

# Parish Committee Minutes

First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Arlington

February 13, 2019

(Note: Postponed from February 12 due to snow)

**Present:** Steve McMullin (Chair), Marie Meter (Vice Chair), David Klingsberg (Treasurer), Tom Estabrook (Parish Committee Member), Sara Galantowicz (Parish Committee Member), Jeff Roberts (Parish Committee Member), Olav Nieuwejaar (Sabbatical Minister), Tina Schultz (Director of Religious Education)

**(1) Consent agenda.** *The members of the Parish Committee voted 6-0-0* to accept the consent agenda, which consists of the January 8 minutes, the Minister's Report (Appendix A), and financial documents.

**(2) 2018-2019 Finances update and new proposals for this year's spending.** Steve reviewed the status of this year's spending, including expenditures on the kitchen. Parcom had approved \$60,000 for the kitchen upgrade and the current total is \$48,000. This leaves some additional funding this year for some kitchen related items, including a new Fellowship committee centered around the kitchen and the purchase of "movables" (including pots and pans). Each are described below:

**New committee.** Julius and others in the congregation have proposed a new "Fellowship" committee responsible for more community activities around cooking and meals together. The notes on the original discussion in January are included below. *The members of the Parish Committee voted 6-0-0* to create the new committee and fund it at \$500 in 2018-2019. It will also be considered in the 2019-2020 budget as proposed below.

From January 2019 minutes: Julius would like to gather people who enjoy cooking for groups and form a Fellowship Committee that provides institutional support for sharing food. Perhaps an ArCS Cluster celebratory dinner could become an annual tradition. Or perhaps the annual tradition could be a celebratory dinner and who is honored could vary – for example, RE teachers or the choir would be worthy groups to celebrate. Perhaps there could be a lunch for members over age 70, many of whom used to be Parish Committee members or other lay leaders and now feel invisible. We supported Julius moving forward with this idea, with the thought that we could include \$500 for the Fellowship Committee in next year's budget, which the committee would use to underwrite as many events as works out.

**"Movables".** While this kitchen itself is upgraded, it would greatly benefit from additional funding for kitchen items such as pots and pans. The kitchen committee has asked for \$3000 to purchase such items. *The members of the Parish Committee voted 6-0-0* to spending \$3,000 from the previously approved \$60,000 kitchen budget on such items.

**(3) Website update.** Marie Meter gave an update on the website. The group organizing the effort includes Kiki Giatis, Maggie Carrie and Marie. The designers have been working since January, first meeting with Marta and a number of different small focus groups to understand First Parish's goals and then working with Kiki, Maggie, and Marie on developing the upper levels of the site map. They have produced the "wireframes", which show the architecture of each page and will have the design ready for review on March 6. The group will be organizing the rewriting of the current pages to fit the new format

in March and the final design and the pages will be turned over to the developer at the end of April. The new site will launch in the summer.

**(4) Turning outward strategic planning group proposal.** Tom brought the proposal below for a new banner to be placed in front of the church. As he describes below, there would be a panel forum to follow up and the time and date would also be on the banner:

The Turning Outward Strategic Planning Group (SPG) is proposing a public witness banner and a panel discussion for mid to late March on the theme of economic justice and political and economic democracy. Specifically, we are requesting that the public witness banner have the following statement:

### **What would real political and economic democracy look like?**

We believe that the obvious crises plaguing the world today – increasing concentration of wealth and political power at the top 1%, devastating consequences of austerity policies, the declining fortunes of working people and the middle class, the rise of neo-fascism and authoritarianism, a two-decade long war on terror with no end in sight, rampant racism, islamophobia, the vilification of immigrants and refugees, and a deepening of the climate crisis and related ecological crises – are all indicators of the lack of political and economic democracy. At this specific political moment, we believe that First Parish and the broader Arlington community would benefit from a meaningful exploration of real political and economic solutions to the world's crises.

During the several weeks that the banner is up, a 2-hour panel forum would also take up the banner's question, and would have a title of "**Envisioning Real Political and Economic Democracy.**" We are hoping to schedule the 2-hour forum for a Sunday afternoon in mid to late March. The intent of the forum is to engage a broad audience at First Parish in ideas and discussion about creating a democratic society and political economy in a world enveloped by crises. The panel would consider the application of Unitarian Universalist principles in addressing this topic. We hope to recruit three First Parish panelists and a moderator to kick off the discussion. Attendees would break into small groups to take up questions raised by the panelists and pose questions and challenges coming out of each small group. If the panel forum is successful we hope to follow up with additional organized forums on the same or similar themes.

*The members of the Parish Committee voted 6-0-0 to adopt the proposal of the SPG for the new banner.*

**(5) Music Committee.** Robin Baker provided the Parish Committee with an update on the music committee, including financial information.

First, Robin expressed the gratitude of the committee for the additional funding for social and racial justice, allowing them to create a much more diverse selection of music and musicians. Robin is a music administrator as her job, and the head of community outreach, and as such has many community connections as does Jonathan. She has particularly enjoyed joining with Jonathan to support the communities we care about, including parishioners and youth. The choir has grown to 45 members and has had an increase in younger members. Jonathan has also started up collaborations with other UU churches in the area. We also now have the family choir and the bell choir, both of which are growing. Olav commented that the music program at FP was the best of any of the congregations he had ever served in.

Robin has done some research on music programs in other churches of similar size and quality of music program, and all had full time music directors and many had paid assistants. Belmont has 2 full time music directors. Many have “Section leaders” (for soprano, alto, ...) who are paid. Follen (Lexington). full time person, 4 paid soloists, budget is 4 times ours. Concord, Weston, Newton, all have full time music directors.

Jonathan is paid for 23 hours per week, 43 weeks of year, but puts in more time than that. For example, he works throughout the summer to prepare for the year, selecting, ordering, and reviewing music for the coming year. The Music Committee would like to request an increase in the number of hours per week that are paid by 5 hours per week. They are not asking for any additional money for the music committee. Jonathan has made a significant impact on our community and they want to make sure he is appreciated, is paid for the work he does, and continues to stay with us.

Have not been able to find an organist. There are not that many organists available and given the money (\$14K 6-7 hrs per week), we are not getting any applicants. They have rewritten the job description to focus on the pianist.

She also reported that the organ needs work. For example it's missing a note and has some other problems. They are pushing off the work on the organ while the money being set aside increases, and give that we haven't been able to hire an organist, that is not a problem at this time.

**(6) RJCC Charter.** Lois Fine had submitted a new RJCC Charter, however, there were a number of questions we couldn't answer, so it was tabled until next month when Lois could come in to provide additional information.

**(7) Action Sunday.** Melissa Berczuk reported on the work they are doing to prepare for Action Sunday, which will be April 27. Finding projects has been harder this year and the consultant has done a lot of work. They reached out to 150 different organizations, 70 of which do not accept any volunteers on a Sunday. Of the remaining ones, they have worked to find a set that are suitable to the size and age ranges of our congregation. That said, they have a number of projects scheduled and are working on a few more.

They will be launching on March 10 and will have the website sign up ready. They will be doing an email blast and be at coffee hour every Sunday. Tina suggested they speak at the new UU class and should contact Bonnie Zimmer and the new UU lunch.

She suggested that after this year's Action Sunday we brainstorm and consider other possibilities, such as an Action Week or Weekend, with the Sunday service a gathering and sharing of our experiences. She would also like to see new people join the committee for next year, to spread the work and get new ideas.

## **(8) Financial notes**

Steve has been reviewing our financial reporting and current budget status. The following were items he identified for discussion and possible concern:

1. The financial reporting combines “restricted” and “designated” funds for committees. “Restricted” is money the committees have raised themselves, which should roll over into the following year. “Designated” is funds allocated by the Parish Committed, which go back into the general fund. While in some cases it is difficult to distinguish the two, we should come up with some way to be able to track this,

so there isn't money left in categories unused. Steve will continue to work with David Klingsberg on improving the reporting to make this more transparent.

2. Replacing the flat roof in the spring will deplete the "reserves" portion of the property budget which is supposed to roll over into next year's budget for emergencies. We should be aware of this as we plan next year's budget and consider taking money out of the general reserves to ensure the property reserves have sufficient funds.

3. The Parish Committee should go through CORI checks because of our fiduciary responsibilities. This will have some cost associated with it. Tina already has a system in place for teachers and others who work with children which we can follow. More on this to come.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Draft minutes submitted by Marie Meter, Parish Committee Vice Chair  
Approved by the Parish Committee, March 12, 2019

Upcoming hosts: March 12 Sara, March 26 David, April 9 Steve, April 23 Julius, May 14 Maggie, June 11 Tom

## Appendix A

### **Ministers' Report for the Parish Committee**

First Parish Unitarian Universalist in Arlington, Massachusetts  
Revs. Olav and Jeanne Nieuwejaar - Sabbatical Co-Ministers  
January 2 - February 10, 2019

As your very short term Sabbatical Co-Ministers, we have felt warmly welcomed and well supported by both staff and lay leaders. Thank you.

We bear witness on every possible occasion to the health and beauty of this congregation. It is a joy to feel the vibrancy of the Religious Education program and we are deeply impressed not only with its efficient organization, but also with how well grounded and spiritually rich it is. And it is a surpassing joy to experience the musical dimension of Sunday mornings. Jonathan Brennand is not only a skillful Music Director, but is beautifully sensitive to the moods and nuances we hope for thematically in the Sunday services. And Ken's piano playing, whether it's a centerpiece or accompanying the hymns, is a special delight. You have more than lived up to Marta's high praise for you.

Marta most graciously encouraged us to share our observations of the congregation openly and the lay leaders have frequently asked us to do so and to offer our counsel.

We are mindful that we are not here to innovate or to make changes, but did arrive at a time when the Worship Associates were in conversation about small changes to the Sunday worship structure. We have been happy to work with them on this and able to offer suggestions from our similar experiences in other congregations.

This has resulted in placing Welcome and Announcements before the Prelude on Sunday mornings, allowing the music of the Prelude to establish a centered worshipful mood. Worship Associates are also concerned about latecomers and distractions at the beginning of the service and have met with the ushers to talk about shared concerns and ways to address them. They also are working with the Lay Ministers to experiment with alternative ways for placing stones and sharing joys and sorrows on those Sundays when the service is likely to run long.

One initiative we have launched is the formation of a Memoir Writing group. Fifteen participants are registered and left the first session energized by the process and the sharing of the group. It is our hope that, when we leave at the end of March, one of the participants will move into the leadership role so that the group can continue.

Special mention should be made of Bill Gardiner's willingness to brave the elements in the midst of the January 20 ice storm and deliver his very well received sermon to the stalwarts who likewise made the trek to church. We have heard some feedback that communication regarding whether or not church would be held that Sunday was not entirely clear. We will discuss with Steve and Joan how this might be better communicated.

A detailed listing of our activities follows:

### **Worship**

- January 6      “Prayer for This House” (287 attending)  
Rev. Jeanne Nieuwejaar
- January 13     “The Best Is Yet To Be” (221 attending)  
Rev. Olav Nieuwejaar
- January 20     “Critical Hope” (51 attending)  
Rev. Bill Gardiner  
(significant ice storm)
- January 27     “Remembering Well” (275 attending)  
Rev. Jeanne Nieuwejaar
- February 3     “Love Stories” (273 attending)  
Rev. Jeanne Nieuwejaar  
Stewardship Sunday
- February 10    “The Thing with Feathers” (Attendance unknown at this writing)

Worship Associates Meetings: 1/3; 2/7

Special Meeting with Worship Associates and Ushers: 1/13

### **Pastoral Care by Sabbatical Co-Ministers**

Pastoral appointments and visits

in office      9

hospital      1

home visits   2

(themes: re-visiting childhood trauma, crisis of faith, recovery from surgery)

Lay Ministry meetings: 1/2 and 2/6

### **Staff and Lay Leadership Support**

Appointments with lay leaders regarding projects and committee work: 8

Leadership Development Council: 1/27

Shared Ministry: 1/13

ParCom Exec: 1/16 2/7

ParCom Dinner: 1/3

ParCom Meeting: 1/8

ParCom Retreat: 2/9

Committee on Ministry: 1/16

Presentations at Stewardship Committee Events: 1/26, 2/3, 2/10

Individual weekly meetings with DRE, Office Manager and Executive Assistant

Bi-weekly meetings with Music Director

Bi-weekly Program Staff Meetings

## **Adult Enrichment**

Memoir Writing Group - Introductory Session: 2/3

**Meetings with Colleagues:** 1/23, 1/30, 2/5

We have together attended about 30% of the meetings with committees and staff. FYI, Olav has been the primary working with the Parish Committee, Stewardship, and Leadership Development, while Jeanne has been the primary with Worship Associates, Lay Ministers.