

Parish Committee Agenda

First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Arlington

November 16, 2021

Attending: Marie Meteer, Sara Galantowicz, Celia Wcislo, Jeff Keffer, Allan Tosti, Anna Quaadgras, Carolyn Hodges, Tom Estabrook, Rev. Marta Flanagan, Rev. Erica Richmond, Tina Schultz

Call to Order (Marie)

Reading and Chalice Lighting. (Marie) – Poem by Amanda Gorman: “Morning”

Financial Report & dashboard (Carolyn)

- Pledges appear stable; they have rebounded and are on track with the forecast
- Reminder pledge letters will be issued by Stewardship and the office in December
- Further research regarding the HVAC loan to the Trustees notes an outstanding balance of \$7,500, of which \$5,000 is budgeted to pay in 2021-2022.
- First Parish received an anonymous donation of \$10,000, some of which was intended to offset revenue that normally comes from the Harvest Moon Fair. The Fair committee is considering a mini-fair in the spring, or other fundraiser.
- Plate is lower than forecast to date, possibly because of the low attendance in October.
- Treasurer follow-ups include 1: prepare a mid-year forecast for the January Parish Committee meeting, 2) plate donation analysis to ascertain impact of hybrid worship option.

Vote 1, Discussion: Consent agenda: Minutes, Financials, Lead Minister’s Report, Parish minister’s report, DRE report. Motion made by Jeff and seconded by AI. Motion passed unanimously.

Updates

- Update on Financial Summit (Carolyn)
 - Carolyn reported that the meeting was terrific and a robust list of follow-ups developed (aka -bike rack). Attending were all elected financial leaders, Trustees, Property, Finance, Property, Stewardship, and VIP leader. Notes will be circulated to the Parish Committee
 - Emerging issues for the Parish Committee include a 5-year financial plan, and potential capital campaign
- Parish Committee discretionary budget (Marie)
 - The Finance committee is drawing up a draft budget and has asked how much should be included for the Parish Committee fund. The 20-21 budget includes \$6,500 for this fund, of which \$1,000 was spent on composting.
 - This budget typically covers items such as food, Sunday baking, staff gifts, ordinations, etc.
 - Potential needs for next year’s Parish Committee budget include updating the website, tech support, and Covid-related expenses

- Suggestion made to put in \$15,000 in the draft budget.
- Need to write up more specific policy guidance for this fund, including rollover policy.

Returning to in person worship

- Debrief on first hybrid gathering (11/14/21):
 - About 250 parishioners attended either in person (142), or on Zoom (111).
 - Committee members were very positive about the service and expressed gratitude for the tech team and the Sunday bakers.
 - Consensus was that the joy and turn out at this service shows we have a vibrant and active community.
- Reminder: **Dec. 7 at 7:30** to discuss/propose any changes around hybrid worship policies

Proposed changes in COVID rules for meetings

Members discussed proposed changes for meetings (options listed at end)

- These changes would only apply to group meetings, not worship or events open to the public
- When people are in a meeting room, not in the other areas of the church
 - Consider lightening meeting-room mask requirements
 - Groups meeting in a room can decide whether to stay masked or go unmasked based on a consensus vote of the group.
 - It was agreed that food restrictions for small groups in meeting rooms if all members are vaccinated.
 - Masks must be worn in larger areas and in the hallways.
 - Parish Committee members voted on an exception to current COVID requirements for family members at a memorial service gathered together in the parlor or similar space. **Vote #2.** Motion made by Marie, seconded by Jeff. Motion passed unanimously.
 - These changes will be reviewed at Dec. 7th meeting and voted on.

State of the church (Marta & Rev. Erica)

- Rev. Erica reported on Rob Meier's sudden death.
- Re. Marta and Rev. Erica shared a list of potential ideas for investing in and using our space, and for expanding First Parish offerings:
 - A community center, open to others (more sexton hours necessary to do this).
 - Continue use of technology: need for technical staff and website updating
 - Expand our spiritual lives through pilgrimages to other religions/places. Scholarships, teach-ins.
 - Provide children with a place to stay during school vacation weeks, open to others in Arlington
 - Social Justice adult service trips, create social justice associates.
 - Lecture series that could include pastoral care, marriage, blended families, mental health issues, medical debt relief, reparations, etc.

Vision and budget: Where do we want to be in 3 years?

- What do we want FP to do in the next 2-3 years? What would make you proud of FP? Inward? Outward? Side by side? How can we move forward on all fronts?
- Where should we be investing to get us there? What are the budget implications now?
 - We are a non-diverse Parish. Perhaps inviting or partnering with diverse churches or organizations.
 - Become a more welcoming space, bringing smaller events into the building
 - A community center, with a more useful/open outdoor space. Trees, picnic tables, checkers, etc.
 - Justice ministers, like lay ministry. Think across social movements
 - Spiritual trips and programs
 - Religious Education special events, such as puppeteers and storytelling
 - Open religious education events to all children in Arlington
 - Multicultural events

Policy of the month (Jeff) Postponed due to lack of time.

- [Capital Infrastructure Fund Policy](#)
- Policy Considerations (see attached)

Motion made at 8:56 PM to adjourn by Jeff, seconded by Sara. Motion passed unanimously.

Attachments: October Minutes, Financial Documents, Ministers' reports, DRE report

MOTIONS

1. I move that we adopt the consent agenda.
2. I move that we amend the meeting Covid restrictions as follows:
 1. To allow a food exception for family members at a memorial service meeting in the parlor or similar space.

Proposed changes for meetings for initial discussion purposes

- Only would apply to group meetings, not worship or events open to the public, and changes when people are in the meeting room, not in the other areas of the church
 1. Consider lightening meeting-room mask requirements (3 options discussed)
 - Return to summer rules where groups meeting in a room can decide whether to stay masked or go unmasked if the group unanimously agree
 - Groups meeting in a room can decide whether to stay masked or go unmasked based on a majority vote of the group.
 - When in a group in a meeting room, a fully vaccinated individual may take their mask off or choose to keep it. No group consensus required
- Consider lightening food restrictions for small groups
 - Small groups (not open to the public) can serve food and drink if everyone is vaccinated (regardless of eligibility--so no unvaccinated children). This assumes mask requirements have been lightened

Lead Minister Report

October 17 – November 11 , 2021

Rev. Marta Morris Flanagan

First Parish in Arlington Massachusetts

I write this report the night before we begin Hybrid worship after 87 Sunday worship services exclusively online via zoom. For 19 months we have gathered usually from our homes but tomorrow many will gather in the sanctuary for worship. Worship from the sanctuary will be simulcast online. The order of service is printed, the cameras are ready! We are beginning our experiment of hybrid worship services!

Looking back over the last month, there has been much planning by the staff, tech volunteers, Worship Associates, Ushers, Membership Committee, Property Committee, Parish Committee, and others. They deserve much gratitude for the time and attention to many details as we make this significant move.

This month also marked a staff transition in our office. Sara DeLong's last day as half time Office Associates was October 28. Sara DeLong has worked admirably at First Parish for five years, first as my half time Executive Assistant and then as half time Office Associates. With the concerted efforts of Office Administrator Sara Hidalgo and the Human Resources Committee the job was posted, interviews conducted and an officer extended and accepted by **Rob Beatty**. On November 1 Rob began as our new Office Associate. Welcome Rob!

Finally, this month was marked by two significant losses. A memorial service for First Parish member **dp Powell** on October 23 that I officiated at. Dp died the first month of Covid (March 24, 2020) and the family waited till an incarnate memorial service was possible.

Then late on October 29, First Parish member **Rob Meier** died by suicide. Over twenty years ago, Rob and Sue Sheffler enrolled their three children, Justine, Andrew, and David, in the religious education and youth programs at First Parish. For several years Rob served as a youth group advisor and recently participated in numerous groups and gatherings at First Parish, including Spirit Talks and meditation groups.

This news of Rob's death was hard for many in our community. I redid the sermon I was preaching the next day and took up the themes of suicide, death and loss. That afternoon I met with Sue and the children. And Rev. Erica facilitated a powerful gathering in the courtyard with more than 65 people attending (even though it was only announced that morning!). We both reached and supported the facilitators of many of the programs that Rob participated in at First Parish and created further opportunities for people in those groups to share and reflect on Rob's struggle with mental health and his death. A memorial Service for Rob will be held next Sunday, November 21 at 2:00 pm in the Sanctuary at First Parish with Rev. Erica officiating.

Rob's death amidst the preparation for hybrid worship, staff transition and a full slate adult programming and social justice activities has remade me enormously grateful for Rev. Erica and your decision several years ago to start working toward funding a second minister. This month people showed up for ministry and ministerial programs in ways that I could not have provided on my own.

I close this report feeling so grateful for this religious community at a time when doubts are expressed about the future of the religious communities in media ranging from the Wall Street Journal, the PBS Newshour and more this month. We are stewards of a precious and rare resource that is making an enormous difference in the lives and spirits of our children, youth, and adults.

Marta

What follows is a more detailed accounting of my ministerial activities this month.

Worship

October 17 Shinn Service: "As the World Burns"
Rev. Elizabeth Nguyen, Guest Preacher (124)
(# online screens >30minues)

October 24 "Battling the Beasts"
Rev. Erica Richmond (124)

October 31 "Thin Veils and Clanging Bells" (165)
Rev. Marta Flanagan

November 7 "Spirituality of Trees"
Dr. Nalini Nadkarni, Guest Preachers (141)

Average: 138 screens or 173 people

Note: A rough estimate of the number of people that we have been using since online worship began in March 2020 has been 1.25 screens. The average for the four Sundays before (Sept 19, 26, Oct 3 and 10) was 140 or 174 screens.

Worship Associate monthly meeting: 11/10
Hybrid Rehearsal onsite 11/7

Pastoral Care Provided by Lead Minister

Pastoral appointments and visits:

Online: 1

Office: 9

Hospital: 1

(themes: death/grief, spirituality, living with illness)

Attended Conversation in Courtyard following Rob Meier's death 10/31

Staff and Lay Leadership Support Provided by Lead Minister

Appointments with lay leaders regarding projects and committee work: 4

Participated in Leadership Roundtable 10/17

Committee meetings attended:

(in addition to Worship meetings and Adult Programming Committees):

ParCom Exec 10/27, 11/10

ParCom 10/19

Financial Summit 11/9

Committee on Ministry 10/20

Weekly individual meetings with Parish Minister Rev. Erica and DRE Tina Schultz

Biweekly weekly meetings with Music Director Jonathan Brennand

Weekly Program Staff Meetings (Ministers, DRE, Office Manager, Music Director)

Social Justice and Turning Outward Activities of by Lead Minister

Attended forum on a possible Police Civilian Review Board in Arlington
(Sanjay Newton and RJCC) 10/24

Attended Greater Boston Interfaith organization gathering 10/26

Adult Programming Activities of Lead minister

Lead Lectio Divina: twice a week (attendance 14-25)

Wednesdays at 9 am, Thursday at 8 am

Attend meeting of Covenant Group Convenors 11/3

Attend meeting of Spirit Talk Facilitators, 10/21 and 11/11

Professional Development and Continuing Education of Lead Minister

Attended weekly session of an online training on Coaching, Lutheran Seminary,
Tuesdays, noon- 2 pm, 10/19, 10/26

Attended retreat program on Rumi and Julian of Norwich, online Nov 5 and 6

Met with Rev Erica and our consultant, Rev. Larry Peers, 10/28

**Parish Minister Report
October 19-November 16**

Rev. Erica F Richmond
First Parish in Arlington Massachusetts

Two things dominated the last month: the preparation for hybrid worship and the passing of Rob Meier. In the face of hard things, I have been impressed how we have turned towards one another and showed up for each other. I also hope that in the coming months we resist the natural inclination to simply and exclusively turn inward. I hope that with this next chapter of in-person worship, we might reprioritize our turning outward initiatives. We have so much to offer and so much capacity within this sacred community.
-Rev. Erica

Worship:

I preached on October 24th on mental health and the importance of de-stigmatizing illness and telling our stories.

I participated in the service on October 31st through opening words. I helped coordinate the November 7th guest preacher service.

I am preaching for our inaugural hybrid service on November 14th!!

Pastoral Care Provided by Minister

As trust grows and people get to know me more, my pastoral load has increased: Individual pastoral care sessions: 9

Individual meetings with committee leaders: 4

Themes included ongoing grief, mental health, and family relationships.

The community has been deeply impacted by the death of longtime member, Rob Meier. On Sunday, October 31st, two days after his death, I led a gathering in the courtyard for folks who wanted a sacred space to process their reactions and memories of Rob. 65 people attended.

I also facilitated a conversation with Spirit Talk participants on Monday, November 1st at the request of the facilitators. Rob was an active member of Spirit Talks and that group in particular is impacted.

I am officiating **Rob's service on November 21 at 2 pm at the meetinghouse.** Preparing for this has rightly taken up a lot of my energies.

Lay Ministry:

Our monthly meeting was November 3rd- the lay ministers had long supported Rob Meier so we processed his death as a group. One member has had to step by from the group due to her own needs, we talked about how that is okay and we go through seasons of availability.

I led a ritual of remembrance on 10/20 in our Courtyard for those in our monthly grief group- 10 people attended an hour long ceremony as we honored lost spouses, parents, friends, siblings, and children.

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Staff and Lay Leadership Support Provided by Minister

Sara Hidalgo, Diane Berry from the HR committee, and myself interviewed Rob Beatty and hired him for the part-time communication associate position. He started November 1st and is a great addition so far!

We also said goodbye to Sara Delong who served this community in a variety of years for 5 years, we were able to have a staff dinner with her to celebrate her new position!

The programmatic full-time staff team continues to meet biweekly. Audit: attended the financial summit on 11/9

ParCom Exec: 10/27 and 11/10

Committee on Ministry: 11/17

Indigenous Justice Working Group: missed

Membership Committee: attended 11/7 hybrid prep meeting

Lay Ministry: 10/6

Leadership Development Committee: postponed to December

Par Com: 11/16

Racial Justice: 11/11

Social Justice: 10/27

Stewardship: 11/7

Adult Programming: Education, Spiritual Deepening, Community Building

I led a two-session workshop on October 21st and 28th: Funny about Money, a personal spiritual exploration about finances and how we make sense of money in our lives. 20 people participated and we had engaging conversations about money, safety, values, and spirituality. A big thanks to STAR for helping make this possible.

Our class, New UU, led by Bonnie Zimmer of the Membership Committee is occurring over November 6th and 13th. I am leading the latter session to give ministerial perspective on UU history and our congregation today. We have 8 participants who have shared tenderly and from the heart about their arrival in this community.

Social Justice / Turning Outward

- Sanjay Newton, RJCC, and myself hosted a forum about Arlington's potential for a police civilian review board on October 24th. About 20 people attended. - Marta and I both attended the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization on 10/26. - I attended the Hate Crimes Training hosted by the Arlington Police Department on 11/9, families who lost children to hate crimes spoke on a powerful panel. - The rainbow commission

approached us about using the FP lawn for a display about trans lives lost. 60 flags, each representing a trans person who has been murdered, will be on display from Nov 14-20. The Emergent Issues Task Force also came up with a new public witness banner for the occasion.

- Pie Palace is occurring on November 20th!

Professional Development and Continuing Education

7-week course on Coaching finished and is complete!

Coaching session with Larry Peers for me and Marta:

10/28 Monthly session with a Spiritual Director

REPORT OF THE DRE TO PARISH COMMITTEE

November 2021

Hello Friends,

We are phasing into Phase Two of Religious Education:

Since my last report we have held group gatherings for our children outside with small group breakout sessions, inside on a rainy Sunday in the Sanctuary as a large group, taken hikes in local land preserves and, today, met inside for regular classroom programming.

It has been fascinating to try to determine which families will participate in what kind of activity. We've counted 55 kids between the ages of Prek and Grade 7 who have participated in at least one of the scheduled events. However, regular attendance on any Sunday has been between 18 and 22.

This morning we welcomed 24 children back to First Parish. Most of the children were either on the young side (Prek - Grade 1) or our eldest group (Grades 6/7 - which had 10 kids).

In preparation for returning into the building, the RE Committee and I have recruited teachers (all vaccinated) to be inside with our kids, and have culled lessons to be used part time inside and lots of time outside.

This teaching squad is composed of 10 adult teachers (veterans, with one exception) and four teenaged helpers. Three committee folks were on hand this morning to welcome families and to steer children to their teachers and age groups, which were meeting in the courtyard.

Although the numbers were lower than we had hoped, the teachers, RE Committee folks and I feel like it was a success. The kids were great! Kept their masks on, washed their hands, stayed distanced from each other, and participated fully in their activities.

Our eldest children are using "Lessons of Loss" curriculum for this term. Already, in week one, they shared the challenges COVID has brought and the losses they have learned to manage. One boy willingly shared that he had experienced suicidal thoughts, but, with the help of his pediatrician, found a good therapist, and is doing well now. It has been a struggle for him and many of our kids. His honest sharing and revelation opened up a floodgate of strong emotions and stories, and the kids chatted away with each other and their trusted teachers as they walked around the library grounds.

Our youngest children lit chalices in welcome circles, heard stories, shaken instruments to recorded music, and got out the glue sticks and feathers for art projects. They giggled and ran around happily in the playground.

Our middle group of kids bundled up, read Charlotte's Web on a blanket in the graveyard, and scoped out a piece of turf to analyze and watch change over the weeks ahead.

We are back to what feels familiar and valuable. I believe we will see the attendance increase as more children become vaccinated, as fall sports start winding down, and as families turn inward as the days shorten.

The RE Committee and I will continue to assess the situation in the weeks ahead, and will begin teacher recruiting in earnest for January's winter term -- with optimism.

Evening Programs are a success!

Eric Segal and Leslie Lewis report all is going very well with our group of 14 eighth graders in OWL. I organized a gender panel of youth group alumni, all now adults in their 20s. It was wonderful to have those who grew up in our faith community share their stories and act as role models.

The Youth Group is robust, with weekly numbers averaging in the mid 30s. They have worked on their covenant, voted on freshmen representatives, discussed social justice themes, helped with food drives, and played games. Next week UU performer Matt Meyer will join them for a worship service and drumming activities.

I have been meeting many more people in person recently. Many of them are direct asks for help with teaching needs or as youth group advisors. Because folks are so busy right now they are doing a good job of saying no.

Pastoral appointments with parents on the subjects of: supporting children with special needs, managing bullying at school, anxiety, building confidence, and fear of death.

Meetings:

Weekly with Marta, Rev. Erica, Rose Sawyer Marsh, and Ellen Robie.

Bi-weekly with all staff and with DRE Colleagues from neighboring congregations

Monthly meetings with the RE Committee, YAC (Youth/Adult Committee of FP) MetroWest Religious Educators, and New England Religious Educators (LREDA).

I attended the New UU Class, first session.

I met with two families interested in enrolling their children

As always, thank you for your on-going support of the children and youth of First Parish.

Respectfully Submitted by: Tina Schultz

Oct-21

| | Current Month Actual | Current Month Budget | Variance | %var | YTD actual | YTD Budget | Variance (amt) | Variance (%) | Notes/ Drivers |
|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------|--|
| Income | | | | | | | | | |
| Pledge | 66,939 | 43,542 | 23,397 | 53.7% | 296,764 | 304,309 | (7,545) | -2.5% | Full year-pledges below plan/ trending aligning as expected |
| Plate | 2,009 | 3,333 | (1,325) | -39.7% | 7,396 | 13,333 | (5,938) | -44.5% | plate income below plan |
| Fundraiser | (41) | 125 | (166) | 132.4% | (41) | 500 | (541) | -108.1% | |
| Tenant* | 5,050 | 4,416 | 634 | 14.4% | 17,994 | 17,665 | 329 | 1.9% | Mariposa- main tenant |
| Other Building | 4,125 | 2,125 | 2,000 | 94.1% | 5,550 | 8,500 | (2,950) | -34.7% | other building use increasing but will remain below budget |
| Contributions | 8,965 | 8,667 | 298 | 3.4% | 36,860 | 34,667 | 2,193 | 6.3% | Second Minister Fund, PPP loan and one-time gifts |
| Other Income | 312 | 13,000 | (12,688) | -97.6% | 312 | 13,000 | (12,688) | -97.6% | Trustee/ Operating funding of Capital expenditures will occur in Nov |
| Total (sum) | 87,359 | 75,208 | 12,151 | 16.2% | 364,835 | 391,974 | (27,139) | -6.9% | |
| All Income | 87,976 | 76,108 | 11,868 | 15.6% | 367,301 | 395,574 | (28,273) | -7.1% | Key drivers- reduced pledges & plate, timing of capital funding |
| % explained | 99.3% | 98.8% | | | 99.3% | 99.1% | | | |
| Expense | | | | | | | | | |
| Salary* | 40,978 | 41,769 | 790 | 1.9% | 62,020 | 60,166 | (1,854) | -3.1% | Increases effective 7/1, Sexton - earlier start date August 2021 |
| Benefits (all)* | 10,920 | 12,701 | 1,781 | 14.0% | 44,223 | 50,802 | 6,578 | 12.9% | |
| Utilities | 717 | 1,239 | 521 | 42.1% | 2,981 | 5,205 | 2,224 | 42.7% | |
| Property-maint | 682 | 28,833 | 28,151 | 97.6% | 4,660 | 37,333 | 32,673 | 87.5% | Trustee/ Operating funding of Capital expenditures will occur in Nov |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|--------------|--|
| Office & General exp | 2,856 | 11,592 | 8,736 | 75.4% | 26,567 | 46,368 | 19,801 | 42.7% | Tech expenses (COVID) in process |
| Committees | 2,448 | 4,010 | 1,562 | 39.0% | 5,797 | 16,189 | 10,392 | 64.2% | committee expenditures currently below budget |
| Outreach | 11,819 | 12,663 | 844 | 6.7% | 25,357 | 28,802 | 3,445 | 12.0% | UUA quarterly paid July 2021 |
| Total (sum) | 70,421 | 112,807 | 42,387 | 37.6% | 171,606 | 244,865 | 73,259 | 29.9% | |
| All Expense | 71,314 | 113,474 | 42,160 | 37.2% | 268,565 | 354,441 | 85,876 | 24.2% | Key driver-favorable property, general exp & committees expense |
| % explained | 98.7% | 99.4% | | | 63.9% | 69.1% | | | |
| net position | | | 54,028 | | 98,736 | 41,133 | 57,603 | | |
| | | ck | 54,028 | | | | 57,603 | | |

Year to date net income remains positive.

Year-to-date pledges improving, while pledges remain below the year-to-date budget, the difference is less significant.

Key drivers resulting in favorable net income are related to Trustee/Property expense timing as well as lower expenses than budgeted (property, general and committee expenses).

