsh left the meeting at 8:44 PM. Lisa left at 8:45 PM. Steve Pillemar left.

8:45 PM - Exec Session

MOTION 5: I move to go into Exec session and invite Rev Jonipher. (Joanna) Seconded (John A) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

MOTION 6: I move to leave Exec Session. (Joanna) Seconded (Al T.) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

No notes are taken during executive sessions. Once the executive session concluded after about 38 minutes, the following motion was made.

MOTION 7: I move that we appoint Elizabeth Hunter to the Transition Team. (Carolyn H) Seconded (John A) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

MOTION 8: I move to adjourn. (Susan) Seconded (Marie). 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

The meeting adjourned at 9:24 PM.

MOTIONS:

MOTION 1: I move to adopt the consent agenda: minutes, financials, and the two minister reports from Rev. Jonipher and Rev. Stevie. None opposed. (Joanna) Second (Al) 8 of 8 in favor.

MOTION 2: I vote to adopt the new Employee Handbook, as it has been advised, including the vacation time policy update. (John A) Seconded (Al) 8 of 8.

MOTION 3: I move that we adopt all five votes related to Annual Meeting. (Joanna) Seconded (Carolyn) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

Votes "3-7" on the agenda:

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I move to adopt the published voting procedure for the Settled Minister Search Committee.

I move to add the Settled Minister Search Committee item to the warrant.

I move to add the oral updates to the warrant: Transition Team, Front Corner Project, and Reckoning & Repair Working Group.

I move to approve the warrant.

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Minutes prepared by Joanna Pushee, volunteer clerk.

Interim Lead Minister's Report

April 18 - May 19, 2026

Rev. Dr. Jonipher Kūpono Kwong
First Parish UU in Arlington, Massachusetts

We celebrated the life and legacy of Pat Magee on May 2nd. Thank you to all FP members who attended. It was a great sendoff and a way to hold space for her family, especially their son Robin who grew up in our RE program.

A big shout out to all who were involved with putting together our largest Annual Meeting yet on May 3rd! I believe we had over 140+ members show up. We have a fabulous search committee! Thank you ParCom for your hard work calling every single member and being intentional about balancing the group out. Speaking of members, we added 6 new members since our official new member ceremony in March. Hurray!

Thank you to the Transition Team for holding their Spring Update, debriefing the last Listening Session series and also giving a sneak peak to two processes that are coming up: Staffing Structure conversation as well as Covenanting process.

As I mentioned during my State of the Parish last month, we started the staff performance evaluation process. I am hoping to wrap it all up by the middle of June.

Finally, I wanted to thank you again for accommodating my milestone birthday by moving the Annual Meeting date and allowing me to skip this ParCom meeting (the only one I'm missing this year).

Heritage

- Along with Carolyn Hodges and Marc Jacobson, talked to group of parents who had issues about Rev. Erica's contract

Leadership

- Met with Cathy Modica to plan future of leadership development
- Met with Joel Carlton-Gysan to get his thoughts on this year's Stewardship Campaign and to begin to think towards next year's

Connection

- Met with Hilary Allen to talk about future goals, updates
- Attended annual Transitional Ministers Retreat
- Met with ministers of other large congregations to share ideas and support each other in this work
- Met with Accredited Interim Ministry mentor Rev. Joel Miller

Mission/Vision

- TT Spring Update 4/19 & 5/4 (virtual)

Future

- Help with planning for staffing conversations

Conflict & Trust

- Covenanting Task Force continues to meet and plan upcoming events

Interdependently Yours,
Rev. Jonipher



Key upcoming dates:

May 31	Covenanting Listening Circles
June 6	ParCom Retreat/Joint meeting with TT & SMSC

Attendance:

Date	Total	Preacher	Title
4/19	198	Rev. Jonipher	“Are You Sure?”
4/26	201	Rev. Carolyn	“We Call These Things Love”
5/3	229	Daniel Parsley	Music Sunday
5/10	189	Jordan Clark	Shinn Service (Mother’s Day)

Pastoral care provided:

Office/Home visit: 7

Staff and Lay Leadership support provided:

Appointments with lay leaders regarding projects and committee work: 15

Committee meetings attended:

- *ParCom Exec: 5/12*
- *ParCom: 4/21, Special After Annual Meeting: 5/3*
- *Worship Associates: 5/12*
- *Transition Team: 4/28, 5/7*
- *Clergy Advisory Group: 5/4*

- *Covenanting Task Force: 5/4*

Weekly individual meetings:

- *Parish Minister: Rev. Carolyn Patierno*
- *MRE: Rev. Emily Conger*
- *Office Manager: Ebiere Omoregie*
- *Music Director: Dr. Daniel Parsley*

Community and Denominational Activities

- *Individual meeting with UU ministerial colleagues (including those in search): 6*
- *Large Congregations Ministers Gathering: 2*
- *Interim Ministers Retreat: week of April 21st*