

Parish Committee Minutes
First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Arlington
11/15/22 - In-person - 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, Tina Schultz;
Guests: Ruben Hopwood (virtually) and Alan Linov (Social Justice Coordinating Committee).

Call to order (Sara G.)

Chalice lighting and reading (Joanna)

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

Financial Report (Carolyn)

- The October financials show a positive overall performance. A letter is being sent out for follow-ups on pledges at the end of the calendar year. Letters had also gone out in the summer to members who were only ten percent or less into their pledge.
- Committees are being prudent in their spending while keeping programming vibrant and staying vital.
- Financial Summit debrief:
 - The financial summit was a great meeting with experienced, dedicated participants. Six members of the Parish Committee attended and presented this year's priorities.
 - The main concern is that stewardship pledges were down last year; recommendation to have another fundraiser in the spring.
- Discussion followed including these highlights: the budget is still on track with the planned spend down of the second minister fund; there is a contingent/general surplus and two months of salaries and critical operation funds in reserve, per the commitment made last year. A key factor for consideration in the 2023-2024 budget year is that the cost of living and cost of health insurance are anticipated to go up appreciably. The Property Committee is concluding two projects (dishwasher and flooring) and any remaining funds from the last fiscal year will stay with the Property committee budget.
- The Parish Committee will focus in its December discussion on identifying expenditures and investments that are important to preserve; how should our values align with our budget priorities; and what are potentially items to cut if needed.
- The stewardship working group offered their support leading up to the spring drive and recommended starting engagement activities in January or February.
- The control review process has begun with meetings scheduled in the second half of November. The timeline is such that a presentation will be made in January to the Parish Committee.

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

MOTION 1: I move that we adopt the consent agenda. (Jeff). Seconded (AI). 9 voting in favor. None opposed.

Subcommittee Report-outs:

Stewardship (AI / Jeff / Carolyn; Marie reporting)

- Excitement was expressed about the themes and priorities for this church year.
- Two volunteers have been recruited to create and work on graphics and writing.
- The two main goals for the month are the theme and the strategy as the initial budget comes together and the target pledge goal is determined.
- Collaboration with the Engaging Volunteers working group was proposed as the membership roster is getting finalized. The Engaging Volunteers working group is providing a list of members who joined within the last four years.
- Discussion followed with highlights including a focus on reaching and including people including parents, newer members, and people who do not attend in person. It was suggested to include a parent representative at the table during coffee hour. Consideration should be taken about how information is presented and the various modalities used: from the FP Connection board and email to spoken announcements. In the stewardship cycle, collecting feedback on what people would like to see is important to include.
- The kickoff is March 5, 2023. There will be an all-congregation lunch and a table at coffee hour.

Outreach (Anne Q. and Tom)

- The outreach working group has successfully kept up with a table at coffee hour with a poster and various colorful pages to attract people's attention. How do folks want to get involved?
- At the Harvest Moon fair, there will be a welcoming table in the narthex. A banner will be retrieved from the Bailey Room.
- Embrace the Darkness and Christmas Eve services are all forthcoming in December. These services bring in new folks and are very special.
- Discussion followed with highlights including mention of the narthex needing additional visuals to draw in folks. Another mention of leadership/ministers doing post-worship service meet and greets online to keep the 30 or so people who stay on afterwards engaged. The ministers are open to this. Such an event would need to be announced at least one week in advance once scheduled and the technical team would need advanced notice to arrange the breakout rooms properly.

Engaging Volunteers (Sara, Celia, Joanna)

- Time for All Ages will include a volunteer theme on December 4th. The working group looks forward to engaging with the congregation in this way and will be inviting volunteers to help convey this theme with props. Goal is to have a range of ages, including a youth representative.

- The subcommittee is compiling lists of new members, expanding the one-year list to the last four years (total of about 90 people), and appreciates the assistance and time given by Sara Hildago.
- Joanna and Sara attended the New UU Class in November and spoke about the governing body of First Parish and the priorities selected for this church year. Questions were fielded about the budget and the current control review.

LGBTQ+ Welcoming (Ruben Hopwood and Alan Linov)

Introduction and history (Alan) A little over a year ago, the Rainbow Committee of Arlington approached First Parish with a request to host the Transgender Day of Remembrance on November 20th. A program related to gender identity was created by the STAR Committee. It was recognized that being welcoming requires more than just one program, and not much has been done since the Welcoming designation was adopted in 1996. Recommendation to re-commit to be a Welcoming Community.

Process of welcoming renewal (Ruben)

- One-off programming doesn't work. We want to be welcoming to new folks, visitors, and family members. We want to avoid micro-aggressions, avoid misgendering members / children/ visitors, and make sure inappropriate questions are not asked. What is being asked of First Parish:
 - The UUA Welcoming Congregation Reviewal Program provides a structure and maintenance pathways. The work to be welcoming doesn't really stop. It ought to be included in the church's annual cycle. The UUA has a set of training modules called Transgender Inclusion in Congregations. The cost is \$800 for a license for the congregation. Request for the Parish Committee to invest in this tool.
 - A committee to be organized to ensure the commitment is ongoing and the initial work to start the renewal process is covered: where is First Parish at now and where do we want to be?
 - Announcements to the congregation that a commitment is being made and that a committee has been organized. It was specifically proposed that an ad-hoc Welcoming Congregation Committee (WCC) be chartered.
- A proposal is being submitted with more information as well as links to the UUA website. Request that all of the Parish Committee members watch the 15-minute video presented by Zr. Alex Kapitan of First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Palo Alto. Zr. Kapitan and Rev. Mykal Slack speak about co-creating spaces of healing for queer and trans folks and how to build relationships.
- The Parish Committee expressed gratitude and support for the presentation as did the ministers. Reverend Erica acknowledged that there was no built-in "how are you doing with that?" for the initial 1996 commitment to being a Welcoming Congregation.

- A committee, regardless of official status and type, would likely need to be reporting back to the Parish Committee. This structure would allow and enable the committee to scour documents and data, conduct interviews, and work with staff.
- It was suggested to invite teenagers, middle schoolers, and pre-K kids.
- It was highlighted that despite the title of the program, Transgender Inclusion in Congregations, the whole LGBTQ+ community is included as well as allies and cisgender folks.
- There was a recommendation that a vote on funding for the training and authorizing a formal committee be deferred until December, to allow time to review materials.

Religious Education and **State of the Parish** were tabled until the December meeting in the interest of keeping to the 9pm end time.

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

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

MOTIONS

I move that we adopt the consent agenda. (Jeff). Seconded (Al T.).

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Joanna Pushee, clerk.