

<b>Regular Attendees</b>		<b>Present</b>
Fifi Ball	Director of Operations	Y
Jeff Brainerd	Standing Committee member	Y
Kate Crosby	Standing Committee member	N
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>	
Elizabeth Norton	Music	Y
Bethany Lowe	Social Action	Y
Roselyn Romberg	Social Action	Y

Howard opened the meeting with a reading, “Song for the Unsung” by Steve J Krump.

Minutes from January 10, 2016 meeting, after one small revision, were approved as amended.

Mark reported that the congregational conversation today run by Dave Elwood and Alec Walker was presented under the auspices of the First Parish Forum, coordinated by Patrick Everett. Patrick expressed concern that the Sunday morning forum is an important part of the identity of the church and that he would like the 11:30 a.m. time slot on Sunday morning to be dedicated to the Forum. Mark remarked that many groups are using that time after the service quite productively and that it would not be feasible to dedicate the time slot to the Forum. However, the Standing Committee could continue to coordinate its events with the Forum group.

Mark spoke with Heather Bond from the UUA about right relations and is planning on talking with Sue Phillips next week. He polled the SC members to find out what we would like to do about our goal in modeling right relations: a separate meeting? A presentation during a meeting? Something else? There is a desire to talk with Sue, and Howard volunteered that our March retreat does not have any assigned content yet. Mark agreed to ask Sue if she would be able to facilitate a discussion on right relations at our retreat on March 12, 2016. Per Howard, this service would be one of the many things that is paid for by our association dues.

Howard asked if anyone had questions about his written report. Lora asked about attendance numbers for the RE program. Howard suggested going direct to Dawn and Amy to get the data as well as their perspective on attendance. He also suggested that the RE Council may be interested in this data. Jeff asked whether Dawn

and Amy were able to use the eTapestry database to store this information. Fifi explained that she had enrollment data, but that the attendance data is not part of the database.

In his report, Howard mentioned that Open Table was considering options for its future. When asked, he said that their food bank will likely be in Maynard, but that a Community Dinner would still occur on Thursdays. He also mentioned that Janet Hutslar would be the new ministerial intern beginning in mid-August and that the housing was a positive factor in her decision to take the position.

- a. The theme for the annual pledge Campaign (APC) is “Sowing everyday miracles” and the large donor event is scheduled for Saturday February 27 at Tim Jacoby’s home. A focus is that the pledge campaign needs to help to grow our base, in order to have to a healthier overall revenue distribution.
- b. Black Lives Matter work is moving ahead; updates and concrete activities include:
  - First Parish raised \$3000 with a BLM Cambridge coffee house fund raiser for racial justice work.
  - Formation of 6 small book reading groups, with about 40 people participating, to discuss the book *Waking Up White*, by Deborah Irving.
  - Possible participation in a Mother’s Day March for Peace in Dorchester.
  - First Parish is considering a community “Join the Conversation” event.
  - The banner is receiving both positive and negative comments, even internally.

#### Staff presentation by First Parish Music Director Beth Norton

Howard introduced Beth Norton, our long time and well loved music director. Beth is planning a 3-month sabbatical next year. Beth described her typical work week, beginning with how her music ministry can be seen as somewhat cyclical and includes some of these rhythms:

- Sunday can be seen as both the end of the week and the beginning of a new week.
- Tuesday is the real start of the week. First Parish is a cooperative ministry of colleagues, supported by the Senior Minister. The week begins with a staff check-in, including a discussion about the past Sunday as well as upcoming Sundays. In planning for worship, Beth listens for themes – emotions, ties into Social Justice work, etc. The order of worship is set on paper by Thursday afternoon, including Eric’s input on how the three “big” organ or piano pieces will tie into the service.
- Wednesday is a big rehearsal day, with both rehearsals for children’s, gospel, and adult choirs.
- Thursday includes a “morning after” message to the adult choir, and work with the By Your Side singers on two Thursday evenings monthly. BYS singers make regular visits to assisted living and memory care units, and the group has connected closely with some Parishioners as they have approached death, working closely with Marion.
- Friday is sometimes a “Sabbath day”. The fourth Friday monthly includes Rise Up Singing which brings to First Parish many participants who follow the Boston area folk music scene, and serves as a kind of outreach by First Parish.

Beth is the co-director of the UU Musician’s Network (UUMN) Good Offices program. She has served in various leadership capacities in the Network since 1998, including credentialing and professional standards for UU musicians. Beth is also on a committee for re-envisioning the UU Church in Roxbury, serving as an advocate.

In response to a question about how the music program would fare in her absence, Beth thought that things would go well, and suggested that it would be a good time for the congregation to think about the role of a

music director. Beth is proud of the breadth and depth of the music community at First Parish. Since Beth has an interest in governance, Mark offered her the opportunity to provide advice to the SC. Beth commented that in her experience serving on boards as well as in executive management roles, she has developed an appreciation for the tension in the relationship between the board and management, and explained that it was important to remember what role you are playing as you perform your work.

#### Director of Operations' report

##### a. FY2016 Budget Update

- Pledge income for the month was down—\$100,000 in December 2015, as compared with \$108,000 each in December 2014 and December 2013. See line 3020, under Dec 15. As a reminder, pledge income was \$84,000 in November 2015, compared to November in the two previous years of \$43,000 each.
- Fiscal year-to-date pledge income (see line 3020 July-December 2015 \$572,000) is up slightly over previous years at this time (\$569,000 by December 2014 and \$565,000 through December 2013).
- Total FY16 pledges = \$950,000 at the time this year's budget was set, but, because of pledges that were clarified or came in after the budget was set, \$973,000 now, from 439 households.
- Prior year (FY15 = 7/1/14-6/30/15) pledge payments (lines 3050 and 3055) received during FY16 (7/1/15-6/30/16) total \$31,000 vs. \$8,300 budgeted for these income lines.
- Last year (FY15 = 7/1/14-6/30/15) 464 households pledged \$942,654. Total FY15 pledges paid by June 30, 2015 (the end of that fiscal year), were \$889,343 or 94.3% (5.7% unpaid). We typically budget for 5% unpaid pledges. Including the prior year (FY15) pledge payments made during this fiscal year (\$31,018), total FY15 pledge payments are \$920,361 or 97.6% (2.4% unpaid).
- Box (or plate—see line 3110) collections are \$14,400 so far this fiscal year as compared to \$15,600 by this time in FY15 and \$14,700 by this time in FY14.
- Fifi is still working to understand why we are paying more for health insurance (line 4470) than budgeted, especially when we have reasons to expect this line to be under budget this year. UUA health insurance premium rate increases went into effect January 1, 2016. More on this next month.

##### b. Spending adjustments

- This month there were no spending adjustments requiring attention by the Standing Committee.

##### c. Sanctuary – Terrace stairway update

- No revised quote yet from Mark Brennan for the three-item stair project (center handrail, side handrail jog, and stair tread). Peter is procuring a second quote from Mark Willms, of Straight Up builders. A cost-effective solution seems to be in the works, especially regarding the handrail "jog" and the stair tread. Millworker may have some ideas regarding railings up to the pulpit.
- Toby will write a thank you note to the WPA expressing the Standing Committee's gratitude for their \$10,000 pledge toward covering the expenses of this project.

##### d. UUA Annual Membership Report

- Fifi distributed some analysis re: enrollment, income and expenses. The committee discussed drivers and other factors behind what is generally seen as a decline in membership and attendance since 2008. It was noted that Concord has not experienced the general population declines occurring in other communities, as school enrollments have not decreased. Toby suggested that

there may be different ways of presenting ourselves to people who may not want a religious community but might want to connect, whether around spiritual or other energies and that First Parish might be able to step into the void. Membership may not look the way it has in the past.

#### Treasurer's report

- Tom reported on the committee's ongoing analysis. Compared to other churches, attendance is low but our pledges are still up – essentially, a large number of people are members but do not attend services on Sunday.
- The Wright Tavern working group continues its work. It has been discussing a working relationship with the Concord Museum. The working group is expected to make a recommendation soon.

#### Fiscal Year Spending Priorities Recap

- Elimination of RE fees: Howard is prepared to go into this year's campaign planning on no RE fees (about \$15,000). If more money is pledged, perhaps we can afford other items including 5 more hours for youth director, staff salary increase, increase to UUA dues, health care for intern, or some money toward Beth's sabbatical. Several SC members voiced the position that that any fees should be broad based, not just targeting one community or another.
- The committee discussed how best to close the large gift funding gap – Tom emphasized that the best strategy is to build the base rather than rely on large gifts. Mark pointed out that if pledges don't increase as gap donations decrease, spending cuts might be required.
- Toby suggested to Howard that he consider staffing reductions in response to lower membership levels and/or reduced program offerings. The Finance Committee benchmark report might help us to analyze this issue in comparison to other churches.
- Howard described the "\$1000" pledge line, and that we should seek increases above that line. He also reported that staff salaries at First Parish are at "the bottom" of the UUA scale. The aspirational nature of UUA salary guidelines makes it difficult to stay within range.

#### Financial Reports Visibility

- Howard and Fifi have been working with Stoney Ballard on the new web site. Stoney reports that it is difficult to provide security, e.g. a log-in requirement for certain portions of the site. Three areas of concern are: Pastoral care, photographs of children, and financial data (budgets and reports). Stoney suggested that financial information could be provided but rendered unsearchable, with no login possibility. The question really is whether we should have financials on the web site or not? It was agreed that high level analyses could be presented to the public, but that more detailed, sensitive information could be distributed separately (e.g. via Google Docs or mailing lists) rather than through the web site.

#### Group/Liaison reports

- a. Subgroups:
  - Leadership Selection has been conducting interviews and will have a recommendation next month for the new chair.
  - Evaluations for the senior minister have been distributed to the SC as well as a small group of

other parishioners. The surveys are due February 27<sup>th</sup>. The SC evaluation will be completed in April and May; it will be presented in June, when outgoing and incoming SC members are all present.

- Congregational Outreach held a conversation at 11:30 a.m. today and another is scheduled for Tuesday night. There were 15-20 people present today. Denominational affairs, membership and Black Lives Matter arose as topics.

b. Liaisons:

- Denominational Affairs: The Mass Bay District will decide at their next annual meeting whether or not to dissolve. Delegates need to be selected. Peter and Howard will organize a field trip to the UUA, probably on a weekday evening.
- SAC: The survey results will be distributed soon. Also, workshops with Rev. Kathleen McTigue are planned.
- Ministerial Internship is excited that there is a new intern starting in mid August

Members' reports

The Auction Committee has been fielding a few complaints about the "Off to the Races" auction theme, because of concerns about animal cruelty in horse racing. The Standing Committee was asked to provide feedback on the auction committee's next actions. During discussion, the Standing Committee members expressed interest in having the auction be a positive experience for all, but wanted the auction committee to feel empowered to make their own decision. The Auction Committee recognizes that the original idea was primarily intended to be about fun hats and mint juleps more than the sport itself.

It has been suggested that Standing Committee members could join together to create an auction item such as a specialty basket. Members were open to this opportunity.

Review Future Agenda Items

- Mark requested that the Finance Committee schedule spring dates for discussing the budget and that they try to space them as much as possible from the annual meeting
- The Finance Committee's benchmark survey report will be presented at the March meeting.

At 4:15 p.m., the Standing Committee went into executive session. During the executive session, a motion to make a lump sum payment of \$28,024.33 to Pat Halloran for the purpose of restoring retirement contributions, was approved. The payment was to be classified as an unbudgeted expense.

The meeting adjourned at 4:37 p.m.

Next meeting: Sunday March 13<sup>th</sup>, 6PM.

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attachments

**Minister's Report to the Standing Committee**

First Parish in Concord—January 2016

Rev. Howard N. Dana

***Director of Operations' Goals for 2015-16:***

**One—Continue to improve First Parish use of technology to streamline operations.** Progress: We are progressing nicely toward a new template for the website. We hope to unveil the new site in March. Until then the old one is working fine.

**Two—Delegate more work to First Parish volunteers.** Progress: With the help of volunteers we finished up the new First Parish directory and got it ready to send to the printers. The First Parish Auction team is up and running. The team has the planning well in hand and is entirely volunteer run.

**Three—Continue work with the First Parish Finance Committee to update financial policies and agreements.** Progress: The Finance Committee worked on the financial policies in January. They are working on dividing policies from procedures. The committee continues to work on its bench-mark report in January.

***Senior Minister Goals for 2015-16:***

**One—Partner with the Standing Committee to develop a longer-term vision for achieving the mission of First Parish in Concord.**

Measures: Create a process for the congregation to talk about social justice  
Lead the SC in exploration of spiritual leadership  
Further refine and document the relationship between the SM and SC  
Working with SC and Denominational Affairs Committee representative  
explore FPC's role in the UUA

Progress: No specific progress to report for January.

**Two—Develop a Path to Membership suitable for a large congregation.**

Measures: Membership Committee formed with a convener and regular meetings  
Clear charter for the membership work  
Clear method developed and documented for joining the church  
System to track new members for two years

Progress: Seven people joined First Parish the second Sunday in January. The Membership Committee is starting to figure out what it can handle and what will need to wait for later. We have given ourselves the whole church year to figure out membership methods. Mostly we are glad that people are cheerfully joining First Parish and plugging into our community.

**Three—Implement fundraising work beyond the Annual Pledge Campaign (APC.)**

Measures: Meet with past Auction Committee chairs  
Form a new Auction Committee

Have an Auction at First Parish  
Meet with Treasure to explore possible donor development outside the APC

Progress: The Annual Pledge Campaign team is off and running. We have good participation and energy. We will hold a Large Donor Event on February 27<sup>th</sup> and have a mailing out to the congregation about pledging and Celebration Sunday by February 24<sup>th</sup>. We are optimistic that the congregation can support a 5% increase over last year's pledges. The Auction Team is also formed and beginning its work. The Auction will be April 30, 2016 with the theme of "Off to the Races."

#### **Four—Support the reorganization of the Religious Education Program and the RE Council.**

Measures:     Ensure RE participation is tracked  
                  Provide programing for children and youth every Sunday  
                  Provide supervision and support to the MRE  
                  Attend three family-oriented events to get to know RE families better

Progress: We had our fourth intergenerational worship service in January. This one honored the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Amy and Dawn felt it was successful. The RE Council will be evaluating each of the intergenerational services this year with an eye for number, quality, and content for next year.

#### **Updates on day-to-day ministry**

- In January I took two weeks of vacation—thank you!
- I met with members of the RE Council to discuss whether the elimination of RE fees could be part of the Annual Pledge Campaign this year or not.
- I met with representative from the WPA to talk about safety issues on the stairs and to accept a \$10,000 gift from the WPA to put toward the project.
- I met with Sue Beck about the completion of the First Parish History project featuring Doug Baker.
- I met with Jeanine Calabria to talk about the future of Open Table at First Parish. They are negotiating for leased space in Maynard and are interested in transitioning to a community dinner program at First Parish.

#### **Update on Staff issues and changes**

- We moved the "use it or lose it" deadline for vacation and personal time to August 31. This will make it much easier for people to take earned time off in a well-planned manner. This year staff member will have until August 31, 2017 to take all accrued leave before it goes away.
- The Ministerial Intern Committee and I settled on a full-time ministerial intern for 2016-17. Jan Hutslar.

#### **Senior Minister's plans for denominational work, study leave, and vacation**

- February 22-26, 2016—SMOLUUC Retreat, Santa Barbara, CA
- March 28 – April 4, 2016—Vacation—Parents' 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary in MT
- May 23-25, 2016—Cedar Hill Study Group, Cape Cod