

Parish Committee Meeting Minutes 3.18.25

First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Arlington

March 18, 2025 7 - 9 pm

Via Zoom

Attendees: Anne Quaadgras, John Anderson, Al Tosti, Steve McMullin, Susan Moore, Kate Tranquada, Carolyn Hodges, Joanna Pushee, and Jeff Keffer.

Ministers: Rev. Marta Flanagan, Rev. Tricia Brennan, Minister of Religious Education Stevie Carmody

Guests: Joel Carlton-Gysan of the Stewardship Committee; Marie Meteer of the Interim Minister Search Committee (ISC)

7:01 PM **Call to Order (Anne)**

Scheduling reminders: There will be no meeting on March 25 for the joint Committee on Ministry/Parish Committee meeting. On May 18, there will be a meeting right after the annual meeting to have the Parish Committee select a chair and vice chair. The next retreat will be on June 7. The last regular meeting for the program year will be June 17.

7:05 - 7:19 PM **Check in and Chalice Lighting** (Jeff & Rev. Marta)

In light of the concerns from Washington, D.C.: "What do you want?"

7:21 **Review of Financial reports & dashboard** (Carolyn)

Current financials:

- First Parish is doing extremely well. Expenditures are running favorably despite some revenue line items that are lower. First Parish is favorable to date as well as forecast.
- First Parish pledges are rebounding.
- In terms of revenue: First Parish is now up-to-date on building rentals. The Town of Arlington has caught up on parking payments.
- From an expense standpoint, First Parish is running favorable except for the utility bill for February which is a little higher due to the cold weather and heating needs.
- The Treasurer is grateful that First Parish is in fabulous shape and able to continue doing good work.

Forecast/re-forecast:

- The Treasurer provided the reforecast as a high level summary of basic assumptions, such as the assumption that pledges would be behind about 5% this time of year, as well

as the enrollment of the tenant, Adventures in Montessori. Other line items are predictable.

- For expenses: Some anticipated increases in certain areas such as heat and music. The Treasurer expects the Music Committee to fully spend the funds in their budget. First Parish is also reviewing compensation for Rev. Marta Flanagan in terms of carryover vacation when she departs.
- Overall First Parish is doing fabulously; in this economic climate it is an absolutely amazing thing!
- Reminder: The Parish Committee budget meeting will be in April. First Parish has a good, comprehensive picture and retains a surplus.

7:24 pm - Questions?

- A Parish Committee member had a comment about the compensation for Rev. Marta Flanagan and pointed out that the fiscal year does not necessarily coincide with the start and end dates of the lead minister. There will be an offline conversation to make sure compensation is in line with UUA guidelines as was done with newer staff at First Parish.
- A Parish Committee member reminded everyone about the pledge information and pre-COVID versus post-COVID numbers. There is a reduction in pledges for some new members. However, there are still brand new members joining the community, getting involved, and sharing their time, talent, and treasure. Many brand new members give. First Parish is doing very well!
- Rev. Marta Flanagan had sent an article about employment and how national happenings are impacting First Parish families and community members locally, especially. She encouraged everyone to read the article.
- First Parish is not in a place of scarcity and remains in a place of abundance.

7:29 PM - **Update / Conversations with the First Parish tenant, Adventures in Montessori (AIM)** (Anne/Jeff/Carolyn)

- The Treasurer thanked the chair for summarizing previous conversations in a PDF and sharing with the Parish Committee before the meeting. Much gratitude to Anne!
- The First Parish office manager is doing an exceptional job managing the tenant, AIM, and increased support from the Parish Committee has been appreciated.
- There is a calculation document that is owned by First Parish and managed by the First Parish office manager. The tenant reports to the First Parish office manager what the enrollment numbers are and the office manager updates the calculation spreadsheet. (The lease indicates that rent is based on enrollment.)
- If the tenant chooses to pay by credit card, there is a fee; if the tenant pays by check, there is no processing fee.
- Another meeting will be scheduled among AIM school leadership, the office manager of First Parish, and Rev. Stevie Carmody, as well as a Parish Committee member to review and re-negotiate a lease. This meeting needs to be held before June.
- The current lease with AIM and First Parish ends on June 30, 2025. It was a three year lease.

- AIM is current as of March 2025 with the rental payments.

Questions/Comments:

- How many students do they have? What are the trends?
- The Parish Committee will request some information, such as a financial report and enrollment data, before meeting with AIM.
- Is there more space in the community that can be used as a nursery school, or are there more schools looking to rent space?
- A Parish Committee member suggested that a late fee be included in any new lease with a nursery school to ensure timely payment in the future.
- It was decided that a subgroup including Jeff Keffer and Steve McMullin along with the Minister of Religious Education Stevie Carmody would organize the information collection and meeting scheduling, initiated by Carolyn Hodges.

7:45 PM - Consent agenda: Minutes, Financials, Ministers' Reports.

MOTION 1: I vote to adopt the consent agenda, with the links removed from the minutes. (Jeff K.) Seconded (Steve M./Al T.) 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed.

Friendly amendment - Joanna to remove the live links from the minutes (such as housing letters, which are located in the Google shared drive).

7:46 PM - **Interim Minister Search Committee (ISC) progress update** (Marie Meteer)

The Interim Search Committee has been busy. The group has been working through the first step of the search process: to create the profile based on the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA)'s provided form. The profile is factual and includes information such as when First Parish was founded. The form requests some information such as a history of people joining and leaving. There is also a questionnaire that allows for more information to be included by the ISC. The ISC will say more; the group has had meetings with Rev. Marta, MRE Stevie, and Rev. Tricia, as well as with Rev. Erica shortly before she went on parental leave. The ISC has been communicating back and forth with the UUA.

Marie M. shared the schedule and timeline on submitting the profile to the UUA. We are in good shape; we are quite a ways along. Our target is April 4, 2025, which is the earliest date we are able to post. ISC is looking to have a draft about a week or so from today. Rev Marta and Rev. Tricia have offered to read it. The ISC will send the draft to First Parish Executive Committee and other Parish Committee members who would like to read it. The ISC will incorporate comments.

The First Parish website is in pretty good shape, such as having the Parish Committee minutes uploaded and published on the site. Some areas of the website have been completed with updated policies. The annual reports are posted along with the budget. There is not currently a

place on the website for activities that will be happening “for a few months,” so Marie is updating the “news” tab to share information as news stories on the First Parish website.

The UUA will let First Parish know by May 6, 2025 about candidates to interview. Then, First Parish has from May 6 to May 19th to interview candidates. It will be a busy time for the ISC! First Parish will be informed around May 19th (which is the day after the Annual Meeting) whether there is a match made between First Parish and an interim minister. The offer date is set for May 22nd at noon. These dates were made available by the UUA; Marie can share them with the Parish Committee via email.

Note that the ISC will not have details to share with First Parish members at the Annual Meeting, but ISC can share any information or updates available at that time.

7:54 PM Questions:

- A Parish Committee member mentioned contract negotiation which will be May 22nd and later. Will a pre-meeting be needed ahead of that offer day to plan the negotiation of the employment agreement? Yes!
 - First Parish Executive will be discussing the contract draft in a meeting in March for approval by the Parish Committee before it is submitted to the UUA.
- Sunday, March 23rd is the pancake breakfast in the morning before the Sunday worship service, and there is the teen / parent pizza party for parents of teens in the evening. Marie will be at the pancake breakfast; someone will be stopping by in the evening as well to answer any questions about interim search.
- Deep gratitude for Marie Meteer and the whole ISC. Thank you for being so incredibly on the ball! Thank you to the Interim Minister Search Committee for stepping up!

[Marie continues to stay in the Zoom meeting for the Stewardship update.]

7:59 **Stewardship update** (Joel Carlton-Gysan).

The Parish Committee chair admitted Joel to the meeting and welcomed them.

Joel, as co-chair of the Stewardship Committee, provided an update: First Parish is doing quite well. The Stewardship Committee reports that we are at 82.5% (meaning \$680,000 has been pledged). We are at more than 72% participation (188 people have pledged). We have a phone bank scheduled for Thursday. About 160 people who have not pledged yet will be contacted. Maryglenn Vincens will provide phone scripts and scripts for leaving voicemails and text messages at the phone bank event.

The stewardship-sponsored pancake breakfast is scheduled for Sunday: Thank you in advance to volunteers from the Parish Committee for the phone banking and the pancake making. On Sunday evening, there is the teen / parent Night with pizza. It is our last “big push” weekend. Additional follow-up will occur.

8:02 pm - Questions / comments

Incredible gratitude! The Parish Committee knows how intense and important this work is! The Parish Committee is here to support you.

A Parish Committee member asked: with 160 contacts to make on Thursday evening, roughly how many do we need to hit our participation goal? (260 was the goal). We are looking at around 80 more households to pledge to achieve the participation goal.

Joel is scheduling a meeting with the Unitarian Universalist Association regarding planned giving as this is the first year he is volunteering to do this work: looking for best practices and ideas.

The Parish Committee chair expressed gratitude for Joel and the whole Stewardship Committee.

The Parish Committee is deeply grateful for Joel's work and the Stewardship Committee jumping in with both feet!

Joel and Marie left the meeting at the break time at 8:05 PM.

8:05 - 8:10 PM Break

8:10 PM Rose of Recognition (Anne Q.)

There is a Google Document that was shared with the Parish Committee by the chair. A list of previous nominees lives in that shared document. There are several nominees that are put forward by the Parish Committee.

For the Rose of Recognition for the month of March: Alan Linov of the Social Justice Committee and the coordinators of the Monday, March 17th evening listening session. This social justice forum had about 40 attendees. Rev. Tricia will create the write-up for the First Parish website, e-bulletin and teaser.

8:18 PM Annual meeting process and warrant article votes (Anne/Joanna)

The clerk will be scheduling the coordinating meetings to prepare for the annual meeting in May. The Parish Committee will need to vote on the warrant at the April 29 Parish Committee meeting.

Add minister *emerita* status vote to annual meeting warrant (Anne)

As one of the gifts that First Parish wishes to bestow upon Rev. Marta Flanagan after her 16 years of serving as First Parish lead minister, the Parish Committee, at the suggestion of Parish

Committee Executive, proposed to add the minister *emerita* status vote to the Annual Meeting warrant for May 2025.

The Parish Committee chair reminded the Parish Committee that the congregation would need to vote to approve this motion in May at the Annual Meeting.

MOTION 2: I move that we put an item on the annual meeting warrant to provide Rev. Marta Flanagan minister *emerita* status. (John Anderson) Seconded (Carolyn Hodges & Steve McMullin). 9 of 6 in favor. None opposed.

The motion passed unanimously.

Rev. Marta Flanagan expressed that she is so honored. [The Parish Committee meeting being on Zoom, there were a lot of heart emojis on the Zoom screen.]

Annual Meeting prep:

Proposal to make annual meeting voting in-person only: Zoom attendees can see and hear, but not speak or vote (Anne Q.)

The Parish Committee chair and clerk proposed that the Parish Committee would make the annual meeting in May 2025 be conducted with in-person voting only; Zoom attendees can see and hear, but not speak or vote.

The main reason for this change from previous recent annual meetings which have been hybrid with many members in person and some online on Zoom is that it is difficult to coordinate. Last year, for the annual meeting in 2024, there were about ten people who voted online. With in-person voting only, there would not be the potential security or counting issues or delays that could be present with both online and in-person voting.

Questions / comments:

- The clerk commented that she had initially had some reservations about this change due to messaging and access. However, she reached out to some First Parish members for their input and concluded that many would be able to attend in person.
- A Parish Committee member asked if there was any concern about reaching quorum if First Parish holds an in-person voting meeting only?
 - The clerk's best estimation is that First Parish would be able to meet quorum.
- A Parish Committee member said that there would be a need to advertise this change.
- A Parish Committee member asked if this motion would be essentially making the meeting a livestream for any online members? Yes, the meeting could be livestreamed.
- Would the chat box on Zoom be available or not? Pros and cons of each. - not interacting with the folks on Zoom, but could we take comments to read after the meeting? Last year, no questions from online people. We might INVITE people online to

offer feedback/comments in the chat - not to share live, but the Parish Committee could look for comments online after.

- A Parish Committee member asked if we are voting at the meeting to hold that meeting...clarification: we are voting tonight to have this annual meeting in person only.

Motion 3: I move that we make annual meeting voting in person only, with a livestream on Zoom, and Zoom attendees will not be able to speak or vote. **(Steve) Seconded (Anne) 9 of 9 in favor.** None opposed.

8:31 - **Marta Good Goodbye updates (Anne/all)**

- Congregational Party - May 31
- Art Show of "Holy Moments" (Anne, on behalf of the Art team) - there will be an art show in the Parlor as well as some pieces (sculpture) in the narthex starting in early April.
- Memory Book (Kate) - getting people thinking about it; asked for people who Kate should ask. Advertising has begun to spread the word.
- Professional Photo for the Meeting House gallery (Steve M)
- New: Tea Party (Carolyn)
- New: Campus Legacy Project (Jeff/Carolyn) - The Turning Outward Corner Project

Ministers leave 8:44 PM and Marie M. departs

8:44 **Executive session** (8:44 PM to 9:26 PM) - No notes are taken during executive session.

MOTION 4 I move we go into executive session (Jeff / Steve) Seconded (Steve/Al) 9 of 9

9:16 - **MOTION 5** - I move to end executive session (Joanna). Seconded (Steve) 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed.

9:16 - **Other Business**

The Parish Committee members discussed the Interim Search Committee process and the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) contract guidelines.

[Clerk's note: the vote for the draft of the interim minister contract was set offline and was scheduled for April 1, 2025 via Zoom. Minutes from that meeting will follow and were created by John Anderson, Parish Committee vice chair.]

The Parish Committee will hold a contract meeting in early April. The First Parish budget meeting will be April 15. The regular Parish Committee meeting will be April 29.

9:17 **Adjourn**

MOTION 6: I move that we adjourn the meeting. (John Anderson) Seconded (Jeff / Steve) 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed.

MOTIONS:

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MOTION 2: I move that we put an item on the annual meeting warrant to provide Rev. Marta Flanagan minister *emerita* status. (John Anderson) Seconded (Carolyn Hodges & Steve McMullin). 9 of 6 in favor. None opposed.

MOTION 3: I vote that we make annual meeting voting in person only, with a livestream on Zoom, and Zoom attendees will not be able to speak or vote. (Steve M.) Seconded (Anne) 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed.

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MOTION 5: I move to end executive session (Joanna). Seconded (Steve) 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed.

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Minutes prepared by Joanna Pushee, clerk.