

First Parish in Concord

Draft Annual Report
For Circulation at the Annual Meeting
June 2, 2024, at 11:30 a.m.

For the Year Ending June 30, 2024

Concord, Massachusetts

First Parish in Concord
Draft Annual Report for Circulation at the June 2, 2024, Annual Meeting
July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024

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Warrant for Annual Meeting

WARRANT COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS MIDDLESEX, SS.

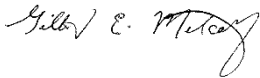
To any one of the constables of the Town of Concord, GREETINGS:

You are hereby authorized and directed to notify and warn the qualified voters of FIRST PARISH IN CONCORD in said County of Middlesex, to meet in person and on-line via Zoom on SUNDAY, the 2nd day of June 2024 at 11:30 o'clock in the morning, then and there to act and vote upon the following articles, to wit:

1. Approve Annual Meeting minutes from June 2023.
2. Approve Special Congregational Meeting minutes from May 2024.
3. To hear and receive the reports of the Senior Minister, the Standing Committee, the Trustees of Parish Donations, and other committee reports.
4. To choose all Parish officers and elected committee members for the coming year.
5. To ratify the UU General Assembly delegate slate.
6. To raise money for all parochial purposes, including the Budget for Fiscal Year 2024-2025.
7. To approve revisions to the First Parish bylaws. Proposed revisions available at <https://bit.ly/FPBylaws>
8. To hear a closing report from the Commission on Institutional Change.
9. To hear a report from the Greening the Campus Committee.
10. To act upon any other business that may come before the meeting.

And you are hereby directed to serve this warrant by posting copies thereof, by you attested, in at least two public places in said Town, one of which shall be at the door of the Meeting House of said Parish, eight days, including two Sundays, before said fifth day of May, and to have this warrant, with your doings thereon, at said meeting.

Witness our hands this 14th day of May in the year two thousand twenty-four:



Gilbert Metcalf, Chair, on behalf of all members of the Standing Committee, each of whom has provided electronic approval of this Warrant:

Jennifer Izzo, Clerk

Leah Russell, Treasurer

Virginia Taylor, Vice Chair

Michael Beer

Lisa Bennett

CC King

Caroline Minkin

Jim Reynolds

Elizabeth Rust

Susan See

Guide to Making, Discussing, Modifying and Voting on Motions

First Parish Annual Meeting

You want to	What to say:	Requires a Motion	Requires a Second	Can be Discussed	Can be Amended	Vote Needed	Notes on the Motion
Make a Motion	"I move that we approve the"	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Main Motion, starts the motion in action
Amend a motion	"I move to amend this motion by" -- add, delete, modify words	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Used to modify the Main Motion; can be used to amend an amendment, must use the new words
Withdraw a motion	"I move to withdraw my motion...."	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Majority	To withdraw a motion or an amendment
Table the motion - refer motion to	"I move to refer this motion to for further consideration"	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Majority	To stop debate and refer to another group
Postpone the motion to a different time; note when	"I move to postpone the matter until"	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Majority	To stop debate and postpone the vote to a later point in the meeting or future date
Object to a Procedure	"Point of Order" -- Make statement or question on the process	No	No	No	No	No Vote	To stop debate and challenge the current process; decided by Moderator

Minutes from the Annual Meeting on June 11, 2023

First Parish in Concord Minutes of the Annual Meeting For the Year Ending June 30, 2023 June 11, 2023 at 11:30AM

The Annual Meeting of First Parish in Concord was called to order at 11:30AM by Moderator Tom Wilson. The meeting was held in person in the sanctuary and remotely via Zoom.

Reverend Liz Weber opened the meeting with a prayer.

Anna Huckabee Tull and Kristin Moore offered a song.

Tom Wilson reviewed the format and protocol for the meeting, and introduced the warrant articles to be discussed.

Article 1: To approve the meeting minutes from the 2022 Annual Meeting.

Upon motion duly made and seconded it was

VOTED: to accept the 2022 Annual Meeting Minutes and to incorporate them into the permanent record.

Article 2: To hear and receive the reports of the Senior Minister, the Standing Committee, the Trustees of Parish Donations, and other committee reports.

Report from the Interim Senior Minister

- Rev. Seth Carrier-Ladd offered his annual report. He thanked the staff for all they do for First Parish, which brought a round of applause.
- He commented that the work of interim ministry is change. We are now halfway through the interim ministry period. This year, we had a Ritual of Release and First Parish Life Story Events.
- Next year, the focus will be on our Congregational Identity: Who are we? We will also continue the work around our Covenant. The point of the Covenant work is more than just writing the Covenant itself. It's about continuing to work on our skills and how we relate to each other.
- We will also have new technology coming into the sanctuary over the summer.
- As our budget continues to shrink over the next few years, the congregation will likely need to pick up more work of the church.

- And finally, next year we will be selecting a new senior minister.
- Rev. Carrier-Ladd expressed that our future is bright. The people here are the congregation's best resource. It has been a joy to work with everyone.

Report from the Chair of the First Parish Standing Committee

- Standing Committee Chair, Liz Rust, offered a report on the Standing Committee's activities in the 2023 church year. She reported that the Standing Committee accomplished a lot. They said goodbye to Howard Dana, and welcomed Rev. Carrier-Ladd. They called every person in the congregation twice. They sponsored a Talent Show, and are looking forward to the Auction next fall on November 4.
- We are coming to grips with the reality of our smaller congregation and the financial ramifications. The Standing Committee was committed to presenting a balanced budget this year, and they did.
- The Standing Committee continues to work on First Parish's governance model to ensure we are organized well and effectively. Good governance liberates the creativity of the staff and congregation. We seek to organize and lead with clarity and transparency.

Report of the Trustees of Parish Donations

- Philip vanderWilden offered a report on the activities of the Trustees of Parish Donations. He stated that the responsibility of the Trustees is to manage First Parish's non-church properties (e.g., cottages, Concord Green) and investment portfolio.
- Highlights of the year included entering into a Memorandum of Understanding, Lease, and Preservation Restriction with the Town of Concord and the Wright Tavern Legacy Trust to preserve the Wright Tavern.
- The Trustees are also actively participating in the Greening the Campus effort. They will follow the lead of the church.
- Roughly ten percent of First Parish's budget comes from the Trustees. Last year, the Trustees contributed \$144,000. This year, they made a two-year pledge to support First Parish's budget. They will contribute an additional \$120,000 from the legacy fund this year, and an additional \$60,000 in the following year. Philip stated that the Trustees felt this was the time to step up and support the church as we go through transition. We want to enter into the next senior ministry with momentum.
- As of the end of May, the total assets of the Trustees (consisting of the legacy investment fund and real estate assets) are about \$3.75 Million.

- The cottages on First Parish grounds are now in good shape. At the Wright Tavern, tenants moved out in anticipation of coming structural repairs, and a contractor was selected for the work.
- Laura Bernstein and John Boynton both ended their tenure on the Trustees board.

Article 3: To choose all Parish officers for the ensuing year.

- Kristin Haddad, Chair of the Nominating Committee, presented the slate of nominees for election as officers of the Parish and members of the Standing Committee for FY 2023-24.

Members-at Large

Lisa Bennett (first 3-year term)

Jim Reynolds (second 3-year term)

Virginia Taylor (second 3-year term)

Officers:

Jennifer Izzo, Clerk (third one year term)

Leah Russell, Treasurer (first one year term)

Tom Wilson, Moderator (second one-year term)

Upon motion duly made by and seconded, it was

VOTED: to approve the proposed slate for the Standing Committee, as noted above.

Trustees of Parish Donations:

- Philip vanderWilden presented the following slate of candidates to fill the open positions on the Trustees of Parish Donations:

Jim Sherblom

Mark Haddad

Upon motion duly made by and seconded, it was

VOTED: to approve the proposed slate for the Trustees of Parish Donations, as noted above.

Article 4: To ratify the UU General Assembly delegate slate.

- Liz Rust made a motion to ratify the UU General Assembly delegate slate for General Assembly on June 21-25. The slate consists of the following individuals:

Lillian Anderson

Sara Ballard

Stoney Ballard

Jan Power

Liz Rust
Susan See
Darien Smith
Cindy Soule
Lois Suarez

Upon motion duly made and seconded it was

VOTED: to ratify the 2023 UU General Assembly (GA) delegate slate, as noted above.

Article 5: To adopt the First Parish in Concord Covenant.

- CC King, as representative of the Covenant Committee, presented to the congregation the following proposed First Parish Covenant:

As Unitarian Universalists, we are called by Love and by our vision of Beloved Community to live out our highest values. As a congregation with spirituality at our core and spokes that connect us to our wider world, we pledge ourselves in Covenant so that our relationships and our community can thrive.

We covenant to live out our mission together.

We nurture belonging across the generations.

We support each other on our spiritual journeys.

We greet one another with curiosity, kindness, respect, and openness. In the belief that we can make progress together, we show up with energy, joy, and commitment to our shared values.

Honoring our diversity and centering justice, we strive to be open and intentionally welcoming. We are willing to be changed by being in community and by our world.

We respect the sanctity of our spiritual community. When in conflict, we talk with each other, not about each other. We listen without judgment, seeking understanding and acceptance.

Trusting in forgiveness and reconciliation when mistakes are made, we strive to be brave and risk vulnerability.

We seek goodness while we do not expect perfection.

As a community of members, friends, ministers, and staff, we cultivate a culture of appreciation for one another. We value expressing gratitude freely.

- CC King commented that next year the mission will be to review the mechanisms for bringing all of these elements of the Covenant to life.

- Liz Rust moved that the vote on the Covenant be a simple “Yeah or Nay” without amendments to the text.
- Pamela Dritt commented that there should be an opportunity to make amendments.
- Liz Rust responded that the language was created as part of a very lengthy and transparent process.
- Pamela Dritt replied said that the wording in the Covenant “We listen without judgment” should be changed to “We listen without being judgmental.”

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was

VOTED: to limit the vote and discussion on Article 5 to a “yes or no” vote without entertaining amendments to the language.

- Peter Lowitt raised a motion to move the question on whether to approve the draft Covenant.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was

VOTED: to move the question whether to approve the draft Covenant.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was

VOTED: to adopt the proposed First Parish in Concord Covenant.

Article 6: To raise money for all parochial purposes, including the Budget for Fiscal Year 2023-2024.

- Heather Packard, Treasurer of the Standing Committee, discussed FP’s budget process, summarized the results of this year’s annual pledge campaign, presented context for the proposed budget and presented next year’s budget.
-
- The Annual Campaign Results for FY24 are as follows:
 - Stewardship Campaign Goal: \$1,025,000
 - Pledges received (to date): \$923,810
 - Households pledged (to date): 301
 - Median Pledge: \$1,000
- This represents a difference of -\$47,313 from FY23 to FY24.
- Heather Packard noted that the numbers above have actually changed a bit from the time the presentation was created due to pledges received after the deadline.
- Heather thanked the Pledge Committee Team (led by Alane Wallis) for their time and talents in running the Pledge Campaign.

- As of the date the presentation was created, the FY24 budgeted expenses are \$1,392,454, with a net surplus of a little over \$3,000.
- Ms. Packard summarized the challenges we face with our budget: expenses are up but pledges are not, attendance is down, and there won't be any surplus funds in the future to fill in the gap between revenue and spending. Some belt tightening will be necessary in next year's budget, but nothing dramatic.
- Suzie Weaver commented that when she was on the Standing Committee 10+ years ago, the issues were the same. We have an over-reliance on a few large donors, which is not sustainable.
- Gib Metcalf agreed, stating that the conversation will need to go beyond where we find money, and focus instead on who we are as a church, and how our budgets reflect that.
- Pamela Dritt commented that it would be good to not spend money on any new fossil fuel equipment, since the Greening the Campus effort is underway.
- Philip vanderWilden stated that the Trustees of First Parish Donations are very much in concert with the Greening the Campus effort. No new oil-based technology will be added; we are just maintaining what we currently have. He also commented that the Trustees' additional pledge from the legacy fund was not fiscally imprudent. The Trustees did not feel they were taking any outsized risk by increasing support for church operations.
- Jim Sherblom commented that not everyone can afford to pledge at the same level.
- Bob Andrews said it's easy to be resigned about how our membership is shrinking. We are not alone as a church experiencing a declining membership. Nonetheless, there are a lot of people who put a great deal of work into clarifying our identity; to defining who we are and why it's exciting to be a member of this church. We should not be doing this just within the church. We should reach out to the larger community and tell them who we are.
- Lora Venesy commented that the Religious Education (RE) program brings in new members. Families come to the church for RE and then they stay. She stated that it is a mistake that the RE budget is being cut. People come here for the RE programs. In comparison, the social action budget was not reduced.
- Stan Griffith stated that there are a lot of resources out there. Fear not, help is on the way. This will change dramatically.
- Peter Lowitt moved to move the question on whether to approve the FY2024 budget.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was

VOTED: To move the question on whether to approve the FY2024 budget.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was

VOTED: To raise money for all parochial purposes, including the proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2024.

Article 7: To ratify the Senior Minister Search Committee slate.

Liz Rust, as chair of the Standing Committee, presented the following slate of members for the Search Committee for the Senior Minister of First Parish in Concord:

- Sara Ballard
 - Jeff Clanon
 - Kristin Haddad
 - Peter Lowitt
 - Kristin Moore
 - Eric Van Loon
 - Lora Venesy
-
- Brad Hubbard Nelson suggested the following amendment: **To ratify the Senior Minister Search Committee slate, and identify and invite two younger members to join the slate.** He stated that the slate is missing millennial members, people with small children and new members. The future of the church are its young members. We tend to pick the people we have, and not emphasize the need to invite younger members to participate. Perhaps there could be two young members who split one role if they don't have enough time to attend all meetings.
-
- Gib Metcalf stated that he opposes the amendment for four reasons. First, the idea of the slate is to represent the church as a whole, not to represent a particular constituency. Second, some of the people on the slate had children in the RE program in recent years, so RE is already covered. Third, the search committee will be doing a considerable amount of outreach within the congregation, which will enable them to engage with parents with younger children to make sure their concerns are being heard. Fourth, as a practical matter, it would be difficult to add two more people to the team. For purposes of coordination and scheduling, seven people is a good size committee.
-
- Seth Carrier-Ladd said that the intention for the search committee is to develop a group that represents the congregation, not particular groups or demographics within the congregation. This is a specific recommendation of the UUA.
-
- Jim Reynolds stated that the Standing Committee considered a wide range of people in selecting the slate. This was the group who had the support of the community and who were willing to serve. Trying to alter a group this large, ad hoc, is not the way to go. Jim does not disagree that we need to do more to reach out to younger members, but trying to change the group at this point would be a mistake.

- Michael McAteer stated that he supports the proposed amendment. We talk about inclusivity, but his first reaction when he looked at the group of people selected was: how are we going to diversify and get more young people? It is important that we be more inclusive. It would be worthwhile to get input from millennials and stress that we are looking across the generations.
- CC King commented that she supports Brad Hubbard Nelson's intention, but not the proposed amendment. She was on the Standing Committee subcommittee that took the lead on bringing to the full Standing Committee the names for the search committee. The subcommittee did reach out to younger parents and talked to Madzie (head of the First Parish Youth Group) to get input when developing the list of names. All of the seven people on the slate were on a four-hour call yesterday to get oriented to the search process. CC's takeaway was that the slate is going to be highly resourced by the UUA, including on the topics of diversity, inclusion, and ageism. They have an army of progressive support behind them. During the call, the UUA mentioned some wonderful ideas about how to involve youth. For example, we could do focus groups, or create videos in which youth tell senior minister candidates what they are looking for in a senior minister. We can bring in the voice of younger people without asking them to commit to 350 hours of service on the search committee.
- Kristin Haddad said that she understands Brad Hubbard Nelson's concern, and also wishes there were younger people on the search committee, but she is against the proposed amendment. Ten years ago, she was new at First Parish when the last search committee was selected. If she had been asked then to spend 300 hours over an eight-month period, she would have run far away. The primary job of the search committee is to listen for the next six months, in a complex and nuanced way, in order to express who we are now and who we want to be. In addition, Kristin stated that she is "speaking up for process" (e.g., the process followed to create the list, reach out to everyone, etc.). The idea to add additional names at the last minute is troubling.
- Stan Griffith stated that he opposes the amendment, though he is sympathetic to the issue, as a third generation UU. He has been through several searches, and taught every RE curriculum. There are reasons why youth and young families come or don't. The membership committee will be exploring this issue. Stan also stated that the idea to have reduced hours for younger members would be a very bad idea. It would be disruptive. Every member need to take a pledge to be there and be engaged for everything.
- Jim Sherblom said that we need unanimous support for the senior minister and that becomes more difficult as you expand the size of the committee.
- A motion to call the question about whether to approve the Senior Minister Search Committee slate was raised.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was

VOTED: to move the question whether to approve the Senior Minister Search Committee slate as noted above.

- Regarding the proposed Amendment, a motion to call the question was raised.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was

VOTED: to move on the question about whether to approve the proposed amendment to add younger members to the search committee slate.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was

VOTED: To reject the proposed Amendment to add additional young members to the search committee slate.

- Doug Hardy stated that Search Committee and Transition Team will be doing a lot of identity work. Their greatest resource is the people in this room, and to please hang in there and participate and contribute.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was

VOTED: to ratify the Senior Minister Search Committee slate as noted above.

Article 8: To act upon any other business that may come before the meeting.

Presentation of Greening of the Campus Task Force

- Peter Lowitt presented an update of the Greening of the Campus Task Force. The Sanctuary is now insulated to modern standards. The blower door test identified additional building efficiency flaws. Energy efficient lighting has been installed throughout the church. The Trustees are insulating all four of the cottages, and are replacing leaking cottage windows. The Task Force took a field trip to Middlesex School to see their installed geothermal system. A geothermal test well was drilled in the front circle of First Parish and it was confirmed that there is excess heating capacity. Interior storm windows were installed to remediate legacy leaking windows. The Task Force identified a direct 30% incentive for the proposed geothermal design, and they raised over \$162,000 in private donations to cover their work. The Wright Tavern Legacy Trust and Trustees of Parish Donations voted to support the Greening the Campus effort.

There was no other business before the meeting. A motion was made to adjourn the Annual Meeting. The motion was seconded and approved with a unanimous vote, and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:40PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Izzo, Clerk

Minutes from the Special Meeting of the Congregation on May 5, 2024

First Parish in Concord Special Meeting of the Congregation May 5, 2024

A special meeting of the First Parish Congregation was called to order on May 5, 2025, at 11:30AM, by Moderator Tom Wilson. The meeting was held in person and via Zoom.

A motion was made to call Reverend Jennifer B. Johnson to serve as the settled minister for First Parish in Concord. Members of the Congregation present at the meeting voted by secret ballot. The final vote tally was 217 (yes) to 1 (no).

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was

VOTED: to call the Reverend Jennifer Johnson as Senior Minister of First Parish in Concord.

There was no other business before the meeting. A motion was made to adjourn the Annual Meeting.

The motion was seconded and approved with a unanimous vote, and the meeting was adjourned a little past 12:00PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Izzo, Clerk

Annual Report of the Interim Senior Minister

Rev. Seth Carrier-Ladd

Dear First Parish Community,

It has truly been an honor to walk alongside you these past two years! While I will certainly report on this past year, I am also going to take this opportunity to reflect briefly on our two years of interim ministry together.

Last year, I appreciated the warm welcome you offered me in August and September, and your willingness to dive with open arms into the work of interim ministry. In the fall, we explore letting go of Rev. Howard Dana's ministry with Rituals of Release led by the Transition Team. Following a successful holiday season, you began the new year by launching a covenant creation process for the entire congregation. The spring saw further development of interim work, including exploring our shared history with our First Parish Life Story events, again put on by the Transition Team. Also in the spring, the Standing Committee solicited feedback from the congregation about who best represent the congregation on the Search Committee, presenting a slate that was approved by the congregation at the June congregational meeting. Also at that congregational meeting, you approved and adopted the final draft of your congregational covenant.

Our work together this year was overshadowed by the injury, illness, and absence to our Associate Minister for Congregational Care, Rev. Liz Weber. Liz fell in July, injuring their neck and head. Their recovery was complicated by catching Covid soon thereafter and suffering from long Covid, ultimately forcing Liz to go on medical leave at the end of October, which has continued on throughout the remainder of this year. Revs. Amy Freedman and Paul Langston-Daley did incredible work covering our pastoral care needs during the first four months of Liz's absence, with the support of the Pastoral Care Associates. We were very fortunate in March to hire Rev. Elizabeth Ide to fill on for Liz on a half-time basis for the immediate future. Elizabeth has more than capably stepped in to help us meet the pastoral needs of the congregation – we are fortunate to have her on board. And the strain of covering for all of Liz's responsibilities over the course of the year definitely had an impact on the staff and our ability to accomplish as much as we had hoped.

The Sunday morning Worship Services this year seemed on the whole to be a success. The sermon series I offered in November and December reflecting on the meaning, strengths, and challenges of the Benediction was very well received. Average in-person attendance was 121 and average attendance on Zoom was just over 42, giving us a healthy 163 weekly attendance average, not including those who couldn't participate on Sunday and watched the services later on our YouTube channel. Our fall services featured Water Communion, All Souls, a hymn sing and more. The spring featured special guest preacher Rev. Sofia Betancourt, President of the Unitarian Universalist Association, as well as candidate and newly called senior minister Rev. Jennifer Johnson preaching twice during candidating week. All in all, we had a strong year on Sunday mornings featuring a variety of voices and perspectives.

Acknowledging and honoring the still mixed or negative feelings for some in our congregation, the overhaul of the technology in our sanctuary we completed this year was a big success. We began the process of updating the sound system and adding screens in August, finalizing after the New Year. This long installation process was far from ideal and led to more week-by-week challenges for an extended period than we had hoped. Nonetheless, the project has been concluded successfully, and the staff has worked hard to integrate the screens and new sound system into the Sunday morning experience. The biggest quantity of positive feedback we have received has been appreciation for the increased accessibility the screens offer – many members and friends in our congregation are now more easily able to participate in singing hymns on Sunday morning. We have also used the screens to incorporate a much broader visual palette into the Sunday morning experience, utilizing text, pictures, and videos to create a richer worship experience. With the addition of technology to make the Brooks and Emerson Rooms hybrid meeting spaces, First Parish is now well-positioned to move into the future as it evolves.

There is of course a huge amount of other things that happened in church life that will be covered in other reports – the work of the Search Committee that resulted in the successful call of Rev. Jennifer Johnson as your next settled Senior Minister, the success of the Welcoming Walls committee in helping to make the Parish Hall more inclusive for all, so many wonderful religious education programs, lots of social just work, and more. Please read all the other reports to get a sense of the breadth and scope of church work this year – we’ve done a lot! You, the members and friends of First Parish in Concord, you should be proud of yourselves. You’ve accomplished an amazing amount, and, more importantly, as you did last year, you have taken significant steps forward in rebuilding a community that was taxed and stressed by the challenges of the pandemic.

It has been an honor and a privilege to serve as your Interim Senior Minister. While there have been some ups and downs, we navigated them together, and for your thoughtfulness, kindness, and passion I am grateful. I will miss you all, and will always look back at our time spent together fondly. With gratitude and appreciation for all of you and your gifts, I submit to you this my annual report for the 2023-2024 church year.

peace, love, and blessings,
Rev. Seth Carrier-Ladd
Interim Senior Minister

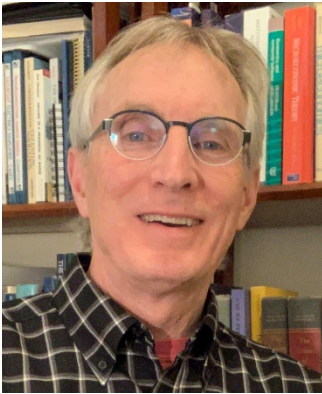
Slate of Officers

2024 Nomination of Officers of the Parish

- Pursuant to Article V of the Bylaws of First Parish in Concord, the membership is hereby notified of the slate of nominees for election as officers of the Parish and members of the Standing Committee commencing 2024-25.
- Members will be asked to vote on the slate at the Annual Meeting on June 2, 2024.
- Respectfully submitted by the Nominating Committee of Leanne Baxter, Jeff Brainerd, Lora Brown, Kristin Haddad, Darien Smith, Susie Weaver

STANDING COMMITTEE

Gib Metcalf | *Member at Large (Second 3-year term)*



Gib Metcalf has been an active UU for some twenty years and a member of First Parish in Concord since 2013. Gib and his wife, Rebecca Winborn, raised twin sons in Acton, and lived in Washington DC before moving to Concord in 2012. Gib is active in the adult choir and has been a member of the Finance Committee as well as a mentor (twice) and co-leader (once) of Coming of Age. Gib is a Professor of Economics Emeritus at Tufts University and a Visiting Professor at the MIT Sloan School. His main research focus is energy and climate policy.

Jennifer Izzo | *Member At Large (First 3-year term)*



Jennifer Izzo has attended First Parish for approximately 17 years. She taught RE classes for several years and attended Ferry Beach several times. She has served on a variety of committees, including the Nominating Committee and Senior Minister Sounding Board. She was an active member of Advocates for Women's Empowerment. She ran 3 fundraising auctions for the church. She has served as Clerk of the Standing Committee for the last 3 years. Outside of church, Jennifer and her husband, Pete, are parents to 3 teenage boys. She is an in-house attorney at a medical device manufacturer.

Kristin Moore | *Member At Large (First 3-year term)*



Kristin Moore moved to Concord with husband Eric and daughter Ava in 2002 and joined First Parish a few years later. Professionally she is a software development program manager, currently employed at The MathWorks. Among her prior jobs, she worked at the nonprofit Gaining Ground in Concord for five years as the office and development manager. She was an active volunteer in Religious Education while their daughter Ava grew up through the program. After Ava's Coming of Age, Kristin served as a mentor and eventually led the Coming of Age program for four years. She has served as Moderator for five FP Annual Meetings. She helps organize the longstanding tradition of a Children's Holiday Craft Workshop in December. Most recently, she chaired the Ministerial Search Committee and shepherded the process that resulted in calling Rev. Jennifer Johnson to First Parish. She enjoys singing in the choir and contributing in other musical ways.

Neil Brock | *Member At Large (First 1-year term)*



Neil Brock has been a UU his entire life and a member of First Parish in Concord since 2010. Neil and his wife, Laura Brock, have lived in Acton for 25 years and raised two children there. At FPC Neil has been involved in the Contemporary Vocal Ensemble, the Ministerial Internship Committee, Pledge Drive, Partakers, and multiple men's groups. Neil is semi-retired from Draper Laboratory and currently associated with ARLIS at the University of Maryland and the Complex Systems Laboratory at WPI. His research focus is on social systems and innovation.

Kimma Brainerd | *Clerk (First 1-year term)*



Kimma arrived at First Parish with her family in 2011. She plays flute and Irish whistle with the Choir, Rise Up Singing, and summer services. She has taught R.E. over many years for various age groups. She served on the Membership Committee, led the Children's Craft Workshop and acted as a Coming of Age mentor. She protested at the Women's March in D.C. with other parishioners. She lives in a log cabin just down the road from church with her curly-topped 15-year old son, an affectionate pup, and a dozen chickens. Kimma is an ADHD coach empowering people of all ages to understand and befriend their neurodivergence so they can thrive in all aspects of life.

Leah Russell | *Treasurer (Second 1-year term)*



Leah Russell has been coming to First Parish since 2015. She has served on the RE Council, the Interim Minister Search Committee, and the Covenant Committee. Leah has also helped organize events for the Mom's Connection Group. Additionally, she has enjoyed going to Ferry Beach with her son, Finch, and participating in the at-home Women's Retreat. Born and raised in the Winchester Unitarian Church, she deeply values her UU roots and hopes to continue to do meaningful work to contribute to First Parish and its community. She works for a made-to-order footwear company dedicated to the mission of improving the lives of Guatemalan cobblers through equitable pay. She also runs a 501(c)(3) nonprofit for families of children adopted from Kazakhstan.

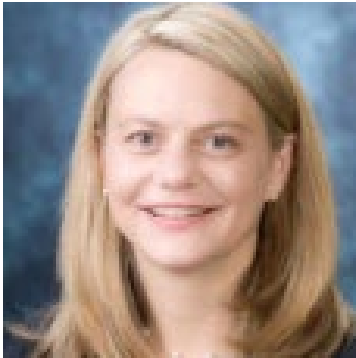
Tom Wilson | *Moderator (Third 1-year term)*



Tom has been a member of First Parish since 1998. Tom has participated in a number of plays, programs and events, and was a member of the First Parish Choir and the Contemporary Ensemble. He loves being engaged in activities that support the community and the First Parish mission. He has served in several leadership roles as well. Tom became a member of and then Chair of the Social Action Committee. He also co-led the project team to install the new organ in the Sanctuary. In 2014 to 2016 Tom was elected Treasurer of First Parish and then served on the Standing Committee for an additional three years. In 2019 Tom chaired the Wright Tavern Futures Task Force and is now serving as Chair of the Wright Tavern Legacy Trust Board. He truly loves this community, and the opportunities First Parish provides for him and others to be engaged and strengthened. He lives with his wife, Martha, and dog Ollie in Concord.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Caroline Minkin | *First 3-year term*



As a member of First Parish, Caroline has spent many years volunteering in the Religious Education (RE) program and served as the Chair and Vice Chair of the RE Committee. During that time, she contributed to the updating of the RE mission and goals, as well as participated in work on the curriculum. As a Standing Committee member for the last three years, Caroline has participated in efforts to reform the governance process and by-laws of First Parish and to bring an RE perspective to the Committee.

Peter Nobile | *First 3-year term*



Peter Nobile has lived in Concord and has been a member at First Parish since about 2000. He has served in various capacities at First Parish, including as a Religious Education teacher, Our Whole Lives facilitator, Coming of Age mentor, Pastoral Care lay minister, Standing Committee member, UUA General Assembly delegate, Commission on Institutional Change member, and Small Group Ministry facilitator. Peter has served the Town of Concord on the Historic Districts Commission, the Concord Sustainable Energy Committee, and the Commission on Disabilities. Peter is an architect and is the Sustainability + Corporate Social Responsibility manager with a firm in Boston.

Suzie Weaver | *Second 3-year term*



Suzie attended First Parish in Concord for the first time in 1991 and was not familiar with Unitarian Universalism. The church was very welcoming, so she decided to stay to learn more and has not looked back. Her two adult children, Chloe and Cam Vilain, participated in RE from the baby room through high school. Suzie has served in numerous roles over the past 30 years and is currently co-chair of the Advocates for Women's Empowerment (AWE). Suzie especially enjoys volunteering at Rosie's Place as well as attending Ferry Beach, the Women's Goddess Circle, and Women's Retreats. Suzie works as a Director of Analytics at Fidelity Investments, is a competitive adult figure skater, enjoys outdoor activities and travel (locally and abroad), speaking French, and doing anything near the ocean.

Jeff Brainerd | *Second 3-year term*



Jeff first came to First Parish with his family in 2011 and has been a member since 2013. He has served as Chair of the RE Council, and as a member of the Standing Committee. He has served as an OWL leader and a Pledge Campaign Steward at First Parish for many years. Recently he has served as Chair of the Nominating Committee. Jeff works in the software industry and loves to mountain bike with his son Eston.

TRUSTEES OF PARISH DONATIONS

Slate of officers to be determined.

General Assembly 2024 Delegates
June 20-23, 2024

Lillian Anderson
Neil Brock
Peter Nobile
Jan Power
Susan See
Darien Smith
Lois Suarez

Proposed FY25 Budget

Final

FY25 Budget

5/24/2024

		FY24	FY25	Budget Diff	
	updated 5/24/24	Budget	Budget	FY24 v FY25	FY25 budget notes
Income					
	3010 - Contribution Income	942,410			
	3020 - Current Year Pledge Income	923,810	934,522	10,712	As of 5/13/24 \$918,522 in pledges from 295 pledgers; adding \$16k in anticipated late pledges
	Total 3020 - Current Year Pledge Income	896,098	925,177	29,081	Was 97% pledges to allow for 3% unpaids for FY24; reduced to 99%/1% unpaids for FY25 to reflect recent trends
	3050 - Prior Year Pledge Payments	5,300	10,000	4,700	Based on annualized FY24 + history
	Total 3050 - Prior Year Pledge Payments	5,300	10,000	4,700	Subtotal
	3060 - Offset Credit Card Fees	1,300	1,100	(200)	Based on annualized FY24 + history
	3110 - Plate/Box Collections	22,000	18,700	(3,300)	Annualized FY24 + history: Used \$1,800 avg/mo x 10 mos + (was \$1,500/mo July & Aug = \$21k total); 2 summer services at FP 7/7 + 7/14 @ \$350/
	3120 - Share the Plate	19,000	18,000	(1,000)	Based on annualized FY24 + history; pass-through to recipients, net \$0
	3122 - Christmas Eve Collection	8,000	8,000		- Pass-through, net \$0
	3124 - Disaster Relief	6,000	6,000		- Pass-through, net \$0
	3126 - Social Action Gift	10,000	10,000		Pass-through part of Simmons' gift, funding 4827 UU-Affiliated Orgs
	3330 - Gifts	95,000	94,000	(1,000)	- donations, net \$0; final yr FY26
	Total 3010 - Contribution Income	1,062,698	1,090,977	28,281	\$80k (Simmons, final yr FY26) + historical actuals
	3130 - Users of Facilities	24,000	25,000	1,000	Subtotal
	3140 - Trustees Income				\$19,760 MNS + ~\$5,240 other, based on lease + historical data
	3150 - Trustees of Parish Donations	137,658	198,127	60,469	FY25 commitment recalculated by TPD-- was \$135,713 + \$60,000 = \$195,713, now \$258,127 total
	3160 - Trustees Additional	120,000	60,000	(60,000)	TPD addl for FY25
	Total 3140 - Trustees Income	257,658	258,127	469	Subtotal
	3185 - Coan House Rental Income	16,000	24,000	8,000	\$1,200/mo TB + \$800/mo LW = \$2k/mo x 12 mos = \$24k
	3350 - Interest Income	42,500	45,600	3,100	Approx \$3,800/mo = (Fid earned 1/4ly x 2 @ 4.9%) + (CT pd monthly x 2 @ 3.5%) x 12 = \$45,600; assuming int rates down in FY25 from FY24 and FP ops assets earning int lower after moving bequest money to TPD/invest funds
	3360 - SREC (solar panel) income	7,000	7,700	700	Based on FY24 actual; calendar 2023 solar credits (SRECs) to be pd in FY25
	3370 - Miscellaneous Income	600	-	(600)	Amazon Smile - expecting none FY25
	3390 - Special Events Income	25,000	22,368	(2,632)	Auction 2023 = \$34,368 total - \$17k -half in FY24 = bal \$17,368 in FY25; SC Patriots' Day food-related fundraising event ~\$5k; assumes no other fundraising events
	Total Income	1,435,454	1,473,772	38,318	

		FY24	FY25	Budget Diff	
	updated 5/24/24	Budget	Budget	FY24 v FY25	FY25 budget notes
Expense					
	4010 • Minister Staff				
	4020 • Senior Minister	138,115	143,730	5,615	SCL 1 mo 7/2024 sal \$10,897 + ilo \$834 = \$11,731 SCL; JJ 11 mos 8/24-6/25 sal \$122,619 + ilo \$9,380 = \$131,999 JJ; both w/in lieu of employer's portion of FICA; both 40 hrs/wk x 12 mos; July 31 days
	4030 • Minister for Congregational Care	91,392	93,676	2,285	Budgeted as if LW worked all year; 40 hrs/wk x 12 mos/yr; \$87,019/yr salary + \$6,657 in lieu of employer FICA; EI's contract prmts come from this line
	4040 • Guest Ministers	3,080	3,080	-	Up to 2 guest ministers summer 2024 + up to 6 during yr = 8 @ \$385/ = \$3,080; 4/19/24 UUMA rate G5 confirmed: \$385; depends on LW disability leave
	Total 4010 • Minister Staff	232,587	240,486	7,900	
4150 • Minister Development					
	4160 • Senior Minister Profl Dev & Exp	12,830	12,090	(740)	10% salary = \$1,090 SCL 1 mo + \$11,000 JJ 11 mos = \$12,090 total
	4170 • Minister PC Profl Dev & Exp	8,490	8,702	212	10% of salary \$87,019
	Total 4150 • Minister Development	21,320	20,792	(528)	
4200 • Human Resources					
	4230 • Hiring & Search	17,000	500	(16,500)	Unlikely new hire(s) in FY25
	Total 4200 • Human Resources	17,000	500	(16,500)	
4300 • Professional Development					
	4310 • Staff Professional Development	4,000	4,500	500	Shared by all staff except 3 mins, Music Dir, SA Mgr; incl UUMN dues for non-director music staff
	Total 4300 • Professional Development	4,000	4,500	500	
4400 • HR Benefits and Taxes					
	4410 • Social Security Taxes (FICA)	33,666	34,994	1,328	Excludes FICA for Int Sr Min, Sr Min, CCMIn, & MRE—pd direct "in lieu of"
	4450 • Retirement Plan	68,619	72,600	3,981	CH qualifies 10/1/24; full yr Min CC to be adjusted per circumstances
	4460 • UUA Group Insurance (Life, LTD)	14,134	14,281	147	Assumes same coverage & rates FY25
	4470 • Health Insurance	66,400	44,953	(21,447)	\$0 for Church Admin (20 hrs/wk doesn't qualify); ADRE & new Sr Min waive.
	4490 • Staff Bonuses	-	-	-	
	Total 4400 • HR Benefits and Taxes	182,819	166,829	(15,991)	

		FY24	FY25	Budget Diff	
	updated 5/24/24	Budget	Budget	FY24 v FY25	FY25 budget notes
	4500 · Parish Activities				
	4510 · Worship Aesthetics	400	-	(400)	Candles, etc.; rolled into 6190 Building Supplies
	4530 · Coffee Hour / FP Café	2,300	2,350	50	
	4550 · Pastoral Care	1,000	500	(500)	Reduced per annualized & historical
	Total 4500 · Parish Activities	3,700	2,850	(850)	
	4700 · Member Services				
	4735 · Congregational Life	2,000	2,000	-	CLC & WAM share budget: \$1k ea
	Total 4700 · Member Services	2,000	2,000	0	
	4800 · Social Action				
	4827 · UU-Affiliated Organizations	10,000	10,000		Pass-through from #3126 SA Gift above - year 4 of 5
	4830 · Share the Plate to recipients	19,000	18,000	(1,000)	Pass-through, net \$0; average \$1,800/mo x 10 mos; only reduction
	4835 · Christmas Eve Collection Distribution	8,000	8,000		Pass-through, net \$0
	4840 · Disaster Relief	6,000	6,000		Pass-through, net \$0
	4845 · Social Action Participation	5,000	5,000	-	
	4860 · Social Action Manager	60,435	61,946	1,511	33 hrs/wk x 12 mos/yr
	4865 · Social Action Manager expenses	2,500	3,500	1,000	Increased \$1k for FY25; requested; lower than any other min or Music Dir
	Total 4800 · Social Action	110,935	112,446	1,511	
	5000 · Lifespan Religious Education				
	5050 · Religious Education Staff				
	5075 · Assistant Director of RE	53,082	54,409	1,327	32 hrs/wk x 12 mos/yr: ADRE, Youth Group, OWL, & COA
	5080 · Religious Education Director	91,392	93,676	2,285	40 hrs/wk x 12 mos/yr; \$87,019/yr salary + pmt in lieu of employer FICA \$6,657
	5082 · Dir RE/Min RE Profl Expenses	8,490	8,702	212	10% of salary \$87,019
	5085 · Retreats Stipend	300	300	-	Staff overnights
	Total 5050 · Religious Education Staff	153,263	157,087	3,824	
	5150 · Religious Education Operations				
	5160 · Childcare (0-4 Yrs.)	2,600	2,600	-	Teen assistants during the yr; summer 2024 childcare 2 Sundays when shared services held here
	5215 · RE Special Guests	400	400	-	
	5295 · Supplies & appreciation K-8	1,000	1,000	-	
	Total 5150 · Religious Education Operations	4,000	4,000	-	
	Total 5000 · Lifespan Religious Education	157,263	161,087	3,824	

		FY24	FY25	Budget Diff	
	updated 5/24/24	Budget	Budget	FY24 v FY25	FY25 budget notes
	5400 - Music				
	5410 - Contract Musicians	3,000	3,000	-	Guest musicians
	5450 - Music Staff				
	5460 - Music Director	85,154	87,200	2,026	40 hrs/wk x 12 months
	5470 - Music Director Prof Expenses	8,515	8,720	213	10% of salary \$85,154
	5480 - Organist	20,508	20,508	-	Has been 12 hrs/wk x 10 months; becomes 12 months. For FY25 \$34.2 mo + Sat 10 hrs, Organist has 8 Sundays + 3 sick days off + Substitute organist \$300 x 8 = \$2,400/yr included on 5482. Organist time may double on third night adult choir rehearsal accompanied. \$110/wk x 40 wks = \$4,400/yr might be added to this salary line from line 5482 - Sat.
	5482 - Guest Organist/Accompanist	13,000	12,000	(1,000)	Sub organist \$550 x 4/yr = 2 wks/yr = \$2,800. Visit on adult choir rehearsal accomp @ \$110/wk x 40 wks = \$4,400/yr, may move to organist salary line. Gospel ensemble accompanied 40 wks x \$550/yr x 1 hr/wk = \$2,200/yr. Totals \$9,400/yr + \$2,800 for special staff accomp work = \$12,200/yr.
	5485 - Gospel Ensemble Director	10,824	11,100	273	7.5 hrs/wk x 10 months/yr plus over 12 mos
	Total 5400 - Music Staff	138,501	140,115	1,615	
	5510 - Music and Material	4,000	4,000	-	
	5530 - Instrument Maintenance	6,000	6,000	-	Piano tuning, minor organ maintenance, total \$200/mo = \$2,400/yr transfers to Organ Fund (savings).
	Total 5400 - Music	151,501	153,115	1,615	

		FY24	FY25	Budget Diff	
	updated 5/24/24	Budget	Budget	FY24 v FY25	FY25 budget notes
	5600 · Administration				
	5700 · Administration Operations				
	5710 · Telephone Services	4,000	3,800	(200)	Verizon ~ \$275/mo = \$3,300 + (possible) service calls
	5730 · Office Supplies	3,000	3,600	600	Avg \$300/mo
	5740 · Technology and Equipment	14,500	20,000	5,500	Zoom \$235/mo x 12 = \$2,820/yr + \$100/yr price increase = \$2,920, eTapestry \$1,300/qtr x 4 = \$5,200/yr, MailChimp \$40/mo x 12 = \$480/yr, 365 15 licenses \$87/mo x 12 = \$1,044/yr, DreamHost ~\$100/yr, PairDomains url renewals 2 x \$65/ = \$130/yr, anti-malware 10 licenses (Mac/PC) ~\$150 total/yr, Carbonite?, total \$10k sware licenses; tech supp \$7k/yr (~\$14,400 ytd incl \$8k email conversion); equip replacement \$3k/yr
	5750 · Publications and Printing	1,400	1,000	(400)	
	5770 · Postage	3,000	3,000	-	
	5790 · Equipment Leases	10,000	10,000	-	\$700 x 12 = \$8,400 printer + \$65 toner waste receptacle (off contract); \$165 x 4 = \$660 postage meter + \$112/ink 1x = \$800; \$200/yr = folding machine = \$9,325; & any off-contract repairs
	5810 · Payroll Services	2,300	2,300	-	\$76/2 wks = \$2,000 + \$17/qtr (reports) - \$70 + \$200/yr (W-2s) = \$2,300
	5820 · Cr card, auto debit, stock fees	4,400	4,600	200	~\$380/mo = \$4,560
	5830 · Administrative Misc.	2,000	2,500	500	
	Total 5700 · Administration Operations	44,600	50,800	6,200	
	5900 · Administrative Staff				
	5950 · Director Finance & Operations	84,897	87,019	2,122	40 hrs/wk x 12 mos
	5960 · Director Fin & Ops Assistant	31,704	32,497	793	24 hrs/wk x 12 mos (too low)
	5970 · Church Administrator	32,144	37,000	4,856	\$27,529 = CH salary; \$780/mo Janet S = \$9,360/yr = (\$36,889) ~\$37k total
	Total 5900 · Administrative Staff	148,745	156,516	7,771	
	Total 5600 · Administration	193,345	207,316	13,971	

		FY24	FY25	Budget Diff	
	updated 5/24/24	Budget	Budget	FY24 v FY25	FY25 budget notes
	6000 · Property Plant & Equip				
	6050 · Sexton Staff				
	6070 · Sexton	72,828	74,649	1,821	40 hrs/wk x 12 mos
	6080 · Zoom & A/V Technicians	11,400	13,000	1,600	Zoom/streaming tech \$220/wk x 52 wks = \$11,440 + 6 special services/events = \$1,320 = ~\$13k
	6110 · Other Maintenance Staff	8,200	14,000	5,800	BD coverage Fri & Sat \$100/day x 52 weeks = \$10,400; 3 wks BD vacation = \$100/day x 15 = \$1,500; misc assistant sexton project/work \$2,100
	Total 6050 · Sexton Staff	92,428	101,649	9,221	
	6100 · Plant Operations				
	6150 · Fuel Oil	28,000	28,000	-	Hard to guess about winter 2024-2025; last year, per BD, this amt \$3,500 low, then mild winter
	6160 · Utilities	14,500	15,000	500	\$1,220/mo current bill mostly Concord Light (incl \$75/mo gas Natinoalgrid) x 12 = \$14,700; eff Nov 2023 internet went fr \$95/mo (for 200/200) to \$115/m (for 500/500) via CMLP
	6170 · Insurance	15,000	16,600	1,600	FY24: Worker's comp \$215 x 26 pay periods = \$5,590; basic incl umbrella \$17,800 (guessing 3.5% increase) (10-6 Conc Greene ins pd directly by TPD); no add'l for YMCA ropes course this yr; minus 35.5% Trustees' portion basic + umbrella = ~\$6,125, then netted
	6190 · Building Supplies	7,200	8,400	1,200	\$800/mo avg = \$9,600/yr; w/o PHall paint = \$642/mo x 12 = \$7,702; incl p towels, tp, cleaning spray, lt bulbs; moved \$400 fr 4510 Worship Aesthetics here
	6210 · Equipment & Furnishings	8,500	8,000	(500)	Incl tools; unpredictable, hard to stay in budget; \$2,135 incorrect ch removed; w/o = \$2,600/10 x 12 = \$3,120; depends on what office furn new min requests
	6225 · Building Maintenance	43,000	44,000	1,000	\$325/wk cleaners = \$16,900 + \$27k standard budget
	6230 · Landscaping & Snow Removal	30,000	35,000	5,000	Last yr BD predicted this \$3,500 over budget because of more expensive snow removal vendor. For FY25 BD to do more of the outside work (but not plowing or mowing).
	6235 · Facilities Repair	22,000	46,000	24,000	Incl \$6k/yr (\$500/mo) tr to Long-Term Facilities Maintenance reserve; last-minute expense reduction increased this to \$1k/mo = \$12k for FY25
	Total 6100 · Plant Operations	168,200	201,000	32,800	
	6220 · PP&E Additional Expenses	5,500	0	(5,500)	FY25 No more tent; removing this line
	Total 6000 · Property Plant & Equip	266,128	302,649	36,521	

		FY24	FY25	Budget Diff	
	updated 5/24/24	Budget	Budget	FY24 - FY25	FY25 Budget notes
	7000 - Denominational Support				
	7010 - UUA Annual Program Fund	76,132	74,100	(1,934)	Full FY25 amount requested by the UUA, reduced from FY24
	7040 - Ministerial Intern	4,000	-	(4,000)	PC summer min 2024 (3 on LW - rather on PC Min salary line, two summer services (7/7 & 7/14) in rotation with other churches - 3 on 4040 Guest Min.
	7045 - Ministerial Intern Profit Expenses	-	-	-	
	7050 - ISA Registration	2,500	2,500	-	Concurrent delegate rates
	7060 - POC Program Support	500	500	-	
	Total 7000 - Denominational Support	83,132	77,100	(6,034)	
	7100 - Governance and Finance				
	7105 - Annual Audit	5,000	5,000	-	Should have done in FY24 per policy, not done, keeping here for FY25
	7175 - Unbudgeted Expense	-	-	-	Art & furniture recognized in FY24, \$1,117 as of 4/25/24 = \$100 add
	7180 - Fundraising Costs	1,700	1,700	-	bookmarks = \$300 party & any life exp.
	7190 - Minister Moving Expenses	-	15,000	15,000	Max, per JJ contract, taxable income
	Total 7100 - Governance and Finance	6,700	21,700	15,000	
	Total Expense	1,432,430	1,475,800	41,000	incl 2.5% staff COL raises
	Net Income	3,824	380	(2,720)	Must balance (net +/- \$0) per BC

Final FY25 vs FY24 Annual Budget - short version

eff 5/24/2024

		FY24 Budget	FY25 Budget	Difference
	Income			
	3010 · Contribution Income	1,062,696	1,090,977	28,281
	3130 · Users of Facilities	24,000	25,000	1,000
	3140 · Trustees Income	257,658	258,127	469
	3185 · Coan House Rental Income	16,000	24,000	8,000
	3350 · Interest Income	42,500	45,600	3,100
	3360 · SREC (solar panel) income	7,000	7,700	700
	3370 · Miscellaneous Income	600	0	(600)
	3390 · Special Events Income	25,000	22,368	(2,632)
	Total Income	1,435,454	1,473,772	38,318
	Expense			
	4010 · Minister Staff	232,587	240,486	7,899
	4150 · Minister Development	21,320	20,792	(528)
	4200 · Human Resources	17,000	500	(16,500)
	4300 · Professional Development	4,000	4,500	500
	4400 · HR Benefits and Taxes	182,819	166,829	(15,990)
	4500 · Parish Activities	3,700	2,850	(850)
	4700 · Member Services	2,000	2,000	0
	4800 · Social Action	110,935	112,446	1,511
	5000 · Lifespan Religious Education	157,263	161,087	3,824
	5400 · Music	151,501	153,116	1,615
	5600 · Administration	193,345	207,316	13,971
	6000 · Property Plant & Equip	266,128	302,649	36,521
	7000 · Denominational Support	83,132	77,198	(5,934)
	7150 · Governance and Finance	6,700	21,700	15,000
	Total Expense	1,432,430	1,473,469	41,039
	Net Income	3,024	303	(2,721)

**Proposed Bylaws
First Parish in Concord
Concord, Massachusetts
Draft: June 2, 2024**

ARTICLE I

Name

The name of this Congregation shall be First Parish in Concord.

ARTICLE II

Purpose

First Parish in Concord is a welcoming Unitarian Universalist congregation that seeks ways to deepen spiritually, build community, and make a positive difference in the world.

First Parish in Concord affirms and promotes participation in all of its activities, without regard to race, color, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, socioeconomic status, or national origin and without requiring adherence to any religious belief or creed.

ARTICLE III

Affiliation

This Congregation shall be a member of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

ARTICLE IV

Membership

Anyone may become a member of the Congregation by signing the Membership Book, or by giving written consent. The members' names shall be kept in the records of the Congregation.

Any member of the Congregation is entitled to vote at any meeting of the Congregation held at least thirty days after they have become a member.

The Called Senior Minister shall ensure that a list of all eligible voters of the Congregation is prepared for each Annual Meeting.

ARTICLE V

Officers

The officers of the Congregation are nine Governing Board members-at-large, a Clerk, a Treasurer, and a Moderator, all of whom shall be chosen at the Annual Meeting. The Governing Board consists of the nine members-at-large, plus the Clerk and Treasurer.

1. Responsibilities

Authority and direction of the affairs of First Parish in Concord are vested in the Governing Board, the discerning body representing the Congregation's vision and mission. The Board is responsible for policy development and oversight, the fiduciary health of the Congregation, and assessing the Called Senior Minister's progress toward helping the Congregation achieve its mission.

2. Election Process and Terms of Service

Candidates for Governing Board members-at-large and the positions of Clerk, Treasurer and Moderator may be nominated by the Nominating Committee or may be nominated from the floor at the Annual Meeting.

Governing Board members shall be elected by the Congregation at the Annual Meeting. The Clerk, Treasurer, and Moderator shall be elected each year for one-year terms. They may be elected for a maximum of six consecutive terms, or six years. The nine Governing Board members-at-large shall be elected for three-year terms and can serve no more than two consecutive terms; fractional terms are not counted.

Members of the Nominating Committee may be nominated by the Governing Board or from the floor at the Annual Meeting and are elected by the Congregation at the Annual Meeting.

3. Vacancies Caused by Death, Resignation, or Removal

A mid-term vacancy created by the departure of a Governing Board member-at-large or the Clerk, Treasurer, or Moderator may be filled by the appointment of an interim successor by a majority vote of the Governing Board. At the next Annual Meeting, the Congregation shall elect a successor who has been nominated as described above for the remainder of the term of the officer whose position has become vacant.

A Governing Board officer may be removed by a two-thirds vote of those members of the Congregation present at a meeting called for this purpose.

4. Annual Meeting

The Governing Board shall provide a written report to the Congregation at each Annual Meeting.

ARTICLE VI

Called Ministers

1. Calling the Senior Minister

Ministry is a covenantal relationship between the Called Senior Minister and the Congregation, in which they pledge to work together toward common goals. The Called Senior Minister shall be chosen by a minimum of four-fifths affirmative votes of those members of the Congregation present at a meeting called for that purpose. The Called Senior Minister's salary and other conditions of employment shall be set forth in a written agreement approved by the Governing Board. The agreement shall contain provisions for its termination. A two-thirds vote of those members present at a meeting of the Congregation called for that purpose shall be necessary to terminate the contract of the Called Senior Minister.

2. Responsibilities

The Called Senior Minister and the Governing Board shall work together through collaborative leadership. The Called Senior Minister shall be responsible for operations, while final decisions in matters of policy and procedure shall remain with the Governing Board or with the Congregation in accordance with Article VIII. The Called Senior Minister shall bring to the Governing Board any matters pertinent to the general interests of the Congregation and shall make recommendations about these matters.

The Called Senior Minister shall be responsible for all religious services, including but not limited to worship, marriages, child dedications, funerals, and memorial services and shall serve as spiritual leader and adviser to members of the Congregation.

3. Annual Meeting

The Called Senior Minister shall provide a written report to the Congregation at each Annual Meeting.

ARTICLE VII

Trustees of Parish Donations

There shall be a committee of First Parish known as the Trustees of Parish Donations. This committee shall consist of five members.

1. Responsibilities

The Trustees are the stewards of funds and properties donated to First Parish and transferred to the Trustees by the Governing Board to be held and managed. As fiduciaries, the Trustees shall use their best judgment to balance the following objectives for the assets:

- Preserve and build the assets to provide a portion of First Parish's annual operating funds in perpetuity;
- Serve as a reserve fund for extraordinary situations; and
- Steward the properties under their control and oversee their operations and finances.

The Trustees shall take, hold, manage, and dispense through the proper offices or committees all property, real and personal, bequeathed or given to the Congregation and transferred to the Trustees by the Governing Board to be held and managed. The Trustees may invest and reinvest in the name of the Congregation all such property, real and personal, in such manner as they may deem safe and proper, and they shall have full authority to assign, transfer, and convey all such property, with the exception that the sale, disposal, or change in use of any real property on the First Parish campus shall require the approval of a two-thirds vote of those members of the Congregation present at a meeting at a meeting called for this purpose. The First Parish campus is defined as any real property owned by First Parish on grounds bounded by Lexington Road, Heywood Street, Walden Street, and Main Street.

2. Election Process and Terms of Service

After consulting with the current Trustees, the Nominating Committee shall nominate Trustees for election at the Annual Meeting.

The Trustees shall be elected by the Congregation for terms of five years or for the remainder of a term in the case of midterm vacancies. Not more than one new or re-elected Trustee shall be chosen in any year, not including Trustees elected to fill vacancies caused by death, resignation, or removal, or to secure an orderly sequence in the expiration of terms. No person shall serve simultaneously as a Trustee and as a member of the Governing Board. Trustees shall not serve for more than two consecutive full terms; fractional terms of less than five years are not counted.

3. Vacancies Caused by Death, Resignation, or Removal

A midterm vacancy may be filled until the next Annual Meeting by the appointment of an interim successor by a majority vote of the remaining Trustees and the Governing Board, voting separately. At the next Annual Meeting, the Congregation shall elect a successor who has been nominated as described above for the remainder of the term to fill the vacancy of the Trustee whose position has become vacant.

A Trustee may be removed by a two-thirds vote of members of the Congregation present at a meeting called for this purpose.

4. Annual Meeting

The Trustees shall do all acts necessary or proper for carrying into effect the provisions of this Article and shall annually make a full report to the Congregation of all their investments and related transactions.

ARTICLE VIII

Meetings

The Annual Meeting of the Congregation shall be on a date and time determined each year by the Governing Board. The date shall be within the first fifteen days of June. Other Congregational meetings may also be called by the Governing Board. In addition, upon the written request of 25 or more qualified voters of the Congregation, the Governing Board shall call a meeting.

The Governing Board shall send advance written notice for all Congregational meetings by posting a certified copy of the meeting warrant near the door of the Congregation's Meeting House for at least eight days, including two Sundays, before the meeting date; and by attempting to give personal notice to each qualified voter of the Congregation by postal mail or email to their last known address. Forty-five members shall constitute a quorum.

ARTICLE IX

Fiscal Year

The fiscal year shall end on June 30.

ARTICLE X

Amendments

These Bylaws may be amended or repealed by a two-thirds vote of members of the Congregation present at a meeting called for this purpose. The wording of any proposed change shall be contained in the notice of the meeting.

ARTICLE XI

Dissolution

Any action to dissolve the Congregation must be approved by a two-thirds vote of members of the Congregation present at a meeting called specifically to consider such action. Written notice of this meeting must be issued to all members eligible to vote by postal mail or email to their last known address. If the Congregation at its own option shall cease to exist, all property, real or personal, shall be transferred to the Unitarian Universalist Association or to another organization affiliated with the UUA.

Appendix

Dates of Adoption and Amendments

ARTICLE I, Name: 1956, 2024

ARTICLE II, Purpose: 2012, 2024

ARTICLE III, Affiliation: 1956, 1968, 2024

ARTICLE IV, Membership: 1856, 1858, 1881, 1894, 1895, 1946, 1956, 1976, 1983, 2024

ARTICLE V, Officers: 1856, 1922, 1935, 1956, 1992, 1996, 2024

ARTICLE VI, Ministers: 1956, 1968, 2024

ARTICLE VII, Trustees of Parish Donations: 1909, 1956, 1995, 2024

ARTICLE VIII, Meetings: 1856, 1880, 1907, 1956, 1970, 1996, 2024

ARTICLE IX, Fiscal Year: 1981, 2024

ARTICLE X, Amendments: 1956, 2024

ARTICLE XI, Dissolution: 2024

Annual Report of the (Acting) Minister for Congregational Care **Rev. Elizabeth Ide**

This is an especially memorable year in the life of Congregational Care at First Parish; a path of many curves and textures. Beginning in October of 2023, this ministry experienced a series of shifts in leadership when Rev. Liz Weber went on medical leave and the ministry continued with a series of transitions. The ministerial leadership in Congregational Care was held by Rev. Amy Freedman in November-December of 2023 and then Rev. Paul Langston-Daley in January, February, and March of 2024.

My presence in this role began in mid-March of 2024, when I was warmly welcomed into the community by so many staff, members, and friends. The sense of hospitality, expressed in so many direct and subtle ways, brought ease to the initial process of integration, and also speaks to a deep respect for and appreciation of pastoral ministry that is held widely among the congregation. Throughout my first few months at First Parish, collective engagement with the caring ministries has remained strong, an embodied expression of the congregation's covenant to encourage mutual support and nurture a sense of belonging across the generations. This dynamic also suggests that the level of focus and capacity made possible through maintaining a dedicated staff position is widely recognized as an essential feature of congregational life. A great strength of the congregation, this commitment to community care extends far beyond the formal features at First Parish and is likely a key source of resilience in times of transition and challenge.

As we often name during worship services, caring for one another is integral to the meaning and experience of being in community. While focused on tending to the collective and personal pastoral needs of First Parish members and friends, participating in weekly worship services has been a powerful source of connection with the larger community. In leading the pastoral prayers and parish concerns at most of our Sunday worship gatherings and joining the informal coffee hour gatherings, I found an abundance of occasions to build relationships with members. I had the honor and joy of witnessing the process as multiple new members signed the membership book. Other connections were strengthened by the open invitations for members to share joys, concerns, and life milestones during worship. Coffee hour was a great opportunity to learn about current and upcoming church activities that spoke more generally to whole church's identity and priorities, and this growing understanding of what matters to our church helped me serve in this temporary role from a more holistic perspective than might have been possible otherwise.

Maintaining a personal presence at larger community gatherings and attending weekly staff meetings remains an essential practice to sustain a sense of the bigger picture, that is, the past, present, and future dynamics that create the foundation of every pastoral interaction. This culture of collaboration made it easier to "learn the ropes" and contribute to shared endeavors early on and continues to nourish my ministry in this role.

Contributing to regular church communications, for example, by writing columns for the Congregational Care edition of *First Parish Weekly* helped to affirm the availability of pastoral support; continually reminding the community that our church cares. In a season when both the

processes for and outcomes of transition are central themes for all of us, it has been important to continually uplift information about and invitations for pastoral care.

Throughout the many transitional processes of this year, the vibrant and dedicated energy of our team of Pastoral Care Associates has remained steady. They worked closely with each of the four ministers that have held this role, meeting monthly and providing kind, responsive support to members in emerging and ongoing life challenges. This year, our Pastoral Care Associates included Paula Adelson, Sally Brandon Bemis, Diane Clapp, Lori Gill-Pazaris, Dana Snyder-Grant, Virginia Taylor, and Rebecca Winborn. Susan Dobbie also returned to active service this spring and brings with her the experience of her previous time engaged with this ministry.

Many support groups continue to gather regularly, including the Cancer Support Group facilitated by CC King, the Caretakers Support Group facilitated by Diane Clapp, and the Parents Support Group facilitated by Jan Power. Small group ministry also continued with the leadership of Lillian Anderson, and many leaders connected with Congregational Care programs and activities participated in the events of Candidating Week in early May.

Other ongoing pastoral ministries include our Prayer Shawl ministry, led by Ingrid Wheeler, which gathers each month, and By Your Side Singers, a pastoral choir that regularly visits those in need, led by Beth Norton, Director of Music Ministry. The warmth of a lovingly knitted shawl and the kindness of a cherished melody sung by caring neighbors brings comfort and healing to those in need.

Our Holiday Plant delivery continued this year at Christmas and Easter; the program was coordinated by Virginia Taylor and Diane Clapp. The Pastoral Care Library remains available, and Enid Boasberg joined the Pastoral Care Associates for a conversation about increasing the accessibility of the Pastoral Care Library, and I am deeply grateful that these carefully cultivated resources remain available at First Parish.

Though this year has had its challenges, many moments of joy, grace, clarity, and connection have emerged as well. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve this congregation while Rev. Liz Weber is on leave, and to work with Rev. Seth Carrier-Ladd, our staff team, and our lay leaders.

Music Ministry Annual Report
Elizabeth Norton
Director of Music and Arts Ministry

This second year of interim ministry brought new challenges and opportunities for the music ministry at First Parish. Sometimes they were one in the same! Ultimately, this became a year of transformation, emergence and rebirth.

The opportunity and challenge that dominated much of the fall and winter for the music ministry and for worship in general was the installation and integration of a new audio-visual system in the Sanctuary. The installation was complex and took place over many months; communication with the vendor was sometimes challenging and our Sunday techs had a lot to handle, what with

learning a new (and sometimes changing) system and operating both sound and video in the Sanctuary and online. Even as we struggled to achieve some consistency in the quality of our Zoom streams, it was apparent that the new screens, video cameras, and ambient microphones would provide powerful new resources for taking our services “out into the world.” The most immediate and dramatic effect, in my experience, was the improved strength of congregational singing. With many parishioners now having the option to read the words up on the screen and sing out, we could all hear one another’s voices better. As a result, I think we sang with more confidence. By the end of March, tech issues had been smoothed out and for our Easter Sunday service we were able to use both images and videos to support the sermon. The sound of the brass, percussion, choir, congregation and organ in the sanctuary sounded inspiring online as well.

The First Parish Choir continued to rehearse each Wednesday night and to sing for services most Sundays. With an active membership hovering around 40, they remain a strong, enthusiastic choir. In the fall, some of our members joined a choir of 90 voices representing Unitarian Universalist congregations from the Boston area and central Massachusetts for a UU choir festival at First UU Society of Newton. This was the first event of this kind since before the pandemic and it was wonderful to sing together again. Highlights of the year were learning a number of new pieces, including the haunting *Čhanté Wašté Hokšila* by Lakota Two-Spirit composer William Linthicum-Blackhorse. Linthicum-Blackhorse is deeply imbedded in the Lakota culture and working to offer Lakota language resources to all. The composer dedicated the piece to the children who died in the Uvalde shooting. We chose, on November 19, to also remember the children of Palestine and Israel. On May 19, the First Parish Choir and Festival Orchestra offered UU composer Clif Hardin’s *Spiritsong: Voices of Many Faiths* in our worship service. This multi-movement piece set sacred texts from many of the worlds’ religious traditions, celebrating our pluralism and our interconnectedness in love and spirit. The service was received with deep appreciation by the congregation – both in person and online. The choir and orchestra loved learning and sharing the music.

Four dedicated youth continued our Gospel Ensemble tradition this year, inspired by Anderson Manuel’s energetic leadership and assisted by accompanist Jennifer (Minjing) Vandenbos and occasional guest guitar player, Rob Castillo. Anderson and the quartet sang in eight Sunday morning services this year, sometimes on their own and sometimes with the First Parish Choir. They helped to form the core of two All-Ages “Pop-Up” choirs, one for our Hallowe’en service (in costume, of course) and one for the “No-rehearsal Christmas Pageant” in December. Anderson Manuel continued to lead congregational singing in worship on a regular basis, and also taught songs during religious education sessions in December and with Jubilee Kids in the winter.

Rise Up Singing, our monthly folk-music group, met on the fourth Friday of each month, with the addition of an all-ages potluck dessert beforehand. Rev. Amy Freedman suggested this might bring in some families to this regular opportunity for intergenerational singing. She and other RE volunteers hosted the dessert. This did bring in some new interest from families with children. Rise Up Singing continues to attract a significant number of singers and instrumentalists from the wider folk-music community. Our annual “Cookies and Caroling” in December brought in an energetic group of about 30 adults and children to sing carols and eat cookies in the Parish Hall

and Parlor. This was a happy combination of Rise Up Singing “regulars” and folks who came especially for the seasonal music making.

By Your Side Singers, our pastoral choir, kept up a regular rotation of monthly “sings” for several individual members of the congregation in their homes, as well as in two residential facilities, Concord Park and Care One for Concord, where resident parishioners share the music with their neighbors. These are spirited community-building sings. By Your Side Singers continued to meet on the first and third Thursday of each month to learn new songs, to sing meditatively together, to support one another, and to hold those in need of care in our musical embrace. In May, the group held a potluck and visioning evening to look back at our 15-year history and to envision how the group can best serve the First Parish community and pastoral care ministry in the coming years.

This spring, Eric Huenneke announced his plans to retire after 22 years serving as our Parish Organist. In April, Eric gave a wonderful organ and piano recital, inviting some musical “friends” to join him in the program. The first half of the concert featured organ works that showed off the many musical colors of our organ. In the second half, violinist Siri Smedvig, clarinet player Nancy Ackerman and soprano Beth Norton joined Eric in collaborative works for organ and violin, piano and clarinet and piano and voice. We were delighted by the strong attendance – over 100 people – and members of the choir provided a gracious and welcoming reception afterwards. It was gratifying to see Eric receive that appreciation and to realize how much enthusiasm for organ music remains in our congregation. In his more than two decades as Parish Organist, Eric served faithfully through some big transitions. His vision, knowledge and persistence helped to guide us to the completion of our beautiful Russell & Company, Opus 54 pipe organ in 2016. That instrument will be his professional legacy to First Parish.

Our services were enhanced by a number of guest musicians and groups this year, including our resident vocal sextet, The Conchords, the Lincoln Ringers, violinist Siri Smedvig and clarinet player Nancy Ackerman. David Owen served as guest organist for the months of January and February. The Walden Brass Quintet gave an outdoor concert on the Keresztúr Terrace in September – an outdoor concert that quickly and quite smoothly became an indoor concert when a late summer thunderstorm suddenly struck. And Anna Huckabee Tull and Mickey Zibello gave a wonderful benefit concert for the Welcoming Walls initiative in February. Other notable concert events were two “Beyond the Notes” concerts presented by violinist and daughter of First Parish, Sarah Whitney and friends. We also hosted several studio recitals by local music teachers.

Rev. Seth Carrier-Ladd’s Easter sermon on the theme of “Emergence” was so appropriate for this time in the life of First Parish. This has been a year of emergence from the isolation of the pandemic. It has been a year of emerging energy for our music ministry. It has been a year of increasing momentum and excitement as we look to what the future and a new settled ministry will bring.

Religious Education Program Annual Report
Rev. Amy Freedman
Minister of Religious Education

2023- 2024 Religious Education at a Glance

Religious Exploration:

Group	Fall	Winter	Spring
Preschool- K	Little RE		
K- 3 rd graders	Exploring & Connecting		World of Wonder
4 th & 5 th graders	UU Tweens		Jubilee Kids
6 th & 7 th graders	Jr. Youth Group		Crossing Paths
8 th graders	Jr. Youth Group		Our Whole Lives (10 sessions)
9 th graders	Coming of Age		
High School	High School Youth Group		

All Ages Services:

Ingathering Service - September 10
Halloween Service - October 29
Pick-up Pageant - December 17
Christmas Eve - December 24
Youth Service - February 11
Easter Sunday - March 31
Coming of Age - June 16
Pride Service - June 23

All Ages Events:

Homecoming Picnic - September 10
Apple Picking - September 24
Community Garden - October 22
Open Table Kids' Bags - November 19
Children's Craft Workshop - December 16
Passover Seder - April 23
Honoring Mothers - May 12
Ferry Beach Retreat - May 24-27
All About Bees - June 2 & 9
Democracy Festival - June 8
Concord Pride Fest - June 22

Back to School Blessing 2023-2024

As our new year starts with a Blue Supermoon,
May we start fresh with the energy and spirit
of this special time.

Help us to find balance
between time alone and with others,
between being active and rest,
between familiar and new experiences.

Each new year is an opportunity
For growth and change.

May we feel the support of our family, friends,
teachers, and First Parish community.

May we find ways to help and share our gifts.

Bless us with curiosity and kindness.
A new world is emerging.

Blessed Be.

Religious Education Annual Report 2024

This was my ninth year as your Minister of Religious Education. Even as we navigate the changes at First Parish, I am mindful of the challenges many families face with illness, mental health, aging parents, and the weight of current events around the world and close to home.

This year we had 71 enrolled in our Religious Education program with an average weekly participation of 49 children and youth. We had 38 volunteers who served as RE Guides, assistants, and mentors. I am grateful to the Racial Justice Action Group for volunteering as substitutes when I was teaching Jubilee Kids. Many people in our community were stretched this year and so it was good to have people who were willing to step in when asked.

A highlight this year was teaching Jubilee Kids with Anderson Manuel. Kristen Hagerty and Liz Cobbs helped with publicity. Five families from the local community enrolled. Eight 4th graders and seven 5th graders participated. Our age-appropriate exploration of race, racism, racial justice, and inclusion helps build Beloved Community.

Our Crossing Paths group of 6th and 7th graders deepened their understanding of world religions through experiential learning and visits focusing on Baha'i, Catholicism, Christian Science, and Judaism this year.

Dawn Van Patten served as our Youth Coordinator as well as leading Coming of Age and Little RE. We have a small group of devoted teens who are our core Youth Group, teen assistants, and Gospel Ensemble. There is a small cohort of 9th graders this year. Each youth has a mentor, went on a UU Heritage Tour, participated in City Reach (with youth from Lincoln), and attended monthly sessions. The Coming of Age service will be June 16.

Dawn and Tim Peacock offered ten sessions of 8th Grade OWL, our comprehensive sexuality program, on Sunday mornings. The group of 8 teens engaged with the content and shared openly. We know this sort of safe space and accurate information transforms lives.

I wish Rev. Seth Carrier-Ladd and his family well on their next chapter. Our paths will cross again in this small UU universe.

This was not an easy year with Rev. Liz Weber on medical leave and the uncertainty of being in search for our settled minister. We are still in a re-building phase. I look forward to welcoming Rev. Jennifer Johnson as our settled minister. I am hopeful that the spirit of collaboration and shared ministry will grow. May our First Parish community continue to grow in love, care, learning, and service.

Blessings,
Amy

Facilities Manager Annual Report
Bruce Davidson
Facilities Manager

There were four major expenses that occurred relatively close together and one large LED retrofit. These issues were caused by an aging building and systems nearing the end of their effective lifespan.

The Meeting House:

- Drain System
 - New power flush toilets
 - Roto Rooter drain clearing
 - Roto Rooter drain pipe descaling
- Mold remediation in Milldam Nursery School closet
- Elevator Motor replacement
- Extensive work on main furnace and pumps
- LED Retrofit and relamping: Completed first phase of relamping and replacing fixtures
- Audio Visual
 - Purchased and installed 5 monitors
 - Maintained media on monitors:
 - Foyer: Calendar and Web Site
 - Sunday Slideshow Sanborn Sofa Monitor
 - Parlor 75": Sunday AM Service and Minister Portraits
 - Provided minor logistics support to Audio/visual in the Sanctuary project
- Oversaw installation of pulpit rails
- Repaired metal handrail at front steps
- Painted Parish Hall and Brooks Room

Cottages on Church Green and 10-6 Concord Greene

- Painted and remodeled several rooms at #1 Church Green
- Partially renovated #23 Church Green and made repairs to a rotted exterior corner between #23 and #25
- Built an extension to #7 Church Green deck using recycled sections of the former walkway
- Began scraping and preparing #23 for painting. By end of summer, I plan to have #7, #1 and the garage siding replaced where necessary and painted

Wright Tavern

- Provided miscellaneous support services

The Grounds

- The tent was removed and large compacted sod was hand-tilled and seeded in time for the return of the WPA Herb Garden Tea
- Installed large stone stairway up from Herb Garden
- Installed granite stepper walkway between front steps and the labyrinth
- Maintained pruning, weeding, sycamore tree treatments, mowing and snow removal services
- Repaired the foundation and grout for the terrace
- Worked with Doug Baker and Barry Copp on the Herb Garden infrastructure repairs (wood and hardscape)
- Cared for the Kopjafa, Native Fruit, Baker and Vegetable Box Gardens. Doug Baker invested many hours at the Herb Garden. The WPA will be contracting for care of the Herb Garden and the Johnson Garden.
- Began harvesting the first compost from the wattle compost bin!
- Planned projects:
 - Birch posts and basswood rail at stone steps
 - Completion of the Native Fruit Garden
 - Bio-diversification of the fern woods along the southeast property line with donated shade plants, moss, fungus, mushrooms, etc.

I am nearing my fourth year anniversary at First Parish and am excited that the joint is jumping with events and full of life and energy. I appreciate the opportunity to serve the parishioners and staff and connect with the community.

Bruce Davidson
Facilities Manager

Annual Report for Social Action

Rev. Paul Langston-Daley
Minister for Social Action

This year I worked closely with and served as staff liaison to three Social Action Teams: the Diversity Team, the Living Our Covenant Team and the Welcoming Walls Team.

I led several circles on difficult discussions related to issues in the Middle East in November, shortly after the Hamas attacks on Israel. I facilitated a leadership training called *Real World Tools for Addressing Conflict*. I trained seven people to lead reflection circles on our covenant. Circles we hope to continue into the fall and spring of next year and perhaps beyond that. I also offered a Deep Listening Training for the folks going to Transylvania to help open them to the experience more fully.

With Liz Weber out, I took on the pastoral care needs of the congregation for two months and provided triage care for the congregation. I worked closely with the pastoral care team and provided support and encouragement for their work.

Share the Plate gave away \$33,000 to 10 organizations this year and the Advisory Team and I selected next year's recipients. They are listed on the website.

Simmon's Gift (\$10,000) Distribution to Affiliate Organizations:

UUMass Action - \$4000 (an additional Gift to UUMass Action Youth Corp for \$1,000 was made from Social Action Reserves)

Black Lives of UU (BLUU) - \$2,000

Transgender Professional Religious UUs Together (TRUUsT) - \$2,000

Ministry for the Earth MFE - \$2,000

The **Welcoming Walls** team, a team I worked closely with this year, was successful in addressing concerns and issues within the congregation as we discussed removing the portraits from the Fellowship Hall. We were able to engage in a process that allowed us to pack and store the portraits from the fellowship hall and decorate the hall with the puppet banners to bring some brightness and to better reflect this congregation in the 21st century. There were a few missteps along the way, but the team managed the challenges well and the congregation seems pleased to have the Parish Hall more vibrant and colorful. This leadership team has been outstanding in addressing concerns and providing opportunities for people to share their thoughts and opinions about this transition to remove the portraits. The team organized and held a fundraiser recognizing that expenses for this project were off budget and funds would be needed for professional photography and professional packing of the portraits. A new television screen is being installed in the parlor (or will have been by the time this document is received) that will present a slide show of the portraits with context allowing for a deeper understanding of our history, to provide a fuller version of who we have been at First Parish and who we are becoming.

The Welcoming Walls team will be making recommendations to the Standing Committee for next steps as we consider possible disposition of the portraits and what's next for the Parish Hall walls.

The Diversity Team spent some of the time this year focusing on internal organization. As an outward facing issue, they chose to focus on a pronoun initiative in the congregation. They have also considered expanding their mandate to address issues around accessibility, and a new team may be forming to focus specifically on those issues. We have been involved in the planning of Concord Pride led by Joe Palumbo of Concord and we will be hosting the Pride Rally on June 22 and leading worship with Tri-Con at our facility (outside on the terrace) on June 23. We are excited for this opportunity and there's a list of month-long events on the bulletin board and posted around town. I will also be presenting a story for one of the several Moth-like storytelling nights at Tri-Con on June 9. (Time TBD)

The pronoun initiative started slowly and continues slowly. The team acquired pronoun stickers for people to put on name tags. I will be leading a training in the fall on how to hold Difficult

Conversations Listening Circles, and we will provide circles in the congregation to discuss and listen and share about the impact of the use of a broad range of pronouns within our congregation. We hope this will help us understand where people might be stuck or confused and to help move our congregation to widening the circle of concern.

There appears to be energy for a team related to and addressing issues of accessibility in the congregation while we do have an improved hearing system in the sanctuary, and the elevator appears to be stable in its capacity and functioning. There are other issues that we would like to consider and address to make the congregation more welcoming. I have agreed to serve as the staff liaison for this team. We renewed our Welcoming Congregation Status again this year.

Living the Covenant Team - I was late coming to this team this year as it was initially overlooked in Liz Weber's leave. In conversation with CC King, I agreed to help support this team in Liz's absence. We met as a team and discussed the need to help the congregation deepen its understanding of and relationship with the covenant. I suggested a form of reflection grounded in spiritual practice called Lectio Divina. I trained 7 people to lead these circles and we have held 3 reflection circles this spring. The plan is to continue to hold these circles over the coming year (and perhaps beyond) to help integrate the covenant into the life of the congregation.

We agreed to begin research and study into possible accountability processes for when our covenant is bent or broken. The plan is to begin that this summer and to engage in earnest in the fall when Rev. Jennifer arrives.

Reclaim Our Democracy Team (ROD) has chosen to dive deep into building a democracy movement rather than focusing on electoral politics. This work is done in conjunction with the UUA Side with Love team, UU the Vote and UUSJ, which is a national organization of social justice leaders. ROD Leadership has continued to provide excellent resources for our congregation and the broader community around democracy, including presentations with David Pepper and fill in the blank and the second annual Democracy Festival (this year planned for June 8, 11-2). We expect to have 25 to 30 booths or tables at the event and hope to have as much success with connections, networking, and community building as we had last year. I am encouraged by this team's willingness to take up the challenge of engaging our congregation and the broader community in civic participation and democracy building with an eye towards collective liberation.

The **Racial Justice Action Group (RJAG)** spent a good deal of this year focused on the Ellen Garrison middle school, renaming, organizing and coordinating with other groups in town, including the Robbin's house, the League of Women Voters, the diversity equity, and inclusion (DEI Committee) team from the town and others. I worked with them to organize their strategy for engaging folks in this issue and encouraging people to vote. They learned solid organizing skills from this venture and were able to claim a victory at the town meeting with an overwhelming vote. Their act of solidarity with other organizations in town is heartening and provides us with a good opportunity going forward as we address issues like the prison land, lingering concerns about the shelter, and deepening our understanding of racial justice issues

within the community of Concord, as well as our striving for collective liberation. Several of the leaders of RJAG volunteered to help with RE this year, a trend I hope will continue and spread.

The **Environmental Justice team** has worked tirelessly on halting jet expansion of the Hanscom airport. They have actively engaged with policy and have done terrific organizing in combination with the congregation in Bedford and others to shift policy and limit the expansion. They have also steadfastly showed up every month on the 11th at 11 AM to ring the bell for Climate Justice, a nationwide call to raise awareness around climate change and our responsibility to address that change. This team appears to be struggling a bit around leadership and at the same time they have continued to be effective in addressing the issues and concerns that face our community and our world. They also coordinated with UUMass Action on several climate justice events.

The Greening the Campus Team continues to move forward with their project on geothermal, making headway to moving us off the grid.

Immigration Justice Task Force continues the tireless work of caring for families, engaging in outreach, and policy work.

The **WPA** had an excellent presentation of the Dana Greeley scholar this year with Fatemeh Shams. It was well attended and the event drew from all over the community.

For the past few years I have had the honor of co-leading the FP Men and Masculine Identified persons retreat with Jeff Clannon. The group of between 14-20 men been meeting twice a year for a day long retreat. This year, the spring retreat was postponed as the search process and candidating week took much of everyone's time. We have a retreat on Spirituality planned for September.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Paul Langston-Daley, Minister of Social Action

SAC PROGRAM REPORTS

Advocates for Women's Empowerment (AWE)

Leader: Suzie Weaver

Mission: AWE is a social action group that is dedicated to advancing the rights and lives of women, through advocacy, direct action, and education.

Vision: We envision a world where all genders work to optimize women's quality of life by removing social, economic, political, and institutional barriers, to promote choices, access, and agency.

Background: In 2012, after 'Reproductive Justice' was made a priority at General Assembly, a group formed at First Parish. In 2016, the group changed its name from "Reproductive Justice" to "Advocates for Women's Empowerment" (or AWE). AWE meets periodically, coordinates regular activities, a monthly newsletter, and an active Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/concordwomen/>). AWE is open and welcome to all, regardless of age, gender, faith, orientation, etc. There are currently a handful of active members and 140+ friends, which include both FP and community members.

Year in review:

- Meetings - This could be considered a "hiatus year" for AWE due to other heavy church commitments of the prior and current chairs. Since COVID, we have had generally less active interest in the group from prior members. In the past, we met monthly for housekeeping, community building, planning, and discussions. This year we met once in the fall at which time we provided input from the group to the ministerial transition team.
- Events - We participated in the Social Action coffee hour at First Parish in October, we carried a banner in the banner parade at Celebration Sunday in March, and we will have a table at the Democracy Festival in June
- Community Support - We supported Domestic Violence Support Network, Inc., a Concord-based organization, with a sponsorship donation of \$500 toward their 25th anniversary benefit fundraising celebration. Our sponsorship included a quarter-page ad in their booklet.

Goals for 2024-25: We hope to re-invigorate the group next year by resuming more regular in-person get-togethers to advocate, volunteer, and build community. We also hope to continue other activities to increase education and awareness for women's issues, as well as continue to be leaders in the fight for women's reproductive justice. Our focus in the fall will be to work with other groups on getting out the vote and supporting democracy ahead of the November election.

Amnesty International, Local Group 15

Contacts: Nancy Lyons, Kathleen Bean

First Parish members: Phil Villers, Ruthann Brien-Minkin, Nancy Lyons

Friends of First Parish: Kathleen Bean

Officers: Coordinator, Kathleen Bean; Secretary, Ruthann Brien; Treasurer, Carol Kyte

Membership: 14 members

Group 15 meets monthly throughout the year, pausing in July for a social get-together. Regular activities include:

Urgent Action Letters: Amnesty's Urgent Action Network is a global program that urges action for human rights activists who are at immediate risk. Each month we send several letters, advocating for activists who have been imprisoned or face other punishment for peaceful actions. We discuss the background and features of each case. Most recently we wrote for individuals in Jordan, Egypt and China.

Individual at Risk/Prisoner of Conscience program: Our Individual at Risk coordinator brings updates and actions to our meetings. We continue our work for Tajik human rights lawyer Bozorghmer Yorov, advocating for his safety and release from prison. Because Yorov represented the opposition Social Democratic Party of Tajikistan, he was sentenced to 23 years for representing members of the banned Islamic Revival Party (IRPT). Ongoing research and occasional contact with Yorov's brother all help to inform our advocacy.

Death Penalty: Group 15, along with AI USA, believes that the death penalty breaches human rights. We believe that as a society, we need to affirm that killing is wrong, and we cannot do this by killing more people. We provide monthly updates to the Group on current death penalty news and have taken actions to end the death penalty in the US. We have written letters to Governor Greg Abbott of Texas, Governor Ron DeSantis of Florida, and Governor Kay Ivey of Alabama, urging them to take definitive steps to end the use of the death penalty in their respective states. We have also written to President Joe Biden urging him to immediately commute all existing federal death sentences, dismantle the federal execution chamber, actively oppose executions at the state level, and ensure that his administration does nothing to facilitate the death penalty in states, whether in litigation, before treaty or regional bodies, or in relation to execution methods.

Most recently, three members of our Group have developed a relationship with Reprieve UK, a legal action NGO. They are investigators, lawyers and campaigners fighting for justice. They defend people who are facing human rights abuses, often at the hands of powerful governments. Reprieve is very much involved in working behind the scenes to abolish the death penalty in the US. They have advised us to target the FDA and the Federal Department of Justice and advocate for them to review the death penalty with greater attention placed on FDA oversight, as the drugs that are being used to execute people are being manufactured by means of sketchy practices in some cases, and present health risks to the general public. For our May meeting, we will be signing a letter to Senator Bernie Sanders, Chair of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, with a copy to Ed Markey, Majority Member on the Committee, urging

greater FDA oversight and stating that we believe the death penalty to be barbaric and inhumane, and look forward to the day it is abolished in the U.S.

LGBTQ: As we pursue educating ourselves about legislation and policies that affect the rights and safety of the LGBTQ community, we have sent petitions for the Transgender Bill of Rights in Congress and for at risk refugees in Kenya. On several occasions we sent solidarity messages to Ugandan activists. Serious concerns for the LGBTQ community persist in the U.S, as well as in many countries, including Uganda, Cameroon, Nigeria, Russia, Honduras, Saudi Arabia and Peru.

Community Partnership with Dignity in Asylum (DIAS): We provide ongoing support to Dignity in Asylum with whom we have a Community Partnership. DIAS, an all-volunteer public charity based in Concord, provides free housing and community support to refugees and people seeking asylum. The Community Partnership agreement formalizes Group 15's longstanding commitment to DIAS, through donations of funds and the hosting of fundraising events.

Criminal Justice/solitary confinement: We have participated in efforts to address injustice in our criminal justice system, such as solitary confinement, bias, racism, wrongful convictions, excessive punishment, treatment of juveniles, and prison conditions. We advocated for several bills in the MA legislation: addressing protection for prisoners in segregated confinement (S1511), a human rights bill (S1493) and the Prison Construction Moratorium(S1979); all remain in committees. Passage of No Cost Calls has made prison phone calls free. We have sent advocacy letters and messages of support to Leonard Peltier in prison in Florida, Rocky Myers on death row in Alabama, and Melissa Lucio on death row in Texas; there are serious flaws in each of these cases.

Immigration and asylum: We have an ongoing focus on immigration-related legislation and policy, especially in Massachusetts. Passage of the Work and Family Mobility Act has allowed undocumented residents to apply for drivers' licenses. The House version of the Safe Communities Act (H2288) was recently reported out favorably, while the identical Senate bill (S1510) remains in committee. The SCA would provide greater safety and stability to immigrants. We continue to collaborate with the F.P. Immigration Justice Task Force (IJTF); with the sharing of actions and a member of our group attending the F.P. Concord Immigration Justice Task Force meetings.

Amnesty campaigns: Group 15 participates in letter writing for several global campaigns which address individuals who are at risk for their activism:

- September's Banned Books Week highlighted individuals whose freedom of expression put them at risk, with six cases, including protecting librarians and schools from book bans in the U.S. and a Burundi journalist.
- Write for Rights commemorates December 10 Human Rights Day, with letter actions active November through January. The nine cases included a peaceful activist in Kyrgyzstan, a man on death row in Alabama, and an indigenous movement in S. Africa.
- Nowruz is a Persian spring holiday celebrated in March. We wrote cards of support to seven prisoners of conscience in Iran, including Kurdish community members, a doctor

working to improve emergency responses and an Iranian wildlife conservation biology researcher and activist.

Tabling events: August-Summer Sidewalk Sale in Concord Center, October-F.P. Concord Social Action Fair, December-Follen Church Lexington, December-Gift Wrapping at the Concord Bookshop

Looking ahead: Group 15 will continue our regular monthly meetings at First Parish and outreach activities within Concord and surrounding communities. We will have a booth for Concord's July 4th Picnic in the Park celebration, with information about: Amnesty Int'l Group 15, Dignity in Asylum, and one or two petitions/letters for signing. We will join with other human rights related groups and organizations, including the Immigration Justice Task Force and Dignity in Asylum. Lastly, we plan to continue and expand our engagement with First Parish.

Submitted by Kathleen Bean for Amnesty International Local Group 15

Diversity Committee

Members: Suzie Weaver (chair), Sara Ballard, Jan Power, Stan Griffiths, Dana Snyder-Grant, Joyce Biggs, Sallie Satterthwaite. Several other members are on our distribution list.

Mission Statement: The Diversity Committee works to help First Parish be a welcoming place for all, regardless of sexual orientation, gender expression or identity, family structure, race, ethnicity, culture, ability or disability, socioeconomic status, or any other quality that might contribute to a sense of exclusion. We educate the congregation and raise awareness about diversity issues in order to foster a sense of inclusion for all in our faith community.

Year in Review:

Meetings & Organizational Changes: We met annually via Zoom on the 2nd Tuesday of each month. We adopted a "distributed leadership" model of organization this year where members took responsibility for various roles within the committee. Some of the roles were fixed, such as the role of the notetaker, but other roles rotated, such as the agenda preparer, the meeting facilitator, the writer for *FP Weekly* articles, being the point person for events, "volunteer as needed," and so on. We established a Google Groups email distribution list, Google calendar, and started to use FP's Google drive.

Focus Areas: The specific focus areas and breadth of focus of the Diversity Committee has changed over time, so we started the year by asking ourselves what we wanted the primary focus areas to be. This year, our focus was on LGBTQ justice, as in prior years, but we also wanted to shine light on disability justice, which is an area where we have not been as active.

Activities / Strategic Initiatives:

- We met the re-chartering criteria for First Parish to be recognized as a Welcoming Congregation by the UUA.

- We participated in the ministerial search listening sessions as a committee.
- We participated in the Social Action coffee hour in October 2023.
- We participated in the banner parade on Celebration Sunday in March.
- We plan to participate in the Democracy Festival in June 2024.
- We worked to raise awareness of important issues in the LGTQ community through writing articles for *FP Weekly* (e.g., articles on pronouns, special dates for the LGBTQ community, transphobia awareness).
- We held, publicized, and attended services focused on LGBTQ holidays / days of remembrance (e.g., National Coming Out Day in October, Transgender Day of Remembrance in November in Groton, Pride Month in June).
- We spearheaded the “nametag pronoun initiative,” which included an article about the importance of recognizing and displaying pronouns on nametags and on Zoom, purchasing pronoun stickers to be available along with nametags, adding spaces for pronouns to be included on church forms, inviting parishioners to request a new name tag with their pronouns (or add a sticker). We plan to run pronoun listening sessions in the future once facilitators are trained.
- In April, we co-hosted the Greeley Scholar, Fatemeh Shams, a feminist scholar, in collaboration with the Women’s Parish Association.
- We submitted a nomination for next year’s Share the Plate (GLASS, GLBTQ+ Adolescent Social Services).
- We worked with the Concord Pride organizers on the events planned in June to celebrate Pride Month and will publicize the Boston Pride parade in *FP Weekly* (but we will not lead a group to Boston this year).
- We began discussions with the Congregational Life Committee on establishing a Disability Justice Task Force, with an initial focus on doing a UUA accessibility audit of First Parish (UUA Equal Access).
- A couple of committee members served as liaison with other relevant initiatives, such as the pulpit accessibility handrail project and the Welcoming Walls initiative, and regularly reported back to the group.
- We made greater use of the Diversity Committee section of the FP website by adding articles and content to the page.
- We have begun to discuss a number of strategic initiatives for 2024-25 focused on LGBTQ justice and disability justice and will work to choose which ones to prioritize based on support from the committee.

Environmental Team

Members: Gail Kharidia (chair, retired), Robert (Bob) Andrews, Berni Jenkins, Brooks Stevens, Pamela Dritt, Richard Keleher

The Environment Team had an active year with approximately 10 people attending meetings regularly.

Projects for the year included:

1. Participation in the Democracy Festival organized by Reclaim Our Democracy.

2. Hosted an in-person and online event on Climate with guest presenter, Gib Metcalf.
3. Held monthly rallies, 11th Hour Calling Standouts, in front of the church to alert passersby of the impending climate crises. These were held from November 11, 2023 through May 11, 2024 on the 11th of the month at 11:00 AM. We held signs and the church bell rang for 11 minutes. As many as 13 Team members and congregates participated.
4. Hosted an in-person and online event with the UU Environmental Justice Team presenting. More than 250 people attended in person, including Senator Jamie Eldridge.
5. Participated in Religious Education, talking with the youth and inviting their engagement on the environment.
6. Advocated for Stopping Jet Expansion at Hanscom AirField. Joined the Organization and sent emails and letters to Governor Healy.
7. Celebrated Earth Day by holding an event during Coffee Hour at Sunday Service, April 21st. Provided plant-based food and handouts on Earth Day and more.
8. Nominated the Share the Plate organization—One Tree Planted—for April.
9. Sponsored ConcordCan, enabling the organization to hold in-person meetings at First Parish.
10. Gail Kharidia stepped down as Chairperson of the Environmental Team after serving 3 years. The Environmental Team is currently looking for a new Chairperson.

Immigration Justice Task Force

Leaders: Laurie Van Loon, Regina Corrao

The mission of the First Parish Immigration Justice Task Force (IJTF) is to support vulnerable migrants, to take action in response to immigration injustices in our country, and to educate ourselves and our fellow parishioners about this continuing crisis.

Our regular meetings are the first Monday of each month; sometimes sub-committees meet at other times. Sessions during this church year have been in person in the warmer months, otherwise via Zoom. Attendance averages 8-10, with additional inactive but interested members and allies. A few IJTF members are not members of First Parish. TF members are also involved in immigration justice related activities on their own, including many types of volunteering and activism. While we are invested in nation-wide immigration policy impact and reform, we focus primarily on the greater Boston area, including in direct service. Primary contacts are Laurie Van Loon and Regina Corrao. Others have taken on a variety of leadership and ancillary roles.

In the fall of 2023 we lost Tony Rodriguez to pancreatic cancer. Tony was our group's most energetic and passionate leader, and we feel his loss deeply. Tony was involved with multiple organizations in the Boston area and beyond, such as BIJAN, the Mabel Center, De Novo, RIAN, Centro Presente, and more. He turned his retirement years into full time immigration advocacy work with individuals and organizations. His spirit is alive in our work.

As we write this report, we are aware of how the immigration picture has evolved since IJTF was launched as a First Parish Social Action program in 2017. Well-publicized changes in the past year include crisis-level lack of housing and basic services for documented refugees, asylum seekers, and the undocumented. We also note how immigrants have been demonized and blamed by some, while being welcomed and supported by others. This discrepancy is clear in our geographic area, and more so in other parts of the country. We encourage other interested parishioners to join us as we grapple with current realities and discern what our small group has the resources and power to do.

TASK FORCE PRACTICES THAT CONTINUED FROM LAST YEAR:

Internal communication:

A Google group and frequent emails keep our members connected with each other and informed.

Communication to the FP congregation:

To engage the congregation, we have leveraged First Parish's methods of communication: notices of upcoming events in *FP Weekly* and the Sunday News, and lengthier reports in the monthly Social Action edition of *FP Weekly* as well as the Social Action area of the website. In addition, a self-chosen list of FP recipients receive urgent activism requests via our Quick Response Team (QRT), managed by Jane Blumberg. As immigration justice issues emerge, we try to make it easy for the congregation to know of and participate in IJTF's efforts and related activities. We have appreciated the support of Paul Langston-Daley in his role as Social Action Minister this church year.

Internal task force sharing:

In addition to activities backed by the whole task force, over the years the IJTF has evolved into a clearinghouse for sharing individual interests and efforts related to immigration justice. By email and during meeting time, individuals and subgroups bring to the task force information about immigration-justice related history, events, policies, and opportunities for education, outreach, volunteering, and activism, at local, regional, national, and international levels.

Internal task force development:

The IJTF continues to review our goals and actions going forward, track initiatives and progress, and clarify if members have volunteered for specific actions or areas of attention. After reviewing the status of our existing goals at the end of the church year, we refine our future focus over the summer and early fall.

Lobbying and activism:

The task force has continued to send numerous messages and phone calls and sign multiple petitions related to efforts such as the Safe Communities Act, No-Cost Phone Calls, the Mobility Bill, injurious aspects of detention, and negative policies of Homeland Security, CBE, and ICE. UUMA-Action has been a regular source of activism notifications.

Collaboration with groups outside First Parish:

We continue to track organizations doing meaningful work in the immigration justice area. Kathleen Bean has been our liaison to Amnesty International. We have collaborated with UUMA-Action, including on Advocacy Day.

Sanctuary Follow Up:

Some of us are still in contact with FP Bedford's former Sanctuary guest Maria Macario, whom many of us supported.

NEW INITIATIVES AND EVOLVING ACTIONS IN 2023-24:**Continuing Afghan Family support:**

Members of the IJTF, working with others as coalition teams, are now in the third year of support for two Afghan families:

Two Afghan sisters, Razia and Tabia, are now living in Waltham, and with the help of our Karem Shalom partners, are self-supporting and have won asylum status. Our Karen Shalom partners continue to work on reuniting Taiba with her husband who was left behind at the airport. Regina Corrao, support team member, reports to the task force on the sisters' progress, which has been steady.

Several members of the IJTF, including Jane Blumberg, Rachel Wheeler, Joyce Pulcini, Ted Bayne, Regina Corrao, and Suzanne Knight have continued to provide extensive direct support to the extended Hakimi family in Lowell. Their efforts are amplified by the invaluable involvement of people from a variety of other faith communities, particularly the Bahá'í Community in Concord. Beyond FP, Mav Pardee, Barbara Maloney, Ellie Hershberger and Shamim Sharifi have been actively involved, and Riaz Zolfonoon provides essential translation and accompaniment services.

Happily, the Hakimi family has grown with the arrival of Mrs. Hakimi's brother and sister-in-law in late December. Their son, Sahil, was one of three young cousins who fled Kabul with the Hakimis in November 2021. Sahil, his parents, and cousin Emran have moved into a small but clean and convenient apartment. The third cousin, Zubair, is self-sufficient and now in an apartment with another recent Afghan immigrant.

While the nine nuclear-family Hakimis now manage day-to-day affairs quite well on their own, FP members provide critical support overseeing medical and dental care, schooling, and apartment issues. The family would like to move to a smaller apartment at lower rent, but none has been found. Budgeting—always a challenge—is affected by the understandable desire to help extended family back home. The support team's goals continue to be greater independence and confidence by adult family members, and successful adjustment by the children. Signs of progress are clear with most of the children, and gradual but apparent with the parents. To increase their monthly income, last summer Mrs. Hakimi began cooking meals for parties, in addition to her regular job.

Steps toward regularizing their status have been slow to take place, but recently Emran and Zubair have been granted asylum. All family members are applying for asylum and for Temporary Protected Status.

New education initiatives to First Parish and beyond:

In early April, IJTF joined forces with Follen Church Lexington and the Concord-Carlisle League of Women Voters to bring immigration historian Aviva Chomsky to First Parish to speak on the background of immigration and settlement in the US. Around 100 people attended, live and on Zoom. Donations of \$360 from this talk, to honor Tony Rodriguez, were sent to Centro Arte Para La Paz in El Salvador, which hosted First Parish youth in the past; its leader Sister Peggy O'Neill was a close friend of Tony's. Ted Bayne, Joyce Pulcini, and Laurie Van Loon organized. Those who missed this talk had the opportunity to hear a recording.

Collaboration with other FP SA groups:

In June, IJTF will participate in the planned Democracy Festival, led by the Reclaim Our Democracy team, recognizing the direct connection between executive and legislative principles and immigration policy. And it is clear that migration patterns are affected by climate change, racism, women's rights and other forces, which are the areas of focus of other social action groups at First Parish. IJTF looks forward to considering additional collaborations to strengthen our efforts.

Share the Plate:

We have encouraged congregants to increase their awareness of Border concerns and support for human rights organizations there. To illustrate, the KINO initiative was nominated and chosen for this year's Share the Plate program. We also hope to educate the congregation about efforts close to home. Next year, one of our nominees, the new Mass Afghan Alliance (see below) will be the January STP organization.

New connections, actions, & information-gathering:

- Regina Corrao is our representative with the recently formed UUMA-Action Immigration Justice group and reports on their initiatives and ways we can be involved.
- Three adjunct members of our task force shared their efforts in relation to Afghans: John Moses works to bring those US allies still in Afghanistan to the US, as well as support refugees who've arrived. He is in the process of establishing the non-profit Massachusetts Afghan Alliance. Jodi Hilton supports those in peril in Afghanistan and beyond to help bring them to safety, and Hope Rubin contributes with advocacy opportunities. Their input has enriched our understanding of concerns and realities for those fleeing persecution there.
- Connie Glegg, member of recently formed LexShelter, an outgrowth of LexRap, met with us to describe their all-volunteer homeless shelter support model in Lexington.
- Eric Segal of the Arlington UU Church described an evolving inter-familial network program to provide short term housing, Cluster Support.
- Regina Corrao hosted a Haitian family in her home for several nights as part of a support program to combat migrant homelessness.
- Nancy Kerr spent her many weeks in Oaxaca as a volunteer in a migrant kitchen that served 300 lunches a day to families paused in their journey north.

Moving forward:

Priorities for the next church year will include continued education of ourselves and the congregation, advocacy—both immediate and longer-term, collaborations, increased attention to direct short-term support for migrant families in the area, and furthering self-sufficiency for our Lowell Afghan family.

Respectfully submitted,
Laurie Van Loon

Partner Congregation Committee

Members: Lillian Anderson and Tim Whitney (Co-Chairs), Beth Norton, Dawn Van Patten (Staff Liaisons), Darien Smith (Treasurer), Sara Ballard (Communications), Tim Whitney (Recording Secretary), Kathy Spang, Dana Booth, Barbara Olson (Co-chairs, Student Scholarship Sub-committee), Rodger Mattlage (Chair Emeritus), Pat Brinkman, Peggy Claybrook, Ellen Crompton, Dana Lissy, Marilyn and Peter Lowitt, Leah Russell, Bill Taylor.

Changes in our Two Congregations

- Keresztúr has welcomed two new ministers, Előd Szabo and Alpár Bartha.
- Concord has welcomed our new minister, Jennifer Johnson. The PCC met with her during candidate week and gave her an overview of the PCC, our history, and upcoming travel, with hopes she and possibly her family too can attend our Spring 2026 travel to Transylvania (see below).

Summary of Connections and Activities

- Committee meetings: Met monthly through the year, alternating between in-person dinner and Zoom meetings.
- Keresztúr Zoom call: We had several calls throughout the year with our partners (approximately every 2 months).
- High School Connections: We have started Zoom calls with the school leaders every 3 months or so to stay in touch (beyond the work of the scholarship team).
- Scholarships: All requested Keresztúr High School scholarships were funded in fall 2023 (*see below*).
- Fall 2023 Dinner Celebration: We held a potluck dinner at First Parish to welcome the travelers back from their trip to Keresztúr in September 2023 (*see below*).
- Christmas Eve collections: First Parish's 2023 Christmas Eve collections (one half of the total collection) was wired to Keresztúr in February.
- Graduation notes and gifts: Sent by Kathy Spang to all high school graduates for spring 2024.
- Graduation: Kathy Spang wrote a speech for graduation, spring 2024, which will be read there.
- Neighboring PCC Forums: We continue to hold Zoom forums (3 over the year) organized by Lillian Anderson, gathering representatives from King's Chapel, Follen church, Winchester, Weston, Brewster, Stow/Acton, Belmont, Bedford, Duxbury, and Newburyport to share information about the state of their partnerships as well as to confront difficult issues. of

approaching differing values. We have been helped by the Rev. John Gibbons, minister emeritus from First Parish in Bedford and the Rev. Harold Babcock, the UUA Ambassador to the Hungarian Unitarian church, both of whom have traveled to Transylvania recently.

Fall 2023 Travel to Keresztúr

- A group of twelve travelers went to Transylvania in late September, the first trip for either congregation since the start of Covid.
- Co-leaders- Rodger Mattlage and Tim Whitney; Pat Brinkman, David Elwood, Doug Hardy, Dana Lissy, Marshall Moore, Beth Norton (staff), Barbara Olson, Leah Russell, Roselyn Romburg, Dawn Van Patten (staff).
- Celebrated our 30th partnership anniversary and their September Thanksgiving.
- It was a chance to meet their two new, wonderful ministers and re-connect with old friends.
- Following the trip, two travelers, Leah Russell and Dana Lissy, joined the PCC. We are excited about our new members.

Upcoming First Parish PCC events

- PCC will host a September 28 Partnership gala with dinner, music, videos from Keresztúr.
- Begin to advertise the spring 2026 travel to Transylvania (*see below*) to FP congregation.

Future Travel Planning

Concord and Keresztúr have been very active planning future travel:

- Fall – 2025: Keresztúr has been invited to Concord for fall of 2025. We and they have discussed funding this trip, and the total travelers will be between 5-10 or so depending on how much Keresztúr can contribute to the travel costs (we estimate we can fully fund about 5 travelers equivalent). At least one of their ministers and also representative(s) from the high school will come.
- Spring – 2025: Possible small group (2-6) from Concord to travel there for graduation.
- Spring – 2026: Concord travels there with large (25 or so) intergenerational group, likely during public school vacation in late April.

Concord - Székelykeresztúr Scholarship Program

The Scholarship program between folks at First Parish and the Unitarian High School in Székelykeresztúr, Transylvania, Romania has been going strong since 1996. The PCC's Scholarship Subcommittee is co-chaired by Kathy Spang, Dana Booth and Barbara Olson.

Scholarships Awarded: For the 2023-2024 academic year, fifty-five students (forty-one at Berde Mózes Unitarian High School and fourteen in colleges and universities) are supported with a total of \$24,200 in scholarships donated by sixty-one donors (families/individuals, the Choir, and the Women's Parish Association, and members of the Massachusetts Hungarian community). The standard annual scholarship amount remained at \$400 per high school student and \$600 per college-level student. This money has been wired to Keresztúr through the UUA.

- Graduation Gifts and Cards: Senior graduating scholarship students have been sent a \$50 gift each and a congratulations card from their sponsors, to be given to them at their graduation ceremony at the end of May. Kathy Spang also has sent a congratulatory speech from our congregation to be delivered at the graduation.

Respectfully submitted,
Lillian Anderson and Tim Whitney, Co-Chairs
Partner Congregation Committee

Racial Justice Action Group

Co-Chairs: Sue St Croix and Ted Bayne

Participation: 64 Individuals subscribe to the RJAG Google Group mailing list and 6-9 individuals consistently attended monthly meetings. Meeting participants have included: Ted Bayne, Pat Brewer, Liz Cobb, Leslie Fisher, Stan Griffith, Wendy Holt, Marshall Moore, Jan Power, Cindy Soule, Sue St Croix, and Rebecca Winborn

Mission Statements for 2023-24 Social Action Year

Our primary goal for the upcoming social action year is to increase awareness and action against the pervasive issue of racism within our society.

1. Education

To develop events or activities which will alert congregation to racism in society today and motivate others to become involved in anti-racism work.

Events

- Sponsored *Busing Battleground* PBS documentary showing with members of the community sharing their experience in Boston busing.
- Co-Sponsored Beth Elohim Martin Luther King Jr Breakfast. Guest speaker, Jean McGuire, who helped found and served for 43 years as director of METCO (Metropolitan Council for Education Opportunity).
- Hosted Porsha Olayinola, poet laureate for the city of Boston, poetry reading with the Robbins House at First Parish. With reception and information on the soon to be open Bookish bookstore and café in Dorchester.
- Hosted the first Social Justice Round Table event at First Parish. Continue to meet and support each member's efforts for a more diverse and just community.
- Hosted the Partakers' introduction to the community.
- Maintained a booklist, stocking a rolling bookcase with racial justice-oriented books for the congregation to peruse during coffee hour. [On-going]
- Organized First Parish and other interested UUs to attend the Louis D Brown walk for Peace in Boston. [May]
- Collaborated with Reclaim our Democracy to create a "Democracy Festival" to educate congregants on aspects of democracy, social action, and civic responsibility. [June]
- Supported book discussion at Fowler Library with local author Joel Johnson, his novel, *Never* (2023, Arbitrary Press).

Partnering outside FPC

2. Increase FPC visibility and effectiveness by more engagement with partners that share our UU and racial justice values.

Actions

- Provided input to the ministerial search committee on the importance support of Social Action, noting our strong appreciation of our Social Action Minister.
- Supporting Concord Community effort to name our new middle school for Ellen Garrison through signs, letters, and voting. Ellen Garrison grew up in the Robbins House. The Robbins House was the RJAG *Share the Plate* recipient in February.
- Supported efforts to provide more town access for middle school METCO students.
- Support Communities Organized Against Racism (COAR) by attending school committee meetings and working toward common goals [ongoing].
- Developed a program on microaggression incidents in Concord with members of IJTF, Concord DEI Commission, and Concord Academy. An event was held in October. This successful program led to a three-session program developed by Dr Carlos Hoyt and sponsored by Concord-Carlisle Adult Education.
- Rebecca Winborn and Leslie Fisher continue to represent First Parish as UUUM delegates (for a second year) and kept FPC informed about UUUM activities. First Parish has also sponsored community conversations.

Supporting UU Urban Ministry

First Parish is one of forty-six UU Churches actively engaged with the UU Urban Ministry. The UU Urban Ministry is changing the way the organization supports the local community organizations such as the Louis D Brown Peace Institute. Each engaged UU church will be asked to provide support to specific organizations. First Parish will be supporting *Dee Dee's Cry*, a fledgling non-profit in Roxbury that seeks to prevent suicide and support family members and loved ones in the aftermath of suicide. *DeeDee's Cry* is associated with the Louis D Brown Peace Institute, another organization we have supported in the past. The May 2025 share-the-plate will go to *Dee Dee's Cry*.

This year First Parish supported the Urban Ministry's community conversations and hosted Mary Margaret Earl's led service in January. Mary Margaret's sermon, "The Gardener's Guide to Racial Justice," reminds us to keep going, so much of what we do involves trying new things and learning from what works and what doesn't.

Partnering within FPC

3. Increase collaboration with internal First Parish Groups to help foster more racial justice work church wide.

Actions

- RJAG representation on COIC which has reviewed FPC's by-laws for aspects that and have shared their findings and recommendations with the Standing Committee. One of the immediate actions is to remove "legal speak" and power differentiators that often

white supremacy cultures intact. The committee will be completing their work this church year.

- Welcoming Walls – RJAG members Cindy Soule, Leslie Fisher, and Marshall Moore kicked off the project. Others including Don Miller, Jim Sherblom and Holly Cratsley have been engaged in aspects of the project. The goal of the project is to examine the literal walls of the church and recommend changes to create a more welcoming and engaging image of the church. See separate Annual Report filed [ongoing].

Reclaim Our Democracy

Planning Team: Fred Van Deusen (leader), Diane Proctor, Ray Andrews, Sue St. Croix, Philippe Prokocimer, Robert Hilsinger, Sandy Currier

In June of 2016, the UUA adopted a Congregational Study Action Issue titled **The Corruption of Our Democracy** which focused on the negative influence that huge amounts of money from corporations, billionaires, and special interest groups has on our national elections and on the effectiveness of Congress. This issue fit in well with some previous work our group had done and we began focusing on it in September of 2016. We chose the name Reclaim Our Democracy and created a mission statement.

***Reclaim Our Democracy** is an inclusive, collaborative, multi-partisan movement. Our goal is to reclaim our democratic rights as citizens of the United States of America to have a government that truly represents and supports the needs and desires of all people.*

We currently have 21 people on our planning team and about 450 people on our mailing list. Fred Van Deusen is the current leader of the group. We have been meeting mostly in-person for the past nine months, monthly in the fall, and bi-weekly since January.

We are currently working directly with a number of non-profit organizations that are also working to reclaim our democracy including **UU's for Social Justice (UUSJ), Concord Indivisible, and League of Women Voters Concord-Carlisle.**

We have organized and sponsored a significant number of important events this church year with notable speakers, including:

- Nov. 5, 2023 - Steven Levitsky & Daniel Ziblatt: Tyranny of the Minority
- Jan. 6, 2024 - Deval Patrick and others: Rally to Save Democracy, co-sponsored with Concord Indivisible
- Jan. 10, 2024 - David Pepper: Saving Democracy, A User's Manual for Every American
- Feb. 6, 2024 - Steve Phillips: How We Win the Civil War, co-sponsored with UUSJ
- April 21, 2024 - Fred Van Deusen (much less notable): Help Build a Democracy Movement
- June 7, 2024 - An Evening of Ideas on Democracy with David Pepper, Judge Nancy Gertner (on video), Whitney Taylor (ACLU), Virginia Solomon-Case (Common Cause)
- June 8, 2024 - Second Annual Democracy Festival (the first festival was a great success and was reported on by UU World)

- June 25, 2024 - Lawrence Lessig: Democracy's Crisis, And How it Ends

There is no question that democracy is under attack In the U.S. and in countries around the world. We saw it in the January 6, 2021 attack on the Capitol. We see it in the efforts of many states to restrict voting rights, to ban books, to attack LGBTQ+ and women's rights; and we see similar behavior at the Supreme Court and the U.S. House of Representatives.

Reclaim Our Democracy is partnering with UUSJ and Concord Indivisible in the major effort to help build an inclusive, collaborative, powerful Democracy Movement. **We are at a turning point in this country, and it is critical that we build a Democracy Movement powerful enough to defeat the movement led by those attacking our democracy. We need to achieve our mission statement now, more than ever.** Over the past few months, in addition to planning and organizing the Democracy Festival, we have also been working to engage other organizations and groups in this effort to build the Democracy Movement. I sincerely hope that our report next year has shown some success in this endeavor.

Throughout the year we continued to publish our biweekly Reclaim Our Democracy Newsletter that contains information about events we are sponsoring and other events of interest. More than 90,000 people have visited the ReclaimOurDemocracy.org website. It contains a great deal of useful information about what is happening to our democracy and why, and what we need to do about it. I also highly recommend the UUSJ website page for [Democracy in 2024](https://uusj.net/wp1/democracy-in-2024/) (<https://uusj.net/wp1/democracy-in-2024/>). It contains a great deal of useful information about the Democracy Movement, tools for how individuals and groups can help, and activities and events that support getting out the vote and saving democracy. At the risk of being immodest, I also recommend articles I've written for Medium at fredvandeu.medium.com. You may find something interesting there.

For more information about Reclaim Our Democracy at First Parish in Concord, email Fred Van Deusen at fredvandeu@gmail.com. All are welcome to join our mailing list and attend our meetings and events.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee Annual Report

Members: Gib Metcalf (Chair), Virginia Taylor (Vice-Chair), Leah Russell (Treasurer), Jennifer Izzo (Clerk), Mike Beer, Lisa Bennett, CC King, Caroline Minkin, Jim Reynolds, Liz Rust, and Susan See

The Standing Committee is the governing body of First Parish in Concord and works closely with the Senior Minister to ensure the smooth functioning of the church and to think strategically about longer term issues. We have completed our second year of interim work with Rev. Seth Carrier-Ladd. Seth has been a strong partner for us as we grapple with hard issues, and he has helped us focus our energy on the most productive and important tasks that we face in the course of the church year. Seth was instrumental in enhancing our continuous effort to improve the Committee's functionality by encouraging us to develop an Ends Statement, an important management tool implicit in the Policy Governance model. Working to develop the Ends Statement helped us to start to solidify our goals. Seth's practice of structuring his Ministerial goals and monthly reports around the Ends Statement reflects the significant progress made this year toward collaborative leadership between the Minister and the Standing Committee.

This year, the Standing Committee continued its work in three major areas: Governance, Community and Connection, and Sustainable Finance. Let me summarize some of the work done in those areas.

Governance: Inspired by recommendations from the COIC, we took on the task of reviewing our bylaws with the goals of: 1) updating language to reflect current practices and norms; 2) re-organize the sections for easier accessibility and to eliminate references to non-existent sections; and 3) to reflect current-day UUA democratic norms. That work culminates with the bylaw revisions that we are bringing to our June Annual Meeting. The process of revision has involved numerous meetings to discuss potential edits and identify problematic areas in the bylaw language. We have received excellent feedback from many congregants that has led, we believe, to a much-improved set of bylaws by which we may be governed. We will continue that work next year by identifying and rewriting some of our policy documents that govern Standing Committee work, but which no longer reflect our current practices. We will also take up the work of exploring how to operationalize the use of an Ends Statement for our Senior Minister as a way to articulate our goals and vision for the next 3-5 years. That work involves incorporating congregational input into those goals and visions and working with Rev. Jennifer Johnson to develop a clear sense of our priorities and intended direction that can inform her work in the next few years. In addition to these "mid-term goals," we also look forward to developing a longer term set of goals and plans in the coming years, as well as a mechanism for injecting strategic thinking into our daily work. We intend to place greater focus on a long-term strategy for the church, to ensure that we are always mindful of the future health of the congregation.

Community, Belonging and Communication: After a very full previous year of activity in this area, we pulled back a bit to catch our breath. The new Welcoming and Membership Committee is up and running, and there has been some work around how we can better live our Covenant.

Some of our progress here was held back by the temporary loss of Rev. Liz Weber and the consequent struggle to provide appropriate staffing support for some of the work in this area. Standing Committee members took important roles in some fun community building events including the Auction last November and the Patriots' Day Pancake Breakfast in April. Both events raised funds for First Parish and, equally important, were fun activities that brought congregants together to work and play and, in the case of the pancake breakfast, allowed us to showcase First Parish activities to outsiders who came for breakfast and had an opportunity to see a bit of who we are. Another fun activity hosted by the Standing Committee was the appearance of the True Story Theater who led participants in an evening of storytelling as a way to explore what we hope for and worry about as we transition to the arrival of a new settled minister.

Sustainability and Long-Term Finance: After a few difficult years of fundraising during COVID and its aftermath and undergoing the major transition of finding a new senior minister, we are beginning to emerge with healthier finances, though by no means completely healthy. We continue to struggle with balancing our budget and to broaden our pledge base to reduce our reliance on a few large donors. We also look to find new revenue sources including, for example, taking advantage of the activities that will occur next year with the Concord 250th Festivities. To that end, we are pleased that a group of congregants have formed a First Parish Concord 250th committee to oversee First Parish activities during this large community event.

The Standing Committee took up other activities this year. We worked with staff and volunteers to finalize the design, installation, and dedication of the Howard Dana Handrails; we also approved spending to improve our AV technology to add screens and improved sound to the sanctuary and to make the Brooks Room a fully functional meeting room for Zoom and in-person meetings. We also have a monitor in the Parlor that allows that room to be used as a "Wiggle Room" during services while allowing parents to view the service from that room. This was a staff-led initiative and while there were hiccups along the way, it is fully functional now and adds considerable flexibility to our services. As we emerge from COVID and return to a "new-normal" where COVID is endemic, the Standing Committee thanks all staff, volunteers, and committees for their flexibility and for their efforts to continue functioning and return to in-person meetings and gatherings. It has been a tough few years, but we can be confident and hopeful for our future.

As we come to the end of another church year, the Standing Committee thanks Mike Beer, Caroline Minkin, and Liz Rust for their service on and many contributions to the committee. We welcome new members Kimberly (Kimmie) Brainerd, Neal Brock, and Kristin Moore to the committee. Kimmie will serve as clerk while Jen Izzo shifts from her clerk position to member at large.

Rev. Seth Carrier-Ladd has been a valued interim senior minister and partner to the Standing Committee these past two years. Among other things, he helped us learn to better differentiate matters that should be discussed by the Standing Committee, and those that should be handled at an operational level by the staff. He also brought the fresh perspective and experiences of his work at other churches, which helped us to examine First Parish's own practices and structures.

We wish him all the best as he moves to his next congregation and continues the important work of interim ministry.

Gratefully submitted in service to the congregation,
Gib Metcalf
Standing Committee Chair

**Commission on Institutional Change (COIC)
Final Report to First Parish in Concord
April 18, 2024**

COIC Charge

The First Parish Standing Committee established the Commission on Institutional Change (COIC) in the fall of 2021 with the following 3-point charge to be completed over two or more years:

- *Assess congregational policies, practices and procedures for their alignment with our UU values of equity, inclusion, and diversity.*
- *To engage First Parish members, friends and staff in identifying opportunities for systemic change that will help FPC realize itself as a place of radical welcome and anti-oppression work. An example might be working toward congregational adoption of the 8th Principle.*
- *To recommend action(s) that serve to dismantle white supremacy within the culture, practice, policies and procedures within FPC. An example might be carrying out the “Welcoming Walls” initiative.*

On March 16, 2024, members of the COIC voted to sunset our group as of Annual Meeting, June 2, 2024. We have enjoyed our work with the First Parish community and feel we have completed the parameters established in the 2021 charge to the best of our abilities.

There is, of course, much more anti-oppression work for our congregation to tackle but we believe there needs to be a larger critical mass in our community to take us to the next level. This then is our final report summarizing the work we’ve done over the last two and a half years.

Eliminating Oppression

People involved in anti-oppression work, including those at First Parish, have learned that this work is always more complicated and time consuming than first imagined. (Think *Welcoming Walls*.) That, despite the fact that there is already measurable support for anti-oppression work within our community.

The goal of achieving true equity, freedom, and justice in our society invariably requires a steady chipping away of practices and policies that have intentionally and unintentionally fostered the

status quo and sustained systemic oppression for centuries. In effect, it entails a necessary, multi-generations-long shift in our society, and we understand this is a slow process which will require long-term commitment and the ability to remain open to thinking in fresh ways.

Righting the ills caused by institutional racism requires many privileged White people to acknowledge the enormous advantages we and our ancestors have had across the generations, above and beyond our individual abilities and efforts. We hope both lay leaders and congregants of First Parish will accept the responsibility all White people share for the damage inflicted on people of color throughout our country's four-hundred year history. We understand this requires a profound and often uncomfortable psychological shift. First Parish in Concord is in the early stages of this journey, when compared with many other UU congregations.

Relevant Trends

COIC believes it is important to consider all anti-oppression work at First Parish in the context of both our own aging congregation and some general [nationwide trends](#).

For example:

- [Demographic shifts](#) predict the United States will become a minority White country (49.7%) in 2045.
- 56% of Americans now report they attend religious services seldom (25%) or never (31%). Only three in 10 Americans say they attend services every week (21%) or almost every week (9%).
- Two decades ago, 42% of adults attended religious services every week or nearly every week. Currently the figure is 30%.
- Among young adults (18-29 years), 35% report they have no religious preference and only 22% attend church regularly.
- Both large and small churches report a decline in Americans giving to churches. The number of Americans who say they donated to religious causes has dropped from 62% to 44% since 2001.
- 55% of churches [reported](#) a decrease in giving for 2023 due to inflation.

Against an overall decline in traditional church attendance, it is essential for First Parish to seek new ways to attract new members in order to thrive. That may mean we have to proactively research what types of programs will draw in young families and young adults. We may need to look for new ways to promote our social, social justice, community, and spiritual offerings through wider outreach efforts, and lessen our focus on Sunday worship as our church's main draw. All of us will benefit by becoming a warmer, more welcoming community to everyone who comes to our door.

COIC Work - Year Two - 2023-24

Meetings: Met every two weeks through this church year.

Interviews: Completed and reviewed one-on-one interviews with both staff and lay leaders that were begun during the previous church year. Our goals were to learn more about each group's work, what they think COIC needs to know, and how COIC can best coordinate related anti-oppression efforts.

Interviews were conducted with leaders of the following groups:

- Advocates for Women's Empowerment (AWE)
- Congregational Life
- Diversity Committee
- First Tuesday Group
- Immigration Justice Task Force
- Jewish Awareness Group
- Music (Beth Norton)
- Nominating Committee
- Partner Church Committee
- Pastoral care (Liz Weber)
- Reclaim Our Democracy
- Religious Exploration (Amy Freedman)
- Racial Justice Action Group (RJAG)
- Social Justice (Paul Langston-Daley)
- Standing Committee
- Trustees
- Women's Parish Association (WPA)
- Wright Tavern Legacy Trust

Major takeaways from our interviews. Our leadership:

- Sees a lot of privilege in the congregation.
- Desires more anti-oppression education.
- Worries that institutional change may trigger a backlash.
- Advocates for clear communication about any changes we make.
- Suggests instituting [Process Observation](#) at the end of all gatherings as a way to make sure all voices are being heard.

Liaisons: COIC maintained liaisons with (RJAG) Racial Justice Action Group (Cindy Soule), Diversity (Dana Snyder-Grant), and Wright Tavern (Peter Nobile) committees. COIC representatives attended meetings of these committees throughout the year to ensure close communication among congregation members with similar anti-oppression goals.

Communication: COIC continually updated our webpage with anti-oppression related resources and events and contributed regularly to our COIC webpage, *FP Weekly*, FaceBook page, and Sunday Announcements about these resources and events.

Covenant: COIC, along with other First Parish groups, urged and supported the creation of a congregational covenant.

Sanctuary Tech: COIC member Peter Nobile worked with staff on the addition of monitors in the sanctuary and upgrading AV equipment around the pulpit to further enhance accessibility.

Pulpit Handrails: COIC member Peter Nobile shepherded through former Senior Minister Rev. Howard Dana's desire to promote accessibility by adding handrails to the pulpit. Handrails are now installed.

UUA Materials: COIC reviewed the anti-oppression curriculum from UUA ([Widening the Circle Report](#) and its companion [Study Guide](#)) which provided us with valuable background about what is happening in our denomination. Though we ultimately decided the materials were not sufficiently relevant to our congregation to offer the full curriculum, we do encourage members to download and read the [report](#).

BLUU: COIC read, reviewed, and discussed the 2022 [Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism](#) report.

Welcoming Walls (WW): The goal of the WW initiative is to create a church environment that reflects our active and vibrant congregation and welcomes newcomers. COIC contributed to the relaunch of the project this year. COIC member Cindy Soule has been an active member of this RJAG working group since its inception in 2018.

Democracy Festival: We participated in the First Parish *Democracy Festival* on May 20, 2023. Our table offered an interactive display allowing attendees to register where they fit along the continuum of anti-oppression sentiment. Participants chose which of the following "I" Statements best corresponds to their attitudes:

1. I'm worried about the problems White people face in our country today.
2. I think attempts to reframe our country's history go too far.
3. I don't believe our country has a major problem with racism.
4. I prefer to avoid talking about race and racism.
5. Conversations about racism upset me.
6. I believe a legacy of colonization and slavery persists in America.
7. I condemn colonization, slavery and racism.
8. I am sorry about the historical and current racialized inequalities in our society.
9. I'm actively working against racism and toward racial equity and justice.
10. I think we should compensate Black Americans and Indigenous people for the injustices they and their ancestors have suffered.

COIC also provided a handout with generic guidance on *How to Apologize*.

Operations: COIC collected and reviewed First Parish bylaws, brochures, policies and procedures, where we looked to revise language around power and privilege. Our priorities were to make text easier to understand, eliminate positions and/or policies that are no longer followed, and ensure that bylaws reflect optimum operating procedures.

We met with Chair Gib Metcalf and Virginia Taylor of the Standing Committee subcommittee and with the Trustees to review our suggested changes to the First Parish Bylaws and to answer their questions.

We returned the following documents with proposed changes as listed below:

Operations: Fifi Ball

Facilities Use Guidelines and Fees Financial Procedures

FP Emergency Procedures

Four Informational Brochures near the church office. We made suggested changes to three (*Welcome, Partner Church, Pastoral Care*). In conjunction with the Congregational Life Committee (CLC) and with support from both Rev. Seth Carrier-Ladd and Rev. Paul Langston-Daley, we removed a fourth brochure, *The Brief History of First Parish*, which requires a complete rewrite.

Standing Committee: Chairs Liz Rust and Gib Metcalf

Church Bylaws

SC Policy Documents:

- 1.0 Preamble & Ends
- 2.0 Means Policies
- 3.0 Operations Policies
- 4.0 Head of Staff Linkage Policies
- 5.0 Finance Policy
- 6.0 Sabbatical Policy
- 7.0 Membership Policy
- 8.0 Policy on Congregational Groups
- 9.0 Operating Details
- 10.0 Disruptive Behavior Policy

Policy: We drafted and sent relevant staff a suggested policy for selecting locations for church events, including those that are originally scheduled for outside the church but moved inside at the last minute because of bad weather. Last minute relocation presents a potential accessibility issue, particularly when the elevator is not operational. Our suggested policy asked that events prioritize accessibility in determining location. (i.e. Parish Hall vs. Emerson room).

Education: We asked and arranged for Rev. Jim Sherblom to teach a five-week class (Sept.-Oct 2023) on the history of racism at First Parish and in the town of Concord, which impacted both indigenous peoples and Black Americans. About 25 people participated. Research from Jim's forthcoming book provided the content for the class. His information is now accessible to a wider audience through a series of [podcasts](#). His book is scheduled for publication fall, 2024.

Education: We assessed whether First Parish is ready as an institution to participate in the second phase of *Beloved Conversations (Among)*. Our conclusion is that more work is needed before the congregation is ready to commit to this whole-congregation program.

Education: We reached out to local indigenous residents. Dan Boudillion and Strong Bear were scheduled to speak at FP on May 19, 2024 about the *Praying Indians* and their historical connections with First Parish and Concord. Unfortunately, they canceled in March.

Training: COIC co-sponsored a three-day [Jubilee Three](#) training in the Boston area, along with other area churches, in October 2023. One First Parish member attended.

Training: Maintained a list of FP members who have completed anti-oppression training of any type. (*Waking up White*, [Beloved Conversations](#) (both virtual and in person), [Healing Embodied Racism](#), [Transforming Hearts](#), [Jubilee Three](#)).

Apology: COIC member Rev. Ken Reeves wrote and facilitated discussions with congregants on a COIC-created draft of a First Parish apology for its historical mistreatment of indigenous people and people of color. Ken attended multiple committee meetings to discuss and revise his draft with many FP groups. This is an area where First Parish lags behind many other UU congregations who have already issued apologies and have land acknowledgements in place. COIC discussion sessions were held on Juneteenth 2023, Indigenous Peoples weekend 2023, and on April 28, 2024.

In what appears to be the absence of widespread support now, members of the COIC have opted not to bring the current draft of the apology to Annual Meeting 2024 for a full congregational vote. Going forward, further consideration of a church apology will likely be handled by the Racial Justice Action Group (RJAG) in conjunction with Rev. Paul Langston-Daley and the next Senior Minister.

Benediction: COIC met with Rev. Seth Carrier-Ladd to discuss the First Parish Benediction and the different ways it can be interpreted. Seth then delivered a four-sermon series about our Benediction to the congregation in the fall of 2023. COIC hosted two follow-up meetings to assess whether the congregation has an interest in altering the Benediction text. Those who attended were grateful for an opportunity to discuss the topic. Among the comments we heard:

- Some felt characterizing people as “weak” is unnecessarily harsh.
- Others felt the text hints at a *privileged White savior* attitude.
- Some said our Benediction is missing a spiritual piece, in that it mentions neither *God* nor *love*.
- There is no reference to *kindness* or how to treat others.

Because most who attended our discussions remained in support of the current Benediction, COIC determined there is insufficient interest in altering the Benediction at this time.

Related to these issues, there is also a contractual agreement First Parish makes with all Senior Ministers that gives each full control over worship, suggesting that decisions about any Benediction fall into the worship leader's realm (rather than the congregation's).

Microaggressions: We solicited our congregation for instances where someone felt they were disrespected by another member of the congregation. We wanted to find out how widespread the problem is. No stories were submitted, though many of us have regularly witnessed such episodes.

Events: COIC members attended, supported and/or co-sponsored various events related to anti-oppression work. (ex: *Raising Consciousness* Workshop with Dr. Carlos Hoyt at Concord Academy, *The Busing Battleground* event, Robbins House presentation in February 2024 about Ellen Garrison, others.)

Library: We supported and contributed suggestions to RJAG for a moveable book cart that features notable anti-oppression books. The cart is often displayed Sundays at coffee hour.

Banner: We carried the COIC banner for "2024 Celebration Sunday."

Summary - Year One - 2022-23

(Link to the COIC's complete [Year One Report](#))

Meetings: Met every two weeks through this church year, beginning February 2021.

Charter: Created and filed COIC charter.

Covenant: Approved a COIC covenant.

One-on-One: Met with Rev. Howard Dana, Rev. Seth Carrier-Ladd and Rev. Paul Langston-Daley to ask for their input on our work.

Interviews: Initiated one-on-one interviews with both staff and lay leaders. (See page 6 for more detail.)

Web: Created our own COIC [web page](#), which we updated regularly with events, articles, and other resources about anti-oppression work.

UUA Material: Read and discussed the UUA's [Widening the Circle](#) report.

Nearby Towns: Explored what nearby towns and congregations are doing with DEAI work.

Training: Engaged in training on the nature and process of change.

Training: Studied ways to handle *difficult conversations*.

Training: Three additional COIC members completed Jubilee Three Training.

8th Principle: Supported approval of the [8th UU Principle](#); passed by the First Parish congregation.

Kickoff Event: COIC Kickoff Event, [Afro-American History in Concord Tour](#), October 16, 2022. Led by Mary-Wren vanderWilden.

Brochures: Removed the brochure entitled “*A Brief History of First Parish*,” which contained some potentially offensive language.

Workshop: Co-sponsored CB Beal workshop and sermons (Winter 2023).

Banner: Created a COIC banner and participated in 2023 Celebration Sunday.

Report: COIC submitted an [interim report](#) (February 1, 2023) to the Standing Committee with recommendations to help dismantle White supremacy at First Parish. Met with members of the Standing Committee to review that year one report. (April 11, 2023)

COIC Congregational Recommendations

Education

Expand our congregation’s understanding of the [characteristics of White supremacy culture](#) (see Appendix 1) so that people can more easily recognize its influence on our daily lives. Organize a church-wide or community-wide *White Supremacy Teach-in*. (Rev. Paul Langston-Daley has expressed interest in developing a presentation to be shared with congregants and groups.)

Increase parishioner participation in anti-oppression trainings: [Beloved Conversations](#), [Jubilee Three Training](#), [Transforming Hearts](#), [Radicalized Trauma](#).

Offer congregation-wide training in conflict management.

Offer congregation-wide training on microaggressions. COIC believes many in our congregation do not yet fully understand what constitutes a microaggression.

Offer congregation-wide training on intersectionality.

Register and complete [Beloved Conversation - Among - Part II](#), which will involve our entire congregation.

Who We Are

Share the UUA’s own history of reckoning with DEAI by screening [The Wilderness Journey](#) movie.

Devote a full church year to congregation-wide, anti-oppression book reading and discussion, where services regularly coordinate with shared readings. Prominent guest speakers/authors could be invited or panels organized, opening these events to the general public. (This could be one important way to grow our congregation.) Shared readings might include: [*My Grandmother's Hands*](#), [*The Warmth of Other Suns*](#), [*White Fragility*](#), [*American Holocaust: The Conquest of the New World*](#), [*How to Be An Anti-Racist*](#), [*The Color of Law*](#), [*Biased*](#), others.

Reexamine the First Parish mission statement to see if the congregation wants to change/add to it. Our current mission is focused on those already part of the community. We may be served better by a mission statement that is more outer-directed, reflecting our congregation's anti-oppression work and our desire to welcome new people and grow.

Complete *Welcoming Walls* in Parish Hall, Parlor, Vestibule, hallways, and other public areas to better reflect current First Parish activities, engagement, UU values, and social justice work. We recommend including our commitment to anti-oppression as a central theme. As we continue to celebrate our history and mark anniversaries, COIC suggests information about our church history and past ministers be presented in a more fully balanced way, even when we are not proud of some of our past actions.

The COIC hopes our elected lay leaders and congregants will one day champion the issuing of a public apology, for the past harms done by the institution of First Parish to people of color.

Communications

Solicit media coverage of First Parish's anti-oppression actions, locally and statewide, so that those outside our community know more about what we do and what we care about.

Write a new brochure on First Parish's history that acknowledges its involvement in the institution of slavery and violence against indigenous peoples. (A helpful model is the North Andover UU church brochure [*Hidden in Plain Site*](#).)

Install a plaque or other permanent fixture (outside the building and/or inside, near entrances) acknowledging our church's past role in harming enslaved and indigenous peoples. Name the people enslaved by our former ministers.

New Connections

Learn how other groups have successfully forged relationships with local indigenous people. Establish a First Parish connection with local indigenous people. Under their guidance, craft a land acknowledgement that is meaningful to them. We could incorporate that land acknowledgement in our *Order of Service* and post it at other locations.

We could study whether any portion of the land First Parish claimed from indigenous people can be returned to its original state or whether we could create another mechanism for reparations.

Explore creating a relationship with other churches, especially those with more diverse congregations, where joint activities can be scheduled. For example, we and a sibling church could share social justice work days or pot luck dinners. This would allow us to form more personal relationships across differences, which is difficult in our less diverse home area.

Our Practices

Examine First Parish practices for choosing lay leaders, to cast a wider net and encourage all people to be considered, rather than our current norms which are often centered on personal relationships and connections. This will likely mean changing how leadership opportunities are communicated to the congregation.

Eliminate, simplify, or reduce reliance on the formality inherent in using [*Robert's Rules of Order*](#) to guide church meetings. These rules can be off-putting to those not familiar with them. Instead, prioritize the inclusion of all voices.

Operational Recommendations for Staff

Worship Practices

In choosing material for worship services, continue to expand the inclusion of voices and music from traditionally marginalized groups (i.e. indigenous people, Black Americans, Latinx people, others.) [*Voices from the Margins*](#) is a good beginning reference for readings. COIC recognizes the good work Beth Norton has already begun to widen the music we hear during worship services.

Education

Look for opportunities to present anti-oppression content (i.e. films, speakers, curricula) to both children and adults in our community. For example, COIC applauds the work of Rev. Amy Freedman and Dawn Van Patten in introducing the UUA's [*Jubilee Kids*](#) curriculum.

Social Justice Connection

Expand the connection between worship and congregational social justice work. Include relevant groups and committees in planning related services, increase lay participation, and acknowledge First Parish's social justice work in services whenever appropriate.

Look for new ways to expand, coordinate, and recognize programs, activities, and services related to anti-oppression work.

Continually review congregation-wide social justice efforts and continue to facilitate cooperative work and eliminate or reduce redundancy (For example, Diversity, RJAG, Immigration Justice Task Force, etc.).

Hiring

Examine First Parish hiring practices to cast the widest net and reflect progressive hiring trends, like [*Blind Recruitment*](#). This may require different types of outreach and changing where and how staff openings are advertised.

Access

Establish a permanent group to attend specifically to the needs of those in our congregation with disabilities.

Conclusion

Because of the longstanding racialized history of our country, many White people, especially affluent ones, are new to considering the inequities that underpin all our lives. Many of the COIC recommendations are aimed at addressing these inequities. However, we recognize that not all people have spent as much time steeped in these issues as we have during the last three years.

Although this iteration of the First Parish COIC has fulfilled its specific charge, the six of us remain passionate about furthering anti-oppression goals. We hope to see a growing number of the First Parish community commit to this important work of learning and growth, to keep our congregation vibrant and relevant in our changing world.

We remain eager to discuss any aspect of this final report in more detail.

Respectfully submitted,
Peter Nobile
Ken Reeves
Toby Smith Ropeik, co-chair
Darien Smith, co-chair
Dana Snyder-Grant
Cindy Soule

The Conchords

Members: Rick Moore (chair), Larry Gall, Lauren Evans, Olof Johnson, Rex Morrill, Pamela Schweppe

The Conchords are an SATB a cappella vocal ensemble based out of First Parish in Concord. Four of its six members sing regularly with the First Parish adult choir.

In 2023/2024, the Conchords provided musical leadership for these worship services at First Parish:

- August 13, 2023: Sunday service anthems and leadership of hymns
- October 1, 2023: Sunday service anthems and leadership of hymns
- April 7, 2024: Sunday service anthems and leadership of hymns

In addition, the Conchords provided the following for the church:

- November 4, 2023: Free gig up for bid at the First Parish auction (no offers)
- December 9, 2023: WPA holiday concert
- January 28, 2024: Wright Tavern reopening gala performance

The group served the wider community during the fiscal year through these performances:

- June 11, 2023: National Historical Park, Quincy, MA (paid in July 2024)
- June 30, 2023: RiverMead LifeCare Community, Peterborough, NH (paid in July 2024)
- September 26, 2023: Residence at Paine Estate, Wayland, MA
- November 2, 2023: Concord Park Senior Living in Concord
- December 7, 2023: RiverMead
- December 8, 2023: Attempted gig at Northeastern Correctional Center (unable to overcome prison logistics)
- February 12, 2024: Residence at Paine Estate

The group started the fiscal year with a balance of \$806 and has a balance to date (April 22, 2024) of \$541. Over the course of that period, the group received performance donations of \$1,550, paid \$1,415 for rehearsal accompaniment, and donated \$400 to the music reserve fund.

The Conchords are grateful for the rehearsal space at First Parish and for the able assistance of rehearsal accompanist Grace Choi. We look forward to singing together in rehearsal, in worship, and in service to the wider community during the year ahead.

Congregational Life Committee (CLC)

Members: Jan Power (chair), Sara Ballard, Jean Chandler, Jeff Clanon, Carolyn Copp

Welcoming & Membership liaison: Liz Rust

Staff liaison: None for this year, as our former liaison, Rev. Liz Weber, was out for medical purposes.

This past year was a challenge for the CLC, as two members served on the Ministerial Search Committee, leaving them limited time and energy to be very active in the CLC. Accordingly, we set modest ambitions for the committee's accomplishments in this church year.

Between the time of last May's annual report and the end of June 2023, the CLC held a June meeting in which we decided that welcoming and membership duties would reside in a separate committee, going forward, *not* in a subcommittee of the CLC. Liz Rust agreed to take on the role of chairing the new Welcoming & Membership (WAM) committee, which operated independently this past year (and will do so, moving forward).

With the new WAM committee taking responsibility for welcoming newcomers to First Parish and guiding their path to prospective membership, the CLC selected other priorities to focus on for this year. The CLC draws guidance for its priorities both from current congregational needs and opportunities as well as the list of recommended initiatives listed in the 2020 Belonging Team Report to the Standing Committee. (See pp. 13-14, “Summary of Recommendations” in “Recommendations for Fostering a Sense of Belonging at First Parish in Concord”: <https://firstparish.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Belonging-Team-report-to-SC-10-29-20.pdf>)

The initiatives that the Congregational Life Committee worked on in 2023-2024 are as follows:

- Organized and hosted the all-church Homecoming Picnic on Sunday (9/10/23).
- Sponsored and hosted Peter Bowden’s “Growing Congregations in the Digital Age” workshop on Sunday (10/10/23).
- Organized and co-led volunteer recognition ceremony (4/14/24).
- Provided Zoom chat hosting services for Sunday services as well as other events (ongoing).
- Tracked and conducted final production steps for the new First Parish photo directory (delivered May 2024).
- Assessed the purposes of First Parish’s website (firstparish.org), assessed its efficacy as a communication vehicle, and generated recommendations for the senior minister to consider. As our work concluded in spring 2024, we are holding our recommendations to deliver to Rev. Jennifer Johnson after she has settled into her role as senior minister this fall.
- Developed a “Welcome to First Parish” booklet that is intended to be offered in print form (at church welcome tables) and electronic (via the church website). This booklet is intended to go beyond welcome brochures to provide newcomers and recently arrived attendees simple, accessible basic information about Unitarian Universalism and First Parish in Concord. As of this report, a draft of the booklet is being reviewed by staff and the Welcoming & Membership committee. (fall 2023 & spring 2024)
- Voted to offer to co-sponsor (with the Diversity Committee) and act as administrative host for a newly forming Disability Justice Task Force. The purpose of the task force, to start, is to conduct an audit of First Parish’s facilities and operations from a disability justice perspective. This work aligns with at least one of the Belonging Team recommendations and with a project that the CLC was planning to take on before learning of momentum for a task force—assessing the wayfinding signage at First Parish. The signage activity will be folded into the audit to be conducted by the task force. (spring 2024)

Flower Committee

Members: Ellen Whitney (chair), Susan Ellsworth, Dinny McIntyre, Donna Peterson, Joy Madden, Petra Betts, Marty Wallace, Linda Reynolds, Faxon Green, Ginger Lang, Kathy Spang

Our Mission: To provide – through flower arrangements in the Sanctuary – natural beauty and an outdoor connection for Sunday worship services. Through this flower ministry, we hope to create arrangements that are graceful, inspiring and of the moment in nature. In addition, we

enjoy the communal spirit of arranging, sharing ideas and fellowship and decorating the Sanctuary together.

What We Do: We create one large flower arrangement that sits in front of the pulpit for every Sunday service. Frequently the flowers and other plant material come from local gardens, deepening our connection to time and place, and extending our budget. The flower committee also creates memorial arrangements donated by parishioners. We are also responsible for arranging and maintaining the two planters at the church entrance. Occasionally members do arrangements for other First Parish events or locations, but our focus is the Sunday service arrangements and the two planters.

We use no First Parish funds. Many of our flowers and other plant material comes from parishioners' yards and gardens. For supplemental, purchased flowers, the Flower Committee raises money through our Holiday memorial poinsettia event and by arranging memorial flowers for a fee. We are committed to maintaining a green sanctuary, and compost all of our plant and flower materials, whenever possible using locally sourced flowers.

The committee typically meets the second Thursday of September, January and May, to plan arrangements for the following season.

'23 – '24 Highlights:

Activities:

- Provided seasonal flower arrangements for weekly Sunday services.
- Decorated the Sanctuary for Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter.
- Installed and maintained the planters in the front of the church.
- Raised funds for flower purchases through the memorial poinsettia fundraiser; coordinated the purchase of poinsettia and lilies for Pastoral Care.

In September we suspended arranging flowers for Sunday services when large monitors were installed on each side of the pulpit. Many members of the flower committee felt the Sanctuary had lost its sacred spirit, and the large monitors overwhelmed the flower arrangements in their traditional locations. Members of the congregation missed the beauty and spirit of the flowers, so in December we agreed to reintroduce flowers — but in a single arrangement, placed in front of the pulpit to separate the flowers from the screens.

Thank you to Bruce Davidson for watering the planters weekly from April to October, and for his overall extraordinary practical and moral support. We are also grateful to the Pastoral Care team, who spread the beauty and solace of flowers and plants throughout our community.

Respectfully submitted,
Ellen Whitney, Chair
First Parish Flower Committee

Greening the Campus Task Force

Background and Members: The Standing Committee charged the Greening the Campus Task Force with advising it and the Senior Minister on how to reduce and eventually eliminate fossil fuels, to develop a plan for fundraising and execute an engineering design study to achieve that goal along with developing a pro forma, cost estimates and identifying funding sources for doing so. Task Force members include Brad Hubbard-Nelson, Ted Bayne (chair), Kel Keleher, Michael McAteer, Bruce Davidson, Regina Corrao, Rick Moore, Irl Smith, Peter Lowitt and Mark Haddad who is liaison to the Trustees of Parish Donations and the Wright Tavern Legacy Trust. During the fiscal year June '23 to June '24, the Task Force met every month with recorded minutes.

Two months ago, the Task Force solicited, and has just received a geothermal estimate from *Windover Construction, Inc.* (<https://www.windover.com>) our “owner’s construction manager.” It’s taken 3 years to get to this point, covering the steps to test, remediate, measure and prepare our beloved 120-year-old buildings to upgrade to 2024 heat pump technology.

We’re fortunate in a few ways:

- Geothermal (or “ground-source heat pump”) heating has matured to the point where Concord, Massachusetts, and the US government directly encourage its adoption by homes and businesses. The IRS offers a ~40% rebate on adoption cost.
- We drilled a test well which proved that we have an abundant source of ground water with which to heat and cool our whole campus.
- Concord Municipal Light Plant (CMLP) is moving the town away from carbon-based fuel electricity sources and expects to be fossil-fuel free by 2030.

In 2022 we contracted *LN Consulting, Inc.* (<https://lnconsulting.com>) to engineer a feasibility design which clarified geothermal as practical and applicable. The Trustees of Parish Donations and Wright Tavern Task Force have fully partnered in this effort to include the Wright Tavern and cottages into the plan, which they will implement and for which they will be financially responsible. By this partnership, we can convert FP and its campus to a carbon-neutral, fossil-free facility.

Last year (2023), we engaged *Nashawtuc Architects* (<https://nasharch.com>) for both direct design and, in the person of Josh Bath, as our “owner’s project manager.” In 2024, Josh and the Task Force drove our selection process, from which we picked *Windover, Inc.* to provide the congregation with a detailed, meaningful cost estimate by our annual meeting. *Windover* as “Construction Manager” agreed to take on *LN Consulting* as a subcontractor addressing geothermal parts of the overall system. The design details are interesting:

- For the sanctuary, offices, parish hall, RE classrooms, chapel and the nursery school we can heat, cool, dehumidify, humidify, and disinfect (including Covid) using specifically-targeted engineering for each particular space.
- FP will provide ground source (GS) water to the cottages and the Wright Tavern, thus removing fossil fuels completely from the campus (carbon-neutral status).

- The design uses high-performance filters, energy recovery units, enclosed ultraviolet germicidal/virucidal lamps to continuously clean our inside air.
- An energy supervisor system will limit extreme settings, monitor occupancy, and anticipate scheduled usage to ensure we operate the system cost-effectively. Ground-source HVAC will let us convene together, assured of a clean, efficient, comfortable and healthy inside environment suitable for all church activities (including singing). We can protect our health, our newly-renovated organ, and do our part to protect the environment: all achieved for the same or less operational cost as fossil fuels.

Frequently Asked Questions:

1. How will we measure the air quality/circulation in the building?

The main indicator of air “cleanliness” is measured CO₂, accomplished by multiple sensors throughout the conditioned FP spaces. Mechanical air circulation in each church area is controlled by continuously measuring both temperature and actual CO₂ levels, and adjusting accordingly. During functions it is possible to override this function to full outdoor air design for additional ventilation regardless of CO₂ concentrations.

2. How does UV light “disinfect” air?

High power UV light is able to “disrupt” (literally tear apart) the genetic material of bacteria, viruses and fungi in the exposure time that the airborne particles spend within the air-handling units. Hospitals have successfully employed bactericidal/virucidal UV for 50-plus years.

3. Will we still be able to open the windows on a beautiful fall day?

We will be able to open windows, if desirable. Because this GS-HVAC system will maintain specified local temperature, humidity and CO₂ levels, it may be that opening windows that allow allergens, pollen, and dust into a clean church interior may prove undesirable. The system can switch to “economizer mode,” acting as a forced air “open window” (with filtered air). Additionally, repeatedly opening windows and storms degrades seal and thus building performance.

4. What are the costs to operate this system now and in the future?

We expect the operational heating cost of this system to be less than the current fossil-fuel system. Engineers explain that we would see a reduction in operational cost compared to previous heat-only conditioning. The project provides humidity, indoor air quality, heat and cooling to improve the facility safety and comfort. The supervising monitor will ensure reasonable and modest use to avoid extremes and unoccupied waste.

5. What is the longevity of a GS HVAC system?

Systems are typically warranted for 20 years. The expected lifetime is 30 years or more. The equipment is modular, redundant, and designed to permit bad module isolation and module substitution (3+ heat pumps, multiple wells, multiple pumps and circulators)

6. Is this equipment noisy?

The air handling equipment is conventional ductwork, fans and heat exchangers. The GS Heat pumps themselves are much quieter than the current boiler.

7. Since electricity isn't itself carbon neutral, how can FP's GS HVAC be carbon-neutral?

Concord Municipal Power and Light (CMPL) is moving fast toward completely carbon-neutral electricity sources. CMPL's GS HVAC coach (and Concord Citizen) Ethan Herberman is engaged to review and monitor FP's project.

8. Where is this system located? Will there be eyesores?

The mechanical systems will be located throughout the facility in the FP basement mechanical room, the Parish Hall and Sanctuary attics, nestled on back roof of the Parish Hall, and interior classroom walls. Outside the church building all GS pipes and connections are buried. At each well there is standard sewer-cover for access. Outside modules will be hidden, screened and/or architecturally integrated.

9. What about power outages?

Neither our current boiler system nor the proposed GS HVAC system can operate without electrical power.

10. Is there any "hidden pollution"?

No. The technology is conventional. It's the same technology in use by all refrigerators and air conditioners, which are tightly regulated for pollution.

11. Are there tax credits or incentives to reduce our capital costs?

Churches have been granted financial incentives in the Inflation Reduction Act that are about equal to the ~40% residential tax credit granted to individuals. One difference is FP would be directly reimbursed for up to ~40% of capital costs after installation. Certain domestic equipment and prevailing wage/apprenticeships are needed: our project implementation is specified to comply.

12. What is the efficiency of the proposed system?

For each watt of electricity consumed, the project GS HVAC system will produce ~3 watts of "heat energy." The somewhat hidden benefit is that as more sustainable (wind, hydro, solar, fusion, fission) electricity sources become available CMPL can (to some degree) "choose the mix" Additionally, FP solar panels sometimes make more electricity than we use. FP could consider increasing its solar panels by ~30%.

13. What about heating domestic hot water? Can we use the well to heat hot water?

Yes, this can be done directly, and was done in the first generations of GS HVAC systems. However, our engineers determined that employing commercially available "Air-Source Heat Pump" water heaters that extract heat from heated building air is the best solution to leverage the GS heat source, both operationally and capital cost-wise.

14. Does the well ever “wear out” or run dry?

The 560-foot deep test well drilled in 2022 appears to produce well over 100GPM (gallons per minute). This is the strongest indicator of the quality of our ground source of heat. 100GPM is more than sufficient to heat the main church building, cottages and Wright tavern. After heat is removed, well water is immediately injected back into the aquifer to continuously replenish water that has been removed.

15. How would “heat” and “cold” get to the cottages or the Wright Tavern?

Piping buried in a 4'-wide, 5' deep insulated trench is sufficient to distribute and return all the GS water needed to service the Wright Tavern and cottages. Individual water-source heat pumps would be provided in the Wright Tavern and cottages by the Trustees in order to provide for the needs of those structures.

16. Who pays for the Wright Tavern and cottages installations and operation?

The Trustees of Parish Donations have agreed to pay for all operating and capital costs to bring their buildings into the system. They have also graciously appropriated \$4000 toward their share of the design costs.

17. Will the indoor air quality be as good as opening the windows and bringing in fresh air?

The indoor air quality will be better than opening the windows to exterior air because it is continuously filtered, disinfected, heated or cooled and humidified. The interior air will contain no pollen, dust or other allergens.

18. Who is responsible for the long term operating costs of the system?

FP and the Trustees of Donations are jointly responsible for the capital and operational costs of the system.

19. What is the plan for funding the campus costs for the system design and installation

Funding will combine individual contributions through a capital campaign, appropriate institutional grants and a 40% (of adoption expense) inflation Reduction Act (IRA) contribution.

20. Why are we doing a campus approach when for less cost we could just do the sanctuary and go fossil fuel free?

The campus-wide approach saves the most energy, with the greatest carbon-footprint reduction. It makes economic sense and makes the project more attractive to outside funding sources (grants).

21. If we have partners in this greening effort who has the lead responsibility and accountability?

The GTCTF (Greening the Campus Task Force) is currently leading the effort.

22. Is our current heating system broken?

The current oil-fired heating system is nearing the end of its life. It has broken down in the past, with long wait times for required repair parts. We had to substitute temporary heaters for the prolonged outage last fall (2023). It is based on 40-year-old fossil fuel technology.

Humanist Council

Members: Andrew Puchrik (chair) Pamela Dritt, Linda Reynolds, Petra Betts, Sarah Ford-Terrey

The Humanist Council was formed in January 2012. It arose from a perceived need for greater recognition of Humanism within the Parish. Over the years it has actively helped keep alive both the Humanist Council and the Concord Area Humanists (CAH).

Concord Area Humanists provides UU and FP outreach to Concord and nearby towns, primarily through our monthly programs. During the pandemic CAH, like other organizations, had been holding monthly Zoom events. We have continued this practice as it allows us to have remote speakers and reach a wider audience. We have also established a YouTube channel where recordings of our events can be found. As part of our outreach, we have been working with the Greater Boston Humanists and Greater Worcester Humanists organizations. We are affiliated with the American Humanists Association.

The Humanist Council holds monthly program events with expert speakers. Our events are usually held near the start of the month. Here are some titles of the past year's talks:

- Albert Einstein, Genius and Humanist Hero
- How Religious Intolerance Began
- The Improbable History of U.S. Higher Education
- Saving Our Democracy: Why? How?
- Democracy Is on the Ballot: The 2024 Election Landscape

For more information on the Humanist Council, please contact Andrew Puchrik at puchrik@gmail.com.

Microfinance Group

Members: Toby Smith Ropeik (chair), Biff Holt, Karen Kashian, Alice Kaufman, Michael McAteer, David Ropeik, Martha Soper, M. Lou Toussaint, Alice Van Deusen

As of April 26, 2024, First Parish has donated a total of \$3,802 toward KIVA.org microloans. Those funds (along with accruing repayments from previous loans) have been used to make a total of 797 separate loans to individuals in 52 countries, totaling \$20,620.

In addition, we have donated an average of \$.74 per loan to KIVA.org toward overhead costs.

Our priorities in selecting loans have been guided by the interests identified by the First Parish Community (i.e. advancing racial and immigrant justice, helping women, supporting environmental action, promoting diversity).

In September 2023, Rev. Paul Langston-Daley made our group aware of an [article](#) in *MIT Technology Review* magazine that was critical of KIVA for both excess compensation to the CEO and misleading information about how loans are made. KIVA's representation that we were selecting specific loan recipients turns out to not be the way monies are distributed.

Our committee decided to stop making loans through KIVA. After unsuccessfully researching other organizations, in the hopes of finding a microfinance group which does allow us to choose recipients, we have begun the process of withdrawing remaining First Parish funds from KIVA and returning that money to the church to support other social justice efforts.

A withdrawal of \$1,461 was made in January 2024. A second, smaller withdrawal is planned for late spring 2024. The final withdrawal is planned for late in 2025, when we are scheduled to receive repayment from our last outstanding loan.

The Microfinance Committee has disbanded. This is our final report.

Ministerial Internship Committee

Members: Neil Brock and Clem Tarpey (co-chairs), Toby Smith Ropeik, Alice Kaufman, Susan Ward

We have paused active operation for this year since there was no intern to supervise and too much uncertainty to recruit one for next year. We hope to resume activity and restart the process to recruit an intern in the fall of 2024.

Respectfully,
Neil Brock

Photography Club

Management Team: Fred Van Deusen (leader), Sallie Satterthwait, Pamela Dritt, Jim Pazaris, Lori Gill-Pazaris, Barbara Olson, Barbara Aiello, Linda Benua

Our Photo Club Mission Statement: "The First Parish Photography Club serves to encourage its members to learn and grow while enjoying their practice of photography. We strive to maintain a standard of activities and conduct in keeping with the mission and values of First Parish and the wider UU community."

We were all deeply saddened when our founder and director for 22 years, Kathleen Elcox, passed away in September. We assembled two slideshows in her honor that were shown at the church reception after her service: the first, of images she had taken through the years, and the second, of photos that included her from our various club outings over the years. We miss you, Kathleen.

We are a non-competitive Club, open to First Parish adults at every level of skill and experience. We have approximately 30 active club members, ranging from beginners to professionals. We meet monthly, except for July and August, on the second Saturday of the month, both in-person and on Zoom, to best accommodate illnesses, geography, and other concerns.

We decided to modify our Annual Exhibit this year. On Sunday, May 19 at Coffee Hour after the service, we displayed our framed images on the back wall of the stage, and also had a perpetual slideshow running in the Parish Hall. We invited everyone to attend.

Content: We generally have two interactive presentations each month by club members, and occasionally professional photographers, on a variety of photographic topics. We have tutorials to learn about various photography and other techniques; themes where we ask members to take photos about a particular theme; and slideshows that members prepare and show at our meetings. We often also share a few photos at the beginning of the meeting.

Shared Information: We have a First Parish Photography Club Google Drive folder that stores photos and other useful club information from past and current meetings.

Tutorials: One of our members conducted several training sessions on using LightRoom. We have also had brief tutorials on using the Google Drive, and not so brief tutorials on setting up and using the Brooks Room for our meetings.

Photography Themes: Summer, Autumn, Joy, Color, Winter, Insects, Stairways

Slideshows: Annual Members Exhibit, Round the World in 333 Days (3 presentations), Kauai Family Celebration, Staycation, Transylvania, Newfoundland, 2012 Oregon Field Trip

Calendar: We create an annual October Farm calendar each year as a gift to the Beeuwkes family for letting us use their photo printing facility

Field Trips: Bare Hill Pond, October Farm

Report submitted by Fred Van Deusen

Transcendentalism Council

Steering Committee: Shelley Hawks (chair), Dianne Weiss, Victor Curran, Jim Sherblom, Carolina Maciel

About us: The Transcendentalism Council offers opportunities to learn about the Transcendentalists and their contributions to the intellectual, spiritual, and philosophical life of Concord and First Parish. We are committed to the study and preservation of the rich heritage of our congregation. We sponsor lectures, exhibits, performances, classes, tours, and maintain our own Facebook page and YouTube channel. Our mission includes community outreach and

collaboration with the Concord historical community. Our programs include both live in-person lectures and webinars; recordings of our programs are archived on our YouTube page. Our mailing list is approx. 234 people; active Council members: 5 or more; all are welcome to join the Council.

Report of activities for 2023-24:

Sunday, July 14, 2023, in-person at First Parish sanctuary and on Zoom

Rev. Jim Sherblom

Thoreau and Resilience

Sermon coinciding with The Thoreau Society Annual Gathering

Sunday, September 10, 2023, live virtual event

Philip Gura

From Puritan to Yankee: How I came to Write on Transcendentalism

Professor of American Literature Philip Gura, a Massachusetts native, explained the importance of spiritual intuition to Puritan Jonathan Edwards and Transcendentalists Emerson and Thoreau.

Monday, October 23, 2023, live virtual event

Dan McKanan

Transcendentalists Honoring Ancestors

Dan McKanan, the Emerson Senior Lecturer at Harvard Divinity School, discussed the spiritual practices of Unitarians and Transcendentalists in the nineteenth century, as they reflected on their predecessors in Concord, creating “garden cemeteries,” preserving wild spaces, and retelling colonial history.

Free event offered as part of the Concord Festival of Authors

Tuesday, December 5, 2023, in-person at First Parish sanctuary and on Zoom

Jeffrey S. Cramer

Thoughts from a Life with Thoreau

Author Jeffrey S. Cramer spoke on his life dedication to Henry David Thoreau. He is the Curator at the Walden Wood Project Library and has written or edited major publications on Thoreau and Emerson, including *Walden: A Fully Annotated Edition* (2004) and *The Quotable Thoreau* (2011).

Thursday, January 18, 2024, live virtual event

David S. Reynolds

Abraham Lincoln in Cultural Context: Puritans, Cavaliers, and Transcendentalists

Friday, February 9, 2024, in-person event at the Wright Tavern and on Zoom

Alan Hoffman

Lafayette and Human Rights

Monday, May 6, 2024, in-person at First Parish sanctuary and on Zoom

Rev. Barry M. Andrews

The Gospel According to this Moment: The Spiritual Message of Henry David Thoreau

Recordings of our past programs are accessible on our YouTube channel at this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1H021BcFrXpEC-XeRDBsDA>

Starting January 2023 and ongoing, our group facilitated reservations for the Emerson Reading Circle chaired by Charles Phillips. The group meets monthly every second Wednesday in the Ellen Emerson Room to read aloud and discuss works by Ralph Waldo Emerson. It is open to all.

Respectfully submitted,

Victor Curran, Shelley Hawks, Jim Sherblom, Dianne Weiss, Carolina Maciel

Welcoming and Membership Committee (WAM)

Members: Elizabeth Rust (chair), Lillian Anderson, Sara Ballard, Claire Griffiths, Heather Packard, Susan See

The Welcoming and Membership Committee (WAM) started up this fall and hit the ground running. Aside from getting our group going and creating some tracking systems, we have concentrated on the items listed below.

- We are always found at the Welcome Table on Sundays, eager to greet newcomers and people wanting to chat. We keep the tables updated with UU materials, and updated our FP Welcome Brochure, putting them in the pews.
- Our group has energy for helping promote First Parish in the broader community and had a great plan for the Holiday Tree lighting at town center – before it was rained out. Count on us to help with outreach and promotion in the larger community, especially for families with children.
- The WAM held the Pathway to Belonging class this spring, which was well attended. They were lively sessions, and everyone got to know each other while we covered our faith beliefs and UU values, the First Parish traditions and our history and the ins-and-outs of our congregational life. We had offered it in Fall of 2023, though there wasn't enough interest to hold the class at that time.
- This church year, First Parish welcomed 17 new members, who will be recognized at an upcoming service on June 2, organized by our team (listed in date order):

- Gordon Bemis
- Sally Brandon Bemis
- Kathleen Molony
- Elizabeth Copley
- Rick Camire
- Shruti Miyashiro
- Casey Burow
- Nathan Burow
- Kate Blackerby
- Jordan Burke
- Katherine Hopkins
- Sarah Ford Terrey
- Amanda Tobey
- Jennifer Saffran
- Richard Saffran
- Kathryn Vandever
- Rein Beeuwkes

Our team is excited for the momentum going into the start of next church year, and we are always open to new ideas and encourage people to come work with us. Extending the welcoming at First Parish and opening our hearts and doors is the keystone of our ministry together.

Women's Goddess Covenant Circle

Members: Darien Smith (chair), Bozena Smith, Darien Smith, Linda Benua, Suzanne Foley, Suzie Weaver, Joyce Biggs

Our group of thirteen women meets two or three times a month in person or on Zoom to explore earth-based spirituality and the feminine divine and to forge deeper connections with one another as women. We welcome new members. We also helped create and facilitate projects for the 2024 Mother's Day RE program at FP.

Women's AM/PM Book Group

Members: The Book Group continues to have many signed members of First Parish participating, and 5 of them are: Darien Smith, Siri Smedvig, Patty Keane, Helene Clayton, and Joy Madden. Darien and Siri will continue as facilitators.

The Women's Book Group began as a monthly morning book discussion group in the fall of 1992, started by Margaret Stewart, who was then the First Parish church administrator as well as a church member. The group was an instant success and within a few years, an evening session was added due to popular demand. The AM/PM format continues and draws a regular core to each session, along with those who drop in occasionally. Women are invited to attend either or both discussions in any given month. The group is open to all women of First Parish and friends they wish to invite.

2023-2024 was the 32nd year of the Book Group and was again a year of good discussions about eight chosen books, both fiction and nonfiction. Darien Smith again facilitated the morning group and Siri Smedvig, the evening group. The evening sessions were held on Mondays and the morning sessions on Tuesdays. We made every effort to have multi-platform meetings this year, though some months needed to hold just online meetings, especially in the evening. We plan to hold our Book Choosing event in June as a multi-platform session.

This year we read: (F is for Fiction, NF for Nonfiction)

Sept *Lessons in Chemistry*, Bonnie Garmus - F
Oct *The Reading List*, Sara Nisha Adams - F
Dec *Small Things Like These / Foster* (2 novellas), Claire Keegan - F
Jan *The Chancellor: The Remarkable Odyssey of Angela Merkel*, Kati Martin - NF
Feb *Call Us What We Carry*, Amanda Gorman - Poetry
Mar *The Sentence*, Louise Erdrich - F
Apr *Master Slave Husband Wife: An Epic Journey from Slavery to Freedom*, Ilyon Woo - NF
May *Fox and I: An Uncommon Friendship*, Catherine Raven - NF

The books read are drawn from contemporary fiction and nonfiction to classics and occasionally poetry. The books this year resulted in excellent and many-layered discussions. Of particular note this year were the non-fiction *The Chancellor* and *Master Slave Husband Wife*. Both were very well-written books about truly remarkable people.

Books are chosen in June of each year at a single event for both the morning and evening groups. Books are suggested and voted on, followed by the facilitators and Margaret Stewart reviewing the tally to make the final decisions, only going below the top eight choices on occasion to help make the list a good balance of fiction, nonfiction, genre, and topics.

The recommendation guidelines are that books should meet **at least one** of the following criteria:

- have women authors **or**
- pertain to women's issues **or**
- include strong character development **or**
- strong spiritual content
(i.e. male authors are fine if the book fits one of the other categories)
- **All** should have good potential for great discussion and have been previously read by the recommender or one other book group participant.

The Women's AM/PM Book Group looks forward to its 33rd year in 2024-25, and we plan to have multi-platform meetings.

Respectfully submitted,
Darien Smith

Women's Parish Association (WPA)

Members: Marilyn Lowitt and Dian Pekin, Co-Presidents, Lauren Evans, Irmi Doane, Marilyn Lowitt, Lois Whitney, Melita Teichert, Janet Bailey, Jennifer Burgess, Peggy Claybrook, Teresa Hubscher-Younger, Priscilla Smith, Lois Suarez

The Women's Parish Association has had a very productive year. We continued our long-standing contributions to a variety of non-profit organizations through both financial donations

and contributions of time and talents to various social action projects. We have continued to support organizations whose primary focus is on improving women's and families' lives. And we continue to support various facilities and program needs of First Parish in Concord along with our social programs.

In church year 2023-2024, the WPA provided significant financial support for the railings in the Sanctuary to ensure safe use of the steps up to the pulpit from the main floor. Many thanks to Peter Nobile for all his work with the designers and manufacturers to ensure aesthetically beautiful and secure railings and to Rev. Howard Dana for requesting that railings be installed instead of spending funds on a gift for him.

We have also continued financial and planning support to First Parish's landscaping needs with our maintenance of the Ruth Johnson Garden and the Deborah Greeley Memorial Herb Garden. These gardens provide places of beauty and contemplation for those who visit them and provide convenient and pleasant outdoor meeting places throughout the spring, summer and fall for a variety of First Parish groups in need of safe, outdoor venues. We extend special thanks to Bruce Davidson, Doug Baker, and Barry Copp for their work to upgrade the Herb Garden with permanent bed-defining planks and improved pathways throughout the garden's interesting components. We also extend special thanks to Faxon Green for her professional expertise in garden design and maintenance work for both gardens. We urge everyone to give themselves a summertime treat and spend some time in these gardens for quiet reading and meditation or lunch with friends.

We have continued our involvement with and support of a variety of First Parish's social action initiatives and programs at First Parish, and in the wider community. Marilyn Lowitt is the WPA liaison to First Parish social action groups and keeps the WPA informed of their programs and activities. The WPA gave direct financial support to the Funderberg Scholars Program, the Partner Church Scholarship program and Concord Prison Outreach for the Holiday Gift Bag Project, specifically for women incarcerated at the MCI-Framingham. WPA members joined other parishioners to assemble the gift bags.

Dian Pekin is a member of the First Parish Environmental Action Team and keeps the WPA informed of opportunities to promote and support their programs and Earth Day events. The WPA has continued its financial support of the Immigration Justice Task Force's Afghan Refugee Settlement Program which works with local faith communities under the auspices of the International Institute of New England. This program provides volunteer assistance to support a refugee family in Lowell, Massachusetts as they settle into their new lives. The WPA provided opportunities for the Lowell refugee assistant organization, "Sewing Seeds For Hope" to sell their fabric creations at our craft fairs to enable the refugee women to provide support for their families. The WPA also provided opportunities for the women of the South Sudanese Enrichment For Families organization to sell their fabric creations at our fairs. This organization is an outgrowth of the "Lost Boys of Sudan" assistance program. Additionally, the WPA provided opportunities for Refugee Protection International to sell handmade dolls and toys made by women in refugee camps to support refugees in Syria, Ukraine, Gaza, and other locations as needed.

The WPA once again supported the Greeley Scholar for Peace Studies Lecture this year. Marilyn Lowitt serves as community representative on the Greeley Advisory Board at UMass Lowell. Iranian poet, internationally acclaimed advocate for women's rights, and professor of Persian literature and gender equality, Fatemeh Shams, was named the 2024 Greeley Scholar for Peace. In April, the WPA, in collaboration with the Diversity Committee of FPC, hosted Professor Shams in the Parish Hall, followed by a reception. Professor Shams has been living in exile since June of 2009 and her lived experience serves her well as a springboard for her poetic expression and activism. The WPA extends heartfelt thanks to all, including the Greeley Board at UMass Lowell, for their support of this well attended event. We were also happy to greet members of the wider community, including members of the Iranian Association of Greater Boston and members of the Greeley family.

For over 60 years, the WPA has participated with other faith communities in Concord's commemoration of the annual World Day of Prayer each year on the first Friday in March. The Committee held this year's Prayer Service at First Parish. The service was written by Palestinian women of Gaza which provided information about the living conditions of Palestinians suffering in war-torn Gaza. Informed prayers, prayerful action and thoughtful fundraising are all part of each year's commemoration and prayer service.

Our fundraising programs this year included the popular sales of catnip balls during the holiday season and its Artisan Fair sales. The WPA held its Holiday Artisans Fair outdoors on the front grounds of the church on October 14th. The front grounds of First Parish were filled with ongoing favorite and new artists, photographers, artisans, crafters, artisan food vendors who showcased and sold their latest creations. The vast array of artisans' tents displayed on the front grounds provided a very festive and fun time for the vendors, shoppers, and volunteer workers. Under Melita Teichert's leadership, the WPA Boutique provided curated donated items of vintage and up-cycled women's accessories, clothing and jewelry, along with small household items and Christmas decorations which were welcome components of this year's fair. These fundraising activities enabled the WPA to reach its goals of continued support for its charities and support of First Parish. Many thanks to all the volunteer workers who made these events possible, and special thanks to all those who made the creatively designed catnip balls.

The WPA board members met monthly via Zoom, for its business meetings as well as for social chat sessions.

Live social meetings included:

- An Herb Garden Party on August 18th at which Doug Baker gave an informative talk about the history, medicinal, nutritional, and decorative benefits of each of the herbs in the garden. The Herb Garden was created to honor Deborah Greeley who was a renowned herbalist and gracious hostess of First Parish while her husband Rev. Dana Greeley served as Senior Minister.
- A December 9, traditional Holiday Concert and Tea. WPA Board member Lauren Evans was a featured singer, with singing group The Conchords, who sang classical and popular Christmas and Hanukkah songs and traditional carols. We extend many thanks to the full A Cappella group: Pamela Schweppe, Lauren Evans, Rick Moore, Olof Johnson, Larry Gall and Rex Morrill for adding much joy to our holiday season.

- A February 25th docent-guided group tour of the Concord Museum's exhibit entitled "Interwoven: Women's Lives Written in Threads." The exhibit featured exquisite examples of needle work that were created with such fine detail, they could be easily categorized as outstanding fine art.
- An April 29th Zoom meeting with Rev. Jennifer Johnson was held in conjunction with the ministerial search committee's candidating week. We look forward to having Rev. Jennifer as our settled minister.
- Yet to come: The WPA Summer outdoor Flea Market and Craft Fair is scheduled for August 3, 2024. We hope you will join us at this and other summer events.

We welcome First Parish women to become members and friends of the Women's Parish Association, and all First Parish members and friends and their families are welcome at all our events. WPA membership chair, Lois Whitney, is happy to share information about our organization.

We extend heartfelt thanks to fellow members of our Board: Treasurer, Lauren Evans; Recording Secretary, Irmi Doane; Corresponding Secretary, Marilyn Lowitt; Membership Chair, Lois Whitney; Social Action Liaison, Marilyn Lowitt; Legacy Committee Chair, Melita Teichert. Our additional Members at Large include Janet Bailey, Jennifer Burgess, Peggy Claybrook, Teresa Hubscher-Younger, Priscilla Smith, and Lois Suarez. Heartfelt thanks to Carol Boris who retired from the board this past year after many years of service, especially as our dedicated and capable Treasurer, to the WPA. We look forward to having her participate in our future events.

Many thanks to Facilities Manager Bruce Davidson for all his support to the WPA. His dedicated efforts to ensure that First Parish's buildings, furnishings, and grounds are all in order provide very pleasant surroundings for us all.

Special thanks to Rev. Seth Carrier-Ladd, Rev. Paul Langston-Daley, Fifi Ball, Rev. Amy Freedman, Dawn Van Patten, Darien Smith, and Catherine Hill for their support of WPA activities. It is greatly appreciated! We can't close without thanking all those who have given ongoing support to our faith community and to WPA programs and activities. It's been an honor and a pleasure to serve as Co-Presidents of the WPA. May our efforts continue to support our larger First Parish community, bringing more justice, peace, and joy to all.

Respectfully submitted,
Marilyn Lowitt and Dian Pekin, Co-Presidents
The Women's Parish Association

Women's Retreats Committee

Members: Lillian Anderson (chair), Carolyn Copp, Karen Kashian, Sydney Miller, Carol Harris, Jiffy Read, Holly Cratsley, Susan See, Bozena Smith

This year, in addition to our very successful at home retreat, we were able to hold our first away retreat since January of 2020. Sadly, we were unable to reach Senexet House, so we researched many retreat places and were able to secure space at Rolling Ridge Conference Center in North Andover for January 5-7.

We were surprised and pleased that 35 women registered, and our theme was Weaving Connections. We had a wonderful time being away even with the interruption of a major snowstorm forcing most of our participants to leave on Saturday evening. The nine of us who braved the storm were well taken care of by the staff at Rolling Ridge and bonded in a special way.

The at home retreat was held on March 8/9 and was enjoyed by 40 women on Friday night and 30 women on Saturday. After the excitement of a smoky fire in the fireplace that resulted in the entrance of 4 fireman, we were able to create our altar in the parlor without further incident. We were able to welcome some newcomers and to reconnect with many women who return every year. We are committed to continuing this important tradition that began in 1992.

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Missing Reports

The following group 2023-2024 Annual Reports are not included. The groups listed here are either taking a break, planning for their reports to make it into the final version of the 2023-2024 Annual Report in the fall, or may be being disbanded.

Ferry Beach Committee
First Tuesday Group
Tibetan Buddhist Group
Transition Team