

Regular Attendees		Present
Fifi Ball	Director of Operations	Y
Jeff Brainerd	Standing Committee member	Y
Kate Crosby	Standing Committee member (outgoing)	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	N
Toby Smith Ropeik	Standing Committee member	Y
Mark Russell Prior	Chair	Y
Lora Venesy	Standing Committee member	Y
Alec Walker	Standing Committee member	N
Tom Wilson	Treasurer	Y
Kate Svrcek	Standing Committee member (new)	Y
John Lowe	Standing Committee member (new)	Y
Guests	Representing	
Rev. Margie King Saphier	Race Conversations Group	Y
Wendy Holt		

Prior to the formal opening of the meeting, the group sat in a moment of silence in honor of those affected by the tragedy in Orlando, FL.

Howard opened the meeting with words from Langston Hughes.

The committee welcomed Kate Svrcek and John Lowe as new members of the Standing Committee. Members also thanked outgoing members Kate Crosby and Alec Walker for their long and devoted service to the Standing Committee. We will miss them! Kate Svrcek and John are now eligible to vote on issues before the committee. Kate Crosby will not be able to vote.

A motion to approve minutes from the 5/15/2016 meeting was accepted and approved unanimously.

Chair’s report

Mark’s comments will be incorporated into relevant meeting agenda items.

Minister's report

In addition to the information provided in his monthly report (attached) Howard fielded a question from John Lowe about whether or not the church will be doing anything regarding the Orlando shootings; Howard is considering what our response might be.

Director of Operations’ report

- a) Budget update - of note in April 2016:

- Pledge income for the month was down—\$53,455 in April 2016, as compared with \$62,740 in April 2015 and \$50,724 in April 2014—averaged = \$56,732. See line 3020 under Apr 16.
- Fiscal year-to-date pledge income (line 3020 under Jul 15-Apr 16: \$816,046) is up ~3.5% over previous years at this time (\$799,136 by April 2015 and \$777,396 April 2014—averaged = \$788,266).
- Box (or plate—see line 3110) collections are down 9.4% over previous years: \$26,934 so far this fiscal year, as compared to \$28,571 by this time in FY15 and \$30,909 by this time in FY14—averaged = \$29,740.
- Cash is up because some households prepaid their FY17 (7/1/16-6/30/17) pledges this month. (Thank you!) These prepaid pledges are not “taken” as income until 7/1/16, the beginning of the new fiscal year. Cash is also up this month because some Ferry Beach 2016 retreat fees have been paid but most expenses have not yet been paid.
- No final net revenue figure on the very successful 2016 Auction yet—income and expenses are still being tallied. When all is settled, we will take \$25k of the net revenue *next* fiscal year (FY17) and the balance as income *this* fiscal year (FY16).
- First Parish’s Social Action Community made grants in April of \$35,900 to 19 organizations (see line 4850).
- All told, we are on target to break even this fiscal year or show a small surplus / positive net income. There are no proposed spending adjustments this month.

Fifi presented the proposed FY17 budget, which is based on a total of 414 pledging households, down from 439 in FY16. Fifi pointed out the SC approved \$15,000 net income adjustment on the last line of the budget. This funding will be allocated from available cash savings if needed to balance the budget. Since the budget was last presented, the use of prior year pledge contributions (lines 3050 and 3055) included in the proposed budget has been reduced to \$12,000. A 50% increase in the hours for the youth director position has also been included. Going forward, the church administrator position salary and benefits will cover the work that Victor Curran was doing this past year. Summer RE costs and the substitute music director will be paid for out of existing funds.

Our UUA dues contribution is lower than hoped, in part because the budget now includes health care coverage for next year’s ministerial intern. However, our UUA dues ratio has increased from 47% to 54% of our fair share, due to our reduced size. There is no contribution to our long term building maintenance funding, and there are no staff raises in this current budget. Fifi has been approached by at least one parishioner interested in raising additional funds for staff pay increases. Mark pointed out that if such funds were to be used for pay increases, they would need to reoccur next year. If the funds were not expected to reoccur, they might instead be used for staff bonuses.

The committee discussed today’s annual meeting. Kate Crosby was struck by the openness with which the congregation discusses and supports increases to our staff. John commented that he appreciated Rev. Amy Freedman’s comments about how well off we are as an organization, and her gratitude to be with us. The meeting turnout was very good. Mark noted that the total attendee count was 118. The committee remarked on the lack of acrimony during the meeting, and the very professional and competent handling of the budget presentation.

Treasurer's report

Tom reported that a new version of the financial policies will be distributed to members for review. The tone of the current policies can sometimes evoke a sense of suspicion. The revised policies try to address this issue. The planned giving program group met and plans to meet again in the fall.

Black Lives Matter banner update

Margie King Saphier, representing the Black Lives Matter group, came to the Standing Committee to request that the display of the "Black Lives Matter" and "Join the Conversation" banners be extended.

Margie reported on a number of program activities and connections with other community groups interested in racial justice. For example, First Parish and the Robbins house worked jointly on a fundraising project centered around the showing of the movie "Slavery By Another Name", which elicited a great deal of discussion. In May, 107 people attended a Forum with ACLU attorney Carl Williams. Holy Family Church and West Concord Union Church have both expressed interest in collaborating on race awareness activities. A total of 36 people participated in "Waking Up White" book discussion groups at First Parish. Next year the group is considering "The New Jim Crow" as a text. Margie reported that the group has been collaborating with the Diversity Committee on a fall film series called "The Power of Illusion ". Members have also participated in meetings regarding the selection of the new Concord Carlisle Regional School District superintendent, especially in sessions regarding the METCO program.

The committee discussed whether or not to extend display of the banners and for how long. The committee discussed the possibility of keeping the banner up for at least another six months, Staff, led by Howard, Marion and Doug Baker will be available to monitor the presence of the banner and respond to any issues that arise.

Peter mentioned that the Town has asked that First Parish engage in a formal permitting process to apply for display of the banners; Peter will work with Margie to complete the relevant applications.

The Standing Committee voted unanimously in support of a motion to display the banners through January 2, 2017. The banner status will be reviewed monthly, and banner display reconsidered at the December 2016 Standing Committee meeting.

Social Action Council Process

Howard reported that in terms of social action, we are in a fertile period as a congregation, and that it is time to look at this realm of church life. What is working? What could work better? The social action examination process will be deliberative and conversational, and will allow input from a number of individuals and groups on deciding Social Action Community (SAC) board priorities, screening processes and the like. Howard is responsible for decisions around staffing. Howard's proposed timeline for the next Social Action Director's hire is that between now and mid-August, the SAC board will draft the job description. The job will be advertised and candidates will be evaluated through September. Howard will interview and make a final decision in the fall.

Wendy Holt commented that the SAC board is developing a more concrete agenda of what needs to be accomplished. Kate Crosby suggested that the Environmental Leadership Team's consideration of working with Bedford's Evan Seitz might be thought of as an example for the SAC pilot program's

staffing approach. Members expressed support for the idea recommended by SAC to work in two-year cycles.

Group/Liaison reports

a) Liaisons:

- a. SAC – Lora reported that additional discussion is underway about the future SAC staff member’s role. The council is concerned about how best to draw future members to sit in SAC board positions.
- b. ELT – Kate reported that 16 individuals, including 8 UU ministers, were arrested in West Roxbury as part of a pipeline protest. Other UU activists have been arrested at various protests, and funds are being raised for their legal defense.
- c. RE Council – Dave reported a successful “RE Refresh” dinner. Leslie Pelton will once again be RE Council chair and a full slate is available for next year’s council. The council is thrilled about the elimination of RE fees.
- d. Arts Council – Tom reported that the organ rededication events this fall will be substantial and exciting.

Other SC Member Business

Mark thanked Standing Committee members in attendance at the Annual Meeting for spreading out to talk to congregation members after the meeting. Such meetings are a great chance to connect.

Review Future Agenda Items

Kristin noted that we WILL be having a July meeting (scheduled for July 10) with a relatively light agenda including an initial financial policy review. Kristin will also be scheduling an orientation session for new members. Mark suggested that it would be good to develop a standard package of orientation materials for future use. Dave would be willing to work on this.

Standing Committee Self-evaluation

Lora reviewed the Standing Committee self-evaluation data gathered by her and Toby relative to our six stated goals. The evaluation showed that progress, often substantial, was made on all of the goals. Two goals, improving operational effectiveness and providing support to our Senior Minister, were well implemented. Others, concerning building a culture of stewardship, functioning with a proactive outward vision and modeling right relations and kindness in communications, will require more work.

During the discussion, members recognized the importance of regular, effective communication as a sign of transparency and openness. One challenge is ensuring the consistency and appropriateness of the message. This responsibility falls to the chair.

In a discussion concerning the right relations goal, it was noted that as the year progressed, some of the proposed actions seemed unnecessary and no longer relevant. Other actions, such as kindness in communications were practiced well by Standing Committee members in the course of our work.

Lora and Toby noted that the “checklist” approach to evaluation seemed to limit the feedback received. The responses were less colorful, and we might consider moving to a more general evaluation. The committee considered this and agreed that in the future, some combination of

narrative and quantitative review would be beneficial. Toby suggested that we more critically evaluate each goal, review the indicators, and ask whether or not this still a good goal?

Members also discussed the possibility of reducing the number of actions to be taken in support of goals. Howard suggested that we, like the staff, might consider developing a concrete list of 3 or 4 things that will help move our ministry forward. For instance, how best can the Standing Committee enable the Social Action discussion?

Howard also suggested that we are getting close to being able to talk about where we want to be in 5 years – the church is heading in a direction, and the leadership is coalescing around that direction.

Toby and others noted that we would be well served to catalogue accomplishments of the past year, as these are very useful indicators of our growth and evolution as a committee. Mark noted that this information will be included in the Standing Committee's annual report to the congregation.

SC Leadership Transition Discussion

Kristin reviewed a few thoughts she has for the coming year, including:

- 1) A goal of having shorter meetings. This may require people to do more homework, and exchange ideas before the meeting.
- 2) That each member, individually, meet with the Chair over coffee – Kristin's goal is one or two members a month. The group agreed that the more we get to know each other, the easier and more productive our working relationships will be.
- 3) That the committee consider developing a covenant, and revising our mission if necessary.

Mark highlighted the importance of Standing Committee member support for the chair. The chair has many planning and management responsibilities and needs committee members to engage in activities to carry out the goals of the committee. Mark noted that the work we do in service to the congregation makes us better leaders both within and outside of First Parish.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting, and the meeting ended at 9:08 PM.

Attachments

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Minister's Report to the Standing Committee
First Parish in Concord—May 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 getting closer and closer to having the content we need to launch the new website. We are eager to start the next church year with the new website. We are planning to offer training to all church staff (and maybe some lay leaders) so they can do some of their own website content management. We are interviewing for a new Church Administrator. One of the top qualifications we are seeking is in the realm of technology. Our new Fidelity account is up and running and we are in the process of transferring our stock sales to this less expensive platform. The Auction Committee also used online resources well in doing their work. We updated the database to better capture RE registration data.

Two—Delegate more work to First Parish volunteers. Progress: Dian Pekin coordinated the farewell party for Cassy Bosworth. Jane Johnson will be volunteering in the office for the rest of the year helping with order of service production. Additionally both Victor Curran and Tina Storey have helped out with tasks while we are without a Church Administrator.

Three—Continue work with the First Parish Finance Committee to update financial policies and agreements. Progress: This work is now done and waiting to be presented to the Standing Committee by the church treasurer.

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: My third annual evaluation happened in May accompanied by a good conversation about the progress we have all made in working together. I welcome this yearly opportunity to take stock and make needed adjustments. With Bethany's leaving, we are in a fertile time to think about the Social Action needs of the congregation and how best to staff for those needs. The process is a thorough one, but may be moving more slowly than some members would like.

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 the church in May. The Membership Committee has tried a number of times to have gatherings of newer members. These have all needed to be cancelled because of a lack of participation. We will be reviewing our strategy at our June meetings and proposing a modified plan for next year.

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 finished up its work in May and celebrated its success. Fifi and I began the process of putting the budget together for next year. Because we did not reach the funding goal, we will need to make some hard choices about what to fund and what to leave unfunded. We now have three years of data on the pledge campaign and know roughly how much we can expect to raise. In order to expand our programs, we will need to do some additional fundraising in the congregation.

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: As the year comes to a close, it is clear that Amy Freedman has won over children, youth, and their parents this year. The RE Council has reformed itself and is working well. The consistency of the RE Program and the good participation of children and youth, even on vacation Sundays, is a testament to Amy and Dawn's hard work. We are looking forward to rejuvenating the senior high youth program next year with a new Youth Director.

Updates on day-to-day ministry

- I participated in the installation of Rev. Heather Janulus in Winchester, MA.
- I met with Tom Wilson and others to begin working on a planned giving campaign at First Parish to start in the fall.
- I took a worship planning retreat to map out the worship calendar and come up with service topics for next year.
- I met with my ministers' study group on Cape Cod.
- I attended the RE Council's world café event to plan for next year.

Update on Staff issues and changes

- Cassy Bosworth's last day working for First Parish will be May 6, 2016. We are interviewing for a new Church Administrator with a preferred start date of July 1, 2016
- Bethany Lowe's last day was Sunday, May 15th. We are in the process of advertising and recruiting for both a Youth Coordinator and a Social Action Director. We hope the

Youth Director will start after Labor Day and the Social Action Director will start by October 1, 2016.

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

- June 20-25, 2016—General Assembly in Columbus, OH
- July 2016—Study Leave Month
- August 1-13, 2016—Vacation