

Parish Committee Meeting Minutes

First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Arlington

February 24, 2026, 7 - 9 pm

Via Zoom

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

Minister: Rev. Dr. Jonipher Kwong; Rev. Erica Richmond

Guests: Joel Carlton-Gyson (Stewardship Committee)

Mark Wilke and Greg Ruccio (Property Committee)

Julie Garry and Kay Snowden (Transition Team)

- 7:03 Call to Order (Marie)
- 7:04 Reading and Chalice Lighting (Marie); Two minutes of silence
- 7:11 Property Committee updates (Mark Wilke & Greg Ruccio, co-chairs)
- The Property Committee provided a presentation on the boiler and the meeting house cleaning service updates.
 - Boiler system:
 - About 20 years old; Obligation to maintain 65 degrees or higher
 - Replacement and quotes
 - The Property Committee received three quotes: one from the incumbent company, one from a previous maintenance vendor, and one other entity.
 - Cost for replacement ranges from \$107,000 to \$148,000.
 - Incumbent company option:
 - Alanco Service Corporation (the current maintenance provider)
 - Cost: \$125,000
 - Two 500,000 BTU systems that work in parallel
 - 97% efficient
 - Advantage of getting two: one can be de-commissioned, for example, if more heat pumps go in with going green, or if one needs servicing or is down, the other would be able to support the tenant nursery school's needs.

Timing: sometime this spring, as soon as the heating season is over. Spring avoids disruption, and the nursery school runs about 50 weeks a year.

Installation includes demolition of old boiler to go through the doorway.

Questions:

- Have you spoken to other customers and what has their experience been? Property Committee has not directly spoken to other customers. However, these units are now used all around the region. The three technicians who talked to Property all said the parts are easy to get. They come from the region such as Watertown, MA and Rhode Island warehouses.

- Are you happy with the service and quality of information? The recommended company gave us the most thorough information. Their technician was amazing.
- What is the warranty information? A warranty would cover one year on parts and 10 years on the heat exchanger. There is a warranty of one year for installation and service. The Property Committee asked for a quote for ongoing maintenance: 2600 USD annually.
- Can we extend the warranties? Did not ask yet. To be determined.

II. Building Maintenance

- While First Parish had a sexton, it is very common for churches to employ a janitorial service rather than having one person who cleans and also fixes things.
- First Parish has a temporary vendor cleaning the building and it is very expensive.
- Researched three vendors for janitorial services:
 - Cost range: from \$3,989 to 5,500 up through \$10,000
 - Recommendation is City Wide. They use vendors for cleaning, painting, etc. They are a coordinator of services.
 - One stop shopping with one account manager
 - The quote includes Arlington Children's House/Adventures in Montessori tenant cleaning requirements
 - Includes Sunday Coffee Hour setup and cleanup
 - Special events were quoted at \$40.00 / hour
 - The quotes were for Tuesday through Friday and a half day on Sunday. The cost would be \$3,900.
 - For example: cleaners would come in at 4:30 pm, and then clean ACH / AIM in the evening each of those days.

Questions:

- A Parish Committee member asked that the Property Committee check in with the FP office manager to see about Sundays and youth programs. Would the cleaners come in on Sunday for coffee hour and then not clean again until Tuesday? The school's terms may require cleaning by Monday morning.
- Could the cleaning be itemized? First Parish needs to re-negotiate the annual lease with the school by March 31.

Greg left at 7:31 PM. Mark left at 7:35 PM.

7:36 Financial Review (Carolyn)

- Our pledges are running 5% below plan, but this trend has been consistent at this time of year. The plate is tracking about the same.

- First Parish received a generous, one-time gift \$6,000 from the Eric Segal Foundation. No directive was given.
- The Reckoning & Repair group in February contacted the UU Urban Ministry and have delivered a \$27,000 donation to Roxbury Youth Program. Many households donated a total of over \$32,000. The \$27,000 donation is the initial payment to the Roxbury Youth Program.
- In general expenses: the cleaning services is really really high. There is a need to itemize cleaning and bill the nursery school more accurately.
- First Parish will update the rental agreement with Adventures in Montessori by March 31st.
 - The Office Manager is the point person and she welcomes Parish Committee support, particularly around the correct COLA amount and right adjustments for cleaning.
 - There has not been an update for plan for the temporary wall requested by the tenant. The Parish Committee signed an amendment for the wall approval. The school needs to communicate. Rev. Stevie was doing that work with the office manager and was involved in communicating RE's needs before going out on his parental leave.

7:41 Consent agenda items:

Vote: Consent agenda: Minutes, Financials, Ministers' reports

MOTION 1: I move to accept the consent agenda (Marie) Seconded. (Kate) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

7:44 Transition Team (Julie Garry and Kay Snowden)

- **Structure of congregations of similar church size** (Kay)
 - The working group has been collecting data on church size and structure. Team members Lois, Lida, Kay, and helper Tish Miller (not in Transition Team, but providing support) collected data.
 - Ministerial structures:
 - Patterns: A second minister
 - Largest congregation has three ministers
 - Most churches show a hired minister pattern
 - Two congregations had a non-ordained person as part of their staff group: Beacon in New Jersey and South Church in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.
 - There are two congregations in our peer group for church size that have community engagement or welcoming and engagement staff. All others have at least part-time staff.
 - A note on music programming: Dr. Daniel Parsley, the First Parish music director, hires collegial level choral and orchestral folks. These are not full-time employees so cost is not reflected in First Parish data for full-time employees.

- The majority of similar size churches pay for tech support rather than relying on volunteers.
- Most churches of similar size hire custodial services rather than employ a sexton.

Questions and comments:

- Contract and on staff bookkeepers (more detailed chart)
- What is Lifespan? Religious Education: youth and adult education
- Is it correct that only one church in the data collected had hired both an Executive Director and lead minister out of the 12 congregations?
 - Yes, one had a called minister and ED as the “key team” and there were other cases with a minister and directors. Some have a director of administration and finance, as a position above an office manager and below an executive director.

7:58 PM (Julie) - Had submitted a written report to the Parish Committee in advance

- Transition Timeline & Working on communications with Marilyn and Lida
- The Common Grounds event took place on Sunday, February 22. Over 100 people participated, not including Parish Committee and Transition Team members. Feedback was positive overall. Online session on Thursday had about twenty members.
- Rev. Erica Richmond’s announcement about not pursuing the lead minister position will be circulated more widely in print and electronically. It is on the First Parish website already.

Gratitude was expressed to Kay, Julie, and the Transition Team working group. A huge amount of legwork was involved in pulling this data together.

Julie Garry left at about 8:11 pm, and Kay Snowden left at about 8:13 pm.

Amy remarked on the successful phone bank and the outreach being done to members to ask for recommendations on who could serve on the Minister Search Committee. The deadline was extended to March 2, and both the Parish Committee and Transition Team pitched in to make phone calls.

8:13 State of the Parish

Rev. Jonipher submitted a written report.

- Highlights:
 - Ministerial search process.
 - Good news regarding the Covenanting process: Tina Schultz is willing to lead it and has agreed to do so!
 - A team of 3-5 people will be needed for the Covenanting process, including at least one person from Transition Team and a person from the Safe Congregation/Healthy Congregation effort being put together.

- Rev. Jonipher mentioned the “A” for accountable in RACI: instead of Rev. Stevie (who will be on second part of parental leave and summer break) there will be a need for someone to step up.
- We will be working on these efforts for next few months.

Rev. Erica submitted a written report.

Highlights:

- The Stewardship Committee kick-off is March 1. Three households pledged.
- The All-Congregation Lunch is on March 8th.
- The Flemings, Katherine and James, with help from Julius, are hosting and providing a barbeque themed lunch.
- Stewardship will be at a table at coffee hour in March and are accepting help from the Parish Committee at the table or with phone banking.
- Megan Rising, Emily Balcom, and about 15 others were able to reach out to about 400 households by stuffing envelopes in under two hours!

Questions for the ministers:

- What is the Stewardship Committee’s total goal? \$840,000. This will be announced on Stewardship Sundry from the pulpit.
- Follow up (non Stewardship Committee item): Congratulations on the Reckoning and Repair group working with UU Urban Ministry and the \$27,000 that was donated. A three-year partnership w/ UU Urban Ministry with First Parish’s Reckoning & Repair group will fundraise each year. (aim is not \$27,000 each year). The \$36,000 was the total in the RR fund; The group gave \$27,000 this year, and the hope is to raise \$5,000-7-\$10,000 in years two and three.

8:23 Stewardship (Joel Carlton-Gyson)

With kickoff being Sunday, March 1st, the Stewardship Committee is pleased to announce this year’s theme “Upholding What Matters” - We are all bound by love at the center of our community.

A new logo was created and shared. The office (Allison) updated the website with this logo.

The goal for this year is \$840,000 and for a participation goal, 280 pledging households.

We had one pledge from a dinner already.

Last Thursday, about 15 volunteers did some folding and mailing to get 400 letters out to members. The mailings included a pledge guidance sheet as something new we are doing this year. It will be a way for folks to look at their own philanthropy within their own lifestyles. The sheet came from a pledging workshop that Joel and Rev. Erica did in October 2025.

There is an article in *The Spire* for March and information on a bulletin board in the meeting house.

Saturday is game night. Sunday is the all congregation lunch, hosted by Katherine and James Fleming.

Phone banking for outreach to those who have not yet pledged occurs on Wednesday, March 11th from 6-8pm and Tuesday, March 24, 6-8pm.

Sunday the 15th will feature member testimonials and a dessert in the vestry. Regular emails throughout. Tabling throughout the month.

Sunday March 8th is the OWL, coming of age, and youth group parents event in the evening.

The Parish Committee is hosting a luncheon to start talking about the church size and structures discussion in afternoon on March 7th.

Parish Committee members thanked Joel and the Stewardship Committee. A member of the Parish Committee lifted up the boiler replacement project and noted that it could be a talking point.

Joel left at 8:40 pm.

8:40 PM Short reports

- Vote on updated covenant language
 - Remove: "Be Encouraged to speak with one voice about Parish Committee decisions, even when we may disagree personally."
 - Add: "Speak clearly about Parish Committee decisions; expressing any dissension respectfully."

Different elements - Al T. / John A / Amy S - language added and collaborated via Google document shared with Parish Committee

- "Speak clearly about Parish Committee decisions; expressing any dissension respectfully."

MOTION 2: I move that we amend the Parish Committee Covenant to the following: "Speak clearly about Parish Committee decisions; expressing any personal dissent respectfully." So moved. (Al) Seconded (John). 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

- Final vote on inside candidate position

MOTION 3: I move that the Parish Committee direct the Ministerial Search Committee not to consider or allow inside candidates. As defined by the Unitarian Universalist Association in its Ministerial Transition Handbook, inside candidates include: current First Parish employees, current members who are ordained ministers, and any individual who has preached or spoken from the pulpit since the outgoing lead minister's announcement in November 2024. The Parish Committee approves conducting a search for external candidates in order to best serve the congregation's discerned needs and vision. So moved. Al. Seconded Amy 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

8:48 PM - Rose of Recognition

The Parish Committee discussed some upcoming potential nominations for the Rose of Recognition and will publicize the celebrated individuals and groups in the e-bulletin.

8: 50 pm - Minister Search Committee formation

- The Parish Committee Exec has been getting great traction on the recommendations for the Minister Search Committee via phone banking and the Google form.
- Phone banking will continue into March, beyond the March 2 deadline, to remind members to make their recommendations for who could be on the Minister Search Committee
- The data is coming in and the initial information is looking good.
- This process kickoff has been successful!
- A lot of people are happy we are reaching out to every member.
- It's really important that we try to connect with everyone, not just people who show up on Sundays.
- Potluck announcement (Marie) to remind folks
- Once we have the names, the next step is to sort the data.
 - A sit down will happen soon to look at data
 - Who covers what ground (balance)
 - Think through what is the best way to get to the balance.

8:59 **Update on the Front Corner Project** (Al T.)

- The Front Corner working group worked on a request for proposal and got three RFPs
 - All three look great
- December announcement was the initial communication to the congregation, but there is a strong need for more communication
- Once the Parish Committee votes on funding, maybe there can be an architect article in *The Spire* including the information on the firm, Hedlund Design Group
 - Peter Hedlund designed the Magnolia Playground
 - Super exciting.

9:03 pm **Executive Session**

- Rev. Jonipher's Contract Renewal
Rev. Erica left at 9:03 pm.

MOTION 4 I move that we go into Executive Session and invite Rev. Jonipher. (Carolyn) (Seconded) Kate. 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

9:14 PM **MOTION 5** I vote that we leave the Executive Session. (Al) Seconded (John) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

9:15 PM **MOTION 6:** I move that we approve Rev. Jonipher's letter of agreement for his second year (Al T) Seconded (John) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

9:16 PM Adjourn

MOTION 7: I move that we adjourn (Joanna) Seconded (John) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

Recent Exec Meetings

Exec:

- All recent exec meeting agenda items have turned into ParCom agenda items or where in support of planning one of our many meetings.

MOTIONS:

MOTION 1: I move to accept the consent agenda (Marie) Seconded. (Kate) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

MOTION 2: I move that we amend the Parish Committee Covenant to the following: "Speak clearly about Parish Committee decisions; expressing any personal dissent respectfully." So moved. (Al) Seconded (John). 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

MOTION 3: I move that the Parish Committee direct the Ministerial Search Committee not to consider or allow inside candidates. As defined by the Unitarian Universalist Association in its Ministerial Transition Handbook, inside candidates include: current First Parish employees, current members who are ordained ministers, and any individual who has preached or spoken from the pulpit since the outgoing lead minister's announcement in November 2024. The Parish Committee approves conducting a search for external candidates in order to best serve the congregation's discerned needs and vision. (Al) Seconded (Amy) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

MOTION 4: I move that we go into Executive Session and invite Rev. Jonipher (Carolyn) Seconded (Kate) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

MOTION 5: I vote that we leave the Exec Session. (Al) Seconded (John) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

MOTION 6: I move that we approve Rev. Jonipher's letter of agreement for his second year (Al T) Seconded (John) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

MOTION 7: I move that we adjourn (Joanna) Seconded (John) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

Minutes prepared by Joanna Pushee, volunteer clerk.

Ministers' Reports

Interim Lead Minister's Report

February 25 - March 16, 2026

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

The launch of this year's stewardship campaign was also the launch of the covenanting process, beginning with my sermon on March 1st. I led a small group of new-ish people in a deep conversation around covenant and why it matters after the service. I was impressed at how deep they went! I also had a chance to talk to Tina Schultz and Rev. Stevie about the way forward—how to engage with this process in phases and put a team together. I'm very excited about the possibilities and will have more to report next month!

This was also the period when Rev. Emily's first period as Adjunct MRE came to an end. Overall, things went very smoothly in the RE program, thanks in large part to Bella's leadership and institutional memory and the RE Committee coming up with a RACI chart beforehand. It's great to welcome Rev. Stevie back from his first parental leave. Rev. Carolyn Patierno also joined us for our recent staff meeting to get to know the staff better as she begins her time with us on Easter Sunday (April 5th). We gave her a tour of our campus (including a couple of hidden rooms I haven't even been to!). I'm looking forward to working with her in the upcoming months.

I am also happy to announce that we have a Tech Upgrade Task Force (aka inclusion and accessibility in worship task force) up and running, comprising of Bill Licea-Kane, Paul Franzosa, and John Shriver, with Allison Sillers and Daniel Parsley serving as initial consultants. Our first meeting will take place on March 21st.

Finally, there are four of us who have signed up for the UUA's Sustainable Staffing Strategizers wave cohort beginning two Tuesdays ago—Marie Meteer, Carolyn Hodges, and Kay Snowden. We're apparently not the only congregation trying to figure out what kind of staffing configuration we need!

Heritage

- Appreciative inquiry during Common Ground event to talk about what drew people in to FP and why people keep coming back

Leadership

- Stewardship luncheon and ParCom event on 3/7 (poster board sessions)
- Planning for Leadership Sunday (3/29) with Cathy M. & Kiki

Connection

- "Common Ground" event in-person and online
- Planning for Listening Circles on 3/22

- 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

Future

- Budget conversations with Lissa

Conflict & Trust

- Covenanting Process launch (above)

Interdependently Yours,
Rev. Jonipher



Key upcoming dates:

March 22	Listening Sessions re: values & mission
March 29	New Members Ceremony
March 29	Trans Day of Visibility
April 5	Easter Sunday (first day with Rev. Carolyn Patierno)

Attendance:

Date	Total	Preacher	Title
3/1	195	Rev. Jonipher	“A Covenantal Take on Stewardship”
3/8	209	Sarah Q, Jim Hall, Annette Sawyer	Credo Service
3/15		Rev. Erica	“Don’t Set an Alarm”

Pastoral care provided:

Office/Home visit: 6

Staff and Lay Leadership support provided:

Appointments with lay leaders regarding projects and committee work: 13

Committee meetings attended:

- *ParCom Exec: 3/3, 3/10*
- *ParCom: 2/24*
- *Worship Associates: 3/10*
- *Transition Team: 2/23, 3/9*
- *Alliance Sunday planning: 3/10*
- *Clergy Advisory Group: 3/5*

Weekly individual meetings:

- *Parish Minister: Rev. Erica Richmond*
- *Adjunct MRE: Rev. Emily Conger/Rev. Stevie Carmody*
- *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: 1*

Rev. Erica F Richmond

First Parish in Arlington Massachusetts: Parish Committee Report

February 24, 2026-March 17, 2026

Well, first of all, Stewardship is in full swing! The team is working hard and I am optimistic that we will reach our goal. To pull that off though, we will need additional help. Please tell your FP friends to pledge. Talk up Stewardship at any and all gatherings over the next few weeks. The Committee will also be doing two phone bank sessions this month to help drive up our financial and participation numbers. If you are available to help with phonebanking, please reach out to Joel Carlton-Gysan. Thank you for your support of Stewardship!

And second, part one of my Sabbatical is coming up. This is my last report for a while. I will be on leave from April 1-June 30th. When I am on Sabbatical, my boundaries will be similar to my parental leave, i.e. I won't be checking email. Revs. Jonipher and Stevie can contact me with pastoral updates if need be. Rev. Jonipher and I are each preaching three times over the summer so there will be more ministerial availability and presence in our community. I really look forward to connecting with folks again in July.

Be well,

Rev. Erica

Worship:

March 1st- Stewardship Sermon! Rev. Jonipher preached. I assisted

March 8th- Credo Service, Rev. Jonipher and I assisted, Rev. Stevie is back!!

March 15th- I am preaching on the spiritual practice of rest.

Here is a picture of the Time for All Ages on March 1st, an excellent story of generosity from Stewardship and RE!



Pastoral Care Provided by Minister:

(this reflects through March 20)

Individual pastoral sessions: 17

Themes: transition anxiety, family stressors, and spiritual identity.

Individual meetings with committee leaders: 6

Lay Leadership Support Provided by Parish Minister:

Attended the following committee meetings:

Defending Democracy: February 24th, March 10th, March 17th

Lay Ministry: March 3rd

LGBTQIA+ Committee: Saturday, Spring Retreat, March 7th

Membership: missed March's meeting

Reckoning and Repair: March 18th

Social Justice: March 5th

Staff meeting: March 12th

Stewardship: March 3 , March 10th, March 17th

Programming:

Education, Spiritual Deepening, Community Building

- On February 28th, Stewardship and Religious Education Committees hosted a family game night. 25 people came through and lots of fun was had by all!



- Stewardship hosted a congregational luncheon on March 8th! Katherine and James Flemming were the lead chefs and made an incredible BBQ feast. The mood was festive! It was wonderful to see such intergenerational connections. Stewardship, ministers, and Parish Committee spoke.



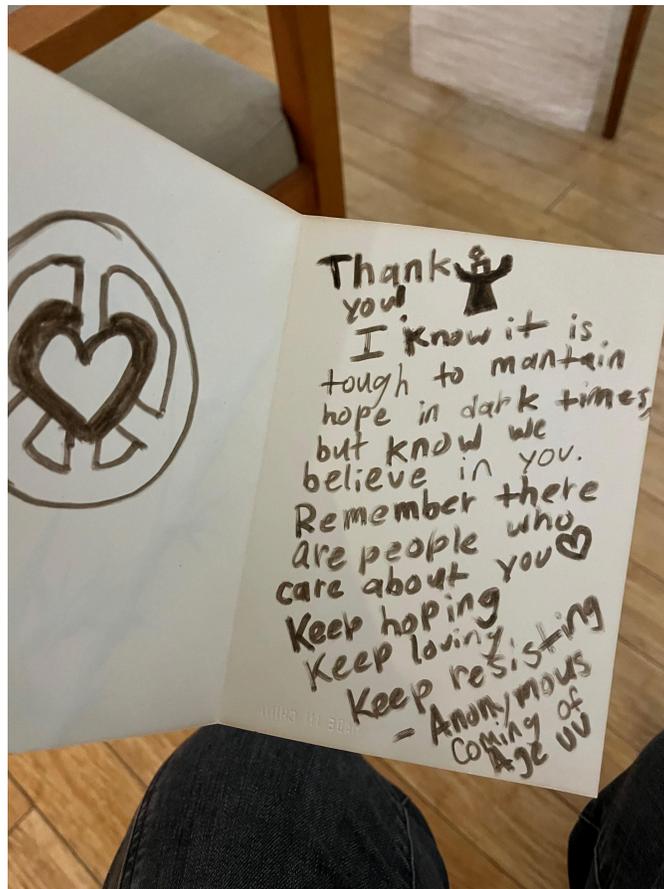
- Wendy Page and I hosted a contemplative gathering to process people's grief, anger, sadness surrounding the war in Iran. 20 people came together in Parlor for an hour of quiet, poetry, and deep, deep sharing. Here is a photo of the candles people lit as they shared.



- Wednesday Evening Chapel continues every week on Zoom. It is ending on March 18th and will restart next Winter.

Social Justice / Turning Outward

- I was the guest speaker at Coming of Age on March 1st. I joined three of the mentors, Carolyn Hodges, Peter Heller, and Pamela Baldwin. I led the students in a values voting exercise and then we ended the session by writing more letters to UU congregations in states experiencing a surge in ICE violence. Here is a picture of our session and then a picture of one of the teen's cards.



- I started serving as a chaplain outside the ICE detention facility in Burlington. This is organized through the Mass Council of Churches - the same group that organized the Prayers for Liberty marches that FP hosted in May and September.

Chaplains outside the detention center are available for prayer or support if folks waiting for appointments would like such a presence. I have done two shifts and it was incredibly powerful.



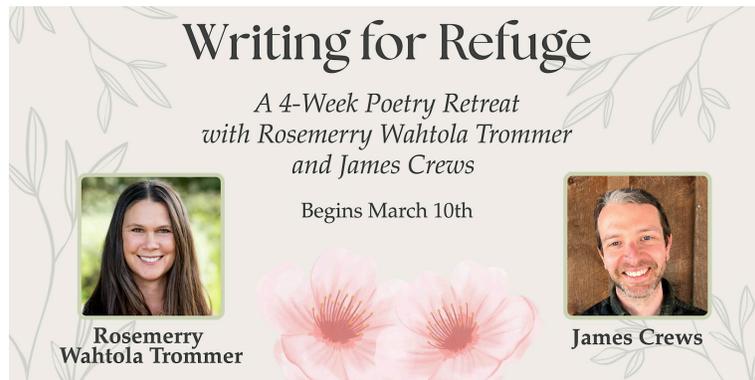
- Maggie Carey and I are representing First Parish at a Reparations Summit hosted by UU Belmont on March 21st.
- Indivisible LAB (Lexington, Arlington, and Belmont) are partnering with our Defending Democracy Working Group for No Kings in Arlington Center. Come one, come all, March 28th at 10 am.



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 am taking a four-week online poetry retreat with my two favorite contemporary poets, Rosemary Wahtola Trommer and James Crews.



Writing for Refuge
*A 4-Week Poetry Retreat
with Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer
and James Crews*
Begins March 10th


**Rosemerry
Wahtola Trommer**


James Crews

The graphic features a light beige background with faint green leaf patterns. At the bottom center, there are two large, soft-focus pink flowers. The text is centered and uses a mix of serif and sans-serif fonts.