

**First Parish in Concord
Standing Committee Meeting
February 14, 2023**

Fifi Ball	Director of Operations	Y
Michael Beer	Standing Committee Member	N
Rev. Seth Carrier-Ladd	Senior Minister (Interim)	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	Y
Rev. Liz Weber	Minister for Congregational Care	Y
Ken Reeves	Representative of Commission on Institutional Change	Y

THIS MEETING WAS HELD VIA ZOOM.

Gib Metcalf offered a reading. Everyone checked in about how they are doing.

Ken Reeves – COIC’s Proposed First Parish Apology for Slavery and Colonization

- Ken Reeves attended the SC meeting as a representative of the Commission on Institutional Change (COIC) to present a draft Apology for Slavery and Colonization. The Apology acknowledges Concord’s and First Parish’s history of colonization and slavery, and acknowledges that this history continues in our country’s hierarchical structure.
- The COIC got input on the draft Apology from First Parish clergy and staff, the racial Justice Action Group and historians, Jim Sherblom and Mary Wren Vander Wilden.
- The SC asked what actions will be taken in support of the Apology. The COIC will go into those details in the coming months.

- Seth and CC suggested that the COIC consult with impacted populations to get their feedback (African Americans and Native Americans).
- The SC will discuss the Apology initiative at its March meeting, and in April will discuss other ongoing COIC initiatives.

Minister's Report and Update

- Seth has been suffering from Covid.
- Seth encouraged members of the SC to show up as leaders at upcoming important services, including CB Beale's sermon on February 26 and workshop on March 11. And Celebration Sunday.
- The church is looking for a half-time administrative support person.
- The transition team released its report on the Ritual of Release to the Congregation. The team is now planning its next set of events focusing on the "lived history" of the congregation. The main event will give people the opportunity to post sticky notes on a big piece of paper on the back wall of the stage describing memories of their lived history at the church. This will occur on the second or third Sunday in March.
- Seth is working on improving communication and relationships between the congregation and staff members.
- The first issue of the newly formatted *FP Weekly* went out in January, and feedback has been positive.

Update from the Minister for Congregational Care

Congregational Covenant Process

- The Covenanting Team retreat occurred on Saturday, February 11. Attendees were very engaged. About 100 people attended the retreat in person; 18 people attended via Zoom. The team will now develop a first draft of the congregational covenant. The goal is to present the proposed final covenant to the congregation for a vote at the annual meeting in June.
- *FP Weekly* will be highlighting the covenanting process in the weeks to come.
- The covenanting team is planning 4 town hall meetings in March: Wednesday, March 15, 1:00 pm online; Sunday, March 19, 11:30 am in person; Tuesday, March 21, 7:00 pm online; and Sunday, March 26, 11:30 am in person.

SC Operations

Director of Operations Report

- Fifi reported that FP showed a net loss for the last four years except the year FP received the PPP loan.

- Jim H. asked about the cost of the covenanting retreat. Liz W. reported that the total cost was under \$1,000. The COIC will be covering these costs.
- It is time again for the SC to approve staff housing allowances for purposes of IRS designation. There are 3 allowances: Amy Freedman, \$46,296; Liz Weber, \$18,000; and Seth Carrier-Ladd, \$24,000.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the housing allowances for Amy Freedman, Liz Weber and Seth Carrier-Ladd.

- Fifi asked if she could temporarily reduce the number of financial reports that she sends to the SC. Currently, she sends a report every month, and spends a good deal of time analyzing and summarizing the data, including drafting a cover email. During this time when FP is short-staffed, Fifi asked if she could provide her financial report every other month. She would do full reports for February, April and June, but skip January, March and May. The SC was supportive of this idea, but asked Fifi to alert it about any issues that need to be discussed. They also asked that Fifi continue to send the financial spreadsheet to the SC every month, without analysis, cover email or line annotations.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously

VOTED: the Director of Operations will send full financial reports every other month instead of every month.

Meeting Minutes Approval

- Voting on the meeting minutes for the January SC meeting are postponed until the SC's March meeting due to some last minute edits and changes.

Interim Evaluation

- The SC filled out the evaluation on our Interim Minister and Interim process, and shared it with Seth. Seth will share his evaluation shortly.

Governance Subcommittee

- At the December SC meeting, the Governance Subcommittee provided to the SC a list of the four primary problems facing First Parish, based upon learnings from staff interviews and congregational input. Today, Virginia, as convener of the subcommittee, presented proposed solutions to these four problems:
 - Problem 1: Lack of clarity about roles, responsibilities, relationships, and decision-making authority among Senior Minister, staff, and SC.
Proposed solution: Develop a brief, clear summary of how Policy Governance works at First Parish.
 - Problem 2: Lack of clarity about Standing Committee operations; in particular, SC does not set a strategic direction, or annual End Statement, for the Senior Minister, as stipulated by Policy Governance.
Proposed solution: In the fall, the SC will lead the process of creating an End Statement with congregational input. This End Statement will be provided to the

Search Committee to be shared with applicants for the position of Settled Minister. Meanwhile, the SC will create a temporary End Statement this spring based on congregational input from the retreat and other listening sessions.

- Susan asked for clarification about the differences between a mission statement, goals and an end statement. Seth explained that a mission statement is a short, concise statement of long-term purpose. An end statement is shorter-term (“medium term”), covering what the congregation will be focused on in the next 4-5 years. An end statement is more specific and detailed than a mission, but not so detailed as to describe everything that needs to happen “this year.”
- Problem 3: Lack of consistent channel of communication with the congregation. Proposed solution: SC will hold quarterly Town Halls. Two Town Halls per year will be open to any members of the Congregation who have issues to discuss. The other two will be open to Committee Chairs, giving them an opportunity to discuss the work of their committees.
 - Liz Rust asked if the twice-yearly meeting with the committee chairs would replace the current committee chair breakfasts, and was told that the current meetings probably not be replaced because the purpose is different.
- Problem 4: Lack of clarity about Standing Committee role; in particular, SC sometimes “gets into the weeds” rather than fulfilling its purpose as a visionary board. Ambivalence about members of the Congregation taking on leadership roles to carry out FP operations. Proposed solution: Senior Minister will form a Leadership Team (aka “Get Stuff Done” group).
 - A discussion ensued about what the proposed Leadership team would look like, timing, etc. The Subcommittee will work out the details.

Financial Sustainability Subcommittee.

- Heather reported that she and Gib held an informational budget meeting in person on Sunday. About 10-12 people attended the meeting. There is another meeting scheduled for next Thursday.
- The pledge campaign is underway. Letters will be mailed to the congregation on Friday. An email will be sent on February 20th from the pledge committee to the whole congregation. The email offers frank observations of FP’s current deficit and the impacts that such deficit might have if not addressed.

Senior Minister Search

- The SC and others are currently calling everyone in the congregation to solicit names of trusted individuals to serve on the senior minister search committee.

GA/UUA Affairs

Article II update

- Liz Weber presented an introduction to the current UUA initiative to consider whether to update “Article II.” A full discussion will happen in March.

- Current Article II in the UUA bylaws contains the UUA's Principles and Purposes, Inclusion and Freedom of Belief. Article 2 summarizes how we as a collective national UU faith talk about what we value and believe, and who we are.
- Since 1985 the UUA had 7 principals. In recent years there have been some minor changes and edits to those principals. In 2020, when we were thinking about adopting the 8th principal, people suggested that we stop trying to make small changes every year and instead think about Article II as a whole. We could find a better way to articulate who we are.
- The UUA has been working on revising Article II for a few years with significant public process. A draft was presented to the UUA Board and will be reviewed at the 2023 General Assembly (GA). The GA will consider whether to continue to study this question in the next year, with a final vote at the GA in 2024.
- The draft language to replace Article II is centered around the idea of love. From a center of love, it articulates a set of values and how we live that value.

Upcoming FP Events

- 3/05: Pledge Drive kickoff, celebration Sunday
- 3/11: Pre-Emptive Radical Inclusion retreat, CB Beal
- 4/01: Talent Show
- 4/11: SC meeting: Review search committee applicants, review prelim budget/s
- 4/25: SC budget meeting
- 5/09: SC meeting: Confirm search committee ballot, review budget/s
- 5/20: Democracy Festival
- 5/22 (approx.): Budget approval deadline, warrant finalization
- 6/11: Annual Meeting
- 6/13: End of year SC meeting, Welcome new board members, elect next year positions, schedule summer/fall retreat