

**First Parish in Concord
Standing Committee Meeting
January 11, 2022**

Fifi Ball	Manager of Operations	Y
Michael Beer	Standing Committee Member	Y
Howard Dana	Senior Minister	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
Meck Groot	UUA Congregational Consultant	Y
Rev. Paul Langston-Daley	Social Action Manager	Y
Sally Lewis	Co-Chair, Racial Justice Action Group	Y
Sue St. Croix	Co-Chair, Racial Justice Action Group	Y

THIS MEETING WAS HELD VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM

Howard started the meeting by reading a poem, “The Darkness Divine,” by Kristen L. Harper, from UU World Magazine.

Racial Justice Action Group’s Presentation on the Eighth Principle of Unitarian Universalism

- Sue St. Croix and Sally Lewis, co-chairs of the Racial Justice Group (RJAG), updated the Standing Committee on their work related to the advancement of the Eighth Principle of Unitarian Universalism. The Eighth Principle states: *“We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.”*
- On December 7, 2021, RJAG voted to move forward with advancing the Eighth Principle within First Parish, culminating in a potential vote by the Congregation to adopt the Eighth Principle in June of 2022.
- The group hopes to widen the involvement level and knowledge level within the Congregation, and to strengthen the work that can be done with other churches. They want to foster more action, and to commit to the principal on a congregational level. They came to the SC meeting to get support for this plan.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve and support RJAG’s Eighth Principle adoption effort as presented by Sue St. Croix and Sally Lewis.

Rev. Paul Langston-Daley

- Rev. Paul Langston-Daley, the new Social Action Manager, introduced himself to the Standing Committee. He will be preaching to the congregation this Sunday.
- He is interested in finding ways to embed social justice in the life of the congregation and bring more people into the work in ways that are joyful.

Black Lives Matter Banner

- The Town of Concord requires us to recommit to our intentions to display the banner every six months. The Standing Committee agreed that the banner should continue to be hung on the church.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously

VOTED: to recommit to hanging the Black Lives Matter banner on the church for another six months.

Discussion with Meck Groot, Congregation Consultant, New England Region of UUA

- Meck Groot led a conversation about the changes that First Parish is facing and how to lead in this difficult time. We are in a world that is changing so fast that we don't get the time we need to adopt a reasoned response. By the time we figure out our response, the conditions that called for the response have already changed.
- Every 500 years or so, there has been a huge shift in how the Christian Church does religion. The last major shift was during the Reformation. We are now at a new crossroads where we are struggling with such questions as: What does it mean to be part of a congregation when younger generations are less and less interested in participating in a gathered community where worship happens in pews? What is the purpose of institutional religion? How do we do it? What is our "why"? A new type of leadership is being invited in this time.
- Meck will lead a retreat for church leaders on February 26, 2022 from 9am-noon. She is seeking input on what we wish to accomplish in the retreat.
- The Standing Committee shared their thoughts on the following reading materials provided by Meck: US Church Membership Falls Below Majority for First Time - Gallup - March 2021; Church membership in the U.S. has fallen below the majority for the first time in nearly a century - *Washington Post* - March 29, 2021; The Church Has Left the Building by Carey Nieuwhof; An overview of Susan Beaumont's book *How to Lead When You Don't Know Where You're Going: Leading in a Liminal Season*.

Governance Subcommittee Update

- The Governance Subcommittee provided an update to the Standing Committee on the status of their work to improve upon or replace the church's current governance model to better align with First Parish's size and mission.

- The subcommittee drafted questions for First Parish staff, and for the standing committees of similarly sized UU churches to research possible improvements or changes. They will gather information from these groups and report back to the Standing Committee later this year.
- The subcommittee also presented a diagram of a possible governance structure for First Parish involving increased involvement of the laypeople in church operations.
- The new structure would require a great deal of involvement from volunteers. The SC agreed to solicit initial feedback from church leaders at the retreat being led by Meck Groot in February.

Approval of Minutes

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously

VOTED: to accept the December, 2021 Standing Committee (SC) meeting minutes, and to incorporate them into the permanent record.