

First Parish in Concord
Governing Board Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, February 11, 2025, 7-9pm
Meeting at First Parish, Brooks room
All but one member present

Fifi Ball	Director of Operations	Y
Lisa Bennett	Governing Board Member	N
Kimma Brainerd	Clerk	Y
Neil Brock	Governing Board Member	Y
Jennifer Izzo	Governing Board Member	R
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	R
Virginia Taylor	Governing Board Member	Y
Jennifer Johnson	Minister	R

R = Remotely, by zoom

Opening Words

Kristin offered opening words from Thich Nhat Hanh's *How to Fight*.

Check-in

Board members shared reflections on a passage from our covenant and the reading shared by Kristin.

Administrative Actions

- **January Meeting Minutes** (Meeting Agenda, Appendix II)
With minor edits for clarification: notes from Leah regarding action items, removal of unnecessary detail, corrected spelling errors on names. Positive feedback on format.
→ **VOTED**: **January 2025 meeting minutes** with minor edits, unanimously approved.
→ **ACTION ITEM**: **Jen** and **Kimma** to meet about uploading minutes to appropriate folders.
→ **ACTION ITEM**: **Kimma** to upload minutes to the Governing Board folder, and rename past minutes with standard naming convention.

Operations Report (Fifi Ball)

- Fifi previously circulated an email with the **UUA Certification submission**.
- Fifi previously circulated an email to the Governing Board with **financials** at the half-year point, in December. Jim highlighted some good news, Sunday collection was up 90%. We've collected about $\frac{2}{3}$ of pledge amounts halfway through the year.
- **Attendance** and membership trends include an over 41% increase in attendance since the start of our new minister Rev. Jennifer.
- **Facilities Manager** position. An offer has been made and accepted. He has experience, has roots in the community, understands UU culture, lives in Concord. Start date will be beginning of March.

Minister's Report & Items (Rev. Jennifer Johnson)

- **Lunch & Listen** groups with parents. Will be doing a couple more of these. Has notes to share with the Governing Board.
- **Communication materials** in process. Finding ways to help new people find smaller groups.
- **Facilities Manager** position filled! Feeling hopeful.
- Search team for **Minister for Congregational Care** position has seen a number of qualified candidates in first round interviews. At least 2 candidates will be advanced to another round. Looking at hiring for mid-July at the earliest, due to availability of candidates. Excited and feeling hopeful. Working group along with Rev. Jennifer Johnson: Virginia Taylor, Peter Nobile, Dana Lissy, Beth Norton.
- **Pastoral Care team** is strained, due to capacity and resources. Elizabeth's availability has been curtailed due to loss. Rev. Jennifer, Beth, Amy, Paul opening availability for one-on-one Ministry Meetings. Rev. Jennifer is feeling highly encouraged about rebuilding. Will be attending the Pastoral Care team meeting in March.
- Will be attending **Parenting Circle** that Amy & Dawn are offering.
- Rev. Jennifer spoke about what it is like **ministering** at this time of chaos: laying the groundwork, tilling the soil, so that we're open and ready for what comes next. Rev. Jennifer believes that First Parish will become more central in people's lives.
- **Celebration Sunday** is coming. Getting ready.
→ **ACTION ITEM**: Rev. Jennifer will send the Governing Board a written report for the month of January.

Concord250 (Rev. Jennifer Johnson)

- Rev. Jennifer sees First Parish as being an **engaged part of Concord** as a **welcoming community**. In making decisions in regard to the celebration Rev. Jennifer goes back to our primary mission

and safety. It is important that we be a place where we deepen spiritually, build community and make a positive difference in the world.

- **Worship** is the central act of our religious life, and **Easter Sunday** is an important service. We are making sure we're prepared to open our doors for Easter worship the very next day. So, First Parish will not be available for tours, and bathrooms will not be available to the public.
→ **NOTED**: Neil raises a question: Do we need to put forth a special effort for cleaning up early on Sunday morning before Easter service? Let's keep this in mind. Maybe the new Facilities Manager could be given some responsibility for coordinating an effort.
→ **NOTED**: Susan asks, will we have a need for 2 Easter services? Let's consider.
- **Security**. Rev. Jennifer attended a meeting of interfaith clergy attended by the chair of Concord250, as well as Captain of Concord police. Invitation will go out to the office of the sitting president; we won't know if he'll attend or not until 5-10 days ahead. We won't know of any planned protests. There won't be metal-detectors. We don't know who will show up or what the crowds will be like. Homeland Security level 3.
- **Attendance**. Crowd sizes are estimated to be around 100,000. This is a significant public gathering getting national attention.
- Rev. Jennifer feels strongly about giving thought to **Safety and Sanctity of Campus and Community**, keeping our community and campus safe, so that we can live out our mission.
- There was a request to host a **Jumbotron** on our grounds to watch ceremonies and the parade route. After consideration, it was decided that the risks were not aligned with our mission. Concerns about crowds gathering, access to restrooms, potential damage to property. First Parish declined this request.
- Mission-aligned ways that make sense for First Parish in Concord in supporting community:
 - **Ambassador's program**. Rev. Jennifer expressed interest in First Parish becoming a hub for this program; it could be stationed on site. Concord250 will train volunteers (First Parish members, neighbors) to be eyes, ears and responders for emergencies during events. More information coming in FP Weekly to recruit people for this.
→ **NOTED**: **Governing Board members** please consider volunteering for the Ambassador Program and promoting to other members.
 - First Parish received a request to be a **Red Cross** satellite/headquarters station and expressed willingness for a van to be positioned on property. We expect to hear back on this, in the meantime not sure yet of their needs.
- **Reclaim Our Democracy** group is working on activities, they will have some presence.
- **No access to First Parish parking lot** from 6pm Friday to 2am Sunday. Anyone planning on being Ambassadors, or to be present, will need to use satellite lots and shuttle-system or come in by bike or walk.
- The **parade route** will be on Lexington Rd. We can expect that people will use our lawn for watching.
- **Wright Tavern** is planning a host of activities, including serving food and beer. Gib, Roselyn, Tom and Rev. Jennifer will be meeting with Wright Tavern to learn more about their security, use of

bathrooms, and sharing of campus space. We want to support them, but also keep in mind safety and property. There will be some security provided by Anthem. Wright Tavern has their own mission. We are supportive of it, but also mindful of our own obligations.

→ **ACTION ITEM**: Gib, Roselyn, Tom, Rev. Jennifer will meet with Wright Tavern next week.

Finance Group Items (Leah Russell, Jim Reynolds, Neil Brock)

- **Fundraising Policy** (Jim Reynolds). The new policy items with edits based on last month's discussions were circulated and discussed (Appendix III). These new proposed policy items belong in Section 5, numbers 22-28.

→ **ACTION ITEM**: Jim will incorporate edits from Kimma's email.

- Removed referral to capital fund-raising in **Policy 23**.
- **Policy 25**. Who reauthorizes and how often? Sponsoring organizations will determine how often a project must be reviewed to qualify for continued sponsorship. Proposes to add that the authorizing organization can also review.
- **Policy 26**. Neil proposes adding the word "paid," so "*Paid* staff."
→ **ACTION ITEM**: Jim will edit number 26 to include the word "paid" staff.
- Discussion ensued about how funds may be used if a group **over-raises funds**.
- Jen suggested different wording for "organization" throughout, perhaps "committee." In alignment with language used regarding use of space in FP Weekly, Fifi suggests: "First Parish chartered group or program" instead of "sponsoring organization."
→ **ACTION ITEM**: Jim to edit "sponsoring organization" to "First Parish chartered group or program" throughout.
→ **NEXT STEPS**: Jim to incorporate changes, circulate final policy text to the Governing Board, and we will vote in March meeting under Administrative Actions without needing much or any discussion.

Governance Group Update (Gib Metcalf, Jennifer Izzo, Virginia Taylor)

- Gib circulated and then presented materials (Appendix IV), **Background and Rationale for Policy Reorganization**. Two main guides for our work were highlighted: John Carver on *Policy Governance*, and Dan Hotchkiss, who applies the Carver policy governance model specifically for a church setting.
- **Two main tasks** of the Governing Board that the Governance group brought before the GB related to: 1) Setting a direction, and 2) Assessing how we are doing.
- A **3-Tiered Approach** was proposed and discussed, setting up three clusters of policies centered around reviewing **Mission Statement, Strategic Plan** and **Short-Term Goals**, along with proposed intervals for these assessments to think about:
 - Based upon an event, such as relating to the hiring of a new minister (before or after),
 - A circumstance or the environment,

- A specific interval, or a vague time frame (“from time to time”)
 - Or, *not* specifying (leaving it open).
 - Let’s consider asking, when evaluating if it’s time to review: Is it working well?
 - Proposed a broader approach to **annual assessments**, to include First Parish as a whole, “How are we doing as a church?” in achieving short-term goals and reaching towards mission. And, “how is our lay and clergy leadership doing?” Important to the work of the Governing Board and staff is the on-going assessment of our progress towards achieving our mission. Also, consider process for lay leadership, lead minister, and Governing Board.
 - Responses and thoughts to a **lead minister assessment process** include: make it a light touch, not a burdensome process or too big of a project, more frequent (quarterly?), and proactive. Keep it well-intentioned and well-received. Address problems in the moment, rather than waiting for an assessment period.
 - The Governance group’s proposal to replace language “End Statements” with “**Short-Term Goals**,” in closer alignment with Hotchkiss, was received favorably.
 - **Membership Policy.** Group discussion led by Virginia on whether we should consider any criteria, qualifications or restrictions for membership. How do we want to define membership at the policy level (as opposed to operational level)? The Governing Board is invited to think about whether we should consider any limitations on membership, such as age?
 - Do we want to change the by-laws related to membership (to allow the Governing Board to put restrictions on membership)? We should have a membership policy, but we should also make sure the bylaws *allow* us to have membership policy.
 - Question was raised: What do other congregations do in regard to membership and policy? Invites other feedback from Governing Board.
 - Fifi made distinctions between active members and inactive, and the difference between *operational* members. Active is defined by being seen or contributing money. Members can chair a group, can vote at annual meeting.
- **ACTION ITEM: Virginia** to find out more about what other congregations do in regard to membership policy.
- **NOTED: Governing Board members** are invited to consider: Should we have any kind of limitations on membership (such as age, or accepting a covenant)?

Nominating Committee Discussion

On February 27, Liaisons **C.C.** and **Jim** will visit with Nom Com’s Jeff Brainerd about what are the skills that we need coming onto this board. Noted that C.C. and Susan are coming off the board.

→ **ACTION ITEM:** On February 27th, liaisons **C.C.** and **Jim** will visit with Nom Com’s Jeff Brainerd about the skills and qualities that we are looking for in new Governing Board members.

Some qualities the Governing Board would like to see:

- Strategic planning process is going to require **long-range thinking, long-range planning.**

- Susan and C.C. are both “deep listeners” to the congregation. These **soft skills** will be important to look for: connector, listener, relational and interactional qualities.
- Find someone connected with younger people.
→ **NOTED**: **Governing Board members** to give some continued thought to characteristics that we’d like to communicate to the Nominating Committee.

Governing Board Operations

- **Banner Parade for Celebration Sunday** on March 2nd. Neil volunteered to carry the banner on behalf of the Governing Board.
- We need to **make a new banner!** Current “Standing Committee” banner needs to be changed to “Governing Board.” **Kristin** will take charge, **Kimma** will help.
→ **ACTION ITEM**: **Kristin** will take the lead on making a new banner; first step is locating the Standing Committee banner in the attic. **Kimma** to help.

→ **NOTED**: **Annual Pledge Campaign Event** on Saturday, March 1st, all Governing Board members encouraged to come.

Greeter Responsibilities

- The general direction Rev. Jennifer would like to move towards: greater involvement by the assigned weekly Governing Board representative, including announcements.

→ **NOTED**: Reminder to look for people with red mugs and greet them.

Executive Session

The Governing Board went into Executive Session.

Meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

GB = Governing Board

ACTION ITEMS:

- **Jen** and **Kimma** to meet on how to upload Minutes to appropriate folders.
- **Kimma** to upload minutes to the Governing Board folder.
- **Kimma** to rename past minutes with standard naming convention and re-upload.
- **Rev. Jennifer** will send the Governing Board a written report for the month of January.
- **Gib**, Roselyn, Tom and **Rev. Jennifer** will meet with Wright Tavern next week.
- **Jim** will incorporate edits from Kimma’s email.
- **Jim** to edit financial policy number 26 to include the word “paid” staff.

- **Jim** to edit “sponsoring organization” to “First Parish chartered group or program” throughout new financial policies.
- **Virginia** to find out more about what other congregations do in regard to membership policy.
- On February 27th, liaisons **C.C.** and **Jim** will visit with Nom Com’s Jeff Brainerd about the skills and qualities that we are looking for in new members.
- **Kristin** will take the lead on making a new banner; first step is locating the Standing Committee banner in the attic. **Kimma** will help.

NEXT STEPS:

- **Jim** to incorporate fundraising policy changes, circulate final policy text to the Governing Board, and it will be put to vote in the March meeting under Administrative Actions without needing much or any discussion.

VOTED:

- Amended **January 2025 meeting minutes**, unanimously approved.

NOTED:

- Consider the possibility that **extra cleaning** may be necessary very early on Easter Sunday morning, particularly on grounds, to get ready for service. May need a plan for that. Perhaps the new Facilities Manager could help coordinate this effort.
- Consider: Will we have a need for **2 Easter services**?
- **Governing Board members** to consider volunteering for the Ambassador Program.
- **Governing Board members** are invited to consider: Should we have any kind of limitations on membership (such as age, or accepting a covenant)?
- **Governing Board members** to give some continued thought to characteristics that we’d like to find in new on-boarding GB members, to share with the Nominating Committee.
- **Governing Board members** are encouraged to attend the **Annual Pledge Campaign Event** on Saturday, March 1st. Please put it on your calendars.
- **Governing Board members** reminder on Sundays to: look for people with red mugs and greet them.

NEXT MEETING:

(Second Tuesday of the month, 7pm)

Tuesday, March 11, 7-9pm

Brooks Room at First Parish in Concord
