

The Parish Board of First Parish in Brookline has adopted a new policy for formation of the Ministerial Search Committee. The goals are to encourage the broadest possible participation by all members of the congregation and to insure the Ministerial Search Committee will fairly represent our mission. This process is adapted from the recommendations of the UUA.

An email message sent to all members of First Parish in Brookline requested up to five nominations. 88 people submitted nominations. From the tally of all submitted names, the Board contacted those who were most often mentioned until 12 who were willing to stand for election were identified. These nominees are

- Karla Baehr
- Ellie Boynton
- Emily Cherry
- Steve Davis
- Bijan Etemad-Gilbertson
- Charles Fuller
- Ann Gilmore
- Susan Larrabee
- Liz Martin
- Carol Spitzer
- Laura Walters
- Ron Wilkinson

Each nominee was asked to submit a photo and a bio of no more than 250 words, with the following questions in mind: What gifts, talents, perspectives do you bring that will enhance the Search Committee's ability to choose the best settled minister for First Parish? What does First Parish in Brookline mean to you? What would you like to share about how you identify? What has your involvement in the life of First Parish been up until now?

The remainder of the process is as follows:

**May 8** In-person early voting, as described in our current bylaws, begins.

**May 21** At the annual meeting, members in good standing will vote on Search Committee nominees. Each member will have 4 votes to cast, and each vote must be for a different individual on the ballot.

**June 5** The Parish Board will meet in executive session to count the ballots. The 4 individuals with the most votes will be elected. The Board will appoint 3 other people from the remaining names on the ballot, keeping in mind diversity and balance. The Parish Board will announce the members of the Ministerial Search Committee to the congregation; the congregation will not know who was elected and who was appointed.

As you review the bios here, please keep in mind the desired qualities of Ministerial Search Committee members:

- Respected and trusted by the congregation
- Good listener and good speaker
- Able to represent the congregation as a whole
- Invested in the congregation's future
- Reliable
- Able to commit to a long-term time-intensive process

## Karla Baehr



Thank you for considering me to serve on the Search Committee for our community's next called Minister. I came to First Parish a dozen years ago with my partner Ann Dinsmoor, and have found here a spiritual home and community that offers solace, connection and challenge. A baby boom lesbian, I feel like I can grow old(er) here!

I've had the chance at First Parish to facilitate dialogues and engage in deep conversations about "charged" subjects ranging from our legacy assets (Stained Glass Task Force) to whether or not to call Rev Jim as our senior minister (Congregational Engagement Committee). I've learned much about the many and diverse interests and voices within our community, and, as chair of the Parish Committee for two years, about the complexity and rewards of shared ministry. Now, I serve on the Diversity Caucus, Finance Committee, Canvass Team and UU Urban Ministry Board.

Outside of First Parish, I have worked in urban and suburban public education for over 40 years as a teacher and leader with lots of experience – alone, with teams and coaching others – in recruiting, interviewing, and choosing leaders.

I would hope to bring my experiences within and outside First Parish to bear as a member of your Search Committee. This is a really important moment in our 300-year history: we've been through challenging times that have brought pain and loss for many. I love this community – and would cherish the opportunity to bring my most generous, best self to this effort.

## Ellie Boynton



I have attended First Parish for 14 years and been a member since about 2005. During that time, I've watched my two children grow up in the church and participate in many rituals. I've also watched the church go through many changes with different ministers, music directors, and RE directors; some of those transitions have gone better than others. I love Unitarian Universalism's openness to different beliefs while also loving First Parish's majestic and historic building.

I am organized, thoughtful, observant, caring, and bring excellent communication and technical skills to the table. My first career was in financial services and commercial real estate. Now I run Garnet Solutions, a web development firm, and am a partner in Web-Care, a website maintenance service.

At First Parish, I've taught RE, managed costumes for the pageant, substituted for music directors, sung in the choir, been part of the Communications committee, and participated in a

Spiritual Autobiography class and Small Group Ministry. One of the original Pastoral Care Associates, I continue to serve on the Care committee. I have served as Chair of the Technology Committee for the past 10 years and work closely with our Parish Administrator. I built and continue to maintain the church's website.

On the home front in North Brookline, I am married to Scott Weighart. It brings me joy to watch our son Tim's Brookline HS track meets and visit with our daughter, Hannah, who is a sophomore in college.

I hope to help First Parish make the best possible transition into its next era.

## Emily Cherry



First Parish in Brookline is my home. Being part of our beloved community has allowed me to further check my own privilege, to listen with a more open heart, and to be a more honest and whole version of myself. I feel supported and valued here and believe every congregant deserves to feel the way I do when I walk through our doors.

Since becoming a member at FPB two and a half years ago, I have been involved with the Welcoming Team, Reverend Rebecca's Ministerial Fellowship Team, Chancel Choir, and the Challenge Program. I have given testimony during worship, including telling my coming out story in

2015 and participating in the more recent white supremacy teach-in. I also served as a marshal for our church group at the 2016 Boston Pride Parade and will do so again this year.

It is an honor to have been nominated to serve on the Search Committee for our next settled minister. Thank you for your thoughts!

## Steve Davis



As an out gay man who grew up in a church that didn't accept who I was born to be, I know what it means to not be included by my faith community. Since then, my husband Nick and I (I'm on the left in the photo) were married here at FPB, we said goodbye to my mom from that same altar and recently named our children from that same spot.

FPB has changed my life. It has helped me become more whole. It is the center of my spiritual home. I love our mission, our approach to governance and our commitment to hold love in our center.

In my professional life, I lead a Real World Data and Advanced Analytic Tools Division. It is my job to listen to the data and find connection between

unmet needs and healthcare opportunities. If I have the privilege to serve on your Search Committee, I will listen to each of you for your hopes, dreams and needs. I will hold your interests as my guiding light throughout the process.

I have served many roles throughout my 13-year tenure.

- Parish Committee member / Chair
- Committee on Ministries member / Chair
- Canvass Cochair
- Leadership Development Committee Chair
- Membership Committee Cochair
- Challenge Student Mentor (twice)
- Finance Council Member
- Congregational Engagement Committee Member

I have lived much of our recent history with you and am proud of where we have come. I would be honored to join the search committee but will bring my whole self to this search regardless of my role.

## Bijan Etemad-Gilbertson



Greetings FP friends,

My name is Bijan Etemad-Gilbertson. I'm the one on the right!

I have been coming to FP for the past 13 years. My husband and I stumbled upon this First Parish a few years before while we were doing speaking engagements for the "Freedom to Marry Coalition" – during our grassroots homosexual activist years.... At that time, we were thinking of starting a family and were desperately looking

to be part of a community that would be inspiring and supportive (our families are spread out between Minnesota, France, Iran and Washington).

I am an atheist with a keen penchant for the grace of Zen Buddhism. I love the notion of life / the universe being this giant puddle of mud, from which a beautiful lotus flower will bloom – once in a while. I leave my muddy boots at the door when I enter FP, and surround myself with beautiful lotus flowers.

I have been teaching OWL (Our Whole Lives – sex education for 8th grade FPer) for the past 10 years. I was also on the RE committee for 4 years, sang in the choir, served as a mentor for Challenge, among a long list of other activities.

What do I love most about FP? The people! I like to be surrounded by individuals who are better than me and who inspire me to be a better human being.

I would love for FP to have a minister who will nurture the sense of community and who will challenge us to become more generous in every way possible.

## Charles Fuller



I've worked as an executive recruiter for almost 20 years. I've screened, interviewed and hired at every level from Laborer to Vice President. I'm well practiced in listening deeply, first to consider the talents and treasures candidates bring to the table, and then to encourage team members to see the points of connection between our vision of the future and the strengths, desires and limitations of those candidates.

At FPB, I've found friends and fellow travelers, all hard at work on simple matters of justice, fairness and equity. The recent disheartening shakeup at the national level in the UU leadership makes it clear we need to reflect on what are some of the hidden costs associated with the

welcome we extend.

It's important to know that before I am an American, black, gay, spouse, parent, Baby Boomer and optimist... I am human! While shared experiences may first draw us together, my spiritual evolution relies on exploring the differences between my lived experience and that of others.

In terms of service, I'm proud to have been a member of the search committee that brought Keith Kirchoff to FPB. As co-chair of our Diversity Education Forum for some years, I learned how important it was to insist people move beyond apologies for their unintentionally hurtful words and gestures. To this day I see members of this church doing the hard work required to manage the impact of exclusion and erasure, and stay in right relation to others in our community. Blesséd be!

## Ann Gilmore



I love working in collaboration with others, am a good listener, speaker and writer, have taken on leadership roles in a reliable and trustworthy way, enjoy thinking "outside the box" and feel deeply invested in FPB's future. I have developed these abilities here at FPB, as well as during my twenty years as a civil rights lawyer focusing on employment law, and my subsequent twenty years as a special education teacher for 6th through 12th graders.

FPB is an oasis of love, spiritual growth and community for me. It is a place where I am invited and challenged to open my mind, heart, and spirit and live into my deepest values.

I identify as a lifelong learner and seeker of meaning, a white, female, social activist, and an elder, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother in an extended, blended, Mashpee Wampanoag family.

I have been actively involved at FPB for the last eight years. What attracted me were the creative and engaged worship services and the opportunities for deep exploration and relationships in spiritual autobiography workshops. I served as a member of the Parish Committee, including two years as clerk of the parish. I have been active on the Diversity Caucus and Immigration Justice Committee. Though not a regular teacher in the RE program, I have thoroughly enjoyed helping lead a number of Justice Seeking Sundays and a Children's Chapel, as well as serving as a mentor in the Challenge program last year.

## Susan Larrabee



“What does First Parish mean to you?” Our family came to FP in 2000. I decided early on that if parents “pick their battles” I was picking church. As a lifetime UU I couldn’t imagine not providing my kids with a spiritual base to take into the world; there were times in my life it was all sustaining.

So battle it was. One weekend Emma started complaining about going to church. After much thought I said, “Do you know how I feel about Papa? How much I love him?” They of course did. “Well, when you talk down about church, it feels like if you were to talk down about Papa”. They got it. That’s how I feel about FP.

There’s never been a question of whether to share my time and humble talents with FP, just a question of how. It is the UU way. Over the past 17 years I’ve taught RE classes, developed Affinity Groups, served on the Transition Committee, chaired the Worship Committee and volunteered enough hours for Whit to jokingly claim he is a “church widow”. As an act of love I consistently receive back more than I give.

As an HIV/AIDS social worker for 30 years I’ve honed skills in character assessment, working on a team, gaining the trust of people from all walks of life and maintaining air tight confidentiality. These will be useful in choosing our next minister. Perhaps more importantly, I pride myself in being dependable and a very hard worker.

## Liz Martin



I have heard that adults join faith communities when they have children or pain. Pain brought me to First Parish, but love is what is keeping me here. The first 2 years of my time at First Parish was devoted to healing and rebuilding. Then I joined the Buildings and Grounds committee believing I could participate in something that was literally concrete. A few years later I was asked to lead the Cherub choir, an interesting request given that I cannot sing nor do I have children. I soon discovered that one needs neither to get a group of kids to march, sing, and laugh. I have taken numerous classes with many of you and I have grown as I work to be my "authentic self" while also being in "right relations".

I have a combination of skills and strengths cultivated in my personal and professional life that will be valuable to the search committee. Professionally I have hired perhaps 40 people and negotiated numerous contracts. I have a balanced perspective as I work to understand both the complexity of people and situations. I place a lot of value on my compassion and empathy, which enable me to see things from multiple perspectives. At the same time I am a deeply rational person motivated by a desire to do good and right.

I am at a point in my life when I want to give back to First Parish. My pain is gone and my heart is full, I have so much to give.

## Carol Spitzer



First Parish has been a significant part of my life for about 25 years, since I first came here with my husband, Bob Williamson, our two sons, Ian and Ben, and our daughter, Meredith Williamson. We watched our kids grow up here, made many friends here, and opened our hearts here.

I've been happy to participate in many committees and activities over the years. One of my proudest moments was leading the effort to get the outside ramp installed, the inside ramp built, and moving coffee hour to Lyon chapel. all so the church could be more accessible. I've served on the Worship committee, Diversity caucus, and committee on Ministry. I've helped to teach the

Neighboring Faiths RE class a few times, and joined in many Social Action workshops and events. Along the way, I've gotten to work with and listen to many church members. I've been challenged to grow, to think, to see things from a different perspective, and to carry that out into other parts of my life. For the past five years, I've had the joy of singing in the services with other choir members.

I think I'm a good, empathic listener. I want our congregation to continue its involvement with more people and organizations in the wider community, to be committed to social justice, and to have meaningful, thoughtful, stimulating Sunday worship too. I'd like to help First Parish step into its future by finding our next settled minister.

## Laura Walters



I joined First Parish 36 years ago when I was pregnant with my first child. I thought I was coming for him, but I soon realized that I was there for myself. Over the years, First Parish has fed my soul. It gives me strength to be surrounded by people who believe that joy is a moral imperative and who endeavor to make the world a better place. It enables me to go into the world and fight the good fight.

I've been involved in many activities: serving on the RE committee; leading the former annual fair for 5 years; co-chairing the annual canvass for 7 years; working in the nursery for about 15 years; and serving on the last 2 settled ministerial search committees (co-chairing the last one). I'm currently a Deacon, Pastoral Care Associate, and greeter.

In thinking of what I might bring to the search committee, I'm reminded of how I felt while serving on the last one. I believe I brought balance and an even temper to that committee and an ability to represent the whole congregation. When I read the sermons and met with candidates, I listened not only with my eyes and ears, but the eyes and ears of First Parish. I asked myself not only who made my heart sing, but who would make First Parish's heart sing. I hope I would do that again, knowing that it is a different First Parish and that I am representing a changed and evolving congregation.

## Ron Wilkinson



I am a 3rd generation American of Afro-Caribbean descent who grew up in New York and have lived in the Boston area for the last 40 years. Almas Dossa, my wife of 30 years, grew up in India and Pakistan and immigrated to the US in her early 20's. We met in Boston nearly 35 years ago through our international folk dancing hobby.

Almas and I officially became Unitarian/Universalists when we joined First Parish Brookline 14 years ago, having sought a spiritual community that would honor both my liberal Christian and Almas's liberal Muslim backgrounds. We have also developed a strong affinity for Buddhist meditation over the past several years.



Believing deeply that caring people, working together, must be the ones to create the beloved community we dream of, I have actively both contributed to (and benefited from) life at First Parish Brookline throughout our years here. Activities have included:

- Small Group Ministry both as a regular participant and a host/facilitator
- Worship Committee both as a regular participant and as co-chair
- Meditation Group participant and leader
- Diversity Caucus both as a regular participant and as co-chair
- Second Minister Search Committee as participant
- Beloved Conversations workshop series on racial justice as participant
- Salsa, Soul, and Spirit workshop series on multiculturalism as participant
- Giving testimony at worship services
- Annual Cape Cod Retreat as enthusiastic participant

I believe this broad involvement will enable me to be a strong contributor to the ministerial search committee.