

**First Parish in Concord
Standing Committee Meeting
May 9, 2023**

Fifi Ball	Director of Operations	Y
Michael Beer	Standing Committee Member	Y
Rev. Seth Carrier-Ladd	Senior Minister (Interim)	Y
Jim Hawks	Standing Committee Member	N
Jennifer Izzo	Clerk	Y
C.C. King	Standing Committee Member	N
Gib Metcalf	Standing Committee Member	Y
Caroline Washburn Minkin	Standing Committee Member	Y
Heather Packard	Treasurer	N
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
Tom Wilson	Congregant and Moderator of Annual Meeting	Y
Ted Bayne	Congregant and	Y

THIS MEETING WAS HELD VIA ZOOM.

Jim Reynolds offering a reading about Managing During Turbulent Times.

The SC acknowledged and confirmed the Standing Committee Covenant. We covenant to:

- Listen to each other with enough focus and space to receive what is shared
- Assume best intentions
- Maintain confidentiality as appropriate
- Welcome questions and different perspectives
- Make space and take space so that everyone's voices can be heard
- Lead collaboratively
- Take the necessary time for the work without rushing into decisions
- Show up prepared to do the work
- Speak with one voice about decisions

- Trust each other's wisdom
- Communicate directly with each other

Everyone checked in about how they are doing.

Interim Senior Minister Report

- Worship. Rev. Amy Freedman led us in a wonderful Earth Day service featuring large puppets on April 23. Beth Norton and the choir led our Sunday Service on April 30, featuring the Rutter Requiem. This past Sunday, Amy and Dawn Van Patten co-led the service with the Coming of Age class. The class shared their credos with us, and it was amazing.
- Upcoming Events:
 - May 21: Annual Volunteer Appreciation
 - June 4: Pride Service and New Member Recognition Ceremony
 - June 11: Annual Meeting
- Summer Minister. We hired Rev. Althea Smith to serve as summer minister. She is a community minister affiliated with First Parish in Dorchester. She will report to Liz Weber. We scheduled our guest preachers this summer with the intention of having the majority of our guest preachers/speakers be people who hold marginalized identities.
- Covid 19 Policy. Effective May 21, mask wearing will be optional everywhere in the FP building. Jim R. asked whether this is also true of singing. Susan answered that it will be up to the choir to discuss and decide.
- Governance. Seth determined that there is not enough time and energy to implement the Leadership Team idea this spring. He will reinitiate the topic next fall. We will also wait until next year to start a whole-congregational conversation to establish End Statements. Seth believes that the congregation needs to do some identity work before we go try to create End Statements. In the meantime, we will utilize the temporary End Statements created by the SC Governance Subcommittee, pending approval by the whole SC.
- Sanctuary Technology Modernization. The firm, Shanahan Sound, has been selected to design and implement the technology modernization plan for the church. The goal is to complete plans and fundraise this spring, install over the summer, and have the new system ready to go for the start of the next church year.
- Time Line. Seth provided a timeline on what he sees happening during final year of interim ministry at FP:
 - Winter-Spring 2023
 - Covenant Creation Process
 - Pledge Campaign and Budget Prep
 - Search Committee Slate Selected by the Standing Committee
 - Sanctuary Technology Upgrade – designed, contracted, and fundraised
 - June 11th , 2023
 - Annual Congregational Meeting
 - Budget approved
 - Covenant approved
 - Search Committee elected
 - Summer 2023
 - Church Management Software Transition to Breeze (June or August, TBD)
 - Sanctuary Technology Upgrade – installation in preparation for September launch
 - Search Committee schedules their retreat

Fall 2023

- Leadership Team Recruiting & Implementation
- Conversations on Identity led by Transition Team and Standing Committee
- Search Committee prepares Congregational Record; this involves getting input from the congregation, possible survey, possible cottage meetings, etc.
- Post-Covenant Work – how do we continue to work on the way we relate with each other?; Paul to offer workshop on navigating conflict; formation of a Right-Relations team or equivalent?

Winter 2024

- Search Committee (January-February) – they receive Ministerial Records on the first business day in January; they begin intensive interview process; this is all “behind-the-scenes,” no active congregational involvement at this point
- Reflecting on the Sunday Morning Benediction (January-March)

Spring 2024

- Pledge Campaign and Budgeting
- Search Committee (March-April) – has narrowed their list to three or four pre-candidates; they host those pre-candidates for pre-candidating weekends
- Search Committee (April-May) – committee ranks their top choices, submits to UUA and finds out who the congregation has matched with; Negotiating Team negotiates contract with the candidate; candidate announced to the congregation
- Candidating Week (typically early May) – candidate comes for a week, preaches on Sunday, spends the week getting to know the congregation and vice-versa, preaches on the second Sunday, congregation votes to call/not call
- Interim Minister Farewell (June)

Summer 2024

- Transition Period – interim minister on vacation, congregation preps for new settled minister

August 1, 2024

- Welcome new settled minister – begin next chapter of congregational life
- Prep for work with new settled minister (End Statement, Mission Statement, etc.)

- Seth raised the idea that we should re-examine our practice of saying the Sunday morning benediction. Some lines of the benediction don’t seem to be consistent with our values (e.g., condescending, privileged mindset of helping the less fortunate). He believes that the benediction represent an older liberal mindset that is no longer appropriate.
- The SC discussed that it would be helpful to have a SC retreat like we did last year.
- Seth wants us to mindful how much we have going on next year. We are going to be very busy, which is another reason why the congregational End Statement should be delayed.

- Democracy Fair. The Democracy Fair will be held on May 20. There will be a panel discussion on May 19.
- Conversation about Identity. Seth doesn’t think the congregation yet understands itself as smaller in number and smaller in budget. He suggests that we do some identity work – who do we think we are?

FY 24 Budget. Gib shared a slide showing the total budget for Fiscal Year 23, versus Fiscal Year 24. In FY23, total revenue and spending were both \$1,487,092. The numbers were the same because we used surplus cash to balance the budget. Without that cash, we would have had a deficit of \$169,986. In

comparison, revenue in FY24 is budgeted at \$1,433,562, with total spending at \$1,432,609. Fortunately, we are able to eliminate the deficit in FY24 due to such factors as personnel savings, various expense savings, etc. As a result, we now have a modest net surplus.

Fiscal Year 2024 Budget

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously

VOTED: to accept the proposed FY24 budget and to recommend it to the Annual Congregation Meeting on June 11 to be voted upon by the congregation.

Governance Subcommittee: End Statements

- Virginia asked the SC to vote to approve the End Statements drafted by the Governance Subcommittee. These End Statements provide vision and goals for FP for the next few years. The proposed End Statements are:

Worship & Music

We ground our community in worship experiences that inspire, sustain, challenge, and embrace diverse beliefs and identities. Worship invites participation with head and heart through music and creative expression. Our worship provides a spiritual foundation for building community and working for justice in the wider world. Using applications of universal design, our services will be accessible to all.

Congregational Life & Spirituality

We foster connections within our congregation for spiritual care and sustenance. When one of us is hurting, the community, including ministers and pastoral care teams, will be there for support. Together, we explore our spirituality and religious beliefs in order to deepen our inner worlds and spark engagement in our wider world. We reach out to those who have not found us yet. Our community is inclusive of newcomers and longtime members alike, understanding “belonging” in anti-oppressive and liberatory ways.

Social Action

That goal of collective liberation drives our work to engage more people both within and beyond the congregation to participate in civic life. The work within includes deepening our anti-oppression work in all its forms with opportunities for education and action. Our work in the larger community involves education, hands-on work and progressive policy change at the local, state and national level. We seek to support and defend democracy and widen the circle of concern.

Finance & Operations

We care responsibly for our staff and for our physical, electronic, and financial assets, providing pleasant, welcoming environments—both in person and online—and smooth, effective operations, supporting the congregation, our guests, and our visitors. We steward our finances to sustain work toward the goals addressed in our Ends Statement.

Religious Education

First Parish in Concord becomes known as a center for liberal religious education locally and in the Unitarian Universalist Association. As part of an intergenerational community, children, teens, and adults experience fun, friendship, and a deep sense of belonging while being encouraged to search for truth and to create a better world. Our young people learn skills associated with liberal religion, gain basic religious literacy, and grow into their identity as Unitarian Universalists. Our comprehensive sexuality and anti-racism education empowers youth and families to take ownership of their personal health and engage in their communities.

Our Culture

We transform into a church with truly shared ministry between the laity and the staff, where the congregation is empowered to lead and sustain events and programming. We are willing to make mistakes in public and learn together and share those learning with others. We are willing to engage in healthy conflict with patience, listening, and boundaries, and to forgive and move forward together when appropriate. We hold ourselves accountable and speak up when we see injustices within and outside our congregation. We treat one another with kindness, moving from relationships that value being nice to relationships that value authenticity and care. We engage in difficult conversations and learn from one another.

Adjusting to our New Normal

We come to grips with the changes that have been wrought by the Covid-19 pandemic. We make any adjustments that are necessary to accommodate the smaller size of our membership. We acknowledge and embrace the continued need and desire for multi-platform participation in First Parish services and events. We experiment and learn to use technology tools to increase our reach and effectiveness, and to improve the user experience of virtual participants.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the End Statements prepared by the Governance Subcommittee.

FP Covenant

The FP Covenant team has met around 15 times since February. They drafted a covenant to describe how we want to be in relation to each other. The team has met with the entire congregation a few times, and now is visiting all of the groups and committees in the church to share the covenant one more time before annual meeting. It will be voted upon at the annual meeting in June.

Susan shared the draft Covenant:

As Unitarian Universalists, we are called by Love and by our vision of Beloved Community to live out our highest values. As a congregation with spirituality at our core and spokes connecting us to our wider world, we pledge ourselves in Covenant so our relationships and our community can thrive.

We covenant to live out our mission together.

We nurture belonging across the generations.

We support each other on our spiritual journeys.

We greet one another with curiosity, kindness, respect, and openness. In the belief that we can make progress together, we show up with energy, joy, and commitment to our shared values.

Honoring our diversity and centering justice, we strive to be open and intentionally welcoming. We are willing to be changed by being in community and by our world.

We respect the sanctity of our spiritual community. When in conflict, we talk to each other, not about each other. We listen without judgment, seeking understanding and acceptance.

Trusting in forgiveness and reconciliation when mistakes are made, we strive to be brave and risk vulnerability.

We seek goodness while we do not expect perfection. We are open to change, within ourselves and others.

As a community of members, friends, ministers, and staff, we cultivate a culture of appreciation for one another. We value expressing gratitude freely.

- The SC expressed support for the draft covenant.
- Mike suggested adding a statement about the actionability of the goals. For example – “we hold ourselves accountable...”

Proposed Slate for Senior Minister Search Committee:

The following individuals comprise the proposed slate for the Senior Minister Search Committee:

- Sara Ballard
- Jeff Clanon
- Kristin Haddad
- Peter Lowitt
- Kristin Moore
- Eric Van Loon
- Lora Venesy

The slate will be voted upon at the annual meeting.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously

VOTED: to endorse the Search Committee slate and to present it to the congregation for adoption at the annual meeting in June.

Warrant

Tom Wilson joined the SC meeting. He will be the moderator for the FP annual meeting on June 11, 2023. He presented to the SC the proposed Warrant for the annual meeting:

WARRANT COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS MIDDLESEX, SS.

To any one of the constables of the Town of Concord, GREETINGS:

You are hereby authorized and directed to notify and warn the qualified voters of FIRST PARISH IN CONCORD in said County of Middlesex, to meet on-line via Zoom meeting on SUNDAY, the 11th day of June 2023 at 11:30 o'clock in the morning, then and there to act and vote upon the following articles, to wit:

1. Approve Annual Meeting minutes from 2022
2. To hear and receive the reports of the Senior Minister, the Standing Committee, the Trustees of Parish Donations, and other committee reports.

3. To choose all Parish officers for the ensuing year.
4. To ratify the UU General Assembly delegate slate.
5. To adopt the First Parish in Concord Covenant.
6. To raise money for all parochial purposes, including the Budget for Fiscal Year 2023-2024.
7. To ratify the Senior Minister Search Committee slate.
8. To act upon any other business that may come before the meeting.

And you are hereby directed to serve this warrant by posting copies thereof, by you attested, in at least two public places in said Town, one of which shall be at the door of the Meeting House of said Parish, eight days, including two Sundays, before said fifth day of June, and to have this warrant, with your doings thereon, at said meeting.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve, as amended, the warrant for the Annual Meeting on June 11, 2023.

Annual Meeting on June 11, 2023

- The annual meeting will begin at 11:30, after the service on June 11, 2023.
- Tom Wilson will be the moderator.
- The SC volunteered to donate food for the annual meeting.

Sanctuary Renovations

Technology in the Sanctuary

- Seth provided an update on the plan for updating the technology in the sanctuary. All video and sound equipment will be replaced with new equipment. The contractor selected is Shanahan Sound. Members of the congregation with technical acumen have reviewed the proposal. We are ready to sign the contract.
- The cost is just under \$50,000 for screens, new sound system, cameras, and a confidence monitor for people at the chancelry. The total budget estimate is \$60,000 because they may need to purchase a few other items, such as a table.
- We already received three \$5,000 gifts for this effort. Seth feels comfortable that we can raise the \$50,000 needed.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve a contract with Shanahan Sound for \$50,000 to upgrade the technology in the sanctuary.

Pulpit Rails

- The SC considered a budget proposal for Pulpit Railings to be constructed by Berkeley Building Company. The total cost is estimated to be between \$8,500-\$17,531.25, depending upon whether wood or bronze caps are used.
- For now, the team is simply looking for approval to engage Berkeley to “Field verify and create shop drawings,” for a cost of \$1,720.00

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously

- **VOTED:** to approve a contract with Berkeley Building Company for \$1,720.

Greening the Sanctuary

- Ted Baynes visited the SC to provide an update on efforts undertaken by the Greening the Sanctuary task force. Testing revealed that the windows in the RE area have a gap in the upper and lower sash, causing leakage. The trustees are replacing leaky cottage windows with efficient ones, and providing insulation in all of the cottages. They engaged a contractor to do geothermal testing. A geothermal test well was drilled in the front yard of the church, and it confirms that there is excess heating capacity.
- The task force has been looking around for funding for the proposed geothermal escalation, including a campus-wide geothermal system, completing insulation in the Parlor Hall, chapel and attic, and replacing the gas fired stove/oven with an electric convention oven/stove. They identified a source that would reimburse 30% of the cost. Total cost is estimated at between \$1M-\$2M.
- Ted asked for SC's advice on the best timing and methods to fundraise from church members, so as to avoid interfering with normal church pledge drives. Liz expressed concern about asking for money for this sort of "optional" activity when we are facing difficulties with the budget and may need to cut staff.
- Ted stated that it is possible to look for external sources of funding.
- Our fundraising policy is that any fundraising over \$2,500 must be approved by the senior minister.

Nomination Committee recommendation

The members of the Congregational Life subcommittee (CC, Susan and Liz) will come up with names to serve on the Nomination Committee.

Minutes Approval

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously

VOTED: to accept the April 11, 2023 Standing Committee (SC) meeting minutes, and to incorporate them into the permanent record.

The June SC meeting will be in person.