

**FIRST PARISH BROOKLINE
PARISH COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
June 1, 2015**

PC Members Present: Sue Andrews, Greg Buckland, Ann Congleton, Steve Davis, Ann Dinsmoor, Elena Garofoli, Ann Gilmore, Stacey Raczek, Corey Thomas, along with newly elected members Michele David, Ben Davis and James Shillaber. Also present: Rev. Jim Sherblom and Rev. Maria Cristina Vlassidis Burgoa.

Check-In

What does our new mission statement: **Called by Love, Sustained by Community, Committed to Justice** mean to us?

We expressed excitement about how we have already been energized and changed by this new mission statement and hope that it will guide and sustain us for many years to come. We are grateful to our Mission Sub-Committee, led by Ann D and including Sue Andrews, Greg Buckland, Elena Garofoli and Ann Gilmore, for their good work; grateful to Rev. Jim for his help and support in incorporating the process into two worship services: and grateful to the congregation for all their engagement and for reminding us of the importance of including caring for our earth in our mission and vision.

Beloved Conversations

Rev. Jim described how 22 people, including both congregants and staff have been engaged in the workshop series “Beloved Conversations” developed by Dr. Mark Hicks. Gene Thompson-Grove, James Shillaber, and Rev. Maria Cristina have been facilitating these two-hour sessions over the past seven weeks, after the initial weekend workshop led by Dr. Hicks in early May. Rev. Jim shared his observation that our capacity for connecting with and expressing our own vulnerabilities is linked to our cultural norms and our language. Including staff in these conversations has allowed for congregants and staff to bond and share vulnerabilities in new ways.

Rev. Maria Cristina described the workshops as a way of retraining and opening our brains and our hearts to see the richness of individual experience and learn to notice and undo our faulty generalizations, standards for what is good, circular thinking and myths.

James added that this process is a way of developing new muscles, and building our capability for making our church a really welcoming space.

Elena shared that in the first weekend, we jumped right into exercises that built up trust and from then on, everything that followed has been at a gut and heart-felt level. It has changed her frame of reference and allowed her to soften into relationships.

Ann G described how powerful one of the exercises was in revealing and embodying the painful disconnections and separations that result from differential levels of privilege based on race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and ableism. And also how ending in a circle where everyone is connected was a healing, restorative experience – highlighting the importance of “learning to live in the circle.”

Sue shared feedback she has received from congregants who are wondering about and feeling left out by the process used to invite and include people in the workshop and how important it is not to leave people feeling left behind.

James explained that the Diversity Caucus hopes to make this workshop available to all interested congregants, but that the nature of the work requires that it be done in small groups. For the first go-round, the focus was on involving Caucus members who could then become future facilitators, as well as including staff, along with representatives from the Parish Committee, RE Committee, and Committee on Ministry.

Other PC members expressed discomfort with limiting participation in this workshop and with our insularity in where we look for leadership, along with expressing the importance of transparency about the process and of communicating this in multiple ways to the congregation.

Minutes from our May 4, 2015 meeting

The minutes from our May 4th meeting, with suggested clarifications about our rental policies and the topic discussed in our executive session, were **APPROVED**.

Swan Song- our dear Greg, soon to depart from the PC Committee, led us in a moving song inspired by civil rights movement builder Ella Baker: "Give Light and the People Will Find a Way!"

Congregational Interviews

In response to a drop in attendance at our Sunday worship services and our RE classes, we have initiated a process whereby a representative sample of congregants as well as PC members will be interviewed and asked "What is working for you and what is not working for you at FPB?"

Ann D reported that Anne Copeland has generously agreed to oversee the interviewing, including training the congregational interviewers- Ethan Brackett, Susan Larrabee and Karla Baehr, along with Steve Davis and Ann Dinsmoor, who will be interviewing outgoing, current, and incoming PC members. A total of 32 interviews will be conducted in the coming month, including approximately 46 individuals (some couples will be interviewed together.)

Anne Copeland and her team will compile the feedback without attributing it to the individuals who were interviewed. We will be looking for patterns and themes from these interviews at our retreat later this month. An initial report will be shared with the PC, Rev. Jim. Rev. Maria Cristina, DRE Rebecca Keller Scholl, and the Committee on Ministry. In keeping with right relationship, although no individuals will be quoted or identified in the report, a list of those interviewed will be provided to the PC, the ministers, and the chairs of the COM. In the fall, a summary of the report will be made available to the congregation.

Canvass Feedback

Steve noted that, in addition to the good news about overall pledges, including 74 households who have increased their pledges over FY14/15, the Canvass Report yesterday indicated that 22 households have decreased their pledges and 12 families have discontinued their pledges. He expressed concern that that this is a reflection of people's pain and disconnect about what is not working for them at FPB. They need our love and support no matter what they are or are not pledging. Rev. Jim responded that these situations are treated as pastoral issues. FPB is in

transition and this is causing pain to some people. Steve and Ann D will debrief with our canvass chairs, Alice Mark and Dave Demerjian, as to how to follow up on this. Since this information was not previously shared with us, we did not use it in selecting people for congregational interviews.

PC Elections

Steve explained to our new members that our practice has been to have a committee member serve as chair-elect for a year before becoming chair of the Parish Committee for two years. The chair-elect works with the chair and the senior minister to plan the agendas for our monthly meetings. Since many of our goals are multi-year in nature, it is best to have some continuity in leadership from year to year. This year Corey was elected and served as chair-elect and was to step into the position of chair for the next two years. Unfortunately, due to his responsibilities at home and at work, he recently resigned as chair-elect and will be going off the Parish Committee. We are so grateful for his leadership and service this year!

The call went out to the rest of the committee and two people generously offered to step forward into leadership for the new year- Ann Dinsmoor as chair and Elena Garofoli as vice-chair. We are blessed to have them! It is our hope that during the year, one of our three new PC members will step forward to become chair-elect and then serve as chair for the following two years. Steve has generously offered to stay on the committee for one more year as a member to ease this transition and support our new leadership. We have been so blessed to have his dedicated and inspirational leadership these past two years!

A motion was made to elect Ann Dinsmoor as PC Chair and Elena Garofoli as Vice-Chair and was unanimously **APPROVED**.

PC Retreat June 19-20

Steve will host the Friday evening session of our retreat on June 19th from 6:30 – 9:00pm. We will share a pot-luck dinner and libations, followed by some team building, goal setting, and honoring the gifts of our three out-going members: Greg, Ann C. and Corey. Ann D will host us for the Saturday session from 8:30 am to 2:30 pm. Our agenda will include check-ins, more on Beloved Conversations, developing our PC covenant, setting our goals for 2015-16, chartering an HR task force, a Mission task force, and a Stewardship Committee, sign-ups for PC sub groups, and end with an Executive Session for PC members on the results thus far of our congregational interviews.

We then brainstormed a list of possible PC goals for our 2015-16. Steve will e-mail us the list we generated and invite us to add to it prior to the retreat.

Review of Process/Covenant

Thanks to everyone for serving as our Process Observers for this meeting!

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Gilmore, Clerk