

# Parish Committee Minutes

First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Arlington

March 12, 2019

**Present:** Steve McMullin (Chair), Marie Meter (Vice Chair) (by video conferencing), Lori Kenschaft (Clerk), David Klingsberg (Treasurer), Maggie Carey (Parish Committee Member), Tom Estabrook (Parish Committee Member), Sara Galantowicz (Parish Committee Member), Julius Pereli (Parish Committee Member), Jeff Roberts (Parish Committee Member), Olav Nieuwejaar (Sabbatical Minister), Tina Schultz (Director of Religious Education), Sara DeLong (Executive Assistant to the Minister), Michael Friedman, Carol Chamberlain, and John Chamberlain (all of the Partner Church Committee)

**(1) Consent agenda.** *The members of the Parish Committee voted 8-0-0* to accept the consent agenda, which consists of the February 13 minutes, Sabbatical Ministers' Report (Appendix A), DRE's Report (Appendix B), and financial documents.

**(2) Financial Documents.** David pointed out that for the last three months the Parish Committee has been given financial documents dated at the end of the month before we meet (i.e. about 2 weeks before our meeting), rather than the month before that (about 6 weeks before). We were glad to hear that this pattern of more timely reporting seems to be sustainable. It is aided by our new bookkeeper, Liz McKersey, who is on board and learning and helping.

**(3) Possible Visit from Our Partner Church in Gagy, Transylvania.** Michael Friedman gave the Parish Committee an overview of First Parish's relationship with our partner church in Gagy, which started when the congregation voted to enter into this partner relationship in 2010 and included 7 First Parish members visiting Gagy in 2011, a visit from the Gagy minister and his wife in 2012, and 4 First Parish members visiting Gagy in 2015. Now 5 members of the Gagy congregation would like to visit us later this year.

The Partner Church Committee asked the Parish Committee to endorse this visit and the associated fundraising, and to contribute \$1,000 from the First Parish operating budget. The Partner Church Committee's goal is to raise \$5,000, but the visit may be possible with somewhat less than that total.

The Parish Committee endorsed this visit, especially if it occurs during the program year rather than August, when most First Parish members are disengaged from our community.

*The members of the Parish Committee voted 9-0-0* to allocate \$1,000 from the Parish Committee discretionary line item to the Partner Church Committee, contingent on their raising at least \$3,000 (from other sources).

We will ask the Partner Church Committee to inform the Executive Committee about their emerging fundraising plans. We expressed concern about using general online crowdfunding tools, such as Gofundme, for this purpose, but would support the Partner Church Committee using the UU crowdfunding site Faithify.

**(4) Library Parking Meters.** First Parish owns the parking spots closest to the front doors of the Robbins Library and currently receives \$6,000 a year in income from the parking meters on those spots.

First Parish member Andrew Fischer is trying to persuade the Town of Arlington that these parking meters pose a barrier to the use of a public library and should therefore be removed. He asked the Parish Committee for a statement of support.

The Parish Committee noted that the meters were installed in order to discourage commuters from parking for many hours in Arlington Center while taking the bus into Cambridge or Boston. We believe that the meters – which allow 15 free minutes and have a 2-hour maximum – encourage turnover of these parking spots and thus facilitate access to the Robbins Library. There may be people who can afford to drive to the library but can't afford \$1 an hour for parking, but we suspect there aren't many such people.

**(5) Accessibility for People with Hearing Impairments.** We discussed options for making our worship services more accessible to people with hearing impairments. We agreed that many people develop hearing impairments as they get older, don't know ASL, and aren't going to learn it. We agreed that a projection screen at the front of the sanctuary would not work well in our space. We agreed that an arrangement with a CART reporter and dedicated tablets might work. We wondered whether a remote CART reporter (cheaper than an in-person CART reporter) would have acceptable accuracy if they received electronic input from our sound system over the internet, rather than trying to listen to the service through our speaker system and its challenging acoustics.

We noted that traditionally the Parish Committee stops running the church at the door of the sanctuary, though we would need to be involved in finances. We also agreed that it would make sense to try some experiments before committing to a long-term arrangement.

Sometime after Marta returns, Maggie will talk with her and the Worship Associates about what experiments with a CART reporter might make sense.

**(6) Public Witness Banner Proposed by the Climate Action Working Group.**

The members of the Parish Committee voted 9-0-0 to approve the banner proposed by the Climate Action Working Group.

**Working together  
for bold changes  
to protect our home**



**(7) UU World Controversy.**

Olav shared with the Parish Committee a variety of perspectives related to a recent *UU World* article by a cis-gendered woman about her and her family's changing perspectives on transgender identities. Some transgender people have objected to the publication of this article on the grounds that anyone who is not transgender should not write about transgender issues. The editor of the *UU World* has

apologized for publishing the article.

The Parish Committee decided to encourage Olav, Steve, and Marie to put a statement in this week's E-Bulletin affirming First Parish's commitment to being a Welcoming Congregation for everyone, including transgender people. All Parish Committee members will have a chance to read and comment on the statement before it is submitted to the E-Bulletin. (The final draft of the E-Bulletin statement is in Appendix C.)

The Parish Committee did not endorse the principle that it is never appropriate for people who are not members of a specific group to write about issues related to that group.

Olav also informed the Parish Committee that the UUA is updating its Welcoming Congregation program and that First Parish will need to re-do some of this process if we want to maintain our status as a Welcoming Congregation.

**(8) March 26 Meeting.**

We agreed to focus on three topics from our recent retreat at our upcoming March 26 meeting:

- Leadership in turning outward, taking it to the next level (Tom & Julius will lead discussion)
- Accessibility & being welcoming to all (Maggie & Steve will lead discussion)
- Volunteerism & bringing in new people (Sara & Lori will lead discussion)

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Draft minutes submitted by Lori Kenschaft, Clerk  
Approved by the Parish Committee March 26, 2019

Upcoming hosts: 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  
February 11 - March 10, 2019

We have felt a palpable shift in recent weeks in our connections with parishioners, beyond learning names and faces to knowing bits of life stories. This has resulted in more meaningful conversations, not reflected in our appointment calendars, but in the little conversations that happen in the flow of church life. There is poignancy in this as the ending of our time with you draws near.

Planning for the service on February 24, on matters of sexual abuse and harassment, was particularly intense, in part because of the depth of the subject matter and the extra level of sensitivity needed to do it well, and also because of the candle lighting ritual and the issues some parishioners have with smoke. We were very well supported by several conversations with Lay Ministers and Worship Associates as we worked through details of the service. Special thanks to Bonnie Zimmer for personal consultation on this issue and for preparing a list of therapeutic resources for those who might want to follow up.

A detailed listing of our activities follows:

### Worship

February 17	“On Stories” (143 attending) Meredith Jeremiah
February 24	“Body and Soul” (161 attending) Rev. Jeanne Nieuwejaar
March 3	Youth Sunday (335 attending)
March 10	“To Tell the Truth” (Attendance unknown at this writing) Rev. Olav Nieuwejaar

Worship Associates Meetings: 2/24 (special meeting), 3/7

### Pastoral Care by Sabbatical Co-Ministers

Pastoral appointments and visits

in office	6
phone	1
home visits	4

(themes: struggles of adult children, terminally ill child, conflict, etc.)

Lay Ministry meeting: 3/6

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

Appointments with lay leaders regarding projects and committee work: 4

ParCom Exec: 2/20, 3/6

ParCom Meeting: 2/13

Committee on Ministry: 2/13

Presentation at Stewardship Committee Event: 2/24

Membership Committee: 3/10

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: 2/17, 3/3

Membership Committee (“Meet with Minister”): 3/3

Men’s “Lunch and Learn” group: 3/7

### **Meetings with Colleagues: 3/6, 3/7**

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

## **Appendix B**

### **Report of the DRE March 2019**

#### **Morning Happenings:**

Every week newcomers are visiting. Thank you to the RE Committee people who are greeting and escorting these new folks to the classrooms and offering them literature about First Parish and our programs.

Many of our newest families have babies and toddlers – so the Nursery and Prek classrooms are packed. We have had at least one extra volunteer to be with Nursery Coordinator Amy to help with crowd control. We always have 4 leaders with our Prek children because there are usually 12- 18 in attendance.

Attendance recording for children in older grades is incredibly erratic and unpredictable.

New curriculum in grade 4 (Stories from the Hebrew Bible) is a huge hit with children and teachers.

No complaints from teachers regarding space, curriculum or co-teachers. The RE Committee sent out another survey monkey asking winter teachers for their feedback.

The spring term will begin on March 24 and all teachers have confirmed they are still available. There are 6 adult teachers new to teaching this spring! Once again 50% are male.

#### **Evening Happenings**

Wendy Fields and Meredith Jeremiah have been trained to teach OWL.

There are currently 24 7<sup>th</sup> graders enrolled in OWL, so we had to divide them into two groups. Leaders are Alex Aminoff/Wendy Fields and Dave Deakin/Stephanie Franzosa. There are 4 sets of twins!

We held the parent orientation on Sunday, March 7 and 40 parents were in attendance. The teachers and I helped to answer their questions and given them information about the lessons. Parents were offered a chance to see the visual component of the curriculum and a handful did choose to view them. Thanks to the teachers for coming on another evening mid-week for the visuals.

Coming of Age is rolling along well. They have gone snowtubing, learned about caring for others and cooked for the lay ministry freezer and are doing art with Randal Thurston. During the next month they will learn more about a variety of spiritual practices and walk an outdoor labyrinth. Aisha will lead them in a dinner church experience. Credo writing begins in late April.

Youth Group organized and led a fantastic worship service! Special thanks to Aisha for a full day rehearsal to ensure smooth transitions, quality music, stellar reflections and a thoughtful prayer. I believe it was one of the best services ever offered by our teens.

The Service Trip Planning group meets every other week. We held a parent information meeting, led by the youth from the planning committee. Scholarship applications have been completed and scholarships granted. Advisors (Paul Franzosa, Andy Kobayashi, Bill Licea Kane and Peter Heller) have completed the application process and been accepted. All the women advisors are staff. There are 32 youth and 8 adults scheduled to participate. We have reserved the bus and vans. A blog is being

created so the congregation can follow our planning before and the activities/action during the trip.

Thank you for your generosity in allowing the service trip fund raising group a second plate at the youth group worship service.

The youth group advisors, Aisha and I celebrated recent accomplishments and their amazing work with the teens over dinner.

## **Worship**

The TFAA committee has organized the stories for children to include topics of community building, lessons from grandparents, church history, peace, truth telling, dreams and music set to our benediction. We have organized all the time for ages for all worship services through the end of this church year. Thanks to Jeanne and Olav for talking with the children and finding ways to get to know them better.

Jeanne will be offering an after church workshop for parents based on her sermon on the gift of faith.

Before Marta left we planned Easter Sunday. I have been meeting with Jonathan to organize a family choir and identify child friendly music for that service.

## **RE Committee:**

Wendy, Janis and I have been getting together every other week to talk about programming, teacher needs and ways to support our volunteers.

I was excited to join the curriculum sub-committee meeting where we discussed upgrading the grade 6 "Lessons of Loss" curriculum for next fall.

Sarah Short is doing a great job as RE Treasurer and is helping us to organize the way we track our spending on a seasonal basis.

## **FP Community Connections**

Ellen Robie and I met via tele-conference with the new web designers and gave our opinions about changes and upgrades that would improve communication and get our message out more clearly (including registration process).

I attend Parish Committee, RE Committee Meetings, Service Trip Planning Sessions, YAC, meet regularly with Jeanne/Olaf and the staff. I hold weekly meetings with Aisha, Meredith and Jan Penney.

Stewardship is in full swing. I have met numerous times with the committee and am supporting their efforts to reach out to more families. There was a pancake breakfast for young families and a dinner for middle and high school families. I spoke at both.

The RE Committee is organizing a family get together/potluck in March and is working with parents of babies and toddlers to encourage regular get-togethers for support and connection.

March is food pantry month and we are inviting families to support this initiative by bringing in especially needed items. Thanks to Stephanie Franzosa for bringing the donations to the Arlington Food Pantry. Families have been very generous so far.

## **Collegial Connections**

I have met with DRE district team monthly. I have shared the story and props we used in our fall All Ages worship to my colleague at the Lexington Follen church as an initial step for all of us to share our successes with one another.

Jeanne, Olav, Meredith and I will be attending a workshop for ministers and religious educators on “Family Ministry” next week.

We will be hosting a Coming of Age class from Syracuse New York for 5 days in April.

## **Pastoral**

Along with two meetings with brand new families to the faith I have had meetings with parents to discuss: How to talk with children about gender fluidity; How to get reluctant children to attend church; How to find resources for children with learning disabilities; Children with depression and anxiety; High School seniors facing rejection; How to negotiate life with young adults who have moved back home.

Thank you all for your ongoing support of the children and youth in our community!

Respectfully Submitted by,

Tina Schultz

## Appendix C

### **A Message from the Parish Committee and Sabbatical Ministers**

Members of the congregation may have read an article in their latest issue of the UUWorld, the national magazine sent to all members of Unitarian Universalist congregations. The article was a cisgender\*\* woman's reflection on her family's growth in embracing gender diversity. The article itself became controversial because it was not written by a member of the transgender community.

First Parish is a diverse community whose members comprise a variety of sexual and gender identities. People who are transgender can face hostility and misunderstanding; First Parish strives to create a welcoming and supportive community for everyone. Similar to most of our family of congregations across the continent, First Parish is a "Welcoming Congregation." Collectively, we stand behind the principles of the UUA's Welcoming Congregation program, whose mission is to help everyone learn how to undo homophobia and transphobia in both hearts and minds, in congregations, and in communities. While we may be in different places in understanding gender identity, as a congregation we are committed to learning from each other and to affirming lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, non-binary, and queer people as full members of our faith community.

\*\**Cisgender* meaning one's present gender identity corresponds with the gender identity one had or was identified as having at birth.