

**FIRST PARISH BROOKLINE  
PARISH COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
April 12, 2016**

**PC Members Participating:** Sue Andrews, Michele David, Ben Davis, Ann Dinsmoor, Ann Gilmore, Stacey Raczek, and James Shillaber. Steve Davis participated by phone. Also Rev. Rebecca Bryan

**Check-In**

**Update on Youth Program**

Rebecca Keller Scholl joined us to give an update on the status of our youth group and youth program leadership. FPB has not had a paid youth advisor for at least 10 years. Six youth (10th-12th grade) gathered along with Bijan Etemad-Gilbertson and Karley Ausiello on January 29<sup>th</sup> and planned to meet every other week in Peterson when the younger kids are in RE classes. Priscilla Brown agreed to volunteer as youth adviser. The youth have changed their perspective over the years from wanting to focus on youth empowerment and decision-making to wanting a space to show up and be connected to their peers. Unfortunately, the youth have not been responsive to meeting as planned. Without an organized youth program, Rebecca thinks we will lose the youth and their parents after the 9<sup>th</sup> grade Challenge year, which is the culmination of our RE program for children and youth.

Two years ago, a request was made to the PC to hire a youth advisor for 10 hours a week at \$20.00, which would total \$8,000 for the year. Currently the youth group might consist of 10-15 youth in 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade. This year we had planned to have our ministerial intern act as a youth advisor, but, due to our transition this year, she decided to find another placement. Rev. Rebecca advised that the use of ministerial interns as youth advisors is not the best model. The PC decided not to pursue a youth advisor during FY17 while we evaluate our staffing models. In addition, we agreed we need to have a clearer assessment of what youth would commit to before hiring someone new.

**Announcements**

- Ann D will draft agendas for our April 24 Transition Team/Parish Committee joint retreat and for our May 16<sup>th</sup> Program Council.
- Ann D will also draft the PC's annual report and send it to PC members for suggestions.
- Doug Zelinski has approved an exit review process for Rev. Jim's departure consisting of 4 questions. Steve and Ann D will work with Rev. Rebecca to articulate lessons learned. Anne Copland and Gerry Leader will be invited to participate. PC members will be invited to participate in May, with the process to be completed by June.
- Reminder of our April 17<sup>th</sup> meeting from 9:45-10:45am for congregants, TT and Rev. Rebecca to discuss and respond to questions about the interim process. PC member's attendance is welcomed but optional.
- Rev. Rebecca gave an update on the Pastoral Care Associates retreat and their planning for next year.
- Rev. Rebecca announced that Rev. Maria Cristina will be taking study leave in preparation for her defense of her thesis on April 29<sup>th</sup>.
- James gave an update on the congregational engagement with immigrant justice. The first session on March 13<sup>th</sup> focused on raising awareness and hearing testimonies from immigrant youth who fled the violence in their Central American countries and who are now being targeted for deportation. The second conversation will be this Sunday, April 17<sup>th</sup> and a third conversation will be held on May 15<sup>th</sup>.

## **Fundraiser Proposal for Gerald Alston, Brookline firefighter**

Ann G described a proposal from Ed Loechler, and endorsed by the Diversity Caucus, to host a People's Café type fundraiser on May 7<sup>th</sup> at FPB, to support Brookline firefighter Gerald Allston. He has lost his job, his home, and his health following an incident where a racial slur was uttered by one of his fellow firefighters and left on his voice mail. This fundraiser will feature music and dinner and will hopefully draw people from Brookline and beyond who are concerned about both Gerald and ongoing racial issues in the town. This request was **APPROVED**.

## **Rev. Maria Cristina**

Rev. Maria Cristina was scheduled to meet with the PC to share her thoughts about the future. Unfortunately, she was not able to join us due to a contemporaneous emergency involving technical computer problems with the transmission and receipt of her final written thesis by her faculty advisors at the Harvard Divinity School.

## **Preparations for April 24 Budget Hearing**

Stacey described the plan for the upcoming budget hearing with the congregation on April 24<sup>th</sup>. We will sit in a circle, start with our mission statement, have a check-in, and frame the conversation with a sense of optimism. Possibly ask: what is your vision for what our budget would enable 5 years from now?

Steve added that we should elevate our mindset above our immediate situation and transition period. Sue said people will be coming wanting to talk about money, not a future vision. She wants honest talk about money. Michele remembered that we started last year's budget hearing with a spiritual centering which made it easier to talk about money. Ann D wants to set the context for the hearing within our mission, and create a brief covenant for working together on this.

After the check-in, Stacey will review the 6 guiding principles from the Finance Council. She will bring the congregation into our dilemma- we want to honor our commitments to staff as well as ensuring sustainability for the future. We are recommending level staff and salaries for FY 17, but in the coming year, we will need to consider what staffing models are sustainable going forward. She will let congregants know about the drop in our membership from a midsized level II to a mid-sized level I congregation, about an increase in pledges for FY2016 above our goal of \$420,000, and the strong canvass drive this spring for FY2017.

Ben asked: what is our goal for this meeting?

Stacey responded 1) we want transparency about the state of our finances and to answer people's questions about the proposed budget and 2) we want to know if there are alternative proposals and we want honest feedback. We are not looking for consensus at this point. The purpose of our second budget hearing on May 1<sup>st</sup> will depend on what arises at this first hearing. She and Steve will field any questions about our future plans for a youth advisor.

James questioned the idea of sharing the straight-line graph, prepared by someone on the Finance Council, which shows our endowment plummeting to \$0 in 12 years if we maintain our current levels of endowment draw. There are many other factors not taken into consideration on that graph, such as growing our membership, liquidating some of our legacy assets, etc.

Steve feels we need to be realistic with people about the consequences of our spending for the future of the congregation.

### **Executive Session**

Rev. Rebecca left the meeting and we went into Executive Session to continue our discussion from our previous meeting on the recommendation from Ann D and James that we increase the salary for Rev. Rebecca for FY 2017, beginning July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016. A salary increase was **APPROVED** and will be included in the budget recommendation to the congregation.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ann Gilmore, Clerk