

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

PC Members Present: Sue Andrews, Greg Buckland, Ann Congleton, Steve Davis, Ann Dinsmoor, Elena Garofoli, Ann Gilmore, Stacey Raczek.

Also present: Rev. Jim Sherblom

PC Meeting Dec. 1, 2014

There are no minutes from this meeting. It was a brain-storming session on questions we will be taking to the congregation as part of our dialogue this year, questions related to our congregational goals of creating a mission statement, revising some of our by-laws, and sorting out the organizational structure, authority and connection between ministers and other staff, the Parish Committee and the congregation.

Working relationship between the PC and the Sr. Minister

Steve reported on an extensive conversation he had with Doug Zelinski, UUA District Director of Leadership Development, on our organizational structure, authority, and connections between ministers, the PC, and the congregation. Doug recommended a number of changes to our present structures and practices, including:

- 1) Periodic executive sessions of the Parish Committee without the senior minister present to evaluate the performance of our senior minister, or to discuss issues of concern
- 2) A Committee on Ministry nominated by the Leadership Development Committee and elected by the congregation
- 3) Goal setting by the Parish Committee for a) shared ministry, b) ministerial team, c) congregational programs, d) governance.

Doug will meet with the PC By-Laws subcommittee and representatives from the COM and LDC and follow that meeting up with a meeting with the full PC to explore his recommendations.

We then discussed the need to return to a fuller (30 minute) discussion at our meetings of the monthly report from Rev. Jim in order to step more deeply into a bidirectional dialogue. Each member of the PC had an opportunity to briefly (2 minutes) answer the question:

What would help ME, in the context of my role on the Parish Committee, stay in dialogue with Rev. Dr. Jim, in a loving and constructive way, to help his ministry thrive?

Members addressed the difficulties/sensitivities involved in giving Rev. Jim evaluative and other feedback while also being in a minister/congregant relationship with him. Suggestions included providing a regular, structured process for this feedback, utilizing executive sessions, listening circles, and other protocols to make the process easier.

Rev. Jim then shared what he would need from us in order to have productive dialogues and to feel heard, including advanced notice of topics for discussion or concerns, structured discussions, and appreciation for what he is doing before hearing feedback.

Several members indicated a desire to discuss with Rev. Jim some of the issues/concerns, which surfaced at our December 1st meeting. Steve will solicit feedback on topics via email, will give Rev. Jim advance notice, and will include this on our agenda for next time.

Song Sue led us in a rousing version of “I’ve Been Working on the Railroad.”

Dialogue re Minister’s Report

Rev. Jim highlighted a few issues from this month’s minister’s report. He shared with us that his passions for ministry include: working with all on spiritual transformation; valuing staff in terms of financial compensation and working relationships; and, overall financial stewardship.

Rev. Jim was acknowledged and thanked for the passion, energy and enthusiasm he brings to his ministry. The PC shares his concerns about financial stewardship and the need to compensate staff more in the middle than in the lower range of the fair compensation guidelines. Rev. Jim shared with us that UU’s give less of their income to their church than other denominations, averaging around 1.9%. FPB averages around 2%, but we need to raise our average to at least 2.5%. We currently have about 270 active members, meaning they have signed the book and have made a financial contribution in the last 12 months.

Our Sunday attendance had been dropping this fall, but is trending upward in December. Scott Ullrich is posting audios of many of the sermons, so that people can listen to them even if they are absent on Sunday. We are moving towards a more affective worship style.

Several members wanted the PC to have more contact with Rev. Maria Cristina and possibly other staff., without overtaxing their time. Rev, Jim will arrange for other staff to attend PC meetings when relevant.

Steve suggested we try doing a “temperature check” with people about Sunday attendance. He will dialogue with Sue and the Committee on Ministry to work together with us on this.

Plans for this year’s Canvass – with Alice Mark and Dave Demerjian

Alice and Dave led us in a debrief of last year’s canvass and the role the PC played in giving testimonials. Although we were successful in increasing our overall pledge amount significantly, the number of pledges dropped, we fell short of our goals and were not able to fund some important initiatives. Also, the distribution of pledges is still very uneven, with a few large donors providing a significant share of the overall pledges. This puts us in a very vulnerable position if any of them cut or discontinue their pledges. Alice noted that many of those who increased their pledges last year included members of the PC and other canvassers. One way to inspire people to give more is to ask them for testimonials or to become canvassers.

Dave wondered if part of the shortfall in pledges last year was due to our being in transition as a congregation. Also, people are part of FPB for different reasons and we need to target different groups and let them know what it costs to provide different aspects of what we offer.

Steve mentioned that in the past, asking individuals to give a specific amount, representing a 10% increase in their previous pledges, was helpful. Providing the UUA guidelines and asking people to give more based on those levels of giving did not seem to help this past year, as the guidelines seemed too high and too complicated.

Rev. Jim mentioned that the average household income at FPB is \$110,000 and we need an average pledge of 2.5%, or \$2700 from those households to be sustainable.

Alice and Dave will check in with us again as they develop a theme and more strategies.

Thank you Alice and Dave for your leadership in this year's canvass!

Emeritus Status for Rev. Martha

Rev. Jim raised the issue of granting emeritus status for Rev. Martha. The UUA has strict guidelines about waiting until a new minister is settled, but it has now been two years since Rev. Martha retired and we have a settled senior minister and a new second minister in place. Affording her emeritus status would enable her to occasionally preach and/or offer workshops at FPB, as well as attend worship, and serve as a delegate to GA. This issue garnered much enthusiasm amongst the PC, but a concern was raised about the timing of it. Given that we have just hired Rev. Maria Cristina as our assistant minister, it might be better to wait a bit longer and allow her relationship with the congregation to deepen. We decided to postpone action on this and discuss it again at our next meeting, especially since one member was absent and another had already left prior to this discussion.

Review of Process/Covenant

Thanks to Elena for serving as our Process Observer for this meeting!

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Gilmore, Clerk