

<b>Regular Attendees</b>		<b>Present</b>
Fifi Ball	Director of Operations	Y
Jeff Brainerd	Standing Committee member	Y
Rev. Howard Dana	Senior Minister	Y
Dave Elwood	Standing Committee member	Y
Kristin Haddad	Chair	Y
Peter Nobile	Clerk	N
Patty Popov	Standing Committee member	Y
Toby Smith Ropeik	Standing Committee member	Y
Mark Russell Prior	Standing Committee member	Y
Lora Venesy	Standing Committee member	Y
Tom Wilson	Treasurer	N
Kate Svreck	Standing Committee member	Y
John Lowe	Standing Committee member	Y
Jan Hutslar	Ministerial Intern	N
<b>Guests</b>	(none)	

Kristin read our Standing Committee (SC) covenant, and then each committee member checked in.

Minutes from February’s meeting had already been revised and approved via electronic vote.

**Chair’s Report**

Kristin reminded the committee that General Assembly (GA) is to be held in New Orleans on June 24-25 this year. Registration is open, and Howard, Kristin, and Kate are planning to attend. Also, Regional assembly will be held in Woburn on April 21-22. John, Lora, and Toby are planning to attend.

The Committee needs to think about what if any warrants we will introduce at this year’s annual meeting. Possibilities include a measure regarding the 7.5% Social Action set-aside policy. May 7 is the due date for warrant approval. A committee member advised not have too many things on the docket.

**Minister's report**

Howard’s report was gratefully received. John and Dave asked if future reports might include data on RE attendance? Howard pointed out that he is open to include such data in his reports, but wants to make it a group decision on what the Minister's report can and should contain.

Howard reported that two people signed the membership book today. Additionally, he reported that the men’s retreat was successful. Dave, Tom and Peter attended, and most attendees found it to be good and meaningful and would like to participate in additional such retreats in the future.

A recent large donor dinner was reported to be successful. Of 77 people invited, 35 attended. Darien Smith did a terrific job, and the group size was just right. This year’s dinner included servers which was well worth the expense. About 2/3 of the attendees pledged that night. The church is generally asking for 5% increase in pledges. This is the fourth year for the dinner event, and folks are feeling more and more comfortable coming, which Howard sees as a positive cultural change.

Howard would like to see more groups getting directly involved in the pledge campaign in the future, possibly by running an event during the campaign, or by being the face of the campaign at coffee hour. At

the Harrisburg church, March was known as "money month" and all groups were invited to participate. Kristin commented that this idea should be shared at the upcoming leadership workshop

Finally, Howard believes that everyone involved in the Social Action Council (SAC) staff hiring process is clear as to how decisions are going to be made.

**Director of Operation's report**

Fifi reported that First Parish had a good, strong January financially relative to previous years. Changes to our budget include:

- A slight increase due to a change in the types of group insurance we participate in with the UUA (no SC approval needed)
- Jan Hutslar qualifies for our retirement plan, which considers previous UU work experience. Jan will receive a total contribution of \$2,000 (no SC approval needed)
- We changed trash pickup vendor (to a smaller, local firm), which will save the church \$300 a month. However, we had to pay \$1,200 fee to break the current contract. This trash service will be shared with the Concord Museum.

Fifi reports that we have almost \$100,000 of next year's pledge payments in hand already. This money is held as cash. Due to wise budgeting and conservative spending, we have over-compensated for our \$15,000 budget shortfall. We are now \$36,000 in the positive direction, which is great news. Possible wildcards that could undermine this surplus include additional snow removal costs, cost of heating oil, and unexpected building expenses. Howard suggested that we finish the sanctuary speaker project while we are in the black. Toby suggested placing surpluses in a maintenance fund.

Howard also expressed concern about fact that pledging is flat but giving is increasing, which makes it difficult to plan programming. Such pledging behavior is not long-lived enough to be relied upon as a new pattern. Mark commented that a 5-year rolling average is a good measure for determining such a pattern.

**Pledge campaign update**

Kristin reported, with thanks, that many SC members are involved as stewards. The campaign is generally doing well, many people are involved, and members are happy with a shorter campaign season. Fifi reported about \$740,000 has been pledged to date, from about 200 households.

Tom reported that while the active campaign is shorter, the overall campaign won't end until May to get as close as possible to actual numbers. It was observed that an externally communicated fundraising target would not be productive.

**Nominating Committee update**

Patty reported a bit of history regarding the size of the Nominating Committee (NC). Per previous annual reports, in 2000 the committee increased in size from 6 to 9. The church was expanding at that time, and the NC had larger role, making a recommendation to the SC to increase in size. This process was observed to be a good protocol, e.g. the NC should ask the SC to recommend any change to its structure.

Howard observed that the prevalent thinking at that time was to have big programs and lots of staffing, which is different from today's thinking. Mark observed that people may hold a perception that a smaller committee isn't as representative of the congregation, and that we may want to anticipate such concerns. Kristin noted the potential use of historical records to explain future decisions.

**Leadership Workshop**

This in-house workshop is planned for the evening of Thursday, April 27<sup>th</sup>. The current plan is to use the Emerson and other rooms upstairs in Religious Education (RE) wing. Howard is soliciting input on

themes, and possible themes suggested by SC members included:

- looking outward, collaborating with others outside of First Parish
- social justice
- how to involve and retain young people

Committee chairs will be invited to the workshop directly, with an invitation to pass along the invitation to anyone who is interested. The committee should also feel free to approach individuals personally with an invitation to attend. It was noted that that week in April is also Concord Town Meeting week, which might impact attendance.

### **Member's Reports**

A parishioner approached Kristin to express gratitude for a well run Annual Pledge Campaign.

Jeff noted that Christa did a great job today at service.

Howard reported that someone from Carlisle was grateful for the Black Lives Matter banner.

### **Group liaison reports**

- Congregational Outreach: Toby is collecting information for annual meeting.
- Governance: Mark and John have agreed to look over old policies and are making progress.
- Denominational Affairs: John is actively recruiting delegates for GA.
- SAC: Lora reported that Howard has reviewed the top 4 candidates for the staff position, with a decision forthcoming. Also, Evan Seitz presented at the last SAC meeting and plans to work with Evan are moving forward. He will be supervised by his UU MassAction supervisor Laura, with whom Howard will deal directly. Evan's primary focus will be on environmental issues. We are joining 10 other churches in efforts along those lines, and hope to learn from this collaborative experience.
- RE Council: Dave noted that Leslie Pelton is rotating off chair, and the council is not sure who will succeed her. This year's Coming Of Age program was a great success.
- Ministerial Intern: Howard reported that we have selected an intern for next year! Her title will be a minister-in-residence due to her status of being a recently ordained minister, but her responsibilities and salary will be that of an intern.
- Arts Council: current focus is to ensure that nothing falls through the cracks while Beth is out.
- Forum: John reported that Pat Everett will be stepping down as chair.

### **Evaluation Discussion**

Mark reported on the first evaluation committee meeting. A questionnaire, with some yes/no questions and some essay questions, was discussed. It was thought that participants in Howard's evaluation should include all SC members and some at-large congregation members, committee members or committee chairs. In past years, we have chosen non-SC members who were able to see beyond our blind spots.

Lora noted that the committee is looking at past years to see what worked and didn't work, and that current thinking is a hybrid of past years' evaluation efforts. Last year's evaluation process was felt to be too constrained, that there was not enough content outside of strict goals.

Howard observed that what is most helpful to him is to know if anything is heading toward a crisis point, and to identify any blind spots. In other words, how is he doing in the chief of staff role, which is how most of SC members interact with him?

Howard's evaluation should be completed prior to the budget being set (this year on May 7<sup>th</sup>) to be taken into consideration for any compensation discussions. Standing Committee members want to know about our own performance. Next year, the SC will ideally look at a full review of the ministerial team. We should be preparing now for what we want to ask about in that review.

A rough timeline for evaluations this year is as follows:

- Howard's will begin at the end of March and wrap up at the end of April.
- SC's evaluations will begin in May and wrap up in June.

Next year is the fifth year of Howards ministry and the SC is required to do a comprehensive survey of the parish, along with our standard evaluations. This will involve:

- Congregational Conversations in the fall of 2017.
- The All-congregation survey will occur late fall or early winter 2017, and during the winter the SC will wrap up and analyze the evaluations.

Dave noted that it would be best for surveys to be more quantitative, less free form, so we can track results over time. Lora shared that she was impressed with the Finance Committee's recent survey process. Howard noted that he will respond to feedback when setting next year's goals.

### **Chair Selection for 2017-18**

Kristin noted that she had signed up for a term of 1 + 1 years, so a discussion about her term was due. Kristin asked Mark to lead the meeting and left the room so that committee members could discuss whether to confirm her as chair for next year. After Kristin left the room, there was a short discussion on how best to collect and present feedback to the Chair, and it was decided that we will have a direct discussion, to be scheduled in the future, with Kristin to review the Chair's role and give feedback.

A motion was made to confirm that the SC would like Kristin to continue as Chair next year. Several SC members expressed gratitude for Kristin's hard work and their wish that she continues in her role. The motion then passed unanimously and with expressions of joy!

In miscellaneous SC news, Kate noted that there will be no 2<sup>nd</sup> SC retreat this year, but that she has provisionally offered to host a cookout social event at her house.

The public portion of the meeting concluded at 8:03PM, when the committee went into executive session. The executive session ended at 8:58PM and the meeting was adjourned.

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