

Parish Committee Meeting Minutes  
First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Arlington  
March 19, 2024: 7 - 9 pm  
First Parish Parlor (in person)

Anne Quaadgras, John Anderson, Joanna Pushee, Sara Galantowicz, Celia Wcislo, Al Tosti, Jeff Keffer, and Carolyn Hodges.

Rev. Marta Flanagan, Rev. Erica Richmond, and Minister of Religious Education Stevie Carmody  
Guests: Elizabeth Hunter (in person); Ellen Leigh (online via Zoom)

7:00 **Call to Order** (Anne Q.)

The Parish Committee expressed its deep gratitude to Sara Galantowicz for completing her term as chair.

7:02 **Reading & two minutes of silence** (Carolyn), **chalice** (Jeff), and **prayer** (Rev. Erica)

7:07 **Rose of Recognition nomination** (Carolyn) - STAR Adult Education

The Parish Committee recognizes First Parish STAR Adult Education and its coordinators, Steph Miserlis and Kate Lenox. The Parish Committee applauds all the volunteers working with STAR, hosting programs to gather us together.

Among many other activities, STAR helped sponsor a film screening at the meetinghouse which drew 83 attendees. Rev. Stevie Carmody (together with Jessica Farman and Brian Dooley, who had brought the idea of viewing the documentary *Join or Die* to the congregation) introduced the event. Small group discussions followed the film screening.

7:13 **State of the Parish** (Ministers, 20 minutes)

- Program Year: There are 12 more weekends left in the program year. Priorities include:
  - Stewardship and budget
  - Office Manager hiring and training
  - Music Director search (including two auditions) and hiring
  - Congregational votes and Annual Meeting
  - Recruiting leaders
  - Staff evaluations including Religious Education and Music
- Discussion followed
  - The Parish Committee expressed gratitude about a possible candidate for the role of Office Manager.

- The Parish Committee acknowledged that the three ministers are juggling many plates which are all full.
- Layleaders and staff are attending to organizational processes well.
- The sentencing of First Parish member Clarissa R. is on Thursday March 28th. There have been approximately 30 parishioners at the trial proceedings and over 130 people have joined the support group (a Google group).
- The youth service was amazing. Much excitement and gratitude was expressed. The Coming of Age program is excited about the youth band. Gratitude was expressed to Rose and the youth.

7:30 pm to 7:35 pm **Stewardship update** (Rev. Erica, 5 minutes)

- The Stewardship campaign goal was set at \$775,000, which is a three percent increase from last year's campaign result of \$752,000. The Stewardship campaign has raised \$677,000 (87% of goal). There is \$97,000 remaining. For participation, the goal is 272 households. Visiting stewards are at work connecting with parishioners. There is one more testimonial this coming Sunday. Phone calls will be made to folks who have not yet pledged. There are around 100 people who pledged last year who currently have not pledged this year.
- Continued thanks were expressed towards the Stewardship Committee, with the powerhouse of Amy Speare and Marie Mateer at the helm. Gratitude for MaryGlenn Vincens for saying yes to taking on the task of running part of the visiting stewards' training.

The Parish Committee expressed deep gratitude to Rev. Erica, who is in year four of shepherding the Stewardship Campaign at First Parish.

7:35 - 8:00 **Indigenous Justice Working Group** (Elizabeth Hunter, in person & Ellen Leigh, online via Zoom)

- The Indigenous Justice Working Group has been providing educational opportunities and listening sessions for the congregation to grapple with a Land Acknowledgement and to have support on taking substantive action around indigenous issues.
- The Indigenous Justice Working Group has provided extensive hyperlinks as an educational addition to previous literature so that congregants who want to know more can pursue more information.
- In January, a brochure was distributed by the IJWG at worship. There have been three listening events so far this year.

- About 30 people have attended these events. Responses have been generally positive. Some changes to the language of the acknowledgment have been made based on consulting with indigenous experts.
- The Indigenous Justice Working Group would like to bring a vote on the Land Acknowledgment before the congregation at the Annual Meeting in May this year.

Discussion:

- The Parish Committee celebrates the revised language in the Land Acknowledgement.
- There was concern about the hyperlinks being part of the document. It is hard to vote on a set of words with hyperlinks, which could change or become inactive.
- The Parish Committee advised that the hyperlinks not be a part of the congregational vote.
- The Parish Committee expressed curiosity with one phrase: “White Europeans” and posited whether the phrase was redundant. The Indigenous Justice Working Committee shared that other wording had been reviewed, such as “invaders,” as non-racially identifying language. However, the consultants suggested that the language connect with white supremacy.
- The Parish Committee asked for further explanation on the last sentence of the acknowledgment regarding offering our First Parish resources. The resources would include the building, funds, expertise or skills, and presence (as in bodily showing up) as well as our First Parish website. The land acknowledgement would appear on the website. Giving First has already been a way that the Indigenous Justice Working Group has included indigenous issues.
- A suggestion was made to mirror the structure of the Reckoning and Repair affirmation and supporting materials, especially including a rationale.
- The Parish Committee clarified that if the language in the acknowledgment as is were to come to the congregation during the Annual Meeting and members wanted to change the wording that it would be recommended that the vote be tabled as an outcome.
- The Indigenous Justice Working Group was invited to return to the Parish Committee at the April committee meeting with updated language and removal of hyperlinks.

**MOTION 1:** I move that we table this recommendation of support for the Land Acknowledgement text as is. (Jeff K.) Seconded (Anne Q.) 2 in favor of tabling. 6 opposed.

Motion 1 does not carry.

It was suggested that the language of the acknowledgement need not be perfect at this time.

**MOTION 2:** I move that we recommend that the congregation support the Land Acknowledgment proposed by the Indigenous Justice Working Group as is. (John A.) Seconded (Carolyn H.) 5 in favor. 3 opposed.

There was a friendly amendment pertaining to the language specificity and context, but this amendment was withdrawn.

It was noted that Rev. Erica and Rev. Marta have met with and would continue to work with the Indigenous Justice Working Group around the materials such as the rationale.

Add Land Acknowledgement vote to annual meeting warrant:

**MOTION 3:** I move that the Parish Committee add the Land Acknowledgment to the Annual Meeting warrant. (Carolyn) Seconded (Sara G.) - [This motion is tabled until the next meeting.]

Discussion:

- The Parish Committee recommended that if the acknowledgement were to be presented at Annual Meeting for a congregational vote, and if First Parish members at the Annual Meeting wanted to change the language, that the Indigenous Justice Working Group withdraw and table the vote. The concern would be wordsmithing in a timely and meaningful way with many people in attendance.
- A question was called. There was a point of clarification: The Parish Committee has voted to approve and support the current language on the Land Acknowledgement as is and to table the Parish Committee vote on whether it be added to the Annual Meeting warrant for April's committee meeting.

Gratitude was expressed to Elizabeth Hunter and Ellen Leigh of the Indigenous Justice Working Group.

The Parish Committee is open to looking at changes in the language but recommends no edits be made at the time of the Annual Meeting, should the acknowledgment be approved to be added to the Annual Meeting warrant.

**8:14PM Lafayette marker: summary of email, discussion, and vote (Anne, 10 minutes)**

- The Parish Committee received an email from the Town of Arlington [from its Economic Development Coordinator] regarding an organization called The Lafayette Trail. This organization would like to place a marker in Arlington to

commemorate General Lafayette's visit 200 years ago. The Town offered First Parish the opportunity to accept a marker on the property.

- Parish Committee Executive discussed whether First Parish might like to put other markers or signage on the campus.

**MOTION 4:** I vote that the Parish Committee kindly decline the Town of Arlington's offer to put this marker on First Parish property. (Anne) Seconded (Sara G) 7 in favor. 0 opposed. 1 abstention.

8:18 PM - Break for 5 minutes.

**8:23 PM - 8:39 PM Review of Financial Report & Dashboard (Carolyn, 15 minutes)**

- First Parish is in good shape and is at a place similar to where finances were last year at this time. The Treasurer continues to update their forecast and watches the finances closely.
- First Parish received money from Sol Systems from the solar panel payment, which is understood to be paid quarterly. First Parish received \$3,600 from the last quarter and will be reflected in March activity.
- There was an anonymous donation of \$1,500 to First Parish.
  - A question was raised about where the donation would be going: the Trustees or the Parish Committee Operating funds. The donation would go to Operations.
  - The Treasurer will send a thank you note to the donor.
- Gratitude was expressed to Greg Ruccio of the Property Committee for sending a detailed insurance report. More work remains in process.
- The Parish Committee reviewed and clarified that the Trustees of First Parish are empowered to handle and renew the loan of First Parish artifacts to the Arlington Historical Society.
- For staffing considerations, First Parish has funds to have Sara Hidalgo train a new office manager as part of the transition after she steps away from her role. The funds for this training come from the salary budget and will not adversely impact the budget.
- A discussion was held about the allocation of funds collected from the *Join or Die* film screening. Donations were collected on site at the screening in the First Parish meeting house.
  - Clarification was requested for how to advise the Social Justice Committee in allocating the funds collected. It is understood that the sponsor hopes to hold a second screening.
  - A recommendation was made that the funds go to the documentary filmmaker for the second screening.

- STAR Adult Education and Social Justice Committee could split the cost of the licensing for the film showing. The number of attendees was originally underrepresented.
- The Parish Committee expressed full support in advising that the donations be allocated to the filmmaker for the purpose of a second showing .

### **The Second Minister Fund**

- The Second Minister Fund ends in 2025. At completion, First Parish will have approximately \$25,000 left over from the fund (unspent from welcoming events and relocation costs, etc.). At completion, the Parish Committee will need to confirm disposition of the leftover funds.

### Expenses and revenues:

- Committees within First Parish are receiving reports on a monthly basis.
- On the revenue side, First Parish is up about \$32,000. Pledges are up (and pledges usually slow down at the end of the church year, so they are at the top of the curve).
- First Parish is still expecting a surplus for the full year, as indicated in the revised forecast.
- Please note this forecast is an estimate- there might be additional expenses coming from committees as the church calendar year closes.

### **Two votes: Voting on surplus funds disposition and on the Assistant Treasurer transition.**

**MOTION 5:** I vote that we adopt the Consent agenda: Minutes, Financials, Ministers' Reports (Jeff) Seconded (Celia) 8 in favor. None opposed.

### **Disposition of the Surplus funds**

**MOTION 6:** I move that the Parish Committee accepts prior period funds from the Trustees by moving them into the general contingency surplus fund. (Anne) Seconded (Jeff) 8 of 8 in favor.

### Discussion highlights included:

- The history and background from the Capital improvements were reviewed and summarized. There had been a two-step process to move funds into the Operating budget in the past.
- One advantage of having the noted prior funds go to general contingency is that they would be unrestricted. If the funds go to the Property Committee first, then they are restricted to that.

- A reminder was made that during the early part of the COVID-19 pandemic, the building was not being used so it was a good time to address the additional property costs that surfaced and complete the work, paid by operating funds.

#### **8:40 PM - Voting to approve a new Assistant Treasurer to start immediately**

The Parish Committee expressed its gratitude for Shaileen (Shay) Crawford for having been the Assistant Treasurer. Shay is ending her service, and Annie Hewitt has come forward and agreed to become the Assistant Treasurer. The ballot for Annual meeting in May will include Annie Hewitt as Assistant Treasurer.

The Parish Committee was asked to appoint Annie Hewitt as the Assistant Treasurer effective immediately. She would be added to the Operating Accounts. It takes time to change over accounts.

**MOTION 7:** I move to appoint Annie Hewitt as Assistant Treasurer from now through May 2024 and to have her name be put on First Parish's Operating Accounts. (Carolyn) Seconded (Celia). 8 in favor. None opposed.

The Parish Committee expressed gratitude to the First Parish Treasurer for shepherding the transition of the Assistant Treasurer role.

#### **8:45 PM - Vote to approve Spring Fundraiser; and funds recipient charity (Sara, 10 minutes)**

- Mockups for the flyers (to be posted) were circulated among the Parish Committee members.
- The proposed charity for the spring fundraiser is World Central Kitchen. Alan Linov of the Social Justice Committee has been consulted. World Central Kitchen aligns well.
- The name of the fundraiser is A Taste of First Parish Arlington
- First Parish performers will provide music: a pianist the first hour; David Whitford and his band will perform. Stanley and the Undercovers will end the evening.
- The event is intended to build community, provide a fun event, and test whether First Parish can mount a second fundraiser in one church year (the first being Harvest Moon Festival).
- First Parish can leverage ourselves in line with our values and lift up the Arlington community while drawing people in.

Considerations regarding the First Parish alcohol policy, serving food, and security:

- The spring fundraiser planning committee would like to have a bar in the sanctuary. A special one-day alcohol permit (for beer and wine only) would be

required. (Note: As a non-profit, First Parish could potentially sell liquor but the planning committee is not recommending that.)

- Arlington Brewing Company was mentioned as a wholesaler from which to purchase beverages, and the planning committee has reviewed the paperwork as well as consulted someone who is a licensed bartender and First Parish member.
- A point of clarification: The fundraiser would be a ticketed event, with one price for an entry ticket. The alternative way would be to sell food as the method of making money and that is more complex, so the ticketed method was chosen.
- A question about the Town of Arlington and Board of Health was posed; the fundraiser planning committee has been consulting with First Parish members well versed in providing food, particularly hot foods.
- Security concerns
  - The fundraiser planning committee must create a whole security plan.
  - Reasonable precautions would need to be shown.
  - Some background was provided from when the Parish Committee adopted the most recent policy around alcohol at events (for example, for the event Martapalooza) where there was a price of admission and drink tickets.
  - Language about insurance coverage, having a licensed bartender, and marketing was discussed. For marketing, the event would largely be promoted within the First Parish community.
  - A question was asked about security and clarification around the age restrictions of attendees for this event.
    - This is an adult event, a 21+ event.
    - Childcare can be provided in a separate part of the building in the Bailey Room. There would be a supervisor and at least one other person.

-There was a question about having alcohol in the building in advance of or in anticipation of the event, for example keeping it in the fridge. With the one-day liquor license for beer and wine, the beverages' transportation and disposition would happen the day of the event.

**MOTION 8:** I vote that we approve the requests for the Taste of First Parish fundraiser on May 3, 2024, including getting a one-day liquor license; that the event is 21+, with childcare in the building, and that the charity be the World Central Kitchen. (Sara) Seconded (Jeff). 8 in favor. None opposed.

**8:55 PM - Update on Charting the Course, a Parish Committee working group studying 5- and 10-year visioning/planning (Sara/Carolyn/John)**

A survey has been written. It may not be sent out to the congregation until next year.

**8:56 PM Update on Volunteer Engagement, a Parish Committee working group (Jeff)**

- The Volunteer Engagement folks are looking at a number of short-term considerations including working with the Leadership Development Committee and focusing on recruitment for officers and leaders
- With assistance from Kiki Giatis and Anne, the group met on a Saturday morning for a brainstorming session to come up with some names of First Parish members to approach for leadership positions
- The group has discussed bringing in and hiring someone to look at First Parish skillsets which would not happen this year but would be looked at again at the beginning of the next church year in September.
- The group has discussed a committee fair, which is also being migrated to the fall. It could be a pathway for people who are new to the church to engage more.
- To increase visibility for Volunteer Engagement, Jeff Keffer will be in the pulpit on Sunday, April 21st.
  - First Parish is doing very well. Some committees are doing wonderfully. For Property, for example, John Galantowicz has stepped away and Greg Ruccio is staying on. There is a new Assistant Treasurer. Two people are continuing on the Human Resources Committee. There are a lot of volunteers actively engaged in First Parish.

**8:59 PM - Committee of Ministry and Parish Committee 3/26 evaluation meeting, process and goals (Anne Q.)**

- The meeting with the Committee of Ministry will be in person in the Parlor.
- The purpose of the meeting is to provide an evaluations of the ministers, brainstorm and hear feedback.
- It is a closed meeting except to invited guests. No minutes are taken.

**9:01 PM - Confirm schedule for remaining FY 2024 meetings (Anne Q., 5 minutes)**

April 16th is the Parish Committee's regular meeting, which will be online. Jeff is the host.

April 23rd is the budget meeting which will be in person in the Parlor.

The Parish Committee has signed up to host the April 24th potluck in the vestry. Parish Committee members are requested to come by early, around 5pm to help set up.

May 14th is the Parish Committee's May meeting.

May 19th is the Annual Meeting.

There will be a June retreat. Scheduling will be determined offline.

### **9:07 Adjourn**

**Motion 9:** I would like to move we adjourn (Celia) Seconded (John A.) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

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**Attachments:** Last month's Minutes, Financial documents, Ministers' reports

### **MOTIONS**

**MOTION 1:** I move that we table this recommendation of support for the Land Acknowledgement text as is. (Jeff K.) Seconded (Anne Q.) 2 in favor of tabling. 6 opposed. *Motion 1 did not carry.*

*Please see the current Land Acknowledgement text following the motions.*

**MOTION 2:** I move that we recommend that the congregation support the Land Acknowledgment proposed by the Indigenous Justice Working Group as is. (John A.) Seconded (Carolyn H.) 5 in favor. 3 opposed. *This motion carried.*

**MOTION 3:** I move that the Parish Committee add the Land Acknowledgment to the Annual Meeting warrant. (Carolyn) Seconded (Sara G.) - *This motion was tabled until the next meeting.*

**MOTION 4:** I vote that the Parish Committee kindly decline the Town of Arlington's offer to put this marker on First Parish property. (Anne) Seconded (Sara G) 7 in favor. 0 opposed. 1 abstention.

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**MOTION 9:** I would like to move we adjourn (Celia) Seconded (John A.) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

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Language for the Land Acknowledgement references in motions 1-3:

“The First Parish meetinghouse is located on the ancestral lands of the Massachusetts people, whose name was appropriated by this Commonwealth. The White Europeans who took land from its inhabitants through coercion and violence also subjected Indigenous people to forced labor, relocation, and genocide. Our faith calls us to acknowledge the truth of our history, to name the ongoing harms of settler colonialism, and to work toward repair. We resolve to be in right relationship with the Massachusetts and other Indigenous peoples, particularly the federally recognized Wampanoag nations of Mashpee and Aquinnah. We commit to finding meaningful ways to offer our resources as we work in solidarity to build a more sustainable future for us all.”

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Minutes prepared by Parish Committee clerk, Joanna Pushee.