

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	
Laurel Gray	Ministerial Intern	Y
Kristin Haddad	Standing Committee member	
John Lowe	Standing Committee member	
Peter Nobile	Clerk	Y
Toby Smith Ropeik	Standing Committee member	Y
Kate Svrcek	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	
Tom Wilson	Standing Committee member	Y
Guests		
Peter Lowitt	<i>Expanding Our Connections with Other Communities</i>	
Jan Power	<i>Strengthening Bonds Within Our Community</i>	

Lora lit our chalice, Laurel opened our meeting with a reading by David Bumbaugh, and we held a moment of silence together.

I. Time for Action reports:

The four task forces briefly reported on activities since the retreat in January, and some notes on each group's reporting are as follows.

1. Increasing Growth and Diversity – Tom and Toby reported that co-chairs have been selected and that the group is already pursuing several goals, including making a brochure about the church (First Parish and being a UU in general), how to enliven the front vestibule to make it more warm and welcoming, and coordinating with the Welcoming Walls group to better present the Parish Hall and First Parish generally as a warm, welcoming, exciting and interesting place. A separate group will be researching what other churches have done and are doing along these lines, and several members attended a webinar on building diversity by traveling outward rather than waiting for diversity to come to us.

2. Strengthening Bonds Within Our Community – Kate reported (using text assembled by Eric Moore) a summary of the task force's work so far, sharing thoughts and observations. The group has been focusing on "how" we are in relation to one another, how we deal with other especially when in conflict, and how we make people feel like they matter or belong at First

Parish, especially given the variety of personality types at First Parish. Jan described various levels of process and connection that could potentially make congregational life more accessible to parishioners, ranging from leadership training to general communication tools. The group will likely divide into sub-groups to pursue a variety of activities and tasks.

3. Expanding Our Connections with Other Communities – Peter Lowitt reported that the group discussed how to connect on issues that we can address better together rather than alone, working with other groups – the bundle of straws analogy. Next meeting late March/early April. Ideas discussed included:
- Increase funding to UUA
 - More participation in regional UUA activities
 - Support UU Mass Action
 - Ask clergy to step up interfaith work in Concord
 - Connect with another local congregation on Transylvania partnership or other work
 - Connect with other UU congregations across boundaries and silos on social action and other fronts
- General recommendations to the congregation may include:
- More broadly share work on racial, climate justice
 - Work on better opportunities for connection within the congregation, e.g. by using social media
 - Ramp up intergenerational participation
 - Major social action “theme” for a set period
4. Deepening Our Spiritual Selves – Peter reported that a group of 8 out of the 20 members of this Task Force met at David Ropeik’s home and had a lively discussion on a wide range of ideas. In general, there was a sense that opportunities for spiritual growth, and spirituality in general, are less present and visible than they ought to be. David has agreed to facilitate our meetings and help steer the conversation, and members volunteered to begin leading certain sub-tasks. Several possible areas for creating or re-creating opportunities for personal spiritual exploration and growth could include:
- Neighboring Faiths for Adults (under development with Jan Power)
 - Coming of Elderhood (like our Coming of Age program)
 - Spiritual Autobiography groups (Jeff expressed interest)
 - Re-energized Small Group Ministry and/or Covenant Groups
- Broader ideas for enhancing spirituality in general could include:
- More time for reflection during weekly services
 - More spiritual testimonials or “mini-sermons”
 - Prayers leading into moment of reflection more like “real” prayers
 - Better feedback mechanism(s) to the ministerial leadership about spiritual activities
- And other thoughts about how to better embed our core mission of spiritual development included:
- Beginning every meeting or activity at First Parish with a chalice lighting, reading and/or moment of reflection
 - Developing “at-home” resources, programs and simple rituals to help parishioners

- practice spirituality at home (Peter expressed interest in this, and will connect with Rev. Amy Freedman who is already doing some of this)
- Distributing worship “aides” including giving homemade chalices to all new members, and selling chalices or other objects at coffee hour

We discussed how best to communicate across task forces and with the Standing Committee (SC), and the SC liaisons will serve as connections between groups. The SC will coordinate the development of guidelines and implementation – this is work that the congregation will “do” more than assign to staff. Laurel reminded the group about the First Tuesday services led by Laurel and Gail as an opportunity for connection and deep listening.

II. Regular Business

Meeting minutes

January minutes had been approved by email and will be posted to the web site ASAP.

Chair’s report

- Banner Parade Celebration Sunday March 3rd – Dave asked as many SC members as possible to attend and help to carry banners.
- Dave will be traveling on the evening of our April 9th SC meeting and will likely designate a substitute chair for that meeting.
- Dave noted that several SC members – Val, Toby, Michelle and Kristin – will be ending their terms of service this year, so the Nominating Committee is very busy!

Director of Operation’s report

Fifi answered questions about this month’s financial reports. Fifi has had several conversations with SAC members about the current budgeting process, especially around the funding and filling of the SAC coordinator position. Lora noted that given the Howard’s role in staffing decisions, some of the SAC concerns about money seem to be a legacy of how things had been done before now.

There were two items that required SC approval:

1. **Outdoor flood light work:** poor wiring, a strange path, and inadequate protection in the ground caused this flood light to go dark and a search for the electrical problem ensued. When the dust (or sand) settled, the repair cost a total of \$6,263 (the budget was \$3,500). This will be expensed on the budget line 6220 PP&E Additional Expenses (for Plant, Property & Equipment unanticipated or otherwise difficult to categorize expenses). A motion was made to approve this line item overage of \$2,763, and the motion passed unanimously.
2. **A \$15,000 gift was received in January and was designated for the Social Action Reserve fund.** A motion was made to accept the gift, and the motion passed unanimously.

III. Standing Committee initiatives/New business

Liaison and subcommittee reports

- Lora reported feeling very encouraged by the current work that the SAC group is doing.
- Kate reported that she and Dave met with the Nominating Committee to discuss upcoming needs on the SC.

- Dave reported that the Governance subcommittee continues to work on its various activities.

The Future of First Parish Other Business

- Toby, for the Governance Subcommittee, reminded us that Senior Minister and Standing Committee evaluations are coming up again; the Ministerial Support Committee will connect with Howard when he returns from sabbatical in early March.
- Denominational affairs meeting is coming up on March 5th.

A motion was made to close the main meeting at 9:10PM and the committee entered Executive Session. Executive Session ended at 9:50PM and the meeting was closed.

Respectfully Submitted,
Peter Nobile
Clerk