

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
<b>Guests</b>	<b>Representing</b>	
Bob Bratt		Y
Kate Svrcek		Y^
Janine Olson	Social Action Council	Y
Leslie Fischer	Social Action Board	Y
Wendy Holt	Social Action Board	Y
Tricia Haut	Social Action Board	Y
Don Haut	Social Action Board	Y

Howard opened the meeting with a reading from the UUA hymnal, by Ralph Waldo Emerson, on kindness.

A motion to approve minutes from the 4/10/2016 meeting was accepted and approved unanimously.

**Chair’s report**

Mark noted that his report would be incorporated into relevant agenda item discussions.

**Minister’s report**

In addition to the information provided in his monthly report (attached) Howard reported the following:

- 30 resumes have been submitted for the Church Administrator position. Fifi is evaluating the resumes with the intention of identifying a smaller number of candidates for interviews.
  - Howard noted that the budget presented tonight will include questions about whether funding for a number of positions should be full or part-time. Alec noted that it would be good to work on increasing the volunteer corps from within the congregation. This has been a focus for Howard and other staff members.
- a) Annual Pledge Campaign results – pledge revenues are tracking closely to pledging patterns over the last 5 years. Another \$20,000 was received yesterday. The campaign to date has recorded \$958,000 in pledges, which is still \$61,000 away from our target. Tom reported that the likely final number will be closer to \$975,000, slightly more than last year. Tom noted that a review of

the last five years suggests that we might have reached a “ceiling” in the size of our pledge base. In summary, while many parishioners increased their pledge, pledging patterns have not changed, and the number of pledging households has declined. Tom sees a need for increasing pledge unit capacity in coming years. Howard suggested that increasing pledges might be the subject of a Standing Committee retreat or an in-house training effort.

- b) Auction results – Howard reported good results, with a final figure near \$45,000 net gain. The amount raised will be split between the FY2016 and FY2017 budgets. Mark asked Dave to express the gratitude of the Standing Committee to the Auction Committee and other Auction volunteers.
- c) Black Lives Matter update – the banners are back up, and First Parish recently recorded an all-time forum attendance record at the Carl Williams forum. A small number of parishioners have questioned why more was not made of the banner theft, and Howard pointed out that press releases were sent out to a number of media outlets. Howard confirmed that we have a backup banner in case of another theft.

Shortly after the banners were stolen, Mark received and distributed two emails from congregation members to the Standing Committee requesting that the Black Lives Matter banners be taken down. Both parishioners had been involved in discussions prior to the hanging of the banners, and their concerns were considered at that time. No other parishioners have spoken against the banners since that time. Mark confirmed with Standing Committee members that there was no need to revisit the question.

#### **Director of Operations' report**

- a) Budget update - of note in March 2016:
  - Pledge income for the month was down—\$55,872 in March 2016, as compared with \$85,330 in March 2015 and \$60,500 in March 2014. See line 3020 under Mar 16.
  - Fiscal year-to-date pledge income (line 3020 under Jul 15-Mar 16: \$762,591) is up ~4.2% over previous years at this time (\$736,396 by March 2015 and \$726,673 March 2014—averaged).
  - Box (or plate—see line 3110) collections, always highest at Easter time, are down 1.8% over previous years: \$24,322 so far this fiscal year, as compared to \$24,441 by this time in FY15 and \$25,073 by this time in FY14—averaged.
  - We received a \$7,100 refund during this fiscal year (FY16) for a mistake made mostly in FY15 on Social Security taxes (line 4410), so that line is lower than budgeted and adjusted.
  - One piece of big news is a \$7,600 Solar Renewable Energy Credit (SREC) check we received in March. Because we have a registered and certified solar array, we may sell credits back to a market filled with organizations mandated to generate (or buy) them. SRECs are sold separately from the electricity they represent. We generate and sell credits to these organizations (through a broker)—then these organizations remain in compliance. This month First Parish was paid \$475 per kilowatt hour, as compared to \$280 and \$285 per kilowatt hour we've made in prior years. While SREC credits are ahead, our energy savings targets are behind target due to net metering) – we are saving \$2,000/yr, and expectations were that we would save more like \$2,400/yr.
  - All told, we are on target to finish the fiscal year with a surplus, or positive net income.
- b) Spending adjustments – Fifi requested approval for spending increases for three line items. Line 4230, \$270 for recruiting/hiring of Church Administrator; Line 5950, increase of \$2,639 for

Director of Operations salary increase in support of extra hours for the remainder of the fiscal year; and Line 7180, increase of \$1,100 for fundraising costs. All three motions to increase spending on these line items were approved unanimously. It was noted that surplus or unspent money from other line items often covers unanticipated expenses like these.

- c) Sanctuary – Terrace stairway update. Peter, Howard, and Doug have met and agreed on the scope of a potential project. Peter met with Mark Brennan who is prepared to complete the work late in the summer. Peter and the architect, Robert Taylor, will be meeting with Concord building officials next week to finalize an approach. We want to be sure that anything we install does not create other, unanticipated consequences such as making stair runs too narrow. Code deficiencies including replacement of the wood handrail jogs will be addressed.
- d) Bi-annual staff compensation review. Fifi presented a breakdown of compensation costs for First Parish employees. Howard pointed out that Amy's salary is low, given her experience. Members acknowledged her contribution, but reflected that she was hired to perform the duties of a Director of Religious Education. Examined in this light, Amy's salary is only slightly below 90% of the UUA recommended midpoint for such a position.

### **Treasurer's report**

Tom, with help from the Trustees of Parish Donations and others, has launched an effort to develop a Planned Giving/Legacy program. Proceeds of this long-term program would be managed by the Trustees. Challenges include marketing the program, and the committee is researching similar efforts in other organizations. For instance, Patty reported that bequests, gift annuities and charitable IRA plans are all possible vehicles people might be able to choose within such a program. The plan is to launch the program around Thanksgiving of this year.

### **Social Action Council's report**

Janine Olson, Social Action Council co-chair attended the meeting to discuss the possibility of a social action related warrant article at the 2015 Annual Meeting. Janine reviewed a PowerPoint presentation that summarized Social Action at First Parish. The Social Action Council has recently conducted a number of interviews and listening sessions regarding Social Action at First Parish, and has researched in detail a number of other church's approaches to Social Action. Results from within First Parish show a desire for better integration of social action with other church activities, as well as a desire for a wider variety of event types, more support for multiple social action priorities, and more intergenerational activity.

SAC proposed that a warrant article be considered that would reduce the current allocation of pledge monies from 7.5% to 4%, and release the 3% decrease to fund the position of social action director from the operating budget. The reason for this proposal was to put the authority for supervision of the director under Howard's responsibility as head of staff, and to codify the existing arrangement in which a portion of the SAC monies go toward social action purposes such as grants, and a portion toward staff. Standing Committee members engaged in discussion with Janine and interested guests. Several members remarked upon the importance of social action at First Parish. Concerning the social action director reporting responsibility, Mark pointed out that according to First Parish governance policies, all positions report to Howard as Head of Staff, no matter the funding source. Also, SAC members were looking for a guarantee that the social action director would be included in the operating budget. Staff positions for other programs are not guaranteed in that way. Standing Committee members pointed out Howard's responsibility for managing the resources of First Parish in keeping with bylaws and Standing Committee policies and the corresponding need for flexibility to do so.

A few Standing Committee members mentioned that there should be discussion about reducing the SAC allocation without any strings attached. In a time of constrained revenues, congregation members might want to reduce the amount of money allocated to SAC, and provide more money for other programs in the operating budget.

After discussion, it seemed that a warrant article would not be of benefit, and SAC decided not to move forward with the warrant article this year. The Social Action 7.5% set aside from pledge revenues will continue unchanged.

**FY2017 Budget presentation and discussion**

Fifi presented the draft budget for FY2017 and summarized possible adjustments to various income and expense lines in order to achieve a balanced budget. The final budget, to be considered by the Standing Committee on June 5, 2016 will be based on pledge revenue projections finalized in the coming weeks. Tom is preparing to present the draft budget to the congregation in a meeting next Sunday, and the committee offered advice as to what the Standing Committee would like to learn from the congregation. The basic message Tom will deliver is that while we had a successful pledge campaign this year, we have not increased the overall pledge amount, the FY17 budget is tight, and we can't do everything we said we wanted to do.

**Warrant approval and signing**

The 2016 annual meeting warrant was reviewed and signed. Mark asked whether food should be provided at coffee hour, and also whether child care should be arranged. Jeff agreed to develop a message to First Parish committee leaders inviting committees to sponsor the food. Mark will send the message out via his emailing list. Given the limited time available between the service and the meeting, Howard suggested finger food offerings to provide quick energy options to those who need it. Mark will coordinate child care arrangements with Amy.

**Group/Liaison reports**

a) Subgroups:

- a. Standing Committee Evaluation – Lora noted that only two Standing Committee members have provided responses so far, and to please get responses in ASAP (due by Friday 5/20/16)
- b. Nominating – Patty reported that the Nominating Committee will be putting two new Standing Committee candidates at our annual meeting, Kate Svercek and John Lowe.

b) Liaisons:

- a. Denominational Affairs – Kate reported that the Mass Bay District met on April 23, 2016 and voted to dissolve.
- b. Membership – Kristin reported that the membership committee has been very active, meeting and following up with new members. Some membership events have been held, but attendance has generally been low.
- c. RE – Dave reminded the Standing Committee about the upcoming RE dinner intended to gather people interested in RE together to brainstorm potential RE program improvements. Dave suggested that it would be great to have Standing Committee members at the dinner.

**Members' reports**

Kate reported that the Environmental Leadership Team will meet this coming Tuesday (5/17/16) to review current climate justice initiatives and to brainstorm new ideas for next year. Also, Kate reported on a Chicago-area congregation that is sponsoring efforts to resettle Syrian refugees. Howard reported that one First Parish congregant made a donation to the Unity Temple congregation to help with such efforts.

**Other SC Member Business**

Lora reported on the UUA Woburn Fund grant program, which awards grants to congregations for activities or projects related to leadership development, membership growth, multigenerational or multicultural program growth, accessibility improvements and so on. Application ideas need to be as specific as possible, with measurable outcomes. The next deadline of May 31, 2016 seems too soon, but the deadline for the next grant cycle is October 31, 2016 and this should provide enough time for applications to be developed.

**Review Future Agenda Items**

- a) The Standing Committee special meeting for budget approval meeting is on June 5, 2016 at 6pm. The Annual Meeting will be on June 12, 2016. The regular Standing Committee meeting will be held on June 12, 2016. This meeting will include newly elected SC members and perhaps a potluck dinner as well.
- b) Woburn Fund application ideas will be added to the future items list to be discussed at a future meeting.

**UUA presidential candidate: Rev. Jeanne Pupke**

- a) Two people are currently in the race for UUA president. Howard would like us to help make it possible for Rev. Jeanne Pupke to run as well. Jeanne is a strong candidate who has much experience working with the UUA board. Approval of twenty congregations is required to put a person on the ballot. A motion was made for First Parish to support Jeanne Pupke in her wish to be on the ballot for UUA President. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting, and the meeting ended at 10:10 PM.

Attachments  
/pn

**Minister's Report to the Standing Committee**  
First Parish in Concord—April 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 got caught up on uploading sermon podcasts. We continue to use the database for all things related to the Annual Pledge Campaign. Our ability to make it meet our needs grows the more we use it. For example, the new directory and the database informed one another throughout the process of producing the directory.

**Two—Delegate more work to First Parish volunteers.** Progress: The Annual Pledge Campaign has many volunteers who are keeping the fundraising going well. As Fifi continues to get to know the congregation better, she is able to ask for the help she needs. We have the front office covered for the summer with volunteers.

**Three—Continue work with the First Parish Finance Committee to update financial policies and agreements.** Progress: The Finance Committee gave their benchmarking survey results to a variety of groups in the congregation including the staff and the Standing Committee. The presentations were well received. The report pointed out the need for a Planned Giving Program. Work in this area will start in May. The Finance Committee has reviewed the church's financial policies. A new draft has been written and will be presented soon.

***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: More conversation about how First Parish engages in social justice work continued in April. The SAC board held listening sessions—resulting in only 10 people giving input. The survey results from other churches have informed the process. The SAC board hopes to bring something to the Annual Meeting in June. Bethany has been working to finish up her time with us and put things in order for us to go forward.

**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: One person joined First Parish the second Sunday in April. The Membership Committee is working well under the leadership of Suzanne Lowe. We have given ourselves the whole year to try some things and have a good idea what to begin next year with. We are planning 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 Auction happened on April 30<sup>th</sup> and was a tremendous success. The party was sold out and quite fun. The online bidding worked well and the live auction raised a considerable sum. Best of all, the Auction Team worked well together, felt great satisfaction with the event, and did not get burned out.

### **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: Amy, Dawn, and the RE Council were busy in April planning for next year. We have set the RE calendar and that, in turn, informed the worship calendar. The RE Council came to some resolution on its internal structure and operation. We are in good shape for the summer RE program and for next year.

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

- I met with the chaplain at Emerson Hospital to learn more about their pastoral care program and how it could fit with ours.
- I solicited pledges from the top ten donors who had yet to give to the Annual Pledge Campaign. This is good and very time-consuming work.
- I met with the new Executive Director of Jericho Road, Dan Bush.
- I met with one of the candidates for UUA President, Allison Miller.
- I finished up my supervisory class at Andover Newton Theological Seminary
- I performed two memorial services in April.
- I enjoyed attending the church auction.

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

- Cassy Bosworth gave her notice in April. We are planning for her replacement. Her last day working for First Parish will be May 6, 2016. We are taking this opportunity to look carefully at what kind of work is needed in this position.

**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