

Regular Attendees		Present
Fifi Ball	Director of Operations	Y
Jane Barnes	Treasurer	Y
Jeff Brainerd	Standing Committee member	Y
Rev. Howard Dana	Senior Minister	Y
Dave Elwood	Chair	Y
C. C. King	Standing Committee member	Y
Peter Nobile	Clerk	Y
Liz Rust	Standing Committee member	Y
Susan See	Standing Committee member	Y
Kate Svrcsek	Standing Committee member	
Lora Venesy	Standing Committee member	Y
Tom Wilson	Standing Committee member	
Rev. Liz Weber	Minister for Pastoral Care	
Alec Walker	Standing Committee <i>alumnus, serving tempus esse</i>	Y
Guests		
Adrienne Betancourt	Social Action Manager	Y

Rev. Dana opened our meeting with words by UU Minister Max Coots. Adrienne lit our chalice and we held a moment of silence.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously

VOTED: to accept the February 2020 Standing Committee (SC) meeting minutes as amended, and to incorporate them into the permanent record.

Director of Operations Report

Fifi is keeping an eye on one line item – an equipment budget that may exceed our \$2,000 SC approval requirement threshold – and reported that 2019 pledge income in January was strong. Fifi reported on two other issues:

- 2020 annual pledge campaign: to date we have 146 pledgers and \$514,000 pledged to the FY 2020 campaign, a stronger showing than the same time last years. At least 41 households have committed to the \$520 pledge challenge, out of a total of more than 90 pledgers who have increased their pledges this year. It is to be determined whether the *Building Our Base* emphasis in the campaign is working.
- Anticipated changes in income and expenses: Fifi reviewed a detailed spreadsheet that totals an overall increase of about \$150,000 to a total FY 2020 budget of \$1,225,000. There was a lengthy discussion about various line items. Howard emphasized that this represents about a 10% increase over last year’s budget, and that encouraging congregants to pledge will build participation and help raise this money.

Senior Minister's Report

Howard has agreed to be an "on call" minister for justice emergencies through the UU College of Social Justice. The group discussed how Howard's commitments to the denomination and his efforts to broaden his ministry beyond an emphasis on administrative work can be brought back into First Parish more directly. Adrienne suggested lifting up the Immigrant Justice Task Force's work in conjunction with Howard's UUSC ministerial and advocacy work. Howard discussed the UU large church group, which supports ministers and reviews trends and challenges to large church ministers including staff supervision, fundraising and public speaking commitments. There are 43 churches in the United States with 550 adult members or more, and the bulk of the UUA's growth comes from these large churches. Religious education (RE) is failing in most smaller churches – about 1/3 of churches no longer have RE programs – so large churches support this facet of our denomination. The UUA staff is also shrinking due to lost income.

Howard distributed a draft COVID-19 policy chart for First Parish, which the SC discussed at length. There are 41 COVID-19 cases currently in Middlesex County as of today, and because more than half of our congregants are over 60 years-old we must take proper precautions. The likelihood is growing that First Parish may need to close to the public relatively soon. Alec emphasized the need to not amplify the feelings of panic around this situation, but to act from an abundance of caution. Plans are underway for explaining how First Parish will be employing various technologies to support worship and pastoral work including telephone, internet, snail mail, Zoom for meetings, and so on. We discussed how to communicate a calm and orderly shift from business as usual toward whatever temporary measures we need to employ.

Standing Committee general business

- Capital campaign discussion: the group discussed the Environmental Team's (ET) urgency around raising money for ET initiatives, which seems to be disconnected from broader capital improvement and fundraising efforts. Howard wants the ET to go through an overall capital campaign consensus building process that could take at least a year, and the SC agreed with that approach. Adriene has already offered her organizational skills and expertise to the ET to craft the right message, build awareness and develop a positive path forward, but so far without success. The group agreed that no real capital raising discussions should begin in earnest until after the annual pledge campaign is over in May. Another avenue for paying for specific initiatives might be through restricted gifts. Peter is to attend the next ET meeting to help the group understand the larger context in our budgeting and capital planning processes.
- General Assembly delegate vote: upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously VOTED: to approve the 2020 slate of General Assembly delegates, as submitted by Rev. Dr. Jim Sherblom.
- Belonging Team: we talked about how best to move forward with recommendations and next steps coming out of the excellent work this group is doing, and we will discuss this more at our April SC meeting.
- Standing Committee general feedback: we discussed SC pulpit participation and coffee hour conversations as a result of our slightly higher visibility.

Governance Subcommittee report

Susan reviewed proposed changes to the Membership policy, which technically is not official until the bylaws have been revised. The group had a lengthy discussion about changes to the policy, which will be revised and represented at the April SC meeting.

The main meeting was closed at 9:36 PM, and there was an Executive Session. With no further business before the Committee, the Executive Session was closed at 10:05 PM and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,
Peter Nobile, Clerk