

First Parish Unitarian Universalist – Canton
Minutes of the Parish Committee
October 9, 2024
7:15 PM on Zoom

In Attendance:

Kitty McGregor, President
Dave Williams, VP-Administration
Larry Cotton, Treasurer
Debbie Radovsky, VP-Member Services
Jonette Nagai, Clerk
Don Seaman, Member-at-Large
Bette Wells, Member-at-Large
Rev. Dr. Michelle Walsh, Minister

2024-25 Parish Committee Guests:

Rev. Dr. Clyde Grubbs
David Bryant, Assistant Treasurer

Absent:

Call to Order and Chalice Reading: The meeting was called to order at 7:18PM. Bette lit the chalice and gave the following chalice reading:

Work in Commitment and Love

By Viola Abbitt

As we light this chalice this evening, may it serve us clarity of purpose and illumine our way as we set about doing the work of this congregation, in commitment, in cooperation, and in love.

Adoption of Changes to UUA Pension Plan:

Dave Bryant had sent out a package of information regarding changes to the UUA pension plan effective January 1, 2025 prior to the meeting. These changes were either required to conform to current federal regulation or minor and will not impact FPUU Canton's plan which is in compliance. The Parish Committee (PC) unanimously voted to adopt the restated Unitarian Universalist Organization's Retirement Plan. The following is the text of the motion passed.

"Whereas First Parish Unitarian Universalist Canton is committed to assisting all of its employees 18 years and older to prepare for their retirement years, and;

Whereas the Unitarian Universalist Organizations Retirement Plan (the “Plan”) is the retirement plan sponsored by the Unitarian Universalist Association, therefore;

Be It Resolved that the First Parish Unitarian Universalist Canton hereby adopts the 2025 Restatement of the Unitarian Universalist Organizations Retirement Plan with an implementation date of January 1, 2025 and commits to complying with all the provisions of the Plan and the elections made by First Parish Unitarian Universalist Canton in the 2025 Employer Participation Agreement that we submit to the UUA Retirement Plan Committee and they acknowledge receipt and approve via counter signature of same.”

David Bryant will prepare a package to send to the UUA including updated FPUU Canton pension plan documents by the end of the month.

Consent Agenda:

The Parish Committee (PC) unanimously voted to approve the minutes of the September 11, 2024 meeting.

Ministers’ Thoughts and Concerns:

Michelle noted that Larry and Kitty have reviewed a copy of the draft of the policy for the Dignity Fund prepared by Michelle after the last PC meeting. Essentially, the policy allows for more accountability around the management of the fund.

Overall, things appear to be going well. There have been a few new and younger individuals attending services and enthusiasm for the various new programs (e.g. Mind/Body/Spirit, Clyde’s bible study, etc.) Some challenges noted include the November interfaith service being planned, and a shortage of volunteers. In particular, the Tech Team critically needs back-up. In short, things are going well, but there are fragility points to be aware of and addressed.

There is clearly a lot of angst as the election draws nearer and with climate change. Michelle mentioned opening up the church to allow for a meditative space on the day of the election and perhaps the day after, and a few possibilities were discussed. There was general agreement that this was a good idea. Specific details will be worked out.

There are two public speaker forums coming up in October.

Financial Status Update:

No one had any questions on the financial reports that Larry circulated prior to the meeting.

There was discussion around the draft of Dignity Fund Policy. There have not been many requests for help over the last two years perhaps because people hesitate to ask for help or perhaps because they are not aware of the availability. However, there also needs to be clarity around who can be helped by the fund. It was agreed that PC members will review the draft with a focus on what would be workable and fair. The discussion will continue at the next meeting.

Team Reports:

Vision Ministry – An email went out to members of the Five Point Cluster inviting those who might be interested in joining together and creating a new approach to church/community. Cheryl Brigante of Easton floated the concept to others within her congregation who indicated that they were not interested which is not surprising given their unique situation. Braintree folks seem interested in figuring something out and have been coming to a number of our Thursday events. The key person from Foxborough has recently had surgery but is very interested. Amanda from Attleborough was interested but was not able to make any of the dates proposed. (Dave and Kitty will follow up separately with Amanda.) However, no one is pushing for a group meeting at this time. We will observe who shows up at this Sunday's service and determine next steps. Dave will work on getting nametags for visitors perhaps including which congregation they belong to.

Congregational Life and Stewardship Ministry – Debbie will be working with others to update the friends and members of First Parish.

For fundraising, there are a number of ideas in play. First, it was clarified that the proceeds from the St. Pauly's shed clothing donations will be included when measuring against the target goal for fundraising. We expect to see roughly \$1,000 a year for this passive fundraising activity. Don is in conversations with Liam Galvin for a psychic reading evening event in February. The thought is to sell 100 seats at \$40 a piece; the revenue would be split with Liam and his group. Other fundraising ideas include: 1) renting tables at our yard sale; 2) finding a small musical ensemble for an afternoon event with refreshments; 3) the annual coffee house; 4) a banned book sale in the fall; and 5) a craft sale. Debbie suggested another idea of having a food truck festival which Don will look into.

Other updates: 1) Don is working on removing the pews in time for the November interfaith event; 2) we will not be participating in the October Trunk or Treat event; 3) on October 19th, Diane O'Toole former president of the League of Women Voters will speak on voter engagement, and Don is working on a flyer and publicity for the event; 4) on October 26th we are collaborating with the CDEI to host a family friendly event on indigenous people with Thomas Green, and information about the event will be circulated within the Canton public schools. We will be looking for volunteers to support both October events. Michelle indicated that we will be looking to split the cost of the advertising (in the Canton Citizen) with the other churches participating in the November Thanksgiving interfaith service.

Building Projects Ministry – For the November interfaith service, we will be setting up a stage, as well as removing pews. Don is also working on improving the sound/audio issues including the microphone. There was discussion around the cost/benefit of buying something new versus repair of the existing components. The Building and Grounds work party originally

scheduled for October 26th and will be rescheduled for early November given all of the other activities.

November 2nd is Music Sunday while Michelle is away at her nephew's wedding. Jim will be leading the service with assistance from Clyde.

Kitty reported that the town select board has approved the proposed approach and materials for the Sanctuary roof project so that can move ahead starting early next week. Kitty is trying to get a few additional quotes for patching the driveway. Based on the quotes so far, it will cost too much to do more than patch holes. Kitty asked if anyone could recommend a driveway vendor. There was a conversation around the expense and alternative approaches.

There was a discussion around putting up no trespassing signs indicating that the church and parking lot are private property. If there are no signs, the police cannot arrest any trespassers. Kitty will also ask that the "No U-turn" sign at the end of driveway near the police station be replaced since the sign belongs to the police station. Finally, we share the driveway with the police station, but it isn't clear where the property line is; knowing where that line is has become more important. [All of this discussion was precipitated by the Karen Read protestors taking over the parking lot and driveway a few weeks ago. The church did file a police report.]

There has been a request for an easement so that there can be a path (both walking and bicycle) behind the church from the graveyard to the back of the police station. No action was taken on this request since we need more information, but the initial reaction was that this was not a good idea and it's unclear what the benefit to the church would be.

We have received documentation from the Historical Commission of the Town of Canton recognizing First Parish's status as a church. This documentation is filed in the office for any further needs the church may have.

Next Meeting of the Parish Committee:

In general, Parish Committee meetings are held on the second Wednesday of the month at 7:15pm on Zoom. However, the next meeting will be Wednesday, November 13th

Closing Words:

Since this meeting focused on so much minutia, Michelle emphasized the need to recenter and to remember who we are, the reason why we exist as a religious body beyond buildings. Clearly, the times we are in with the climate crisis, threats to democracy, etc. don't help. Michelle read an excerpt from a poem by Maya Angelou.

From the poem **Alone**
By Maya Angelou

Now if you listen closely
I'll tell you what I know
Storm clouds are gathering
The wind is gonna blow
The race of man is suffering
And I can hear the moan,
'Cause nobody,
But nobody
Can make it out here alone.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 9:03PM.

Open Follow-up Items from previous meetings:

- Develop process for handling cash donations at events.
 - Closed – Michelle will not be taking cash donations.
- Review draft Dignity Fund policy and be prepared to discuss at the November PC meeting. (All)
- Arrange for celebration of Golden Anniversary of FPUU Canton.
 - Recognized in an announcement at a Sunday service; lack of bandwidth to do more at this time.
- Kitty and Carol Smith to work on rental rate charts and process for one-off rentals
- Dave Bryant, Kitty, and Debbie to work on contract language and policy for long-term rentals.
- Draft up formal policy for handling in-kind donations for approval of PC at next meeting. (Larry)
- Review 8th UU Principle for adoption by the Parish Committee: “We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.”

Minutes prepared, and respectfully submitted, by Jonette Nagai, Parish Committee Clerk