

Parish Committee Meeting Minutes
First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Arlington
April 16, 2024: 7 - 9 PM, online via Zoom

Anne Quaadgras (chair), John Anderson (vice chair), Joanna Pushee (clerk) , Celia Wcislo, Al Tosti, Jeff Keffer, Sara Galantowicz, Carolyn Hodges
Rev. Marta Flanagan, Rev. Erica Richmond, Minister of Religious Education Stevie Carmody

Guests: Lois Fine, Tom Estabrook, Maggie Carey, Ellen Leigh

7:03 Call to Order (Anne)

7:05 Reading, Chalice Lighting and two minutes of silence (Jeff)

7:08 Prayer and celebration of some major anniversaries of membership at First Parish (Rev. Marta Flanagan)

7:12 Rose of Recognition nomination (Jeff)

The Parish Committee recognizes the extraordinary work of the Stewardship Committee under the amazing leadership of chairs Marie Meteer and Amy Speare. Sue Sheffler recruited the visiting stewards. Maryglen Vincens offered trainings along with Rev. Erica's coordination. To celebrate the generosity of the congregation, a bouquet of roses will be purchased and placed on the chancel table on Sunday to celebrate.

7:19 Stewardship update (Rev. Erica, 5 minutes)

- The Stewardship Campaign exceeded the goal of \$775,000 with a current pledge total of \$781,738.
- For participation, last year there were 267 households which pledged. The goal this year was set at 272 households. The current number of pledging households is 246.
- For folks who pledged last year and have not yet pledged, there are about a dozen who are expected to submit their pledges.

The Parish Committee expressed its gratitude to Rev. Erica, John Anderson (Parish Committee vice chair) who is on the Stewardship Committee, and the whole Stewardship Committee, and visiting stewards.

The Parish Committee praised the Stewardship Committee for reaching its goal and doing so early. First Parish has much to celebrate.

7:24 Review of Financial report & dashboard (Carolyn, 15 minutes)

- First Parish remains in a solid position for the year-to-date. The reforecast suggests that First Parish will end up with a surplus, meaning we will pay back the \$60,000 used last year from surplus to balance the budget, and start again next fiscal year.
- Pledges
 - Pledges are doing very well and are ahead of the seasonalized amount with payment of

pledges coming through.

- The Parish Committee is grateful for this incredible news of early or on time payment schedules.

Updates on the tenant, the Montessori Children's House of Arlington / Adventures in Montessori (AIM):

- For the First Parish tenant, AIM, enrollment is still below expectations.
- A question was posed: with a new daycare at Arlington High School, is our tenant having any trouble with enrollment?
 - Arlington High School's daycare is not competition; AIM is for families looking specifically for Montessori schools, so there might be different pools of people looking to enroll their children in these daycare programs.
- A request to take down a wall to make the space sunnier and larger has been made. John Anderson has been working with AIM, which could open the space and be able to support families with very young children better. There is some expansion potential for AIM's offerings. There would have to be an amendment to the lease. [Clerk's note: the recommended amendment will be brought before the Parish Committee at the April 23rd Parish Committee meeting for discussion.
 - Parish Committee Exec discussed the wall being taken out in a previous Exec meeting: *Participants discussed ACH (school) request to remove a wall between the May room and office space, incorporating MRE Stevie's feedback. Asked ACH to have their lawyer create a lease addendum, including plan to pay for and replace the wall upon lease termination. Once the Parish Committee receives the addendum the committee can finalize approval.]*

Budget meeting coming up:

- There is a short wish list to consider from First Parish committees to the Parish Committee. - If there is something expected that is not on the wish list, the Treasurer asks the Parish Committee to look in a comprehensive way
- The budget will be shared with the Parish Committee at the end of the week ahead of the budget meeting on April 23, 2024.

Vote 1: Consent agenda: Minutes, Financials, Ministers' Reports

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

7:31PM - Taste of First Parish (Sara G.) (moved from later in the agenda)

- The new fundraiser, a Taste of First Parish, will be on May 3, a Friday evening. - Five or six restaurants will be donating food.
- Marie Meteer and Lissa McBurney will be providing additional food.
- The Town of Arlington approved a special one-day license for beer and wine (no liquor). - The fire department will be doing crowd control. This will be an expense. There will potentially be a need for a police officer.
- A food permit will be submitted to the Arlington Board of Health.
- Live music has been arranged.
- There will be a silent auction.

- Planning is going well. More volunteers are needed for positions such as greeting attendees and cleaning up after the event. There is a Google form to do so.
- Posters advertising the event have been put up around the meeting house.

7: 35 The Parish Committee welcomes First Parish members as follows as guests: Lois Fine, Maggie Carey, and Tom Estabrook (representing the Reckoning & Repair group) and Ellen Leigh (Indigenous Justice Working Group)

The Reckoning & Repair group and the Indigenous Justice Working Group are present to see if the Parish Committee approves the most recent language for the respective Reckoning & Repair Affirmation and the Land Acknowledgement.

7:37 pm - Presentation of the most recent updates to the language of the Reckoning & Repair Affirmation and the Land Acknowledgement (Rev Erica assisting with slide deck)

- Gratitude was expressed for the patience demonstrated on all sides
- There have been many listening sessions, including three since January 2024, so that the congregation can interact with the language of the text of the affirmation.
- Language has been updated in the text of the affirmation based on Parish Committee recommendations. For example “guided by” has replaced “led by” to show a cooperative and spirited way. The last sentence has been updated within the last day to reflect the financial decisions to be made by the appropriate financial body. It now reads ‘Annual decisions are to be made by the Parish Committee and the Trustees. Longer term decisions will be made by a congregational vote.’
- Final edits to the Reckoning and Repair Affirmation combined the final two sentences into one sentence reading as follows: *All annual fiscal decisions will be made by the appropriate committees within the congregation, while all longer-term fiscal commitments will be made by congregational vote.*

7:40 pm Reckoning & Repair Affirmation: Parish Committee voting on two motions (Anne, 10 minutes)

MOTION 2: I vote that the Parish Committee recommends the congregation vote yes on the updated Reckoning & Repair Affirmation as written.

Celia (Seconded) John A and Joanna P. Vote: 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

MOTION 3: I move that we, the Parish Committee, add the affirmation to the warrant for Annual Meeting. (Sara) Seconded (John). 8 of 8 unanimous. None opposed.

Both motions for the Reckoning and Repair Affirmation passed unanimously. The Parish Committee endorses the Affirmation as written. The Parish Committee voted in favor of putting the Affirmation before the congregation in a congregational vote at Annual Meeting.

7:53 pm - Indigenous Justice Working Group - request to add a congregational vote on the Land Acknowledgement to the Annual Meeting warrant; Parish Committee motion was tabled from the March monthly meeting. (10 minutes)

The Parish Committee chair re-introduced the Indigenous Justice Working Group (Ellen Leigh, representing the IJWG) with Rev. Erica sharing a Google Document with the most recent updated

language to the Land Acknowledgement.

- IJWG showed that some language redundancies were removed, namely “white Europeans” was replaced by “European colonists” per Parish Committee discussions and feedback.
- IJWG directed the Parish Committee to literature available, such as the brochure on the Land Acknowledgement which was circulated among First Parish members in January.

Land Acknowledgment text:

The First Parish meetinghouse is located on the ancestral lands of the Massachusett people, whose name was appropriated by this Commonwealth. The European colonists 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 Massachusett and other Indigenous peoples, particularly the federally recognized Wampanoag nations of Mashpee and Aquinnah. We commit to finding meaningful ways to offer our support as we work in solidarity to build a more sustainable future for us all.

MOTION 4: I move that the Parish Committee recommend the congregation vote yes on the updated Land Acknowledgment as written. (John A) Seconded (Carolyn) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

MOTION 5: I move that the Parish Committee add the Land Acknowledgment text to the warrant for Annual Meeting. (Celia) Seconded (Carolyn) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

Both motions for the Land Acknowledgement passed unanimously. The Parish Committee endorses the Land Acknowledgment as written. The Parish Committee voted in favor of putting the Land Acknowledgment before the congregation in a vote at Annual Meeting.

It is noted that the Clerk will add articles for the congregational votes on the Reckoning & Repair Affirmation and the Land Acknowledgment to the warrant.

Rev. Marta Flanagan commended the Parish Committee, the Reckoning & Repair Working Group, and the Indigenous Justice Working Group all together for everyone’s patience and perseverance in this process.

7:59 - 8:04 Break (5 min)

8:05 PM **State of the Parish (Rev. Marta Flanagan)**

- Members of First Parish were lifted up and gratitude was expressed for Rev. Stevie Carmody, Religious Education Minister, as well as Daniel Parsley, interim Music Director.
- Observations about the calendar for the remaining program year of First Parish included: -
 - The Clean Up day in April
 - The Taste of Arlington - fundraiser in May
 - Possibility of adding an end-of-year picnic (the last Sunday of the program year)
 - A reminder that First Parish is always looking for “large events” that new people could

- come to, volunteers could support and are fun.
- Rev. Stevie is kicking off a History of Religious Education program the first Sunday in June

First Parish highlights include experiences and programming for deepening spiritual connection. There are many all congregation events, deepening opportunities, and more rituals to come such as the Shinn Service, the annual Coming of Age, the Flower Communion, and the New Members Ceremony.

Discussion/Questions:

- The Parish Committee noted that it is truly amazing what First Parish does as a community. There is such a diversity of offerings and so much more than weekly Sunday morning worship services. People at First Parish engage in activities that resonate with them which is a mark of real health.
- The Parish Committee noted that First Parish has three truly extraordinary ministers. Gratitude was expressed.

8:19 PM Annual meeting: hybrid plan and warrant vote (Anne, 15 minutes)
Exact warrant was determined based on votes 3 and 5, above.

MOTION 6: I vote that the Parish Committee approve the warrant for the Annual Meeting. (Celia) Seconded (Carolyn) 8 of 8

Discussion included:

- Reviewing the language of the warrant and ensuring there was consistency in wording and formality (e.g. changing "to vote" to "to see if")
- Ensuring information for Zoom participants was included for a hybrid Annual Meeting (i.e.. Zoom participants will not be able to speak, but they will be able to vote. Instead of speaking, Zoom participants can submit pre-written comments to the Parish clerk at clerk@firstparish.info.

8:37 pm **Update on Volunteer Engagement/officer & committee ballot (Anne, 5 min)** - Jeff Keffer, Parish Committee member, will speak at the pulpit during worship services on April 21st. The Parish Committee is grateful for Jeff's continued commitment to Volunteer Engagement efforts.

- The Parish Committee Executive has been working with the Leadership Development Committee on contacting First Parish members who would be great candidates for committee roles. Updates were discussed, particularly for a candidate to fill a 2-year term commitment on the Parish Committee.
- The Parish Committee and LDC will continue to ask First Parish members to consider being nominated for committee roles.
- The Parish Committee is grateful for the work of Kiki Giatis and Helene Newberg on the Leadership Development Committee.
- Committees for Music, Religious Education, Membership, and Trustees are working out and are in good shape, as is the Property Committee.
- The clerk will connect with the Office Manager to make sure the e-bulletin includes a reminder about May 1st as the deadline for committee reports.
- The clerk will work with the Office Manager to ensure a follow-up / reminder message goes out to committee chairs responsible for submitting their reports.

8:48 pm **Update on Charting the Course** (5 min) - (John A. & Sara G.)

- The Parish Committee requested a brief one page report be made available for the congregation to provide continuity to the efforts of this working group.
- The Parish Committee agreed that acknowledging feedback from the congregation on Charting the Course would be a good idea. There are some great actionable ideas for short-term as well as the 5- to 10-years out timeframe.
- Gratitude was expressed to Carolyn Hodges for sorting through the incoming data and feedback.

8:51 Other business:

- The Parish Committee will host the potluck on April 24th at 6pm with set up beginning at 5:15PM.
- The Parish Committee will meet again on April 23 for the annual budget meeting, which will be hybrid.
- The Parish Committee's monthly meeting on May 14 meeting will be on Zoom.

8:55 PM - Adjourn

MOTION 7: I move that we adjourn. (Celia) Seconded (Joanna) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

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

MOTIONS

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

MOTION 2: I vote that the Parish Committee recommends the congregation vote yes on the updated Reckoning & Repair Affirmation as written. (Celia). Seconded (John A and Joanna P.) Vote: 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

*Affirmation of Reckoning and Repair
First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Arlington*

Acknowledgement:

To create beloved community, rooted in justice and inspired by love, we break past silences and name our congregation's entanglement with the institution of slavery, which began with the founding of the congregation in 1739. At least eight of First Parish's sixteen original pew owners enslaved Black people, and our initial congregation was founded in part on the uncompensated labor, resources, skills, and talents of enslaved people.

Commitment:

First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Arlington is committed to building relationships with local,

Black-led organizations to shape a framework for meaningful reparations. We commit to a process of reparations guided by people of African heritage and the broader reparations movement, and we will work within and beyond our congregation's walls to bring about holistic repair. In tandem with seeking out and forming relationships with Black-led organizations, the Reckoning & Repair working group will continue gathering congregational feedback about a plan for reparations. All annual fiscal decisions will be made by the appropriate committees within the congregation, while all longer-term fiscal commitments will be made by congregational vote. Reparations are central to the struggle to build a world based on justice, care, and uplift, and we commit ourselves to this work. Hand in hand we will find a way.

April 12, 2024

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Prepared by volunteer First Parish clerk, Joanna Pushee.