

**First Parish in Concord
Standing Committee Meeting
September 12, 2023**

Fifi Ball	Director of Operations	Y
Michael Beer	Standing Committee Member	Y
Lisa Bennett	Standing Committee Member	Y
Rev. Seth Carrier-Ladd	Senior Minister (Interim)	Y
Jennifer Izzo	Clerk	Y
C.C. King	Standing Committee Member	Y
Gib Metcalf	Chair	Y
Caroline Washburn Minkin	Standing Committee Member	Y
Jim Reynolds	Standing Committee Member	Y
Leah Russell	Treasurer	Y
Liz Rust	Standing Committee Member	Y
Susan See	Standing Committee Member	Y
Virginia Taylor	Standing Committee Member	Y
Rev. Liz Weber	Minister for Congregational Care	N

THIS MEETING WAS HELD IN PERSON AT FIRST PARISH AND VIA ZOOM.

Gib Metcalf offered opening words.

The group read the Standing Committee covenant. We covenant to:

- Listen respectfully with an open heart
- Publicly support Standing Committee decisions and honor the decision-making process, even if we disagree
- Take the time to hear everyone's thoughts and opinions, including the congregation's
- Be open-minded and curious; we welcome respectful questions
- Respect disagreement and try to work through it
- Make space and take space so everyone's voices can be heard
- Be open and flexible to change
- Encourage direct communication from the congregation and with each other
- Practice compassion for ourselves and each other
- Enjoy being together and have fun
- Maintain appropriate confidentiality

Everyone present checked in about how they are doing.

INTERIM SENIOR MINISTER REPORT

- Rev. Seth Carrier-Ladd reported that services during the summer months went well. Rev. Althea Smith, a community minister affiliated with First Parish in Dorchester, was a good hire. Based on anecdotal feedback, the summer was a success. People seemed to appreciate Althea's presence and offerings in the service. We sent a survey to the congregation to get greater feedback. So far, 29 responses have been received and the responses have been overwhelmingly positive.
- We also sent a survey to solicit feedback about the technological changes in the sanctuary, such as the big screens at the front. So far we have received 18 responses. The majority of people had positive comments, but a small number really disliked the changes. We will continue to see how it goes.
- We had the Ingathering/Water Ceremony service this past Sunday, September 10, to officially kick off the 23-24 church calendar year.
- Seth highlighted 2 upcoming services:
 - o October 1st, "Friendship in the Digital Age" – led by guest preacher Peter Bowden, with a special all-congregation workshop after the service led by Peter.
 - o October 15th – Rev. Keith Kron from the UUA will be our guest speaker, with the theme of the service following up on the "Beyond Categorical Thinking" workshop that Keith will have led as part of the Search process the previous day.
- We are setting up "wiggle room" space in the parlor so that families with young kids can go there to watch and hear services on Sundays.
- Seth has been thinking about and discussing our First Parish benediction. He proposes to launch a theological discussion about the benediction with the congregation this fall. He will hold 3 services reflecting on the 3 different components of the benediction. He will encourage people to think about the benediction, what the language means, and how it relates to our values.

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS REPORT

- Fifi Ball discussed the 2022-2023 year-end financial reports. We ended up with a smaller loss than anticipated (-\$40,000 vs. -\$170,000 budgeted). Our income was \$46,000 more than budgeted, including higher than anticipated interest income, and we spent \$84,000 less than budgeted. As a result, as of July 1, we have \$145,000 in surplus funds. The SC discussed the most transparent way to frame these better-than-expected results for the congregation in light of our continued financial vulnerability.
- First Parish currently has two freelancers helping with communications—producing *FP Weekly*, *Orders of Service*, and *Sunday Announcements*. We had budgeted to end their work with us at the end of September 2023. In that case, Catherine Hill, our half-time office and web administrator, would have taken on the communications work, leaving her much less time for website, social media, and other administrative work. Fifi asked for SC approval to keep the freelancers through the end of the fiscal year, for a total additional cost of \$12,500.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve keeping the freelancers on contract to perform administrative and communications work through the end of the 2024 church fiscal year.

SC OPERATIONS

- **Wright Tavern.** Gib introduced two topics raised by Tom Wilson, Chair of the Wright Tavern Legacy Trust:
 - o Lafayette's Farewell Tour of America. On September 2, 2024, there is a major event happening in Concord - a reenactment of "Lafayette's Farewell Tour of America" (<https://lafayette200.org>). The Wright Tavern Legacy Trust would like this event to be held on the lawn of First Parish. They would also like for the SC to help design and develop this event.
 - o Use of Wright Tavern. The Legacy Trust is continuing to evolve the vision for the Wright Tavern, based on feedback from the community and discussions with potential funding partners. They are shifting the focus from being just a museum to an active gathering place and tavern.

The SC will look again at the draft Memorandum of Understanding between First Parish, the Wright Tavern Legacy Trust and the Trustees of First Parish Donations. We will discuss these topics at future SC meetings.

- **One Year Interim Ministry Appraisal.** It is time for the new interim minister annual evaluation. The SC will divide up and answer the questions in the evaluation by the end of the month.
- **SC Coffee Hour Representative.** Jim created a new assignment list for members of the SC to serve as greeters and representatives during the coffee hour during the 2024 church fiscal year.
- **Minutes Approval.** Gib asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes from the SC's June, 2023 meeting.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously

VOTED: to accept the June 13, 2023 Standing Committee (SC) meeting minutes, and to incorporate them into the permanent record.

- **Senior Minister Negotiation Committee.** The negotiations team is responsible for developing a draft contract for the new senior minister role. Gib proposed the following individuals serve as the negotiations team: Jim Reynolds, Jen Izzo and Eric Van Loon. He asked the SC to approve this slate.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the new senior minister negotiation team comprised of Jim Reynolds, Jen Izzo and Eric Van Loon.

- **Report From Large Congregation Retreat.** Several members of the SC attended the large congregation UU training session at the end of August, and shared their experiences. They appreciated the extensive pre-work and informational resources.

The September 13, 2023 meeting of the First Parish Standing Committee was adjourned at 8:20pm.