

| <b>Regular Attendees</b> |                            | <b>Present</b> |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|
| Fifi Ball                | Director of Operations     | Y              |
| Jeff Brainerd            | Standing Committee member  | Y              |
| Kate Crosby              | Standing Committee member  | Y              |
| Howard Dana              | Senior Minister            | Y              |
| Dave Elwood              | Standing Committee member  | Y              |
| Kristin Haddad           | Standing Committee member  | Y              |
| Peter Nobile             | Clerk                      | Y              |
| Patty Popov              | Standing Committee member  | Y              |
| Toby Smith Ropeik        | Standing Committee member  | Y              |
| Mark Russell Prior       | Chair                      | Y              |
| Lora Venesy              | Standing Committee member  | Y              |
| Alec Walker              | Standing Committee member  | Y              |
| Tom Wilson               | Treasurer                  | Y              |
|                          |                            |                |
| <b>Guests</b>            | <b>Representing</b>        |                |
| Bethany Lowe             | Social Action              | Y              |
| Marion Visel             | Minister for Pastoral Care | Y              |
| Alane Wallace            | Nominating Committee       | Y              |
| Paula Vandever           | Denominational Affairs     | Y              |

Howard opened with words by Denise Johnson, "To Covenant".

A motion was made to approve the October minutes and was unanimously approved.

#### Chair's report

Mark handed out reminder copies of the welcoming schedule.

#### Minister's report

There were no comments on Howard's report (distributed by email)

Howard reported that his target is to assemble a list of participants and leaders to work on the Annual Pledge Campaign planning by mid-December.

Bethany reported that the last SAC listening session was completed today; analysis of data gathered is underway. Work with Fred Van Deusen and Toby on SAC survey continues. Bethany will send the survey link to Mark, and encouraged all on the Committee to take the survey.

Howard's sense is that things in the RE department are moving smoothly, and that Amy is getting used to the job and the community. Some uncertainty still exists within the RE Council (purpose, vision, concerns, etc.), and it was noted that Council was on retreat today (11/8/15).

A new Membership committee has been formed, headed by Suzanne Lowe. The membership book was opened today and 3 members formally joined the church. Howard's new path to membership does not require the New-UU course before membership eligibility. About half of new members are new to UU, but the other half have had some UU experience. Suzanne Lowe is the primary contact for new members; committee members on duty at coffee hour will have handouts, business cards, and a modest amount of training about how to approach new people, etc. The group discussed how best to follow up with members who have drifted away, as tracking of such members is still informal.

There was a brief discussion about Howard's goals, and Lora asked about the possibility of offering a New UU class and how to best check in with members who have "fallen through the cracks." Howard said that a New UU class may be offered by the Membership Committee, that it would be open to all, and that it would include a history of Unitarian Universalism. Regarding "lost" members and how to reconnect with them, Howard commented that the tracking of members is logistically challenging, but that he would check first with Amy and the RE council to see if such tracking might start there.

#### Director of Operations' report

##### FY2016 Budget Update

Mark asked about the availability of the Parsonage (Coan house). Fifi reported that the apartment has been posted on ministerial web sites. There is a possible 6-month tenant in the wings. Fifi will update the congregation re: Amazon Smile designation via FP Announce. Fifi also reported that Rev. Amy's FICA is being paid for by the Parish and that is standard IRS practice.

##### Spending adjustments updates:

There is a small net reduction (line 4470) in health insurance costs. There is a financial policy that requires SC approval of spending changes in excess of 5%. Fifi has commented in the past that the language of the policy is vague, and the Finance Committee is planning to review the policy. Mark suggested that we ask Fifi to ensure that the SC be notified about changes in income, but that the SC would only approve changes to spending. Fifi and SC members agreed that this would be a good course of action.

The UUA health plan increase is 9.4% across the board, which the committee agreed seemed rather high. Alec advised we join the exodus of churches leaving the UUA health plan, and asked the Treasurer (Tom) to consider shopping around for better health plan costs.

There is an operational need to increase Dawn Van Patten's hours from 20 to 24 hrs/wk. The cost for this net increase this fiscal year is \$5,623, and the increase qualifies Dawn for a 10% of base salary contribution toward her retirement and is included in the amount noted. Part of this increase in hours will be spent on curriculum development. Tom moved to increase spending on line 5075 by \$5,672 as an adjustment to Dawn's salary, as noted in Fifi's financial report. The vote was approved unanimously.

The committee briefly discussed the Bi-annual Staff Compensation Report, and expressed gratitude for Fifi's efforts.

Treasurer's report

Tom reported that there has been a richness to the congregational discussions and conversations. The Finance Committee has received a number of good ideas, and feedback has been generally positive.

Surveys have been sent out to 30 or 40 other UU churches regarding their spending patterns; the Finance Committee has received a few responses and is looking to create some benchmarking data. The hope is to share survey analysis and results with respondents.

A Wright Tavern review group has been set up. Its mission is to develop a strategic plan to make the Tavern and its unique history more accessible to the public. The review group includes Tim Jacoby, John Boynton, Jane Gordon (Town of Concord), Bob Morris (Minuteman Park), and Sue Gladstone (Concord Museum). The goal is to have a plan for review by Jan/Feb 2016. CPA grant work is currently underway, so a partnership with Town might also fit in to that strategic plan.

Staff presentation: Pastoral Care

Marion reported on the structure of the Pastoral Care program. Three new Pastoral Care Lay Ministers were recruited and trained this year. The Friendly Visitor program was started, and Covenant Groups are continuing with the addition of the new Small Group Ministries, which are more theme or cohort-group focused. Marion sees some success of the Senior Group (65+), which was struggling but now averages more than 30 attendees at each meeting. There was desire at First Parish for the ability to share one-on-one and there continues to be a real hunger for connection with others. Marion sees the small group ministry as a way of meeting these needs.

Marion has worked to make the Pastoral Care library more accessible and usable. She has also encouraged more use of the Parish web site for posting commonly used documents, e.g. the memorial service personal information form.

Much of the past year has been spent getting to know the Pastoral Care community more deeply. The coming year's focus will continue to be on small groups. Marion would like to create a Steering Committee for small groups, because as this foundation is built more structure will be needed. Two small groups are currently going, each with 9 members (limit is 10). Two additional small focus groups will begin in the spring including one on "Creating Meaning in Retirement". Marion envisions small groups as avenues for reconnection back to First Parish. She has her eyes and ears open to what people want, need and will commit to. While there are many possibilities for additional programming (as opposed to direct pastoral care), programming always suffers due to time constraints (Marion's works 30 hours a week).

Marion reported on attention given to stewardship of the Holden Fund (along with Howard, Sue Dobbie and Alice Van Deusen); fund criteria have been modified and the group has completed a review of policies, including eligibility for and distribution of funds.

Howard reported that he could not do his work without Marion – the health we feel as a congregation is in

large part due to Marion and her 100+ volunteers who care for and connect with us.

#### Group/Liaison reports

##### **Groups**

- HD communications support: Mark, Alec, Kristin. A meeting has been set up for November.
- Congregational Outreach: Dave, Kate. A congregational conversation is scheduled for early 2016. The group is looking to operationalize Standing Committee coffee hour outreach activities a bit more and to take advantage of other avenues to gather information.
- Leadership selection: Alec, Patty, Jeff. Work is underway.

##### **Liaisons**

- Ministerial Internship: Alec. This group is under a lot of stress because of changing internship practices in the denomination. First Parish's desire is to have an intern here for next year but fewer folks are applying for the "traditional" immersion internship as offered by FP, which is excellent finishing/training for running a mid-size parish. The new Ministerial trainee requirement is for only six, not ten months, of internship.
- Denominational Affairs: Kate. There is an ongoing discussion regarding district vs regional structures, focusing on the nature of communications within each structure type. Current congregational study initiatives include Escalating Inequalities and other issues. The UUA Director of Congregational giving has invited Darien Smith to participate in a stewardship related working group.

#### Members' reports

- Kate reported that a congregational proposal for an energy audit is underway.
- Jeff reported that he heard positive feedback from a new member at Mom's Night Out about the warmth and welcoming nature of FP, and that such Night Out events seem like a good non-threatening way to get involved.
- Lora sensed a lot of positive energy around the upcoming WPA pie crust event with Howard. Howard suggested thanking Marilyn Lowitt for moving the WPA forward as an active, vital member of the church.
- There was a brief discussion about the SC routine practices list that Kristin, Kate, & Lora created. It is their hope that the list will be used as a resource in addition to yearly goals. The plan is to present a final version at the next SC meeting as an appendix to our goals, which are already posted online.

#### Finalization of Standing Committee Goals

Mark reviewed the current draft of the goals. The goals were modified slightly and a motion was made to accept the new version (attached to the end of these minutes). The motion was approved unanimously.

#### SC Retreat Feedback

The group was grateful for the opportunity to connect and strengthen our bonds with each other. The SC's connection and support helps Howard to perform his role and to "be the Minister." Our next retreat is scheduled for March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016, and the group agreed it would take place from 9AM to 1PM with lunch together included.

Statements of Congregational Opinion -- Black Lives Matter

The committee discussed its role in facilitating a decision about the display of a large Black Lives Matter banner on the front of the church. Howard pointed out that display of a banner would be the beginning of a congregation with the community. Bethany commented that the parish would need to be prepared for the sign to be vandalized – vandalism rates of such signs and banners have approached 40-50% nationally. Internally, discomfort over the idea stems in some ways from a lack of clarity about the banner; e.g. does the banner say that are we in favor of better rights for all African-Americans in general, or that we are supporting the Black Lives Matter organization? The Social Action Council's Diversity Committee will refine a proposal for the SC to consider at its December 13, 2015 meeting. Alec called attention to the need for emphasis on a process for congregational conversation. If this effort moves forward, the church might consider a ceremonial installment of the banner on MLK day (1/18/16). We were reminded of the need to prepare for a backlash, and Howard reminded the committee that we would reach out to police and make other efforts to prepare for reactions as best as possible. In order to make sure that the congregation is well informed, Mark will announce the SC's consideration of the banner at next Sunday's service (11/15/2015). It will also be reported in the Sunday News.

Review Future Agenda Items

The list of future agenda items was briefly reviewed. The next meeting will be on Sunday, December 13, 2015 at 6pm at First Parish.

The public meeting was concluded, and the Standing Committee entered into a brief Executive Session.

The meeting was adjourned at 945PM.

/pn

Attachments: 2015-16 Standing Committee Annual Goals

**First Parish in Concord  
Standing Committee  
Annual Goals 2015-2016  
Approved: November 8, 2015**

| Goal   | Action   | Success Indicators   |
|--|--|--|
| <b>Improve SC operational effectiveness.</b> | Continue to implement governance policies so that they become routine and sustainable.   | SC work will be performed on schedule according to an established calendar.                    |
|  | Form a governance subgroup, and review current practices, continuing those that are valuable and eliminating those that are unnecessary. | Stated practices will match practices performed.   |
|  | Hold two Standing Committee retreats.  | Standing Committee members will be productively working together in small and/or large groups. |
|  |  | SC members will understand their roles.  |
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| <b>Model healthy/right relations in SC communications.</b> | Find resources that will help us to educate ourselves and others on right relations. | SC Members will understand what is meant by “right relations”                                |
|  | Promote kindness in communications.  | Congregation members will recognize SC efforts to promote kindness in communications         |
|  | Develop a covenant for consideration by congregation.                                | Congregation members will have participated in an introductory discussion on right relations |
|  |  | Congregation and SC members will feel well informed and heard.                               |

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| <b>Function with a proactive outward vision.</b> | Learn more about First Parish's place within our denomination.   | SC Members will be able to discuss First Parish's role among UU congregations.   |
|  | Reach out to the Denominational Affairs committee and our Senior Minister to discuss topics of interest.   | Increased awareness will allow First Parish goals to be informed by the issues confronting the congregations of the UUA. |
|  | Examine UUA web site to identify high priority goals and objectives.   |  |
|  | Conduct a field trip to the UUA.   |  |
| <b>Build a culture of stewardship.</b>           | Participate fully in the annual pledge campaign, auction planning and execution, and other activities that strengthen the culture of giving at First Parish. | Number of pledges increases  |
|  |  | Average pledge amount increases  |
|  |  | Standing Committee and congregation members recognize the importance of supporting First Parish programs and operations  |
|  |  |  |



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|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| <b>Support our Senior Minister.</b> | Continue to explore and develop ways we can support our Senior Minister in his programs and operations activities. | Senior Minister feels supported by SC.  |
|                                     | Create opportunities for the Senior Minister to communicate his needs.   | The quality of conversations between the SC and the Senior Minister will improve. |
|                                     | As needed, establish a working group to address specific support issues.   |   |

/end of Standing Committee Annual Goals 2015-2016