

Strengthening Our Future Through Family Ministry, Community, and Religious Exploration

The Religious Exploration Committee (REC) has completed a funded, meaningful year-long visioning process within our parish led by an experienced religious professional. As a result of that, and largely based on feedback from our congregation, we now have a proposal for rebuilding multi-generational participation in worship, education, and community over the next 3 to 5 years.

This staffing model and framework proposal doesn't just focus on 'maintenance' but on carrying forward the vision for growth and expansion of programs for children, youth, families and the congregation as a whole.

Based on the Parish Board's goal of 'Developing A Framework for the Future of RE', and our church's mission 'to nurture spiritual growth for individuals and families', we propose the following staffing model and framework. This staffing model and framework will allow us to help re-invigorate and re-establish the religious exploration program as a vital part of the congregational life of First Parish in Brookline. We propose a three-to-five year commitment to this bold vision that will reset this program in ways that will feed the congregation's health and vitality in many areas.

Staffing & Funding Model

1. **Full-time Director of Family & Community Ministries (budget line-item: \$70K plus fringe)**
 - a. The work of a dynamic, energetic, and experienced religious educator is needed to help inspire, develop and implement a plan for the future and to support a full program and engagement of children, youth, families and adults in the ministries across our church.
 - b. **Job responsibilities:** develop and implement a plan for a religious exploration program that would serve the needs of families (in their many forms) and adults in the congregation through faith development programs, affinity groups, and intentional groups that draw people from different ages and stages together. Job responsibilities divided among:
 - ⅓ Children and Youth (K-12) Religious Exploration
 - ⅓ "Whole Life" Religious Exploration (Young Adult, Singles, Couples)
 - ⅓ Community Organizing: Cross-Ministry Activities, Engagements and Opportunities
 - c. Volunteer energies are low right now. **Investing in a family & community ministries director is our best path forward to inspire the congregation to become an active learning community, with programming for different ages across the lifespan and to provide opportunities for all ages to engage together.**
2. **Youth Group (budget line-item 'RE Assistant': \$3,150: 3 hours/week at \$25/hr):** We propose to re-allocate Paige Belfield's hours (RE Assistant) toward developing and implementing a youth group. This would be done with full support and collaboration with the REC and DF&CM.

3. Enrollment

- a. We currently have a core group of 30 kids and youth that attend RE classes regularly (including OWL and Coming of Age/Challenge). We expect that this staffing model and framework will lead to increases in this core group starting in year 1 (financial model to be shared soon).
- b. We also seek ways to retain more youth as they get older, and instead of “aging out” of the program, they continue to participate, be it in Youth Group, as part of Worship, or in other community / committee aspects of the church.
- c. This staffing model and framework, including a dynamic religious exploration and family ministries program, will be attractive not only to the families and members of the congregation but to those in the surrounding residential areas, particularly Jamaica Plain and Dorchester. Resetting a healthy religious exploration program can bring much-needed hope, promise and optimism to the children, youth and adults who call First Parish in Brookline home.

4. Start-Up Plan

- a. Our start-up plan for year one includes hiring (Summer 2022) and developing and beginning to implement the plan for program development and expansion
 - i. **RE Classes for kids & youth:**
 1. Learning goals are clear to all
 2. We have a refreshed curriculum with regular updates
 3. Kids know and understand what ‘UU’ means
 4. Establish youth group
 - ii. **RE Classes for adults:**
 1. Develop plan for offering RE classes for adults: conduct survey and focus group to determine what would be of interest and how this would work
 - iii. **Worship Services:**
 1. RE is integrated into church services once/month, with children leading and participating in the worship service, through readings, ritual, music and movement. This effort will be led by the Director of Family Ministries, with assistance from Kiara Zani (music educator) and other REC and congregation volunteers
 2. All-RE Sundays (all kids together on one class) focus on kids and families participating in social justice and community actions
 - iv. **Community-Building Activities:**
 1. Organized gatherings of the congregation, including kids, youth, families and adults, are happening regularly
 - v. **Structure and Operations:**
 1. Recruitment, enrollment and trainings for kids, youth and adults run like a well-oiled machine
 2. Measures of success include:
 - a. Increased attendance & membership
 - b. Lower attrition rate
 - c. 90% of RE families are members of FP