

Parish Committee Minutes  
September 15, 2020

Attending: Marie, Sara G., Marta, Rev. Erica, Celia, Steve, David K., Maggie, Paul H., Tom E., Anne Q., Tina S.

**Financial Report** (David K)

At beginning of year there is usually a surplus of revenue because some people pay pledges early. This year there was \$90,000 in early pledges. Plate has been low per budget. Mariposa has paid in full as of 9-2. Income from second minister fund and PPE does not show as income but is being distributed each month on the income statement. Expenses are low because of summer costs.

Dashboard: Should have items that are a variance from the full year budget. Examples are staff because of lack of sexton/childcare, RE and other monthly savings.

Key indicators: Plate offerings, fund raisers, pledge collections. Need trend data for last 3-4 years and 3-year average. Unexpected large expenses, property costs, Mariposa rent, any "weird" stuff (with explanation). If we could get an assistant-treasurer, what could they help with?

**(Vote 1, Discussion). Consent agenda:** Minutes, Financials, Lead Ministers Report. Motion passed unanimously

**RE Survey results and plans** (Tina)

Ellen Robbie was chairing all summer. An RE task force kicked off with a family worship service. On 9-27 there will be RE for younger grades, and then the Coming OF Age service. October 4<sup>th</sup>, OWL and youth group begin. OWL has 12 teens and 2 teachers.

There is a new curriculum that has "soul matters" themes. RE will start remote for Sept.-Nov. RE will be accessing and pivoting as conditions change. RE sent out personal cards to the kids, welcoming them back. The RE committee is collaborating with other RE committees all over the country for ideas. Developed some family fun activities. Surveyed 103 families, with 31 responding. Parents are frazzled. 65% want family worship; Want to meet outdoors. Note depression of high school kids an issue.

**Social Justice and the Election** (Mary Cummings and Maureen Dolan)

Discussion of UU the Vote work, and support for Rank-Choice voting (Question 2)

FP working with other congregations both in MA (Wayland, Belmont, Cambridge, Lexington, Concord). and other states to increase voter turn-out. Also writing postcards to the South for Reclaim Our Vote – "People love the cards". 72 members have mailed 750,000 cards. Now transitioning to phone call.

On Oct. 25<sup>th</sup>, the Shinn service will be a presentation on Rank Choice voting, and a tutorial is planned.

The Social Justice Committee needs to include their work and successes in the E-bulletin. Create an honor role of volunteers.

### **Fundraising!** (Aaron K.)

- No Harvest Moon in person this fall.
- In Spring-time- like old auction, but online. Services, week at vacation home, guitar lessons, etc.
- WILD Care- More elaborate in April or May. Spring plant sale, garden tours. 6 gardens, with musicians, painting, around whole town. Big \$\$\$\$. Lunch at church. Develop a reputation over time. Maybe guides.
- This would require software. Cost \$ for an online auction. Plan distribution and pickup/drop-off outdoors with a yard sale model.
- Researching who has done this before

### **State of the church** (Marta)

- In 2019 we averaged 212 in person
- In 2020 248 attended online services (1.2 per screen)
- Summer worship was significantly higher:
  - 65 in 2019
  - 100 in 2020 (1.25 per screen)
- Ingathering Sunday
  - 2019 303
  - 2020 247 (1.25 per screen = 308)
- Holding our own. Adult RE programs. Children attendance down. Youth group choir steady. Social justice work is increasing. Stewardship steady.
- Zoom programming, monthly, weekly
- ParCom suggestions-Follow break out groups How well are they holding-up? Covenant groups-any issues coming up? Marta attends Covenant group conveners meeting. Loss and grief seem a common issue.

**Allowing activities in the building** (10 minutes) – Skipped for tonight

Finance update at a future Parcom meeting.

Continuing discussion of [how we can live our mission in our time](#).

Retreat suggestions: More discussion. Small work groups that are accountable to ParCom. All individuals join one. Work with 2-3 others. Note that “Injustices of our time” is not on the list. Nor is educating our members.

Adjourned at 9:06 PM.

## Lead Minister Report

August 1- September 11, 2020

Rev. Marta Morris Flanagan

First Parish in Arlington Massachusetts

We are in our sixth month of being a religious community in a time of pandemic and social unrest. We have lost one member to the virus, and a dozen or more extended family members. Some have lost jobs; some have taken pay cuts. Some have had to keep on working when they had planned to retire. Our families with small children have struggled with the closure of schools and summer programs. Those living with others have grappled with feelings of too much closeness. And those in single households have had to manage feelings of isolation.

In these six months more of us met together in small groups, albeit online. There are discussion and book groups, covenant groups, Lectio Divina, Spirit Talks, youth group meetings, religious education programming and weekly music programming. More of us are attending worship with the breakout groups and the chat providing an opportunity to connect that receive rave reviews. This summer more than 60 people attended racial justice programs. We sent postcards to voters and joined public demonstrations in greater numbers than before this current crisis. We are living our faith in our use of the meetinghouse. The sanctuary is now a food pantry distribution site (Food Link). The bilingual nursery school (Mariposa) continues to meet. The blood drives resume October 3. Our Black Lives Matter banner remains in place even in the face of vandalism in August. At the same time, the staff at First Parish have been in the midst of new beginnings. Rev. Erica Richmond joined us as Parish Minister on August 1. What a blessing she has already become to us – connecting with staff and members, meeting with police and press when the Black Lives Matter banner was vandalized, and stepping up to deal with conflicts in committees. I am so very grateful she is here. And four weeks ago Sara Hidalgo joined as our new Office Administrator. Sara Hidalgo may have the most difficult job at First Parish. But she is tackling it in calm stride! Joan Dyer after eleven years with us is beginning her well-deserved retirement. But for now, she is working part time for the next

several weeks to help train Sara Hidalgo.

I note that by my Letter of Agreement, I receive one month vacation (July) and one month professional leave designated for study and reflection (August). But this August saw me back in the saddle creating a new staff team and preparing for the year ahead.

What follows are:

--A record of my meetings, appointments and activities over the last month

--the current staffing list

--The staff covenant developed two weeks ago during our staff development days

--The ministerial team arrangements and covenant which you received earlier by email, but I include here for the Parish Committee record.

I write with gratitude for the staff team and for your lay leadership. I write with deep appreciation for the commitment we all are bringing to these hard times.

Marta

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#### Worship

Summer worship, as is First Parish custom, was lay led from Father's Day through Labor Day (June 21- September 6), Summer services were well crafted with much credit going to the lay leaders themselves and to the Worship Associates. Attendance ranged from 83 to 122 and averaged 100. It is noteworthy that average summer attendance last year was 65. Possible reasons for this increase include quality of services, the need for community and worship in this time of pandemic, and comfort and convenience of worship online. Summer services in the sanctuary are not air conditioned.

Monthly Worship Associate Meeting: 8/26

Pastoral Care Provided by Minister

Pastoral appointments and visits:

Online: 9

Outside: 4

(themes: loss and grief, illness, family death, call and discernment)

Staff and Lay Leadership Support Provided by Minister

Three day start program with Consultant Larry Peers and Rev. Erica Richmond, 8/4-6

Two half day staff Development days with Ministers, DRE, Music Director, Office Staff, 8/27,28)

Appointments with lay leaders regarding projects and committee work: 4

Committee meetings attended:

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

ParCom Exec 8/6, 9/2, 9/9

ParCom 8/18

LDC/VIPC Convenors 9/8

Racial Justice Coordinating Committee (RJCC) 8/19

Search Committee Final Gathering 9/1

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)

Adult Programming: Education, Spiritual Deepening, Community Building

Lead Lectio Divina: twice a week beginning September 2 (attendance 8-23)

Attended Covenant Group Convenors meeting 9/2

Attended meeting of Spirit Talk Convenors 8/25 and 9/11/20

Attended Star Committee meeting (Adult Religious Education) 8/26

Social Justice / Turning Outward

Counter demonstration to "Back the Blue, Arlington, 9/10

Professional Development and Continuing Education

Attended women minister support group "Follen Women," 8/20

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Individual meeting with colleagues in the area: 2

Staff at First Parish Arlington MA 2020- 2021

Note: Some positions are temporarily unfilled due to COVID restructuring

Lead Minister ... Rev. Marta Flanagan (began 9/2009) (FT: Full Time)

Parish Minister...Rev. Erica Richmond (8/2020) (FT)

Director of Religious Education ...Tina Schultz (9/1994) (FT)

Youth Program Coordinator.... (0.5 FT)

Rose Sawyer Marsh (9/2019) 24 hs x 42 wks

RE Assistant N/A (COVID vacancy)

Nursery Supervisor N/A (COVID vacancy)

Office Administrator ... Sara Hidalgo (8/2020) (FT)

Administrative Associate ... Sara Delong (10/2018) (0.5 FT)

20 hrs x52 wks

Sunday Sexton N/A (COVID vacancy)

NOTE: We have contracted services with a bookkeeper, Liz McKersie,

a payroll service and with a cleaning service.

Music Director ... Jonathan Brennand (9/2014) (0.5 FT)

26 hours x 40 weeks

Director of Music, Emeritus...Kenneth Seitz (9/2008)(N/A)

Interim Organist ... Kenneth Seitz (9/2018) (0.3 FT)

13-15 hours x 40 weeks

Affiliate Minister/Hospital Chaplain N/A

Rev. Wendy Page (9/2017)

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## STAFF COVENANT

FIRST PARISH ARLINGTON MA

September 2020

We choose to be a liberal religious community, welcoming to all.

We encourage each other on our spiritual journeys,

Support one another through the changes in our lives,

And challenge the excesses and injustices of our time.

Called to love and upheld by joy, we live our faith.

—Adopted by the members of First Parish Arlington MA March 28, 2010

We, the staff, covenant to support and serve the mission of First Parish.

In the service of this mission, we set these ideals before us.

## AN ETHIC OF SERVICE

☑ We will practice responsiveness to one another and the community. We will strive to respond to communications promptly even if simply letting another know we will be providing a fuller response at a later date.

☑ We will strive to avoid surprises, informing one another of issues as they develop, giving one another as much opportunity as possible to prepare the wisest response to a given situation.

☑ Whenever the community gathers in large numbers, especially on Sunday morning, we turn outward to serve them.

## CARE AND COMPASSION ESPECIALLY WHEN PEOPLE ARE IN NEED

- ☒ We will speak truths to one another in love.
- ☒ We will respect and protect the confidentiality and trust of those we serve, keeping confidences within the circle of other staff members.
- ☒ We will respond swiftly upon learning of the death of someone in our community.

## HEALTHY RELATIONS WITH ALL

- ☒ We will practice being calm and present to one another and to others (“nonanxious presence”).
- ☒ We will encourage all to speak directly to others and will avoid triangulating or being triangulated in our dealings with one another and others.
- ☒ When emotions or conflicts arise among ourselves or with others in the community, we will avoid email and speak face to face, or online or on the phone.

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## KINDNESS AND SUPPORT OF ONE ANOTHER

- ☒ We will explain and clarify our and other’s roles and responsibilities. At times this will involve directing or redirecting people with a given issue or concern to the right staff person.
- ☒ Out of respect for the efforts of our colleagues and for efficiency’s sake, we will strive to use protocols and procedures established by staff before asking for information or assistance.
- ☒ We will practice patience and forgiveness especially with new staff during this time of learning.
- ☒ We will err on overcommunicating rather than under communicating especially during this time of creating a new staff team.
- ☒ We will practice flexibility and understanding especially in this time of pandemic.
- ☒ We will support one another in leading balance lives, supporting one another in the setting boundaries on their availability.

Rev. Marta Flanagan, Lead Minister  
Rev. Erica Richmond, Parish Minister  
Tina Schultz, Director of Religious Education  
Jonathan Brennand, Music Director  
Sar Hidalgo, Office Administrator  
Sara DeLong, Office Associate  
Rose Sawyer, Youth Program Coordinator

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### The Ministers at First Parish

First Parish is served by the elected leaders, volunteers, and staff. First Parish is also served by two full time ministers. Both ministers preach and participate in worship services and are available for pastoral care, weddings, and memorial services.

Rev. Marta Flanagan is the Lead Minister called by a vote of the congregation in 2009 and is generally called "Marta." Rev. Erica Richmond is the Parish Minister hired by the Parish Committee in August 2020 and is generally called "Rev. Erica."

How do I reach a minister?

Both ministers are available by appointment. For personal, spiritual, and pastoral care, you may choose whichever minister with whom you would like to meet. Pastoral conversations are confidential, but the content of conversations shared with one minister may be shared with the other. You can email [Marta@firstparish.info](mailto:Marta@firstparish.info) or [Erica@firstparish.info](mailto:Erica@firstparish.info). In case of emergency, please phone the church office: 781 648 3799

Who does what?

Each minister serves as a supervisor to other staff members and as the ministerial contact for various groups and committees at First Parish. Each year they will determine which minister will supervise and serve as the ministerial contact for the staff positions, committees, and groups.

For 2020-21, Rev. Marta Flanagan will be the ministerial contact for the Parish Committee, the Executive Committee, the Program Council, the Worship Associates, and those groups providing adult programming including STAR and Covenant Groups. She serves as supervisor to Rev. Erica Richmond, Director of Religious Education Tina Schultz, and Music Director Jonathan Brennand.

Rev. Erica Richmond will be the ministerial contact for Lay Ministry, Social Justice, Leadership Development, Stewardship, Membership and Property Committees. She serves as supervisor to the Office Administrator Sara Hidalgo.

What is their schedule?

Saturday and Sunday: Both ministers leading worship and programs, writing and preparing

Monday: Rev. Marta Flanagan's Sabbath Day; Rev. Erica Richmond's writing day. Rev. Erica Richmond is available for emergencies.

Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday: Both Ministers at meetings, appointments, and programs

Friday: Rev Erica Richmond's Sabbath Day; Rev. Marta Flanagan's writing day. Rev. Marta Flanagan is available for emergencies.

What About the Committee on Ministry?

A Committee on Ministry serves as ambassador between a minister and a congregation. The Committee on Ministry will continue to evaluate and support the ministry of the congregation working with the two ministers as a team. You are welcome to give feedback and suggestions to the members of the Committee on Ministry: [COM@firstparish.info](mailto:COM@firstparish.info)

In addition, as Rev. Erica begins her ministry a Parish Minister Transition Team will help orient and support her work.

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Ministerial Contact List

2020-2021

Rev. Marta Flanagan is ministerial contact for the following committees and staff:

Religious Education: DRE, Youth Program Coordinator

RE Committee and YAC

Music: Director

Accompanist (and Music Committee)

Parish Committee and Executive Committee,

Finance Committee, Trustees of Permanent Funds

Worship Associates (and Ushers),

Program Council

Adult Programming (STAR Covenant Groups, Ferry Beach)

COVID-19 Task Force

Rev. Erica Richmond is the ministerial contact for the following committees and staffs:

Office and Building: Office Administrator, Office Associate, Sexton

(and Human Resources and Property Committees)

Lay Ministry (Prayer Shawl and Wider Network of Care)

Social Justice (Action Sunday, RJCC, and Strategic Planning)

Leadership Development

Stewardship Committee

Membership Committee

Shared Ministry

Parish Minister Transition Team

All other committees and groups may contact either minister as needed.

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Core Commitment and Covenants of the Ministers

We began our ministry with a three-day private consultation led by an outside church consultant. Together we reflected on our core commitments in ministry and on the ways we want to work together. It was a deep and rich process that led us to draft the following statement.

Rev. Marta Flanagan, Lead Minister

Rev. Erica Richmond, Parish Minister

August 2020

### Our Shared Core Commitments

Our ministry together is grounded in:

- ☑ a sense of a Spirit moving within and among us
- ☑ service to First Parish, its leaders, and members
- ☑ a call to work for justice, both within and beyond the walls of the meetinghouse.

Together we will work and serve; share joy and delight; engage in prayer and devotion. And in this trying time of pandemic and economic hardship, we will keep before us the grief many are enduring, and will be especially committed to speak and act with tenderness.

In this ministry, we are grateful that we are not alone. We support and are supported by a larger staff team, lay leaders, and volunteers. We are also connected to the community of greater Boston and Unitarian Universalism.

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### Our Individual Core Commitments

We know too that we bring to our ministry our separate stories, passions, and commitments. We will encourage one another in those pursuits that make our hearts

and souls sing.

Of particular note, Rev. Erica is committed to:

☑ Lifting up and giving attention to what is urgent; this includes issues of justice, trauma, and grief in our aching world.

☑ Honoring complexity as a spiritual endeavor -- that many things are true at the same time.

☑ Wrestling with the harsh realities of our times and leading with hope.

☑ Companionship with and being led by a Holy Presence in her work and encounters with others.

Marta is committed to:

Ministering to others in times of death and grief.

Attending to the outsider, the outcast, the misunderstood, and those peoples often made absent.

Fostering spiritual awareness and transformation in others

Promoting racial justice – made even more pressing in this time of pandemic.

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Our Covenants

Knowing that the ways we are and work together are important, we covenant to:

Underscore the joys of this work and take delight in the opportunity to work and learn from one another. We will celebrate one another's successes and those of the congregation.

Speak the truth in love in our work with the congregation the staff, and one another. We will maintain confidentiality in staff conversations and meetings. We will share pastoral care concerns of those we serve with each other as needed and will inform the

congregation of that policy.

Model direct conversation and discourage triangulation within the congregation. If someone complains to one of us about the other, we will coach that person to be direct with their feedback. We will publicly support each other when issues arise.

Uphold the freedom of the pulpit, a treasured principle of the liberal religious tradition.

We will educate others of this theological foundation.

Be open to new ideas and learn from one another's approaches and frameworks.

Recognize difference as a good thing and honor one another's perspectives. We aim for a spirit of playfulness and curiosity when we hold different perspectives.

☒ When disagreements arise, we will not speak disparagingly or invite others to take sides.

We will take time and approach any disagreements with intention.

Support each other in finding balance in our work and in our lives. This means encouraging one another to take time away from ministerial responsibilities for rest and refreshment.

Give each other feedback; knowing that we have a shared commitment to growth and to building a partnership of trust and support.

## **Report to the Parish Committee September 2020**

Hello Friends,

It's great to be back and gearing up for the Religious Education fall term.

I have been meeting regularly with RE Chair Ellen Robie, Youth Group Coordinator Rose Sawyer Marsh, the OWL teachers and our Coming of Age mentors to formulate some kind of plan to offer to our families.

As you can imagine, it's not easy!

**Here is what we have done so far:**

Created a survey for families with children Prek-7, which was emailed last week

Purchased new curriculum which is thematic based (to tie in with worship themes) and targeted to on-line learning and fun  
Found adult volunteers willing to teach virtually  
Revamped OWL learning  
Streamlined Coming of Age for youth presentations during Sunday morning worship (October 11)  
Determined a Phase 1 calendar with a shorter fall term so we can analyze successes and areas to improve for pivoting into Phase 2  
Brainstormed ideas for family events to reinforce connection and community building  
Solicited help from RE Committee members to send out hard copy invitations for fall classes

### **In Youth Group:**

Met with co-leaders to set up fall calendar  
Created virtual orientation for incoming freshmen  
Continued successful programs (baking, games, etc) until first session of youth group  
Established connections with UU Youth Ministry and UUA sponsored programs  
Service Trip Planning meetings have begun for spring/summer 2021

### **For Worship:**

A team of Time for All Ages worship planners have met and found time for all ages leaders for September and October  
Rev Erica and I have met and plan to lead Family Worship together on September 20  
The COA mentors and I are planning their Sunday morning worship service on October 11

### **Other happenings:**

I meet weekly with Marta, Rev. Erica, Rose and attend staff meetings  
I have been meeting over the summer with the RE Committee Re-Entry task force  
I meet weekly with DRE colleagues in neighboring congregations  
I meet bi-monthly with UU District Religious Educators  
I attend "Soul Matters" educational forums  
I am educating myself and volunteers about safe on-line practices in working with children and teens

### **What's Next:**

Educating the congregation in upcoming RE plans via announcements, web page updates and newsletters  
Teacher Orientation  
Working with task force to plan family fun events  
Calling stakeholders to learn more about ways to support families once school has begun

Respectfully submitted by: Tina Schultz, Director of Religious Education

