

Parish Committee Meeting Minutes – “The Budget Meeting”

First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Arlington

April 15, 2025 7 - 9 pm

Via Zoom

Attendees: Anne Quaadgras (chair), John Anderson (vice chair), Carolyn Hodges (treasurer) Joanna Pushee (clerk), Al Tosti, Steve McMullin, Kate Tranquada, Susan Moore; Jeff Keffer joined in the second half of the meeting.

Ministers: Rev. Marta Flanagan, Rev. Tricia Brennan, and Rev. Stevie Carmody

Guests: Lissa McBurney (Finance Committee)

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

7:04 **Reading and Chalice Lighting** (Steve M.)

Two minutes of silence (let us bring our best selves to this meeting)

7:10 Emerita Policy, Nomination, and Recommendation (Anne & Joanna)

The Parish Committee received materials electronically in advance of the April 15 meeting to review for discussion and voting regarding creating a First Parish policy for bestowing emerita / emeritus / emerit status on a minister. The following policy was based on the Unitarian Universalist Association's template and guidelines suggested on the UUA's website.

After drafting the policy, members of the Parish Committee shared it with a member of the Committee on Ministry for input, questions, and edits. After gathering input, the following policy was presented to the Parish Committee as a whole:

Policy: The title Minister Emeritus or Minister Emerita may be granted to honor ministers who have served for a minimum of 10 years, with devotion, skill, grace, integrity, and vision. Qualified candidates must be in good standing with the UUA and UUMA, and fully retired from active service to First Parish by the end of the program year in which the title is granted. Candidates may be nominated by the current Parish Committee, or by a petition as per the First Parish Bylaws.

Procedure: There will be at least 2 opportunities for comment by voting members (e.g., listening session, cottage meeting) at least 1 week before a congregational vote.

MOTION 1: I move to approve the policy and procedure for conferring emeritus status on a minister. (Kate T.) Seconded (Al T.) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

The motion passed unanimously.

Discussion included:

- A question of whether to specify adding “settled” or “called” to modify minister.
- Rev. Tricia noted that the UUA does not make a distinction; a minister with a long duration may be worthy of such a status.
- A member of the Parish Committee asked for clarification on the Latin endings for emeritus and emerita, with emeritus being masculine and emerita being feminine; emerit can be added for gender neutral.
- A member of the Parish Committee asked if a congregation could have more than one minister who received the emeritus/emera/emerit status? Yes.

Nominate Rev. Marta Flanagan for Minister Emerita

MOTION 2: I move that we nominate Reverend Marta Flanagan for minister *emerita* at this year’s Annual Meeting in May, meaning there will be a congregational vote. (John A) Seconded (Kate T.) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed. The vote was unanimous.

MOTION 3: I recommend that the congregation confer the title Minister *Emerita* on the Reverend Marta Flanagan. (Al T.) Seconded (John A.) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

Providing an affirmation/resolution to the congregation at Annual Meeting and adding an agenda item to the warrant as an article

- Members of the Parish Committee provided input and asked questions regarding the drafted resolution
 - It was suggested to change the phrase “finding another way” to something broader and more recognizable; Suggestions included: “As Marta has frequently said, ‘finding another way,’...Marta’s phrase for the Christian term “kingdom of heaven,” or Martin Luther King Jr’s phrase, “beloved community;” it is another way besides the status quo.
 - The Parish Committee came to a consensus to change “another way” to “fostering Beloved Community...”
 - The resolution is in keeping with a couple of other printed materials that have been provided at the time of Annual Meeting such as the 2024 affirmation created by the Indigenous Justice Working Group and the Reckoning & Repair Working Group

The Parish Committee worked towards getting the resolution in a state that could be voted on and to distribute the resolution at annual meeting.

For the Article on the warrant: To see if members will confer minister emerita status on Rev. Marta per the resolution as recommended by the Parish Committee

Joanna moved to table the motion until Jeff K could arrive and weigh in. Anne seconded this. The motion was tabled.

7:29 **Nursery school update** (Carolyn & Jeff)

Steve M, Carolyn H, and Jeff K, as members of the Parish Committee, with Rev. Stevie Carmody, and Ebiere Omoregie met with the tenant, Adventures in Montessori, on 4/15/25.

Some background on the history of the tenant was provided, including an update on requests for timely payments each month, use of the Pierce Room in the meeting house as an office space (which was not in the original lease), and re-negotiation of the lease which concludes in June 2025.

Re-negotiation of terms included: late payment fees, increasing the security deposit, updating a section on how First Parish and the tenant share space in the meeting house, and plans for how to bring enrollment up.

The tenant had made some requests regarding the space of the meeting house and some items that needed fixing. Despite requests for a list, the tenant did not provide any list of items needing repairs prior to the meeting on 4/15. As a note, First Parish and AIM as a group had come to a proposal about knocking down a wall. With no list being provided, and no substantial piece of information from the tenant, the Parish Committee group did not move forward with signing the updated lease, yet the Parish Committee working group is committed to seeing that the updated lease be re-negotiated and signed by the end of April.

The Minister of Religious Education would need some assurance as to having a space for a nursery with a sound-proof wall in the meeting house; no assurance has been provided yet.

The basic lease structure of the original lease did not have the rental space of the Pierce room; First Parish has placed 183 square feet for the Pierce Room and the tenant has agreed to pay for rental of that space. The tenant agreed to pay a late fee if rental payments are more than three days late. The lease would be renewable annually; the updated lease itself has June 30, 2028 as the end date.

Questions by the Parish Committee were:

- Whether the late payment fee escalates; No, it does not. If the tenant is late more than two months, then there would be a notice to terminate the lease.
- There is an interest payment on unpaid rent.
- The Parish Committee would need to have at least one member view a temporary wall and ensure such a wall is soundproof.
- The tenant had mentioned a soundproofing test and was willing to put such a test into the terms of the lease.

The Parish Committee expressed gratitude to this temporary working committee working with AIM to negotiate: thank you, Steve M, Carolyn H, and Jeff K, as members of the Parish Committee, with Rev. Stevie Carmody, and Ebiere Omoregie, for your hard work.

7:39 **Budget discussion** (Lissa McBurney (Finance Committee) and Carolyn Hodges, FP Treasurer)

Anne introduces Lissa. Lissa sent an updated budget this afternoon to the Parish Committee. Slightly different from Sunday night's file. 1100 less on expense side.

Lissa/Finance Committee:

- Lissa thanked the Parish Committee for having her speak and she focused on the changes from the original FY 25-26 budget (green columns) to the revised FY26.
- Lissa and Carolyn
 - Includes COLA at 2.5% and includes continuing expanded health care coverage costs roughly \$30,000
 - Interim minister salary is at the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) midpoint and is documented in the proposed letter of agreement; with relocation expenses
 - Sexton and maintenance of the First Parish campus: there was still about \$10,000 in the budget for a facilities position but First Parish has not had facilities position so that has been removed. There is only one part-time sexton.
 - Childcare staff: updated budget to reflect actuals: \$20 an hour for 2 hours a week for two people for the program year
 - Keep in mind, with sexton and childcare: this area is where First Parish had some fluff in previous years (The Finance Committee is making personnel expense more accurate)
 - The Finance Committee also has recommended \$10,000 in professional expenses allotted for the Interim Lead minister.

Questions:

- A question about summer minister funding was asked: in cases of pastoral care needed, what amount would be appropriate and is it an hourly or flat fee?
 - Background: If there is a need for pastoral care over this summer, beginning of FY2025, in the case that Rev. Erica may be on vacation and an interim person may not be installed in early summer yet, it was suggested that \$500 be set aside for purposes of summer coverage. There has been a week to a week and a half that both lead minister and parish minister were on a vacation; First Parish always has a minister "on call" if they were needed to provide emergency pastoral care or a service - for example, a funeral - the Parish Committee would be able to pay for that person to come in and provide the needed pastoral care.
- A question was asked about the midpoint as determined by the UUA. Would the midpoint salary be sensible if the Parish Committee brought in someone with Accredited

Interim Minister status (AIM-status)? First Parish may have accredited interim ministers looking at the congregation.

- Rev. Tricia Brennan provided insight to this knowledge point. The UUA did not provide (or has not yet provided) this information to the working group / Interim Minister Search Committee.

Rev. Tricia Brennan will connect with Marie Meteer, chair of the ISC, with this knowledge point, and that AIM-status folks are not guaranteed the high point.

Forecasting and expenses:

Lissa brought attention to the highlights in yellow, which the Treasurer had put out in a reforecast this spring. Some of the forecasted items were less than what was originally budgeted for, so the Finance Committee adjusted to the actuals. First Parish had planned for some big increases: for example with the ministerial search-related expenses like the website (this is not a budget for the search committee; the understanding is towards the settled minister). TY reforecast means This Year reforecast.

The Finance Committee originally thought there might be a film/video made in the next fiscal year; there was \$500 placed in the proposed budget for the cost of furniture and \$500 for a welcoming event, again for FY 26-27 is the aim. If for some reason the proposed budget of \$500 for furniture and property-adjacent items is not used, the funds would be rolled into the Property Committee budget, as the Parish Committee does not take that into its fund.

Expenses:

Cleaning supplies went up.

The First Parish utilities cost is down, which is good news. Finance Committee reforecasted that. The utilities include items such as heating, maintenance, and elevator maintenance and inspection.

A question from a Parish Committee member:

- Electricity and utilities: First Parish had forecasted \$11,500 and now it is showing as reforecasted down to \$9,000. What is the logic behind that going down, particularly at a time in the region where electricity costs have been going up.
- The Finance Committee had provided the proposed \$11,000 as the forecast back in January (as a note: last year in 2024, it was \$9,000, so the FinCom is assuming flat to budget).
- The Treasurer noted that First Parish member, Lori Kenshaft, as a member of the Property Committee, has been trying to dig into this complex electricity question recently as pertains to the solar panels. First Parish gets some amount of money from the solar panels that we own; there are also solar panels that First Parish does not own but rents. There are lots of moving parts. The solar panels are separate. Lori hasn't come to a conclusion as of yet and continues to research each piece.

- Regarding the elevator maintenance and inspection: The Finance Committee had an original proposed budget that they brought down.
- Electricity: a question about the 2024 budget in comparison (\$3,000): Is this a categorization matter? Yes - between the solar panels which First Parish did not own.

A question from a Parish Committee member about the elevator in the meeting house:

- The FP elevator isn't getting any newer: what is the logic behind the lower reforecasted amount for maintenance of the elevator?
- The Finance Committee explained that it was a one-time cost. First Parish pays a one-time inspection fee, which we just paid in March 2025 - it consistent with annual cost that we usually incur. We don't expect additional from the 8552. Reflects annual change and cost to repair the elevator.

Committees that requested wishlist items:

- The Welcoming Congregation Committee (the WCC is First Parish's committee to focus on welcoming people of all sexual orientations and genders)
 - The Welcoming committee requested \$1,500 for the coming fiscal year with a breakdown of items which is in the wishlist. Previously the budget was for \$1,000.
 - The Finance Committee suggested keeping the budget flat at \$1,000. (The WCC has funds from their T-shirt fundraising, as a note.)
 - The Welcoming committee would be set up for rollover.
 - There was a request for childcare, which has not traditionally been funded in this way.
- Music Committee:
 - The Music Committee budget has gone up significantly over the past couple of years.
 - In 2024, the Music budget went up 7%. In 2025, First Parish has the accompanist, organist, and children's choir.
 - For the organ: Music Committee had planned for organist for six Sundays; we don't know how many organist visits/performances in the Sunday Worship but the total will not be six Sundays in the end. (For example, rather than hiring an organist each time, the Music Director can fill in the schedule with the Choral Scholars. For purposes of Music Sunday, the Music Director has hired one-time musicians to perform.
 - Last year, the \$3,500 was marked as a one-time item to see how the new programs such as the Choral Scholars program, worked. The funding will have been spent by the end of this current program year 24-25.

[Parish Committee member Jeff Keffer arrived at 8:04 PM.]

- UU Mass Action: Last fiscal year, the Parish Committee approved the UU Mass Action funding as a one-time gift rather than a regular ongoing part of the budget like a fee.

Break - 8:06 PM to 8:13 PM

8:13 PM Budget discussion (continued)

- The income numbers are about the same.
- The surplus: the Finance Committee is estimating that the income from the surplus will be \$ 67,000.
- 80% of the expenses are amalgamated; a Parish Committee member requested that we spend time digging into the expenses more, which included discussions on personnel and salaries.
- Information on personnel and salaries is confidential
 - Highlights included:
 - Reiterating that the Interim Lead Minister salary offer is going to be at midpoint (current for 2025-2026) and in line with UUA guidelines
 - Discussion around the sabbatical reserve (it is accrued monthly)
 - In Religious Education, First Parish currently does not have full staff compared to prior years, pre-COVID-19 pandemic; for example, there is no childcare coordinator. There are two assistants and an RE assistant.
 - There is a music director
 - There is an accompanist
 - There is an Office Manager
 - There is an Office Associate
 - There is a part-time sexton (First Parish sexton role ensures the facility is tidy; the role does not do any review or status of the building)

As First Parish goes into a transition phase with the church, with interim ministry, one thing the Parish Committee might want to think about is how staffing is set up: how the roles are defined and how they are divided up. What does the future look like?

Other questions on expenses or income?

One Parish Committee member posed a question: calling out the total personnel cost and there being a difference of \$500. Where did the \$500 come from? It is the summer ministerial cost.

There being no further questions, the chair asked if there was a motion; however, further discussion occurred.

- The Treasurer noted, regarding the surplus, if First Parish were to use up the \$67,000 surplus, how much would First Parish have left? How is the surplus divided up?
 - First Parish is in a favorable position with a surplus, which is comprised of three basic amounts:
 - One amount represents two months of expenses
 - Another amount represents what First Parish has been using recently since the pandemic to fill any budget gap

- Finally, an amount is the discretionary fund (First Parish's Parish Committee has not needed to use that discretionary fund yet).
- First Parish/FinCom/Treasurer have been very conservative.

Pledges are running as we expected.

The regular April Parish Committee meeting will be 4/29 as the Treasurer provides a breakdown of the information: about \$157,000 is 2-months of the fixed expenses that First Parish would need to keep the lights on and pay FP staff. We FP also set aside \$63,000 (as money we may want to borrow from ourselves - we would have a discretionary surplus of 85,000 - we are thinking 20,000) - factor in the increase of the expenses for the 2 months, everything costing more: how much of the authorized loan we are going to use for ourselves.

This upcoming time is a perfect time, working with interim minister, to do a deep dive to do a review and see how we, First Parish, have been living in terms of expenses that we may want to trim here and there.

First Parish is coming from a place of abundance!

First Parish is fostering community. We are funding activities for overall congregation's ability to thrive.

A Parish Committee member noted that First Parish received a significant gift from an anonymous donor during the last year; as a point of clarification: that gift is not included in the budget, correct? That is correct: that gift is not included in the budget.

8:36 PM

MOTION 4: I move favorable action on the revised budget as presented. (Al T.) Seconded (Steve M) 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed.

The motion to put the ParCom approved budget before the congregation at Annual Meeting in May was unanimous.

Being that Jeff Keffer had arrived for the second half of the meeting, the tabled vote regarding the last pieces of the emerita minister status came forward.

VOTE 5: Resolution; Add the warrant article that says the Parish Committee confers the title of minister emerita Rev. Marta Flanagan in accordance with FP policy including the resolution as written with one edit on "fostering Beloved Community."

RESOLUTION CONFERRING EMERITA STATUS ON REV. MARTA FLANAGAN

WHEREAS, Rev. Marta Flanagan has served with distinction as the Lead Minister of First Parish Unitarian Universalist Arlington from 2009 to 2025; and

WHEREAS, during her tenure, she has led the congregation through significant growth and stability, instilled a sense of what it means to be in religious community, provided numerous examples of fostering Beloved Community, and established structures and systems which have led to great strength in lay leadership as well as increased social justice advocacy; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Marta Flanagan has demonstrated unwavering commitment to the mission and values of Unitarian Universalism, spiritual depth, and fostering a culture of turning outward; and

WHEREAS, her leadership has had a profound and lasting impact on the congregation, including current and former members, lay leaders, and staff members;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the voting members of First Parish UU Arlington do hereby confer upon Rev. Marta Flanagan the title of **Minister Emerita**, with all the rights, honors, and privileges thereto pertaining, as a testament to our deep appreciation for her exemplary devotion, skill, grace, integrity, and vision.

8:40 PM Move reconsideration:

MOTION 5: I move to take the vote off the table. (AI T.) Seconded (Anne / Joanna) 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed. Unanimous.

MOTION 6: I move the Parish Committee support conferring emeritus status to Rev. Marta Flanagan and approve the resolution. (AI) Seconded (Steve). 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed. Unanimous.

Rev. Marta Flanagan thanked the Parish Committee and conveyed that she was deeply honored.

The Parish Committee conveyed deep gratitude to Lissa McBurney of the Finance Committee and Carolyn Hodges, First Parish's ParCom Treasurer. We have MUCH to owe Lissa and Carolyn for the huge amount of work done to prepare the proposed budget.

8:41 Other Business

There being no other business, the Parish Committee members provided reminders.

A reminder about the gifts being prepared to celebrate Marta and provide a "good" good-bye to her: Kate T. acknowledged that the memory book submissions will be due mid-May.

The Youth Group will leave on Easter Sunday morning for their service trip starting on 4/20/25.

Rev. Marta reminded the Parish Committee that among the blessings for our youth, our adults, for Rose Sawyer who is accompanying them on the service trip, that the roads in Arlington will be closing for the celebrations and re-enactments for the Town of Arlington's Revolutionary War 250th anniversary events. The Town sent out a notice about the time: at noon, roads will begin to close. Roads formally and firmly close at 1:00pm that day.

8:46 PM Adjourn

MOTION 7: I move that we adjourn the meeting (Carolyn) Seconded (Al T. / Steve). 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed.

MOTIONS:

MOTION 1: I move to approve the policy and procedure for conferring emeritus status on a minister. (Kate T.) Seconded (Al T.) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

MOTION 2: I move that we nominate Reverend Marta Flanagan for minister emerita at this year's Annual Meeting in May, meaning there will be a congregational vote. (John A) Seconded (Kate T.) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

MOTION 3: I recommend that the congregation confer the title Minister Emerita on the Reverend Marta Flanagan. (Al T.) Seconded (John A.) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

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Minutes prepared by volunteer clerk, Joanna Pushee.