

Regular Attendees		Present
Fifi Ball	Director of Operations	Y
Jeff Brainerd	Standing Committee member	Y
Rev. Howard Dana	Senior Minister (on sabbatical)	
Dave Elwood	Chair	Y
Michelle Fortier	Treasurer	Y
Laurel Gray	Ministerial Intern	Y
Kristin Haddad	Standing Committee member	Y
John Lowe	Standing Committee member	Y
Peter Nobile	Clerk	Y
Zach Roe	Social Action Coordinator	
Toby Smith Ropeik	Standing Committee member	Y
Kate Svreck	Standing Committee member	Y
Valerie Vallancourt	Standing Committee member	
Lora Venesy	Standing Committee member	Y
Marion Visel	Minister for Pastoral Care, Lead Minister in Howard's Absence	Y
Tom Wilson	Standing Committee member	
Guests		
Eric Moore	Nominating Committee	
Richard Brown	Scheid & Co., Accountants	
Rudi Scheiber-Kurtz	Finance Committee	

Fifi lit our chalice, Marion opened our meeting with a reading adapted from text by Wallace Stevens, and we held a moment of silence together. Dave read our Standing Committee covenant.

I. Regular Business

Standing Committee (SC) minutes from December were approved with a near unanimous vote and will be posted to the First Parish web site.

Treasurer's report

Michelle introduced Richard Brown, who reported on Scheid & Company's review of both Agreed Upon Procedures at First Parish, and the previous three years' financial records. Fifi and the Finance Committee were instrumental in this effort, which consisted of a general overview of existing practices that resulted in a series of recommended minor adjustments to those practices. Richard categorized the recommendations as "more tweaks than alarm bells." Copies of the report will be made available to members of First Parish by directly contacting Fifi or Michelle.

Michelle reviewed ongoing efforts to create an inventory of the Church's physical assets, including the campus buildings (i.e. the church and houses) and grounds, fine art, antique furniture, communion silver and other valuable artifacts. The first part of such an inventory would include photographs and current appraisals. A second step would be to reevaluate and upgrade appropriate types and levels of

insurance in order to properly cover our assets. A third step would look at operational issues including security. The Trustees are also investigating other possible entity structures in order to best mitigate risks to First Parish. The committee heartily supported all of these efforts.

Michelle raised the issue of whether First Parish is following the UUA's Safe Congregation guidelines, and Marion noted that this resource is available from the UUA for our review. Laurel recommended that the Standing Committee review a checklist published by The Religious Institute, which offers a third-party certification regarding sexually safe congregation practices. The group discussed various standards and systematic evaluations. Lora and Peter will follow up with a review of materials that Laurel, Fifi and others will share.

Dave and Michelle briefly reviewed current budget priorities for the coming year, to include:

- Minister for Pastoral Care (salary and benefits)
- Staff salary increases
- UUA Fair Share contribution
- Long term building maintenance

Michelle noted that beginning July 1, MA state law is enacting a 0.63% tax that will contribute to family and long-term medical leave, so that tax burden will need to be included in our budget.

Chair's report

The SC greeter assignments were discussed, and the greeter activity was agreed to be important, especially greeting people at the side door on Sunday mornings. Members also described how being a greeter circulating during coffee hour seemed less than effective. The group discussed how intimidating coffee hour can be to some. Marion noted that the hallway and kitchen are both places that some people linger and can be quietly approached. Jeff reminded us to seek out strangers, new faces, and people who look bewildered or lost. Peter advocated for a serious effort to acoustically assess and improve the Parish Hall and Parlor spaces, and the group agreed this could be a budget priority sooner rather than later.

Dave discussed maintenance of the SC area of First Parish's web site, recommending that we remove some older evaluations and reports. The group discussed how best to perform routine maintenance on the web site, and the potential importance of a point person – on the staff? – who would have the primary assignment of web site maintenance. This issue warrants further discussion.

Director of Operation's report

Fifi discussed the monthly report, which included a Christmas Eve collection total of some \$8,000, which was a traditional pass-through collection to pre-selected organizations. Fifi noted a recent repair to one of the large flood light conduits at the front of the building that will cost around \$4,500.

Lead Minister's report

Marion reported that both member and non-member memorial services are happening at the usual pace, and that emergency need requests were taken care of during December. On Saturday January 5, several FP members attended the Sanctuary Congregation re-certification ceremony in Bedford. Worship

numbers were very high in December and staff was quite stressed, with a total of 1,154 people attending the four Christmas Eve services. The committee thanked the staff for its dedication and hard work on Christmas Eve!

II. Standing Committee initiatives/New business

Liaison and subcommittee reports

- John noted that the Forum committee has temporarily disbanded, and a survey is underway to determine how best to move forward with Forum planning.
- Lora reported that Fred Van Deusen has become the new Vice-chair of the Social Action Council.
- Lora, Eric and Kate are part of the Youth Advisory Group that has begun to meet regularly, in support of Madzie Burnham who is starting with a group of around 10 kids total, 4 or 5 who show up on a regular basis. Madzie is reaching out to younger kids, including the current COA cohort.
- Jeff reported that Sara Ballard and the Diversity Committee will be meeting this month regarding First Parish's outward looking expressions of welcoming and diversity especially toward our LGBTQ brothers and sisters.

Kristin reported on behalf of the Governance subcommittee that the current membership policy does not align with our bylaws. The conflict is that the policy mentions the requirement of a "pledge of record" for membership, but the bylaw notes that one can become a member by simply signing the membership book. Fifi told us that the definition of "active member" means that you have been seen at least once at First Parish in the past two years, and that there are any number of pathways to regular membership besides making a formal financial pledge. John noted that most other churches make a financial contribution a requirement for membership. The group discussed current practices, how best to revise the membership policy and procedure to better reflect our bylaws and practices, and the importance of clarifying these issues. The subcommittee will draft modifications to the current policy to review at the next SC meeting, which could be voted on in our March meeting when Howard will be able to participate in the decision.

Kristin raised the issue of a charter for the Nominating Committee. Kristin has drafted a charter for SC review and will share with the SC at our February meeting and with the Nominating Committee at their next meeting.

The group discussed other upcoming Governance Committee work including self-evaluation and other SC responsibilities, confidentiality policies, and signage or banner policies.

The Future of First Parish

Dave noted that we are preparing for the 2/2 Future of First Parish event, at which most if not all SC members will be present. Dave asked for members to begin listing resources and ideas, and that he and Tom will be contacting us all over the next few weeks to follow up. Committee members should be actively recruiting, especially through liaison connections, and connect with individuals who would be ideal contributors. For the moment the event will focus on the four areas that emerged from our SC fall

retreat:

- Strengthening our Bonds
- Increasing Our Growth and Diversity
- Expanding Our Connections with Other Communities
- Deepening Our Spiritual Selves

A motion was made at 9:08 PM to adjourn the meeting, and the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,
Peter Nobile
Clerk