

**First Parish in Concord
Governing Board Meeting Minutes
December 10, 2024**

Fifi Ball	Director of Operations	Y
Lisa Bennett	Governing Board Member	Y
Kimma Brainerd	Clerk	N
Neil Brock	Governing Board Member	Y
Jennifer Izzo	Governing Board Member	Y
Rev. Jennifer Johnson	Lead Minister for First Parish in Concord	Y
C.C. King	Governing Board Member	Y
Gib Metcalf	Chair	Y
Kristin Moore	Governing Board Member	Y
Jim Reynolds	Governing Board Member	Y
Leah Russell	Treasurer	Y
Susan See	Governing Board Member	Y
Virginia Taylor	Governing Board Member	Y

THIS MEETING WAS HELD IN PERSON AT FIRST PARISH, CONCORD.

Jen Izzo offered opening words.

Check in: We all discussed our personal reactions to the following line from the Governing Board's Covenant: "As a community of members, friends, ministers, and staff, we cultivate a culture of appreciation for one another. We value expressing gratitude freely."

Governing Board Administrative Actions.

- The Board heard a motion to accept the Governing Board meeting minutes from November 12, 2024, as amended to reflect the discussed changes.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the meeting minutes from November 12, 2024, as amended, and incorporate them to the permanent record.

Operations Report.

- Fifi offered highlights from her financial report.
- Fifi reported that her new assistant is doing well.
- Black mold was discovered in the nursery school rooms. The mold has since been remediated.
- Fifi found an industrial commercial dishwasher repair person to repair FP's dishwasher.

Minister Report.

- Rev. Jennifer reported that worship is going well. There is a great "coming together" in this shared ministry. She feels replenished and expanded through worship at First Parish.
- Rev. Jennifer and the Membership Committee sponsored a "Meet and Greet."
- Six new people have become members since the national elections.
- Relationship building is going well. The way we came together as a community to support each other after the election was a success.
- FP's staff culture is strengthening. A culture of collaboration and appreciation is being created.
- The layperson-led Release Ceremony for Liz Weber went well. A hiring committee has been convened to select the new Minister for Congregational Care. The committee is comprised of Dana Lissy, Virginia Taylor, Peter Nobile and Beth Norton. The person we hire may not start until August because of the overall cycle of UUA candidating ministers. We will need to see how it goes.
- The biggest challenge facing FP staff right now is the departure of staff members. The team is feeling stretched. This is especially true after the national election results, which created even greater need for comfort and care.
- The Board went into Executive Session to discuss an issue related to potential disruptive behavior. The Board then exited the Executive Session and resumed the meeting.

Finance Group Report.

- Financial Reporting. Leah presented a proposed policy regarding financial reporting by FP groups for the Board's approval. Currently, not all groups are reporting to the Director of Finance and Operations about their budget each year. The proposed policy would fix this. The policy reads:

Financial reporting policy for groups using tax exempt status

Any group using the First Parish in Concord tax exempt status for fundraising must provide an annual financial report to the Director of Operations unless funds are held by First Parish. Reporting must include an income statement, a cash flow statement, and a balance sheet for the church fiscal year (July 1 – June 30). Information must be submitted no later than August 1st of each year.

As of January 1, 2025, any group operating under the First Parish tax exempt status that does not have a previously established independent financial account, must keep its funds in a First Parish account managed by the Director of Operations.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the Financial reporting policy outlined above for First Parish groups using the church's tax exempt status.

- Annual Pledge Campaign Update. The annual pledge campaign is kicking off. Dave Elwood is the chair, and is looking for volunteers. Several members of the Governing Board volunteered to serve as stewards for the pledge campaign.
- Leah asked if there is a plan to reach out to people returning to First Parish after a long absence. Rev. Jennifer said that several Listening Circles are scheduled, which will help in this regard.

Strategic Assessment Discussion.

- Kristin discussed the information collected by the Governing Board subcommittee looking at First Parish strategy to help us understand where we are at this point in time. The subcommittee compiled data from many sources including:
 - Staffing levels and tenure
 - Membership and Attendance trends
 - RE enrollment trends
 - Report from Beth on Music Ministry
 - Report from Amy on RE
 - Financials / Budget
 - Five Year Trend of FP Google Calendar events
 - Participation in social action activities
 - Information gathered during the transition interim period and the senior minister search process
- Areas for further information gathering include:
 - Qualitative information gathering – post December
 - Accessibility of building, campus and services – address a spectrum of disabilities
 - Outside use of facilities for events
 - Outbound/community communication
 - Staff levels (including volunteer staffing)
 - Qualitative assessments through structured conversations with:
 - FP Friends and members
 - Interviews with Staff
 - Outside perspectives – how are we seen by the community?
- Gib asked whether the goal of the strategic assessment is to create Ends statements to help the Governing Board move forward with our mission statement, and to assess how the minister, Congregation and Board are doing. The Ends statements are the “set of coherent actions for execution.”

- This strategic analysis could also lead to an adjustment of the First Parish mission/vision.
- Kristin suggested that a good starting point for looking at how we are doing is the list of Questions for UUA Congregations to consider during the ministerial search process.
- Neil suggested that we should look at the groups/circles of community in the church as a measure of the church's health.
- Consider: Are our practices and policies truly inclusive and welcoming to individuals of all backgrounds? Is the church financially sustainable for the future and what adjustments might we need to make? How can we actively work to dismantle systems of oppression within our congregation and community? What unique and meaningful experiences do we offer that individuals cannot find elsewhere?
- Gib suggested going back to our mission statement and determining how the data we have maps to the various elements of First Parish's mission. For example, one element of our mission statement is "making a positive difference in the world." How are we doing with that goal?
- Rev. Jennifer said she suspects that the data about family attendance may end up informing our future mission. The diminished attendance of families in UU churches is too big a trend to ignore.

Governing Board Operations

- Mid-Year Mini Retreat. The Governing Board Mid-Year retreat is scheduled for Sunday, January 5, 2025 (in the afternoon and evening). CC offered to host the retreat at her house.
- Installation Ceremony. Rev. Jennifer's First Parish installation ceremony is scheduled for May, 2025. There is a committee that helps to plan this event with and for Rev. Jennifer. CC will be on the committee from the Governing Board. The committee will plan events, make travel arrangements, plan and set up food, decorate, etc.
 - Jim will reach out to Toby to see who was involved in setting up the installation ceremony for Rev. Howard Dana so that we can benefit from their historical knowledge.
- Bonus Proposal. In recognition of the extraordinary work that the staff have done during this difficult time of transition, Gib and Rev. Jennifer proposed giving a bonus to all salaried staff members, prorated (%) based on their FTE status.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was

VOTED: to give First Parish staff members a bonus in appreciation for their hard work, diligence and dedication during this difficult transition time.

The December meeting of the First Parish Governing adjourned at 9:15pm.