



A WELCOMING UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

May 11, 2015

Dear Member of First Parish in Brookline,

Join us on Sunday, May 31<sup>st</sup>, from 1:00 to 2:30 for our Annual Meeting. We plan to celebrate people and programs so please join us! Child care provided!

Our Agenda

Call to Order by Moderator  
Chalice Lighting and Opening Hymn  
Approve Minutes of 2014 Annual Meeting  
Recognize and elect New Members  
Elect Officers and Committee Members  
Vote on FY 2015-16 Budget  
*List items being discussed*  
Any Other Business  
Closing Hymn  
Adjourn

Hoping to see you at 1:00 pm in Lyon Chapel on Sunday, May 31<sup>st</sup>!

Steve Davis,  
Parish Committee Chair

382 Walnut Street  
Brookline, MA 02445-7563  
617-566-1933

### **New Parish Members**

The following 20 people have signed the membership book since our last Annual Meeting:

Ellen Blaney	Lilly Marcelin
Jonathan Cave	Anne Modena
Emily Cherry	Philip Moremen
Micaela Coady	Amy Morrissey
Nathan Freitas	Matthew O'Rourke
Russell Geer	Alison Plante
Jennifer Goldson	Douglas Plante
Jennifer Goulart	Luisa Raposo
Robson Goulart	Caterina Rodriguez
Fernanda Justo	Sara Warren

### **Officers and Standing Committee Members**

The Leadership Development Committee nominates the following members:

For Clerk of the Parish	Ann Gilmore
For Treasurer	Anastacia Raczek
For Moderator	Anne Copeland
For the Parish Committee	Michele David Benjamin Davis Steve Davis James Shillaber
For Leadership Development Committee	Suzanne Federspiel

Respectfully submitted,  
Ann Gilmore  
Clerk of the Parish

**FIRST PARISH IN BROOKLINE**  
**Minutes of the 297th Annual Meeting**  
**May 18, 2014**

**Call to Order and quorum established by Moderator, Janet Sanders at 1:00 pm**  
**Chalice Lighting and Opening Hymn #123**

**Minutes**      The minutes of the 2013 Annual Meeting were **approved**.

**Recognize and Elect New Members**

The following people signed the membership book since the 2013 Annual Meeting:

Luis Aguilera	Kimberly Gladman Jackson
Jessica Aguilera-Steinert	Meredith Hall
Kathleen Burck	A. Mitra Morgan
David Cave	James Shillaber
Peggy Cave	Kim Whelan
Fatemah Hajebi	Charlotte Willett

**A motion to accept these new members was seconded and passed unanimously**

**Elect Officers and Committee Members**

The following officers and committee members were nominated by the Leadership Development Committee, except the new LDC member, who was nominated by the Parish Committee:

Clerk of the Parish	Ann Gilmore
Treasurer	Stacey Raczek
Parish Committee	Sue Andrews
	Elena, Garofoli
	Corey Thomas
Moderator	Janet Sanders
Religious Exploration Committee	Jeff Cadow
	Richard Day
	Elizabeth McIntire
Leadership Development Comm.	Margie Beal

**A motion to accept these nominations was seconded and approved.**

**Discussion and Vote on FY2015 Budget**

Treasurer Ryan Kim presented and visually projected on a screen an overview of Fiscal Year 2014 and the proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2015.

For the current FY14, the projected pledge income of \$378,000 is on target, and represents an approximately \$40,000 increase over FY13. However, excluding the \$100,000 gift from Jane Hoey's estate, overall income is trending \$14,000 below budget, due to declining income from fundraising, building rentals and Sunday offering collections. On the expense side, building operation expenses exceeded budget by \$12,000 due to a cold and snowy winter. The expectation is that we will end up drawing \$152,000 or 5.8% from our endowment to cover our expenses. In addition to this, we withdrew \$90,000 from our endowment to pay a previously incurred bill for a stained glass window repair.

The proposed budget for FY15 (July 1, 2014- June 30, 2015) shows an increase in both income and expenses over FY14, resulting in a projected 5.5% funding need from our endowment. We are estimating \$420,000 in pledge income for the upcoming year, representing an 11% increase over the prior fiscal year. We have eliminated fundraising events from the budget and reduced expectations for Sunday offering collections. On the expense side, the budget assumes a .75FTE interim minister, no ministerial intern, and only nominal salary increases for staff. In addition, we are not able to fund the following three items we had hoped to include in our budget:

- Larger salary increases for our staff –we continue to be towards the bottom end or, in some cases, below the UUA Fair Compensation guidelines for a congregation of our size and socio/economic area. Approximate cost – up to \$30,000 to get into the mid-ranges.
- Youth Minister/Leader at .25 FTE. Approximate cost - \$8,000
- Consultancy with Mark Ewart re sustainability. Approximate cost – \$10,000

Questions were asked and answered regarding the conditions and needs of our building, our endowment, and the status of our decision to sell our silver. Our endowment currently stands at \$2,722,091. Our projected draw for FY15 will be in the range of 5% -6%. We are trying to find the right consultant at the Museum of Fine Arts to assist us in the process of selling our silver.

It was also suggested that we adopt a policy to use microphones consistently at our congregational meetings.

**A motion to accept the proposed FY2015 Budget was seconded and approved.**

#### **Discussion and Vote on proposed By-Law changes.**

Parish Committee Chair Steve Davis reviewed the efforts of the Parish Committee to amend some of our by-laws, last updated in 1986, in accordance with our current practices. We were greatly aided in this effort by our field education intern, Sean Neil-Barron, as well as by the engagement of members of our congregation. The proposed changes included clarifying the duties of the Clerk, the Treasurer, and the Moderator, clarifying the role and changing the name of the Nomination Committee to the Leadership Development Committee, removing the Religious Exploration Committee from the by-laws to allow it to operate more flexibly as do most church committees, and removing the defunct Finance Committee. These proposals were mailed to the members of the congregation in early April. See attached Proposed By-Law Amendments dated April 7, 2014.

Steve mentioned that some potentially more complex by-law changes to be explored in future years, include:

- the age and responsibilities of congregational membership
- the process for ministerial call and the role of the minister
- the possibility of absentee ballots

In addition, the Parish Committee, aided greatly by the work of Sean Neil-Barron, has collected, updated and compiled our congregational policies into a comprehensive Policy Manual which is available in the office of Sonya Abbott, our Church Administrator.

Discussion of this year's proposed changes focused on the removal of the Finance Committee as a standing committee in our By-Laws. This committee used to manage

our endowment investments. This role has been outsourced to the UUA and is obsolete. We still have a Finance Council which serves in an advisory capacity, although it has not met in a while. A question was raised about our ability to participate in decisions affecting our endowment investments. Kimberly Jackman, who has recently become a member of our congregation, serves on the UUA Endowment Committee and can be approached for questions. There will also be a resolution brought before the UUA General Assembly in June regarding divesting endowment funds from fossil fuel companies. Interest was expressed in including more information about our endowment in our Annual Report.

**A motion to accept the proposed By-Law Amendments detailed in the April 7 attachment was seconded and approved.**

### **Report on Search for Second Minister**

Gerry Leader reported on the year-long process of the Second Minister Search Committee (SMSC). Last fall they conducted a congregational survey, and interviewed staff and prior search committee members. They prepared and submitted an extensive Congregational Record to the UUA in November, including a 500 word summary of what we are seeking. Seventeen candidates applied.

The SMSC reviewed and ranked the applications, conducted phone interviews with seven candidates, and chose three finalists based on the phone interviews, reference checks, and sample sermons. They interviewed each finalist for three hours at FPB on a Saturday, observed the candidate preaching at a neutral pulpit on a Sunday, and engaged in further conversation with the candidate at lunch after the service. One of the finalists moved out of state, one was not considered a good fit, and one declined our offer.

The SMSC then recommended an increase in salary for the position from \$34,000 to \$38,000, which the Parish Committee approved. They entered the second round of search with the UUA, but did not find a suitable match.

The SMSC subsequently recommended, and the Parish Committee approved, extending the interim ministry of Rev. Maria Cristina for another year.

**Following this announcement, Rev. Maria Cristina was given a standing ovation!**

A suggestion was made to improve the salary we are offering for the position of second minister and Steve responded that we need to look at our salary structures as a whole.

### **Other Business**

Janet Sanders announced that the Parish Committee had voted to host the ordination of Sarah Napoline, our ministerial intern, at FPB in the fall.

**This decision was unanimously affirmed!**

The meeting **adjourned** at approximately 2:30 pm with the singing of Hymn # 118.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Gilmore  
Clerk of the Parish

## **SENIOR MINISTER'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2015**

Dear Ones,

I love this community, who we have been, who we are today, and who we are becoming. This is my tenth annual report, so I thought I would look back over those years, at what has changed, and what remained the same, over all this time. Rev. Martha's and my first report to you focused on learning right relationship, deepening spiritual conversations, and building membership. Our congregation certainly has grown over the years in how we treat each other, our engagement with spiritual conversations, and we have also doubled in terms of total membership. Our second report focused on being a Welcoming Congregation, creating Small Group Ministries, and developing financially sustainable financial policies, all of which are still very much with us, and have become part of who we are as a congregation. Our third report celebrated our substantial growth in church attendance, RE enrollment, our growing number and level of pledges, as well as the success of our health and safety project for our historic building. Multicultural diversity, for the first time, became an explicit goal of our community.

The tone of our FY2009 report changed dramatically, recognizing that our larger culture was in crisis, one which we described as "economical, financial, spiritual and structural in nature," and one which we were confident this nearly 300 year old congregation could survive. And the following year, which marked the 5 year anniversary of our co-ministry here, was marked by a number of milestones: active membership up 85% in 5 years, Sunday morning attendance up 80%, RE attendance up slightly, pledging up 90% and 39 new members that year (highest ever in one year). The following year our continued growth brought us from Midsize I to Midsize II as a congregation, and to the highest Sunday morning attendance and level of pledging ever. Yet losses on investment assets, and financial hardship from the Great Recession, were rocking many of the families within our congregation, and forced us to cut back levels of paid employment for some of our staff, even as we took a serious look at our deferred maintenance, which looked increasingly difficult to adequately address. By the following year, thanks to the movie contract, we added \$60,000 to our building reserve fund to address deferred maintenance, had begun to restructure our staff, renewed our energy in worship, and began developing governance appropriate to the congregation's size and complexity. 2012 was the year that Rev. Martha retired.

In the FY13 report, my first as your sole senior minister, I observed the congregation continued to recover from the effects of the Great Recession, our endowment growing again in value, and our best ever pledge campaign was bringing us closer to financial sustainability. Our congregation moved towards greater diversity and more strongly towards social justice as a core activity of this community. Last year's annual report spoke about the growing impact of non-traditional family structures on our RE program and community, the UUA financial consultant's conclusion that we were too dependent on a few generous families for funding our programs, and that we needed to significantly increase giving by our lower tier givers (those pledging less than \$2000 annually). We celebrated bringing our endowment draw under 25% of our overall budget for the first time in a generation, while also growing our written polices so that we can better be a program size church. It felt like we were on the cusp of becoming a healthy, financially sustainable mid-size II UU congregation, but we certainly can't take it for granted.

This year we are experiencing more departing members than new members, a continued slow decline in average Sunday morning attendance, with a more dramatic decline in average RE attendance, and our annual pledge campaign, even after focusing aggressively on those pledges suggested by our UUA consultant, looks as if it will roughly match last year (which was an all-time high). We continued to refine the relationship between the senior minister, all other staff, and the Parish Committee. I have been gratified that our social justice advocates have raised the issue of fair compensation so loudly in our spring budget hearings, so that our sustainability of staff and programs is accorded equal weight with the sustainability of our endowment and our physical assets. This year we have made enormous strides in terms of becoming a more pluralistic, multicultural, anti-racist, anti-oppression congregation, with work that will continue through Beloved Conversations going forward. We have developed far more affect in our Sunday morning worship services, often with enormously positive responses, but we are also aware that further changes in worship are warranted in order to better meet the diverse needs of this congregation. The Parish Committee made real progress in helping us arrive at a mission and vision statement for our congregation, last revised in 1992, and I am hopeful this will help us all to discern our best choices about what to fund and what to defund in order to better meet the mission and vision of this community. Through it all, it is a blessing to serve this congregation as senior minister.

We have an extraordinarily good staff team for this size congregation including Maria Cristina Vlassidis Burgoa, Rebecca Keller Scholl, Keith Kirchoff, Sonya Abbott, Juan Miranda, Kristen McIntire, and Frank Peace, but most of us are only paid part time. So, if we can grow in numbers and pledges from here, then I hope we can keep this team together for several more years, growing their paid hours until each who wishes to is working and being paid full time. Nancy Natowitz left for a more full time job in May and we are looking to replace her with another part time secretarial assistant. In our shared leadership model, I am particularly grateful for our lay leaders, with Steve Davis completing his second year as Parish Chair, Ann Dinsmoor stepping up to fulfill that role next year, Stacey Raczek as treasurer bringing back the Finance Council and leading remarkable budget hearings, and Ann Gilmore admirably serving as clerk. Leading an increasingly diverse congregation through a time of such dynamic change, the staff is very grateful for the collaboration and support of our lay leaders; we really can do more together than we could ever do alone. It is an incredible honor to be senior minister for a congregation facing such changes and opportunity. I thank my lucky stars that you called me as your senior minister. I love you all dearly.

With love and gratitude,  
Rev. Dr. Jim Sherblom

## **REPORT OF THE PARISH COMMITTEE**

Congregational Year 2014-2015

We, the members of the Parish Committee (PC) would like to open this year's report with recognition that our greatest strength is the love and participation of every member in this community. The most frequently mentioned word that we heard from you, our members and friends, as part of the mission statement development work that occurred this year, was "community". We believe that it is this sense of community that will sustain us – together. It is why a centerpiece of our efforts this year was to work with you to craft a mission statement that honors the love that brings us together, the values we share and the fairness for which we strive. We believe the mission statement will serve as a guiding light for goal setting, decision making and to remind us why we participate in this volunteer spiritual community. It has already served to remind us to keep fairness in the center of our budgeting efforts – even before it has been made official through a vote at annual meeting.

One of our overarching goals is to bring transparency to First Parish in Brookline governance and its processes. We were grateful when this transparency was recognized by several of you at our budget hearing meetings. But beyond transparency, it was your engagement in authentic dialogue and conviction towards our values that created space for us to recognize that fairness must be the centerpiece of the First Parish in Brookline budget. The meetings were dynamic, full of love and spiritual for all who participated. Thank you.

For the second year in a row, we announced our Parish Committee goals to you at the beginning of the year. We have made this our practice to keep you informed and to hold ourselves accountable. As a governing board of a program sized church, we depend on our meetings for decision-making, which means much of the work must occur outside of our meeting time. So, we divided into sub-teams to make this work. We herein report our progress towards those goals.

**GOAL #1:** Update the bylaws to provide clarity and transparency about the congregation's organizational structures and decision-making.

Corey Thomas led this sub-team with Ann Congleton and Steve Davis as team members. Focus on organizational structure and decision-making generated a considerable amount of thoughtful and dynamic conversation at multiple Parish Committee meetings, a ½ day workshop with Doug Zelinski (The UUA's Leadership Development Director for the New England Region) and at a meeting for all interested members. Parish Committee members were accompanied by members of the Committee on Ministries (COM) and the Leadership Development Committee (LDC) of the ½ day workshop. These dialogues, as well as those with the senior minister and staff team were helpful in providing insights as to how to coordinate more proactively, based on input from members, lay leaders and members of the staff team. This process helped the PC recognize that the by-laws may be sufficient but our organization would benefit from a bit more structure. This summer, the Parish Committee will be chartering three committees and task forces; an HR Task Force, a Task Force on Mission and Ministries and a Stewardship Committee in order to help us step more deeply into right relations with our staff team and to stay connected around priorities, goal setting and feedback community-wide. Although the charters have not yet been crafted, we expect the overarching goals to be as follows:

The HR Task Force will be reinstated for the 2015-2016 church year to respond to the Parish Committee's expressed desire to more widely involve members of the congregation in assessment of program effectiveness and in understanding and appreciation of the challenges of the work of each program staff leader. This process will likely be facilitated by way of the a 360 degree review or some process that is considered appropriate by the committee and staff. Program effectiveness will be assessed in relation to our new Mission.

The Task Force on Mission and Ministries will support the Parish Committee's intention for the goals and programs developed by all our committees to be faithful to the intent of the Mission. In so doing, we will be bound by common purpose, as we become a Mission-driven congregation.

The 2015-2016 church year will be a year of new beginnings as we begin to live into our mission driven strategy. These task forces will help to determine whether this kind of leadership supports our common focus and the work of other already chartered committees, such as the Parish Committee, Committee on Ministry, and Leadership Development Committee.

The Stewardship Committee will be intended to bring predictability and spirituality to our revenue generation efforts (pledge campaigns and fundraising efforts) through increased awareness and financial stewardship. As a growing organization with growing complexities in our finances, we need to ensure that financial opportunities and tradeoffs (e.g. our commitment to fair compensation and a sustainable withdrawal of the endowment) are commonly understood by all members. We strive to be a community where awareness of church finances enables its members to commit to their financial contributions responsibly and in keeping with their financial wherewithal while feeling appreciated and fulfilled for doing what they can.

We believe these committees will be important in helping us live into our mission together as a community as well as managing the increasing complexities of being a program-sized church.

**GOAL #2:** Develop a broadly-endorsed mission/vision statement for adoption at the 2015 Annual Meeting that is focused on "how First Parish Brookline can make love and justice real in the world" and can guide future congregational decision-making.

Ann Dinsmoor led this sub-team with Sue Andrews, Greg Buckland, Elena Garofoli and Ann Gilmore as team members. The First Parish in Brookline congregation and lay leaders were engaged in multiple venues and iterations throughout this church year. All of your thoughtful and loving input has been heard and carefully woven into the mission/vision statement that will be considered for a vote at this year's Annual Meeting. The process was community building and generative. The Parish Committee is excited to bring this mission/vision statement to the community for a vote; we believe it will serve as a guiding light in all that we do together.

**GOAL #3:** Begin to define organizational relationships by working with the LDC to implement the committee charter process with 4 pilot committees for approval by the Parish Committee in the spring of 2015.

Elena Garofoli led this sub-team with Ann Congleton and Ann Gilmore as team members. A committee charter template was proposed by the LDC and approved by the Parish Committee in the fall of this year. The Parish Committee is planning to review the first four committee charters at its June meeting.

**GOAL #4:** Begin to align our shared mission, financial resources, and diverse needs to best serve the long term needs of the congregation.

This goal sub-team was co-led by Stacey Raczek and Sue Andrews with Steve Davis as team member. As Treasurer, Stacey led the charge of reinstating and leading the Finance Council. This is a key initiative given the growth of our budget over recent years; the Parish Committee is grateful for the financial insights and recommendations provided by this council. Additionally, as you will see in the Finance Council's report, there is progress towards a number of initiatives including, but not limited to, selling the silver based on two congregational votes, bringing transparency to the budgeting process and ensuring that our budget is a reflection of our shared values.

By way of the lay leadership of the Finance Council and your participation in budget hearings, we took a major step forward in aligning our budgeting – how we spend money - with our shared values. This year, we are recommending that we close the gap between our existing staff wages and the mid-point of the UUA's newly released guidelines for our mid-level-2 sized church in our geography. Next year, we will be taking the appropriate steps to make this practice of fair compensation more sustainable by finding ways to reduce the withdrawal on our endowment. This will require congregation-wide dialogue as we consider the 3 primary opportunities to make this practice sustainable – growth in membership, growth in pledges and consideration towards liquidation of some of our physical assets.

Although much of the Parish Committee's focus was on its four goals this year, it wouldn't be church if we didn't have other key initiative actions to take. Other key Parish Committee votes and activities this year:

- In November the PC voted to approve the recommendation of the Second Minister Search Committee to extend an offer to Rev. Maria Cristina as Assistant Minister. The PC authorized Rev. Dr. Jim Sherblom (Rev. Jim) to draft an offer of employment, which was later approved by the PC. Announcements were made and Rev. Maria Cristina transitioned from the Interim Assistant Minister to Assistant Minister in December. The PC is grateful for the tireless work of the Second Minister Search Committee in this their second year of service. We are looking forward to experiencing the growing and maturing ministry of Rev. Maria Cristina going forward
- In January, the PC voted to approve the recommendation of Rev. Jim to extend an offer to Mandy Beal to serve for 2 years as a student-intern minister with a focus on developing a model for youth ministry based on her experience in this area. Mandy will be joining the staff team in August for 2 years.
- Throughout this year, we have been in thoughtful dialogue with Rev. Jim in an effort to bring more balance, distinction and coordination to our roles as senior minister and governing board. The genesis of this effort was likely our work on Goal I above. However, the loving and sometimes anxious dialogue helped spark what may be a new paradigm for First Parish in Brookline:
  - An assertion that as a program sized church, lay leadership must assume responsibility for key issues such as governance, fiscal matters and organizational issues, and
  - A recognition that as Senior Minister with staff reporting to him, Rev. Jim depends on the goal setting processes and feedback from lay leaders and members

This new paradigm helped fuel the direction of the HR Task Force and the Task Force on Mission and Ministries described herein.

- The Parish Committee and Senior Minister have recognized a decline of approximately 19% in Sunday Services since peak attendance in 2011 and 2012. A similar decline has been recognized in Religious Exploration attendance. This trend has been experienced in other congregations according to the UUA. However, given that we have a new ministry we are looking to understand the drivers of this trend here at First Parish in Brookline. We have begun reaching out to a representative sample of lay leaders and participants past and present to solicit their feedback. A report will be forthcoming in the fall.

This has been a year of discernment and a commitment to live into our values on the Parish Committee and more broadly at First Parish in Brookline. We wish everyone a warm and energizing summer and hope to see you at our summer services.

We are sad to see Greg Buckland, Ann Congleton and Corey Thomas leave the committee at the end of this year. We are grateful for their wonderful contributions and their beautiful friendship.

In faith and on behalf of the Parish Committee,  
Steven Davis

Parish Committee Members:

*Sue Andrews, Greg Buckland, Ann Congleton, Steve Davis (Chair), Ann Dinsmoor (Chair Elect), Elena Garofoli, Ann Gilmore (Clerk), Stacey Raczek, (Treasurer), Corey Thomas (Vice Chair)*

## **ASSISTANT MINISTER'S ANNUAL REPORT 2014-2015**

On December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2014 I was blessed with being consecrated as your Assistant Minister. It was a deeply moving ceremony that included smudging, laying-on of hands, beautiful music, and the reaffirmation of the covenantal relationship between this congregation and myself. The significance of this ceremony is with me every day as I joyfully recommit myself to journeying with you as your Minister.

One of the biggest and best changes that took place during this church year was moving to Brookline. This has made me more available and flexible for scheduling pastoral care appointments and participating in evening committee meetings and events. Living in the community that I serve has given me a new sense of belonging. It brings me closer to the local issues affecting our schools, neighborhoods, and our families. Pastoral Care has become a major part of my ministry and through it, I have strengthened my relationship and connection to individuals and the congregation as a whole. It is indeed a blessing to be more accessible and be able to effectively respond when congregants reach out to me for guidance and support.

My new role as Assistant Minister and my move have resulted in an increase in my hours (from 50% to 75%) and giving priority to Pastoral Care, leading innovative and meaningful worship services, and working closely with the Diversity Caucus, The Social Action Committee, and the Immigration Justice Committee. In addition, I meet with the Committee on Ministry on a monthly basis in order to fulfill the requirements for obtaining Final Fellowship as a UU Minister. The guidance and support I receive from the COM has been tremendously important in helping me to engage in deep reflection to enrich and improve my ministerial skills in eight areas: Counseling and Pastoral Care, Practical Arts, Organizational Ministry, Personal and Professional Growth, Teaching, Worship, Denominational Activities, and Prophetic Outreach.

This year I continued to work in collaboration with our Staff Team to create worship services that articulate our mission. As a congregation going through an intentional transformation towards becoming more Multi-Cultural, inclusive, and radically welcoming, I was especially grateful for the opportunity to preach on Immigration Justice, Adoptive Families, and the connection between Justice, Love, and Fair Compensation. The *Las Posadas* event on December 14th and the Immigration Justice service "*Corazones Sin Fronteras/Hearts Without Borders*" on February 8th allowed us to open our hearts and our church to families from Chelsea and East Boston. Among them were families who experienced first-hand fleeing from violence, crossing the desert, being incarcerated, having a child imprisoned, and living with fear day to day. During that service, we embodied radical hospitality and welcomed our community partners Centro Presente and The Chelsea Collaborative with compassion and solidarity. In a moment of true interfaith and multi-cultural significance, we dedicated Gladys Vega's grandson, Armani, as our Spanish for Social Justice Choir sang "*Paz, queremos paz, y libertad en este mundo/Peace, we want peace and liberty in this world*".

During the service "Loving Beyond Belief: Honoring Adoptive Families" we heard powerful testimonies from 5 families about what it means to be an adoptive parent. This moving service addressed the complexities, challenges, and joys of adoption, giving voice to the lived experience of a growing number of multi-racial families whose courage and love shape our own faith formation.

On Canvass Sunday, I challenged myself to deliver a sermon that would encourage a shift towards a spirit of abundance and to consider pledging to support our programs as an act of love. This sermon provided another opportunity for the Parish Committee to lead congregation-wide conversations about living into our mission as a justice seeking community and the need to bring all staff up to fair compensation levels.

This year we continued the “Salsa, Soul & Spirit” workshops to explore different models of multicultural leadership styles. We also formed a new “Spanish for Social Justice” class which is open to all. This class invites people with various levels of Spanish proficiency to learn vocabulary that can be directly applied in our work in solidarity with immigrant families and community partners.

I have also been blessed with opportunities to serve our wider UUA community of faith as President of DRUUMM (Diverse Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries), member of the UUA’s Council for Cross Cultural Engagement, Steering Committee member of Commit2Respond (a UUA environmental justice project), member of the Boston New Sanctuary Movement, and collaborative work with ARE (Allies for Racial Equity). In my ongoing efforts to provide opportunities for us to engage in intersectional approaches to complex challenges, I was part of the planning committee and delivered one of the keynote speeches at the Annual ARE Conference “Healing the Waters: Decolonizing our Communities and the Climate Change Movement” on March 15th In New Orleans, making the connections between racism, classism, and environmental devastation.

Looking ahead, I am excited that we have started the first round of Beloved Conversations to help us learn new ways of being that encourage us to connect on a deeper level as we continue building the Beloved Community together. A special thanks to my mentor Rev. Jim, the members of the Diversity Caucus, the Immigration Justice Committee, the Committee on Ministry, the Parish Committee, the Spanish for Social Justice class, and all the members of our dedicated and awesome Staff. Thank you all for your light. *Gracias!*

With Much Love,  
Rev. Maria Cristina

## **AFFILIATE MINISTER**

I serve as a community minister focusing on spiritual care for animal caregivers, particularly helping with end-of-life issues and memorials. I work with people and their animal companions privately, as well as with the clients of New England Pet Hospice and Home Care. I also offer spiritual direction, and this past year a few of my bereavement clients have found their grief has led them on a quest for deeper meaning.

I organized and promoted a Blessing of the Animals on October 5th, 2014 in Pierce Hall. Matt Laurence and his string band offered lively music to accompany our celebration of the gifts animals bring to our lives.

This past year I offered pet loss circles again on August 24<sup>th</sup>, December 7, and another on March 15th. Those who attended appreciated the chance to remember their beloved companions and have their grief truly heard. These and the blessing service are open to the community at large.

In February, believe it or not, I offered this congregation a workshop called “Making Light in the Darkness.” We found it very apt this winter, and it was heartening to find sources of light together, sharing stories and practices, tears and support. In February I also offered a “Resilience and Ritual” workshop to the care team and congregants at the UU church in Needham.

Finally, I’ve been asked by congregations all over the state to lead worship, to share what I’m learning about our connectedness with all life, and to sometimes leading animal blessings. This month, with Rebecca Keller-Scholl’s invaluable wisdom and help, I’ll offer a multi-generational worship service on spiritual journeys, supported by Keith Kirchoff and the choir. This service will honor our youth who are bridging.

Going forward, I expect to continue with these forms of ministry. Rev. Jim and I will talk soon about our vision of this ministry’s role for the coming year, and I’m hoping to offer an animal blessing service in the fall and pet loss circles as needed.

I’m very grateful to this congregation, especially to those who’ve helped with the various services, to the ministers, and to the incredible staff who have been so supportive of my work. If only you could hear what a balm it is to the seeking, the anxious, the confused, and the bereaved who are served in this way! I couldn’t do it without you. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,  
Rev. Eliza

## **ARCHIVES PROJECT**

**Project Manager:** Elizabeth Cousins

**Purpose / Mission Statement:** To organize and describe First Parish records.

### **Accomplishments Past Year:**

- Shelf list completed.
- One museum object digitized.
- Metadata for sermons begun.

### **Tasks Next Year:**

- Complete sermons metadata & oversee digitization through Digital Commonwealth.
- Possible supervise Simmons College student interns to process and prepare series descriptions.
- Contact Harvard Divinity Archives to arrange for deposit.
- Thanking: Boston Public Library Digitizing Team: Tom Blake, Danni Pucci, Jake Sadow

## **BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS COMMITTEE**

*Report to First Parish in Brookline Annual Meeting May 2015*

Buildings and Grounds supports the church with planning and capital projects. Our budget complements the Maintenance budget to allow our physical plant to serve our religious community. We very much appreciate the way our church administrator Sonya Abbott – ably supported by custodians Frank Peace and Juan Miranda – work together with us.

### **The year in review**

Capital projects since the last Annual Report with the Committee Members who helped supervise them:

- Refinished the floor in Pierce Hall (\$5,000) - Sonya
- A valley on the rear of the sanctuary was replaced and gutters added back (\$24,000) – Clint
- The security and functionality of the sanctuary and lower entrance doors were improved. The antique nature of the doors and associated hinges continues to be an operational challenge (\$6,350 to date) - Will
- Replaced a receiver tank for the heating system (\$3,612) - Sonya
- Miscellaneous organ repairs (\$1,090) - David
- The remainder of the stone retaining wall along Walnut Street had many of its stones reset (\$300). - Clint
- The Building and Grounds Committee identified building improvement initiatives beyond B&G's scheduled maintenance purview and budget. These were put forward as potential projects for consideration if a capital campaign were undertaken. A visioning session was held with the various Committee Chairs in October, 2013 at which the following improvement concepts were presented - Will:
  1. Improve the accessibility and safety of the sanctuary entrance
  2. Improve the outdoor areas to be part of the spiritual and social life of the Church
  3. Make "green" sustainability improvements that lessen our carbon footprint such as solar electricity
  4. Be good stewards of the building by repairing the Tower
  5. Create more classrooms and accessible toilet rooms in the ground floor of Parish Hall
  6. Renovate Pierce Hall to better meet the multifunctional space needs of the Church
  7. Renovate the Sanctuary to improve worship experience

This past fiscal year, B&G the annual funding from the endowment was \$40,000. Note that Buildings and Grounds is funded by a dedicated reserve account. Our spending in any given year may be more or less than our endowment transfer. The account may be supplemented by grants and special donations. We always maintain a minimum amount for unexpected events.

Regarding the Tower, the crack gauges have remained stable. We remain committed to restoring the entire tower as soon as possible to address structural and envelope integrity issues. Funding for this remains an open issue but could be assisted by a capital campaign.

We renewed our membership with Massachusetts Interfaith Power & Light, an advocacy group, which also provides us with advice on green projects as needed.

### **Upcoming**

We are guided by a long-term plan and continue to address our deferred maintenance, new safety issues, and accessibility and green projects. This plan allocates expenditure for specific items on a yearly basis projected out 20 years. One important goal is to maintain the integrity

of the building envelope, and we expect to complete a couple such projects in the next year. The 2016 fiscal year B&G funding remains at the reduced level of \$40 thousand.

As always, we rely on our members and seek additional volunteers for initiating projects. Join us and help achieve our vision of making this place truly welcoming and environmentally sustainable.

Respectfully submitted by the Building and Grounds Committee,  
Clint Richmond & Will Spears, Co-Chairs, Greg Caplan, Sam Dennis, Tim Dailey and  
David Hawkins

## **BUILDING OPERATIONS**

### **2014 - 2015**

*Building Operations, according to the budgeted line items, encompasses overseeing the recurring daily operating expenses incurred throughout the year from insurance to ground maintenance, fuel oil, snow removal, utilities and unplanned repairs that are always a surprise. This will be my seventh year overseeing general building operations.*

Last year (2013-2014) I reported that winter was a killer. Well this year 2014-2015 it was worse and I wouldn't have thought that possible. We had snow, snow, snow, and more snow. Over 9 feet of snow all totaled and it took its toll on us all. The building barely survived and there were days when we couldn't keep up with the ice dams and leaks. We had leaks in the corridors, in the doorways, in Pierce Hall, in Dana and in the kitchen to name just a few of the places. There were times we just couldn't keep up with them no matter what we did. Our outside roofing contractor spent hours breaking up ice dams one week, only to have to return the next week or day and deal with many more again all in a different locations.

Fortunately our furnaces continued to work well during all of this, with only a few minor glitches and other than the winter, all is surprisingly quiet. Our grounds are maintained by an outside service that includes not only mowing and plowing, but both spring and fall cleanup which is major since the building is surrounded by many trees.

Thankfully, in addition to so many of you that help keep First Parish a pleasant, friendly and safe building open to not only its members, but the public at large, we have two individuals that work very hard to accomplish this. Frank Peace our Senior Sexton, knows where everything is, how it works and will normally come back to work on a moment's notice when there are problems, even though he suffered a major heart attack this past year and since his recovery has slowly been working himself back into a normal routine. Now because we can't depend on Frank as we used to, we rehired Juan Miranda in the fall of 2014 to assist more fully and he has been great. Between the two of them, First Parish is well cared for.

To repeat what I've said in the past ... We are a tiny village that quietly works behind the scenes keeping First Parish a welcoming building, vibrantly alive, and I certainly could not accomplish any of the tasks without all of you. Thank you all for your continued assistance and support.

Gratefully submitted,  
Sonya A. Abbott,  
Parish Administrator

## **CANVASS / FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN REPORT**

Our Canvass this year was focused on the theme of Building Blessed Community. We encouraged every member of FPB to think about the ways they have been touched and impacted by the church, and how their financial support makes it possible to continue building and fostering communities that connect them with their spirituality – and with one another.

In inspirational testimonials, the congregation heard from Reverend Maria Cristina, church members, and the Canvass Co-Chairs about the importance of First Parish in their lives, and how their financial contributions reflect their commitment to the church. We also reached out to every committee and small group to talk about the canvass in relationship to smaller communities where church members often find a home. After all, it is through participating in smaller groups, whether the Poetry Circle, Social Action, or Worship Committee, that people connect and form true community. It was a new and intimate way for us to hear from members about their vision for the church and how their giving could help build community.

1. Our end goal for fiscal year 2015-2016 is to raise \$440,000 for our operating budget.
2. The following numbers represent what was known as of May 17, 2015.
3. Of 163 member households, 154 had turned in pledge forms, totaling \$407,566. Last year these same households had pledged \$401,046.
4. 74 households increased their pledge amount over last year for a total of \$45,585 in increased pledges. Of these, 28 households increased by more than \$1,000. This is a great accomplishment!
5. 7 new pledges were written for \$7,200
6. 22 pledges decreased by \$24,990
7. 12 families indicated that they won't be pledging for a loss of \$14,075

Although we are delighted with so many generous commitments, we take the changes in pledging seriously, especially by long-time members who are decreasing or not making a financial commitment this year. We have heard your struggles with the church and hope to open a door to continue talking. The Parish Committee and the ministerial team are discussing how giving reflects the role of the church in members' lives.

We wish to express our sincere thanks to the ministerial team and Parish Committee for their support, as well as Ben Davis, Susan Larrabee and Elizabeth McIntyre who gave testimonials. We thank the committee and small group chairs who gave us their time in meetings. And as always, our gratitude goes out to Sonya Abbott and Nancy Natowitz, who kept us organized and up-to-date and provided encouragement all along the way.

Respectfully submitted,  
Alice Mark  
Dave Demerjian

## **COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY**

The Committee on Ministry (COM) this year was composed of 7 lay members:

Sue Andrews (chair), Janet Britcher, Michelle David, Justin Francese, Gerry Leader, Dorothy Richardson, and Jim Womack, as well as our senior and assistant ministers.

Rev. Maria Cristina joined the group after she was hired in December, 2014.

In addition to our regular work of providing a safe environment for our ministers to express themselves re: various First Parish issues, we took on the task of providing to the UUA the written document for Rev. Maria Cristina's first fellowship assessment. This assessment is completed three times within the first seven years of a UU minister's term as an ordained minister in a congregation.

We have enjoyed hearing from Maria Cristina about all of her activities at First Parish in Brookline, as well as engaging in dialogue with her to give feedback and encouragement. Our report for her first assessment will go to the UUA in July, 2015.

In March 2015 the COM began discussing a transition into a somewhat different form, at the urging of the Parish Committee. We've made some preliminary plans for engaging the congregation in dialogue beginning in September 2015. We've also planned for ways to recruit 3 new members for 2015-16, with the idea that beginning in May 2016, members of this committee will be elected by the congregation at annual meeting.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sue Andrews, Chair COM

## **CONGREGATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

### **BOOK CLUB**

The book club had another year of eclectic reading experiences and terrific discussions. We shared varying thoughts about the following selections:

- *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* - Gabriel Garcia Marquez
- *Where'd You Go, Bernadette* - Maria Semple
- *Started Early, Took My Dog* - Kate Atkinson
- *The Invention of Air: A Story of Science, Faith, Revolution, and the Birth of America* - Steven Johnson
- *The Brain that Changes Itself : Stories of Personal Triumph from the Frontiers of Brain Science* - Norman Doidge
- *Americanah* - Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
- *House Made of Dawn* - N. Scott Momaday
- *My Beloved World* - Sonia Sotomayor
- *Life After Life* - Kate Atkinson
- *Gone Girl* - Gillian Flynn
- *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* - Oliver Sacks
- *Reclaiming Prophetic Witness: Liberal Religion in the Public Square* - Paul Razor (UUA Common Read for 2014 - co-sponsored with the Social Action Committee)

We advertise our monthly meetings and reading choices in the weekly bulletins, orders of service announcements, and monthly newsletters. If a selection interests you, feel free to join us! If you've enjoyed a book and would like to discuss it with a group, let us know the title, and we'll put it on our list. Contact Julie Horvath if you'd like to be added to our mailing list - [jrhovath123@gmail.com](mailto:jrhovath123@gmail.com).

### **FIRST PARISH KNITTERS**

Knitting Group	Madeline Fine (Facilitator)
Knitting Group	Anyone who enjoys knitting or other handiwork: Gina Giamei, Alice Gray, Val Gunning, Lilly Platt, Mary Rogers, and Molly Willette
Knitting Group	Create a time and a space to share and create while using our hands and hearts to connect
Accomplishments	We met!
Tasks	Next Year-undecided
Thanking	The knitters/ crocheters /spinners and handcrafters among us

### **VESPERS**

**Leaders:** Jamie Redgrave and Anne Copeland

**Description:** On the second Sunday of each month (7-8pm), an opportunity for a small, contemplative lay-led vespers service has been offered to the First Parish community. Based on the ages-old practice of marking the end of the day with communal reflection, this service revolves around simple music, guided meditation, and periods of silence and quiet reflection focused on a unifying theme. In a candle-lighting ritual, attendees are invited to name those who are physically absent but on their minds and in their hearts. Most services this year included a new co-leader from the group, who chose the theme and readings and helped run the service. Sample themes in 2014-15 were *New Beginnings*, *Loving When it's Hard to Do*, *Finding Spirituality in Unexpected Places*, *The Ups and Downs of Denial*, and *Reclaiming Purpose and Passion*.

**Participation:** Approximately 8-10 people have attended each Vespers Service – about 30 different people in all.

## **CONGREGATIONAL LIFE EVENTS**

### **Child Dedications**

- October 2014                      Gathel and Olivia Day

### **Geographically Distance Members**

Jean Ashland and Hank Reisner – Maine  
Doyle Canning and Justine Francese – Oregon in August 2015  
Chip DeWitt – Louisiana  
Val Gunning – New York  
Liz Scully - Oregon  
Linda and Jack Smith – Oregon

### **Graduating High School Seniors June 2015**

Chloe Hart  
Olivia Hart  
Grace Raczek-Hoffmann  
Abigail Thomson  
Hannah Weighart  
Charlotte Willett

### **Memorials**

- February 2015                      Kenneth Kamal Scott Memorial Concert
- March 2015                          Newell Family Memorial Service

### **Weddings and Receptions**

- June 2014                              Wedding & Reception for Michele David and Steve Von Lichtenberg
- July 2014                                Reception for Susan and Gregory Caplan's Daughter
- September 2014                        Wedding & Reception for Diane Shannon and Sam Dennis

## **DEACON'S REPORT**

2014-2015

**Members:** William Dwyer (Senior), Chris Beasley, Sheila Hussey, Laura Walters, Midge Wilcke, Bob Williamson and Jim Womack

**Purpose:** The deacons are the designated elders of the parish. They act as the church's institutional memory, preserve our community's heritage and support the wellbeing of the congregation by being a strong presence in congregational life.

**Year's Activities:** The deacons facilitated four communion services during the year (September 28, November 16, January 25, and March 29). Attendance at communion has typically ranged from fifteen to thirty participants. In recent years, we have used the pottery chalice and candlesticks that were given to Reverend Martha Niebanck when she visited a Unitarian congregation in Transylvania several years ago. Meanwhile, our traditional communion silver continues to be stored at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

The deacons continue to represent the congregation as ushers at memorial services, ordinations and major church holidays. Also, from time to time, the deacons are called upon to meet with Religious Education class members to discuss the role of deacons throughout the history of First Parish.

**Next Year:** The deacons remain committed to serving the congregation and aiding our ministers when called to do so.

Respectfully submitted,

William Dwyer, Senior Deacon

Chris Beasley

Sheila Hussey

Laura Walters

Midge Wilcke

Bob Williamson

Jim Womack

## **DIVERSITY CAUCUS** **Annual Report 2015**

**Co-Chairs:** Almas Dossa and Ronald Wilkinson

**Members:** Ellen Blaney, Madeline Fine, Ann Gilmore, Jody Leader, Martha Leader, James Shillaber, Gene Thompson-Grove, Rev. Maria Christina Vlassidis Burgoa

**Mission:** To empower First Parish in Brookline to nourish and be nourished by the rich diversity of people with whom we are all blessed in the congregation, in greater Boston, and the wider world.

**Vision:** We believe in the inherent worth and dignity of every person and the interdependent web of which we are all a part. Therefore, we aspire to become an inclusive community, where people can show up as their whole selves to be together in authentic ways. We reaffirm our commitment to our journey as a congregation to become an intentionally anti-racist, anti-oppressive, multi-cultural, beloved community.

This year the Diversity Caucus continued to work on raising our own awareness and understanding of the history of race relations and structural racism, and how it plays out in our community and congregation. As a result of our learning, we updated both our vision and our mission statements. We also developed a covenant to guide our actions going forward (see next page).

Finally, we have created multiple occasions to invite the whole congregation to join us in these conversations, including bringing Beloved Conversations to First Parish Brookline (see description on the next page). Our hope is that this group of 22 people will be just the first of many groups to engage in this learning/work.

Past, ongoing, and future events for the First Parish community in 2014-2015 are as follows:

- Film series followed by group discussion:
  - A. October, 2014: *Oil and Water* (co-sponsored with Social Action)
  - B. January, 2015: *Abrazos* (co-sponsored with Social Action/Immigration Justice Committee)
  - C. April, 2015: *Gran Torino* (co-sponsored with Beloved Conversations)
  - D. May 2015: *Thirsty for Justice: The human right to water* (co-sponsored with Social Action)
- Multicultural workshop series organized by Rev. Maria Cristina and attended by diversity caucus members and the larger congregation:
  - A. Salsa, Soul, and Spirit Fall, 2015: Leadership for a Multicultural Age, led by Rev. Maria Cristina
  - B. Spanish for Social Justice (ongoing), led by Rev. Maria Cristina
- Along with Social Action, we have extended our efforts outside our congregation by working on the movement to end mass incarceration as a participating organization in the *Jobs Not Jails Coalition* and attending related justice-seeking events:
  - A. Collected signatures for the legislature on the *Jobs not Jails* initiative
  - B. Participated in *Jobs Not Jails* Forum to work on the coalition's mission and vision, Freedom House in Dorchester January 31<sup>st</sup>
  - C. Participated in "A Roadmap Towards Justice: How to help end mass incarceration in Massachusetts" workshop focusing on upcoming legislative initiatives and their sponsors, First Parish Arlington March 15<sup>th</sup>

- D. Participated in UU Mass Action Lobby Day and met with legislators about Pretrial Bail Reform, Ending Mandatory Minimum Sentences, and Justice Reinvestment bills, Arlington St Church and the State House April 14<sup>th</sup>
- Brookline Community Forums
  - A. Attended Brookline Community Foundation’s “Poverty, Income Inequality and Our Community” report and discussion, Brookline Teen Center February 26<sup>th</sup>
  - B. Attended Brookline Interfaith Clergy Association-sponsored “Brookline Community and Police Relations” panel discussion, St. Mary of the Assumption School March 5<sup>th</sup>
- In addition, the Diversity Caucus will:
  - A. Participate in the Annual Growing Racial and Cultural Equity Summit (GRACE) organized by the Clara Barton and Mass Bay Districts, May 16<sup>th</sup>
  - B. Continue to work with the RE committee and Social Action on matters related to diversity and inequality

### **BELOVED CONVERSATIONS – FIRST PARISH BROOKLINE**

*“Not everything that is faced can be changed. But nothing can be changed until it is faced.”-  
James Baldwin*

What is *Beloved Conversations*? In the words of Dr. Mark Hicks, the curriculum developer and our lead facilitator ...“Race” matters and shapes the way we see ourselves, each other, and how we interact as a community of faith. Indeed, as we peel back the layers of meaning that form our personal and collective lives, we realize that the world we want to create is already here, however, for a variety of reasons, we often can’t bring it into a full expression of itself. Said another way, we know the theology of Unitarian Universalism can speak boldly, justly and compassionately to the world, yet we don’t know how to get beyond a mono-cultural expression of that belief. *Beloved Conversations*, framed in the spirit of small-group ministry or a covenant group, aims to be a tool for such a project.

*Beloved Conversations* should be thought of as a “spiritual practice.” Facilitators and participants work to encourage seeing anti-racism/anti-oppression work as acts of faith formation...of becoming more fully human. Everyone involved – whether socialized within the framework of a dominant cultural group or as targets of oppression – is asked to grow, take risks, struggle with ambiguity, and love each other into a bigger sense of self.

*Dates: May 1-2, May 7, May 14, May 21, May 28, June 4, June 11, June 14*

### **Diversity Caucus Covenant (Updated September, 2014)**

As a caucus we agree to:

#### Speak Your Truth

- We often avoid speaking our truth for fear of what others might say. It's important that we create a safe environment where everyone is free to speak openly.
- Keep in mind that people are in different places in this work. In order for us to grow, it's important that people are able to share their thoughts in a way that's comfortable for them.
- When we share our thoughts, it often creates an emotional reaction from others. Being able to speak your truth does not mean that people will not respond emotionally. Be prepared to experience the discomfort that race conversations bring.
- Speaking our truth does not mean stomping on each other’s heads. Before speaking, think about what it is that you want others to know. How can they best hear you?
- Remember that everyone does not communicate in the same way that you do. If someone gets loud in the room, it doesn't mean they are angry. If they are angry, it doesn't necessarily mean they are

angry with you. If they are angry at something you said, it doesn't mean that that person no longer has a relationship with you. Often times these conversations bring up a lot of emotions from past and present experiences. Try and allow others to experience their emotions without your shutting down. We acknowledge that these conversations can be experienced differently for people of different backgrounds, and we give ourselves permission to say "ouch" when we feel hurt. We make a commitment as a group to return to those ouch moments.

#### Listen for Understanding

- Try and understand where another person is coming from as best you can. Refrain from interrupting; listen for the punctuation mark at the end of the speaker's sentence before speaking yourself, and consider what has just been said before speaking.
- Be careful not to compare your experiences with another person's. This often invalidates or minimizes a person's experiences.
- Listen without thinking about how you are going to respond.
- Stay present in their pain and your discomfort as you listen.
- If someone is pointing out how what you said left them feeling, try not to explain or rationalize what you said or why you said it. For example, sometimes it's necessary to just say, "I didn't realize what I said was inappropriate or hurt you in that way, I'm sorry," etc. Resist the urge to tell others how to feel (or not feel).
- Think about your comments before saying them. Resist the need to explain. Sometimes positive intent is not enough (intent vs. impact). Be careful not to lose the opportunity to just listen by putting the focus back on you.

#### Experience Discomfort

- One way to think about this is, "Be comfortable with being uncomfortable". In other words, discomfort is to be expected. If you are experiencing discomfort, return to your breathe before speaking.
- If you are not feeling any sense of discomfort in the dialogue, ask yourself are you fully engaged? Are you giving of yourself fully and taking risks?

#### Stay Engaged

- It's important that you try to stay present in the room. Pay attention to when you are shutting down. Discomfort and anxiety are normal parts of courageous conversations.
- If you find yourself needing to stand up, please do so.

#### Expect and Accept Non-closure

- In our society today, we often want to feel some sense of closure, regardless of the issue. Engaging in conversations regarding race and other types of diversity issues means there will be times of no closure. This is on-going work that does not necessarily leave one walking away feeling like everything turned out the way you hoped. Be willing to take risks and accept that much of this is about changing yourself not others. We give ourselves space for learning and changing our minds. "Passing"/not speaking is always an option.

#### Maintain Confidentiality

## **LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (LDC)**

**Prelude** This past year consisted primarily of completing tasks begun last year, including finalizing the template for committee charters and working with the committees to complete and submit them to the Parish Committee. While a short list, we feel happy and relieved that this two year project was put to bed.

### **Committee Membership and Structure**

Minimum # of Members:

# of Co/Chairperson/s: 1

# of Vice-Chairperson/s: 1

Term of Membership: 3    Renewable: no

Members: Margaret Williams, Chair; Andrea Willett, Vice-Chair; Margie Beal; Jonathan Cave; Anya Phillips Thomas; Martin Thomson

### **Mission/Responsibilities**

- Submit nominations for Parish Committee and Leadership Development Committee prior to Annual Meeting
- Identify and connect individuals with leadership opportunities at First Parish
- Develop Leadership skills in the First Parish community
- Offer support and consultation to leadership and committees
- Help make leadership a spiritual practice that contributes to the ongoing health and sustainability of First Parish

### **Partners/Stakeholders**

Congregation; Minister; Parish Committee; Welcoming Committee;  
Religious Exploration Committee; District

### ***2014-15 Goals and Subsequent Accomplishments***

1. Charter - In the Fall, the draft charter template created in 2014 was approved by the Parish Committee. The PC requested that the charters of the following four committees be completed: Religious Education, Worship Committee, Social Action Committee, and Diversity Committee charters. A web-based fill-in format was created and sent to all committees for completion and each LDC member was assigned a committee to help with completing the charters. By March, the requested charters and more were submitted.
2. Connect members with transformational leadership opportunities - First, we are gratified that the Parish Committee continued to work with the district leadership development resource that the LDC recommended last year, Doug Zalinsky. It seems that their work with Doug has been quite fruitful, including the likely ratification of a FP Mission Statement.

LDC Chair, Margaret Williams, attended a district-wide workshop that Doug held titled "Overcoming the Leadership Crisis." The takeaway from the day was that despite FP's growing pains, the church is doing quite well in its efforts to become more planful about growth.

Margaret also represented FP at the District Annual Meeting in late April.

3. Populate the required Parish Committee positions.

The LDC, with some heavy lifting from Ann Dinsmoor and Steve Davis from the PC and the self-nomination process, have submitted three candidates for the Parish Committee

The Committee felt that the use of its funds would be best utilized by the Parish Committee in its ongoing teambuilding efforts.

### **2015-2016 Goals**

It is our desire to work more closely with the Parish Committee in the coming year to be of more support when it comes to organizational capacity building. As we move from creating a mission statement to integrating it into the work of the congregation, the PC will benefit from LDC's labor in helping committees think through how their roles and goals relate to it. We hope to work in close partnership through this period of exciting growth and transformation.

## **MUSIC DIRECTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT**

May 2015

Music Director: Keith Kirchoff, 2010-present

**The Choirs:** We had a very busy musical year this year, with exciting music nearly every Sunday! Both the Chancel and Chamber Choirs sang regularly, we welcomed several guest musicians, and we re-launched the Children's Choir.

**Chancel Choir** – The Chancel Choir consists of roughly 12-25 singers. All are volunteers with the exception of four paid section leaders. All singers are welcome to join, and no prior experience is required. The choir, led by myself, Keith Kirchoff, continued to sing a varied repertoire of gospel, spirituals, ancient classical, modern classical, rock, folk, pop, Indian, African, Czech, and plainchant among other styles.

**Chamber Choir** – The only audition-only choir at First Parish, the Chamber Choir consists of a rotating roster of eight singers. Often singing difficult and challenging repertoire, these singers must be strong sight readers. The Chamber Choir sang on average once a month.

**First Parish Band** – The First Parish Band consists of Landon Rose, Matthew Lawrence, and Djems Domerson. The band is a rock oriented ensemble that played versions of new and classic rock songs, as well as funky arrangements of traditional hymns. This ensemble was always joined by the choir, and performed twice in the fall. Busy schedules meant that rehearsal time was almost impossible to come by, and the band has not played since the New Year.

**Children's Choir** – After a three year hiatus, the Children's Choir returned in 2015, led by MaryHelen Gunn, Jennifer Goldston, and Micaela Coady. They sang on three services and at the time of the writing are exploring possible dates to sing in one more service this year.

**Section Leaders:** The choir pays four section leaders. At the beginning of the year, we invited all of last year's section leaders to return, and all four accepted. We welcomed back soprano Elizabeth McIntire, alto Oriana Dunlop, tenor Adrian Jones, and baritone RaShaun Campbell.

**Assistants:** Adrian Jones led choir rehearsals in my absence, and we welcomed three different piano accompanists to fill in on Sunday mornings: Ellie Boynton and Elaine Aveni.

**Guest Musicians:** We welcomed several guest musicians this year. Jeannie Gagne and Stan Strickland joined our own Jon Hazilla for a special service on November 30th, guitarist Sergio Reyes joined us on February 8, Sarah Morrow accompanied the choir on guitar for the Tenebrae Service, and organist Courtney Swain accompanied the choir on Easter. All other guest musicians were drawn from the congregation. In addition to the members of The First Parish Band, these volunteers have included Sue Kalt, Joe Horning, Jonathan Richardson, Tai Melendy, and Martha Leader.

**Christmas:** At Christmas, the choir sang a collection of a capella pieces from various centuries and styles. These included *Veni Emmanuel*, *Carol of the Bells*, *O Magnum Mysterium*, *In the Bleak Midwinter*, *Christmas Time is Here*, and *Stille Nacht*.

**Easter:** At Easter, the Chancel Choir was accompanied by organist Courtney Swain, and sang Arvo Pärt's *The Beatitudes*, Ralph Vaughn Williams *Let All the Bells*, and Andrew Carter's *Alleluia*

## **PARISH ADMINISTRATION**

2014-2015

What does the Parish Administrator do you ask? Seems as if this is a puzzle to many still, even after all these years together! Primarily, I'm a first responder, on a daily basis for whatever comes my way. Here is just some of what that might be:

- A parishioner calling about a tragedy in their life.
- Dealing with an old building problem and there is always one after another on a daily basis
- Assisting the public at large who call seeking information about rentals, which then need to be negotiated, for many do not understand that we are not a large modern function hall and thus don't have the latest and greatest accommodations.
- Dealing with computer equipment breakdowns needing to be replaced almost immediately or spending hours trying to get the wireless service to boot back up. I'm thinking our resident ghost has a hand in disrupting this on a quarterly basis.
- Maintaining the church calendar, which seems never to be in sync, no matter how hard one tries, it truly is a daily challenge. Case in point – just prior to writing this report - I had to change the calendar six times in one day for the month of May.
- Coordinating and oversee the workloads of custodial staff and administrative assistant
- Oversee the church wide communication system from among us notices, to weekly updates, newsletters, order of service announcements and monitor Facebook posts.
- Maintaining the financial record system, which on one hand is relatively straight forward, on another is very time consuming and includes not only the daily operational accounting procedures one would expect, but also includes maintaining the pledge tracking system of each parishioner and their donations throughout the year. I also generate and closely review month end financial reports which are passed onto the Treasurer and Senior Minister, in addition to working closely with them throughout the year on financial matters and in particular during the yearly budgeting process.

Yet that's not all that administration is responsible for and over the past 3 plus years we've had a wonderful assistant - Nancy Natowitz. Nancy primarily handled the bulk of the weekly order of service processing, entered weekly data from the membership coordinator, worked with the Religious Exploration team on registrations, list serve maintenance and timely reports, in addition to tackling any project I would toss her way. Unfortunately though she has taken a position with a new and exciting company, working with children, and replacing her will be not easy task.

Keeping on top of all of this and communicating in today's techno advanced world certainly keeps me on my toes. Some mornings I'm drowning in emails (70 or more on a Monday morning). Some days it's blissfully silent and projects can be accomplished without any interruptions. Most days though, it remains an interesting juggling act to deal with the many requests that come in from all sorts of individuals (or the building) throughout the year. I literally hardly ever get my foot in the door (or get out of my car) without hearing about some issue that must be responded to immediately. I'll even hear about issues via Facebook on weekends so that sometimes it feels like I'm working 24/7!

Hard to believe it has been ten years, and the Great Spirit willing, I'm looking forward to spending a few more years with you and sincerely thank everyone for your continued presence, kindness, assistance and wonderful creative spirits.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sonya A. Abbott, *Parish Administrator*

## **RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION COMMITTEE - 2014-2015**

**Members:** Karen Kepler, Chair, Jeff Cadow, Rich Day, Dave Demerjian, Bijan Etemad-Gilbertson, Sarah Griffen, Rob Guillemin, Alice Mark, Elizabeth McIntire

We enrolled one hundred nine children and youth who were taught by forty-two volunteer teachers, and two paid teachers (in nursery and preschool). Average Sunday class attendance was 51. Classes/curriculum included: Nursery; We Are Many We Are One (preschool); Spirit Play; Moral Tales; Tool Box of Faith, Riddle & Mystery, OWL (Our Whole Lives – a part of the three year Coming of Age program); Challenge and Senior High Youth Group.

### **RE Committee Goals**

- Provide a welcoming and safe environment for children and youth so that they think of First Parish as their church home.
- Intentionally support child-child and child-adult relationships so that each child and youth is known by name by other children and adults in the congregation.
- Teach children and their families about UU religion (including UU heritage, theology, the 7 principles and 6 sources).
- Engage members of the congregation in understanding and participating in the faith formation of our children and youth.
- Hold 2 teacher enrichment events.
- During the 2015-2016 church year, the REC plans to reprise “children’s chapel” by holding 3 children’s services in the chapel simultaneously with the 11:00 sanctuary worship service.

### **RE Committee Covenant**

- We covenant to grow in right relationship.
- We covenant to infuse joy into the process and content of our work.
- We covenant to create and adhere to practices that support reaching our program and personal goals.
- We covenant to acknowledge our humanity, and offer forgiveness to each other and ourselves.

### **Accomplishments**

1. Committee Charter provided to Parish Committee.
2. Well designed and facilitated monthly meetings, with agendas posted ahead of time, with a check-in/centering reading or exercise, and a note taker.
3. An annual RE Calendar, which lays out the tasks of the RE Committee month by month.
4. A Teacher recruitment calendar, plan, process and supporting documents.
5. Successful teacher recruitment/staffing model in place by September 2014 RE program start date.
6. Expanded the Preschool Classroom model comprised of a paid teacher who is there every week to Nursery. This provides consistency for our youngest children.
7. Held a Halloween Party which provided older kids with the opportunity to create a “haunted church” for the younger RE kids.
8. Provided 2 teacher enrichment opportunities – Dorothy Richardson PhD, spoke about brain development and learning styles; Johnny Blazes spoke about gender identity.
9. Facilitated class breakfasts, pot-lucks and other opportunities for RE classroom teachers, kids and parents to interact out-side of the Sunday morning classroom.

10. Held a teacher appreciation dinner prior to the Dorothy Richardson lecture.
11. Held a teacher appreciation breakfast followed by the RE Sunday service at which teachers were thanked first by the REC and then by the congregation for their dedication and support of the RE program.
12. Continued last year's successful RE Sunday service which allowed for the congregation to visit RE classrooms and engage with students and teachers.
13. Combined the RE Sunday program with FAHS service materials provided by the UUA.
14. Held an end of year teacher party.
15. The Riddle & Mystery class took ownership of First Parish's participation in the Walk for Peace on Mother's Day. Over 50 FP members walked this year (a significant increase over the 9 walkers who participated last year).
16. The Tool Box of Faith class replanted flower beds outside the church building.

## **Challenges**

1. The Youth Group program needs to be strengthened and would benefit from a dedicated professional advisor. The current program experiences low and intermittent attendance on the part of the youth, many of whom are wrestling with a full schedule of activities. The REC would like to see the Youth Group become more involved with the UU denomination, social action and service opportunities but does not think this can happen without a dedicated advisor. Also, the large size of the current classes in the early elementary grades (20+ per grade) requires advanced planning for their Youth Group experiences so that there is a strong program available to them.
2. Classroom space continues to be a problem. There are too few adequately sized spaces available on Sunday morning. Although the REC has tried to hold programs at alternative times, Sunday morning continues to be the preferred time slot.
3. The REC recognizes that we have a diversity of learners in our classes. We aspire to break away from a Sunday morning classroom model that is almost identical to the classrooms that children experience Monday – Friday. We are committed to educating ourselves – and our RE teachers – about “universal designs for learning” which include multiple modalities, so all children can access the curriculum. This requires a careful examination of the UU curricula we choose, with an eye toward the kinds of demands each curriculum places on children (i.e. language, attention, social cognition, working memory, etc.), and development of ways to adapt the UU curriculum we choose so all children are safe and feel comfortable in our classes.
4. We continue to provide special multi-age programs in lieu of regular classes on low attendance Sundays (often long week-ends). These are currently designed to match the theme of the worship service being offered that day in the Sanctuary. We would like these to be tied more closely to social action projects that the general congregation is engaged with.
5. Attendance is strong in the first half of the year but drops off in the spring. We would like to find ways to increase families' engagement at First Parish so that more kids come to class after the winter month's end.

## **DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION**

**Position Description:** *The Director of Religious Education (DRE) is responsible for developing and maintaining a strong program for children and youth faith development at First Parish. As a member of the staff team the DRE brings RE activities and concerns to the staff and encourages integration of children and youth in all aspects of the community. As a member of the worship team, the DRE collaborates with the Ministers, Ministerial intern, Director of Music and membership coordinator to help craft worship that is vibrant and meaningful for all ages. The DRE reports directly to the Senior Minister.*

*Submitted by: Rebecca Keller Scholl, Director of Religious Exploration*

\* \* \* \* \*

As my fourth year as Director of Religious Exploration at First Parish in Brookline winds down, I continue to be grateful for the spirit of community and the love in this congregation. I am part of a staff team that works tirelessly to discover ways to nurture the vibrant vision of this congregation and support ways for members to live out their faith. I am thankful for every small but deeply meaningful exchange with children, youth, and adults. I look forward to another year of shared ministry as each individual's searches to make meaning and deepen their personal faith.

### **Highlights:**

**Teaching:** This past year's 42 volunteer teachers brought a richness of experience and depth of faith to the classes they enriched. Our Teacher Enrichment and Appreciation Events and RE Sunday were joyful and a true celebration of the gift of spending time with children.

**Children and Worship:** We held seven Multigenerational worship services which were well received. These services provided opportunities for families to worship together, and for all the generations in our community to share a worship experience. We incorporated more worship art and movement into these services. Children continue to be a part of the first 15-20 minutes of Sanctuary worship, during which there is a Time for All Ages with a theme-based message or Candles of Joy and Concern.

**Collaborations:** Diversity, Parish Committee and RE - worked with representatives from these committees to address issues of diversity and inclusion for all ages in the life of the church. I am also excited to be participating in the Beloved Conversations group which engages in opening our hearts and minds to all the diversity of our community. Social Action and Building and Grounds- building on the foundation of congregational polity, RE classes and teachers take curricular assignments connected to SAC and B&G and learn how to work within existing church structures to accomplish change. Worship- we have had more children and youth involved in worship this year, including youth readers for our Tenebrae service.

### **Denominational Involvement**

President: North Atlantic Chapter of LREDA (Liberal Religious Educators Association)

Representative: LREDA Fahs Lecture for General Assembly

Member: New England Region Shared Ministry Team

Young People's Dean Executive Team: Lifespan Religious Education Week at Star Island

Convener: NARL Annual Retreat

Delegate: General Assembly

Group Presenter: General Assembly- Sanctuary Boston

## **Professional Development**

General Assembly

LREDA Annual Fall Conference

Lifespan Religious Education Week: Star Island

NARL Retreat- From Scarcity to Abundance

## **Special thanks...**

...to an inspiring and engaged congregation, to all the wonderfully dedicated volunteers, to an incredible collection of colleagues who make coming to work so joyful, to a smart, thoughtful and patient RE Committee, and to the children and youth who spontaneously teach all of us each day what is important.

## **SOCIAL ACTION ANNUAL REPORT**

Co-Chairs: Clint Richmond and Ellen Blaney

**Our Mission:** To provide inspiration, leadership and support for social action at First Parish in Brookline.

**Our Actions:** We are first inspired by the Seven Principles of our faith. In the face of so much need and opportunity, we focus on three thematic initiatives: **Standing on the Side of Love**, **Economic Justice**, and the **Environment**. We also strive to build upon and integrate with the efforts of the Unitarian Universalist Association, UU Mass Action Network, Unitarian Universalist Service Committee and the Unitarian Universalist Urban Ministry. This year, over half of the congregation's adults and youth participated in some kind of Social Action activity. And over \$16,000 was given to support the work of others. We also incorporate our action into four Sunday services during the year. These usually include a special collection and testimony from partner organizations and social action members of the congregation.

### ***Standing on the Side of Love:***

- **We stood against mass incarceration.** We supported the Jobs Not Jails initiative here in Massachusetts. We raised over \$1600 for Ex-Prisoners and Prisoners Organizing for Community Advancement (EPOCA) in a special collection. We signed petitions that were delivered at the State House, and called and visited state legislators to support bills on Pretrial Bail Reform, Ending Mandatory Minimum Sentences, and Justice Reinvestment. With the Diversity Caucus, we participated in Jobs Not Jails forum, "A Roadmap Towards Justice" at First Parish Arlington.
- **We fought HIV and AIDS** at the Harbor to the Bay bike ride from Boston to Provincetown. Team First Parish, 5 riders and 16 pit crew of all ages, raised \$10,000 in this all-volunteer, grass-roots fundraiser. We rode, we made snacks, and we ran a pit stop, all under the leadership of Linda Smith and Catherine Cappelli. The next ride is September 19, 2015.
- **We supported immigration justice.** This year the Immigration Justice Committee continued to deepen and expand its commitment to immigration reform by supporting the efforts of Chelsea Collaborative and Centro Presente and participating in Boston New Sanctuary initiatives. Activities included:
  - Joining interfaith vigils at the Suffolk County Detention Center
  - Attending the Stand Up for All Children rally at the State House
  - Celebrating Las Posadas with Chelsea Collaborative and Centro Presente
  - Participating in Spanish for Social Justice classes, led by Rev. Maria Cristina
  - Participating in a bilingual service on Radical Hospitality
  - Meeting with our legislators on the Trust Act, Safe Driving, and Education Equity bills.
- **We walked in witness and support.** In May, we again expanded our multi-generational presence at the Mother's Day Walk for Peace and against gun violence. We also donated to the sponsor, the Louis D. Brown Peace Institute. In June, we look forward to the Boston Aids Walk, and with continuing the energy from RE and the Youth, for Boston Pride Parade. Thanks to Elizabeth McIntire and Bijan Etemad-Gilbertston for organizing our Pride participation.
- **We partnered with our Diversity Caucus** for the third year of the Friday-night film series and other events. The largest film night was for "Abrazos," a documentary about the reunification of families separated by immigration. Several people from outside of

First Parish attended our discussion, which included a conversation with filmmaker Luis Argueta over Skype.

**Environment Initiative:**

- **We raised over \$1000** in two Special Collections for local and national environment organizations: 350ma.org, UU Ministry For the Earth, Alternatives for Community Action (ACE).
- **We supported the ballot initiative** for the expanded Bottle Bill, which unfortunately was defeated.
- **We held a Friday-night film series** on issues around access to water.

**Economic Justice:**

- **We supported Raise Up Massachusetts** to increase the minimum wage and provide earned sick leave, and were gladdened that both were passed.
- **We helped feed to the homeless** at St. Francis House working shoulder-to-shoulder with their wonderful kitchen staff on Saturdays as requested. Many thanks to Susan Caplan for organizing all these efforts.
- **We honor our commitment with Jericho Road Roxbury**, in partnership with the UUUM, First Parish in Milton and First Church in Boston. The program has entered its third full year. Specialized volunteers for Roxbury non-profits have been placed. Gail and Karla Baehr serve on the Steering Committee.
- **We partner with Common Hope**, which provides social service and educational support to low-income families in Guatemala. Since 2009, our congregation has been financing the education through high school of Dulce Maria Llanos Garcia, who is now 13; and a dozen families sponsor individual children as well. We are considering a fourth congregational service trip to Guatemala next April.
- **We donated non-perishable foods** to the Brookline Food Pantry all year long. Thanks to Ed Loechler and Leslie Spaneas for delivering our donations once a month.
- **We value our ties to UU Social Action.** We are congregational members of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, UU Mass Action, and the UU Ministry for the Earth. We had excellent turnout for this year's UU Mass Action Advocacy Day in April to support bills relating to all our Social Action initiatives. We again facilitated the discussion at a Book Club meeting on the UUA Common Read book, *Reclaiming Prophetic Witness: Liberal Religion in the Public Square*, by Paul Razor, May 3.

**Our Vision:** Our vision is for our congregation to live out our principles inside the church and in the wider community. And, in following our vision, that First Parish is seen as active in the community and as a place to learn about and respond to the moral imperatives that derive from our faith. We look forward to continuing to tap the passion of our ever-evolving community and to see everyone at First Parish in Brookline come together in making a better world.

Thank you, Susan Caplan, for serving as co-chair for the start of the year. We would also like to recognize the efforts of Linda and Jack Smith for their many years of leadership on Social Action and wish them well in their new home in Portland, OR.

## **STAINED GLASS COMMITTEE**

**Committee Members:** Sue Andrews, Jeff Cadow, David Cave, Sally Dwyer, Frank Hutchins, Sheila Hussey, Chair, and Skye Kramer.

**Mission Statement:** Our mission is to educate our congregation and the wider community of the origin and historic significance of our stained glass windows and to continue efforts to search out ways to raise the funds to repair, restore and safeguard the windows for future generations.

**Year's Activities:** The highlight of the year was the installation last June of the restored Lowell Memorial Window lancets. It was most rewarding to witness the taking down of the plywood panels that darkened the northeast corner of our sanctuary for several years to be replaced by glorious light.

A new stained glass brochure incorporating some editing and colored pictures was printed last summer. We encourage all who encounter visitors to our sanctuary to offer this brochure as part of a welcoming visit.

**Tasks:** We continue to look for funding opportunities for remaining restoration needs. As part of outreach to the wider community a long-term goal is to create a First Parish in Brookline Wikipedia article with links to at least to Sarah Wyman Whitman's page as well as the stained glass page on Facebook.

**Thank you:** We thank our ministers for their ongoing integration of the windows into congregational life as done by Reverend Maria-Christina Vlassidis Burgoa's Veteran's Day sermon, the cover of the Christmas Eve Order of Service and Reverend Sherblom's Christmas Eve homily (2014).

Respectfully submitted,  
Sheila Hussey

**TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE**  
**2014-2015 Annual Report**

**Chair:** Ellie Boynton

**Members:** Sonya Abbott and Rev. Dr. Jim Sherblom

**Mission Statement:** To help the parish's staff and members make the best use of technology while performing their duties and missions on behalf of the church, considering users' abilities, reliability and complexity of systems, and financial constraints.

**Major accomplishments for 2014-2015:**

- Launched redesign of website that appears well on all device sizes (phones, tablets, etc.) in early 2015.
- Added new wireless network to Dana Room.
- Kept website updated with sermons and committee reports and added podcasts of sermons that were recorded.
- Cleaned up old electronic files.
- Recommended new photo policy for posting photos to website and other electronic media.

Additional work included:

- Updating existing listserv subscription lists and adding new ones when requested.
- Renewing the web hosting service and anti-virus subscription.
- Troubleshooting when problems arose.

**Goals for 2015-2016:**

- Continued support of church staff and consideration of equipment upgrades or replacement.
- Look into further improvements to wireless network; possible part of capital campaign.
- Continued development and updating of website to meet congregation's needs, including addition of audio recordings and/or live streaming of sermons or entire services, and enhanced interactivity.

**Thanks to...**

- Sonya Abbott and Nancy Natowitz, for continually updating content on the website and for support and advice.
- Digital Communications team for reviewing the website, finding errors, and making helpful suggestions before launch.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Ellie Boynton

## TREASURER'S REPORT

First Parish's staff has responsibility for the budgeting, implementation and monitoring of our finances. Specifically, Sonya Abbott, Parish Administrator, and Rev. Jim Sherblom develop budget drafts for review by the Parish Committee and congregation, produce financial statements, manage expenditures to stay within the budget, and recommend withdrawals from the endowment as needed to cover our funding needs. They do so with active input and oversight from the Treasurer, Finance Council, and Parish Committee.

Fiscal Year 2015 Income is tracking closely to budget. Although pledges and income from Sunday offerings are expected to be less than budget estimates by about \$4,000 each, income from building rentals and "other" donations was higher than anticipated, resulting in an overall projected FY15 income that will match or may slightly exceed expectations. On the Expense side, Payroll-Related expenses were on track as budgeted, Program-Related expenses will be slightly less than budgeted, and Administrative/ Office expenses will be nearly 10% (more than \$3,000) below the budgeted level. Building Operation expenses exceeded budget by about \$3,000; although snow removal costs were higher than expected, heating oil costs were somewhat lower. Overall, total expenses will be about \$4,000 less than budgeted for FY2015. The withdrawal from the endowment will be \$144,000, or about 5.5% of endowment value. This amount continues the trend of more sustainable withdrawal levels from the endowment fund. It's notable that actual income and expenses for FY2015 will be quite similar to budget estimates, suggesting that we're achieving a goal of accurate and honest budget forecasting.

The proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2016 (July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016) is included in the following pages and shows an increase in both income and expenses over FY15. This budget was developed through a multi-stage process in which staff developed projected income and expense estimates, the Finance Council reviewed budget drafts and made recommendations, and the Parish Committee reviewed budget drafts. Throughout this process, participants sought to consider financial decisions in a way that honors the values of the FPB community. This process led to sharing draft budgets with the congregation in two well-attended budget hearings, intended to provide an opportunity for questions to be asked, concerns to be raised, and dialog to occur. A key point of discussion was how to balance the goals of fair staff compensation with a sustainable draw from the endowment. Participants in the conversations made it clear that it would be most consistent with our values to commit to fair wages immediately, budgeting all staff salaries to the midpoint of the most-recent *UUA Fair Compensation* guidelines range for congregations of our size and geographical location.

Based on pledges received to date, we are estimating \$420,000 of pledge income for the upcoming year, the same as the prior fiscal year. In an effort to offset some of the increase in budgeted payroll expenses, fundraising events have been added back into the budget for \$12,500. Budgeted Sunday Offering collections have been reduced for FY2016 to reflect FY2015 levels.

On the cost side, the Budget reflects staff salaries that will reach the midpoint of UUA recommendations for a church of our size and location for a 75% time Senior Minister, 75% Second Minister, a 75% DRE, a 50% Music Director, a full-time Parish Administrator, part-time Administrative Assistant, 25% Membership Coordinator, a Ministerial Intern, and part-time Custodian and Sexton. This corresponds to an increase of more than \$65,000 to last year's salary and fringe expenses, and an expected endowment withdrawal of about 7.9%.

We are grateful for the deep conversations about finances, values, and mission this year. We look forward to more sharing in FY2016, with the hope of creative solutions to our imbalance of income and expenses. Thank you for the opportunity to serve as Treasurer.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Stacey Raczek, Treasurer*

## FINANCE COUNCIL

The Finance Council (FC), consisting of committee representatives and members that have interest in the finances of the congregation, was revived in 2014-15. This year the Finance Council included: Steve Davis and Sue Andrews, Parish Committee; Karla Baehr; Melinda Maryniuk; Kim Whelan; Ryan Kim, past-Treasurer; Rev. Dr. Jim Sherblom and Rev. Maria Cristina Vlassidis; Sonya Abbott, Church Administrator; and Stacey Raczek, Treasurer and FC Chair.

The Finance Council endorsed the principle that First Parish should approach financial issues in a way that supports and celebrates our mission and values. We reviewed and updated the existing FC guiding principles and presented the proposed update to the Parish Committee, where they were accepted:

1. Be a UU *Fair Compensation* congregation for our staff.
2. Support the Unitarian Universalist Association as a *Fair Share* congregation.
3. Use excess rental income to increase our building fund reserves.
4. Maintain building fund reserves in a separate bank account.
5. Support completion and implementation of a 20 year plan to repair and maintain our facilities.
6. Work to reduce and then sustain the draw on our endowment to 4.5% of capital.
7. Use increases in pledge income above budget to lower endowment draw.

The FC gathered four times this year, meeting in February, March, April, and May. At the first meeting we developed goals:

- Review and submit a draft budget for 2015-16 to the Parish Committee for presentation to the congregation at Annual Meeting.
- Collect existing documentation; consult with Buildings and Grounds, Stained Glass, and Digital Ministry Committees; and participate in congregational Vision discussions to identify categories of capital priorities.
- Develop a plan to sell the silver items identified for de-acquisition and approved for sale by the congregation last year.
- Draft and submit to the Parish Committee a proposal to launch a planning committee to begin a capital campaign planning process in 2015-16, for consideration at Annual Meeting.

At our meetings we reviewed budget progress for the current fiscal year. We reviewed extensive data to begin to understand longitudinal trends for indicators including: pledges, membership, endowment, staffing levels and costs, service attendance, RE registration and participation, rental income, Sunday offerings, and annual budgets. Key information was aggregated into a single document and we have developed a notebook of documentation to serve as a resource for future reference. THANK YOU Sonya for aggregating so much data!

Will Spears, co-Chair of the Buildings and Grounds Committee attended a meeting and provided valuable information to the group about the current repair and maintenance plan for the church facilities. Karla Baehr and Melinda Maryniuk led an effort to locate past information about the silver appraisals and to identify possible avenues for auction, with proceeds to go to the endowment. Sheila Hussey of the Stained Glass Committee attended a meeting to share information and a question about an external grant for stained glass maintenance funds.

Several meetings focused on the development of a 2015-16 budget. A key point of discussion was balancing goals of staff fair compensation with a sustainable planned draw from the endowment. Draft budgets were reviewed that reflected getting all staff salaries to the midpoint of the most-recent UUA-recommended range for congregations of our size and geographical location over a one-, two-, or three-year time frame. The Finance Council recommended to the Parish Committee that a budget presenting a three-year plan to get to the defined midpoint be presented to the community for review and comment, with discussion of the opportunities and financial concerns provided by the other two options. The hope was to support a transparent process in which concerns were heard and questions answered. After two budget hearings, the Finance Council is grateful to the congregation for strong participation in deeper dialogs about how to consider developing budgets at First Parish.

The Finance Council is pleased with the overall financial standing of the church in FY15. Since FY 2011, our annual draw on our endowment has been lowered from 8% to 5.5%. Over the past ten years dependence on our endowment has been reduced from 65% to about 24% of our operating budget.

On behalf of the Finance Council we are grateful for the trust given to us by the congregation to manage its finances. It is an honor and a pleasure to work together. We pledge to move forward in a prudent, ethical, and forthright manner always keeping the First Parish mission and the congregation's needs, both short and long term, at the center of our work.

Stacey Raczek, Chair

FIRST PARISH IN BROOKLINE  
Proposed Budget Fiscal Year 2016

	Fiscal Year 2014		Fiscal Year 2015		Proposed
	Budget	Actuals	Budget	Estimated	FY 2016 BUDGET
<b>CONGREGATIONAL SUPPORT</b>					
Pledges	377,600	380,319	420,000	415,661	420,000
Sunday Offering	17,000	7,075	10,000	6,000	7,000
Activity Fees	3,000	1,950	3,000	2,000	3,000
* Other Donations	3,000	107,678	3,000	10,500	5,000
<b>Total Program Support</b>	<b>400,600</b>	<b>497,022</b>	<b>436,000</b>	<b>434,161</b>	<b>435,000</b>
<i>* Other Donations - \$100K bequest</i>					
<b>OTHER INCOME</b>					
Fund Raising Events	25,000	13,854	-	430	12,500
Building Use	17,000	17,123	15,000	18,000	16,000
Grants and Designated Income	-	5,092	5,000	6,000	5,000
Interest	50	20	50	20	50
<b>Total Other Support</b>	<b>42,050</b>	<b>36,089</b>	<b>20,050</b>	<b>24,450</b>	<b>33,550</b>
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>442,650</b>	<b>533,111</b>	<b>456,050</b>	<b>458,611</b>	<b>468,550</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>					
<b>Payroll Related Expenses</b>					
Salary expense	265,445	267,824	291,722	290,000	339,590
Fringe expense	89,621	73,602	89,100	89,000	106,586
<b>Total Payroll Expenses</b>	<b>355,066</b>	<b>341,426</b>	<b>380,822</b>	<b>379,000</b>	<b>446,176</b>
<b>Program Related Expenses</b>					
Denominational	23,000	21,290	23,000	22,500	23,000
Sunday Services - Music	6,500	2,847	6,500	6,500	6,500
Religious Exploration	6,900	4,789	7,400	7,400	7,700
Special / Committee Funding	12,750	9,806	4,200	4,450	6,000
Welcome Team	3,000	915	3,000	1,500	1,000
Teaching Parish (Intern)	9,000	9,000	-	-	8,500
<b>Total Program Expenses</b>	<b>61,150</b>	<b>48,647</b>	<b>44,100</b>	<b>42,350</b>	<b>52,700</b>
<b>Functional Expenses:</b>					
Administration & Office	31,200	30,621	39,400	36,000	36,000
Building Operations	84,000	104,421	95,000	98,000	100,000
<b>Total Functional Expenses</b>	<b>115,200</b>	<b>135,042</b>	<b>134,400</b>	<b>134,000</b>	<b>136,000</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>531,416</b>	<b>525,115</b>	<b>559,322</b>	<b>555,350</b>	<b>634,876</b>
Operating Surplus (Deficit)	(88,766)	7,996	(103,272)	(96,739)	(166,326)
Endowment Transfer - Operating	89,000	89,000	104,000	104,000	166,500
** Endowment Withdrawal Other	-	41,000	-	-	-
<b>Net Operating Surplus (Deficit)</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>137,996</b>	<b>728</b>	<b>7,261</b>	<b>174</b>
<i>Bequest moved to endowment</i>		<u>100,000</u>			
		37,996			
<i>** Endowment Withdrawal Other - to cover deficit realized in FY13</i>					
<b>B&amp;G Capital Projects</b>	<b>40,000</b>	<b>145,180</b>	<b>40,000</b>	<b>40,000</b>	<b>40,000</b>
Endowment Transfer - Capital	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000
Endowment Transfer - Other	-	90,000	-	-	-

*FY14 B&G Additional reserve funds of \$15,180 for Tower Repair  
FY14 B&G Other - Stained Glass Repair approved by Congregation*

FIRST PARISH IN BROOKLINE  
Proposed Budget Fiscal Year 2016

	Fiscal Year 2014		Fiscal Year 2015		Proposed
	Budget	Actuals	Budget	Estimated	FY 2016 BUDGET
<b>ADMINISTRATION &amp; Office</b>					
Office Supplies	4,800	3,582	5,000	3,000	4,250
Telephone	2,800	3,887	5,000	3,500	5,000
Postage	1,500	1,465	1,500	440	750
Printing & Copying	3,000	1,325	3,000	1,500	2,000
Equipment Lease	3,900	4,305	5,000	3,180	5,000
Computer/Software	4,000	2,331	4,000	3,000	4,000
Hospitality	4,200	5,160	5,000	5,000	5,500
Temporary Help	2,000	1,834	2,500	2,000	2,000
Website	700	648	1,000	1,000	800
Flowers	500	500	500	500	500
Miscellaneous	0	0	800	500	250
Bank Services Fees	300	193	500	500	500
Credit Card Fees	240	344	500	500	500
Payroll Processing Expenses	3,460	3,398	3,600	3,600	3,600
Directors & Officers Insurance	0	0	1,500	1,200	1,350
Ministers Discretionary Exp		1,839	0	6,600	-
<b>Total Administration &amp; Office</b>	<b>31,200</b>	<b>30,621</b>	<b>39,400</b>	<b>36,000</b>	<b>36,000</b>
<b>BUILDING OPERATIONS</b>					
Commercial Insurance	17,500	23,765	21,300	26,843	30,000
Fuel - Oil	30,000	41,419	37,300	30,500	35,000
Utilities	7,500	8,027	7,500	7,500	7,600
Municipal Fees	1,500	2,206	2,200	2,000	1,900
Snow Removal	4,000	5,150	4,000	9,307	4,000
Repairs & Small Projects	10,000	9,912	9,000	9,000	9,000
Cleaning Supplies	4,000	2,319	3,000	2,750	3,000
General Maintenance	7,300	8,753	8,500	8,000	7,300
Cell Phone	1,200	1,184	1,200	1,100	1,200
Parish Furnishings	1,000	1,886	1,000	1,000	1,000
<b>Total Building Operations</b>	<b>84,000</b>	<b>104,421</b>	<b>95,000</b>	<b>98,000</b>	<b>100,000</b>
<b>SPECIFIC COMMITTEE FUNDING</b>					
Auction	250	200	-	-	-
Canvass/Stewardship	1,000	94	-	-	-
Capital Campaign	2,500	1,645	-	-	-
Care Ministry	600	250	500	300	500
Congregational Life	250	250	-	-	-
Diversity	500	281	500	716	800
Historic Archives	200	394	200	50	50
Leadership Development	500	-	-	-	-
Parish Committee	3,000	3,558	500	880	1,150
Social Action	1,500	1,501	1,500	1,500	1,750
Stained Glass	250	-	-	-	250
Worship	2,200	1,634	1,000	1,100	1,500
<b>Total Committee Funding</b>	<b>12,750</b>	<b>9,806</b>	<b>4,200</b>	<b>4,546</b>	<b>6,000</b>

Notes: Communications, Flowers, Photo Directory, Technology and a portion of Welcoming Team for hospitality were have been rolled into Administration from previous reports

Worship Committee expense primarily covers guest ministers in addition to specific supplies solely related to Sunday worship

FIRST PARISH IN BROOKLINE  
Historical Review FY12 and FY13

	Fiscal Year 2012		Fiscal Year 2013	
	Budget	Actuals	Budget	Actuals
<b>CONGREGATIONAL SUPPORT</b>				
Pledges	347,248	336,979	355,000	338,361
Sunday Offering	17,000	12,627	17,000	10,931
Activity Fees	2,000	3,140	3,000	3,700
Other Donations	3,000	10,356	5,000	5,954
<b>Total Program Support</b>	<b>369,248</b>	<b>363,102</b>	<b>380,000</b>	<b>358,946</b>
<b>OTHER INCOME</b>				
Fund Raising Events	20,000	21,078	25,000	7
* Building Use	17,000	79,815	20,000	14,935
Grants and Designated Income	-	14,996	-	5,424
Interest	50	83	50	37
<b>Total Other Support</b>	<b>37,050</b>	<b>115,972</b>	<b>45,050</b>	<b>20,403</b>
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>406,298</b>	<b>479,074</b>	<b>425,050</b>	<b>379,349</b>
* Rental income high as a result of movie rental				
<b>EXPENSES</b>				
<b>Payroll Related Expenses</b>				
Salary expense	253,992	257,768	263,567	265,071
Fringe expense	81,231	69,961	83,466	71,373
<b>Total Payroll Expenses</b>	<b>335,223</b>	<b>327,729</b>	<b>347,033</b>	<b>336,444</b>
<b>Program Related Expenses</b>				
Denominational	21,050	19,416	22,000	19,500
Sunday Services - Music	8,415	8,226	8,995	3,461
Religious Exploration	4,370	5,745	5,300	4,510
Special / Committee Funding	13,800	6,165	19,000	12,449
Welcome Team	2,360	2,405	3,000	815
Teaching Parish (Intern)	12,000	12,000	6,000	6,000
<b>Total Program Expenses</b>	<b>61,995</b>	<b>53,957</b>	<b>64,295</b>	<b>46,735</b>
<b>Functional Expenses:</b>				
Administration & Office	22,500	49,044	23,000	30,580
Building Operations	80,100	92,664	80,500	93,759
<b>Total Functional Expenses</b>	<b>102,600</b>	<b>141,708</b>	<b>103,500</b>	<b>124,339</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>499,818</b>	<b>523,394</b>	<b>514,828</b>	<b>507,518</b>
Operating Surplus (Deficit)	(93,520)	(44,320)	(89,778)	(128,169)
Endowment Transfer - Operating	93,752	78,843	90,000	90,000
<b>Net Operating Surplus (Deficit)</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>34,523</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>(38,169)</b>
<b>B&amp;G Capital Projects</b>				
Endowment Transfer - Capital	60,000	70,007	60,000	81,158
	60,000	40,000	60,000	60,000

\* FY12 B&G used additional reserve funds of \$10,007 for Tower Repair and Tree trimming

\*\* FY 13 B&G used additional reserve funds of \$21,158 for Tower Repair

FIRST PARISH IN BROOKLINE  
Historical Review FY12 and FY13

	Fiscal Year 2012		Fiscal Year 2013	
	Budget	Actuals	Budget	Estimated
<b>ADMINISTRATION &amp; Office</b>				
Office Supplies	2,500	5,616	5,020	3,757
Telephone	4,000	3,967	4,000	4,693
Postage	750	1,118	1,200	1,546
Printing & Copying	1,000	2,476	1,000	1,045
Equipment Lease	3,000	3,804	3,780	4,304
Computer/Software	4,200	4,027	0	3,005
Hospitality	2,000	4,792	2,000	5,477
Temporary Help	1,000	1,568	2,000	999
Website	0	648	0	778
Flowers	0	676	0	0
Miscellaneous	0	12,392	0	1,016
Bank Services Fees	200	95	200	106
Credit Card Fees	350	250	200	229
Payroll Processing Expenses	3,500	3,110	3,600	3,221
Directors & Officers Insurance	0	0	0	0
Ministers Discretionary Exp	0	4,505	0	404
<b>Total Administration &amp; Office</b>	<b>22,500</b>	<b>49,044</b>	<b>23,000</b>	<b>30,580</b>
<b>BUILDING OPERATIONS</b>				
Commercial Insurance	17,350	14,310	17,500	18,189
Fuel - Oil	25,000	32,400	25,000	36,905
Utilities	6,500	7,439	6,500	7,615
Municipal Fees	1,500	2,250	1,500	1,938
Snow Removal	6,000	1,050	6,000	4,153
Repairs & Small Projects	10,000	18,224	10,000	12,591
Cleaning Supplies	4,000	3,008	3,000	3,188
General Maintenance	7,550	8,630	9,000	7,706
Cell Phone	1,200	1,200	1,000	1,001
Parish Furnishings	1,000	4,153	1,000	473
<b>Total Building Operations</b>	<b>80,100</b>	<b>92,664</b>	<b>80,500</b>	<b>93,759</b>
<b>SPECIFIC COMMITTEE FUNDING</b>				
Auction / Fund Raising	-	-	250	76
Canvass/Stewardship	1,000	300	1,000	756
Capital Campaign	-	-	-	-
Care Ministry	600	339	600	474
Communications	1,500	in admin	2,500	in admin
Community on Ministry	-	-	1,000	1,019
Congregational Life	250	250	700	42
Diversity	-	-	1,700	6,682
Flowers	500	675	500	52
Historic Archives	200	-	200	185
Leadership Development	-	-	500	-
Parish Committee	2,500	1,889	2,500	1,077
Photo Directory	-	-	600	in admin
Social Action	1,500	1,649	1,500	1,611
Stained Glass	250	266	250	-
Technology	4,200	in admin	4,000	in admin
Worship	1,300	797	1,200	473
<b>Total Committee Funding</b>	<b>13,800</b>	<b>6,165</b>	<b>19,000</b>	<b>12,449</b>

**First Parish in Brookline  
Fiscal Year 2016 Time and Salary Recommendations**

POSTION	UUA 7/11/2015		Percent			
	FY 15	Mid-Size II Range at % of time	Mid-Range at % of time	Full time FY 16	Full Mid FY 16	
Senior Minister	<b>66,384.00</b>	57,113 - 91,425	74,325.00	75%	<b>74,325.00</b>	
Assistant/Second Minister	<b>38,000.00</b>	39,375 - 63,637.50	51,562.50	75%	<b>51,562.50</b>	
Ministerial Other (Soc Sec) ***	<b>7,985.38</b>	7,183 - 11,541	9,630.39	N/A	<b>9,630.39</b>	
Director of Religious Ed	<b>38,250.00</b>	40,462.5 - 48,675	44,475.00	75%	<b>44,475.00</b>	
Music Director	<b>25,778.00</b>	26,075 - 37,425	30,250.00	50%	<b>30,250.00</b>	
Section Leaders	<b>16,000.00</b>	N/A	16,000.00	8hrs*4/10	<b>16,000.00</b>	
Parish Administrator	<b>44,000.00</b>	44,450 - 59,950	52,150.00	100%	<b>52,150.00</b>	
Admin Assistant	<b>16,146.00</b>	13,047.84 - 17,587.44	15,322.50	15 hr/wk	<b>15,322.50</b>	
Membership Coordinator	<b>9,300.00</b>	9,113 - 12,250	10,713.00	25%	<b>10,713.00</b>	
Sexton	<b>13,923.00</b>	<i>Budgeted changed midyear based on 10 hrs per week</i>	7,727.20 - 10,311.60	9,019.40	10hrs/wk	<b>9,019.40</b>
Custodian	<b>12,355.20</b>	<i>Budgeted changed midyear based on 25 hrs per week</i>	19,318 - 25,779.00	22,542.00	25hrs/wk	<b>22,542.00</b>
Nursery	<b>3,600.00</b>	<i>3 hrs*2 for 4wks/mo for 10mas</i>	3,086.40 - 4,032.00	3,600.00		<b>3,600.00</b>
<b>Total Staff Wages</b>	<b>291,721.58</b>		<b>339,589.79</b>		<b>339,589.79</b>	
Professional Expenses	<b>15,561.94</b>		18,499.29		<b>18,499.29</b>	
Benefits	<b>57,085.30</b>		69,353.07		<b>69,353.07</b>	
RCA & Worker's Comp	<b>16,452.76</b>		18,733.50		<b>18,733.50</b>	
<b>Total Compensation / Expenses</b>	<b>380,821.58</b>		<b>446,175.65</b>		<b>446,175.65</b>	

\*\*\* Ministerial other is social security offset actually paid to Minister's and thus is part of their salary thru payroll service and needs to be represented here otherwise it's confusing as budget doesn't fall in line as actually tracked. Previous years this was part of RCA/Worker's Comp

**Visit the UUA Website  
Fair Compensation Guidelines  
Geo Index 6**

(2 pages were inserted in the hardcopy of the Annual Report)

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## **WELCOMING COMMITTEE**

**2014-2015**

**Team Members:** Branch Moody and Laura Hatfield (co-chairs), Susan Caplan, Val Gunning, Kathryn Kirshner, Grace Raczek-Hoffmann, Scott Ullrich, and Kristen McIntire (staff)

**Our Mission:** We seek to attract, invite, inspire, retain, and support newcomers; to encourage membership and foster a congregation-wide spirit of radical hospitality in support of a healthy and growing church community; and to facilitate participative and joyful connections between newcomers and members.

**Our Vision:** We create a welcoming atmosphere to facilitate the spiritual development of newcomers and their connection to the congregation. Welcoming, from first contact and continuing throughout membership, becomes a part of our culture at First Parish and is recognized in the wider community.

### **2014-2015 Goals**

1. We will broaden involvement of the congregation in welcoming activities by recruiting members to greet at the doors and in coffee hour.
2. We will facilitate Deeper Discussions as a way to reflect on the sermon in a small group setting.
3. We will host welcome breakfast and lunch activities on Sundays approximately once per month.
4. We will foster increased visibility of our committee through the bulletin board and integrating with other parish committees. We have identified committee crossover issues, including the Parish website, youth group involvement in greeting, and pastoral care associates.
5. We will revamp the written “welcoming packet” with up-to-date information for visitors and make it available at the welcome table on Sunday.
6. We will aim for speedy written follow-up with visitors through “same day” cards and email messages and welcoming team personalized “calling cards.” As individuals, we will be knowledgeable about Parish activities so we can communicate these to visitors.
7. We will host circle suppers and use these as a means of integrating visitors into the community.
8. We will develop welcoming as a spiritual practice.

### **2014-2015 Achievements**

- We expanded our list of greeters to 28 people. This diverse group of volunteers worked with Welcoming Team members to greet newcomers, friends, and members into the sanctuary on Sunday mornings; connect with visitors at coffee hour; and collect visitor information forms.
- We facilitated Deeper Discussions after worship on the first Sunday of the month.
- Our team hosted 3 newcomer meals. At these events, attendees learned about the history of Unitarian Universalism and First Parish in Brookline.
- We created visitor Welcome Packets filled with compact visitor contact forms, tips for connecting electronically with the church, and other helpful information.

- We welcomed at least 80 visitors on Sunday mornings and sent personal notes after their first visit to the church. So far this year, 15 new members have signed the Membership Book.
- We organized 3 Circle Suppers, potluck meals in individual homes. All told, 116 people, including a number of children participated. One host couple new to First Parish said, “The conversation bubbled over...We learned a lot about our guests and the church...As relative newcomers, we were grateful for this exchange.” Comments from other hosts included, “opportunity to converse more deeply,” “a delightful evening,” “a good mix of people,” “a chance to get better acquainted.”
- We assembled and donated a basket of home goods for Friends of Boston’s Homeless as an extension of the spiritual practice of welcoming to the wider community.

### ***Appreciation and Recognition***

We are tremendously grateful to Kristen McIntire, our Membership Coordinator, for coordinating greeting schedules, collecting and updating newcomer information, sending newcomer notes, and supporting all of us on Sunday mornings.

Special thanks also to all those who joined us in welcoming on Sunday mornings: Jeff Cadow, Peggy Cave, Ann Dinsmoor, Almas Dossa, Madeline Fine, Elena Garofoli, Sheila Hussey, Gerry Leader, Paul McLean, Tai Melendy, Mary Rogers, Jack Smith, Gene Thompson-Grove, Joey Ullrich, Laura Walters, Ron Wilkinson, Meredith Williamson, and Jim Womack.