



First Parish in Brookline

A WELCOMING UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

May 9, 2016

Dear Member of First Parish in Brookline,

Join us on Sunday, May 22nd, from 12:45 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
Chalice Lighting and Reading
Unison Reading of Mission Statement
Approve Minutes of 2015 Annual Meeting
Recognize and Elect New Members
Elect Officers and Committee Members
Parish Committee Reports
Minister's Report
Hymn (*Siyahamba*)
Budget Presentation and Vote on Fiscal Year 2016-2017
Any Other Business
Hymn (*This Little Light of Mine*)
Extinguishing the Chalice
Adjourn

Hoping to see you at 12:45 pm in Lyon Chapel on Sunday, May 22nd!

Ann Dinsmoor,
Parish Committee Chair

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

New Parish Members

The following 9 people have signed the membership book since our last Annual Meeting:

Jessica Alm
Charissa Benak
Sean Benak
Phil Didlake
Rob Ellison

Ben Gibbons
Sara Gibbons
Jenny Madrigal
Susie Shayegani

Officers and Standing Committee Members

The Leadership Development Committee nominates the following members:

For Clerk of the Parish

TBD

For Treasurer

Ben Davis

For Moderator

Bob Williamson

For the Parish Committee

David Cave
Ann Dinsmoor
Laura Hatfield
Alice Mark

For Leadership Development Committee

Sara Warren
Gene Thompson-Grove
TBD

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Gilmore
Clerk of the Parish

FIRST PARISH IN BROOKLINE
Minutes of the 298th Annual Meeting
May 31, 2015

Call to Order and quorum established by Moderator Janet Sanders at approximately 12:45pm

Chalice Lighting and Reading

Approve 2014 Minutes

The minutes of the 2014 Annual Meeting were approved.

Recognize and Elect New Members

The following 20 people signed the membership book since our 2014 Annual Meeting:
Ellen Blaney, Jonathan Cave, Emily Cherry, Micaela Coady, Nathan Freitas, Russell Geer, Jennifer Goldson, Jennifer Goulart, Robson Goulart, Fernanda Justo, Lilly Marcelin, Anne Modena, Philip Moremen, Amy Morrissey, Matthew O'Rourke, Alison Plante, Douglas Plante, Luisa Raposo, Caterina Rodriguez, Sara Warren.

A motion to accept these new members was seconded and approved.

Elect Officers and Committee Members

The following officers and committee members, nominated by the Leadership Development Committee, were elected:

Clerk of the Parish	Ann Gilmore
Treasurer	Stacey Raczek
Moderator	Anne Copland
Parish Committee	Michele David, Benjamin Davis, Steve Davis, James Shillaber

In addition, Suzanne Federspiel, nominated by the Parish Committee, was elected to the Leadership Development Committee.

Discussion and Vote on Mission Statement

One of the Parish Committee's goals for this year was to engage the congregation in a process to create a new Mission/Vision statement to guide our congregational decision-making. Generative activities were conducted throughout the church year, including at our Thanksgiving Feast, and during and after worship services. This process yielded five suggested statements which were presented to the congregation for feedback. Based on the feedback, the following broadly endorsed mission/vision statement was submitted by the Parish Committee for adoption at the Annual Meeting:

Called by Love, Sustained By Community, Committed to Justice

We strive to be a welcoming, diverse and loving congregation that nurtures spiritual growth for individuals and families, celebrates multicultural community, and works together to demand social justice, dismantle racism, and care for our living earth.

A motion to adopt this mission/vision statement was seconded and approved.

Song We'll Build a Land

Discussion and Vote on FY16 Budget

Treasurer Stacey Raczek presented an overview of the past year's finances and the proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year 2016.

FY15 is tracking closely to budget. Although pledges and income from Sunday offerings are less than expected, income from building rentals and other donations was higher than anticipated, resulting in an overall projected FY15 income that will match or slightly exceed expectations. Our overall expenses will be slightly less than budgeted. The withdrawal from the endowment will be \$144,000 or about 5.5% of the total.

The proposed budget for FY16 is higher in both income and expenses. The budget was developed through a multi—stage process including staff projections, Finance Council review and recommendations, Parish Committee review, and two well attended budget hearings with the congregation. A key point of discussion was how to balance our goals of fair staff compensation with a sustainable draw on the endowment. The feedback at those hearings was that it would be most consistent with our values to commit to increasing all staff salaries to the mid-point of the UUA Fair Compensation Guidelines for congregations of our size and geographic location. These salary increases will add an increase of more than \$65,00 to our salary and fringe benefit expenses. We are estimating \$420,000 of pledge income, the same as for FY2015, and are calling for fundraising events to add \$12,500 to our budget, to offset a portion of the salary increases. The recommended budget would require an expected endowment withdrawal of about 7.9%.

Questions were asked and answered regarding the UUA Fair Compensation guidelines. It was suggested that, since our membership of 265 was only slightly over the minimum range of a midsize level II congregation (ranging from 250-349), it was appropriate to be paying staff at the lower end of the recommended salary ranges. Many comments were directed at the goal of setting our staff salaries at sustainable levels for staff, which would mean compensating at the midpoint. Comparisons were made to the focus on sustaining our endowment and the need to broaden our concept of sustainability beyond the endowment to include sustaining our staff. Ideas on reducing the resultant increased draw on our endowment included growing our membership, increasing our pledges, and active fundraising. The Finance Council is developing a plan to sell the silver items approved for sale by the congregation last year. In addition, it was suggested that individuals be encouraged to add the amount of \$80 to their pledges to offset the Fair Share dues we pay to the UUA based on our number of members.

A motion to adopt the proposed budget for FY 16 was seconded and approved with one abstention.

Chair Steve Davis explained that at the budget hearings, some members had expressed a willingness to add to their pledges for FY16 in order to help pay for increased staff salaries. Some additional pledge amounts and/or checks had already been sent into the church office. He encouraged everyone present to consider increasing their pledge and passed out forms for people to fill out with any additional pledge amounts.

Emeritus Status for Rev. Martha Niebanck

Steve Davis explained that the PC is recommending that the congregation grant emeritus status to Rev. Martha Niebanck, who retired from her co-ministry with Rev.

Jim at the end of December 2012. This role would allow for Rev. Martha to attend church, to preach occasionally, to offer workshops, to perform weddings and funerals, and to mentor Rev. Maria Cristina. As part of her role, she would be in covenant with our senior minister, Rev. Jim, to support his ministry and not to express opinions on the performance of any of our staff. Both Rev. Jim and Rev. Maria Cristina are supportive of this recommendation.

A motion to grant emeritus status to Rev. Martha was seconded and approved.

Parish Committee Report

Chair Steve Davis reported on the PC's progress this year on the goals that were formulated and announced at the beginning of FY 2015:

Mission/Vision – our yearlong process of engagement with the congregation has resulted in the adoption today of an inspirational new mission and vision.

By-Laws, Organizational Structure and Decision Making – this was an area of focus at multiple PC meetings, a half-day workshop attended by members of the Parish Committee, Committee on Ministry, and Leadership Development Committee, and a meeting for all interested congregants. This process helped the PC realize that although no by-law changes seemed warranted, our congregation would benefit from more structure. This summer the PC will be chartering three committees and/or task forces:

- HR Task Force to help us step more deeply into right relations with our staff team:
- Task Force on Mission and Ministries to help our committees and our congregation live into our new mission: and
- Stewardship Committee to bring predictability, awareness, spirituality, and stewardship to our church finances.

Finance Council – Treasurer Stacey Raczek led the effort to reinstate the Finance Council to provide financial insights and recommendations towards aligning our shared mission, financial resources and diverse needs.

Youth Ministry – On the recommendation of Rev. Jim, the PC approved the hiring of ministerial student-intern Mandy Beal for the next two years with a focus on developing a model for youth ministry based on her experience in this area.

Charter Process – a new committee charter template was proposed by the LDC and approved by the PC. In June, the PC will review four pilot committee charters.

Trends in Participation – The PC has recognized a decline of approximately 19% in Sunday service and RE attendance since peak attendance in 2011 and 2012. In an effort to understand this trend, we have begun reaching out to a representative sample of lay leaders and participants past and present to solicit their feedback. We will report back to the congregation on this feedback in the fall.

Song – This Little Light of Mine

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:30.

Respectfully Submitted,
Ann Gilmore
Clerk of the Parish

INTERIM SENIOR MINISTER'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2016

I am so thrilled to have been selected to serve as your Interim Senior Minister. Our time together started in January, 2016 and has been all that I could have wished for in an interim ministry. First Parish in Brookline is a special congregation with a deep sense of community and a long and rich history in our Unitarian Universalist history. Your commitment to multiculturalism and becoming an anti-racist congregation combined with your love and respect for one another is remarkable. You are a welcoming congregation in the largest sense of the word - valuing religious exploration, making a safe space for all kinds of families and caring and opening your doors and hearts to the larger world and one another.

The first five months of our shared interim ministry has gotten off to a great start! Worship attendance is strong and growing, folks are coming to check out this interim minister and ending up falling in love with this beloved congregation. We spent the couple of months getting to know each other on the congregational and individual level. I have spent time with committee and other lay program leaders from nearly every corner of this congregation. (Still have poetry, yoga and I'm sure a few others still to come!) I've enjoyed getting to know many of you in pastoral and one on one visits. The minister's office has been humming with visitors, its newly arranged furniture and ever ready tea pot. Each and every conversation and visit that I have helps me to know FP, your history and traditions, concerns and hopes better.

The staff team has been working together incredibly well. We have quickly gotten to know each other and develop a strong rapport. We continue to meet collectively every other Tuesday for several hours to plan worship services together which is a true team effort. We are blessed to have a member of the Worship Associate Team join us each time that we gather. We also focus on other issues at each staff meeting including what is going on in various aspects of church life, planning congregational activities and supporting each other's ministries. Affiliate ministers are an important part of the fabric of the staff team and are always eager to offer their support.

We had a mild winter this year which was a blessing not only for the fuel costs but also for my commuting between West Hartford, CT and Brookline. My husband, Bart and I found a home to rent in Newton Corners where I live from Sundays through Wednesdays. We will be selling our home in CT this summer as our last child goes off to college thus allowing us to live here full time for the rest of my time with you.

I have been working closely with the Parish Committee and the Transition Team focusing both on specific interim tasks and the ongoing ministry and work of the congregation. Both groups have worked very hard and are deeply committed to a successful interim period. The Parish Committee has been supportive of my developing norms with staff that include regular supervision and each staff member establishing professional goals. They are open to reconsidering church life through an interim lens, and fully support the questioning and reflection that goes along with that. They voted for the Immigration Justice Task Force to continue and expand its work with our community partners; Chelsea Collaborative and Centro Presente while at the same time exploring what it might mean for FP to be part of providing sanctuary. The PC manages to balance many priorities including most recently responding to the likely transition of the Assistant Minister Reverend Maria Cristina as she is called to serve

our congregation in Hayward, CA. The PC has created a culture where members can share differing opinions in a healthy and open way.

The Transition Team has taken their few months to understand the scope of their work particularly with respect to the PC and the Search Committee when it is formed. The PC and TT have had two mini-retreats together where they identified the goals of this interim period and put them into twelve categories. Part of their work has been to clarify the roles and responsibilities for each of these areas between PC, TT, the congregation at large and staff. The areas of work include: living into FP's mission/vision, social justice, worship attendance, community building; social and small groups, staffing supervision and staffing model, Commitment to being a multi-generational congregation, grieving /resolving of past, financial sustainability, how decisions are made and who does FP want to be? The TT organized the congregational creation of a history wall and facilitated a conversation about the history wall. They are communicating with the congregation through various mechanisms including a monthly newsletter article, question box, informal conversations for interest congregants with the interim senior minister and members of the TT before service. They are also starting a blog in May! It was important for the Team to realize that this is the first interim ministry that included a TT, so this is a new experience for FP.

In addition to the PC and TT, I have been working with many other groups. The Worship Associates are embracing their increased involvement in Sunday services. They have appreciated working with the worship template and annotated orders of services each week. The PC and the WA supported moving the chairs that were facing each other on the chancel and putting in their place two historical chairs that now both face outwards toward the congregation. The WA are putting together the summer services schedule and participated in the creation of next year's worship calendar. We are excited to be trying monthly ministry themes next year!

The Pastoral Care Associates also held a retreat in March during which time they renewed their mission and service to the congregation, as well as their structure and volunteer leadership. They are excited about that they are beginning a more formalized rides/meals/visits system that will allow all congregants to participate. PCA continue to provide pastoral care and deep listening as a critical part of their work.

I have also supported and engaged in the work of groups including the Diversity Caucus, the Deacons, Welcoming Team, canvass, the Finance Council, the Social Action Forum and RE. I am looking forward to attending Cape Cod Sea Camps and getting to know the families of FP better.

My time has also been spent getting to know the UUA regional staff members and keeping them up to date with the work that we are doing together. As well I am getting to know my ministerial colleagues in the region through district meetings and small groups of ministers.

My personal ministry has included preaching about living into your mission statement, creating genuine relationships, opening up the conversation about being in recovery (AA), living in transition and liminality and community rituals. A membership class was held with six new members joining this April.

We've begun gathering to plan for your 300th anniversary next year which is sure to include a yearlong array of activities. We are excited to celebrate both your history and your future!

First Parish is truly a UU congregation that "Stands on the Side of Love"!

Congratulations on the wise decision to extend your interim period through June, 2018! I look forward to our shared interim ministry – working, growing and worshipping together next year!

With love and gratitude,
Reverend Rebeca M Bryan
Interim Senior Minister

FELLOWSHIP TEAM

Rev Rebecca's Fellowship Team was assembled in advance of her starting with First Parish in January. The purpose of our Team is to support Rev. Rebecca in her progression preliminary to final fellowship with the Unitarian Universalist Association. We meet monthly and more if necessary to provide feedback, support and guidance. We also complete and submit the renewal paperwork with the UUA. This first renewal period began in January 2016 and will run through October, 2016. We plan on meeting throughout Rev. Rebecca's time with First Parish.

Respectfully Submitted,
Sue Andrews, Chair
David Cave
Emily Cherry
Sheila Hussey

TRANSITION TEAM **Annual Report May 2016**

A new group, the Transition Team, was formed in January 2016 to assist the Interim ministry through the period of transition following Rev Jim Sherblom's departure.

Members: Rev Rebecca Bryan and Anne Copeland, Co-Chairs; Lily Marcelin; Mark Reynolds; Gene Thompson-Grove; Bob Williamson.

Meetings: Monthly, with occasional additional special meetings or projects

Tasks: The Transition Team will be guided by the following Tasks of an Interim Ministry, as outlined by the UUA:

- claiming and honoring its past and engaging and honoring its griefs and conflicts
- recognizing its unique identity and its strengths, needs, and challenges
- clarifying the appropriate leadership roles of minister(s), church staff, and lay leaders and navigating the shifts in leadership that may accompany times of
- making appropriate use of District, UUA, and other outside resources
- proudly coming into possession of a renewed vision and strong stewardship, prepared for new growth and new professional leadership, ready to embrace the future with anticipation and zest.

Activities: Toward that end, here is a sample of the Team's activities:

During Spring 2016, the Transition Team organized a History Wall in which over 70 members wrote about and posted onto the wall almost 200 memories of First Parish that evoked values that they want to carry into the future. A subsequent church-wide conversation focused on observed themes, including:

- Family milestones and planted roots (weddings, funerals, child dedications)
- Experience of being welcomed and sensing diversity; wonderful and warm
- Personal growth
- Support for children when they are in need
- Celebrations and fun – the cape cod sea camp trips
- Appreciation for the choir
- Gay marriages celebrated
- Intergenerational community

The Team co-led a meeting of the First Parish book club in which the book, *In the Interim*, was discussed.

Several strategies were begun to facilitate communication between the Team and congregation members, including:

- Team members now wear name tags with their Transition Team membership noted.
- A Suggestion Box is now in the hallway for people, non-anonymously, to ask questions or make observations about the transition in a convenient way.
- Members of the Team will write a transitions update in each church monthly newsletter, and will start a transitions blog that can be accessed easily throughout the year.
- The Team held a pre-church Q&A coffee with congregation members who had questions about the transition.
- The Team held two meetings, including an afternoon retreat, with the Parish Committee to agree on the roles and responsibilities of each group.
- The Team held a joint meeting with the Diversity Caucus to begin to ascertain how to support the congregation through the possible departure of Rev. Maria Cristina Vlassidis Burgoa.

Going forward, the Transition Team will be responsive to congregational and ministerial needs related to the interim ministry period, working with the Parish Committee and Rev Rebecca Bryan to understand and address the church's history and points of conflict, and to help it live into its mission.

Respectfully Submitted,
Anne Copeland and Rev Rebecca Bryan, Co-Chairs

REPORT OF THE PARISH COMMITTEE

Congregational Year 2015-2016

“Change”, “discernment”, and “deepening spiritual connections” have been the themes of this year – as we come together to live into our new mission, adopted at last year’s Annual Meeting, and play our part in guiding the work of interim ministry. Dear members of the First Parish in Brookline community, the Parish Committee (PC) thanks you for making this journey with us.

To create a safe space for each of us to bring our authentic selves to our work together and to ground that work in the spirit of Unitarian Universalism, we were steadfast in starting every PC meeting with an extended time of spiritual practice and a check-in. And we often made time for a “musical interlude” to re-ground and – energize us!

As the previous church year drew to a close, we had recognized the downward trend in worship and religious exploration participation and begun to consider whether this was part of a national trend in churches or whether there might be actions we as a congregation could take to reverse the trend. For example, we noted that average weekly attendance and religious exploration registrations had both dropped 23% since the 2013 church year. With Rev. Dr. Jim, we considered our options for better understanding what was happening. In late May/early June 2015, we undertook a carefully planned and conducted process in which we interviewed a sample of 47 congregants selected to represent a range of family stage, length of time at FPB and current level of involvement in congregational life. Each was asked two questions: *What has worked well for you at First Parish this year? What, if anything, has not worked well for you at First Parish?* Responses were recorded by the interviewers without names attached to specific answers. The responses were compiled and analyzed.

What did we learn? A very large majority of those interviewed saw the First Parish community as “working well” for them, citing the deep bonds they have with others here. A prevailing sentiment was expressed that members’ spiritual needs would be better met with changes in and/or alternatives to multigenerational services, as well as more lay participation in services. Many people commented favorably on the increased attention being paid to diversity and anti-racism. Some noted that the increased focus on race and social justice has meant that we have less emphasis on other spiritual concerns on Sunday morning.

The PC chair met with chairs of the Worship and Religious Exploration committees, and Rev. Dr. Jim worked with staff to plan some changes over the summer for implementation in September. We shared detailed reports of the interviewing with Rev. Dr. Jim, and, with him, met with Assistant Minister Rev. Maria Cristina and with DRE Rebecca Keller Scholl to share the portions of the interview findings that related to their areas of responsibility. We prepared a brief summary report to the church member list-serve in July. That report is appended to this report.

During this same time, Rev. Dr. Jim was reflecting on his ten years at First Parish and deciding to depart. He concluded that he and church leadership had set the stage for the FPB community to grow and transform. With a new mission statement, a strong staff, a safe and refurbished building and a stronger financial footing, now, he explained, is the time for First Parish to begin the transition to a new minister whose gifts can be really well-matched to the ministry First Parish will need in the next stage of its development. He also explained that he is at heart a mystic and a spiritual seeker, and loves to spend time with Sufi's, Taoists, and shamans. He explained in his message to the congregation in September that he feels called to

do more of this type of spiritual work, so he would spend the second half of this church year using the sabbatical time we owed him to explore more intensely the new directions his interests were taking him for the next phase of his life and career.

With support from the Worship Committee and others, Rev. Dr. Jim began to implement some changes in services in the fall, based on the findings of the interview process, notably changes in multi-generational services and the introduction of more lay voices in the service. And as the time of his departure neared, we celebrated him – and his 60th birthday - at a lovely dinner-dance party sponsored by Alice and Coleman Mark and Anya and Corey Thomas. Thank you to these two couples for such a gracious way of honoring the strong and inspired leadership of Rev. Dr. Jim! In December, under the leadership of past chair and continuing member Steve Davis, the PC organized a farewell event after church at which children led him on a path, eventually crossing a bridge to a new place. On this path, narrated by Jody Leader, he began in the sanctuary and continued around the circle of those gathered in Lyon Chapel, as they spoke their farewells. He was accompanied by a large white dove puppet created and made to fly by Sally Moore! We wished him great joy on his new spiritual journey.

In response to Rev. Dr. Jim's decision to leave, the PC held several congregation-wide "Listening Circles" to give members an opportunity to share their feelings and ideas about the path forward, and to share what we were learning about how to find an interim minister and otherwise plan for changes that would begin January 1. We called two congregational meetings (October 4th and 18th) for the two votes needed under our by-laws to withdraw funds from our endowment. We so appreciate members' dedication in achieving a quorum for each meeting (!) and voting to "withdraw up to \$55,000 to fund up to five (5) months of an interim minister's service during Rev. Dr. Jim's sabbatical (January 1 to May 31, 2016)."

With counsel from staff at the UUA, and guided by the UUA's *Transitional Ministry Handbook*, we learned that interim ministers are hired by the congregation's governing board and report to the board, which is different than called ministers who are chosen by and report to the congregation. The PC formed an Interim Minister Search Committee comprised of three members of the PC – Sue Andrews (chair), Michele David and James Shillaber – and two members of the congregation - Bijan Etemad-Gilbertson and Scott Ullrich. In a very short time – and with information gleaned from the Listening Circles and elsewhere - the committee put together the First Parish application to the UUA. From a list of potential candidates presented by the UUA's Office of Transitional Ministry, the committee selected candidates they wished to interview. To our very good fortune, we found Rev. Rebecca Bryan very interested in serving our congregation and available for an almost immediate start – the first week of January. The PC contracted with her for an 18-month commitment, January 2016 through June 2017. Rev. Rebecca comes to us from the Monson, MA church where she was a contract minister. She also was working as a consultant with the UUA, following a successful career as a consultant to non-profits.

To deepen our understanding of the possibilities of an interim period, members of the PC read together and discussed with Rev. Rebecca *In the Interim: Strategies for Interim Ministers and Congregations*, edited by the UUA's Director of Ministerial Transitions, Keith Kron, and Barbara Child. We learned to distinguish between our interim "minister" and our "interim ministry". The latter is the responsibility of all of us! Our interim minister assists us to achieve these five goals of our interim ministry together:

1. Claim and honor our past and engage and honor our griefs and conflicts;
2. Recognize our unique identity and our strengths, needs, and challenges;
3. Clarify the appropriate leadership roles of ministers, church staff, and lay leaders and navigate the shifts in leadership that may accompany times of transition;
4. Make appropriate use of UUA and other outside resources; and ultimately to –
5. Proudly come into possession of a renewed vision and strong stewardship, prepared for new growth and new professional leadership, ready to embrace the future with anticipation and zest.

Again following UUA guidelines, the PC formed a five-member Transition Team to work closely with Rev Rebecca to support the work of both the interim minister and interim ministry. The PC invited members of the congregation to nominate themselves or other members to serve on this team. The PC then selected five people who – together – it felt could represent the diverse interests and experiences of the congregation: Anne Copeland, Lilly Marcelin, Mark Reynolds, Gene Thompson-Grove and Bob Williamson. The Team is co-chaired by Anne Copeland and Rev. Rebecca. We are greatly blessed to have Rev. Rebecca’s highly visible presence and thoughtful guidance. The PC intends to work closely with the Transition Team throughout the Interim period. Already, in consultation with the Transition Team, the PC voted in April to extend the interim period through June 2018 and invited Rev. Rebecca to stay through this extended time. Also, the PC has seen a need to learn how program leaders are seeing their role in the interim ministry period and to share with them the several areas of focus of the PC’s work over the next year. To that end, the PC will be holding a meeting of the “Program Council” on May 15th. Members of the Transition Team will join the PC in that effort. See the report of the Transition Team elsewhere in this Annual Report for information about their role and activities.

Early last summer, at our annual planning retreat, the PC had identified goals in five broad areas:

- Mission Empowerment, e.g., ensure that we are living into our mission – across all lay led activities and ministerial activities
- Human Resources, e.g., Evaluate current staff hours and compensation relative to work patterns
- Stewardship, e.g., develop a more robust membership process that invites people deeper and deeper into the community and the experience
- Finances, e.g., engage the congregation in a conversation regarding church assets and antiquities and their relationship to the mission, and actions that would be appropriate
- Policies and Bylaws Refinement, e.g., identify conflicting and out-of-date information in bylaws and draft revisions for action at Annual Meeting.

With Rev. Dr. Jim’s decision to leave, the PC’s focus had naturally turned to transition. However, we have made progress on several of our goals. We have tried to hold up our new mission statement as our primary guide in every policy decision we have acted upon, including the decision to support congregation-wide conversations that led to the decision to proudly unveil our Black Lives Matter banner. The PC also approved the Immigration Justice Committee's request to initiate a congregation-wide dialogue about the deportation crisis facing Central American immigrants and the many ways our church can respond. James Shillaber, the PC’s lead on human resources, has worked closely with Rev. Rebecca and Parish Administrator Sonya Abbott to update and codify personnel policies and practices. Under the leadership of Treasurer Stacey Raczek, the Finance Council has served the Parish Committee well by analyzing budget and other financial issues and taking the lead in the sale at auction of our silver collection. PC member Sue Andrews is chairing a small team charged with drafting revisions to the bylaws for a congregational vote next fall.

On April 22nd, beloved assistant minister Rev. Maria Cristina Vlassidis Burgoa announced to the congregation that she had been unexpectedly invited to consider becoming the minister of a UU congregation in Hayward, California, and was awaiting a congregational vote to call her on May 15th. This sudden and unanticipated news elicited strong feelings, including deep loss and uncertainty. It thrust the PC – along with the staff and congregation – into deeper reflection about our shared journey toward becoming a multi-cultural, anti-racist congregation. The PC and Rev. Rebecca – in consultation with the congregation through a series of budget hearings – have begun to develop “contingency plans” for next year designed to sustain the progress being made to live into the social justice aspect of our new mission, and – at the same time – afford us time and resources to discern together what our future ministerial/staff model can and should be when we emerge from the Interim period.

As the church year nears its end, the PC is thankful for the passion and commitment of so many members of this beloved community. We look forward to working even more closely with the Transition Team to involve the congregation in realizing the goals of the interim ministry. We thank Rev. Rebecca for her skillful leadership and pastoral care! We are doing our very best to look at whatever challenges come our way as opportunities and possibilities.

Blessings on our precious community,

Ann Dinsmoor, Parish Committee Chair
Elena Garofoli, Vice Chair
Ann Gilmore, Clerk
Stacey Raczek, Treasurer

Sue Andrews
Michele David
Ben Davis
Steve Davis, Past Chair
James Shillaber

Attachment

First Parish in Brookline A Report from the Parish Committee July 2015

What brings you to church? What do you look for from your Unitarian Universalist congregation? We have different theologies, family constellations, cultural traditions and so much more, but what makes a congregation vibrant is the energy and engagement its members bring to worship, programs, committees and community.

Background

In spring 2015 the Parish Committee and ministers noticed that attendance rates at Sunday services and in the RE program had fallen. Further, we noted that a number of formerly active leaders and members were considerably less involved in Sunday services and committees. While a host of factors can account for this, we saw ourselves - as the community’s elected governing board - responsible for investigating what some of the causes might be and whether any contributing factors could/should be addressed by the First Parish Brookline community.

To do so, we launched an interview process designed to understand how a representative sampling of members viewed current church life. Our incoming and outgoing chairs (Ann Dinsmoor and Steve Davis) recruited Moderator-elect Anne Copeland and former Community Engagement Committee members Karla Baehr, Ethan Brackett and Susan Larrabee to join them in conducting interviews.

Under Anne’s leadership, this group of six members developed an interview process designed to respect the community’s commitment to right relations while providing the opportunity for honest, detailed and nuanced feedback. Between mid-May and mid-June, they interviewed a total

of 47 people in 36 sessions. The 47 were a sample chosen to represent a range of family stage, length of time at FPB and current level of involvement in congregational life. Each interview session lasted between 45 and 90 minutes and focused very simply on what is working well and not working well at First Parish for each member or couple. Using methodology common in the field of professional qualitative research, the interview team identified a number of patterns and trends for the Parish Committee and ministerial team to consider.

Community

A very large majority of those interviewed see the First Parish community as “working well” for them, pointing to:

1. The deep bonds they have with others here;
2. The intimacy and sense of “knowing and being known” that comes from small group engagement through committees, long-term activities, workshops and the like;
3. The importance, especially but not only for families, of being a diverse population of people who share values and life struggles;
4. Being part of a well-functioning congregation and/or committee that is growth-enhancing;
5. Being a place where newcomers to the community can make and build sustaining connections; and,
6. Being a place of connection for families who share the journey of same-sex parenting, adoption and raising biracial children.

A few interviewees described having difficulty making and/or sustaining connections.

Sunday Services

Interviewees held a range of views about what they consider to be some of the more “experimental” approaches to worship used in Sunday services. A prevailing sentiment was expressed that members’ spiritual needs will be better met with changes in and/or alternatives to multi-generational services, as well as more lay participation in services.

Diversity/Anti-Racism/Social Justice

Many people commented favorably on the increased attention being paid to diversity and anti-racism. Some noted that the increased focus on race and social justice has meant that we have less emphasis on other spiritual concerns on Sunday morning.

Religious Exploration Program for Children

Every parent of a child or youth who commented about RE noted how good the program and teachers are, or mentioned the importance of RE’s role in their family.

Music Ministry

Many people interviewed commented positively about the choir, the director, and/or the music. While some interviewees criticized some of the musical choices, there was no consensus about what people preferred.

Next Steps

Members of the interview team are sharing greater detail on the findings about Sunday services with the (staff) worship team and the Worship Committee. In addition, more detailed feedback about pastoral care, shared ministry/decision-making and the other topics relevant to their area of ministry has been shared with each member of the ministerial team (senior minister, assistant minister and director of RE).

The people who were interviewed expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to explore their experiences through the interview process, and the Parish Committee appreciates very much the time and effort made by those members of the First Parish community. In addition, the Parish Committee appreciates the hard work of the interviewing team. Change is inherently a part of being in a dynamic, living community. The information provided by the interviews is extremely useful for understanding what people in this community are experiencing and expect, and it will help us as we think about where this community will go – what forms worship, music, education and service will take. There will be more opportunities for you to be a part of shaping our community, and we encourage you to look for opportunities to share your ideas or get involved in shaping what we do.

ASSISTANT MINISTER'S ANNUAL REPORT 2015-2016

Beloveds,

I first came to First Parish Brookline as a guest preacher about three years ago. I spoke about radical hospitality and being a welcoming congregation. Shortly thereafter I was invited to be your Minister with a particular focus on diversity, multiculturalism, and building the beloved community. Our shared journey these past three years has been a blessing and an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to becoming an anti racist, multicultural congregation, and to reaffirm our calling to a shared social justice ministry. In this short time, we have built a trust relationship that has allowed us to have difficult conversations about race, gender, class, and the need to take your mission outside these walls.

We have experimented with worship with mixed results, always seeking to be more welcoming, more open, and willing to experience the discomfort of stepping outside our comfort zones. We opened our doors to our community partners from Chelsea and East Boston who found here among you, a sanctuary. We opened our hearts to become pastoral caregivers within and without our walls, including inside the Suffolk detention center where people are incarcerated for the only crime of lacking immigration papers. We established a relationship with the Louis D. Brown Peace Institute beyond walking and charity giving and more in solidarity with families experiencing the loss of a loved one. We have nourished the social justice efforts that Linda and Jack Smith began and our congregation has become well known within the Boston New Sanctuary Movement.

One of our many proud moments was receiving an award from the Chelsea Collaborative for our ongoing efforts towards immigration justice. We have walked together in solidarity during vigils and *Las Posadas* to bear public witness to the journeys of immigrants who arrived here fleeing violence, seeking refuge, and a second chance to live in peace. We have shared the challenge and joy of Beloved Conversations, the installation of our Black Lives Matter banner, the Salsa, Soul, and Spirit workshops, the Spanish for Social Justice classes, hosting the screening of the film *Harvest of Empire* and the Growing Racial And Cultural Equality regional gathering, participating in public witnessing at the Boston New Sanctuary Movement vigils and the testimonies at the State House in support of the TRUST Act and denouncing government raids and massive deportations as a violation of human rights.

As your minister, I have done my best to provide pastoral care that is genuine, supportive, and affirming of your inherent worth and dignity.

As a preacher, I strive to speak truth to power, to share my own journeys and to articulate the call and challenges from our Unitarian Universalist denomination to engage in transformational work that results in changes to our power structures, to institutionalized racism, and allows us to become our best selves. This has been transformative work for my ministry.

We are in the midst of exciting times at First Parish Brookline. Change is in the air and Spirit is calling us to open our hearts and not be afraid of the changes before us. In just a short period time, we have experienced some amazing transformations as a community. Together we have experienced changes in leadership, celebrating joys and grieving losses, helping each other heal in order to move forward as a community. We are now in a period of transition that is offering many opportunities to continue on the journey and to try new paths towards living into your mission and vision.

This is a time of great creativity and faith. A time when lay leadership is rising to the occasion and illuminating the way for a shared ministry that will continue to hold the congregation together, caring for each other, loving one another and sharing the love beyond these walls. I wish I could have continued to grow with you, to see many of our hopes and aspirations become a reality along our shared journey. Becoming a spiritual leader of any community of faith requires time, relationship building, trust, commitment, and specific considerations to power dynamics and providing the necessary supports to sustain the individual minister and their ministry. Being a minister of color comes with its own challenges both to the congregations we serve and to us as ministers to find the necessary supports to thrive. Here at First Parish in Brookline we intentionally engaged in building such a trust relationship. It was not always a clear path and finances were always an obstacle. And yet, over these three years, I have experienced the support and love of this congregation. I leave here reaffirmed in my social justice ministry thanks to your support and encouragement throughout these three years.

I hope that you continue to challenge yourselves to examine, understand, and actively engage in dismantling institutionalized racism within and without these walls. I hope that you know that our work together has made a difference, to me personally, and to all the people we have touched with our presence and commitment. I hope that you take the time to explore possibilities for a multicultural ministry model, a model that includes people of color as full time staff in sustainable and well supported leadership positions. I hope you know that I leave here with my heart filled with gratitude for your hospitality and grace towards myself and my dear mother.

May you be well.
May you experience loving kindness.
May you always know that you matter.
May you know that your story matters.
May you know that you are loved unconditionally.

Thank you for your generosity of spirit.

Gracias por sus Corazones Sin Fronteras/Thank you for your hearts without borders.

With Deep Gratitude and Love,
Rev. Maria Cristina Vlassidis Burgoa.

AFFILIATE MINISTER

To the First Parish in Brookline Community:

This past year has been rich in expanded opportunities for my ministry, and I am very thankful to this community for them all.

I have been privileged to offer three pet bereavement groups during the past church year. The average number of participants is five, which turns out to be the right size for a group designed to offer mutual support for an often disenfranchised grief. These groups have led a few individuals' hearts to break open in such ways that they've asked me for spiritual coaching (also called spiritual direction), as they seek deeper meaning for life and loss. So I have been offering more spiritual coaching this past year.

This past month I attended a conference sponsored by Spiritual Directors International in San Diego, the best conference I've ever attended. Workshops, keynotes and meeting other spiritual directors from across the continent was stimulating and educational, and I hope will benefit those I work with.

In addition, a year ago Sean Neil-Barron and Sarah Napoline began work to bring a year-long adult spiritual formation curriculum to the Boston area, a program called Wellspring. They asked me if I'd be willing to be part of their roster of spiritual coaches, as the program asks that each participant have a spiritual coach accompany them. This provided another opportunity for me to do work that I love.

In addition to leading worship at other congregations, I've led a summer worship service on here at First Parish in Brookline last August, a Blessing of the Animals open to the community last October, and another service this past December. This spring, at Reverend Rebecca's request following an intense book club discussion on the book Being Mortal, I offered an adult faith formation class on mortality viewed through three major faith traditions as well as our own. Being of service to this community has been very rewarding.

Respectfully and gratefully submitted,
Rev. Eliza Blanchard
Affiliate Minister

COMMUNITY MINISTRY: CampUUsBoston

First Parish in Brookline's emerging outreach ministry to students on campuses in greater Boston ("CampUUsBoston") has continued to grow stronger. The "seed" group at Northeastern University, where Rev. MaryHelen is also on staff as Spiritual Advisor, completed this winter all requirements and is now officially recognized as a student group by the University. This status confers benefits including institutional recognition, potential for access to student activity resources, and a durable presence that further facilitates the group hosting students from other Boston area campuses, which has begun but needs strengthening. In addition, we have put one more Campus Ministry group solidly on the UU map!

Among the many indicators of growth in this ministry: students are increasingly mentoring and supporting one another - including two students who have been regularly attending worship at First Parish in Brookline, and including "middlers" and seniors who have been cultivating the gifts and nurturing the spirits of younger students. This development not only tends to increase participation, leadership development, and overall capacity of the group; but it also helps ensure continuity in the all-important leadership succession "pipeline" inherent in the progression of student populations.

One shining moment, among many from this year, came on a Saturday morning in February at the UU Urban Ministry. More than a half-dozen CampUUsBoston students created and hosted, for the second time in creative collaboration with the secular Human Services Organization (student volunteer network), an Explorers Club enrichment program for neighborhood elementary- and middle-school-aged children, focused on heart-healthy winter living. Our partnership with the Urban Ministry and relationships with staff there continue to grow stronger.

Countless indicators show that this ministry is gaining recognition and a durable presence in the community. Anecdotally, more students from more campuses have been reaching out to connect with CampUUsBoston and with Rev. MaryHelen for spiritual care and support; and more leaders in the UU and wider community are consulting with Rev. MaryHelen to tap into her expertise for growing our campus ministry presence region-wide, and to help connect CampUUsBoston students with local resources and opportunities.

With this growth comes the persistent question of fiscal sustainability for this ministry. To that end, Rev. MaryHelen continues to seek out and apply for funding from continuing* and new grant sources; to develop needed resources to launch a successful Faithify matching-funds campaign; and to network with area congregational leaders towards developing networks of congregational support.

Securing sustaining financial support for this ministry is a core goal for this ministry this year, equal in its demands to the ministry itself. With financial sustainability will ultimately come increased capacity to serve young adults, and our shared faith, for years to come.

**Initial funding from the UU Funding Program for the 2015 calendar year was renewed but significantly reduced (predictably given their start-up funding model) for the 2016 calendar year.*

Gratefully submitted,
Rev. MaryHelen

ARCHIVES PROJECT

Project Manager: Elizabeth Cousins

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

Accomplishments Past Year:

- Created and contributed metadata for digitizing the extant sermons from 1700's-1920's
- Spearheaded establishment of Friends of the 300th
- Reached out to Brookline Public Library and Brookline Historical Society re Tercentennial collaborations
- Delivered first and second book of records to NEDCC for conservation assessment
- Continued to promote/report on project via Twitter and Facebook

Tasks Next Year:

- Create and contribute metadata for photographs & illustrations of buildings, officials and parishioners.

Thanking: Boston Public Library Digitizing Team and Digital Commonwealth.

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS COMMITTEE

Report to First Parish in Brookline Annual Meeting May 2016

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 and her assistant Kevin Hoskins – ably supported by custodians Juan Miranda and Kofi Serebour – work together with us in this goal.

The year in review

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

- Repointing to address water infiltration in the Sanctuary basement and Parish House tower (\$17,600) - Clint
- New sound system equipment for the Sanctuary (\$12,350) - Will & Clint

This past fiscal year, the annual B&G 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 expenditures.

We continue to monitor the Tower. 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.

For many years, we have been members of Massachusetts Interfaith Power & Light, an education and advocacy group, which also provides us with advice on green projects as needed.

Upcoming projects

We are guided by a 20-year maintenance plan that allocates costs for specific items on a yearly basis. We also continue to address our deferred maintenance, new safety issues, and accessibility and green projects. Our near-term projects include:

- Replacing the older of our two furnace systems in the Sanctuary (c. \$17K) - Will & Clint
- Restoring two windows in Pierce Hall that are water damaged - Sam & Clint.

The 2017 fiscal year B&G funding remains at the reduced level of \$40 thousand.

Major capital projects

In addition to the long-term maintenance plan, the Building and Grounds Committee has 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:

- Improve the accessibility and safety of the sanctuary entrance
- Improve the outdoor areas to be part of the spiritual and social life of the Church
- Make "green" sustainability improvements that lessen our carbon footprint such as solar electricity
- Be good stewards of the building by repairing the Tower

- Create more classrooms and accessible toilet rooms in the ground floor of Parish Hall
- Renovate Pierce Hall to better meet the multifunctional space needs of the Church
- Renovate the Sanctuary to improve worship experience

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
 Tim Dailey
 Sam Dennis

BUILDING OPERATIONS **2015 - 2016**

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 eighth year overseeing general building operations.

Finally, after reporting two years in a row of “killer” winters, we had a mild one. Mild as far as snow and ice goes and truthfully I’m very grateful, because this meant that it was easy on everyone. While there were no major snowy/icy parking lots to deal with or ice dams in various parts of the roof, we still had leaks, leaks and more leaks. Why you wonder? Well you see, turkeys, yes real wild turkeys love to roost on our roof tops, in particular over the space we affectionately call our Skylight Room and dig holes up there. When holes are dug and it rains, well eventually you have drip, drip, drip! The accumulated water has no place to go and gravity pulls it downward and it drips on down columns, across beams, onto carpets. Rolling up sopping wet carpets and placing buckets under multiple drips became a normal course of action.

Once again our furnaces continued to work relatively well during all of this, with only a few minor glitches. There will be a scheduled replacement of one furnace over the summer: a furnace that’s located under the sanctuary. Fortunately because that’s a capital improvement, its cost will fall under the Buildings & Grounds budget. 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.

We have had one major change this past year in that, sadly, our Senior Sexton Frank Peace had to retire. He didn’t want too and we certainly didn’t want him to ... but his health unfortunately forced this upon him. We all miss him tremendously, not only on Sunday mornings, but also during the week (even though we had reduced his hours the previous year). He stills comes in occasionally and did a walk through with our other custodial staff explaining some of the nuances to various systems.

Thankfully, in addition to so many of you that help keep First Parish a pleasant, friendly and safe building open, not only to its members, but to the public at large, we have two part-time custodial individuals that work very hard. They are Juan Miranda and Boateng (Kofi) Serebour and 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 works quietly behind the scenes to keep First Parish a welcoming building, vibrantly alive. 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 / STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN REPORT

We framed this year's Canvass around our community's new mission statement and our transition into interim ministry. Our letter to members and friends began with the mission in bold and asked members and friends:

Have you felt the energy at First Parish in Brookline this year!? Long-time members and new members alike are excited at how our beloved community is embracing the many opportunities and gifts of interim ministry. ...

With timely and thoughtful counsel and support from Rev. Rebecca and Church Administrator Sonya Abbott, we offered three testimonials during Sunday services in March; hosted a Canvass Express Table with a slide show of First Parish members, friends and families; and challenged passersby to guess the number of blocks in a large glass vase. (The winner got to choose the topic for Rev Rebecca's April 27th sermon!)

We reached out in advance of the official March 6th launch to chairs and co-chairs of committees with the hope that we could celebrate their gifts as examples of the confidence and optimism among community leaders. We sought to use the Canvass process to build community, so we promised ourselves that we would call, email, and/or meet face-to-face with every member and friend. We planned an end-of-canvass, all-congregation "cupcake celebration" after the May 15th service (cupcakes donated by the Demerjian-Brackett family).

With membership having dropped by 44 between January 2015 and January 2016 (from 265 to 221), our goal of matching last year's pledge commitment total of \$420,000 was ambitious. As of this writing, we have gotten close, and are hopeful that new pledges between now and next winter will get us to our goal.

1. As of May 10 - 124 pledges have been received for 2016-17 totaling **\$396,852**
 - a. 105 Member Households are committing **\$376,907**
 - b. 8 Non-member households are committing **\$13,350**
 - c. 11 new pledges are committing **\$6,595.**
2. 43 households increased their pledge amount over last year for a total of \$28,755 in increased pledges
3. 25 households decreased their pledges by a total of \$20,030

We want to thank the members of this congregation for their generosity and receptivity to our pleas! We want to especially thank Rev Rebecca and Sonya Abbott for their active engagement in our planning and encouragement throughout. We could not have done this – and had as much fun as we did! – had they not “been there” for us.

Respectfully submitted,

Dave Demerjian, Chair
Karla Baehr
Bob Williamson

COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY

Committee on Ministry for Rev. James Sherblom and Rev. Maria Cristina Vlassidis-Burgoa (July 2015-December 2015) Fellowship Committee for Rev. Maria Cristina (January 2016-July 2016)

The current Fellowship Committee for Rev. Maria Cristina was restructured in January 2016 from a Committee on Ministry for both Rev. Maria Cristina Vlassidis-Burgoa and Rev. Jim Sherblom.

With the departure of Rev. Sherblom and the installation of Rev. Rebecca Bryan as the Interim Senior Minister, the Parish Committee Chair, Ann Dinsmoor on behalf of the Parish Committee, restructured the Committee on Ministry to the Teaching Committee (subsequently renamed Fellowship Committee) in keeping with the UUA guidelines (see immediately below).

CHARGE FROM THE PARISH COMMITTEE TO THE TEACHING COMMITTEE

December 1, 2015

PURPOSE

- The Teaching Committee supports, listens, advises, evaluates, provides feedback, serves as a sounding board and evaluates Rev. Maria Cristina Vlassidis-Burgoa's progress toward her goals. Its primary purpose is to help her develop and hone the personal and professional skills of ministry and to support her by providing written evaluations towards her second and third renewals of preliminary fellowship through the process set forth by the Ministerial Fellowship Committee (MFC) of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA).
- The Teaching Committee will exist during the interim ministry, January 1, 2016 to July 31, 2017, for the sole purpose of supporting Rev. Maria Cristina toward successful completion of her fellowship years. The interim minister is not expected to participate. In order to avoid triangulation, any supervisory issues or issues related to the interim minister – assistant minister relationship must be immediately identified and excluded from the work of this ad hoc group. When such issues arise and Rev. Maria Cristina cannot resolve them with the interim minister, she must seek help from her own personal mentor or advisor.

LEADERSHIP & COMPOSITION

- Co-chairs will be the co-chairs from the suspended Committee on Ministry. There will be 2-5 members, in all; those continuing on from the 2014-15 COM will be no more than the co-chairs plus one, to be identified by the co-chairs in consultation with Rev. Maria Cristina.
- Committee on Ministry (July 2015-December 2015): Michele David and Gerry Leader, Co-chairs; Dorothy Richardson, Scott Ullrich, Jody Leader, and David Cave.
- COM provided support, counsel, feedback, and a sounding board for both Rev. Jim and Rev. Maria Cristina. Rev. Maria Cristina was given particular attention to how she might better align her efforts to meet her position responsibilities at FPB, complete her dissertation, and successfully meet UUA's Second Fellowship requirements. We believe we were a helpful sounding board for Rev. Jim as he prepared to depart FPB.
- Fellowship Committee (January 2016-July 2016): Michele David and Gerry Leader, Co-chairs; Dorothy Richardson, Scott Ullrich, and Jody Leader.
- FC supported Rev. Maria Cristina with her supervisory transition, from Rev. Jim to Rev. Rebecca, and the successful completion of her dissertation. FC will continue to support her as she concludes her responsibilities as Assistant Minister at FPB. FC will submit to UUA no later than July 1st 2016 a Second Fellowship Evaluation for Rev. Maria Cristina.

Submitted by,
Michele David and Gerry Leader

CONGREGATIONAL ACTIVITIES

BOOK CLUB

Book Club attendance grew again this year due to a wide variety of reading opportunities and lively, often amusing discussions! Highlights were the UUA Common Read sponsored with the Social Action Committee and three special recommendations from Reverend Rebecca. These books were promoted congregation-wide to encourage broad participation, and many people attended the meetings – even on Super Bowl Sunday!

Our reading list for the year:

- *The Lemon Tree: An Arab, A Jew, and the Heart of the Middle East* - Sandy Tolan
- *The Boys in the Boat – Nine Americans and Their Quest for the Gold at the 1936 Berlin Olympics* – Daniel James Brown
- *The Rosie Project* – Graeme Simsion
- *The Wordy Shipmates* – Sarah Vowell
- *The Dressmaker* – Rosalie Ham
- *The Invention of Wings* – Sue Monk Kidd
- *How the Garcia Girls Lost their Accents* – Julia Alvarez
- *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* – Bryan Stevenson*
- *Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End* – Atul Gawandi, MD**
- *In the Interim: Strategies for Interim Ministers and Congregations* – Kenneth Kron and Barbara Child**
- *The Boston Girl* – Anita Diamant
- *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong* – James W. Loewen**

*UUA Common Read

** Rev. Rebecca's recommendations

The Book Club generally meets the first Sunday of every month. We advertise our 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.

POETRY CIRCLE

The Poetry Circle has remained active during 2015/16. We've enjoyed getting to know each other better (this has been the seventh year with this group for many of us), while discussing poems and poets, each chosen by a different group member.

Our poets this year have included:

- Osip Mandelstam, a Russian dissident
- Conrad Aiken, a colleague of T.S.Eliot
- Malcolm Crowley, a post World War II expat to Paris
- Emily Dickenson, "the belle of Amherst"
- Rainier Maria Rilke, an early 20th century Bohemian-Austrian
- Dennis Brutus, a 20th century political poet of South Africa
- John Donne, a 17th century member of the clergy
- Louise Gluck, a contemporary Pulitzer Prize winner from Cambridge, MA

Our group is long standing, but we encourage those interested in joining to contact Sue Andrews, unofficial leader/organizer. We meet the second Monday of each month at 4pm.

VESPERS

Leaders: Jamie Redgrave and Anne Copeland

Description: On the second Sunday of each month (5-6pm), 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 co-leader from the group, who chose the theme and readings and helped run the service. Sample themes in 2015-16 were Simple Gifts, Finding Our Way by the Returning Light, Animal Kinship, and Homeostasis in the Universe.

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

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE EVENTS

Child Dedications

- August 2015 Domenic James Francese
- January 2016 Valerie Peterson-Davis

Graduating High School Seniors June 2016

Ezra Cimino
Annie Dobroth
James Monaco
Josh Grossman
Eamon Hanlon
Rafael Kinsella
Emma Larrabee
Tai Melendy
Jerilyn McLean
Nora Redgrave
Gaby Zylbersztajn
Rudy Avery
Johanna Kepler
Evan Thomson

Memorials

- April 2016 Mary (Molly) Wiелlette
- June 2016 Gaston Blom (*in Alabama*)

Weddings and Receptions

- December 2015 Wedding & Reception for Emily Walton and Daniel Bishop-Schaffer

DEACON'S REPORT

2015-2016

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

Purpose: The Deacons, approved by the Parish Committee, are the designated elders of the parish. They act as the church's institutional memory and support the wellbeing of the congregation by being a strong presence in congregational life.

Year's Activities: We assisted our ministers in the celebration of four communion services. Attendance at the communion services continues to grow as participants find comfort in the quiet ritual of song and spoken word and the sharing of bread and wine.

We continue to be ready to serve as ushers at memorial services, ordination services and major church events. We were honored to assist at the memorial service of long time First Parish member, Molly Wiellette. As ushers at the Brookline Historical Society Annual Meeting we greeted many old and new friends of First Parish.

We are always available as asked to meet with the youth in our Religious Exploration Program. We welcomed both children and their parents to a gathering with the Neighboring Faiths class this year.

Next Year: We are committed to being a source of strength and support to Reverend Rebecca Bryan as she sets forth into her interim time with us.

Respectfully submitted,
Sheila Hussey

DIGITAL MINISTRY TEAM

The Digital Ministry Team is an informal group that has come together to look for and employ ways to extend our ministry via technology, both among us and beyond our walls into the wider community. An important component of ministry is outreach. We reach out to the community and the world to discover how we may be of use, to share our vision of beloved community with a beleaguered world, and to invite others to join with us to strengthen our ministry.

This year, the Digital Ministry Team has been composed of: Rev. Rebecca Bryan, Sonya Abbott, Ellie Boynton, Kristen McIntire, and Scott Ullrich.

A digital ministry makes use of the latest technology to further our mission. One component of a digital ministry is a website. These days, it's unlikely that we'll have a visitor who hasn't first checked out firstparishinbrookline.org, which does a great job of not only telling seekers who and where we are, but also what we do and why they may want to do it with us. We also know that members and friends listen to, or read sermons (*found on the website*) and keep in touch from afar with the congregation.

Over the past decade, technology has rocketed lightyears ahead. The phenomenon of **social media** has taken the world by storm and created new vehicles for communication and outreach that are instantaneous and far-reaching. For us at First Parish, it also offers an excellent vehicle for engaging with, and ministering to *each other* throughout the week.

During the past year we have:

- increased our social media outreach using Facebook and Twitter;
- recorded sermons and other key elements of our worship services and made them available;
- documented many aspects of our community life and our social justice ministry through photographs and video;
- upgraded the sound system in the sanctuary.

During the upcoming church year, the Digital Ministry Team plans to become an ongoing committee and set further goals for use of technology to enhance our ministry through innovations in worship and outreach. We'll be looking to recruit additional members. If you have an interest in technology, if you're social media savvy or want to learn, if you are interested in shooting photographs or video, or if you would like to help out on the Sunday morning sound team, please speak with Scott Ullrich.

DIVERSITY CAUCUS **Annual Report 2016**

Co-Chairs: Almas Dossa and Ronald Wilkinson

Members: Ellen Blaney, Madeline Fine, Ann Gilmore, Kathryn Kirschner, Martha Leader, Lilly Marcelin, James Shillaber, Gene Thompson-Grove, Rev. Maria Cristina 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.

Participation and Commitment: All are welcome to join the Diversity Caucus. Anyone interested is invited to share hopes and intentions through a simple process that insures mutual understanding and commitment. This is a group where learning builds as conversations deepen over time, something that doesn't happen through occasional attendance or dropping in to meetings.

This year, as members of the Diversity Caucus continued to raise our own awareness and understanding of the history of race relations and how structural/institutional racism plays out in our community and congregation, we led efforts at FPB to support the Black Lives Matter movement and stance. In addition to collaborations with the Social Action and Immigration Justice teams to organize educational events, we have networked with other UU congregations and reached out to the Brookline and Greater Boston communities to work on issues of racial justice and equity beyond our church walls.

Past, ongoing, and future initiatives at FPB in 2015-2016 are as follows:

Continuing our Commitment to Beloved Conversations

When the Diversity Caucus called curriculum developer and lead facilitator Dr. Mark Hicks of the FAHS Collaborative to launch *Beloved Conversations* at FPB last spring, we saw this as the start of a long-term commitment. In the words of Dr. Hicks, "Race matters and shapes the way we see ourselves, each other, and how we interact as a community of faith... [W]e know that 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.'"

In our ongoing commitment to *Beloved Conversations*, the Diversity Caucus has:

- Collectively maintained a *Beloved Conversations* FPB FB page with resources, readings and notices of actions/events
- Held a follow-up gathering of the first *Beloved Conversations* group

- Signed an MOU with the Fahs Collaborative for access to the 2.0 version of the curriculum
- Initiated discussions with the RE committee on organizing the next Beloved Conversations at FPB for parents of racially diverse families, in the fall of 2016
- Initial thinking about additional learning experiences related to race and equity for adults at FPB in the fall of 2016 – perhaps including Beloved Conversations, but not limited to that.
- Collaborated with the Welcoming Committee to do a “walk-through” of FPB to determine how we can be more welcoming to people from diverse backgrounds. We followed up with meeting with the Deacons to discuss possible ideas

Collaborations that Raised Awareness

- Co-planned and participated in the Children’s Chapel on Indigenous People’s Sunday in October
- Co-planned and participated in the RE Justice Making Sunday program focusing on Black Lives Matter
- Co-sponsored with the Book Group and the Social Action Forum a discussion of Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson
- Co-organized with Immigration Justice a *Harvest of Empire* film event that included commentary from Patricia Montes of Centro Presente
- Participated with Social Action and Immigration Justice in an interfaith event at FP in Cambridge, along with FPC and several other congregations, to show *Trails of Hope and Terror* with filmmaker Dr. Miguel De La Torre, followed by testimony from members of the Chelsea Collaborative and Centro Presente

Initiatives in Support of Black Lives Matter

Last fall, in keeping with FPB’s congregational resolutions to become an “intentionally anti-racist, multicultural, beloved community (adopted in 2009 & 2013);” our newly adopted **Mission Statement**, “Committed to Justice” and striving to be a “congregation that . . . works together to demand social justice, (and) dismantle racism;” and the recent **UUA 2015 Action of Immediate Witness in support of the Black Lives Matter Movement**, the Diversity Caucus requested that **the Parish Committee endorse and approve immediate efforts at FPB to support the Black Lives Matter Movement**. These efforts would include expanding “beloved conversations” with our membership about ongoing systemic and institutional racism, white privilege, and the Black Lives Matter movement, engaging the membership in a process and ceremony to hang and dedicate a “Black Lives Matter” banner outside our church building, affirming our support of the worth and dignity of black lives in the face of the systemic devaluing of black lives, and initiating and/or expanding our collaboration with local organizations, led by people of color, fighting for racial justice. The Diversity Caucus subsequently organized the following initiatives at FPB:

- Testimony from Co-Chair Ron Wilkinson during worship – 9/27
- Congregational process on “Becoming a Mission-Driven Church” – 10/18
- Conversation circles on supporting Black Lives Matter at FPB and beyond – 11/8
- Dedication ceremony and raising of the Black Lives Banner – 12/6

We also worked on building UU Connections in support of Black Lives Matter beyond FPB:

- Participated in the annual Growing Racial and Cultural Equity (GRACE) summit held here at FPB to share what UU churches are doing to support the Black Lives Matter movement and to dismantle racism in their congregations
- Participated in the Anti-Racism Summit sponsored by the UU Urban Ministry, January, 2016

- Developed a "Black Lives Matter" Certified Working Group (CWG) through UU Mass Action, consisting of congregants from several UU churches, which will foster networking among UU congregations to share experiences going forward and to reach out to more potential allies in our local communities
- Met with members from Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ), a national network of groups and individuals organizing for racial justice with accountability, to determine how we can use their support for the Black Lives Matter movement and for networking within the CWG.
- Presented at April 2016 Panel Discussion on Black Lives Matter issues, First Unitarian Society of Newton. Co-Chairs Ron Wilkinson and Almas Dossa shared a panel with presenters representing FP in Concord and FP in Arlington. Discussion focused on what churches were currently doing to support the Black Lives Matter movement, their process for raising a banner, the barriers and concerns they have dealt with, and their plans for supporting the movement in the future.

To extend our efforts and live more fully into our commitment for racial justice and equity, we also took action in our local community:

- Participated in State House actions focused on legislative reform related to dismantling mass incarceration as part of the *Jobs Not Jails* Coalition
- Attended several Brookline Community Forums, including:
 - Diversity Caucus and other members of FPB attended and spoke at Brookline Selectmen meetings on issues of racism in the Brookline Police and Fire Departments, and in the community in general.
 - Sponsored a table at the Brookline High School ant-racism event.
- Participated in preliminary meetings with Brookline stakeholders about the Town of Brookline's on-going racial issues and made initial inquiries into the Public Conversations Project as a possible resource to facilitate future community dialogues.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (LDC)

The Leadership Development Committee had a fairly quiet year. Our effort was focused in two areas: ensure that committees' charters were up to date; recruit and put forward nominees for the Parish Committee. The nominee process was especially gratifying as the interest in serving was robust this year. We anticipate that the LDC will take an active role in helping the congregation think about new pathways for service and leadership over the next couple of years.

MUSIC DIRECTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT

May 2016

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 relaunched 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.*

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 three of the four accepted. We welcomed back soprano Elizabeth McIntire, alto Oriana Dunlop, and tenor Adrian Jones; baritone RaShaun Campbell declined citing conflicts within his schedule. We auditioned new baritones for the position and hired Nate Mattingly. Unfortunately, Nate regularly skipped Sunday performances unannounced and was let go in December. In January, we hired Joshua Dixon to take his place.

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

Guest Musicians: We welcomed several guest musicians this year. The Flying Seeds were a guest ensemble on November 1st; Jeannie Gagne and Stan Strickland joined our own Jon Hazilla for a special service of remembrance on November 29th; pianist Brian Friedland, bassist Brad Barrett, and guitarist Nick Grondin joined Jon Hazilla and the Chancel Choir for a jazz and gospel Easter celebration; and the Homilius Choir from Avignon, France were a guest choir on April 3rd. All other guest musicians were drawn from the congregation.

Christmas: At Christmas, the choir sang a collection of a capella pieces from various centuries and styles. These included a gospel arrangement of *Glory, Glory, Glory to the Newborn King*, *South African Gloria*, John Tavener's *The Lamb*, and *In the Bleak Midwinter*.

Easter: At Easter, the Chancel Choir was accompanied by pianist Brian Friedland, bassist Brad Barrett, guitarist Nick Grondin, and drummer Jon Hazilla for a special service of jazz and gospel music. Adrian Jones was a soloist.

PARISH ADMINISTRATION

2015-2016

The first part of this report is a repeat from last year. Why? Because what the Parish Administrator does is still a puzzle to many, 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:

- 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.
- 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
- 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
- Coordinating and oversee the workloads of custodial staff and administrative assistant
- Attend on regular basis a variety of evening meetings

Yet that's not all that administration is responsible for and over this past year we were able to find yet another wonderful assistant – Kevin Hoskins. Kevin primarily handles the bulk of the weekly order of service processing, enters weekly data from the membership coordinator, works with the Religious Exploration team on registrations, list serv maintenance, and timely reports, in addition to tackling any project we toss his way. He keeps me sane, along with all the staff he works closely with ... and at least once a week has me laughing out loud with one witty comment or another. Kevin's a keeper for sure and I hope we can find enough work to keep him engaged.

Now besides a change in administrative assistance and losing our senior sexton (*see my Building Operations report*), I've also had to transition from working with one senior minister to another. Truthfully, there has hardly been a moment to grieve the loss of any co-worker, because I've been so busy. Somedays just trying to keep up with all the transitional changes makes my head spin. Don't get me wrong, this is all good, but I just wasn't planning on all these major staffing changes in one year. I'm sure, like many of you are discovering, transitional times are both exciting, sometimes tiring and often challenging. But, I also know that change ultimately helps one grow and the rewards, if one opens their heart to new ideas, will far exceed expectations.

So after eleven years I'm still here. And the Great Spirit willing, I'm looking forward to spending a few more years with you. I sincerely thank everyone for your continued presence, kindness, assistance and wonderful creative spirits.

Respectfully submitted,
Sonya A. Abbott

PASTORAL CARE ASSOCIATES

Rev. Doctor Jim did an excellent job galvanizing, organizing, leading and training the Pastoral Care Associates after Rev. Martha's retirement. We met several times over a two year period for trainings, strategy sessions and how best to serve the congregation. Rev. Jim's premature departure left the Pastoral Care Associates without leadership and formal structure.

Listening circles were offered in the fall 2015 with Rev Jim and Pastoral Care Associates who were able to listen and (not immersed in their own grief), to the congregation to begin the transition process from loss, to grief, to healing and moving forward.

Paul Mclean suggested meeting informally (come if you can) with no set agenda the first Sunday of each month to check –in and offer support to one another. This practice continued into the New Year and coincided with Rev. Rebecca being named Interim Senior Minister. We have continued our first Sunday meetings and participated in one retreat (April 16).

We are in the process of reorganization, redefining our mission, reediting our Care Ministry brochure, and designating specific roles for Pastoral Care Associates. We are assisting Rev Rebecca with candles of joys and concerns. Laura Walters and Julie Horvath have volunteered to be technical coordinators for logistical care (rides, food, cards, etc.) Jon Hazilla has volunteered to be chair in the fall and co-lead with Rev. Rebecca. Another training is being considered for late summer.

As of this time, I am unaware of any expenses incurred during this time period, and if a budget for the Pastoral Care Associates was established. In previous years there was a small budget, and might be considered for 2016-17

Blessings,
Jon Hazilla

Pastoral Care Associates 2015-2016

*Rev. Rebecca Bryan
Rev. Maria Cristina Vlassidis –Burgoa
Sonya Abbott
Jon Hazilla
Jeff Cadow
Dorothy Richardson
Julie Horvath
Laura Walters
Madeline Fine
Paul Mclean
Mary Rogers
Ellie Boynton
Fiona Lovell Horning*

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

James Shillaber and Michele David

The Parish Committee revived its Personnel Committee this year, with PC members James Shillaber and Michele David serving. It turned out to be a fortuitous year because of all the changes at church. The committee completed or supported several activities during the year:

- Staff job descriptions have been reviewed and over the coming year will be revised to more adequately reflect current positions
- Review and updating of the Personnel policies
- Recruiting, negotiations and the offer letter process with the Interim Senior Minister
- Support for all staff with questions about jobs or employment

RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION COMMITTEE - 2015-2016

Members: Dave Demerjian, co-chair, Bijan Etemad-Gilbertson, co-chair, Jeff Cadow, Rich Day, , Sarah Griffen, Elizabeth McIntire, Anne Brown, Nathan Freitas, Margaret Williams, and Jaime Kim.

We enrolled 102 children and youth who were taught by 38 volunteer teachers, and two paid teachers (in nursery and preschool). Average Sunday class attendance was 52%. Classes/curriculum included: Nursery; We Are Many We Are One (preschool); Spirit Play; Love Will Guide us, Windows and Mirrors, Neighboring Faith, 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 teacher enrichment events.
- During the 2016-2017 church year, the REC plans to continue “children’s chapel” and “Justice seeking Sunday” by holding the events 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. Well designed and facilitated monthly meetings, with agendas posted ahead of time, with a check-in/centering reading or exercise, and a note taker.
2. An annual RE Calendar, which lays out the tasks of the RE Committee month by month.
3. A Teacher recruitment calendar, plan, process and supporting documents.
4. Successful teacher recruitment/staffing model in place by September 2015 RE program start date.
5. Expanded the Preschool Classroom model comprised of a paid teacher who is there every week to Nursery. This provides consistency for our youngest children.
6. Held a Halloween Party which provided older kids with the opportunity to create a “haunted church” for the younger RE kids.
7. Provided teacher training for Spirit Play curriculum.
8. Facilitated class breakfasts, pot-lucks and other opportunities for RE classroom teachers, kids and parents to interact outside of the Sunday morning classroom.
9. Continued last year’s successful RE Sunday service which allowed for the congregation to visit RE classrooms and engage with students and teachers.
10. Held an end of year teacher party.
11. Students in the OWL class took ownership of First Parish’s participation in the Walk for Peace on Mother’s Day (May 8th). Many FP families attended.

Challenges

1. The Youth Group program needs to be strengthened and would benefit from a dedicated professional advisor. The current program experiences low or inexistent 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.

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION

Transition is the word that best defines this church year for all areas of the congregation and the Religious Exploration Program is no exception. We have had a large number of new families who have gotten involved in the church, and many have very young children. During the course of the year our Nursery-Pre-School has almost tripled in size and the upstairs RE wing is abuzz with the sound of children's laughter. Our year included saying goodbye to Sara Ann Romaine and welcoming Julia Brasor as our Nursery/Pre-School director.

Four Children's Chapel worship services were created, the first three of which have been well attended and received and I look forward to our final one this May. The Make A Difference Sundays were restructured and are now Justice Seeking Sunday's. The Diversity Caucus and Immigration Justice Committee partnered with RE in creating these new programs. These dedicated adults brought their talents and skills to helping our children and youth better understand these groups roles in the congregation, as well as the important work they are doing.

In response to feedback received in July, we redesigned the calendar for the year, increasing opportunities for multi age activities and reducing the number of Multigenerational Worship Services. The RE Program was more involved in the Thanksgiving Feast, and will also be helping out with the Final Picnic. RE held its annual Halloween Party, presented the Christmas Pageant, and hosted an Easter Egg Hunt with 1300 eggs hidden in the back yard. The Neighboring Faiths class held a Spring Equinox observation and enjoyed a Passover Seder supper led by Charles Sandmel, which we hope to make an annual event and partner with others in the community who are interested in celebrating. The Louis D. Brown Mother's Day Walk for Peace and the Pride Parade are fast approaching and the RE program is very involved in these acts of witness and justice.

The work of the 38 volunteers leading our classes, our 5 Challenge mentors, and the 9 dedicated REC members keep our program vibrant and meaningful. As always, we could use more volunteers in the classes on Sunday mornings to provide consistency and experience, so if you haven't already done so, please consider volunteering for next year. We continue to struggle with providing consistent and effective Youth Programming. Our space limitations within the building are limiting and there is no handicap accessible RE space at the moment. These are challenges which we are considering and addressing within the RE committee, and as an entire church.

Highlights of the year were a Religious Exploration Sunday with a multitude of voices offering testimonies and reflections on lifelong Faith Formation. Nita Penfold, the creator of Spirit Play, provided a training for our teachers as well as spirit play teachers from other local congregations. Three of our youth, Emma Larrabee, Anita Mayfield and Raf Kinsella joined our teaching teams, working in the classes with the children. The expanded Neighboring Faiths program which is now both 6th and 7th grade was extremely engaging and creative. Our OWL and Challenge programs continue to be strengths of our program, and our Challenge Sunday will, for the first time, include all ages. And probably the greatest highlight is the sense of joy and inclusion our children experience with First Parish in Brookline as their spiritual home.

With transition comes opportunity, and we will be introducing new programming next year connecting to theme based ministry. Building on the successful partnering with other committees, RE will be reaching out to find ways to deepen our connections with all parts of the community. Continuing with our pancake breakfast tradition, we hope to offer more opportunities for families within the classes to meet and socialize. As the church celebrates its 300th anniversary we will be learning from our history, and building our future together. I look forward to see what the year ahead brings.

Faithfully submitted,

Rebecca Keller Scholl
Director of Religious Exploration

SOCIAL ACTION ANNUAL REPORT

Co-Chairs: Ellen Blaney and Clint Richmond

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

Our Vision: Our vision is for our congregation to live into the Seven Principles of our faith both inside the church and beyond our walls. And, in following our vision, that First Parish in Brookline be seen in the wider community as a place of active engagement in social justice, where people learn about and respond to critical issues and situations as a spiritual commitment. We look forward to continuing to tap the energy, interest, passion and compassion of our ever-evolving congregation and to join together at First Parish in Brookline in helping to make a better world.

Our Actions: We are first guided by our UU spiritual principles and by our congregational mission: Called by Love, Sustained by Community, Committed to Justice. In the face of so much injustice 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 our efforts with the initiatives of the Unitarian Universalist Association, UU Mass Action Network, Unitarian Universalist Service Committee and the Unitarian Universalist Urban Ministry. This year, over half of our congregation's adults and youth participated in some kind of Social Action activity. And we contributed nearly \$14,000 to support the work of other justice-seeking organizations. We also integrated social action and worship in four Sunday services focused on racial, immigration and climate justice. These included dedicated collections to support the missions of our community partner organizations.

Standing on the Side of Love:

We fought HIV and AIDS at the Harbor to the Bay bike ride from Boston to Provincetown. Team First Parish, 4 riders and pit crew of 7 of all ages, raised \$10,000 in this all-volunteer, grass-roots fundraiser. We rode, we made snacks, and we ran a pit stop, under the leadership of Lori and Rich Day. The next ride is September 17, 2016.

We supported immigration justice. This year the Immigration Justice Group Corazones Sin Fronteras (Hearts without Borders) grew its membership and expanded its initiatives. Guided by a vision to be in community with one another, to keep the "borders" of our hearts and church open, to take our cues from the missions of Centro Presente and the Chelsea Collaborative, to practice cultural humility and radical hospitality, to respond to current immigration issues in the larger community, to raise consciousness at FPB through educational events, and to collaborate with other faith groups in the Boston New Sanctuary Movement coalition.

Activities and Events at First Parish in Brookline:

- *Harvest of Empire* film with commentary from Patricia Montes of Centro Presente
- Bilingual worship and Thanks/Giving tree honoring Chelsea Collaborative partnership
- Bilingual, intergenerational Las Posadas celebration with Chelsea Collaborative
- Justice Seeking Sunday program with children of RE, including service activities

- Immigration justice worship service with immigration testimony from FPB congregants
- Congregational dialogues to raise awareness, encourage discernment, and determine FPB's response to current deportation crisis faced by Central American children and families across the country – what are ways of offering Sanctuary?

Actions beyond First Parish in Brookline:

- Interfaith vigils in solidarity and support of detainees at Suffolk Detention Center
- Refugee Immigration Ministry (RIM) visits by our members with detainees inside Suffolk County Detention
- Participation in hearings, rallies and vigils led by Centro Presente at the State House
- Presentation at Sen. Joe Kennedy's office with Centro Presente and other activists
- Advocating for the Trust Act (including working with the Massachusetts Trust Act Coalition)
- Participating in UU Mass Action Advocacy Day for immigration justice legislation
- *Trails of Hope and Terror* an interfaith collaboration with FP Cambridge and Boston New Sanctuary; with Dr. Miguel De La Torre, the Chelsea Collaborative, Centro Presente

In December, the Immigration Justice Group was deeply honored to receive the Chelsea Collaborative's Unsung Heroes Award on behalf of First Parish in Brookline. We are forever grateful to Rev. Maria Cristina for sowing the seeds of "Salsa, Soul and Spirit;" her ministerial presence, visionary guidance and transformative leadership.

We walked in witness and support. In May, we sustained our multi-generational presence at the Mother's Day Walk for Peace and against gun violence. We also raised over \$1000 for 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 on June 11. Thanks to Elizabeth McIntire and Emily Cherry for organizing our Pride participation.

We partnered with our Diversity Caucus to host congregational dialogues and discernment on racial justice in preparation for hanging a Black Lives Matter banner in front of the Sanctuary.

We stood against mass incarceration in partnership with UU Mass Action and SURJ.

Environment Initiative:

We learned about environmental justice issues facing the Roxbury community and community-empowering solutions on a tour by Alternatives for Community Action (ACE) coordinated by the UUUM.

Our final Social Action service of the year featured guest minister Rev. Fred Small and a special collection for ACE and ClimateXchange.

Economic Justice:

We advocated with UU Mass Action and marched with organizers and activists of #WageAction in the new Fight for \$15 campaign.

We honor our partnership with the UU Urban Ministry. Karla Baehr, James Shillaber and Margaret Williams served as FPB Delegates to the UU Urban Ministry this year, with Karla starting a three-year Board term this spring. Clare Reilly has organized FPB parents and children interested in doing hands-on, justice-serving work as families with Boston-based Fair Foods organization. Once a month they sort vegetables and produce into bags and help to sell them in Fair Foods' "Two Dollars-a-Bag" community program, whose goal is to "go beyond emergency hunger relief" by strengthening residents' dollars to make a healthy diet affordable and accessible. Margaret Williams and other FPB members anticipate working with Roxbury-serving non-profits this summer and next year through the Urban Ministry's rejuvenated Jericho Road Roxbury program, which matches the professional skills of volunteers with the needs of non-profits.

We continue our commitments through 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 14; and many families sponsor individual children as well.

We collected non-perishable foods for the Brookline Food Pantry all year long. Thanks to Ed Loechler and Leslie Spaneas for delivering our contributions 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 strong turnout for this year's UU Mass Action Advocacy Day in April to support bills relating to all our Social Action initiatives. We co-sponsored with the Book Group and the Diversity Caucus a discussion of the UUA Common Read, *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*, by Bryan Stevenson.

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:

With much appreciation for their assistance we concluded our relationship with Brookline Community Foundation that functioned as our financial entity during the fund raising efforts to restore the Lowell Memorial Window lancets and revise our Stained Glass brochure. The money remaining in the Stained Glass Fund is now in a named First Parish account at Brookline Bank.

This year's activity highlight was to welcome Sunday, March 6 the Brookline Historical Society Annual Meeting to our sanctuary. SG committee member Francis Hutchins PhD spoke to the significance, styles and stories of the windows and then led a tour of the windows. An appreciative gathering of over 70 attended both lecture and tour; several spontaneous contributions were made to the restoration fund. A full-page article titled *A colorful celebration of faith* with a generous collection of pictures commemorating the event appeared in the March 10 edition of the Brookline TAB.

Tasks: We will continue to seek ways to advocate for this segment of our First Parish heritage.

Respectfully submitted,
Sheila Hussey.
April 25, 2016

TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE
2015-2016 Annual Report

Chair: Ellie Boynton

Members: Sonya Abbott and Rev. Dr. Jim Sherblom / Rev. Rebecca Bryan

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 2015-2016:

- Enhanced website with more photos, Parish Committee reports, sermons (audio and text), and online pledge form.
- Maintained website – added new layer of security for protection from hackers
- Met with Comcast about improving and extending wifi service in the church building.

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 2016-2017:

- Continued support of church staff and consideration of equipment upgrades/replacement.
- Make improvements to wireless network.
- 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...

- Scott Ullrich for taking photos and making recordings that are now incorporated in the website.
- Sonya Abbott for communication, support, and advice.
- Digital Communications team for suggestions regarding the website.

Respectfully Submitted,
Ellie Boynton

TREASURER'S REPORT

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

Fiscal Year 2016 Income is tracking closely to budget. Pledges for congregational support are higher than the budgeted \$420,000 by about \$8,000, although more than \$100,000 has not been received to date. Fundraising income is expected to be less than budgeted by about \$4,000, but income from building rentals and "other" donations is on track, resulting in an projected FY16 total income that should be close to expectations. On the Expense side, Payroll-Related expenses were on track as budgeted, Program-Related expenses may be slightly less than budgeted, and Administrative/ Office expenses are once again below the budgeted level. Building Operation expenses also are expected to finish the fiscal year below budget; heating oil costs were lower than expected, but funds required for repairs and small maintenance projects to address issues such as damage from the previous winter were greater than budgeted. Overall, total expenses will be close to or slightly less than budgeted for FY2016.

Upon Rev. Dr. Jim's decision to retire from First Parish, staff, the Treasurer, Parish Committee and Finance Committee developed a new budget to include updated payroll expenses in anticipation of funding both a January-May sabbatical for Rev. Jim and the hiring of an interim Senior Minister from January through the end of the fiscal year. In October, 2015 two congregational votes were held, and a resolution was passed to withdraw up to \$55K from the endowment to support an interim senior minister.

The total withdrawal from the endowment in FY16 will be \$261,500, or approximately 11.9% of endowment value: about 7.6% for church expenses; 1.8% for Buildings and Grounds capital projects; and 2.5% for the interim minister transition support. This level of withdrawal from the endowment fund is not sustainable. However, the Treasurer and Finance Committee supports the use of endowment funds to address important church needs such as ministerial transitions.. It's notable that actual income and expenses for FY2016 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 2017 (July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2017) is included in the following pages. 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. With Rev. Maria Christina Vlassidis' announcement of ministerial candidacy for another church, the draft proposed budget was revised to include plans to meet congregational needs for the interim years 2016-17. Throughout this process, participants sought to consider financial decisions in a way that honors the values of the FPB community. Draft budgets were shared with the congregation in four 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 meet the fiscal goals of the church in a way that is consistent with our mission.

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. To support the celebration of First Parish Brookline's 300th anniversary, \$4,500 has been allocated to a planning committee, while \$1,500 has been added as a minimum expected fundraising from the effort, resulting in a total of \$5,500 for expected fundraising income. Budgeted Sunday Offering collections also remains at the FY2016 level of \$7,000. Overall, the expected total income for FY2017 is \$461,550, an increase of \$1,500 over FY16.

On the cost side, the Budget reflects staff salaries for a full-time Interim Senior Minister; 75% Assistant Minister through August 7, 2016; a full-time Parish Administrator; a 75% DRE; a 50% Music Director; part-time Administrative Assistant (up to 35 hours/week); 50% Membership Coordinator; and part-time Custodian. This corresponds to a decrease of about \$40,000 from last year's salary and fringe expenses.

Additional changes to expected expenses in FY2017 include \$2,500 allocated to Youth programming, \$8,000 in ministerial transition expenses; \$2,500 in guest minister stipends; and \$10,000 to support anti-racism efforts.

Investment Update

The First Parish Brookline endowment is deposited with the Unitarian Universalist Common Endowment Fund (UUACEF), a "*diversified investment fund seeking current income and long-term investment returns through portfolio allocation and professional asset management with UU socially responsible investing goals.*" As of April, 2016 the Endowment was valued at \$2,130,189, which includes planned withdrawals of \$220,000 in FY2016, with \$41,500 additional in withdrawals expected. This compares to a value of \$2,479,509 at the end of fiscal year 2015.

The UUACEF reports net performance of 4.5% for the month of March 2016, but a -5.4% performance for the past year. The three-year net return was 2.2%. The current market value of the total fund as of 3/31/16 was \$171,880,902.

In April, the UUA Socially Responsible Investment Committee (SRIC) announced that the UUCEF will implement a new screen that places a spotlight on human rights. Companies with a pattern of many human rights violations have always been excluded from the UUCEF. In the past, however, companies with isolated human rights controversies could be included in the fund if they were otherwise strong performers on the wide range of environmental and social issues the SRIC considers. Newly available data allow the SRIC to be more discerning in our approach. A company that is deemed to have a human rights controversy triggers their exclusion from the non-comingled portion of the portfolio. As noted in the recent <https://www.uuworld.org/articles/vote-divestment-israel> UU World article, several holdings changes in the UUCEF have flowed from those human rights screening changes, including the screening out of Caterpillar, Motorola Solutions, HP Inc., and Hewlett Packard Enterprise.

I am grateful for the deep conversations about finances, values, and mission this year and look forward to more sharing in FY2017, 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) consists of committee representatives and congregation members that have interest in the finances of the congregation. This year the Finance Council included: Sue Andrews, Ben Davis, and Steve Davis, Parish Committee; Karla Baehr; Melinda Maryniuk; Kim Whelan; Ryan Kim, past-Treasurer; Sonya Abbott, Parish Administrator; and Stacey Raczek, Treasurer and FC Chair. Rev. Dr. Jim Sherblom attended meetings in 2015 and Rev. Rebecca Bryan attended meetings in 2016.

The current guiding principles of the Finance Council are:

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

The FC gathered monthly this year, from November through June. At each meeting we reviewed budget progress for the current fiscal year. In November, the church received a communication from the UUA regarding the UU Common Endowment Fund endowment that holds the First Parish of Brookline endowment, informing us that a new LLC was being established to hold fund assets. The Finance Council endorsed signing a new Subscription Agreement and Operating Agreement to remain in the UUA account. In December, before retiring from First Parish, Rev. Jim reviewed his understanding of the church building status, legacy assets, and related topics with the Finance Council. To ensure that updated documentation is available for church holdings and their potential monetary value, the Finance Council decided to begin a process of cataloging and appraising legacy assets, and determining options that may be available to convert them to monetary assets.

Karla Baehr led a process to complete the sale of selected silver goods as approved by the congregation in 2014. She reached out to several churches that recently sold silver assets to learn about their experience. After communicating with four auction houses and based on the recommendations of other churches, the Finance Council approved proceeding with auction by Christies. Christies noted that the value cited in the 2012 appraisal was likely high and that the silver market declined since that time, estimating that the sale price would be closer to \$100,000. Christie's featured the First Parish silver collection in a special display at their major January auction and held its spring silver auction on April 21st in New York City. Six of nine First Parish lots sold for a total of \$63,000 ("hammer price"), each at or near the low range of estimates Christie's provided. The piece most valued, a 1690 tankard by Boston silversmith William Coney, sold for \$27,500, the fifth highest price paid for any of the lots sold at the auction. As directed by Annual Meeting, proceeds from the auction will be added to the First Parish endowment. The exact return from this auction will be known in late May. The Finance Council is now in the process of determining how to proceed with the unsold lots (a pair of beakers, 4 silver wine cups, a pair of communion plates and a teaspoon). One option is to have Christies auction the pieces at its January 2017 Americana auction.

Kim Whelan, a member of the Finance Council, and Parish Committee members Ann Dinsmoor and Michele David attended a Stewardship workshop presented by Mark Ewert, a consultant to the UUA, in February 2016. The workshop addressed fundraising and a holistic approach to congregational stewardship.

A key issue the Finance Council considered this year was long-term financial sustainability. As we developed a draft budget for 2016-17 to submit to the Parish Committee for presentation to the congregation at Annual Meeting, we continued to discuss how we can move toward a budget that requires a sustainable draw from the endowment of approximately 4.5%. The Finance Council recommended to the Parish Committee a 2016-17 budget that maintained staff compensation levels of the current year, even though First Parish Brookline transitioned between February 2015 and February 2016 to a “mid-sized I” congregation from a “mid-sized II” congregation as defined by the UUA based on membership size (membership declined from 265 to 221 in that timeframe). Because the initial proposed budget resulted in another unsustainable draw from endowment of more than 10%, the Finance Council drafted a letter to the Parish Committee to accompany the draft budget. Although it is appropriate to spend beyond a sustainable level to meet the needs of this transition period, the Finance Council recommends that beginning with 2017-18 the congregation take steps to move toward a more sustainable draw on our endowment to maintain the long-term financial standing of the church (see below).

Subsequently, the congregation learned of the potential departure of Assistant Minister Rev. Maria Cristina Vlassidis Burgoa, and the Parish Committee and Treasurer, with guidance from Rev Rebecca, developed a new draft budget plan for interim year 2016-17.

Four budget hearings were sponsored by the Finance Council and the Parish Committee to share information about the proposed budget and to collect feedback from the congregation. After these budget hearings, the Finance Council is grateful to the congregation for strong participation in deeper dialogue about how to consider developing budgets at First Parish.

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 Brookline Finance Council Statement re: 2016-17 Budget, April 2016

The Finance Council urges the Parish Committee to consider the First Parish in Brookline endowment as a sustainable resource. That means that typically the amount withdrawn annually from the endowment for operating expenditures and capital improvement should not exceed the annual income from the endowment. Historically, First Parish has defined a sustainable annual withdrawal based on a percentage of the endowment balance, usually 4-5%, although the Finance Council has discussed the possibility of defining sustainability based on specific withdrawal amounts, given that endowment value can vary greatly year to year based on market fluctuations.

That said, the endowment exists to help see the congregation through times of transition. The congregational vote to increase the draw on our endowment this fiscal year reflected the view that this year is a transition period requiring an investment in our future. However, when the congregation needs to draw funds from the endowment in excess of annual income, steps need to be taken in future years to return to a sustainable draw and to replenish the endowment so that future generations of First Parish members will have access to this resource.

This year's endowment draw is expected to be 11.9%, which includes paying for a full-time Interim Senior Minister for half a year, a part-time (75%) Assistant Minister, and five months sabbatical pay for the previous Senior Minister. The endowment draw for fiscal year 2016-17, based on a budget with no sabbatical pay, a full-time Interim Senior Minister, level staff salaries, and no other changes in current staffing levels, is estimated to be 10.3%. It is the sense of the Finance Council that no additional changes in staffing levels that result in increased costs should be made for the 2016-17 budget year.

Beginning in the subsequent budget year (2017-2018), the congregation - with the Parish Committee's guidance - will need to take a combination of steps to ensure the endowment endures, which may include any or all of the following:

- *Increase revenue (e.g., add more members to pledge, get larger average pledges, increase fundraising, get more building rentals)*
- *Increase the endowment (e.g., secure bequests, sell legacy assets as we're doing with silver)*
- *Reduce costs (e.g., adjust staffing models, improve energy efficiency, move to alternative space)*

First Parish Brookline Finance Council

FIRST PARISH IN BROOKLINE
AMENDED Proposed Budget Fiscal Year 2017

	Fiscal Year 2015		Fiscal Year 2016		Proposed
	Budget	Actuals	Budget	Estimated	FY 2017 BUDGET
CONGREGATIONAL SUPPORT					
Pledges	420,000	407,804	420,000	413,000	420,000
Sunday Offering	10,000	5,401	7,000	6,500	7,000
Activity Fees	3,000	2,126	3,000	2,079	3,000
* Other Donations	3,000	20,419	5,000	5,700	5,000
Total Program Support	436,000	435,750	435,000	427,279	435,000
* Other Donations - \$100K request					
OTHER INCOME					
* Fund Raising Events	-	635	4,000	782	5,500
Building Use	15,000	20,311	16,000	16,000	16,000
Grants and Designated Income	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
Interest	50	24	50	30	50
Total Other Support	20,050	25,970	25,050	21,812	26,550
TOTAL INCOME	456,050	461,720	460,050	449,091	461,550
EXPENSES					
Payroll Related Expenses					
Salary expense	291,722	287,567	339,590	339,590	340,692
Interim Senior Expense	-	-	55,000	55,000	-
Fringe expense	89,100	93,336	106,586	106,586	84,061
Total Payroll Expenses	380,822	380,903	501,176	501,176	424,753
Program Related Expenses					
Denominational	23,000	21,501	23,000	22,000	18,000
Sunday Services - Music	6,500	4,229	6,500	6,500	6,500
Religious Exploration	7,400	6,242	7,700	7,700	10,200
Special / Committee Funding	4,200	4,395	6,000	6,000	43,850
Welcome Team	3,000	658	1,000	1,000	1,000
* Teaching Parish (Intern)	-	-	-	-	-
Total Program Expenses	44,100	37,025	44,200	43,200	79,550
Functional Expenses:					
Administration & Office	39,400	34,344	36,000	35,100	36,000
Building Operations	95,000	99,648	100,000	90,694	99,000
Total Functional Expenses	134,400	133,992	136,000	125,794	135,000
TOTAL EXPENSES	559,322	551,920	681,376	670,170	639,303
Operating Surplus (Deficit)	(103,272)	(90,200)	(221,326)	(221,079)	(177,753)
Endowment Transfer - Operating	104,000	104,000	166,500	166,500	178,000
** Endowment Withdrawal Other	-	-	55,000	55,000	-
Net Operating Surplus (Deficit)	728	13,800	174	421	247
* Funding raising lowered by \$8,500 from previous budget as a result of no Intern Expense					
** Endowment Withdrawal Other - to cover Interim Ministerial Expense					
B&G Capital Projects	40,000	40,742	40,000	40,000	40,000
Endowment Transfer - Capital	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000

FIRST PARISH IN BROOKLINE
AMENDED Proposed Budget Fiscal Year 2017

	Fiscal Year 2015		Fiscal Year 2016		Proposed
	Budget	Actuals	Budget	Estimated	FY 2017 BUDGET
ADMINISTRATION & Office					
Office Supplies	5,000	2,515	4,250	4,250	4,250
Telephone	5,000	4,140	5,000	3,500	5,000
Postage	1,500	438	750	1,000	750
Printing & Copying	3,000	707	2,000	2,000	2,000
Equipment Lease	5,000	3,463	5,000	5,000	5,000
Computer/Software	4,000	3,058	4,000	3,000	4,000
Hospitality	5,000	5,674	5,500	6,000	5,500
Temporary Help	2,500	968	2,000	2,000	2,000
Website	1,000	648	800	800	800
Flowers	500	500	500	500	500
Miscellaneous	800	106	250	250	250
Bank Services Fees	500	165	500	500	500
Credit Card Fees	500	569	500	500	500
Payroll Processing Expenses	3,600	3,609	3,600	3,600	3,600
Directors & Officers Insurance	1,500	1,184	1,350	1,200	1,350
Ministers Discretionary Exp	0	6,600	0	1,000	-
Total Administration & Office	39,400	34,344	36,000	35,100	36,000
BUILDING OPERATIONS					
Commercial Insurance	21,300	26,876	30,000	26,494	30,000
Fuel - Oil	37,300	30,456	35,000	22,000	30,000
Utilities	7,500	8,248	7,600	7,600	7,600
Municipal Fees	2,200	2,086	1,900	2,000	1,900
Snow Removal	4,000	9,307	4,000	6,100	5,000
Repairs & Small Projects	9,000	8,999	9,000	14,000	12,000
Cleaning Supplies	3,000	3,096	3,000	3,000	3,000
General Maintenance	8,500	8,452	7,300	7,300	7,500
Cell Phone	1,200	1,146	1,200	1,200	1,000
Parish Furnishings	1,000	982	1,000	1,000	1,000
Total Building Operations	95,000	99,648	100,000	90,694	99,000
SPECIFIC COMMITTEE FUNDING					
Auction	-	-	-	-	-
Canvass/Stewardship	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Campaign	-	-	-	-	-
Care Ministry	500	300	500	300	3,000
Congregational Life	-	-	-	-	-
Diversity	500	716	800	716	800
Historic Archives	200	50	50	50	50
Leadership Development	-	-	-	-	-
Parish Committee	500	880	1,150	880	4,000
300 Celebration					4,500
Emerging Ministry Fund					7,500
Ministerial Transition					8,000
MULTICULTURAL/ANTI-RACISM					10,000
Social Action	1,500	1,150	1,750	1,500	1,750
Stained Glass	-	-	250	-	250
Worship	1,000	1,300	1,500	1,100	4,000
Total Committee Funding	4,200	4,395	6,000	4,546	43,850

Notes: Worship expense primarily covers guest ministers in addition to specific supplies related to Sunday worship

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS FY17
Plans for Next Year
Considering the Likely Departure of Rev Maria Cristina
As of May 12, 2016

FY17 (2016-17) is a year to discern who FPB has been and who we want to be moving forward. This is the work of the congregation, its leadership and our interim minister. “How do we live into our mission?” and “what model of staffing and ministry will serve us best?” are key questions to be addressed during this year of discernment. The process of answering these and other questions will involve engaging the entire congregation and will take time. Our plan is to decide next year on a staffing plan that we hope to try out for two years - the final year of the interim ministry (2017-18) and the first year of our new called minister (2018-19). We envision developing a two-year staffing plan next year that will make use of modifications to current staffing and/or hiring of (likely interim) new staff. Living with the new model during 2017-18 will provide important information for the search committee to share with candidates for our next called minister. Questions include, “How were these staffing decisions made?” “What are we learning?” “What would we hope to see continue?” “What would be important for ministerial candidates to understand?” And living with a new model for a second year will give our next called minister information s/he and we can use to chart our future together.

Narrative of Recommendations for Next Year:

1. Increase responsibilities (and compensation) of existing staff instead of making new permanent hires.

Rationale: The current staff team works well together and has the capacity with increased hours and compensation to both continue and grow the work of the congregation. Rev Rebecca will work with current staff and our Affiliate Ministers. We will save money and time in not searching for, training and hiring interim staff for positions that may change again in FY18.

2. Increase Number of times Rev. Rebecca preaches by 33-50%.

Rationale: This is a model that will require Rev Rebecca to be mindful of work boundaries and elicit more support of staff and volunteers. It will both increase the time that she is in the pulpit and can minister to the congregation during this interim year, and bring new and important guest preachers to the pulpit. In recognition of this increase and other added responsibilities of a “solo minister”, we will further increase Rev Rebecca’s compensation.

3. Increase Membership Director hours by 10 per week to include creation of an adult faith formation program.

Rationale: Rev. Rebecca has helped us understand that there is an important need and opportunity for a formalized adult faith formation program at FPB. This can include different activities including discussions, support groups, classes, workshops, etc. This is seen as a one-year investment that will create the capacity and infrastructure needed for lay leaders and/or staff to continue a robust adult faith formation program in the future. The Membership Coordinator’s work next year will include forming a volunteer committee, surveying congregational interests, creating schedules, recruiting volunteer leaders, marketing programs, etc.

4. Bring in experts who can work with the congregation and guide the discernment/work/dialogue around multiculturalism and anti-racism.

Rationale: This is critical work for which there are expert facilitators. They need to not be members of the congregation or the minister. Rev. Rebecca will engage the Diversity Caucus in helping to identify prospective facilitators and outline the scope of their work.

5. Dedicate \$2,500 to programming for the youth. (Envisioning 3 weekend activities over the course of the year)

Rationale: There are youth who have been with FPB and are ready and interested in ongoing engagement and programming. We are committed to supporting these youth and their families with programming planned by and with youth. During this interim time the funds could support facilitators, trip costs, food, etc.

6. Increase office assistant hours to support data entry with adult programming, manage increased building usage, and assist Rev Rebecca with administrative arrangements for guest preachers, etc.

Rationale: Our office assistant can support most any aspect of congregational life from the operational and support side. His new work will vary in focus based on needs at any given time.

7. Retain support of Affiliate Ministers to cover during Rev. Rebecca's vacation in case of emergency.

Rationale: The two Affiliate Ministers are both willing and able to provide important ministerial support beyond what is included in their current letters of understanding. Their new responsibilities would include providing emergency pastoral care during Rev Rebecca's vacation weeks, possibly leading more worship, and other programmatic activities.

Cost projections for implementation

Area of Work	Proposed FY2017	Proposed Cost FY 2017
Preaching	10 Guest Ministers \$ 250 each Rev. Rebecca will preach 2.5 time each month (on average) plus special services (5) total = 5-10 additional services more than this year Rev. Rebecca will oversee ministry themes	\$ 2,500
Pastoral Care	Reserve for Emergencies during Rev. Rebecca's 4 weeks of vacation Training for Pastoral Care Associates in Small Group Ministry Rev. Rebecca will work with facilitators and oversee implementation	\$ 1,000 \$ 1,500
Social Justice	Guest Preachers /Facilitators / Consultants Rev. Rebecca will work with Immigration Justice Committee Retain services of consultant(s) for antiracism /multiculturalism work and congregational growth and discernment	\$ 10,000
Youth Programming	Funds to support approximately 3 activities over the course of the church year.	\$ 2,500
Adult Faith Formation	Increase Membership Coordinator's hours by 10 per week (one-year only)	\$ 10,765
Administration	Increase Office Assistant's hours by 10/week (in addition to increase in hours PC recommended in April to assume building management responsibilities formerly undertaken by our retired Head Sexton)	\$ 11,624
Ministry	Because Rev Rebecca will be assuming additional responsibilities as our "solo minister", the PC will be increasing her compensation beyond the original \$6,550 increase the PC voted in April which would place her at mid-point of Tier I congregation; she will now be half way between the mid-point of a Tier II congregation and her starting salary.	\$ 3,025
	Total Estimated Proposed Cost	\$ 42,914

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

POSTION	UUA 7/1/15	Percent	Budgeted FY 2016	UUA 7/1/2016	Percent	Proposed FY 2017
	Mid-Range at % of time	Full time FY 16		Mid-Size II Range at % of time	Full time FY 17	
Senior / Interim Minister	74,325.00	75%	74,325.00	77,750-101,150	100%	91,575.00
Assistant/Second Minister	51,562.50	75%	51,562.50	40,200 - 52,650	5wks 75%	4,958.00
Ministerial Other (Soc Sec) ***	9,630.39	N/A	9,630.39	8,383 - 12,252	N/A	14,468.00
Director of Religious Ed	44,475.00	75%	44,475.00	40,462.5 - 48,675	75%	44,475.00
Music Director	30,250.00	50%	30,250.00	26,075 - 37,425	50%	30,250.00
Section Leaders	16,000.00	8hrs*4/10	16,000.00	N/A	8hrs*4/10	16,000.00
Parish Administrator	52,150.00	100%	52,150.00	44,450 - 59,950	100%	52,150.00
Admin Assistant	15,322.50	15 hr/wk	15,322.50	13,047.84 - 17,587.44	35hr/wk	34,580.00
Membership Coordinator	10,713.00	25%	10,713.00	9,113 - 12,250	50%	20,713.00
Sexton	9,019.40	10hrs/wk	9,019.40	7,727.20 - 10,311.60	20hrs/wk	16,640.00
Custodian	22,542.00	25hrs/wk	22,542.00	19,318 - 25,779.00	14hrs/wk	11,284.00
Nursery 3 hrs*2 for 4wks/mo/10mos	3,600.00		3,600.00	3,086.40 - 4,032.00	varies	3,600.00
Total Staff Wages			339,589.79			340,693.00
Professional Expenses			18,499.29			16,048.00
Benefits			69,353.07			48,037.00
RCA & Worker's Comp			18,733.50			19,976.00
Total Compensation / Expenses			446,175.65			424,754.00

*** 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 RCAN/Worker's Comp

UUA Compensation Guideline Insert (2 pages)

UUA Compensation Guideline Insert (2 pages)

WELCOMING COMMITTEE

2015-2016

Team Members: Branch Moody and Laura Hatfield (co-chairs), Jeff Cadow, Scott Ullrich, Emily Cherry, Charles Sandmel, 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.

2015-2016 Goals

1. We will host 4 circle suppers and use these as a means of integrating visitors and new members into the community, plan as a team, each person takes responsibility for planning one, we will distribute team members and “pathway to membership” materials at each supper with a newcomer family.
2. We will schedule and facilitate 4 new member recognition events on a Sunday morning, in coordination with worship committee and add new member spotlights to the newsletter.
3. We will broaden involvement of the congregation in welcoming activities by recruiting members to greet at the doors and in coffee hour.
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 distribute “welcoming packets” with up-to-date information for visitors and make it available at the welcome table on Sunday. We will develop a “Becoming a member” website and insert that replicates the material from the bulletin board about discernment, signing the book, pledging, etc. We will update the “First Time at First Parish?” web page, add more photos, videos, music, and information about “who we are” as a congregation.
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 develop welcoming as a spiritual practice.

2015-2016 Achievements

- We expanded our list of greeters who work with Welcoming Team members to greet newcomers, friends, and members into the sanctuary on Sunday mornings.
- With Reverend Bryan, Kristen McIntire, and members of several committees, we helped host a Membership Class in April.
- We strengthened outreach to new members, friends, and visitors for Circle Suppers.

- We continued our practice of providing visitors with Welcome Packets, collecting information on visitor information sheets, and, thanks to Kristen, sending handwritten notes to visitors.
- We organized Circle Suppers in November (35 participants), January (67 participants), March (31 participants), and May (still signing people up).

Congregational Action Items

- **Sign up to greet!** We would love to broaden our list of Sunday morning greeters, particularly to families. We ask that you commit to a particular Sunday morning and arrive at 10:30a. A member of the Welcoming Team will teach you everything you need to know. If you are interested in volunteering, please email membershipchair@firstparishinbrookline.org.
- **Join our team!** We are seeking new team members to join our warm, collegial, and efficient team. Team members attend monthly meetings, greet once/twice a month, recruit new greeters, plan Circle Suppers and other special events. If you are interested in joining us, please email membershipchair@firstparishinbrookline.org.

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: Peggy Cave, David Cave, Ann Dinsmore, Madeline Fine, Elena Garofoli, Robson Goulart, Jami Jordan, Jody Leader, Paul McLean, Tai Melendy, Anne Modena, Nick Peterson, Mary Rogers, Joey Ullrich, Laura Walters, Meredith Williamson.

WORSHIP COMMITTEE

May 2015-May 2016

Co-chairs: Susan Larrabee and Lisa Underhill

Members: Jessica Aguilera-Steinert, Nancy Clark, Anna Eisengart, Coleman Mark, Sally Moore and Martin Thomson

Purpose / Mission Statement: We support the Ministers and the Director of Religious Exploration to provide worship activities and spiritual celebrations that speak to the diverse spiritual needs of the First Parish in Brookline community both within and beyond regular Sunday worship.

Accomplishments Past Year (2015/2016)

- Participated in Sunday worship: (a worship associate from the Committee did unison chalice lighting, readings, testimonials, as needed).
- Regular participation in twice-monthly staff meetings to plan Sunday Worship (attended by 1-2 rotating WC members)
- Held monthly committee meetings with the Ministers to discuss recent and upcoming worship activities
- Created chalice lighter sign up to involve more congregants in regular Sunday worship
- Facilitated use of original artwork from our children and member artists for our Sunday Orders of Service
- Hosted 3-hour Committee retreat in September 2016
- Provided feedback on Sunday worship (from the committee and relayed ad hoc feedback from the congregation)
- Worked with the Ministers and Director of Religious Exploration to choose worship themes for next year
- Facilitated all summer worship services last summer (recruited worship leaders, provided worship assistants, facilitated music for each service, provided snacks, did the offering, etc.)
- Created lay leader guidelines and order of service template for summer services
- Attended regional Lay Worship workshops lead by the UUA

Tasks Next Year (2016/2017)

- Facilitate summer 2016 worship
- Schedule two committee retreats
- With Rev. Rebecca Bryant and Rebecca Keller-Scholl, continue support and to assist with Sunday worship as needed
- Continue to provide and relay feedback regarding Sunday worship
- Provide support for other worship activities outside of regular Sunday worship as needed.
- Rewrite our committee charter
- Expand our committee to 9 standing members and 1-2 youth members

We thank Reverend Jim Sherblom, Reverend Maria Cristina Vlassidis-Burgoa, Reverend Rebecca Bryan, Rebecca Keller Scholl, and Sonya Abbott for essential support and guidance throughout the year.

An Amendment Offered by the Finance Council

Motion: Add \$7,500 to the total budget as a line item under “Special/Committee Funding (Parish Committee)” for an “Emerging Ministry Fund”

Explanation:

\$7,500 will be set aside to use, if needed, for the congregation’s work of interim ministry about which we cannot yet know the full extent or cost at this time.

Rationale:

We all know that we need more time to fine-tune some of the plans being put in place as we work together to cope with Rev. Maria Cristina’s departure and move more deeply into the work of our interim ministry. The amendment and approach outlined here is designed to help give us the flexibility we will need going forward.

Early estimates from the Diversity Caucus’ research indicate that the \$10,000 in our current budget proposal is very likely insufficient for the congregational antiracism/multicultural work we will decide to do – and their early research suggests a cost of \$15,000-\$20,000 depending on the scope of work.

The Finance Council also thinks that, with more time to consider options, we are likely to find other ways to meet pressing needs by reallocating resources. For example:

- Rev. Rebecca has talked with lay leaders and staff involved with administration and RE. They are developing a tentative plan for allocating 2 hours of Kevin Hoskins’ additional 10 hours to administrative support for RE lay leaders involved with youth. That administrative support is one way to address the desire we heard at the budget hearings for more tangible support for our youth.
- The Parish Committee’s proposal calls for Membership Coordinator, Kristen McIntire, to have 10 more hours per week to support community-building events and help establish the “infrastructure” for more adult education programming. They both feel that it may be that 7 or 8 hours will be sufficient instead of 10. If so, \$2,000 or \$3,000 could be diverted to another purpose – or used to reduce the endowment draw.
- After consulting with a range of members, we may decide to experiment next fall with only having coffee/tea at hospitality hour as was suggested by a few people at budget hearings. If successful, that experiment could save up to \$3,000.