

Parish Committee Minutes
First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Arlington
10/18/22 - Online Meeting - 7-9PM

Attending: Sara Galantowicz, Anne Quaadgras, Joanna Pushee, Celia Wcislo, Tom Estabrook, Carolyn Hodges, Marie Meteer, Jeff Keffer, Al Tosti, Rev. Marta Flanagan, Rev. Erica Richmond

Call to order (Sara G.)

Chalice lighting and reading (Marie)

Two minutes of silence. Let us bring our best selves to the meeting. Let us focus on the positive.

Financial Report (Carolyn)

- September financials show that both pledges and the plate are trending better.
- The tenant rent is based on enrollment, which is still down below what was budgeted. Arlington Children's House is not fully enrolled yet, but actively seeking new families.
- First Parish received a proposal from Your Part-time Controller to conduct a review of the current financial controls. The Parish Committee members reviewed Schedule/Attachment A. This section of the proposal explains what the review will do for (a) the assessment phase: standard review of operating activities, review of reconciliation, and our reporting and (b) the implementation phase: controls, working smarter, and a good control environment. The fee for the control reviewer would be \$3,500 to \$5,000. Most of the work will be done in November 2022. Observations will be prepared in December.

Discussion followed. In the discussion about the control review, the following points were raised:

- The current volunteer auditor is involved with the Treasurer to negotiate the scope of the control review.
- There is documentation to allow for changes going forward and to ease a transition for another volunteer to step into a volunteer auditor role.
- An inquiry was made as to whether any local churches were interviewed. Contact was made but no local churches provided responses at the time of this meeting.
- Points to be watchful for included making sure regular discussion and overall interaction would be discussed regularly; additionally, a concern about fraud detection for human and computer risks was raised.
- It was noted that First Parish has an ability to end the relationship with the control reviewer at any time if needed.
- A request was made to be mindful of staff being focused on the Harvest Moon Fair in mid-November.

(Vote 1, Discussion). Consent agenda: Minutes, Financials, Ministers' Reports, DRE report.

MOTION 1: I move that we adopt the consent agenda. (Anne Q.) and seconded (Celia). 9 voting in favor. None opposed.

Subcommittee Report-outs:

Collectively, members look for the synergies in our work and offer assistance to one another. The three priorities selected at the fall retreat in September were: Stewardship, Engaging Volunteers, and Outreach.

Stewardship Subcommittee (Jeff, Al, and Carolyn):

- Leadership of the Stewardship Committee is the main concern. The Parish Committee is discussing and identifying possible people who would be good candidates for the role.
- The difficulty of recruiting volunteers to step up into a leadership role was acknowledged.
- The subcommittee met with Kiki Giatis who emphasized the importance of expressing our gratitude to those who step up by celebrating and thanking them.

Discussion followed: A suggestion was made to have two members of the Stewardship Committee this year who could be candidates for leadership next year.

Outreach Subcommittee (Marie, Anne, Tom)

- This subcommittee defines the group as both reaching out and reaching in.
- This subcommittee is putting up a flip chart and signage at a table during coffee hour with any Parish Committee members staffing the table. The goal is to draw people in, whether new to First Parish or returning.
- Collaboration with the Membership Committee will continue to be important.

Engaging Volunteers (Sara, Celia, Joanna)

- The underlying theme of this subcommittee is that we are all First Parish. We want people to feel energized about supporting this community.
- This subcommittee is organizing a Time for All Ages on a Sunday in December or January to highlight the different volunteers who make First Parish possible.
- Discussion around compiling and analyzing new member lists (last 2 years to start) to look for patterns of where people land: Spirit Talks, Covenant Groups, Lectio Divina, RE, etc.

8:00 Break

Religious Education (25 mins) - Tina S. was unable to attend due to illness. The Parish Committee sends her get well soon wishes.

State of the Parish (Ministers, 20 minutes) Rev. Erica

- As the ministers hear about other neighboring congregations, and the doubling rate of church closures more broadly, they are thinking about metrics and how to frame success.
- At First Parish, there is a slight downturn where activities (attendance and volunteerism) are down about ten percent; however, the mood has been wonderful on Sunday mornings. Including in-person and online services, there have been 141 to 299 people attending worship over the last few weeks even with a holiday weekend and Ferry Beach.
- The ministers have observed a hunger for in-depth spiritual exploration. About 20-30 people were in attendance for each of the following programs:
 - STAR programs such as Rev. Erica's spiritual practices series (30 people)
 - The Lectio Divina potluck (30 people)
 - Reading for Our Times (30 people) - Rev. Marta
 - History of Slavery (20 people in attendance) - Rev. Erica
- Programs have been both of a fun atmosphere and of spiritual wrestling.
- For family/pastoral care, numbers have increased.
- Measuring success/involvement could include traditional metrics such as: overall membership found by looking at who is on the books; budgets; worship attendance.
- An alternative way of measuring success is proposed: Trust (in our staff and lay leadership) - How do we move at the speed of trust?
 - Look towards people's strengths and not their deficits
 - Lay ministers: looking at Trauma informed care
 - Mission alignment and vision statements - Do these reflect our mission and move it forward? Can we be explicit about what the mission is?
 - Accidental values: example - a person shushing a young child during a service when we want to be intergenerational.

Discussion among Parish Committee members followed. The main highlights and questions posed included:

- Being explicit about what the mission is: How do we agree to be together? How do we build community?
- Are we providing opportunities for in depth spiritual exploration? Are we walking with each other in the changes in our lives (do people come to us in hard times?); Are we providing service opportunities?
- We have had some really wonderful services. People are standing in front of the congregation again. (30% of the congregation has not been in the building since 2019.)

- A suggestion was made regarding how people online are cut off despite the fellowship offered for social time following a service: Would Rev. Marta, Rev. Erica, Jonathan Colby, or other volunteers be available for 10-15 minutes to draw people in?
- A suggestion about providing First Parish swag was made to promote community, and potential options: A t-shirt? Handmade items or artwork? Items for pledgers?
- Building community includes having an accessible building for those who need it now or will be in need of accessibility in the future. People are looking for a long-term spiritual home.

The discussion concluded with a few announcements about the Harvest Moon Fair.

- Harvest Moon Fair - November 19, 2022
- Volunteers are being actively recruited. There will be a cafe. Booth chairs are being lined up.
- A reminder to be sure to say what the fair is when spreading the word about it.

MOTION 2: I move we adjourn. (Anne Q.) and seconded (Celia). 9 voting in favor. None opposed.

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

MOTIONS

I move that we adopt the consent agenda. (Anne Q.) Seconded (Celia W.)

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Joanna Pushee, clerk.

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"Vow with the Universe"

“Aspirational Values”
Vision

Covenant Intentional Culture

How we agree to be together

“Core Values”
Mission

“Accidental Values”

18

- marta flanagan
- Joanna Pi
- Anna Quadras
- Celia Wcislo
- Sara Koerber Galanto...
- Tom Estabrook
- Erica Richmond