

Following the process recommended by the UUA, with robust congregational participation and Parish Board input, the following individuals were selected to serve on the Ministerial Search Committee:

Karla Baehr

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

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

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

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

Ellie Boynton

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

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

At First Parish, I've taught RE, managed costumes for the pageant, substituted for music directors, sung in the choir, been part of the Communications committee, and participated in a Spiritual Autobiography class and Small Group Ministry. One of the original Pastoral Care Associates, I continue to serve on the Care committee. I have served as Chair of the Technology Committee for the past 10 years and work closely with our Parish Administrator. I built and continue to maintain the church's website.

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

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

Bijan Etemad-Gilbertson

I have been coming to FP for the past 13 years. My husband and I stumbled upon this First Parish a few years before while we were doing speaking engagements for the "Freedom to Marry Coalition" – during our grassroots homosexual activist years.... At that time, we were thinking of starting a family and were desperately looking to be part of a community that would be inspiring and supportive (our families are spread out between Minnesota, France, Iran and Washington).

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

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

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

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

Charles Fuller

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

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

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

In terms of service, I'm proud to have been a member of the search committee that brought Keith Kirchoff to FPB. As co-chair of our Diversity Education Forum for some years, I learned how important it was to insist people move beyond apologies for their unintentionally hurtful

words and gestures. To this day I see members of this church doing the hard work required to manage the impact of exclusion and erasure, and stay in right relation to others in our community. Blesséd be!

Susan Larrabee

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

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

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

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

Laura Walters

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

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

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

Ron Wilkinson

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

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

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

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

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