

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING MINUTES

November 17, 2019

Once a quorum was confirmed, Moderator Bob Williamson called the meeting to order at 1:01pm.

Rev Lisa lit the chalice and offered opening words.

Participants read together the First Parish in Brookline Covenant and Mission. The Moderator reminded participants of our norms, introduced members of the Bylaws Committee and Parish Board, and reviewed the agenda.

By unanimous vote, members voted to adopt the agenda, as presented

Parish Board Chair Gene Thompson-Grove presented a proposal for suspending Robert's Rules of Order in order to use the Consensus Decision-Making process currently being used by the Parish Board to determine whether or not consensus can be reached on one or more six proposals to amend the bylaws. She described the meaning of each "Fist to Five" position (see attached). Parish Board members Janet Britcher and Karla Baehr explained the Parish Board's thinking that the topic of bylaws is an appropriate opportunity to try out the Board's alternative to using Robert's Rules of Order to make decisions. Bylaw Committee Chair Sue Andrews then reviewed each of the six (6) bylaw amendments being recommended by the Bylaw Committee and Parish Board.

Upon a motion and second, the congregation voted unanimously to suspend Robert's Rules of Order for the purpose of discussing the proposed bylaw changes in facilitated small groups using the consensus decision-making process. {52-0}

The congregation broke into seven (7) smaller facilitated groups to listen, share and discern whether consensus existed about one or more of the issues. At the conclusion of the small group discussions, the purpose of the suspension of the rules was complete and the meeting resumed under Roberts Rules of Order automatically.

Upon a motion and second, without discussion, the congregation voted to ADOPT #1 unanimously, 51-0

Upon a motion and second to TABLE Issue #3, the congregation defeated the motion to table by majority vote.

Upon a motion and second, the congregation voted to ADOPT #3 by a vote of 48 in favor, 1 opposed, and 2 abstaining.

Upon a motion and second, the congregation voted to ADOPT #5, by a vote of 47 in favor, none opposed, and 1 abstaining.

Upon a motion and second, the congregation voted to TABLE #2, #4, and #6 in order to permit more time at a future date to seek consensus.

Moderator Bob Williamson announced that the Nominating Committee has nominated **Kimberly Zimmerman Rand** to serve as Acting Moderator, starting at the conclusion of this meeting. Under the Bylaws, a vote of the congregation for an Acting Moderator is not necessary.

Rev Lisa closed the meeting with a blessing

The congregation voted to ADJOURN the meeting at 2:42pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Karla Baehr, Clerk

Proposed Bylaws Amendments 2019

Issue #1: Should our purpose include our mission?

Article 2.00

This change proposes general language that would not need to be changed in the future if our mission changes.

Current Bylaw:

2.00 The purpose of this Society is to provide a community where religious living is encouraged through worship, study, service and fellowship.

Proposed Bylaw:

2.00 The purpose of this Society is to provide a community where **members can come together and, through worship, study, service and fellowship, work to accomplish our mission.**

Vote on Issue #1: adopted 51-0-0

Issue #2: How does one become a member of First Parish in Brookline? Does membership require a financial contribution?

Sub-article 3.01

This change deemphasizes financial contribution as a requirement for

membership and also states that we have an agreed upon path to membership. The qualifier “in good standing” has been removed.

Current Bylaw:

Current Bylaw:

3.01 Any person, 13 years of age or older who subscribes to our statement of purpose, has an understanding of Unitarian Universalism, and has made a financial contribution of record during the preceding twelve months, may become an active member of the Society. Such person shall sign the Membership Book and then be formally accepted into the society by majority vote at a Membership Meeting. Thereafter to remain an active member in "good standing" a person must: make a financial contribution of record during each fiscal year.

Proposed Bylaw:

3.01 Any person 13 years of age or older who **enters into covenant with all members of the Society: 1) to endeavor to live out the seven principles of Unitarian Universalism and 2) to contribute their talent, money and time for the good of the Society** may become an active member of the Society . Such person shall: 1) complete the current agreed upon path to membership. 2) sign the Membership Book as an indication that a covenant has been made and 3) be formally accepted into the Society at a ritual celebrating this covenant held during a worship service. Those who have signed the Membership book and participated in a covenant ritual during the preceding twelve months will be recognized and noted at a Membership Meeting.

Vote on issue #2: Tabled unanimously

Issue #3: Should younger members, aged 13-15 have the same voting rights as all other members?

Sub-Article 3.02

This change deletes this sub-article entirely. The Bylaws Committee’s opinion is that any member, regardless of age, has the same voting rights as any other member.

Current Bylaw:

3.02 Persons thirteen to fifteen years of age inclusive may become members as stated in sub article 3.01, but may not vote at Membership Meetings on matters pertaining to finance, the disposition of property, or dismissal or calling of the Minister nor may they be eligible for election to the Parish Committee or as an Officer of the Society. All the requirements outlined in section 3.01 for attaining initial membership and for maintaining active membership in "good standing" also apply. Persons under the age of thirteen years may not become members.

Vote on issue #3: Adopted 48-1-2

Note: Sub-Article 3.03 re: termination of membership would now become Sub-Article 3.02 and is unchanged.

Issue #4: Who can vote at congregational meetings? How will lack of financial contribution be addressed?

Sub-Article 3.03 (previously numbered 3.04)

This change removes the qualifier “in good standing” from membership. It continues to require an annual financial contribution, while not requiring that anyone other than the minister is aware of whether the member has made a financial contribution. Every active member will be allowed to attend congregational meetings and to vote.

Current Bylaw:

3.04 (now 3.03) Active Members who have not made a recorded financial contribution during the current fiscal year will no longer be considered in "good standing" and will be contacted in writing by March 1 prior to the Annual Meeting to ask if they wish to remain voting members. If no contribution is forthcoming by April 1 their names will be placed on an Inactive List with non-voting status. Any inactive member may become a voting member again after the Annual Meeting by fulfilling the requirements of active membership. Reactivation does not require a majority vote at a membership meeting.

Proposed Bylaw:

3.03 Active Members who have not made a recorded financial contribution during the current fiscal year will **be contacted by the Senior Minister in order to inquire as to their well being, and be offered assistance if desired/needed before the Annual Meeting.**

Vote on Issue #4: Tabled unanimously

Issue #5: How do we express non-discrimination?

Sub-Article 3.04 (previously numbered 3.05)

This change adds categories about which First Parish in Brookline does not discriminate.

Current Bylaw:

3.05 (now 3.04) The Society affirms and declares its special responsibility to promote the full participation of all people in its activities without discrimination based on affectional or sexual orientation, age, color, financial circumstances, gender identity and gender expression, national origins, physical and mental abilities, race, and without adherence to any particular interpretation of religion or to any particular religious belief or creed.

Proposed Bylaw:

3.04 The Society affirms and declares its special responsibility to promote the full participation of any person in its activities without discrimination based on affectional or sexual orientation, , age, **skin color**, financial circumstances, gender identity and gender expression, physical and mental abilities, national origins, race, **or immigration status** , and without adherence to any particular religious belief or creed.

Vote on Issue #5: adopted 47-0-1

Issue # 6: Should the descriptor “in good standing”, meaning “has made a financial contribution of record during each fiscal year” be removed from all articles of the Bylaws in which it appears, thereby giving the right to vote on all issues to all active members? (Article 3.06, 5.05, 5.07 and 6.01)

Vote on Issue #6: Tabled unanimously

LEVELS OF CONSENSUS

Adapted from Janet Britcher

- 5 I can say an unqualified “yes” to the decision, and am satisfied that it is an expression of the wisdom of the group.
- 4 I find the decision perfectly acceptable.
- 3 I can live with the decision, even though I'm not especially enthusiastic about it.
- 2 I do not fully agree with the decision. However, I do not choose to block the decision, and am willing to support it. I trust the wisdom of the group.

(“above the line”)

(“below the line”)

- 1 I do not agree with the decision, and feel the need to stand in the way of this decision being accepted.
- 0 I feel that we have no clear sense of unity in the group, which means that we need to do more learning before consensus can be reached.