

Regular Attendees		Present
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	Y
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	Y
Kate Svreck	Standing Committee member	N
John Lowe	Standing Committee member	Y
Jan Hutslar	Ministerial Intern	Y
Guests	(none)	

Howard opened with Edmund Noble Freedman’s “*A Failure of Nerve.*” Tom read our Standing Committee (SC) covenant.

Minutes from our March meeting, with minor modifications, were approved.

Chair’s Report

Kristin raised a few policy items, including the governance subcommittee’s request that we ought to regularly review our SC strategic goals. She, Lora and John participated in a UUA webinar entitled “Leading and Feeling Change”. Any other board member interested in the materials was asked to contact Kristin. An upcoming discussion will be held regarding concrete SC Chair duties, and at Toby’s suggestion a list of such duties will be developed for discussion purposes via Google Docs so that members can enter suggestions. The New England Regional UU Assembly will be held on April 21-22, and the FP leadership development workshop will be held here on the evening of April 27th.

SC Goal Review

Kristin read our goals, and generally we are making good progress on achieving our goals. Dave volunteered to gather a few SC members to attend another UU service. Toby and Kristin discussed the potential content of a presentation at this year’s upcoming annual meeting on June 11th regarding the evolution of Social Action and SAC at First Parish, and the group noted the importance of keeping lines of communication open between the SC and the SAC. John and Lora are participating on an SAC subcommittee that is examining SAC financing, but are participating strictly as parishioners and not as members of the SC.

Minister’s report

Howard’s report was gratefully received. Howard mentioned that he is missing an Installation ceremony this evening because of this SC meeting, and that such conflicts happen 3-4 times per year. Howard’s UU hikes are fun but are poorly attended.

Director of Operation's report

Fifi reported a fairly uneventful month, with nothing on today's agenda to approve. The main stair railing project is complete.

Pledge campaign update

Fifi reported that pledges have dramatically slowed down since April, and a reminder mailing was sent out on April 5th to those approximately 100 households who have not yet pledged. Currently we are showing a campaign pledge balance of \$913,736.00 total coming from 334 pledge units. The campaign goal is \$1,050,000.00. Tom reported that regarding collection rates year to date we are about \$170,000.00 ahead of where we were last year. About 55% of pledgers increased their pledges by on average by 8%. We had 32 new pledgers (about 10%) and about 26% did not increase their pledges, both of which are historical patterns. About 38 pledgers (12%) decreased their pledges, but that decrease was in large part offset by new pledges and increases from large donors. There has been good participation in the campaign, and Howard once again noted that while the amount of pledging is flat, other giving is up including gifts, box collections and sizes of pledges. There were several questions about pledge statistics and data that Tom deftly answered. Howard commented that it is wonderful to have the Treasurer, especially given Tom's enthusiasm and energy, centrally involved in the annual pledge campaign.

Howard will be leading the assembling of next year's budget. A draft budget will be reviewed with the SC on May 7th, with a follow up meeting either May 21st or June 4th. Budget priorities include cost of living increases for the staff, increases to our UUA dues, and long term building maintenance funding.

Member's Reports

John commented on the fantastic nature of the Grub's Place production. The committee discussed how best to recognize participants and organizers, including the cast, crew and production team.

Group liaison reports

Groups

- **Nominating**: Patty reported that the Nominating Committee (NC) has recommended that the SC officially move that the NC be reduced to 7 from 9 over two years. After a brief discussion, Patty formally made that motion, which was seconded and approved unanimously. There will be one spot to fill on the NC in the coming year. Mark suggested the creation of a charter for the NC.
- **Evaluation**: Lora reported that this year's multi-pronged approach is coming along. Non-SC members are being polled for input. Additionally, 11 non-SC members, members of the SAC board, and staff were polled for the Senior Minister evaluation. Evaluation categories include Worship, Head of Staff and Head of Staff's Goals, Stewardship, and Congregational Life.
- **Congregational Outreach**: Tom reported that April 23rd will be a Forum for congregants to be able to discuss financial priorities and the annual pledge campaign.
- **Governance**: Mark and John reported that the committee is working through feedback provided by Kristin.

Liaisons

- **Denominational Affairs**: John reported that the committee is working to recruit attendees to General Assembly (GA), and that the GA program looks very interesting. Lora noted that offsite participation is quite worthwhile.

- SAC: Lora and Jeff reported good new energy around the new hires, Zach and Evan. The SC policies are agnostic about whether John should chair any kind of SAC subcommittee. The committee agreed that advocacy efforts should be clearly distinguished from simple liaison duties. Lora also reported on Janine Olsen's long planned resignation from the SAC board, and that there are ongoing discussions about leadership.
- RE Council: Dave reported that Carol Harris is transitioning to become the chair of the RE Council, with good energy in and around the transition. The RE Council is looking for adults to participate in the Little RE program. Youth Group development continues to be challenging. Next year's RE teaching model will test a year-long "team" structure, to increase flexibility and coverage throughout the year.
- Ministerial Intern: Howard reported that Jo VonRue will be our intern next year.
- Membership: Howard reported 5 people signed the membership book today. The bulk of our new members do not live in Concord, and currently 25% of our membership does not live in Concord.
- Forum: John reported that Alan Whitney and Pat Brinkman will co-chair next year's Forum Committee. The group has a number of new members and the leadership transition is going well. Howard reported that the Forums next year will likely happen twice a month (1st and 3rd weeks) rather than every week.

Stewardship Survey results discussion

Tom distributed and discussed a summary of preliminary findings of the survey, looking at Stewardship at First Parish. The three underlying survey questions were: how do people feel about FP, why do people pledge the way they do, and what can be done to the pledging process to make it better? Some dimensions of the survey results include:

- The character of survey respondents reflects those who are very active in the church
- A majority of respondents identified FP as very or extremely important in their lives
- A majority of respondents see a positive future for FP
- Respondents averaged 3.8 FP activities per person, including programs, events and group activities
- There is work to do to increase participation in the Legacy Giving program

The most important lessons learned so far from the survey include:

- 1) FP is a highly important "home" for many in this community
- 2) People are involved in between 3 and 5 activities
- 3) Those who pledged highest tend to be those who have been at FP longest
- 4) The processes that support a strong pledge campaign are working well
- 5) Pledge income may decline as the congregation ages, so there is work to be done in retaining younger congregants

Mark wondered if there is some way to perform an analysis comparing engagement in activities to pledging levels. Tom will be discussing these results at the April 23rd Forum event.

The public portion of the meeting concluded at 8:38 PM. There was an Executive Session, and the meeting was concluded at 8:55 PM.

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