

Regular Attendees		Present
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	N
Mark Russell Prior	Chair	Y
Lora Venesy	Standing Committee member	Y
Alec Walker	Standing Committee member	Y
Tom Wilson	Treasurer	Y
Guests	Representing	
Bethany Lowe	Social Action	Y
Gib Metcalf	Finance Committee	Y
Fred Van Deusen	Finance Committee	Y
Patrick Everett	The Sunday Forum	Y

Howard opened the meeting with a reading from an essay by Egbert Ethelred Brown.

Approval of minutes

The minutes of the February 7, 2016 meeting were amended and unanimously approved.

Chair’s report

Mark thanked Howard and the group for a successful SC retreat on Saturday. Planning for Annual Meeting, including work on this year’s warrant, is about to begin.

Minister’s report

Lora asked about Howard’s comment regarding a possible leadership crisis in the SAC. Howard explained that there is uncertainty concerning SAC leadership roles and also regarding the want or need for an administrator versus a community organizer/advisor. Currently Bethany’s job is very comprehensive, including administrative and organizational duties. Howard will be working with SAC and will ensure that the job description is clearly defined. The recent SAC survey revealed that the First Parish community doesn’t know what it wants to do about Social Action. The SAC board has written a proposal to look at the role of the Social Action staff person. The proposal suggests a decrease in the 7.5% SAC pledge allocation to support the inclusion of the SAC staff member’s salary into the general operating budget. Other elements of the proposal include a “share the plate” suggestion, whereby one Sunday per month, portions of the plate collection would go to a non-profit organization that is pre-approved by the SAC. Howard sees Social Action at First Parish as relatively unfocused – doing many different things, and not concentrating efforts on one major area.

The SAC board will soon present the proposed changes to the congregation, using listening sessions, etc. Howard is expecting disagreements to arise, and thinks that this will be a good thing.

Dave asked about Howard's comments regarding the RE council's efforts to define their role. Howard reported that there is some conflict between the staff and the RE council. He advised that the best course of action for the SC liaisons is to encourage designated RE leaders to stay at the table and continue to work through differences. Lora asked about plans for the summer RE program. Howard reported that the RE program is seeing 30-35 kids on "no-RE" Sundays, and that there will be programming every Sunday in the summer.

Other updates:

Training for Annual Pledge Campaign – Howard reported a good deal of energy and enthusiasm in the steward training session.

Auction – The Auction Committee is moving ahead, after working through a small bump regarding the theme, and there has been a good level of involvement and activity.

Black Lives Matter – Activities are going well. Some *Waking Up White* readers are inspired by the book, while others feel like they are "way beyond" this level of thinking already. Bethany reported on the "Slavery By Another Name" program which has elicited a range of responses. Kate shared a story about how the program is helping people in different circles of privilege experience a variety of eye-opening or view-changing perspectives. The conversation is widening – Howard thinks the conversation will continue well into the fall. Alec advocated a look at our own history and reminded us that William Emerson, a minister of this church, was a slave owner.

Director of Operations' report

Fifi reported that the search for an assistant sexton continues – Concord Journal and Monster.com efforts have not yet proved to be effective. The filling of the position will be delayed until the fall. Several suggestions were made regarding increasing visibility of the posting. Other items reported by Fifi,

- Pledge income for the month was up—\$74,000 in January 2016, as compared with \$47,000 in January 2015 and \$52,000 in January 2014. See line 3020 under Jan 16.
- Fiscal year-to-date pledge income (line 3020 under Jul 15-Jan 16: \$626,000) is up ~1.5% over previous years at this time (\$616,000 by January 2015 and \$617,000 through January 2014).
- Box (or plate—see line 3110) collections are down (4.8% and 7.2%): \$16,700 so far this fiscal year as compared to \$17,500 by this time in FY15 and \$17,900 by this time in FY14.
- Savings on 8th grade play (\$541) because of refunded script fees from last year's play—see budget line 5200.
- 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, but these increases were anticipated and accounted for in the annual budget. Social security taxes (4410) are off too, as is line 4450 Retirement Plan (employer contributions). Fifi is working to get to the bottom of all three.
- We received a check for solar renewable energy credits (SRECs) of \$7,600 in March. The price per credit (megawatt hour) was much higher than we have received in the past (\$475 now vs.

\$280 in March 2015 and \$285 in June 2015). We budgeted \$4,725 in SREC income this year, so we will be over by \$2,875. See income line 3360.

- Bethany Russell-Lowe, our Youth Program Director (10 hours/week) and Social Action Director (30 hours/week), is leaving us as of May 15, 2016. In addition to this being both a sad and happy occasion, it represents a 1.5-month savings in the FY15 budget—\$4,000 in total salary and ~\$750 in benefits. Bethany's replacements are being discussed, but neither would start before mid-August 2016.
- We spent \$500 for a help wanted ad in the Concord Journal, which came with a Monster listing, for an additional assistant sexton—no responses. We had budgeted \$100—see 4230 Recruiting and Hiring. This is a proposed budget adjustment: line 4230 (Recruiting and Hiring) which was budgeted as \$100, and has increased by \$400 for a total of \$500. A motion to approve this spending increase was approved unanimously.
- Total FY16 pledges were equal to \$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, the anticipated level is \$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).

Treasurer's Report -- Tom Wilson reported that the Wright Tavern study group is expected to recommend to the Trustees of Parish Donations that an agreement be negotiated with the Concord Museum for a 3-5 year lease of the Tavern (first floor only). The Museum will use the space as interpretive and educational space. The Concord Museum's programming requires that the Tavern be more ADA compliant on the exterior, so a ramp would be created and bathrooms would be upgraded. Both of these would be paid for by the museum.

The study group anticipates that the Tavern would open in October 2016 (around the historical timeframe that John Hancock et al met at the Tavern to begin planning the Continental Congress). Increased revenue is expected for First Parish, about \$3,000-4,000 per year overall in the initial 3-5 year time frame. Eventually the Parish might consider a long term lease to the Museum.

Parishioner and proponent Mel Bernstein relayed to Tom that even though it took 214 years (usually buildings become "historic" about 100 years after the events that make them famous) it is wonderful to see this level of attention devoted to the Tavern. The Concord Museum is excited about such an agreement for a number of reasons, as this arrangement would alleviate staff office space pressures and allow the Wright Tavern to become linked with interpretive programming involving the museum and the Old North Bridge. There are no anticipated issues with the displacement of Jericho Road. The trustees have the authority to negotiate the lease. Mark proposed that this decision be considered carefully, and that outreach be performed to ensure that the congregation is well informed.

Tom also distributed and reviewed an analysis of current pledging patterns. Thus far, pledges are coming in at a higher rate than last year.

Finance Committee benchmarking study

Gib Metcalf and Fred Van Deusen reported on a benchmark financial survey, performed by the Finance Committee, which was sent out to 34 churches. Eleven responses were received. The respondents covered a range of community per capita income levels and church sizes.

The biggest finding is that in terms of spending, budget and staffing, First Parish does not stand out as very different from other churches that responded to the survey. The primary lesson is that we are not spending more than other churches – we are well staffed and our average pledge sizes are about right. Interestingly, compared to other churches, our ratio of total members to the number of people who attend worship services is very high. However, the ratio of pledging households to attendance is consistent with that of other churches. The Finance Committee recommended this as a topic for further study. Also, the First Parish endowment is large relative to that of other churches. Our use of endowment monies is consistent with practices in other churches. 10 of the 11 churches surveyed have active planned giving programs to grow their endowment. First Parish has such a program, but it has not been promoted.

The full report will be posted on the Finance Committee web page. The Finance Committee is going to share this report with church committees and the larger congregation over the next few months. There is also a movement underway to develop a formal program for planned giving as early as this coming fall.

Standing Committee Leadership Selection

After much exploration and study, the Leadership Selection subcommittee, consisting of Standing Committee members Alec Walker, Patty Popov and Jeff Brainerd, recommended that Kristin Haddad be appointed as Chair of the Standing Committee, with a term to begin at the first meeting following the 2016 Annual Meeting. During the leadership selection subcommittee’s investigation, Kristin received a very high level of support from other Standing Committee members. After a brief discussion, Kristin commented that she is both honored and humbled by this recommendation. Kristin reported that she will not hesitate to ask for help, try to model compassionate listening, convey excitement about First Parish, be kind, and remember she has “two ears and one mouth”. Tom expressed confidence in Kristin’s ability to work competently and effectively outside the group, much the way Mark does. Alec moved that Kristin be appointed Chair of the Standing Committee, starting at the meeting following the 2016 Annual Meeting, to continue for two years, the second year to be confirmed next spring. The motion was seconded, and the vote to approve was unanimous, as committee members stood and shouted “yes!” to show their appreciation for Kristin’s willingness to serve.

See attached report of the Working Group on SC Leadership Succession, dated February 26, 2016.

Group/Liaison reports

- a. Congregational outreach – Dave reported that there have been two congregational conversations, with around 20 people total attending. Good conversation and discussion, but no overriding needs or concerns around big issues. Topics included membership (paths to

membership, greeting visitors, acknowledgement of different groups) and denominational affairs, including connection to/helping other UU congregations, which met with little interest. Other attendees mentioned Black Lives Matter, and the creation of other avenues (a forum? other venues?) to provide feedback. Future topics included suggestions of a public presentation and/or a summary of SM and SC goals to the congregation at the beginning of each year, and the possible creation of a worship committee. Mark related thoughts about participating in the larger UU community as “teachers” and reaching out/building relationships in ways that go beyond what we do now. Tom mentioned possible collaborations around music/choirs, especially given how strongly Beth Norton is represented in the UU music community

- b. Senior Minister evaluation – Dave reported that he and Toby are gathering and compiling input. The evaluation will be discussed at the April meeting.
- c. SC self-evaluations – Lora reported that she and Toby will be gathering and compiling input, and that the evaluation will be discussed at the July meeting.
- d. Denominational Affairs – Mark raised the topic of identifying delegates for the Mass Bay District annual meeting at which dissolution of the district is to be discussed. Members agreed that delegates should be identified in advance, and that they should be given guidance on the matter from the Standing Committee. Kate will reach out to Paula Van Deever and Fred Van Deusen.
- e. Membership – The membership group seems to be working well and making progress.
- f. RE Council – Dave reported on the development of a policies and procedures document including goals, mission and a covenant. Dave is encouraged by the group’s spirit of collaboration. Howard suggested sometimes questions arise about who manages Amy. The group is committed and working well, but that they need support and guidance around issues of governance.

Public Comment

Patrick Everett expressed his concerns about the sustainability of the Forum Committee. Patrick believes the size of his existing email lists are an indicator of continued interest but he needs help running the Forum (the effort of Chairing leads to burnout – he is “caught between the urgent and the important”). Patrick needs help populating the Forum Committee – he needs at least five new members – especially with efforts like publicity. A suggestion was made to assign a liaison from the SC to the Forum, to ensure that the SC is well informed of Patrick’s progress.

Member reports

Mark reported positive feedback from a church member who had previously expressed concerns about Black Lives Matter activities. The member’s concerns have been fully addressed. Lora reported a member approaching her for a second time with concerns about the BLM movement and how “all lives matter.” Elon Cook reported that the BLM banner makes her happy every day. Per Kate, the committee might be hearing a future request for financial sponsorship of environmental activist Evan Seitz. Howard reported that planning is underway for Beth’s upcoming sabbatical.

Future agenda items

Doug Baker will be presenting to the SC in April. Finance Committee budget presentations are anticipated in early May.

At 9:31 p.m., the Standing Committee went into a brief executive session.

The meeting adjourned at 9:48 p.m.

Next meeting: Sunday April 10th, 6PM.

/pn

attachments

Minister's Report to the Standing Committee

First Parish in Concord—February 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 slog forward toward a new web site. Stoney Ballard is shepherding the process. We are using an online pledge form this year and it working well. We continue to learn more ways to use our database to the church's advantage—new photo directory, Annual Pledge Campaign, RE registration, and Membership Committee work specifically. We are thinking about going with Microsoft 365 for staff data sharing.

Two—Delegate more work to First Parish volunteers. Progress: The Annual Pledge Campaign has over 50 First Parish members working on it. Likewise, the Auction has roughly 20 people working on it.

Three—Continue work with the First Parish Finance Committee to update financial policies and agreements. Progress: The Finance Committee finished their report and is scheduled give presentations of that report to the Staff, the Standing Committee, the Trustees, and the congregation. The committee has examined the financial policies of the church and has drafted some changes. This work will continue in March. The committee's cash counting policy continues to be well implemented to better our internal controls.

Senior Minister Goals for 20145-16:

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: I met with the leadership subgroup to talk about who should be Chair of the Standing Committee next year. There is ongoing conversation about social justice next year. My sense is that the Social Action Council has a couple of visionary leaders and a number of other members who are not engaged in the process at all. This may result in a crisis for this group after Bethany Lowe is finished with her work at First Parish.

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: Three people joined First Parish the second Sunday in February. The Membership Committee

met in February and is starting to figure out what it has the capacity to do and what will have to wait for later. Likewise, we are finding the new members to be pretty well integrated into First Parish before they sign the book and in less need of these connections than we might have imagined. All agree that it is working well to have the book open once a month and to concentrate on the signing process as a moment when people clearly signal their engagement. All new members since March 2015 will receive in person stewards during this year's Annual Pledge Campaign.

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 held a Large Donor Event on February 27th with an enthusiastic turn out. We mailed a letter to the congregation about pledging and Celebration Sunday on February 24th. This letter listed last year's pledge amount as well as a suggested pledge increase for the coming year. Many people are stepping up to the requested increases. The Auction Team is also formed and working hard. The Auction will be April 30, 2016. The theme has been changed to "May Day."

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: The RE Council continues to struggle to come to an understanding of what it is and what it does. I expect it to take the whole church year to sort these things out. Amy Freedman remains patient with the process and committed to begin next year with greater clarity and purpose. We are planning for a summer RE program that will cover July and August 2016. We are excited about there being programing for children and youth 52 Sundays a year!

Updates on day-to-day ministry

- In February the Annual Pledge Campaign got started in earnest. I have been attending the weekly meetings of this enthusiastic group.
- I presented at a gathering of students at Andover Newton Theological School on the UUA credentialing process.
- I met with Stoney Ballard to further refine the new website.
- I met with Rev. Mary Margaret Earl from the UU Urban Ministry in Boston to see how our church and her organization might work even more closely together.
- I attended a retreat of the Senior Ministers of Large UU Congregations in Santa Barbara, California for a week.
- I helped out at the Large Donor Event of the Annual Pledge Campaign at Tim Jacoby's house on February 27th.

Update on Staff issues and changes

- Bethany Lowe's last day of employment at First Parish will be May 15, 2016. We will have a farewell reception after church. We will save a bit of money this year on her positions.
- Amy Freedman and I will engage a process to talk with parents of teenagers and the RE Council about the needs for a Youth Coordinator. The hiring process will likely happen in May.
- We are advertising for another sexton to compliment Pat, Bob, and Guy.

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

- March 28 – April 4, 2016—Parents' 50th Wedding Anniversary in MT
- May 23-25, 2016—Cedar Hill Study Group, Cape Cod
- June 20-25, 2016—General Assembly in Columbus, OH
- July 2016—Study Leave Month
- August 1-13, 2016—Vacation

Report of the Working Group on SC Leadership Succession
February 26, 2016

Alec Walker, Jeff Brainerd, Patty Popov

Recommendation

The working group proposes that the Standing Committee elect Kristin Haddad as Chair, with a term to run from the day following the Annual Meeting of 2016 through the day of the Annual Meeting of 2017. The working group further recommends that the SC affirm that Kristin's expected incumbency will continue through the following church year (2017-2018), and that the SC will plan to consider her for reconfirmation as Chair in the Spring of 2017.

Process

Mark Russell Prior, the current chair of the SC, appointed the members of the working group in August 2015, with Alec designated as the chair. In November 2015, the group reviewed documents and procedures of the previous chair selection team and decided to substantially replicate their process. In December 2015, we scheduled meetings with all the current members of the Standing Committee and with Rev. Dana, to be held in January and February 2016. Two of us attended each regular SC member interview, which was structured around the questions listed in the attachment. The last meetings were with Howard and Mark, and all three of the working group members attended these meetings. At each interview, working group members took notes, and after each, the interviewers had a brief discussion about what they had heard and understood.

After the interviews were complete, the working group discussed our impressions from the totality of the interviews, weighing what each of the SC members and Howard had told us. We then waited a week for a final meeting, to be sure that our impressions were stable and represented our best collective judgment. At the final meeting we decided on the present recommendation.

A notable characteristic of the interviews was the high level of mutual support that SC members expressed for the SC and for the individuals who could be selected. "Any one of them could be an excellent chair," was a consistent message. There was no politicking – advocacy for a single choice – or drawing of negative lines. Each member volunteered that he or she would strongly support the new Chair in his or her functions, no matter who was chosen. There was a remarkable consistency in the SC's evaluations of one another's strong points and areas where we would need the group's support. In describing their own qualities, interviewees consistently brought up both positive and negative points that others had mentioned about them as well.

Qualities that SC members described in Kristin that would qualify her as Chair

On the basis of our work together on the SC, members noted that Kristin appears to have an excellent sense of group process and an interest in having all members express views before coming to a collective decision. Kristin's attention to the group is active. She is observant, and "reads the room" with intentionality. She makes an effort to clarify her understanding of nuanced situations. Kristin reserves sharing judgment until others have been heard. She expresses her own views succinctly. She is inclined to test and explore ideas critically, and at the end of the exploration is willing to accept others' positions rather than her own initial view if the arguments have been persuasive.

We feel that Kristin's investment in the collective functioning will support the collegiality that has become a hallmark of the SC.

Kristin did an outstanding job when she served as clerk. Creating a readable and accurate record of SC meetings requires sustained attentiveness, an appreciation of context, an ability to synthesize sometimes complex issues and a knack for boiling these down without losing any of the essence. Her literacy, organization and timeliness in that job bode well for service as Chair.

Role of the Standing Committee with Kristin as Chair

We heard universal appreciation of Mark's performance as Chair of the SC. More than one interviewee opened the conversation by saying that "Mark is going to be a tough act to follow." We believe that Kristin can do that, with the SC's help. As we have under Mark's leadership, we need to willingly accept assignments and encourage Kristin to delegate. We'll continue to be the ears and eyes for the whole SC. We need to bring the congregation's sensibilities back to our meetings, and we need to be the voices that make the SC something real in the congregants' lives.

Appendix

Interviewers: Jeff Brainerd, Patty Popov, Alec Walker

Persons interviewed: Kate Crosby, Howard Dana, Dave Elwood, Kristin Haddad, Peter Nobile, Toby Smith Ropeik, Mark Russell Prior, Lora Venesy, Tom Wilson

Questions used to organize the interviews

- 1) Which members do you perceive to be leaders among the Standing Committee?
- 2) How would you rank these leaders as a potential Standing Committee chairperson?
- 3) What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of these perceived leaders?
- 4) Are you interested in a leadership role? If so, where do you place yourself on the spectrum of potential leaders?
- 5) Are there any particular skills and/or trainings you feel would be beneficial for a chair and/or for committee members? Ex: training in meeting facilitation.