

**FIRST PARISH BROOKLINE  
PARISH COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
October 5, 2015**

**PC Members Present:** Sue Andrews, Michele David, Ann Dinsmoor, Elena Garofoli, Ann Gilmore, Stacey Raczek, and James Shillaber

**Check-In** – Ann D led us in a centering check-in – how are your spirits and/or what centering rituals are important to you?

**Consent Agenda** - Ann G reported on feedback to the draft minutes of PC meetings on Sept 9th and 14th and suggested revisions.

Revised minutes of PC meetings held on September 9th and September 14th were **APPROVED**.

Ann D reported that the Leadership Development Committee had nominated Bob Williamson as our reserve moderator, as a back-up when Anne Copeland is unable to serve. Bob's nomination was **APPROVED**.

**New Staff**

James reported on the recent hiring of Kevin Hoskins as a part time office assistant.

**Executive Session**

As chair of the Interim Minister Task Force, Sue presented a draft of our application to the UUA for an interim minister, based on congregational input. The application was discussed, and a few revisions were agreed upon. The application is now due and ready to submit. Thanks to Sue and the Task Force for preparing this so well and so quickly!

Following our Executive Session, we were joined by Rev. Jim and Rev. Maria Cristina.

**Diversity Caucus Request re Supporting the Black Lives Matter Movement**

Ron Wilkinson, co-chair of the Diversity Caucus joined us to present a request that “the Parish Committee endorse and support immediate efforts at FPB to support the Black Lives Matter Movement.”

Ron had previously emailed PC members a copy of his personal testimony at the worship service on September 27th where Rev. Jim preached on the topic, “Why Black Lives Matter,” along with some background to the request, excerpted here:

“In keeping with our congregational resolutions (adopted in 2009 & 2013), committing to become an “intentionally anti-racist, multicultural, beloved community,” and In keeping with our newly adopted Mission Statement, “Committed to Justice” and striving to be a “congregation that . . . works together to demand social justice, (and) dismantle racism,” and

In keeping with the recent UUA 2015 Action of Immediate Witness in support of the Black Lives Matter Movement The Diversity Caucus requests that the Parish Committee endorse and support immediate efforts at FPB to support the Black Lives Matter Movement, including, in particular, expanding “beloved conversations” with our membership about ongoing systemic and institutional racism, white privilege, and the Black Lives Matter movement, engaging the

membership in a process and ceremony to hang and dedicate a “Black Lives Matter” banner outside our church building, affirming our support of the worth and dignity of black lives in the face of the systemic devaluing of black lives, and initiating and/or expanding our collaboration with local organizations, led by people of color, fighting for racial justice. “

Ron shared a tentative schedule of ways the Diversity Caucus is planning to engage the congregation in this work, including a discussion and activity after the worship services on October 18th and October 25th, followed by a ceremony to hang a Black Lives Matter banner on November 8th.

PC members expressed support and enthusiasm for this request, along with questions regarding 1) potential lack of support from some FPB congregants, 2) the experiences of other churches who have hung banners and faced resistance and/or adverse reactions from their surrounding communities, including defacement or theft of the banner, potential financial consequences, and how a design for the banner would be chosen and where it would be hung.

Ron indicated that the timetable would be reassessed if we find a lack of support on October 18th, that Scott Ullrich is prepared to monitor adverse outside reactions on our Facebook page, that the cost of a banner would be under \$100, and that we would order 2 or 3 in order to immediately replace one that was stolen or defaced, that the design and placement of the banner is to be determined with congregational input, but the thinking is it should be placed out of reach to prevent defacement.

Rev. Jim suggested that we not hang a banner anywhere near our stained glass windows so as not to put them at risk.

The request that “the Parish Committee endorse and support immediate efforts at FPB to support the Black Lives Matter Movement” was APPROVED.

### **RE Concerns**

Rebecca Keller Scholl, our RE Director, along with Dave Demerjian and Bijan Etemad-Gilbertson, co-chairs of the RE Committee, joined us to share concerns about both a drop in RE enrollment and current difficulties in recruiting an adequate number of teachers and RE Committee members. Rev. Jim shared the fact that, over the last four years, the number of children enrolled in our RE program has dropped from 165 down to 81 enrolled this year. How much of this relates to cultural trends where many other activities are competing for family time on Sunday mornings, and how much of this relates to specific factors at FPB?

Rebecca indicated that there are parents who are late in registering and that she expects the enrollment to rise to 100. She noted that enrollment seems to have dropped off in the youngest age groups (nursery and preschool) and the older age groups (8th and 9th grade), and that enrollment and attendance is strong amongst 2nd through 7th graders. In comparison to other congregations where the ratio of children to adults on Sunday mornings is one-third or less, ours is higher at about 40 per cent. Some families have suggested considering other times for RE classes such as 10 am or later in the day on Sundays.

Dave sees the biggest issue this year as a shortage of volunteers for the children we do have. It's October and we still don't have enough teachers for some of the classes. There needs to be a minimum of two teachers per class, and if a class has a child with special needs, we need to have an extra adult to help out.

There's also a shortage of RE Committee members this year. Instead of rotating off after three years, Committee members are staying on longer. Also, it used to be a policy that if you were on the RE Committee, you weren't also asked to teach, but now some people are doing both. Too few people are carrying the responsibilities for RE. It feels like we are in a crisis mode.

Rebecca indicated that there are changes in programming this year which may generate more interest and participation from families. We are reducing the number of multigenerational services to 3, we are initiating a multi-age children's chapel for 4 Sundays this year and there will also be 6 Justice Seeking Sundays where children will be involved in some aspect of social justice. She and the RE Committee chairs are also offering a monthly forum for parents to share feedback and concerns. Rebecca also indicated that we have high school youth who are interested in a youth group, and that she would like to hire a Youth Advisor for them.

PC members expressed support and gratitude for those involved in RE. We recognize the important role of RE in engaging families and in supporting the faith formation of our children. Our families and our children enrich the community for all of us, and we need to share the responsibilities of the RE program amongst a wider group of adults in the congregation, not just among parents of young children.

It was proposed and agreed that Rev. Jim, Rebecca, Dave, Bijan, and James (as a PC member and as our HR person) will meet in an effort to address these concerns and will restructure some of the RE programming to better match our capability this year.

### **Executive Session**

For the final portion of our meeting, the members of the PC went into a second executive session. Ann D and James led a discussion of Human Resource and personnel issues.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ann Gilmore, Clerk