

Parish Committee Meeting Minutes  
First Parish Unitarian Universalist Arlington  
June 17, 2025  
7 - 9 pm  
Via Zoom

**Parish Committee members:** Marie Meteer (chair), Kate Tranquada (vice chair), Carolyn Hodges (treasurer), Joanna Pushee (clerk), John Anderson, Susan Moore, Amy Speare, and Al Tosti.

**Ministers:** Rev. Erica Richmond (Parish Minister) and Rev. Stevie Carmody (Minister of Religious Education)

**Guests:** Maggie Carey and Lois Fine (Racial Justice Coordinating Committee / Reckoning & Repair Working Group - Note: Lois is no longer on RJCC; both groups are under the Social Justice Committee umbrella.)

Kiki Giatis (Leadership Development Committee chair / Volunteer Engagement working group of the Parish Committee)

7:02 **Call to Order** (Marie)

7:04 **Reading** (John A.) and **Chalice Lighting** (Al T.)

The Parish Committee held space to think of Jeff Keffer, First Parish member and former Parish Committee member, and his consistent reminders that the Parish Committee heads a spiritual organization. The Parish Committee has much business and welcomes the spirit.

John invited all to consider: what is something that has moved your spirit in the past week? Let the Parish Committee engage in our work together with that spirit holding us.

7:06 **Review of Financial reports & dashboard** (Carolyn H., Treasurer)

May financials

- The Parish Committee received the financials in advance of the current meeting for review.
- Through May 2025, First Parish is in a favorable position.
- The Parish Committee had expected and planned to use \$63,000 from the surplus, but we will not be needing to use that full amount from the surplus. We have been in a net positive position year-to-date.

- Revenue is tracking well.
- Pledges are tracking less than 2% under expected levels.
- The Tenant, Adventures in Montessori/Arlington Children's House has signed the new rental agreement and has paid their rent.
- The Town of Arlington has paid for May and June; The Town is up to date now with the parking payments.
- Note the gifts for Rev. Marta Flanagan
- One-time gifts reclassified and sits in accounts payable (not related to surplus in any way).
- Some expenses will be coming through at the end of June. The treasurer will walk the Parish Committee through this once the books get closed at the end of June.
- Expenses are running favorable overall.
- The unapplied \$9,400 is the FP credit card. It is typical: expenses will be incorporated by end of June when the books are closed.
- The Music Committee will be over in their budget, so the Parish Committee will be asked to consider acknowledging and approving an overage when the Parish Committee meets in August. [Clerk's note: the Treasurer sent more information via email to the Parish Committee over the summer months with details.]
- Religious Education Coordinator (outgoing) - **Treasurer / Rev. Stevie** ■ Rev. Stevie Carmody: following a precedent that was set with the youth service trip being 24/7 work, First Parish is providing a bonus to the RE Coordinator. The funds line item is the youth group service trip fund (Note: the line item was originally from 2010s and stated "youth service coordinator"; for the last two cycles with the Youth Program Coordinator, First Parish did not need to hire another person to support Rose.)
  - Treasurer / Rev Stevie: Stevie and Ebiere will write up the information for payroll together.
- One question for the chair regarding a guest minister honorarium:
  - In 2022, a guest minister came and preached at First Parish. This person notified the lead minister this year that they did not receive the honorarium (\$300.00 at that time); the person had not sent the W-9 and therefore was not paid, despite multiple reminders.

Unfortunately, since the person had not completed the paperwork, the payment could not be processed in accordance with financial compliance policies. As of now, First Parish remains willing to issue payment for the prior engagement upon receipt of a completed W-9. The question is

whether the Parish Committee is comfortable with the fact that the current honorarium amount was quoted and if the guest preacher may receive that updated amount of \$400 which was referenced in a recent conversation.

To help mitigate any confusion and in recognition of the service provided, First Parish is prepared to honor the \$400 amount, pending consensus by the Parish Committee.

After some discussion, the Parish Committee came to a consensus to move forward with issuing the payment for the guest minister at the current rate for the honorarium once the paperwork is confirmed as complete.

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

**MOTION 1:** I move to approve the consent agenda with one typo updated in the minutes. (Al T.) Seconded (John A.) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

Point of order (parliamentary inquiry): Amy Speare raised a point of order to clarify her own voting eligibility. She mentioned that as a newly elected Parish Committee member, she did not attend the last Parish Committee meeting; however, she did read the minutes and had no objections. As presiding officer and chair, Marie Meteer confirmed that Amy is eligible to vote on the consent agenda.

**The Tenant, Adventures in Montessori (AIM): updated lease agreement and amendment ●**

The Treasurer of the Parish Committee had sent information to the Parish Committee via email on June 15 regarding the updated lease agreement with an attachment of Exhibit A: the second amendment lease data sheet.

- Highlights included a rent increase which would go into effect on July 1, 2025 ○

Repairs: the tenant can replace carpeting with carpets approved by First Parish in two areas (the 2nd floor nursery and on the 1st floor); the tenant is responsible for these expenses. The Property Committee of First Parish is responsible for some small repairs in the nursery on the 2nd floor.

- What are the small repairs in the nursery?

- First Parish needs to repair some gaps in the molding and cracks in the linoleum in the nursery (small room on the second floor across from the art supply room). In April, Jeff K. spoke with the Property

Committee about the work, the timing, and keeping things safe. The Parish Committee will need to follow up with the Property Committee (Greg Ruccio).

There is no mention of the temporary wall which the tenant had requested; in the interest of having the updated lease signed in time, another amendment would be needed to be approved by the Parish Committee should the tenant and First Parish agree to a temporary wall.

Much gratitude was expressed to Carolyn Hodges, Jeff Keffer (especially for all the contract work), Rev. Stevie Carmody, and the First Parish office manager, Ebiere Omoregie.

**MOTION 2:** I move for the Parish Committee to accept the lease as negotiated and signed between Arlington Children's House and First Parish. (Carolyn H) Seconded (Amy S and Kate T) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

Gratitude expressed again for all those who have been working with the tenant.

One note from Rev. Stevie on the timing, specs/vendor for a potential temporary wall includes the importance of sound. There is a state inspector coming at the end of June.

7:30 PM - **Vote 3 - Rev. Jonipher's housing allowance for fiscal year 2025-26** Rev. Jonipher sent the housing allowance information to the Parish Committee chair. The Parish Committee reviewed the letter from Rev. Jonipher provided on June 9th declaring \$24,900 for the housing allowance.

**MOTION 3:** I move that the Parish Committee approve Rev Jonipher's housing allowance for fiscal year 2025-26. (Kate T.) Seconded (Amy) 8 of 8 in favor.

Per the Parish Committee Chair, Marie Meteer, the office manager, Ebiere Omoregie, is working on setting up the retirement information for Rev. Jonipher.

First Parish can place the interim lead minister on payroll for July to factor in relocation costs. The start date is Aug. 1, 2025. The funds are in the right fiscal year.

Note that First Parih cannot reimburse for a security deposit.

**Vote 4:** Megan Rising to be added on the Trustees

7:36 pm - Megan has been nominated and is willing to join the Trustees. She agreed to join the First Parish Trustees as Marie has stepped down from her position to serve as elected chair of the Parish Committee.

Megan Rising is a confirmed member of First Parish. [Clerk's note]

The Parish Committee needs to appoint Megan Rising since this change was not part of the Annual Meeting in May. Per the bylaws, the Parish Committee can make this appointment.

**7:41 PM**

**MOTION 4:** I move to add Megan Rising to the Trustees. (Susan) Seconded (Kate and Al). 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

**DISCUSSION:**

- Is the Trustees a "full" committee or does it need another person?
  - There has been discussion per Marie Meteer, and more education is to be done. The Trustees is starting some new things with finances.
  - There is a fairly good number of people to discuss things, which are not always clear cut. Having a good group of people and hearing different views is important.
  - Kiki Giatis commented on the members currently serving and echoed there being different voices: some long-term First Parish people like Julie Dunn.
  - Kiki applauded Julie Dunn's leadership of the Trustees.
- A Parish Committee member asked if Megan Rising had some relevant expertise or provided a reason why she is interested in serving on the Trustees. Marie answered this question and provided sufficient information.

**7:42 PM State of the Parish (Rev. Erica Richmond & Rev. Stevie Carmody)** Rev. Erica and Rev. Stevie are joining the Parish Committee meeting from the UUA General Assembly in Baltimore, Maryland!

Rev. Erica provided an oral report on pastoral care, recent trainings, and the political climate. - Pastoral Care:

- Pastoral care is an essential part of religious community. All of us do this tending to each other: we witness one another; we show empathy; we tend to the whole self.

- Rev. Erica's personal appointments for pastoral care have increased in June. - Sharen Leonard passed away on June 17th. She was a First Parish member for over 30 years.

- She was previously chair of the Music Committee and had recently been in charge of communications for the Alliance.

- Sharen's memorial service is on July 12 at 10am. The Alliance will be doing the organizing to honor her.

- We hold her husband Andrew in our hearts along with their adult son Michael and his wife Erika.

- A First Parish member is in a nursing facility. He has been a member for 52 years. Rev. Erica visited him on Sunday.

- Other themes in pastoral care sessions have included the political climate, divorce, and caring for a spouse.

- Political climate: parishioners have expressed deep concerns over the rise of fascism and its impact.

- Recent trainings

Rev. Erica spoke of the recent de-escalation training: there were 45 participants, including Kate and Al of the Parish Committee as well as Rev. Stevie Carmody in his capacity as Minister of Religious Education. Rev. Erica remarked on the spirit in the room. [Clerk's note: see the training's announcement / blurb from the e-bulletin at the end of the minutes, below the motions summary.]

Al noted that there were very good points there for ushers. Fortunately, First Parish has not had the need for de-escalation recently, but it was interesting, especially with the current political climate.

Kate appreciated that the skills taught are useful in our everyday lives, not just at a rally or protest. Kate T highly recommended the training to all.

Question:

For the next church year, would First Parish want to do a safety training for our ushers? We are in a tense time. We may want to schedule a safety training.

First Parish did at one point have a Safety Committee.

A Parish Committee member suggested inviting the Membership Committee members and to ask the First Parish staff what training they want.

Rev. Stevie:

Reflection on creating an avenue for action and empowerment in a time when we may not know how to act on our values: If one pastoral concern is how to handle a situation or crisis right now, it's connected to First Parish providing outlets for action, training, and empowerment.

7:51 - Rev. Stevie continuing the State of the Parish for the Religious Education (RE) program What

has been a big theme for children, teens, and families right now is navigating gender identities: not only navigating their own identities, but also navigating gender as a topic now with the federal administration. Families are meeting with Rev. Stevie for resources and to be connected with other families who have experience in seeking resources. It is a group effort.

Another big theme has been loss of relatives (a beloved teacher, too) and sorting through loss.

Pastoral Care in RE:

Rev. Stevie summarized and framed pastoral care in terms of opportunity and “in the moment” pastoral care. Bella Jaffe (they/them) is very skilled with working with young people. Teachers on Sunday mornings do class check-ins, and if something big comes up like a sick relative or the death of a pet, the teacher is asked to contact RE staff. Staff may go for a walk to check out the fish, for example.

Youth Group: pastoral care is built into the structure. There is a Youth Program Coordinator. Much like adult parishioners to lay ministers, youth share candles of celebration or concern at end of most meetings. The adult advisors and the trained peer counsellors (who receive basic youth chaplain training) meet to go over things. Peer counsellors check in with peers, or something is delegated to an adult advisor.

The Parish Committee expressed gratitude to Rev. Erica, especially for the increase in pastoral care, and to Rev. Stevie. Much gratitude expressed for the trust that the congregation puts in our wonderful ministers and for their deep knowledge and care.

## 7:58 Updates

- **Al T.:** Timing on information/proposal for tree/entranceway to meeting house: ○ Al talked to Greg Ruccio of the Property Committee about the tree in the yard at the front of the meeting house. First Parish keeps trimming it back, but branches are dropping. Greg has a small team of specialists - Arbor Care - Town tree person, arborist - and a couple of other people who can do an exam to try to determine the life expectancy of the tree. More dead branches could be a danger, so First Parish needs to stay on top of it and identify a source of funds. Community Preservation in the Town of Arlington may be a place to go to for grant money if First Parish decides to open up a parklet to invite folks from the town onto the property. For example, there could be benches, tables with checkerboards, a peace garden, etc. The area is situated diagonally across the street from another park with the Adirondack chairs. We could justify CPA money. Al Tosti will keep following up with that; a key person is Andrew Leonard. Al Tosti will follow up with Andrew later in the summer.

○ Questions / Discussion / Highlights:

- In keeping with Pastoral Care theme, the tree is beloved. First Parish will

really need to take time with people, talk with parishoners, talk through it.

- Amy S. “the tree warden”(the technical term for the tree person/arborist)
- There are processes and programs to do memorials for trees: we might think of the process that way.

- **Kate:** Transition team update for Rev. Jonipher: volunteer poll, timing The Parish Committee put out a small announcement to the congregation about Rev. Jonipher’s arrival and the need for a transition team. 16 people reached out and nominated themselves, plus about four other people who were nominated by someone else. The Parish Committee is checking with Rev. Jonipher and planning on setting up some one-on-one meetings in August. The task force / transition team will be presented in September.

The Parish Committee will need to approve the group members for the transition team.

In terms of timing, the Parish Committee will need to set up a special meeting in September to vote on the members of the Transition Team.

Rev. Jonipher has been invited to the August 6th potluck, which the Parish Committee and the Interim Search Committee signed up to host that week.

Rev. Jonipher and the Parish Committee to confirm the Transition Committee and keep the interim processes front and center, including discernment. Lori Kenshaft (who was appointed to the Interim Search Committee) wrote up a job description for the transition team. Marie is working on reviewing and editing it.

- “Parsnips” for September suggestions (**Joanna**):

Joanna to write up an article on the Parish Committee notes (“Parsnips”) section to be submitted to the newsletter, *The Spire* (deadline is Sept. 7th for the Sept 14th edition).

- Review of the wonderful events of the end of the last program year
  - Another thank you to the party planners (Tina S., Ebonie, et al.) for organizing Marta’s party
- De-escalation training line or two to highlight the preparedness aspects (see below blurb from the e-bulletin)
- Pastoral care - Grateful for Rev Erica and Rev. Stevie - Rev. Erica’s stepping up and receiving an increased load of pastoral care sessions over the summer; Rev. Stevie’s knowledge and care to provide opportunities to the



kids, teens/youth

8:10 - 8:15 PM- **Break**

**8:15 Racial Justice request to roll over funds to next fiscal year (Maggie Carey and Lois Fine)**

The Parish Committee received a memo via Parish Committee Executive (ParCom Exec) asking that remaining funds from the Racial Justice Coordinating Committee (RJCC) budget be used as seed money for the Reckoning & Repair Fund being established. (This rollover, should the Parish Committee approve of it, would be in addition to the already approved \$5,000 that the Congregation added to the budget at Annual Meeting when the fiscal year 25-26 budget was approved.)

The Reckoning & Repair Working Group (R&R) has been working towards selecting a Black-led organization with which to partner. The R&R group is very close to selecting an organization.

The Parish Committee questions/comments/suggestions:

- The Parish Committee noted that the Racial Justice Coordinating Committee (RJCC) would already have funding for programming for 2025-2026.
- In the RJCC budget every year, RJCC receives funds intended for education, programming, and involvement as opposed to being a fund that goes someplace else. The RJCC did not use all of the budgeted funds for programming for 2024-2025.
- It is not the intention to roll over funds every year. It is not the intention to roll over every year into the R&R fund.
- The Parish Committee underlined that this request is a one-time request and asked that the RJCC confirm that the intention going forward is that funds go toward programming and operating in the future.
- Is the fund mechanism established yet for R&R?
- How much money would the rollover funds amount to?

The Reckoning and Repair Working Group would set aside some money for emergencies (meaning if some local or national concern arose).

The fund mechanism is not established yet at this time. RJCC needs to talk to the Trustees to set up the mechanism. For example, RJCC could use a model like Giving First. There is about \$2,000 left in the RJCC budget from 2024-2025. The RJCC is asking to roll over this amount into the R&R fund as a one-time request. Programming will ramp up next year as

the RJCC has efforts apart from R&R, too. A lot of the energy of RJCC has revolved around Reckoning & Repair. There is still a lot to respond to; a lot of programming can be done.

A Parish Committee member noted that in the span of the need in the world, this amount of about \$2,000 is a tiny amount of money. The Parish Committee member expressed support as a one-time request with the utmost clarity that supporting the rollover goes against the standard practices of First Parish.

Part of a partnership would be assessing First Parish commitment and another part is potentially service. The Reckoning and Repair group would ask the partner group what is wanted, if anything, and would proceed from that conversation in terms of service.

Each program year, RJCC receives \$3,000 which gets approved by the congregation each year. So the RJCC only used a third of that this past year. The Parish Committee approved and the congregation approved the additional \$5,000 just for seed money for the R&R group. There will still be \$3,000 for the RJCC for programming for 2025-26.

A Parish Committee member stated that for any committee at First Parish, there is no policy of rollover. We have a policy of *not* rolling over. The point of the budget is to keep building community, not to store up for a future purpose. The Parish Committee would have to seriously consider additional requests for rollover and these requests may not be approved.

A Parish Committee member noted that the Parish Committee and the Finance Committee have built a budget that is a deficit budget for the last several years; this is a question of how much are we dipping into cash reserves in a sense.

- Vote 5: A motion to roll over funds from the Racial Justice Coordinating Committee funds and allow the RJCC seed for the RR for the 24-25 year with the purpose of seed money for RR.

**MOTION 5:** I move that the Parish Committee approve a one-time rollover of \$2,000 to the Reckoning and Repair Working Group funds from the Racial Justice Coordinating Committee 2024-2025 to the next fiscal year. (Al T.) Seconded (Susan M.) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

Thanks. Gratitude from Lois and Maggie was expressed to the Parish Committee.

8:32 PM **Database team (Susan Moore, Parish Committee, Engagement Working Group; Kiki**

## Giatis, Engagement Working Group)

- Update and needs
    - Collecting data
    - Planning for the rollout in the fall
  - The project team has met:
    - Susan Moore, Amy Speare has joined the working group
      - Gratitude to Amy Speare for joining the working group
    - Skills, interests, and committee memberships
  - Allison would like to help us; Kiki G is meeting with Allison Sillers, First Parish office and communications associate, on this project. Susan said the key learning in the recent discussion is to keep it simple.
    - Steve M and Kiki G - talked to other churches. The failed efforts of other congregations were times that went too big, for example, many more criteria or skills. Rev. Jonipher had told Marie Meteer about an elegant data collection tool. Amy was looking into it.
    - Susan shared her screen with some examples.
      - Greeting newcomers at the welcome table.
      - Working with youth
        - If people look at the list, they have some examples.
        - “If you need somebody for that, call me.”
      - What’s on the back of the Connection Card
  - Collection data:
    - Kiki Giatis and Allison Sillers are getting data into the profiles section [Kiki is the Leadership Development (LDC) chair]
    - In terms of collecting data: we’ll need a number of methods
      - In person
        - Paper; we’ll enter the data
        - Sundays - we’ll be at coffee hours; people can come up to the Parish Committee table and we’ll have laptops with us.
      - A lot of communication through different means: the FP Connection Board (Google group), oral announcements at the Sunday services, the e-bulletin
        - One question to get ParCom’s input on:
    - Whether ParCom only allows self-reporting, or do we allow nominate others for a skill?
- Marie M. - suggested what LinkedIn does: recommendations/testimonials - Marie recommends Peggy Gardiner for her skills in gardening. (Give folks the option to delete.) We don’t do anything behind the scenes; it’s all up front. This needs to be a Google form that people can do

on their phone. (Remove the reliance on laptop, but we can definitely have a laptop at coffee hour in the fall at the Parish Committee table). People need to see it six different places in six different ways.

Wider Network of Care, Membership, RE folks, Office Staff...get input.

Susan Moore: regarding the rollout

- We previously talked about doing a big celebratory rollout at In-Gathering; Susan is thinking that the time pressure is huge, even if we move the August Parish Committee meeting up, people won't be focused on it then. Plan for a series of coffee hour and possibly other events.

Joanna to include a mention of this theme/working group in the September Parsnips? (Potentially as a preview to the Fall Retreat themes that would be included in an October Parsnips article?)

Ferry Beach is another place where this information could be spread on the engagement project. Soft rollout. Other congregations have done a big push and rush the rollout; it sets better expectations to take a slower approach and do a soft rollout as a series of smaller things.

Other piece: Education - spread the word about the database.

A member of the Parish Committee not on the working group asked: What do individuals get out of this? The number one reason people come to First Parish is community; the engagement database is supporting community.

8:46 PM Rose of Recognition suggestions for nominees

E-Bulletin and Website blurbs to be written by Parish Committee members

- June: the Marta Party planners (Kate T. writing)
- August / September : Interim Search Committee (John A. writing)

**8:50 Executive session - Rev. Erica and Rev. Stevie leave the meeting to go enjoy General Assembly in Baltimore.**

Marie asked if there is a motion for the Parish Committee to go into executive session.

MOTION6: I move that we go into Exec session (Carolyn) Seconded (John) 8 of 8 in favor.

9:17 PM - MOTION 7: I move to leave Exec session. (Al / Joanna) Seconded. (John) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

The Parish Committee was in executive session from 8:50 pm to 9:17pm.

**MOTION 8: I move that we approve the updated contract for the Parish Minister, Rev. Erica Richmond, as written for the interim period. (John) Seconded (Joanna) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.**

9:18 PM Adjourn

**MOTION 9:** I move that we adjourn the meeting. (Joanna) Seconded (John A / Carolyn H) 8 of 8 in favor.

MOTIONS:

**MOTION 1:** I move to approve the consent agenda with one typo updated in the minutes. (Al T.) Seconded (John A.) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

**MOTION 2:** I move for the Parish Committee to accept the lease as negotiated and signed between Arlington Children's House and First Parish. (Carolyn H) Seconded (Amy S and Kate T) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

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Blurb on De-escalation Training from the E-bulletin:

### **Responding Well: De-Escalation Training**

**Monday, June 9, 2025, 6:30pm, Vestry.** Join First Parish folks as we learn about tangible and applicable de-escalation skills. How do we respond as individuals and as a community when there is a threat or disruption? What skills can we hone to diffuse a situation on our front lawn, or at an event, or during Sunday morning worship? Claire Karl of UU Mass Action will be leading this training. Join folks from Religious Education, Ushering, Social Justice, Welcoming Congregation, and the Choir!

Minutes prepared by Joanna Pushee, volunteer clerk. Edited for clarity on 8/21/25.