

Parish Committee Minutes
First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Arlington
February 21, 2023 | On-line Zoom Meeting

Attending: Sara Galantowicz, Anne Quaadgras, Celia Wcislo, Joanna Pushee, Tom Estabrook, Al Tosti, Jeff Keffer, and Marie Meteer with Rev. Marta, Rev. Erica, and DRE Tina Schultz

Guests: David Whitford of the Worship Associates; Racial Justice Coordinating Committee sub-committees: Indigenous Justice Working Group and Reckoning & Repair Group

Call to Order (Sara)

Reading and Chalice Lighting (Celia)

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

Financial report & dashboard (Sara, 10 minutes)

- The Parish Committee Chair highlighted the January financials which include forecasting; the estimated current year surplus is close to the prior year surplus that was applied to create a balanced budget in April 2022. Projections were given by the Treasurer with caution.
 - The Parish Committee expressed gratitude for the Treasurer's dedication, attention to detail, and competence.
 - Some questions were raised to be conveyed to the Treasurer offline:
 - In cleaning up the balance sheet, there is a seemingly extra \$60,000 available for the building in the Trustees funding of the property. Were these funds simply not transferred to the operating checking account?
 - Does the percent received in pledges to date match the trend in past years?
 - Can First Parish track who pledges or pays monthly, weekly, or quarterly? If so, the Stewardship drive might consider asking members to raise regularly scheduled pledges by a certain amount.
 - Is the budget flat-lined, or does it reflect seasonality (for example, snow removal)?
 - The plate looks ahead of budget; what is the relationship between the plate and attendance? Is attendance higher than anticipated?
 - A question about the Christmas Eve collection, which is given away, arose: How was this number figured into the financials?
- **Update on the Trustees discussion**
 - The Treasurer and Parish Committee chair Sara Galantowicz met with Trustees chair Annette Sawyer in early February.
 - Members of the Parish Committee have been asking how the Trustees calculate the contribution towards the Property, which is distributed on a quarterly basis. The Trustees are currently calculating this on a rolling basis each quarter. The Treasurer and Chair brought up this issue as a budgeting and congregational approval concern (the April value is included in the budget for congregational approval at the May annual meeting).

The Trustees acknowledged the Parish Committee's preference would be a single, annual calculation. Specifically, if the Parish Committee presents a budget to the congregation, the goal is for it to show the exact anticipated contribution from the trust funds. Annette asked if it made more sense to allocate the entire account at beginning of year. The Treasurer confirmed it is better to keep funds in the Trustees account until the quarterly distribution because of the higher interest rate than First Parish would get from its bank account.

- There was a question about the ministers' housing allowance calculation. Is it currently using the same methodology (most recent 20 quarters on a rolling basis) as the property contribution does? If so, the Parish Committee should clarify with the Trustees that both should be calculated once annually prior to Annual Meeting.
- From the financial control review conducted, the feedback regarding the issue of whether the value of the actual property is listed on the asset sheet or not was discussed. The Treasurer is seeking opinions: While it is not the Trustees' decision, the Treasurer is asking them and other stakeholders for guidance on this matter. An updated valuation of the building for insurance purposes would be useful. Communicating to the congregation about removing the building as a fixed asset on a cash basis accounting system could possibly be done at the Annual Meeting in May.

7:20 (Vote 1, Discussion). Consent agenda: Minutes, Financials, Ministers' Reports, DRE MOTION: I move that we adopt the consent agenda (Jeff K.). **Seconded (Celia W.). 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.**

7:25 Stewardship update and expectations (Rev. Erica and Marie M.)

- Upcoming events scheduled for the First Parish community to raise awareness about the Stewardship drive include: a Zoom-side chat with Rev. Erica on 2/26/23, a masked in-person presentation in the Parlor on 3/5/23, and an in person lunch in the vestry on 3/5/23. The message for these gatherings will be to please pledge early.
 - The Finance Committee would present at a high level during these events but no budget details would be shared at the March 5th gatherings, because a proposed budget has not yet been adopted by the Parish Committee.
 - Visiting Stewards Campaign: "Committing to What Matters" - Nearly 25 Visiting Stewards will reach out to about 100 households. The steward trainings will be in person on Saturday Feb. 25, and on Monday Feb. 27 on Zoom. The ministers, the Parish Committee, Financial Committee, and the Stewardship committee will be represented.
 - There are new materials and the website has been updated with clear instructions and buttons differentiating between pledging and giving.
 - Family Pancake Breakfast & Pizza Dinner in the vestry on March 19th; a breakfast activity in the morning for all families, and an evening activity for youth/OWL/coming of age families.
 - Parish Committee members committed to pledging early.

7:35 Summer Services proposal (Worship Associate David Whitford, 15 minutes)

- It is being requested that the Parish Committee vote on summer services being held completely online.
 - This is not a permanent policy change.
 - The Worship Associates would like to see how it works to be all online for this summer.
 - The reasons are numerous and include the following: a steep decline in attendance in summer services; a lack of A/C; a lower demand on the tech team; no need for ushers or childcare services; no need for a Sunday sexton in summer; ability to use recorded music rather than hire musicians; wider pool of potential recruits for summer worship leaders.
 - Summer services can be considered “a way in” that is an easier pathway to the congregation..
 - The Worship Associates recognize the social interaction provided by summer services. To compensate, First Parish could do potluck suppers once a week or every other week. The Worship Associates could reach out to different committees to sponsor (could recruit members this way, too). These would be outdoors in the courtyard and children would be welcome at these “Summer Socials” potlucks.
 - Rev. Marta pointed out that doing online summer services has been discussed over the past two Worship Associates meetings, among the staff, and among Parish Committee Executive. While this action falls under the purview of the Worship Associates, it should also be a decision supported by the Parish Committee.
 - Discussion followed. It was mentioned that this option has been given a thoughtful approach. It would be an experiment to try for this upcoming summer. Providing other social in person opportunities could be done by the STAR committee and others.

MOTION: I move that the Parish Committee approve the Worship Associates recommendation to conduct all worship services virtually for summer 2023. **(Jeff K.)** Seconded **(Anne Q)** **8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.**

Gratitude was expressed to Elizabeth Hunter on the Workshop Associates. Appreciation expressed by the Parish Committee for the thoughtful approach.

7:50 Racial Justice Coordinating Committee (15 minutes) Lois Fine, Tom Estabrook, Amy Anderson, Maggie Carey, Sibylle Bosslet; Ellen Leigh of the Indigenous Justice Working Group.

- Members of the Racial Justice Coordinating Committee attended to represent two subcommittees: Reckoning and Repair, and Indigenous Justice Working Group.

The Reckoning and Repair group is working to recognize our congregational history of enslavement and investigating how to make repair. The group would like First Parish to make a statement and commit to acknowledging First Parish’s history, involvement, and success having

been partly owing to the work of unpaid, enslaved peoples. The group is working on the language for a statement and ironing out the details of what repair might look like. Input from the wider congregation will be sought over the coming weeks and months during workshops after Sunday services. The hope is that over March and April, a statement on slavery will be created. The statement will be a living document and there should be ongoing discussion on what First Parish is committing to for repair. The Reckoning and Repair group hopes to have a draft ready by the end of March.

- **Land Acknowledgement**

The Indigenous Justice Working Group formed about two years ago with the purpose to explore First Parish's relationship to Indigenous Peoples and work toward repair. The group emerged in part in response to the UUA's call to address white supremacist colonialism. The goal is to educate ourselves. We cannot separate our community from the history of slavery and colonialism. The First Parish community is looking at our local history in Arlington and the surrounding communities. Loren Spears and Silvermoon LaRose of the Tomaquag Museum will be collaborating with First Parish on upcoming workshops. The workshops will start in March. The Indigenous Justice Working Group intends for the land acknowledgement not to simply be performative. The group would like a meaningful land acknowledgment. Indigenous people are still part of the land of Massachusetts. The Indigenous Justice Working Group would like to answer the UUA's call to acknowledge the Indigenous Peoples connected with the land occupied by First Parish and to act in solidarity with them.

A brief discussion followed among the Parish Committee:

- Members asked about the history that was being uncovered and if the church as an institution enslaved people at its founding.
- There were 16 original pew holders who built/funded First Parish, and of the 16 about 7 families enslaved people. An additional 4 people (a father of a family, or a son of a pew holder) also had slaves. In all, more than half of the 16 original families enslaved people. As of yet, there has been no evidence that the founding minister had slaves.
- The Parish Committee commended all of the members of the working groups, the Reckoning and Repair Group and the Indigenous Justice Working Group, noting the service on the 5th of February with Amy Anderson and Tom Estabrook was incredibly moving.
- The Parish Committee acknowledged that this is important work to educate and expose everyone at First Parish to as much information on the tragedies and history as possible
- Blessings and deep gratitude were expressed by the ministers and the Parish Committee.

8:05 Break

8:10 Overview of new UUA Compensation Framework (30 minutes)

- Presentation by Marta with a video. The link is provided below.

The UUA has provided 20 year's worth of recommendations on compensation of staff.

Recommendations have been based on a geographic index and position type. First Parish has

used these guidelines, which shift year to year, with the goal of ringing staff up to mid-point for different individual positions, in different years. This year, UUA is doing an overhaul of its compensation recommendations.

The HR committee at First Parish has reviewed the new UUA compensation framework.

The Parish Committee watched a 10 minute video from the UUA and were asked to reflect on the ideas presented. Considerations on compensation in the past have included midpoint considerations, replacement value, COLA, but no merit increases.

Video entitled “Unconscious Bias in Compensation” with Jan Gartner (she/her) and Rev. Patrice Curtis (they/them)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A5GM7Xf28t4>

1. Bias
2. Equity
3. Transparency

● Q&A and reflections followed:

- These guidelines are an alternative to applying the same COLA to each staff member.
- The goals are admirable and in line with our UU congregational values; however, the guidelines and rationales are murky.
- There is merit in looking at and reviewing First Parish’s compensation plans.
- Some members elevated the idea of reviewing compensation for staff who are paid the least.
- Some members highlighted that skilled staff might be compensated based on merit. Others expressed concerns about merit based compensation.
- Concern was expressed about the feasibility for smaller, less affluent churches to implement these new guidelines.
- A question was raised about how First Parish should best address any inequities: perhaps an equity review should be conducted?
- Implementing a new process could be done over time, not just one year, and be a stepped process.
- First Parish should get a sense of Stewardship pledges prior to determining compensation, to understand available funds.
- It was pointed out that ministers are currently in short supply.
- The First Parish HR committee reviewed the UUA’s recommendation on non-denominal staff determined the recommendations are reasonable.

● The Parish Committee requested more time to review the guidelines on compensation of staff. The values of First Parish play into this framework and play a huge role in this decision-making endeavor. The Parish Committee is considering a future meeting, perhaps an Executive session, in which roles and details can be discussed further.

The Parish Committee acknowledged that it is being made aware of the UUA’s recommendation as our national organization, For now, the guidelines are a purely abstract discussion until we know more about pledges from the current Stewardship drive.

State of the Parish was tabled until the next meeting.

Review Parish Committee calendar will be conducted offline.

- March meetings will have formats proposed - March 21st and March 28th with Committee on Ministry joint meeting
- Reschedule June potluck meeting (proposed June 13th) and determine a date for the June retreat.

A closing reflection:

The Parish Committee would like to remember Woody Kay, who passed away on January 28, 2023. Woody was the Moderator and a Worship Associate at First Parish.

MOTION: I move to adjourn the meeting (Joanna P). Seconded (Celia) 8 of 8 in favor.

9:10 PM Adjourn

Attachments: Last month's Minutes, Financial Documents, Ministers report

MOTIONS

MOTION 1: I move that we adopt the consent agenda (Jeff K.). Seconded (Celia W.). 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

MOTION 2: I move that the Parish Committee approve the Worship Associate recommendation to conduct all worship services virtually for summer 2023. (Jeff) Seconded (Anne Q.) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

MOTION 3: I move to adjourn the meeting (Joanna P). Seconded (Celia) 8 of 8 in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10PM.

Minutes prepared by Joanna Pushee, volunteer clerk.