

First Parish in Concord Standing Committee

Meeting November 9, 2021

Fifi Ball	Manager of Operations	Y
Michael Beer	Standing Committee Member	Y
Howard Dana	Senior Minister	Y
Jim Hawks	Standing Committee Member	Y
Jennifer Izzo	Clerk	Y
C.C. King	Standing Committee Member	Y
Gib Metcalf	Standing Committee Member	Y
Caroline Washburn Minkin	Standing Committee Member	Y
Heather Packard	Treasurer	Y
Jim Reynolds	Standing Committee Member	Y
Liz Rust	Chair	Y
Susan See	Standing Committee Member	Y
Virginia Taylor	Standing Committee Member	N

THIS MEETING WAS HELD VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM

Howard started with a poem, “Down Autumn” by Peter Cooley.

Minister’s Report

- 2 new members joined First Parish due to the efforts of the Pastoral Care Committee, and others may be close to joining. Susan asked if information about the new members could be shared with the congregation. Howard agreed that it would be great if the Congregational Committee could share a short description about new members with the congregation.
- Susan commented that our attendance numbers (including Zoom) are very close to what they were in 2019 when people were still attending church in person.

Director of Operations Report

- The committee had no comments or questions on Fifi’s report.

Approval of Minutes

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously

VOTED: to accept the October, 2021 Standing Committee (SC) meeting minutes, and to incorporate them into the permanent record.

Standing Committee Operations

- Silver Loan to the Concord Museum. Howard described First Parish’s long-standing relationship with the Concord Museum. The church’s communion silver is on long-term loan to the Museum. This 13-piece silver set has been in continual use since the late 1600’s. The Museum keeps the

silver safe and polished, and insures it. First Parish has the right to use the silver at any time, upon prior notice. In the past, the term of the loan agreement was five years. Howard and Liz agreed to increase the current loan term to ten years. Either party can terminate the agreement with prior notice. They also simplified the authorized signatory sign-off: Heather and Liz are authorized to sign documents related to the silver on behalf of the officers.

- **Policy Reviews**

The Committee began a standard review of the First Parish Preamble, Mission Statement & Strategic Ends Policies to determine if anything needs to be updated. We will continue the effort at the next Committee meeting (December, 2021).

- Section 2.1: “The Senior Minister, as head of the First Parish staff, is responsible for implementing these Means Policies.” Gib questioned whether this wording is appropriate, or whether it should instead read that the Senior Minister shall be *designated* as the head of the First Parish staff. The question is: Does the church hire a head of staff, who serves as a Senior Minister, or should the Senior Minister be the head of staff? A discussion ensued regarding the Committee’s broader project around examining First Parish’s policy governance structure.
- Section 2.2.4: “Everyone shall be informed of this policy, and for those who inform the Staff that they have not been reasonably accorded their rights under this policy, a process for resolving problems shall be provided.” CC asked whether we have a process for resolving conflict. Howard stated that there is a conflict resolution policy at the staff level, but not at the congregational issue.
- Section 2.3: “Staff shall be acquainted with their rights under this policy.” CC asked whether this statement is accurate. Howard confirmed that it is.
- Section 2.4.2: “Material deviation of actual expenditures from the Standing Committee’s Annual Strategic Priorities (see Appendix B) or from the budget approved by the Congregation for that fiscal year shall not be allowed.” Gib asked where the term “material deviation” is defined, and where the Appendices are located. If the Committee is going to review the policies, then it should review them in their totality.
- Section 2.4.3: Auditors or others appointed by the Standing Committee and/or the Treasurer to oversee the assets and financial condition of First Parish shall be assisted.” Gib and Caroline suggested that the policy should be more specific about what that assistance looks like.
- Section 2.6: “...the head of staff shall designate at least one other staff member at First Parish to maintain familiarity with the Standing Committee and Head of Staff issues and functions.” Fifi is currently the stand-in staff member. Gib stated that this language should instead read that the *Standing Committee* will designate at least one other person. Language should be added to ensure the involvement of the head of the Standing Committee in any such decision.
- Section 4: The Committee will resume conversation about this Section at its next meeting in December.

- **Wright Tavern – The Birthplace of American Independent Representative Government.**

Roselyn Romberg and Tim Wilson presented on behalf of the Wright Tavern Legacy Trust (WTLT), a 50(c)(3) foundation. This was an informational presentation to keep First Parish and the Standing Committee aware of the Trust’s activities.

- Built in 1747, the Tavern is a National Historical Landmark.
 - The WTLT vision: “Because of what happened here, the Wright Tavern will become the Center for the exploration and renewal of democracy in America. It will take its rightful place as an important historic building in Concord and a gathering place for the study of democracy.”
 - The Mission of the WTLT Board is to create the Wright Tavern into a well-designed and historically accurate structure that is accessible to the public and works in collaboration with other organizations to enable our guests to fully experience the history of the Tavern and to learn and explore the meaning of democracy for today and future generations.
 - The WTLT created draft covenants and operating principles. This year’s objectives are to form the board, develop plans and identify priorities. In 2022, they will finalize designs, begin repairs of the structure and expand fundraising. In 2023, they will finalize renovations, expand marketing, continue fundraising, create program partnerships and hire staff. In 2024, they will build out the staff and expand the programs.
 - The building needs significant repairs and maintenance – current estimates are \$1,125,000. Repairs will take place in winter 2021 to spring of 2022. The money for repairs is being raised through more than twenty funding organizations and individuals; there is no plan to approach the congregation for funding.
- **Commission on Institutional Change**
 - Susan presented the work of the Laying the Groundwork task group, and asked for the Standing Committee to approve the formation of a First-Parish Commission on Institutional Change (COIC).
 - At the New Orleans General Assembly in 2017, the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) Commission on Institutional Change was established and charged by the UUA Board of Trustees to conduct an audit of white privilege and the structure of power within Unitarian Universalism, and analyze structural racism and white supremacy culture within the UUA. The Commission was in place for three years, and its final work was a report called “Widening the Circle of Concern: Report of the UUA Commission on Institutional Change,” presented to the Board of Trustees and General Assembly (GA) in June 2020.
 - First Parish delegates to the General Assembly in 2020 were moved to create a Commission on Institutional Change at First Parish. They submitted a request to the Standing Committee to form the COIC in August of 2020, and the request was approved in December of 2020. A small subgroup from the GA delegation formed the Laying the Groundwork task group. In June 2021, the Laying the Groundwork group submitted its report, with the primary recommendation that the Standing Committee takes the next step to form the COIC.
 - The key tasks of the COIC charge will be as follows: (1) assess congregational policies, practices and procedures for their alignment with our UU values of equity, inclusion and diversity; (2) engage FP members, friends and staff in identifying opportunities for systemic change that will help FP realize itself as a place of radical welcome and anti-oppression work; and (3) recommend actions that serve to dismantle white supremacy within the culture, practice and procedures of First Parish.

- The commission, consisting of five to nine members, will be led by two co-chairs, who will serve for a maximum of two consecutive fiscal church years. The commission would like the first chairs to be Toby Smith-Ropiek and Darien Smith.
- The commission is appointed by and accountable to both the Standing Committee and the Senior Minister. The Standing Committee approves the charge and the chair, and the chair forms the commission.
- A discussion ensued about the timing and purpose of this project. Susan stated that the work is expected to be slow and deliberate, over the course of many years. It is a process of looking at our church, culture, practices and policies, in the context of our overall UU values. The Committee expressed concern that voices of marginalized individuals in our congregation be included in this project, while being sensitive and respectful of expectations placed on such individuals.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously

VOTED: To approve the formation of a First-Parish Commission on Institutional Change (COIC).

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously

VOTED: To appoint Toby Smith-Ropiek and Darien Smith as co-chairs of the COIC.

- The COIC will update the standing Committee at the end of the church year.
- The Belonging Subcommittee presented its plan to reach out to approximately twenty-seven congregants who seem to be not as engaged with the church as they used to be, to ask how the church can better serve them.
- Nikole Hannah-Jones. CC mentioned that there is an organizing meeting scheduled at Middlesex School to invite Nikole Hannah-Jones to speak in the hopes of fostering multiracial awareness in Concord.

Respectfully submitted by Jennifer Izzo, Clerk