

**FIRST PARISH BROOKLINE  
PARISH COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
March 2, 2015**

**PC Members Present:** Sue Andrews, Greg Buckland, Ann Congleton, Steve Davis, Ann Dinsmoor, Elena Garofoli, Ann Gilmore, Stacey Raczek. Diligent attempts to have Corey Thomas skype into our meeting were unsuccessful.

Also present: Rev. Jim Sherblom

**Minutes from our January 5, 2015 meeting**

The minutes from our Jan. 5<sup>th</sup> meeting were **Approved**. There were no meetings in February due to heavy snow and unsafe driving conditions on our original date of February 2<sup>nd</sup> and our rescheduled date of Feb. 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Ministerial Dialogue**

In an effort to step more deeply into a dialogue with Rev. Jim about ministry at FPB, we have expanded the time and nature of this agenda item. Rather than simply reading his monthly minister's report prior to our meeting and hearing a few comments from him, we have allotted 30 minutes to this in-person dialogue. Issues discussed included

1. Beloved Community – not everyone in our congregation embraces this term. Rev. Jim and Rev. Maria Cristina have been discussing how to create space for congregants to both aspire to more inclusive community and the changes that brings, and also to grieve for a sense of loss of the older, more familiar ways of doing things. We need to find ways to discuss these changes while avoiding political correctness.
2. RE – recently there have been issues around different familial behavioral expectations and challenging behaviors in the Spirit Play group, which spilled over into the last Time for All Ages in our worship service.
3. Cultural Humility – we have moved away from a notion of cultural competence to one of cultural humility. We cannot expect to “master” myriad different cultural expectations, but we can become aware of our own cultural norms and approach other norms with openness, curiosity, and humility.
4. Social Justice – We have aspired to form meaningful and accountable relationships with community groups working for social justice. This year we have been connecting and building relationships with the Chelsea Collaborative, Centro Presente, and EPOCA, far beyond what we expected.
5. Worship –This is a topic which is currently generating rich and promising discussions of worship styles, worship practices, and alternative occasions for worship such as the monthly evening Vespers services.

**Song** Sue provided the lyrics and led us in a rousing rendition of Patsy Cline's “Side By Side.” She has generously offered to be our official song leader at PC meetings and we can't wait to see what she has in store for us next time!

**PC Feedback to Rev. Jim**

Each PC member in turn addressed Rev. Jim about personal feelings, concerns or issues raised by how he described his role as Senior Minister in last September's Jim's Jottings. Themes that emerged included feelings that his statements were hierarchical and authoritarian rather than collaborative, marginalized the role of lay leadership, especially the PC, and were painful, ill-timed and preemptive given that one of the main goals we have set and articulated to Rev. Jim and the congregation for this year is to “update the by-laws to provide clarity and transparency

about the congregation's organizational structures, authority, and decision-making," as we transition from a pastoral to a program sized church. Members also expressed gratitude for Rev. Jim's ministry, especially times when he has worked very collaboratively, expressed the desire to partner with him, noted the awkwardness in raising issues now about something he wrote six months ago, and were curious about what prompted his writing the September Jottings.

Rev Jim responded with an apology for the impact of his statements. He said that the September Jim's Jottings was prompted by a desire to clarify uncertainty and anxiety generated by the shift from his co-ministry with Rev. Martha to his being called as our Senior Minister, as well as by a desire to reassure our staff that they would continue to report to him, rather than to go back to previous times when they reported to committees. He indicated that there was a lot of anxiety and uncertainty expressed by staff at their August retreat, wondering if the PC would change their reporting relationships. Rev. Jim also shared his own anxiety about how he has been treated by the congregation since the dissolution of the co-ministry and the "soft" vote (73%) to call him as our senior minister in the spring of 2013.

This discussion prompted a desire to formalize a way for issues of concern, either from PC members or from Rev. Jim, to be addressed in a more timely way. Two ways we will approach this is to include having occasional executive sessions at the end of our meetings, as well as inviting PC members to email the Executive Committee, consisting of Steve (PC chair), Corey (PC vice-chair) and Rev. Jim, about concerns we would like placed on the agenda. We also want and need to connect more directly with Rev. Jim and staff members and communicate our gratitude for all that they do. Rev. Jim invited us to come and sit in on a Tuesday morning staff meeting as one way to connect. Steve will also draft a letter of appreciation and reassurance from the PC to the staff.

### **Canvass Update**

Our Canvass theme this year is "Commit to Community!" Our canvass chairs, Alice Mark and Dave Demerjian, plan to "contain" the canvass campaign into the month of March, so that we can make more accurate preliminary budget predictions and plans in April. During the month, they, along with Rev. Jim and other members of the ministry team, will be showing up at each of the 15 gatherings/committee meetings to talk about this year's canvass theme and encourage people to be generous with their pledges and to get them in by the end of the month. Letters have gone out to the members of our congregation, reminding them what they pledged for this year, and, in most cases, asking them to give a specific amount more this year, ranging from 10% more to 100% more. Rev. Jim encouraged us to get our individual pledges in by March 16<sup>th</sup>, the date of our next meeting. We are so grateful to Alice and Dave for their dedicated and creative efforts as our Canvass Chairs!

### **Review of Process/Covenant**

Thanks to Ann D. for serving as our Process Observer for this meeting!

Our next meeting will be in two weeks, on Monday March 16<sup>th</sup>, to make up for missing our February meeting due to several untimely blizzards.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Gilmore, Clerk