

**Recommendations for  
Fostering a Sense of Belonging  
at First Parish in Concord**

A report by the First Parish Belonging Team,  
a task force of the First Parish in Concord Standing Committee  
Concord, MA

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# Recommendations for Fostering a Sense of Belonging at First Parish in Concord

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## Executive Summary

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“Church” has changed in the last generation and, in response to COVID-19, it is evolving before our eyes. First Parish in Concord is not immune to the trend of members drifting away from faith communities. The Year of Reflection and Visioning process (fall 2017–spring 2018) revealed a longing for deeper connection to First Parish, the loneliness of feeling unseen and unvalued, and a sense of diminishing connection for a number of members of the First Parish community. These responses highlight the importance of focusing on strengthening the bonds within the First Parish community so it can remain a relevant institution in the lives of its congregation.

We on the First Parish Belonging Task Force believe that a program of engagement, a focus on belonging, and a dedication of resources to congregational life are essential to the future of our congregation. As our large congregation goes forward, building connections with the people inside our “doors” is more critical than ever. The question is how.

This report describes a path to deepening belonging in our community. What leads individuals to feel they belong is complex. We identified a spectrum of emotions that contribute to a sense of belonging. We explore each emotion as a section of this report. Under each section, we offer insights and desired outcomes, followed by recommended actions intended to foster a positive emotional response.



The anticipated scope of work can only be accomplished with shared, dedicated effort by both the congregation and the staff. Our recommendations detail the formation of specific lay-led groups, including a Congregational Life Committee, to work with staff to provide leadership and coordination of belonging work. We also recommend that, ideally, First Parish creates a staff position to focus on fostering belonging. We believe that staffing the membership and congregational life functions is a gateway prerequisite for future growth. The report’s appendices provide relevant resources to assist future staff and lay members in doing the invaluable work of fostering belonging at First Parish in Concord.

We offer these recommendations in the belief that we can cultivate a greater sense of belonging at First Parish. Not all of these ideas will work. New ideas will be suggested in the future. Old ideas may take a new form. We invite the First Parish community to experiment. Our response to the changes we face can lead to innovation. We hope the First Parish community joins us in believing that making a commitment to strengthening the bonds within our community is a necessary and worthwhile investment in our future together.

## **Introduction**

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The First Parish Belonging Team is a task force created by the First Parish in Concord Standing Committee in February 2019 in response to concerns the congregation identified during the churchwide Year of Reflection and Visioning (YfRaV) exercise (fall 2017–spring 2018). One of the key findings from the YfRaV survey is that “people want to feel more connection and deepen their connection to First Parish.”<sup>1</sup> The preliminary survey findings identified an aspirational hope for “friendship opportunities, purposeful projects, supportive community”<sup>2</sup> and that “we become the community we seek for others.”<sup>3</sup>

The Belonging Team was given four areas of community-building to focus on:

1. Belonging and connection
2. Communication
3. Growing and supporting leadership
4. Relational skills

From its formation in February 2019 until February 2020, the Belonging Team (originally titled the Strengthening the Bonds Within Our Community Task Force) piloted several programmatic initiatives from these four categories to explore what would contribute to promoting a sense of welcome and belonging within the congregation. By the spring of 2020, we had gathered useful information from our pilot projects; held numerous conversations with First Parish community members on the topic of belonging; and had gained a better understanding of the inner workings of First Parish. We turned our focus from project implementation to assessment of what we had learned from these sources of information, and worked to develop recommendations for sustained, long-term changes at First Parish that would promote belonging and connection within the First Parish community.

While the YfRaV comments include many positive associations with First Parish, the heart of this report is intended to address the stated loneliness of feeling unseen and unvalued, stemming from a lack of connection to the First Parish community. We deeply appreciate the work that staff and community members currently do to reach out, connect, and strengthen our bonds. We believe, however, that we can do more as a congregation. We invite that possibility with these recommendations.

## **Key Definitions**

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**Belonging:** The feeling of inclusion, acceptance, and deep connection that one experiences as the result of being part of a warm, open, and supportive culture within the First Parish community

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<sup>1</sup> “First Parish in Concord: Year for Reflections and Visioning—Preliminary Findings from Our Listening Sessions, Survey and Retreat,” p. 37

<sup>2</sup> “Preliminary Findings,” p. 16

<sup>3</sup> “Preliminary Findings,” p. 16

**First Parish community:** The congregational body comprised of First Parish members, staff, contributors, participants, friends (non-members), and visitors

**Intentional:** Planned and deliberate; the community engages in conscious, contextually appropriate efforts that address individual, congregational, and systemic change through activities such as research, training, active listening, and strategic planning.<sup>4</sup>

**Radical Welcoming:** An intentional, and spiritual, practice that invites and includes the voices, presence, and power of all those within its orbit. Radical Welcoming seeks to eliminate historic and systemic barriers that prevent people, especially those who are traditionally marginalized, from fully participating in activities and community. It is hospitable, compassionate, considerate, and comprehensive.<sup>5</sup>

## The Feeling of Belonging

Belonging is a feeling, and one that touches us deeply. It helps us feel good about who we are and secure about our place in the world. Cultivating a greater sense of belonging for those in the First Parish community is an important and worthwhile goal for deepening our spirituality and developing the trust needed to work together for a greater good.

After reviewing the YfRaV comments, examining First Parish processes, researching other congregations and programs, and drawing on our own personal experiences, we believe multiple feelings contribute to an individual feeling that they belong to the First Parish community. As a result, we propose that belonging is reflected in the extent to which an individual agrees with the following sentiments about their First Parish experiences:

1. I feel welcomed.
2. I feel accepted.
3. I feel informed.
4. I feel encouraged.
5. I feel empowered.
6. I feel invested.

1. I feel **welcomed** at First Parish.

I am met by a congregation, campus, website, services and programs, and membership program that all send the message that they welcome newcomers and have planned for my arrival.

2. I feel **accepted** for who I am at First Parish.

I feel genuinely seen and accepted in my encounters with the First Parish community. First Parish community members create an atmosphere of radical welcome, accepting me unconditionally.

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<sup>4</sup> Spellers, *Radical Welcome: Embracing God, The Other, and the Spirit of Transformation*, p. 16.

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix B: Radical Welcome

3. I feel **informed** about First Parish activities.

If I want information about First Parish events, programs, or committees, it is easily available. It is easy to sign up for First Parish information channels—e.g., weekly emails, other church communications.

4. I feel **empowered** to engage in or initiate activities at First Parish.

When I want to share my interests with the First Parish community it is easy to find ways to connect. If I want to coordinate a group and communicate with other First Parish folks, there are directions and resources for doing that. Information about operations and protocols at First Parish is easily accessible to all who seek it. It is clear how to "get permission" and it is normal to be creative.

5. I feel **encouraged** to participate by members of the First Parish community.

As I participate in the First Parish community, community members actively invite my involvement. I feel a part of a culture that “pays it forward”—members reaching out to include others as they were once included. The physical environment of First Parish reminds me that this community celebrates diversity.

6. I feel **invested** in fostering belonging within the First Parish community and bringing others into that community.

I actively contribute to the work of building personal connections within the community and seek to make First Parish connections with neighbors, friends, and others who are not yet a part of the community. I work against norms that discourage newcomers or innovators. I recognize that fostering belonging is one of the most valuable investments I can make in the future of the First Parish community.

We believe that congregational activities should be **intentional** in promoting all of the aforementioned feelings that contribute to a sense of belonging. We believe that the result of such intentional work will be a deeper connectedness within the First Parish community and a wider appeal to prospective members. The following pages provide a more in-depth description of the feelings that we aspire to promote at First Parish, the **desired outcomes** for the First Parish community, and **recommended actions** for achieving those outcomes. For some recommendations, work is already in progress at First Parish. After discussing each feeling, we conclude with how the community might approach **the work of implementing these recommendations**. We summarize the possible investments in organizational structure, and the time and expertise—both volunteer and paid—that may be required.

## **Feeling Welcomed**

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Many people see welcoming and belonging as being intertwined. A positive welcoming experience launches and accelerates a sense of belonging to First Parish. A newcomer’s “welcome phase” precedes and is distinct from the “new member phase” at First Parish. The latter is the current focus of the First Parish membership committee. Our recommendations

focus on the opportunity for a more consistent and visible process for welcoming newcomers to our church on Sunday mornings and throughout the week.

### **Desired Outcomes**

- First Parish has a permanent, intentional welcoming process for newcomers that happens every Sunday, online or at church—e.g., newcomers are noticed, welcomed, given nametags, we capture names & emails—and which includes follow-up with newcomers.
- First Parish community members feel comfortable and knowledgeable on how to welcome a diversity of newcomers and engage them in learning about First Parish.
- The First Parish website offers a welcoming experience that satisfies newcomers.
- First Parish offers activities that appeal to newcomer engagement.
- The First Parish campus reflects our commitment to welcoming the participation of a diverse community.
- Organizers of meetings, events, and activities hosted by the First Parish community aim to provide an environment that is inclusive and accessible to all.

### **Recommended Actions**

1. Implement an intentional newcomer welcoming process for online and in-person visits, where we track newcomers to the church community and encourage their engagement with First Parish. Our survey of welcoming programs at other churches found a number of different practices that include:
  - Welcome table(s) at church entrance(s) for in-person Sunday services
  - Providing tours of the church
  - Follow-up calls or notes to newcomers who gave their email/phone information
  - Pew cards that enable newcomers to request further contact easily
2. Reinststate a path-to-membership curriculum that includes sessions on an ongoing basis. Session topics could include:
  - UU roots and values
  - An introduction to the history and workings of First Parish Concord
  - Exploring one's own spiritual beliefs(See Appendix D for more resources on path-to-membership programs.)
3. Support cohorts of newcomers who come in to First Parish at the same time by encouraging their concurrent participation in the path-to-membership activities.
4. Develop or procure online and/or printed first-line welcoming materials targeted to a newcomer's stage of life and experience with UUism.
5. Review First Parish website to ensure language is warm, inclusive, friendly, and welcoming.

6. Further define new member responsibilities to include the responsibility to welcome others to the First Parish community.
7. Revisit universal accessibility throughout the First Parish campus. Review previous accessibility audit(s) or conduct a new one of the First Parish buildings and grounds to identify improvements that can help our campus convey that people with physical disabilities are welcome.
8. Optimize the church website's accessibility for disabled users.
9. Develop accessibility guidelines for meetings, events, and activities and share them in a newly developed guidebook to First Parish and/or the proposed First Parish guide for committee chairs. (See "Feeling Empowered" recommendations #1 and #3, p. 11.)
10. Offer leadership development that teaches ways to make meetings, events, and activities hosted by the First Parish community inclusive and accessible to all.

## **Feeling Accepted**

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Generally speaking, Unitarian Universalists tend toward the progressive, liberal end of the socio-political spectrum. We see ourselves as open-minded, welcoming diversity, and inclusive. In practice, we are a mostly homogeneous denomination, and it is easy for people who don't fit a certain mold to feel like an outsider. The First Parish YfRaV data reveal that this is the case for a number of people at First Parish.<sup>6</sup>

In Stephanie Spellers' book, *Radical Welcome: Embracing God, The Other, and the Spirit of Transformation* (2006), she says that "radical welcome is the spiritual practice of embracing and being changed by the gifts, presence, voices, and power of The Other: the people systematically cast out or marginalized within a church, a denomination and/or society." At First Parish, The Other can be those visibly unlike our predominantly white, straight, cis-gender, upper-middle-class membership, or they can be less visibly different, like those who are LGBTQ+ or are without as much education or wealth as many UUs typically have. Otherness can take many forms.

We aim to see the First Parish community do the work necessary to make all members and prospective members of the First Parish community feel accepted for who they are. This is the work of becoming radically welcoming.<sup>7</sup>

### **Desired Outcomes**

- First Parish is a place of radical welcome.
- First Parish community members step outside their comfort zones to make traditionally marginalized individuals feel comfortable, and proactively engage those individuals in their activities at First Parish.
- First Parish community members are committed to being on the "learning edge" of what it means to be in right relationship with one another.

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<sup>6</sup> For a copy of the YfRaV report, contact a member of the First Parish standing committee.

<sup>7</sup> See Appendix B for Spellers' distinction between what it means to be radically welcoming vs. inviting or inclusive.



- Individually, we have skills to compassionately address disrespectful, intolerant, or unkind acts.
- As a community, there is a defined process for handling and resolving conflict between individuals or groups within the First Parish community that makes all parties feel heard and brings about meaningful resolution.

### **Recommended Actions**

11. Engage as many members of the First Parish community as possible in the work of learning how to be radically welcoming. Make use of workshops, classes, and other forms of conversation, using resources such as the following:
  - The book *Radical Welcome: Embracing God, The Other, and the Spirit of Transformation* by Stephanie Spellers
  - *Widening the Circle of Concern*,<sup>8</sup> the report by the UUA's Commission on Institutional Change. This report offers recommendations for UU churches looking to transform their environment and their practices to reflect the values of equity, inclusion and diversity. (See Appendix D for resources developed to help congregations implement the recommendations of this report.)
  - The “Transgender Inclusion in Congregations” and “Beloved Conversations” courses that have been and continue to be offered through First Parish
12. Offer workshops and skill-building opportunities on a regular basis to help members develop knowledge, comfort, and skills related to the radical welcoming mindset.
13. Develop a system at First Parish for lay-led conflict resolution. (See Appendix D for information on different conflict resolution approaches used by other UU congregations.)
14. Train a team of volunteers to lead the new conflict resolution process at First Parish. Lay out the process in the newly developed guidebook to First Parish and/or the proposed First Parish guide for committee chairs. (See “Feeling Empowered” recommendations #1 and #3, p. 12.)
15. Develop and adopt a First Parish covenant of right relations to prompt the open discussion and exploration of what our standards and expectations are for being in relation with one another.

### **Feeling Informed**

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Nowadays, people approach church with a consumer perspective. Ease-of-use factors into their experience, and feeling informed is a significant part of their satisfaction. Effective communication is the foundation that enables participation in the First Parish community. It is a function of format, frequency, and content. We observe that churchwide communication is primarily published through the website, the church’s Facebook site, and the weekly FP and RE emails. Regular reporting from the church leadership about their work, plans, and progress

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/cic/widening>

would contribute further to bringing all First Parish community members into the life of the church and would model transparency in leadership as a value.

It is important that the church's "digital front door"—our website—is as up-to-date, appealing, and easily navigable as possible so as to draw in newcomers and serve the existing First Parish community. Having a social media presence beyond Facebook could serve to involve and attract younger demographics to our community.

Internally, communication within the church's committees, activity groups, and programs is non-standardized and seemingly dependent on the technical preferences or abilities of whoever happens to be an activity's or group's leader at the time. There is the opportunity to update the church's use of technology for internal communication within groups.

The onset of the pandemic has only highlighted the need for effective and consistent communication methods that take advantage of evolving technology options. At the same time, it has become clear to us that we must not leave behind community members who are less facile with the technology we use. We should not discard technology such as phone calls and hand-written notes for maintaining connection with those for whom internet and/or cell phones are not an option.

With the shift to virtual services and meetings, the First Parish community is expanding beyond our four walls. Investment in a long-term communications strategy is recommended to provide the means for communication that meets our needs, now and in the future.

### **Desired Outcomes**

- Members of the First Parish community have easy access to current and up-to-date information on activities and engagement.
- First Parish communication channels serve the various needs of the First Parish community.
- Staff or committees can respond quickly to unusual circumstances with community-wide communication across a variety of platforms (email, text, phone, social media).
- Staff and congregation collaborate on the use and maintenance of communication systems.

### **Recommended Actions**

16. Provide regular updates throughout the year from church leadership (senior minister, standing committee) to the First Parish community, informing them of current projects, priorities, and opportunities, and soliciting input from congregants.
17. Provide periodic updates from the church's "five pillars" (ministry & worship, music, religious education, social action, administration) to the community throughout the year.
18. Annually assess if current communication channels are meeting the needs of members and visitors as reliable sources of current happenings and other information about First Parish.

19. Develop a long-term communications strategy for both the in-person and online First Parish communities that addresses the following issues:
  - Facilitating committee-level group electronic communications (e.g., Google Groups) that are hosted by First Parish accounts and not the personal accounts of committee members
  - First Parish groups having a First Parish email address rather than the use and publication of personal email addresses (e.g., enable the use of belonging@firstparish.org, rather than janedoe@gmail.com)
  - Congregation-wide communication across multiple platforms
  - Outreach to virtual-only visitors/members
  - Communication channels for keeping youth engaged/connected (e.g., facilitating texting groups with youth groups)
20. Keep the entire First Parish website up to date, with priority on the following areas:
  - Calendar and events listing is kept up to date with activities, meetings, etc.
  - Photos are changed regularly (at least annually)
  - "One-click" (easy) access to get on mailing lists
  - More resource links for visitors, members, newcomers to explore UUism, UUA
  - Use friendly, warm, inviting language
  - Make it easy to find out how to join groups/committees
  - The path-to-membership information is more obvious and the language more succinct than current language; the benefits of membership are listed as being more than just the responsibility to give money
  - Post meeting schedule and contact email addresses for all First Parish group and committee meetings
  - Use the "back side" of the website to store information (e.g., workshop materials, committee report, etc.) that is accessible only to church members by password or direct link

## **Feeling Encouraged**

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Receiving an invitation to participate generates a feeling of being seen and valued. Individuals feel more confident that they are accepted and their contributions are desired. The activities and committees available to the First Parish community are numerous. However, we are concerned by the inconsistent attention given to reaching into the First Parish community to actively engage each other.

Our recommendations focus on how the First Parish community can make encouragement systemic and visible at First Parish through proactive engagement.

### **Desired Outcomes**

- Church committees make explicit how community members can contribute to committee work in progress.
- The First Parish Community invites multiple viewpoints on issues concerning the community whether through congregation-wide, small-group, or individual conversations.

- First Parish offers programming that responds to the interests of the community members.
- The First Parish campus encourages the participation of a diverse population.
- Displays within First Parish are engaging and informative; they include contact information and how to participate in the activity or experience being promoted.
- As a central gathering place, the Parish Hall's decor reflects the goal of creating an inclusive and welcoming environment.

### **Recommended Actions**

21. Coordinate across committees to share best practices on expanding participation and deepening community member engagement in the committee's area of focus.
22. Offer leadership development to encourage members to join and lead church committee work.
23. With permission from community members, gather and centralize information on member/friend participation and interests each year with the goal of finding affinities, providing relevant engagement opportunities, and reaching out to community members.
24. Allow for greater member visibility and participation during worship services to send the message that everyone's voice is important.
25. Encourage occasional congregation-wide "conversations" on thematic topics to get the entire First Parish community focused, engaged, and interacting on the same ideas.
26. Assess whether programming is meeting the needs of the congregation at a minimum of every two years.
27. Make the art, notices, and bulletin boards updated, vibrant, and reflective of the First Parish community.
28. Balance honoring our past and addressing belonging-fostering goals by updating the decor of the church interior (especially the Parish Hall) to reflect our church's and denomination's past, present, and future.

### **Feeling Empowered**

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In its recent report, *Widening the Circle of Concern*, the UUA recognizes "the ways we have been doing business need to change and we need innovation, experimentation, and support for those risk-takers who are building new ways."

We recognize there are invisible or impenetrable power structures at First Parish—however unintended—that impede and discourage ideas, initiatives, and engagement from members of the First Parish community. The message these hurdles send is "you don't belong." Our recommendations seek to remove these barriers and enable community members to engage with or propose new activities that serve the First Parish community.

## Desired Outcomes

- Community members can self-serve many basic requests for information such as how to schedule rooms, use the kitchen, and leverage church resources.
- No one feels they have to ask for help in locating a room.
- Community members can easily find out how to organize a group or committee at First Parish.
- Community members can easily discover how to suggest programming across the five pillars of church operations.
- Community members can engage and connect to the First Parish community using First Parish communication systems.
- The standing committee regularly solicits input from members.
- Newcomers feel that they have a clear and easy onramp to getting engaged in the First Parish community and the activities that First Parish offers.

## Recommended Actions

29. Consolidate information on how to get things done at First Parish into a guidebook, “How to Navigate First Parish,” that is available to all community members. (The Belonging Team has generated a first draft of such a guidebook.)
30. Improve wayfinding signage in the building.
31. Create a guidebook for committee chairs that provides guidance on the following topics:
  - Chair duties
  - How to use communication and collaboration infrastructure within First Parish
  - Expectations for committees on reaching out for new members
  - Best practices for fostering healthy interpersonal dynamics
  - Best practices for running meetings
  - Having a succession plan for recruiting the next chair
  - Monies and other resources available to chartered church groups
  - Other operational information that committees and their chairs should know
  - Accessibility
  - Different options for group decision-making methods (see Appendix D for UUA-provided leadership resources.)
32. Standing committee develops a system for soliciting and reviewing input from the congregation on a regular basis.

## Feeling Invested

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We believe fostering belonging is the implicit responsibility of every member of the First Parish community. Rev. Howard Dana observed, “I can bring new people in, but only the congregation can make them stay.” It is the work of the entire community to be involved in these efforts, both on a personal level and on an institutional level. *We believe fostering belonging is one of the most valuable contributions any member of the community can make to the resilience, financial security, and longevity of the organization.* Community is one of our core values.

## **Desired Outcomes**

- As members of the First Parish community, we embrace a mindset that prioritizes deepening interpersonal connection and developing trust and friendships in our work together.
- We seek to support other First Parish community members by taking part in the activities they offer through the church.
- We serve as ambassadors to encourage newcomers, friends, and neighbors to the congregation.
- We continuously seek to improve our individual skills to compassionately address disrespectful, intolerant, or unkind acts.

## **Recommended Actions**

33. Expand the First Parish community's awareness of our shared humanity by offering congregation-wide conversations on topics such as:
  - Being vulnerable
  - The spiritual practice of empathy
  - Seeing similarities between each other
  - Offering kindness
  - Not being an expert
  - Letting go of control
34. First Parish offers leadership development workshops on the topic of healthy interpersonal dynamics.
35. Coordinate with the Annual Campaign team to communicate the value of fostering belonging throughout the Annual Pledge Campaign.
36. Encourage the First Parish community to invite their friends and neighbors to attend a First Parish service or other event.

Summary of Recommendations	Welcomed	Accepted	Informed	Encouraged	Empowered	Invested
1. Implement a welcoming process for newcomers (online & in person)	✓					
2. Reinstate & implement a path-to-membership curriculum	✓					
3. Support cohorts of newcomers through the path-to-membership process	✓					
4. Develop/procure newcomer materials targeted to life stage	✓					
5. Ensure language on the website is warm, inclusive, & welcoming	✓					
6. Broaden membership responsibilities to include welcoming others	✓					
7. Revisit First Parish campus accessibility	✓					
8. Optimize website for accessibility	✓					
9. Develop accessibility guidelines for meetings; train leadership in guidelines	✓					
10. Offer leadership development on inclusivity and accessibility	✓					
11. Engage in efforts (workshops, classes, etc.) to become radically welcoming		✓				
12. Offer workshops to help members develop comfort and skills in radical welcoming		✓				
13. Develop a system for lay-led conflict resolution		✓				
14. Train a team of volunteers to lead the new conflict resolution process		✓				
15. Develop and adopt a First Parish covenant of right relations		✓				
16. Provide regular updates from church leadership on projects and priorities to the First Parish community			✓			
17. Provide periodic updates from the church's pillars to the First Parish community			✓			
18. Annually assess efficacy of current communication channels			✓			
19. Develop a long-term communications strategy			✓			
20. Keep entire website up to date			✓			
21. Coordinate across committees to share best practices on deepening community engagement				✓		

Summary of Recommendations	Welcomed	Accepted	Informed	Encouraged	Empowered	Invested
22. Offer leadership development to encourage members to lead committee work				✓		
23. Gather and centralize information on member participation and interests to inform engagement opportunities and outreach				✓		
24. Provide greater member visibility and participation in worship services				✓		
25. Hold congregation-wide conversations on thematic topics				✓		✓
26. Assess programming at least every two years				✓		
27. Update art, notices, and bulletin boards to reflect the community				✓		
28. Update the church interior décor to reflect our past, present, and future				✓		
29. Create guidebook, “How to Navigate First Parish”			✓		✓	✓
30. Improve wayfinding signage in and around the church					✓	
31. Create guidebook for committee chairs on how to run committees/groups at First Parish			✓		✓	
32. Standing Committee develops a system for gathering input from the congregation on a regular basis					✓	
33. Engage in all-congregation conversations about our shared humanity						✓
34. Provide leadership development on healthy interpersonal dynamics						✓
35. Communicate the value of fostering belonging throughout the Annual Pledge Campaign						✓
36. Encourage the First Parish community to invite friends and neighbors to First Parish event(s)						✓

### **Recommendations for Implementation**

We conclude that the First Parish community requires explicit support from both staff and the congregation to foster and facilitate a deeper sense of belonging in a collaborative, shared leadership manner. The spectrum of work anticipated and outlined above can only be accomplished with collective, dedicated effort by both the congregation and staff. Fostering belonging is not solely the work of staff, nor is it solely the work of lay volunteers. With leadership from both volunteers and staff, the First Parish community will be able to move to the next level of belonging through greater welcoming, acceptance, engagement, connection,



and integration. To achieve the desired results, First Parish must demonstrate a commitment to strengthening community by committing both human and financial resources to the job of promoting belonging.

### **Congregational Volunteer Committees**

We recommend the formation of the following lay-led groups to help carry out the work we have laid out in this document. We recognize that volunteers are in short supply, so First Parish must be judicious in its use of volunteers and pragmatic in its expectations of the groups as they get themselves up and running, especially during the stressful times of the current pandemic.

**Congregational Life Committee:** The key lay-led group that we envision for addressing belonging work at First Parish would be a standing Congregational Life Committee. This would be composed of First Parish members and friends, and importantly, include representation from the current committees and groups engaged in welcoming and membership. The committee assesses and coordinates the implementation of recommendations that support belonging, starting with those in this report. With staff, the committee provides ongoing vision and leadership as further belonging work evolves.

**Welcoming/Membership:** First Parish needs a congregational group responsible for overseeing and coordinating welcoming throughout the church organization. This could take the form of a new Welcoming Congregational Group or expanding the existing membership committee.

**Accessibility Task Force:** First Parish creates an accessibility task force to identify ways in which it can make its physical campus, its online presence, and its programming accessible and welcoming to all populations.

**Conflict Resolution Volunteers:** Explore training in conflict resolution techniques (e.g., restorative circles, nonviolent communication) with the goal of creating a trained corp of First Parish volunteers who help resolve interpersonal conflicts that arise within the First Parish community.

### **Implementation Approach:**

We recommend formation of the above-mentioned groups in the following order:

1. Form the lay-led Congregational Life Committee (CLC) this church year (FY21), with support from the First Parish Belonging Team.
2. CLC identifies the goals and recommendations that it will work to implement.
3. CLC works with the senior minister to determine how the \$3,000 allocated to membership cultivation for FY21 would be best spent.
4. CLC works with the senior minister and the membership committee to determine how to address the responsibility for welcoming.
5. CLC starts its work as identified, preparing plans and budget.
6. Standing committee creates an Accessibility Task Force to study accessibility opportunities at First Parish and produce recommendations for their implementation.

7. Standing committee appoints a task force to explore and recommend conflict resolution approaches, then to develop an implementation plan for First Parish.

### **Staff Position**

**Dedicated Staff Position:** The long-term importance of having a culture of belonging at First Parish is too great not to have staff resources dedicated to it. Ideally, we recommend that First Parish creates a staff position to foster belonging and deepening of connection within the FP Community and for implementing the recommendations in this report. This staff person would be tasked with making sure that the work of fostering belonging is integrated across church departments with staff operational functions. (Note that First Parish did have a Director of Congregational Life in 2013. See Appendix E for the job description of that position.) We believe that staffing the membership and congregational life function is a gateway prerequisite for future growth.

A survey of the 21 large U.S. UU congregations with 551-850 members (not including First Parish in Concord) shows that 90% of these have dedicated staff for congregational life, membership, and/or communications. (See Appendix C for a list of these congregations and their relevant staffing.) The position titles and areas of responsibility vary, but they generally focus on membership, congregational life, adult education, or communications, or, not infrequently, a combination of those areas.

We recognize that First Parish already has a full complement of staff, and that staff indirectly has community engagement as part of their responsibilities. Defining the staff position in conjunction with the other staff, and its relation to the volunteer committees is a key requisite. We also recognize that it will probably take at least one more budget cycle to identify funds for a separate staff position such as this. In the interim, we provide a recommendation below to address this period.

### **Implementation Approach:**

1. Senior minister and the CLC work collaboratively to identify staff functions and responsibilities having to do with fostering belonging and implementing the recommendations of this report.
2. Senior minister and the CLC identify whether congregational life and membership functions can be combined in an existing staff member, new hire, or combination of both.
3. Senior minister and the CLC reflect on lessons learned from the most recent First Parish Director of Congregational Life position to inform staffing recommendation.
4. Senior minister and the CLC identify new staff member's responsibilities and develop job description for position, and integration with the CLC.

### **Communications**

As we have mentioned, being well-informed about life at First Parish is a key component of fostering belonging. Communications, like congregational life, can be a shared staff and volunteer function. First Parish's community is fortunate to be rich in motivated IT and

communication talent. We recommend leveraging our parishioner technical, communications, and project management expertise to improve communication systems available to the First Parish community.

We recommend the formation of a **Communication Systems Working Group** that shares leadership and responsibility with the staff for developing and maintaining an efficient and effective communication infrastructure; defining a long-term communications strategy; and assisting with First Parish community communication. Using in-church knowledge affords congregants input on communication system investment. Additionally, it ensures that the perspective of the consumer of First Parish communications is represented when decisions are made about technology platforms to use, effective forms of outreach, and so on.

We are sensitive to the demands that implementation and ongoing maintenance of IT products can place on the staff. This is another reason why we recommend involving lay members in sharing their knowledge, experience, and labor in keeping the First Parish IT environment up to date and viable.

## **Conclusion**

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This report concludes the work of the First Parish Belonging Team. After more than a year and a half of working together to examine the subject of belonging—the what, why, and how of it—we are firmly convinced of the need for First Parish in Concord to make deliberate changes in an effort to strengthen the bonds within our community; open our doors wider in welcoming; engage more deeply with members; and remain relevant as people’s lives change. While we have chosen to use the feeling of belonging as the focus for this report, we recognize that it is a function of several aspects of church life—welcoming, membership, congregational life, and communications. We are recommending attention to all of these areas as a way to strengthen the bonds within our community.

We believe that this dedication of resources to congregational life is important to the future of our congregation. The experience of church has changed in the last generation and is evolving before our eyes. Most immediately, COVID has brought new ways of connecting to each other, making programming more accessible and less personal. Before COVID, though, UU and other churches were already facing the trend of shrinking membership. We recognize these challenges as a backdrop, not the focus, of our work. But we feel that addressing the recommendations in this report will only strengthen First Parish in Concord’s ability to retain members and appeal to prospective members going forward. We believe it will position our church community to better integrate and connect with people who cross our threshold, whether virtually or in person. As Corie Jason, president of the UU Association of Membership Professionals (UUAMP) says, “Focus on engagement, and the numbers will take care of themselves.” It’s about “integrating and connecting with people who walk in our doors. That often leads to membership growth, but it’s a deeper spiritual process.”

We hope you join us in believing that making a commitment to strengthening the bonds within our community is a necessary and worthwhile investment in our future together.

## Appendix A: First Parish Belonging Team Task Force Background

### September 2019–November 2020:

Chair: Jan Power

Report committee: Dana Lissy, Kristin Moore, Liz Rust, Susan See, Lora Venesy

Additional contributors: CC King, Kate Svrcek

### February 2019–June 2019:

Co-Chairs: Eric Moore and Jan Power

Committee Members: Jen Izzo, CC King, Dana Lissy, Kristin Moore, Jan Power, Susan Ryan, Liz Rust, Susan See, Kate Svrcek, Lora Venesy, Suzie Weaver

The Belonging Team was given four areas of community-building to focus on:

1. Belonging and connection
2. Communication
3. Growing and supporting leadership
4. Relational skills

In the 2019–2020 church year, the Belonging Team piloted initiatives in these four categories that it felt would contribute to promoting a sense of welcome and belonging within the congregation. These **initiatives** included:

#### 1. Belonging & connection

- Hosting six monthly Third Sunday suppers in the FP parish hall to provide an easy community gathering opportunity for FP folk of all ages
- Working toward having a welcome table in the front foyer on Sundays [process interrupted by COVID-19]
- Exploring having a “Welcome, new members” display to acquaint FP folk with faces of new members (with the new members’ permission only) [process interrupted by COVID-19]

#### 2. Communication

- Creating and distributing pew cards to provide a channel for newcomers or existing members and friends to request information or provide feedback on church matters [pilot cut short by COVID-19]
- Hosting a “How do I...?” table during two Sunday coffee hours to find out what aspects of First Parish operations people have questions about
- Drafting a *Guidebook to Navigating First Parish* that will make information about First Parish operations accessible in one location in a way that it currently is not
- Exploring the addition of more wayfinding signage within the church to make it easier for newcomers—and “medium-timers” who may be too embarrassed to ask—to find their way around the building

## **Appendix A: First Parish Belonging Team Task Force Background**

- Creating a hallway bulletin board to share information about happenings at FP

### **3. Growing and supporting leadership**

- Advocating for greater communication amongst the lay leadership of the church and between the lay and staff leadership. Advocated for the all-chair meetings that the standing committee has run this year, to promote communication and cooperation between committees and staff, as well as to provide an opportunity for occasional leadership training for those present.

### **4. Relational skills**

- Discussing organizing a series of workshops on interpersonal skills and identifying potential speakers on the subject. We deferred this year given limited capacity to organize and schedule these events.

### **Further activities**

In support of the above initiatives, we engaged with other members and staff in the following ways:

- We reached out to the Membership Committee to better understand their current role with regard to welcoming and membership at FP.
- We heard anecdotally from a number of FP folk about their ideas for ways to improve communication and connection at FP.
- The Belonging Team co-sponsored—and many members participated in—the “Transgender Inclusion in Congregations” online course initiated by the Ministerial Intern Committee.
- We collaborated with FP staff and other committee members, furthering our understanding of church operations.

## Appendix B: Radical Welcome

Source: “Bread for the Journey: An Online Companion to *Radical Welcome*” from website for *Radical Welcome: Embracing God, The Other, and the Spirit of Transformation* by Stephanie Spellers

<https://www.churchpublishing.org/radicalwelcome>

### Radical Welcome Defined

*What is Radical Welcome?*

Radical welcome is first and foremost a spiritual practice. It combines the Christian ministry of welcome and hospitality with a faithful commitment to doing the theological, spiritual and *systemic* work to eliminate historic, systemic barriers that limit the genuine embrace of groups generally marginalized in mainline churches (young adults, the poor, LGBT people, people of color, people with disabilities).

*What makes a church Radically Welcoming?*

Radically welcoming churches understand that each group brings gifts and perspectives that help the whole congregation to fulfill God’s dream and purpose. These churches seek to embrace everyone’s voices, presence and power, with a special commitment to embracing groups who have been defined as The Other.

*Who is “The Other”?*

The Other is any group that is likely (or would reasonably expect) to experience patterns of historic, systemic oppression and marginalization in your congregation and/or denomination, especially given your church’s dominant race, culture, language, generation, socioeconomic class, education level, sexual orientation and physical ability.

In your church, which of these groups hold power— that is, the ability to have authority or influence, and to have their story, culture, and voice shape the congregation? These groups are your power center. Which groups do not hold this power? Whose story does not yet shape the history, culture, worship, and identity of the church? These groups are The Other for you.

### Moving from Inviting to Inclusion to Radical Welcome

As you consider this grid, ask yourself the following questions:

- Which of these models best fits your church’s current reality, in general?
- What observations bring you to that conclusion?
- Who is The Other for you? What oppressed or marginalized group do you feel most compelled to welcome?
- What might this group’s experience be in your congregation? What barriers would they encounter?

## Appendix B: Radical Welcome

### Moving from Inviting to Inclusion to Radical Welcome

	<b>Inviting</b>	<b>Inclusion</b>	<b>Radical Welcome</b>
<b>The Message</b>	“Come, join our community and share our cultural values and heritage.”	“Help us to be diverse.”	“Bring your culture, your voice, your whole self—we want to engage in truly mutual relationship.”
<b>The Goal</b>	<b>Assimilation:</b> Community invites new people to enter and adopt dominant identity	<b>Incorporation:</b> Community welcomes marginalized groups, but no true shift in congregation’s cultural identity and practices	<b>Incarnation:</b> Community embodies and expresses the full range of voices and gifts present, including The Other
<b>The Effort</b>	Systems and programs in place to invite and incorporate newcomers into existing structures and identity; rejection or marginalization of those who do not assimilate	Stated commitment to inclusivity, but less attention to ongoing programs, system analysis or power, emphasis on individual efforts	Systems and programs in place to invite and welcome people, including those from the margins; to ensure their presence, gifts and perspective will be visible and valued; and to ensure that these new communities, gifts, and values influence the congregation’s identity, ministries, and structures
<b>The Result</b>	Healthy numbers (perhaps with some members who claim marginal identity) but institution and its membership is overwhelmingly monocultural	Revolving door, with people coming from margins only to stay on fringe or leave; institutional structure remains monocultural, with some pockets of difference	Transformed and transforming community with open doors and open hearts; different groups share power and shape identity, mission, leadership, worship, and ministries

**Appendix C: Membership/Congregational Life/Communications Staffing at  
UU Churches of 551-850 members as of February 2020**

<b>Congregation (# of members/ # of pledging units)</b>	<b>Website</b>	<b>Community Life/ Membership Staff</b>	<b>Communications Staff</b>
First UU Church of Columbus (OH) (553/420)	<a href="http://firstuucolumbus.org">firstuucolumbus.org</a>	Director of Congregational Life	
UU Congregation at Shelter Rock (Manhasset, NY) (554/435)	<a href="http://www.uucsr.org">www.uucsr.org</a>	Membership Coordinator	Communications Manager
Foothills Unitarian Church (Fort Collins, CO) (573/397)	<a href="http://foothillsuu.org">foothillsuu.org</a>	Program Coordinator	Marketing Manager, Communications Coordinator
UU Church of Sarasota Inc. (FL) (576/432)	<a href="http://uucarasota.com">uucarasota.com</a>		
Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta (Brookhaven, GA) (576/432)	<a href="http://uuca.org">uuca.org</a>	Membership and Social Justice Coordinator	
Fox Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship (Appleton, WI) (600/307)	<a href="http://fvuuf.org">fvuuf.org</a>	Director of Congregational Life	
First UU Church of Austin (TX) (608/338)	<a href="http://austinuu.org">austinuu.org</a>	Minister for Program Development	Director of Communications
First UU Church of San Diego (CA) (609/390)	<a href="http://firstuusandiego.org">firstuusandiego.org</a>	Membership Coordinator	Connections Coordinator and Scheduler
Unity Temple UU Congregation (Oak Park, IL) (610/368)	<a href="http://unitytemple.org">unitytemple.org</a>	Director of Membership and Engagement	Publications Coordinator
UU Congregation of Fairfax (Oakton, VA) (628/433)	<a href="http://uucf.org">uucf.org</a>	Director of Communications	Communications Specialist
UU Community of Charlotte (NC) (631/444)	<a href="http://uuccharlotte.org">uuccharlotte.org</a>	Membership Coordinator	



**Appendix C: Membership/Congregational Life/Communications Staffing at  
UU Churches of 551-850 members as of February 2020**

<b>Congregation (# of members/ # of pledging units)</b>	<b>Website</b>	<b>Community Life/ Membership Staff</b>	<b>Communications Staff</b>
First UU Congregation of Ann Arbor (MI) (643/381)	<a href="http://uuaa.org">uuaa.org</a>	Coordinator of Welcome Ministries and Membership Coordinator of Congregational Life	Communications Ministry Specialist
First Parish in Concord (Concord, MA) (646/403)	<a href="http://firstparish.org">firstparish.org</a>		
First Unitarian Church of Rochester (NY) (689/498)	<a href="http://rochesterunitarian.org">rochesterunitarian.org</a>	Membership Coordinator	
White Bear UU Church (Mahtomedi, MN) (696/440)	<a href="http://wbuuc.org">wbuuc.org</a>		
First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee (WI) (700/456)	<a href="http://uumilwaukee.org">uumilwaukee.org</a>	Membership Development Coordinator	
First UU Church of Richmond VA (725/310)	<a href="http://richmonduu.org">richmonduu.org</a>	Congregational Life Specialist	
Cedar Lane UU Church (Bethesda, MD) (732/359)	<a href="http://cedarlane.org">cedarlane.org</a>	Membership & Communications Coordinator	
Eno River UU Fellowship (Durham, NC) (735/349)	<a href="http://www.eruuf.org">www.eruuf.org</a>	Minister of Congregational Engagement	Communications Coordinator
UU Church of Arlington (VA) (760/744)	<a href="http://uucava.org">uucava.org</a>	Director of Congregational Life	Communications Coordinator
Jefferson Unitarian Church (Golden, CO) (790/541)	<a href="http://jeffersonunitarian.org">jeffersonunitarian.org</a>		Communications Manager
First Unitarian Church of Albuquerque (NM) (846/567)	<a href="http://www.uuabq.org">www.uuabq.org</a>	Director of Membership & Communications	

Source:

- Table of congregations with 551-850 members, generated September 2020 based on UUA data from January–February 2020: [https://my.uua.org/directory/congregations/search?search%5Bmin\\_members%5D=551](https://my.uua.org/directory/congregations/search?search%5Bmin_members%5D=551)
- List of staff members gathered from individual church websites, September 2020

## Appendix D: Resources

### About Radical Welcome

- Spellers, Stephanie. *Radical Welcome: Embracing God, The Other, and the Spirit of Transformation*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 2006.  
<https://www.churchpublishing.org/radicalwelcome>
- See the application of the radical welcoming concept to UU values in the “Transgender Inclusion in Congregations” online course by the Transforming Hearts Collective.  
<https://transforming-hearts-collective.teachable.com/>

This course is available free to First Parish members. Contact the church office for the coupon code and access instructions.

### About Church Conflict Resolution and Grievance Processes

- Restorative Circles, conflict response program—based on non-violent communication, developed by Dominic Barter
  - Restorative Circles website: <https://www.restorativecircles.org/>
  - About Dominic Barter and Restorative Circles:  
<https://restorativejusticeontherise.org/dominic-barter-of-restorative-circles/>
  - UU Church of Concord, NH: <https://concorduu.org/get-involved/helping-and-healing/restorative-circles/>
- “How to Respond to Complaints at Church” by Donald E. Skinner; 1/1/14; UUA website  
<https://www.uua.org/interconnections/292744.shtml>  
Article on one congregation’s approach to setting up a “grievance procedure”—creation of a Healthy Communications Team
- “Conflict is Part of Congregational Life” from *The Congregational Handbook* (UUA)  
<https://www.uua.org/leadership/handbook/conflict>

### About Membership Professionals

- UU Association of Membership Professional website: [uuamp.org](http://uuamp.org)
- *The Search for a Membership Professional: Best Practices for Unitarian Universalist Congregations* by the Unitarian Universalist Association of Membership Professionals (UUAMP); Created June 2014, updated 2017  
A manual created by UUAMP to provide guidance to UU churches on the hiring of a membership professional.  
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/10Ecd83r4yQsPd-XeDzbfquZTn3uCXszHUPXfCCQQ4rw/edit>

## Appendix D: Resources

### About Membership Professionals (continued)

- “Its about more than membership” by Michael Hart; 10/17/16; *UU World Magazine*  
<https://www.uuworld.org/articles/its-about-more-membership>  
“Focus on engagement, and the numbers will take care of themselves.” Article that profiles the duties and approach of UU membership staff people at different UU churches.
- “80 congregations now hire membership professionals” by Elaine McArdle; 10/6/14; *UU World*  
“Most UUA growth last year happened in congregations with paid membership coordinators.” Article about role of membership professionals at UU churches.  
<https://www.uuworld.org/articles/80-membership-professionals>

### About Welcoming/Membership Programs

- *Faith Forward: From Visitor to Leader*  
<https://faithforwarduu.org/>  
“A guided path for Unitarian Universalists to following their congregations, helping them navigate from building connections early on, to finding their sense of belonging as a member, to serving as a leader and boldly living their faith.”
- “What if Membership Was a Spectrum?” by Carey McDonald, Lori Emison Clair, Marie Luna  
<https://www.uua.org/leadership/library/membership/spectrum>  
Describes a view of membership as a spectrum from “curious individual” through “integrated leader.”

### About *Widening the Circle of Concern* by the UUA’s Commission on Institutional Change

- Link to the report overview, by section:  
<https://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/cic/widening>
- Link to the original report, with audio option:  
<https://www.uua.org/book/export/html/43821>
- Link to the UUA’s study/action guide for congregations: <https://www.uua.org/widening>

### About Leadership Training Resources

- UUA Leader Lab: <https://www.uua.org/leadership>
- UUA Leadership Resource Library: <https://www.uua.org/leadership/library>

## **Appendix E: Job Description, First Parish Director of Congregational Life, 2013**

**First Parish in Concord**

**Concord, MA 01742**

### ***Job Description***

**Job Title:** Director of Congregational Life  
**Reports to:** Director of Operations  
**FLSA Status:** Exempt; part-time  
**Work Schedule:** 30 hours/week, 12 months  
**Date:** May 13, 2013

#### **Position Summary:**

The Director of Congregational Life provides vision, leadership, and strategy to the building welcoming community aspect of First Parish's mission under the direction of the Director of Operations, and in accordance with the principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association and policies and practices of First Parish in Concord. The Director of Congregational Life, working with lay leaders and staff, will welcome, encourage, and assimilate new members to First Parish and will develop strategies to help existing members "find their place" in the congregation.

#### **Principal Duties and Responsibilities:**

1. Coordinates adult and family community building and spiritual enrichment programs.
2. Create and maintain an effective "path to community" to help people progress from visitor to full member.
3. Ensures presence of a high-quality, functioning volunteer council to create and sustain program vision and mission.
4. Collaborate with other First Parish areas such as Music, Religious Education, Worship, and Social Action to foster membership initiatives and implement programs that support First Parish's mission.
5. Communicate with members through a newsletter column, the website, and periodic electronic communications. Use social media to enhance First Parish's online presence.
6. Model and encourage a "culture of welcoming"/right relations/radical hospitality among First Parish's membership.
7. Support and maintain the First Parish's membership database. Work closely with Director of Operations and Business Office to maintain up to date records on parishioners, with a special emphasis on member interests and activities.
8. Attend weekly worship meeting and staff meetings, monthly program staff meetings, and staff retreats as an active, contributing member of the overall staff team.
9. Support the collaborative, welcoming, service-oriented church staff culture.

## **Appendix E: Job Description, First Parish Director of Congregational Life, 2013**

### **Job Qualifications:**

The employee needs to be a leader who can provide vision and attract people to that vision. The person must be able to personally recruit, train and manage volunteers. Team management experience, especially with volunteers, is essential requirement of the job. Good writing, speaking and telephone skills are necessary. The candidate must be able to work independently and as part of a team. The ability to maintain confidentiality is critical. Working knowledge of Microsoft products is a plus. The candidate's schedule must be flexible as this position requires some evening and weekend meetings, including Sunday morning hours.

Requires an Associate or bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university. Background in business, sales or marketing is attractive attribute. The candidate needs to be a warm, approachable person, a sensitive listener, an articulate spokesperson for Unitarian Universalism, and have the ability to work effectively with people from broad and diverse backgrounds as well as a wide range of personalities.

### **Common Competencies and Performance Requirements for all First Parish Staff Members**

These characteristics are considered a part of every job description at First Parish in Concord. Performance evaluations will include a review of these characteristics.

**Ethics:** All employees are expected to treat others as they would like to be treated. Each employee should demonstrate by their actions an understanding of our mission statement. Employees are privy to both personal and financial information about parishioners; this information must be held in the closest confidence.

**Dependability:** An employee must demonstrate that they are able to be depended upon. This includes following established policies and procedures, taking responsibility for their own actions, keeping commitments, demonstrating consistent performance, being on time, meeting work expectations, ensuring responsibilities are covered when absent, and achieving goals. An employee should react well under pressure and stress. An employee should work in a way that sets an example to others.

**Judgment:** An employee should exhibit sound and accurate judgment within the defined parameters of their area of expertise. They should make timely decisions which they can support and explain, and they should include appropriate people in the decision-making process.

**Change Management:** An employee must be adaptable to changes in the work environment and integrate such changes smoothly. They should be open to new ideas and approaches and be able to adjust their approach when the situation requires it.

**Initiative:** An employee should demonstrate initiative by seeking increased responsibility, looking for and taking advantage of opportunities, and volunteering for appropriate duties. When faced with problems, they should come up with proposed solutions and seek agreement

## **Appendix E: Job Description, First Parish Director of Congregational Life, 2013**

on these proposals. An employee is expected to take reasonable independent action, and to ask for help when needed. An employee should undertake self-development activities.

**Job Knowledge:** An employee should be competent in the required job skills and knowledge, exhibiting the ability to learn and apply new skills, and keeping abreast of current developments. An employee should require minimal supervision and display an understanding of how one's job relates to others. Each employee should understand their own strengths and weaknesses.

**Creativity:** An employee is encouraged to display original thinking and creativity, developing innovative approaches and ideas to apply to their work.

**Communications:** Effective communications are essential to mutual understanding. To achieve this, an employee should speak and write clearly, persuasively, and informatively. An employee should listen well and ask for clarification when necessary. We must keep each other well informed, respond well to questions, and participate in meetings. An employee should also maintain appropriate records and promptly submit information when requested to do so.

**Teamwork:** All employees are expected to work in a team setting and atmosphere. This includes establishing and maintaining effective relations, offering assistance and support to team members, and exhibiting tact, consideration, a positive outlook, and a pleasant manner. Every employee must work well in team situations and actively work to resolve conflicts.

**Problem Solving:** An employee should be able to identify problems in a timely manner, gather and analyze information skillfully, develop alternate solutions, and resolve problems in early stages.

**Green Sanctuary:** Participates in and documents efforts to integrate Green Sanctuary goals into Worship, Religious Education programming, Social Action programming, and Congregational Life events. Demonstrates an effort to integrate Green Sanctuary goals around sustainable living into all aspects of operations and programming for our members.

The above shall not be construed as an exhaustive description of all the work required to successfully do this job. Moreover, from time to time, additional duties outside of the parameters outlined above may be assigned.