

Parish Committee Meeting Minutes
First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Arlington
January 20, 2026 7 - 9 pm
Via Zoom

Attendees: Marie, Kate, Carolyn, Joanna, John, Al, Susan, and Amy

Ministers: Rev. Dr. Jonipher Kwong, Rev. Erica Richmond

Guests: Transition Team representative (Marilyn Downs), Human Resources Committee representatives (Sara Galantowicz and Sara Whitford)

Racial Justice Group representatives: Jim Brown, Maggie Carey, Mary Breen, Maryglenn Vincens, Andrea Winslow.

7:01 Call to Order (Marie M.)

7:02 Reading and Chalice Lighting (Kate)

7:06 Financial Review (Carolyn)

- First Parish is running favorable overall.
- Pledges are slightly behind plan; plate is slightly behind plan.
 - Looking back to 2022, there is a pattern showing that by June members typically complete their commitments to pledges. The outlook continues to seem bright for the rest of the program year.
- First Parish received a generous gift to the ministers' discretionary fund in the amount of five thousand dollars.

Questions and Comments:

- The Office Manager was able to consolidate two cleaning service contracts into one; however, the cost of the cleaning has not changed. The Property Committee has received one bid so far and is working on getting more.
- Rev. Stevie Carmody went out on PFML in January. The approach is that First Parish pays the first week per our policy, then 25% is paid by First Parish and 75% is paid by the State. Details are documented in a letter of understanding which both the Office Manager and Rev. Stevie have on file.
- The Adventures in Montessori nursery school updates:
 - The addendum to the lease is signed. Parties agreed to remove the wall on the second floor (nursery and movable wall). Rev. Stevie and the Property Committee were involved. AIM has agreed to not break the flooring. The temporary wall is all at the school's expense, as well as replacing the wall at the termination of their lease.
 - AIM pays \$1,500 per month for cleaning.

- March 2026 will be the time for any updates to the lease, such as a cost of living computation. Any increase on the expected cleaning would be done then. March is the deadline set by First Parish.

Budget and Finance Committee updates:

- The Finance Committee is working on the draft budget presented to the Parish Committee in December. Lissa McBurney and Steve Pillemar are hard at work.
- There is a need to set up a salary task force; Rev. Jonipher, Carolyn H., and Lissa M. plus others will be involved.

Other:

- January compensation for staff: Calendar year basis review
 - First Parish undercharged one employee for an employee benefit cost. The Treasurer has written an MOU effective Jan 26. The Office Manager is completing benefit and cost forms. Staff can review benefits and costs to confirm. Having a written, formal file allows for documentation for First Parish's auditor.
 - First Parish is reviewing the dental allowance to be charged correctly for another employee.
 - These corrections will be made in a timely manner, and the Treasurer recommended making it a common practice from November 2026 to document in writing since that is when Open Enrollment is.

Comment and questions:

An area that needs research is the solar panels since First Parish owns half of them. First Parish seems to have lost some institutional knowledge, but the Property Committee is aware and the Finance Committee will also dig in. The Parish House (where the school is) had been on the boiler, but the Parish House was removed, and we use heat pumps (all electrical draw).

7:31 Consent agenda items:

Consent agenda: Minutes, Financials, Ministers' reports

MOTION 1: I move that we adopt the consent agenda with the received edits from Amy S. and Carolyn H. (Joanna) Seconded (Marie) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

7:22 Short reports and items

- **Ministers' Housing Allowances**

Ministers' housing allowances are tax exempt for federal taxes and is designated in advance for housing and related costs (such as utilities and furniture):

27,900 Rev. Dr. Jonipher Kwong

50,000 Rev. Erica Richmond

30,000 Rev. Stevie Carmody

MOTION 2: I move that we accept the ministers' housing allowances as submitted. (Marie) Seconded (Carolyn). 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

- **Removal of inactive members who have not responded in two years per the First Parish bylaws**

MOTION 3: I move that we remove the following names from the official membership roll of First Parish UU Arlington due to no response over the last two years: Tim Wright, Susan Timberlake, Jeff Melton, and Carol Splaine. (Joanna/Marie) Seconded (Amy Speare) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

7:35 - **On adding new members to the Stewardship Committee**

MOTION 4: I move that we appoint Emily Balkam and Megan Rising to the Stewardship Committee. (Marie/Joanna) Seconded (Kate T.) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

- **Rose of Recognition:** (Kate)
 - The volunteer Tech Team was nominated and the Rose of Recognition is written (Kate T. did the write-up)
 - Upcoming:
 - Steph Miserlis for her work moderating the FP Connection Board
 - Marilyn Downs for the painting she created and donated to First Parish

7:37 PM - **Update on Safe Congregations Team** (Rev. Jonipher, with the Human Resources committee members Sara Whitford and Sara Galantowicz)

- Getting a team up and running with 4-5 people. The idea is to have the team evolve in the future, with task forces.
- There may be a name change to Healthy Congregations or similar.
- **Covenanting process**
 - Autumn is going to be abundant with activity including the Settled Minister Search task force, cottage meetings, and surveys.
 - Pushing the covenanting process out will necessitate another all congregation meeting in the fall.
 - Part of original thinking to do the covenanting process earlier was that the Annual Meeting is in early May: either wait until next May or have a special meeting in the fall.

- Covenants are beneficial to include in the congregational record and potential ministers will look for a Covenant of Right Relations.
- Comments and questions
 - Some groundwork could be started early, in April or May, on the covenanting process.
 - A Parish Committee member suggested relying on what First Parish already has for now until the congregation can come together and discuss covenanting anew. We have what the Covenant Groups use, ground rules before meetings, and we can remind people of what we have in place as our usual agreements.
 - What are the consequences of being out of covenant?

Rev. Erica Richmond shared the theme selected for Stewardship season: **Upholding What Matters**. The theme helps us explore: “What are we nourishing and bolstering in this time?”

7:46 PM Review the Parish Committee Covenant:

- **Accept the Parish Committee Covenant**

Gratitude was expressed to Amy Speare for organizing and synthesizing all of the brainstorming the Parish Committee did with Rev. Jonipher and Rev. Erica.

MOTION 5: I move that we accept and adopt the Parish Committee Covenant and that we agree to live by it. (Marie) Seconded (Carolyn) 7 of 8 in favor. 1 opposed.

Discussion:

- There was a question about one element where the covenant says: every member gets behind a recommendation of the Parish Committee even if there is disagreement.
 - An example of recommendations at Annual Meeting where members have their own conscience and opinions. People have a right to voice their opinions and have free expression of ideas.
 - The line currently reads: “speak with one voice about Parish Committee decisions, even when we may disagree personally”
 - When people look to leadership, they want to understand that the Parish Committee has discussed and has made a decision.
 - Having good discourse is healthy when there are differing opinions; to be able to share the process and discussion of how the Parish Committee landed on a decision to then commit to following through on that decision.

The Parish Committee came to a consensus to review the language at the winter retreat on January 31, 2026 and to consider possible edits to the mentioned sentence.

7:52 **Recommendation for whether to allow inside candidates**

- Recommendation for inside candidates update
 - The Parish Committee will communicate the recommendation widely, get feedback, and vote in February.
 - Tabled until the end of the meeting tonight.

7:53 pm **State of the Parish** (Rev. Erica)

Rev. Erica gave an oral report in addition to her written report. She highlighted:

- Immigration justice and how congregants are thinking and participating
 - a vigil was held on January 9 after the killing of Renée Nicole Good who was fatally shot by an ICE agent on January 7th in Minneapolis. It was an interfaith vigil.
 - Joanne Pohl and Maggie Carey put together a handout with the names of people who died in ICE custody in 2025.
 - First Parish members are encouraged to write cards to UU church in Minneapolis, signed with their name (not “on behalf of FP”).
- A number of committees held their retreats, such as Defending Democracy, which landed on doing more interfaith work this year.

Comments and Questions:

- A Parish Committee member thanked Rev. Erica and highlighted that Sunday’s worship program with testimonials by Bill Gardiner, Eric Segal, and Joanne Pohl was something First Parish deeply needed.
- Lifted up appreciation for the long work of reaching out locally to interfaith leaders; Continue to make the effort and build or hold those relationships.

8:05 Break

8:10 Transition Team update (Marilyn Downs and Kay Snowden)

- Distributed some written notes to the Parish Committee via email
- Update is that the newsletter has been distributed in FP Connection board, print, and is going on the First Parish website: it is accessible from the interim page.
- Three Task Forces:
 - Structure and Organization at Similar-Sized Churches
 - Crafting Communication

- Developing a tool / getting trained in Discernment Circles (Training scheduled for Feb. 1 for Transition Team and Parish Committee leaders)

The Transition team representatives asked for clarity on a few items: the Winter Retreat on Jan. 31 and the inside candidates process.

- The Parish Committee has a goal of having a vote to recommend whether or not to involve inside candidates. Then, we go to the congregation for input. In February, the Parish Committee has a final vote on the item of inside candidates.
- It is important to review past history of First Parish in regards to the inside candidate consideration.

The Transition Team has reserved February 22 for an opportunity to come together so that the congregation can start sharing and lifting up needs.

8:23 pm - The Transition Team completed the update.

8:30 PM - **Reckoning and Repair Working Group** - Jim Brown, Maggie Carey, Mary Breen, Maryglenn Vincens, Andrea Winslow.

The Parish Committee received a one-page report with the background of the Reckoning and Repair group's formation. In May 2024, the congregation voted on the affirmation which was adopted by First Parish.

- A subgroup of Reckoning & Repair, "Outreach and Partnering," was tasked with finding a partner: the UU Urban Ministry in Roxbury's Roxbury Youth Program (RYP). It is an after school program for high school students.
- Proposes a 3-year commitment of time and funds
 - Parish Committee approved the Reckoning & Repair committee's fundraiser in the fall 2025
 - 67 households contributed about \$27,000
 - The Parish Committee approved a \$1,500 one-time rollover
 - \$36,453 total
- Initial plan: donate \$27,000 in this fiscal year; Year 2 and 3 to be in a range of \$7-10,000 (comes from the RYP list of costs for different program features, for example \$7,000 is one student's RYP journey throughout a school year.

Looking to Parish Committee for institutional support.

QUESTIONS:

- Would the \$27,000 be what the group would provide this year? Trying to understand that amount versus next year and year after. What is the annual amount, and any plans for additional fundraising?
- Events that serve as fundraisers would be helpful (look to past events like A Taste of First Parish, or even the “Good Goodbye” for Rev. Marta Flanagan, or something with Stanley and the Undercovers for music and/or dancing)
- Andrea Winslow: if we use \$27,000 for this year, then we think it is an attainable goal to aim for \$9,000 toward what we do next year.
- The institution of First Parish supported Reckoning and Repair with \$5,000 this year. RR was told this is for one year, and the RR committee understands that.
- There is excitement in hearing about opportunities for First Parish members to volunteer in the future.

8:41 PM **Discussion of expanding shared ministry’s charter to include recruiting, particularly for key committee positions (Rev. Jonipher)**

- Rev. Jonipher talked to Cathy Modica who serves on Shared Ministry.
- Rev. Jonipher is looking at Leadership Development (LDC); that committee has one person on it, Kiki Giatis. Looking for ways on how to pool resources together and be thought partners.
- Looking into seeing if Shared Ministry could potentially help recruit ParCom members; help fulfill the charge that LDC has: to also train people up the pipeline of lay leadership.
- Fill critical roles and not just wait until March or April.

Comments, suggestions, questions:

- Shared Ministry has its own process and own application system with nominations.
- Not proposing a merger initially, only collaboration and helping with identifying and supporting
- The LDC has focused on development of leaders; previously, it focused on recruiting leaders only several years ago.
- Targeted roles such as Parish Committee officers, Human Resources Committee, and Finance Committee
- Looking for new volunteers and working with Engage

The Parish Committee came to a consensus to have Rev. Jonipher move forward on collaborations between Shared Ministry and the Leadership Development Committee.

8:48 Executive session, invite in Sara Whitford and Sara G.

- **Human Resources feedback from staff discussions / check-ins**

MOTION 5: I move that we go into Exec session and invite the ministers, Sara Whitford and Sara Galantowicz. (Joanna) Seconded (Al T). 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

We went into executive session at 8:50 pm.

MOTION 6: I move that we leave executive session. (Maire M.) Seconded. (Joanna) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

We left Executive Session at 9:09 PM.

Sara and Sara left at 9:10 PM.

Vote 7: Recommendation for inside candidates

- Parish Committee will communicate the recommendation widely, get feedback, and vote in February.
- Parish Committee will coordinate with Rev. Erica and Rev. Stevie so that the congregation is made aware of their decisions which were shared in December with ParCom regarding this question.
- More discussion is needed on the definition of inside candidates. How do we define speaking from the pulpit, for example?
- The UUA provides information on inside candidates in the guidebook, The Ministry Search Handbook (2026).

Per Ministerial Fellowship Committee rules, any minister who has visited a congregation in a professional capacity after the most recent settled minister has announced their departure to the congregation, or who is either employed by or a member of a congregation seeking to fill another ministerial position on staff may only apply for such a position as an inside candidate...to be considered before the UUA Transitions Team has submitted a list of potential candidates to that congregation. • Per UUA Transitions Team policy, to promote fairness to inside candidates and potential external applicants, a decision about the candidacy of the inside candidate must be made before the search is opened to potential external applicants. This policy applies only to full-time positions.

1. Why discussing the inside candidates question matters
2. How we are going to define inside candidates. For example, First Parish does not hire members of First Parish or people currently employed by First Parish; anyone since defined date - for example, November 2024 when Marta announced her plan to retire.
3. Our past experience of things working out with inside candidates, but also a historical conversation of a number of things that could have been different.

Critical reason: continuing to pursue “people we know” as opposed to a broader sense of ideas: how the denomination is progressing; it could be that First Parish is limiting ourselves by pursuing only inside candidates. Regardless of their success, it might be time to change the approach.

9:19 PM

MOTION 7: I move to make a recommendation that the Parish Committee support the position of not providing internal candidates, with details determined on the Jan 31st, and that we not consider internal candidates as defined by the UUA. (Al T) Seconded (John A). 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed

Amendment (Al T.) - edit: “we not consider internal candidates as defined by the UUA”

9:38 PM Adjourn

MOTION 8: I move that we adjourn. (John A) Seconded (Susan M.) 8 of 8 in favor. None Opposed.

MOTIONS:

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MOTION 2: I move that we accept the ministers’ housing allowance as submitted. (Marie) Seconded (Carolyn). 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

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MOTION 5: I move that we go into executive session and invite the ministers, Sara Whitford and Sara Galantowicz. (Joanna) Seconded (Al T). 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

MOTION 6: I move that we leave executive session. (Marie M.) Seconded (Joanna). 8 of 8 in favor.

MOTION 7: I move to make a recommendation that the Parish Committee support the position of not providing internal candidates, with details determined on the Jan 31st, and that we not consider internal candidates as defined by the UUA. (AI) Seconded (John A). 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

MOTION 8: I move that we adjourn. (John A) Seconded (Susan M.) 8 of 8 in favor. None Opposed.

Minutes prepared by Joanna Pushee, clerk.

Ministers' Reports

Interim Lead Minister's Report January 17 - February 24, 2026

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

First of all, I would like to thank the Parish Committee for changing our regularly scheduled meeting to accommodate my vacation. I am coming back more refreshed and grounded. It has been a very busy and productive month since we last met.

A highlight for me included attending the UU Ministers Association's Institute—a gathering of colleagues every 3-4 years. Unfortunately, many from the East Coast did not make it due to the severe snowstorm, but I was pleased to attend the opening worship service co-led by our own Revs. Emily Conger and Aisha Ansano. It was an embodied experience asking us to nourish our entire being to be able to sustain our work ahead. I also attended the grief track, continuing to deepen my appreciation for this very complex human emotion we all go through at some point in our lives and how to ritualize it for the congregation as whole.

Another highlight was attending stewardship dinners, hosted and coordinated by Joel Carlton-Gysan, chair of the Stewardship Committee this year. I had an opportunity to talk about some of the exciting things that happened so far during this interim period, as well as give a sneak peak of what's to come. First Parish is in a very good place as it engages in the search process for your next settled Lead Minister.

Finally, I wanted to also share how excited I am at the transformative possibility of Discernment Circles, which the Transition Team and a couple of members of ParCom attended on 2/7. A group of lay leaders from a sibling California congregation was gracious enough to share their wisdom in an experiential way of how we answer big questions like what are our values and what drives our mission? It was a great way to practice deep listening and I'm hoping the Transition Team will figure out what questions to engage the rest of the congregation with as we figure out who we are and where we want to go.

Heritage

Leadership

- Stewardship dinners mentioned above.
- Moving forward with collaboration between Leadership Development Committee and Shared Ministry (met with Cathy M., Kiki G., and Marie) to identify new leaders for key committees

Connection

- Planned the February 22nd “Common Ground” event with Hilary Allen, our primary contact at the UUA and Marilyn Downs and Lida Junghans from the Transition Team
- Discernment Circles (above)
- Attended UUMA Mass Bay Chapter gathering (above)
- Attended UUMA Institute(above)
- 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

- ParCom retreat 1/31 to plan ahead

Future

- Support for ministerial search process

Conflict & Trust

- Facilitated conversations around conflict transformation
- Putting together a team for convenancing process

Interdependently Yours,
Rev. Jonipher



Key upcoming dates:

February 22	“Common Ground” workshop w/ UUA staff
March 1	Stewardship kickoff with my sermon
March 7	ParCom sponsored stewardship event
March 8	Stewardship luncheon

Attendance:

Date	Total	Preacher	Title
1/18	227	Rev. Erica	“Inescapable Web”
1/25	218	Rev. Mary Margaret Earl (UU Urban Min.)	“Grounded: Staying on Course During Turbulent Times”
2/1	225	Rev. Jonipher	“Healthy Boundaries=Healthy Beings”

2/8	216	Rev. Emily Conger	"Part of a Larger Whole"
2/15	187	Rev. Jo Murphy	"Moving from Grief to Justice"
2/22		Rev. Erica	"We Need One Another"

Pastoral care provided:

Office/Home visit: 4

Staff and Lay Leadership support provided:

Appointments with lay leaders regarding projects and committee work: 5

Committee meetings attended:

- *ParCom Exec: 1/27*
- *ParCom: 1/20*
- *Transition Team: 1/27*
- *Joint ParCom/TT: 1/31*
- *Clergy Advisory Group: 2/6*

Weekly individual meetings:

- *Parish Minister: Rev. Erica Richmond*
- *Adjunct 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): 10*
- *Large Congregations Ministers Gathering: 1*

Rev. Erica F Richmond
First Parish in Arlington Massachusetts: Parish Committee Report
January 20, 2026- February 24, 2026

The Stewardship Committee hosted a mailing party on February 19th! So many FP folks came to help us with letter signing, folding, stuffing, and stamping!



Worship:

January 25- Rev. Mary Margaret Earl from UU Urban Ministry preached, I was off

February 1- Rev. Jonipher preached, I assisted.

February 8th- Rev. Emily Conger preached, I was off

February 15th- Rev. Jo Murphy from UU Mass Action is preaching, I am assisting

February 22nd- I am preaching about the importance of community as a means to resist facism. What does it mean to create a culture of mutual aid?

March 1st- Stewardship Sermon! Rev. Jonipher preaching. I am assisting.

Pastoral Care Provided by Minister:

Individual pastoral sessions: 17

Themes: grief, spiritual malaise, navigating medical complexities

Individual meetings with committee leaders: 10

FP member Mary Lou Solliday died on Wednesday, January 28th. Mary Lou moved to Arlington in 2016 to be closer to her son and his family. She joined First Parish that same year. She was in a covenant group and participated in Aging Well. She also was in the choir and had served as the chair of the Music Committee several years ago. I officiated her memorial service on Monday, February 2nd. About 25 people attended, 15 of whom were First Parish folks.



Lay Leadership Support Provided by Parish Minister:

Attended the following committee meetings:

Defending Democracy: February 12th

Lay Ministry: February 3rd

Membership: February 10th

Reckoning and Repair: January 28th

Social Justice: February 5th

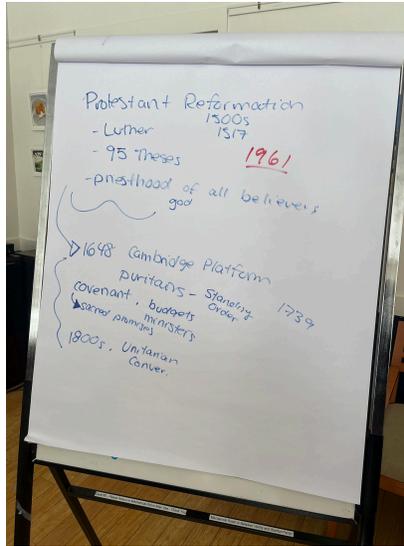
Staff meeting: February 12th

Stewardship: February 10th and 17th and 19th

Programming:

Education, Spiritual Deepening, Community Building

- I led a workshop with the membership committee on UU history/theology 101 on Sunday, February 1st. We had 9 folks attend. Here are two pictures from it.



- Wednesday Evening Chapel continues every week on Zoom. We have about 15-25 folks any week. It is a special and sacred space of quiet, poetry, music, and deep sharing.

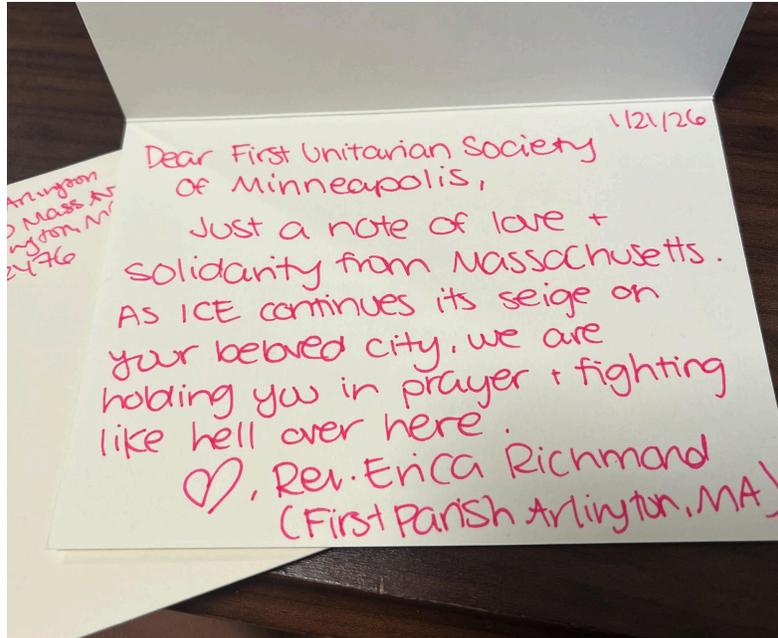
Social Justice / Turning Outward

- On Wednesday, February 4th, the LGBTQIA+ Affirming Committee hosted a movie and discussion night for "Every Body," a film about intersex experiences. I facilitated the conversation after. 19 of us attended, including 5 folks who were

new to First Parish and heard about it through the town's Rainbow Commission. The Vestry with its enhanced AV equipment (thanks to the Alliance) and screen is a wonderful place for film viewings!



- First Parish sent many cards to Minnesota as part of a Love Letters campaign. These were cards of support to Minnesota congregations as they resist ICE across their state. I am so proud of the number of cards our congregation sent. Here is one that I wrote:



- The Reckoning and Repair group cemented their partnership with the Roxbury Youth Program (part of UU Urban Ministry). It is a three year commitment of both financial and relational support. This month Andrea Winslow on behalf of R&R dropped off a check for \$27,000 to RYP!! This gift was made possible by the extraordinary generosity of this congregation during the R&R fundraising this Fall. I am extremely proud of our congregation and this working group.



- I attended the statewide LUCE call for faith-based organizers and congregations on February 17th.

Professional Development and Continuing Education:

- I am meeting weekly with an Internal Family Systems therapist/coach.
- I meet weekly with Rev. Jonipher for supervision and check-ins.
- I attended the Arlington Interfaith Clergy gathering on January 22nd.
- I attended (virtually) the January conference “Institute” put on by the UU Ministers Association. It was a wonderful chance to learn from colleagues and get inspired. In addition to conference-wide worship and keynote speakers, I did a learning track entitled “Preparing for your Sabbatical”
- I attended the Mass Bay District UUMA chapter meeting of UU ministers on Thursday, February 1st in Wayland. Here is a picture from worship that morning.



Religious Education Report

Parish Committee Meeting – February 24, 2026

Submitted by Rev. Emily Conger, Adjunct Minister of Religious Education, on February 17th, 2026.

Dear Parish Committee,

As you know, **Rev. Stevie Carmody**, Minister of Religious Education, is on parental leave with his wife and new baby Hazel Louise.

I am here serving as Adjunct Minister of Religious Education from January 15th - March 6th (8 weeks), and then again April 15th - May 13th. My part-time portfolio includes Directing the RE program with children and youth, offering pastoral support for children, youth, families, and other lay leaders, and some worship leadership. You can reach me at

emily.conger@firstparish.info or mre@firstparish.info.



The start of my term has been exciting! I led an All-Together program and then was away for two weeks. When I returned I [preached a sermon](#) to introduce myself to the congregation. **Bella Jaffe, RE Assistant**, and the RE Committee were instrumental in supporting classroom teachers for three Sundays in a row.

A little about why I went away: I had pre-existing commitments to professional organizations who were meeting up in New Mexico. For the **UU Minister's Association's** Institute for the Learning Ministry, Rev. Aisha Ansano and I as [Nourish: UU Dinner Church Consultants](#), led Opening Worship and two Workshop sessions. I also attended a workshop on Trauma Informed ministry in congregations and experienced powerful, inspiring worship led by colleagues. After that conference, I led the **Unitarian Sunday School Society's** project kickoff retreat for grantees and their mentors. I serve as the Clerk of this 200 year old organization which supports innovation in faith formation.

Oh one other update: There are three new additions to the RE team--**Poutine, Truffle, and Shoestring**. (They are very tiny and move quickly!)



I look forward to more collaboration with this congregation during my tenure.

In faith, Rev. Emily

Sunday Morning Programs

Bella and Rev. Emily for an **All-Together** on MLK weekend where we explored Rev. Dr. **Martin Luther King's** lessons that he shared with middle schoolers on being the best version of yourself, knowing your self-worth, and the power an individual can make. We connected that to the inherent worth and dignity of all beings.

The K-7th graders learned about ways to comfort and ground ourselves through physical postures (power poses) and affirmations. Then we made paper fortune tellers with affirmations. They took the lesson seriously and connected it to historical oppression (enslavement) and modern challenges (Presidential).



We held another All-Together at the start of February Break (2/15) about **Grief** and feeling emotions in the body. We acted out emotions using Inside Out stuffies as props and then made paper flowers with messages of remembrance for people or pets we are missing.

Winter Term Updates

Winter term is rolling very smoothly!

Tali Avery, Melissa Naylor, and consistent teen helper **Katie Limb** guide the **Pre-K** class through **Chalice Children**, a curriculum aimed to familiarize youngest kids with the wider community and Unitarian Universalism. They have learned about love celebrations, memorials, babies, and stars.



Ellen Kloss, Kate Guilbault, and young adult helper **Fae Kramer** work with **Grade K/1** on the **Discovery Year** curriculum, which is all about exploring the world around them.

Grade 2/3 is led by **Marc Jacobson, Mike Rie**, and rotating assistance from parents, as they enter the *Charlotte's Web*-based portion of **Experiences with the Web of Life**.

Long-time veteran teachers **Alan Linov** and **David Desjardins** guide the **Grade 4/5** class through the New Testament / Jesus curriculum called **Kingdom of Equals**.

Neighboring Faiths (Grades 6 & 7) is guided by **Genevieve Baldwin, Erica LeBow**, and **Tara Rosenberger Shankar**. They are benefitting from Genevieve's knowledge of religions and her experience researching and facilitating. She is crafting new lesson plans from older materials to help the youth learn about Catholicism and Methodism. They learned about the Methodist's recent split and visited Calvary Methodist right down the street.

Sunday Evening Programs

OWL Program

OWL 2026 will begin in early March 2026.

COA Program

Coming of Age mentors **Peter Heller, Carolyn Hodges, Phil Speare**, and **Pamela Baldwin** launched with two successful meetings so far. The group is lively and bonded through their experience in OWL together.

Youth Program

(from K Milano, Youth Program Coordinator)

The new year began at full speed for the Youth Program, with creativity in the kitchen, competition in the church halls, and an overnight Lock-In. **Youth Adult Counsel (YAC)** members continued stepping into leadership, supported by youth co-leaders **Lettie Carswell** and **Conard Anderson** alongside Youth Program Coordinator **K Milano**.

Food Coordinator Brendan led the group in making egg rolls from scratch, guiding everyone through chopping, rolling, and (of course) taste-testing. Later in the month, an impromptu evening of Taskmaster challenges brought quick thinking, teamwork, and plenty of laughter.

January also included our first **Lock-In** of the year—an overnight at the church filled with games, cooking, art, discussion, music, and worship. We kicked off the evening by hosting a **dance for First Parish families**, with youth preparing and serving a **spaghetti dinner** for the occasion. The night continued with big games, a spirited Talent/No Talent Show, and breakfast together the next morning.



Winter weather required some nimble adjustments. A planned park outing for reflection and the Winter Walk for the Homeless were cancelled due to storms. Adventures for Justice—a UU Mass Action gathering with other youth groups that combines social justice training and a trip to Boda Borg—has been rescheduled for later this winter, and the youth are eager to reconnect with their peers in that shared work.

Looking ahead, the youth have begun preparing for the **worship service** they will lead on March 22. The Youth Group Band, under **Music Coordinator Calvin Q's** leadership, is rehearsing in anticipation of performing during the service, while other youth are beginning to explore their roles in creating a meaningful worship experience for the congregation.

Attendance Numbers

In the chart below, “Total served” includes morning and evening programs combined. Averages are drawn from non-holiday weekends. In 2023-24, we averaged 68 children and youth served (including morning programs averaging 37 children) each week, and in 2024-25, we averaged 67 children and youth served (including morning programs averaging 40 children).

	H o l i d a y	Total serve d	Sunday morning	Notes	Nurse ry	Pre- K	Grades K-7 (combin ed)	*Othe r	K/ 1	2/3	4/5	6/7	OW L	CO A	Yout h Grou p
avg		60	39		1	6							13		12
9/7		68	41	Combined welcome back program, YG picnic	0	6	35						13	-	14
9/14		72	43		0	6			2	11	14	10	13	-	16
9/21		64	37		1	3			3	9	12	9	13	-	14
9/28		70	42		3	1			5	11	14	8	13	-	15
10/5		65	41	All-Together programming; "Other" & YG = Ferry Beach retreat	1	1	15	24	-	-	-	-	14	-	10
10/12	*	31	31	All-together programming for holiday weekend	0	4	22	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	-
10/19		62	35		1	3	-	-	2	7	15	7	13	-	14
10/26		65	43		0	2	-	-	7	12	15	7	12	-	10
11/2		67	41		0	6	-	-	5	13	9	8	14	-	12
11/9	*	49	36	All-together programming for holiday weekend	1	1	25	-	-	-	-	9	-	-	13
11/16		72	45		0	5	-	-	5	9	16	10	14	-	13
11/23		55	32		0	3	-	-	4	7	12	6	11	-	12
11/30	*	37	27	All-together holiday	1	2	24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10
12/7		62	36		0	2	-	-	7	12	9	6	14	-	12
12/14		59	34	All-together	0	2	32	-	-	-	-	-	12	-	13
12/21	*	-	-	Multigenerational worship	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
12/28	*	-	-	No RE Program, just childcare	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1/4		41	28		1	2	-	-	6	6	6	7	-	-	13
1/11		44	29		1	1	-	-	2	6	10	9	-	-	15
1/18	*	21	21	All-together programming for holiday weekend		2	19	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1/25		23	23	Snow Day Evening Programs	0	3	-	-	3	6	6	5	-	-	-

2/1	93	75	*Youth Group Lock-in and Multigen dance	0	3		35	6	11	11	9	-	9	9
2/8	42	34	Super Bowl Sunday	1	6			5	11	7	4	-	8	-
2/15	*	25	19	All-together programming for holiday weekend	1	3	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	6

Religious Education Committee

(From Betsy Carlton-Gysan, Chair)

Our **Religious Education Committee** – Betsy Carlton Gysan (chair), Janis Fleishman (treasurer), Sharon Jacobson, Kat Cass, Eric Breck, Lauren Newton, and Cathy Slesnick – has increased our participation in the Sunday program since Rev. Stevie started his leave. We've had multiple members cover Sunday morning classes while Rev. Emily was away/preaching, and added support coverage to Sunday evenings. We've also been **casting a wider net for spring RE teachers** and are pleased with the results so far. Using past teacher lists, recommendations, and an Engage list, we've initiated one:one outreach. Fingers crossed that we'll have the full roster settled by the end of this month.

The RE Committee's subcommittee on family engagement has been busy this year! In January, we co-hosted a **multigenerational dance** with the youth group. In February, we are co-hosting a free family game night with the Stewardship Committee, and we are hosting the monthly potluck in March.

To reach the whole Religious Education Committee, you can email recommittee@firstparish.info. To reach the Religious Education Committee Chair, email Betsy Carlton-Gysan.