

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	Y
Mark Russell Prior	Chair	Y
Lora Venesy	Standing Committee member	Y
Alec Walker	Standing Committee member	Y
Tom Wilson	Treasurer	Y
Guests	Representing	
Doug Baker	Sexton & Curator	Y
Janine Olson	Social Action Council Co-chair	Y
Bethany Lowe	Social Action and Youth Director	Y

Howard opened with a reading of Mary Oliver's "Spring."

Approval of the minutes for the March 13, 2016 Standing Committee meeting was unanimous.

Chair's report

Mark reported that all of his report items would be incorporated into the meeting agenda.

Minister's report

- Social Action: The Social Action Council has been working on its report. Howard is working with SAC to identify a job description for the social action staff person. Howard would like to see the social action program become more outward-looking. SC members reinforced the concept that under First Parish governance policies, the decision on hiring of a Social Action director is in Howard's domain and that oversight for such a position would be Howard's responsibility. The position would not report to the Social Action Council.
- Annual Pledge Campaign planning: next phase is "mop-up" until May 8, at which time the annual budget will be built. About half the congregation has not participated in any way; many people respond only to paper mailings. We are at about 72% of our goal; over 50% of people have increased and fewer people have decreased their pledges over last year. Suggestions were made about how to personalize the final push with folks who have not yet pledged.
- Auction – 52 tickets have been sold so far out of 176. Dollar value of donated items so far is higher than what we'd like to raise. The next phase is to sell more tickets!
- Black Lives Matter update – two non-threatening but derogatory anonymous comments were received via Facebook and email, no cause for alarm. One of the banners blew down and is to be repaired and reinstalled.

Director of Operations' report

- FY2016 Budget Update: of note in February 2016 (a short, relatively financially “quiet” month):
- Pledge income for the month was up—\$60,400 in February 2016, as compared with \$34,700 in February 2015 and \$48,800 in February 2014. See line 3020 under Feb 16.
- Fiscal year-to-date pledge income (line 3020 under Jul 15-Feb 16: \$706,700) is up ~7.3% over previous years at this time (\$651,000 by February 2015 and \$666,100 through February 2014—averaged).
- Box (or plate—see line 3110) collections are down 8% over previous years: \$19,100 so far this fiscal year, as compared to \$20,100 by this time in FY15 and \$21,400 by this time in FY14—averaged.
- Analysis (Tina’s and Fifi’s) into health insurance (line 4470) is ongoing. So far things are adding up correctly.
- We received a \$7,100 refund during this fiscal year (FY16) for a mistake made in FY15 on Social Security taxes (line 4410), so that line is lower than budgeted and adjusted.
- Contribution income looks like it is counted twice (line 3010); Fifi will correct the cell error, which does not affect the bottom line.
- Sanctuary – Terrace stairway update: Kel will review estimates with Howard and Fifi.

Staff Presentation by Doug Baker

“Ministers do the service and prayers, I do the tables and chairs.” Doug briefed the committee on his day to day activities, the many personalities he encounters and the numerous efforts that he must attend to as Sexton. The Committee was amazed and expressed deep gratitude for Doug’s continued stewardship of First Parish. Doug’s work includes maintenance of the church calendar, which can take up to 1-4 hours per day. Doug helps to manage over 1,500 functions annually. He supervises assistant sextons, and works on any/all buildings and grounds issues. Doug dabbles in history, herbs, photography and other activities. He put in a plug for upcoming viewings of “History of the Meeting House” (7PM on 4/15 and Sunday 4/24 at 7PM), a film about First Parish that he narrates.

- Doug passed around a list of facilities priorities, and we reviewed the refinishing of the steeple. The steeple is long overdue for painting and re-gilding. Lead paint removal complicates repainting effort. Current estimates range from \$35,000 to \$92,800; some estimates include full scaffolding, which results in a longer duration between paintings. We are now using solid stain as opposed to latex paint.
- Facilities Long Range plan – Doug passed out a master list of projects (developed with Richard Keleher and others several years ago) which recommended placing around \$60,000 annually into a deferred maintenance budget. Perhaps this money could come out of a targeted facilities maintenance endowment fund.
- The Wright Tavern (and possibly, although not likely, the Meeting House) is on a list of potential recipients for additional CPA funds.
- Stair update – Peter will be helping Doug and Fifi navigate the particulars of this project, hopefully in time for approval at the May Standing Committee meeting.

Treasurer's report

Tom reported that the Trustees are working with the Concord Museum to finalize a lease agreement regarding the Wright Tavern by this year’s annual meeting. The Finance Committee is working on reviewing and updating the Church’s financial policies, mostly clarifications to do with budgeting,

reporting and planning processes, as well as removal of any tone of “distrust.” Any proposed changes will be reviewed with the Standing Committee. Congregational budget presentations are scheduled for March 15, 2016.

Social Action Council report

Janine Olson, SAC co-chair, summarized the results of over a year of research by the SAC gathering information about congregational interests and about how other churches engage in social action. SAC is working to reconnect SAC activities with congregational interests. Janine reported on a desire by the SAC board to become more of a facilitative body than a decision making body. She also provided a handout displaying social justice funding and spending breakdowns. SAC is considering reducing the amount of pledge revenue allocated for social action purposes from 7.5 to 4 percent, moving the 3.5 percent reduction into the operating budget to support social action staffing. The 4 percent would continue to feed into social action grants and other social action activities. The plan is to work in two year phases, identifying priorities and trying out different approaches.

A calendar of upcoming efforts and deadlines was discussed, including a SAC Board retreat, the Social Action grants dinner, working with Jericho Road to obtain board training, planning and coordination of priority activities, and overall execution of the proposed new SAC plan. Janine also mentioned that there is some uncertainty around future SAC leadership and there is a need for new leaders to become engaged.

- Alec commented on the impressive size of the Social Justice spending numbers; Bethany reported that we gave away over \$160,000 last year, not including Bethany’s salary. Howard pointed out that plate collections account for many of the unique spending categories – Lora encouraged SAC to gather more data from our annual report to more accurately describe Social Justice efforts (e.g. number of Open Table meals, etc.).
- Mark asked about how the transition in staffing after Bethany’s departure will be managed. Janine thinks that the role of the SAC “point person” during the transition may provide a better indication of the requirements for the role of the person who eventually replaces Bethany.
- Jeff asked about whether or not the SAC Board is interested in coalescing around one particular idea. Janine reported that in other churches, the singular focus resulted in an initial boost in fundraising and engagement, and then a drop off. The SAC Board is hopeful that a new community organizer (Bethany’s replacement) will help in setting priorities and activities that the congregation feels passionate about.

Group/Liaison reports

- Subgroups: no updates
- Liaisons:
 - Denominational Affairs – Kate reported that April 23, 2016 is the Massachusetts Bay District’s next, maybe last, annual meeting, and that FP Denominational Affairs still has to assign delegates. The final MBD proposal (currently on the web site) will be distributed to SC members. Also a General Assembly, this year in Columbus OH, slate is being assembled.
 - Membership – Kristin reported encountering a person becoming a new member this morning who already had a pledge check in hand.
 - Forum – Jeff volunteered to attend the next Forum organizational meeting and perhaps become the liaison to this group.

- Environmental Leadership Team – Kate reported that Evan Seitz has been working with the Bedford UU around climate justice issues, and the ELT is interested in exploring the idea of having Evan work with us. ELT is planning climate justice activities, and a “livable climate” resolution for FP may be proposed to the congregation in the months ahead. ELT is expected to make a presentation at Annual Meeting this June.

Members’ reports

Lora reported several people approached her after service this morning feeling a disconnect between Howard’s sermon topic and what they believed we are actually doing as a congregation, and she also heard questions about church leadership and the direction of Social Action. Howard asked that congregants be encouraged to speak to him about such concerns so that he can address them directly. People also mentioned to Lora that they enjoyed seeing the tapestry behind the pulpit.

Kate reported that people at the worship sharing circle were enthusiastic and excited. Also, Kate reported that a person who has had a challenging medical situation, has been feeling unseen by the Church and is distressed about that. The person also reported that she had approached the church several times but could not attend because she could not find a parking space. Howard will reach out and connect with the person. Staff will also emphasize the importance of leaving parking spaces close to the church available for those who have a serious need.

Kate also reported on an upcoming climate justice event in November, with speaker Tim DeChristopher.

Future Agenda Items were briefly reviewed. The next meeting is on May 15, 2016. The June 12, 2016 meeting, held on the same night as our Annual Meeting, will be our transition meeting, with new and departing members. The SC self-evaluation will be on the agenda. Kristin’s first meeting as Chair is scheduled for July 10, 2016. Tom would like to put financial policies on a future agenda for discussion.

Senior Minister Evaluation

The committee agreed that the Senior Minister Evaluation will be made public.

The public meeting concluded at 8:30 p.m., and the committee went into Executive Session.

The executive session ended at 9:30 p.m.

Attachment
/pn

Minister's Report to the Standing Committee
First Parish in Concord—March 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: Staff members wrote descriptions for various pages of the new website. We are using Google sheets for our online pledging. We are also tracking the stewards' work and communicating through this tool. About 50% of our pledges are coming in online. People seem quite comfortable with this technology. We are moving toward Microsoft 360 for cloud-based data storage for staff. This will improve file sharing and will allow staff members to work more easily when not physically at the church. This move will also save us money.

Two—Delegate more work to First Parish volunteers. Progress: The Annual Pledge Campaign has many volunteers who are keeping the fundraising going well. Fifi continues to retain the work that is of a confidential nature. We are preparing to do a re-up of existing groups at First Parish since it has been a year since the last one.

Three—Continue work with the First Parish Finance Committee to update financial policies and agreements. Progress: The Finance Committee finished their report and has given presentations of that report to the Staff, the Standing Committee, the Trustees, and the congregation. The committee is actively reviewing the financial policies of First Parish that have not been looked at since 2003. This work will continue into April.

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: I continue to see encouraging signs that there is forward movement in the conversation about how First Parish engages in social justice work. Particularly Roselyn Romberg and Janine Olsen are working hard on a report about how other churches engage. We are also moving toward decisions on what sort of staff person to hire next and decisions about how the 7.5% will be used.

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: No people joined First Parish the second Sunday in March—we figured this would happen sooner or later. All new members since March 2015 have received in person stewards during this year’s Annual Pledge Campaign. We are planning a New Member Brunch, a New Member movie night to view Doug Baker’s history film, and a New Member Recognition Sunday in May.

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 has done tremendous work in March. We are ahead of schedule in our pledge drive. In-person stewards and email stewards are reaching out to many in the congregation. Despite all this effort, at the end of March, fully half the households at First Parish have taken no action on pledging. We will send out a second letter and pledge card in April after the official campaign goes into “mop-up.” So far 20 households have responded to our call to increase their pledges to \$500 or \$1000. As always, this is slow, steady work that will take many years to accomplish.

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

Measures: Ensure RE participation is tracked
 Provide programming 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: RE is running well and the planning for next year has started in earnest. Amy and Dawn are working on the calendar and thinking about how curriculum fits into it. Dawn went to a multi-day training on curriculum mapping offered by LREDA. The Easter egg hunt between services was a hit.

Updates on day-to-day ministry

- I preached the installation sermon at First Parish in Lincoln for Rev. Manish Mishra
- I helped lead the second Standing Committee Retreat for the year.
- I gave one Coming of Age tour to youth from the Washington, DC area
- I spent lots of time on the Annual Pledge Campaign, including canvassing some of the large donors myself.
- I helped with the Stewards’ Training for the Annual Pledge Campaign.
- During Easter Week I led the Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday service. We had a great turnout on Easter and were glad to have two services.
- Additionally, I preached at the Concord ecumenical Sunrise Service on Easter.

Update on Staff issues and changes

- Amy Freedman and Dawn van Patton have been working on hiring a director for our summer RE program.

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

- 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