

Parish Board Meeting
June 5, 2022
(Hybrid)

Minutes

Present: Alfred Brownell, Micaela Coady, Jen Guillemín (attending virtually), John Mignano, Margaret Williams, Bob Williamson. (Excused absences: Karla Behr and Jody Leader)

Others (Ministries Task Force): Janet Britcher, Jeff Cadow, and Kristen McIntire (attending virtually). (Martha Leader was present as a visitor considering joining the Ministries Task Force.) Rev. Lisa Perry-Wood was also present.

Once everyone had arrived Bob Williamson called the meeting to order at 12:38. Rev. Lisa lit the chalice and read "Fault Line" by Rev. Robert Walsh as the opening words. A check-in followed.

New Work

Health of the Ministries: Ministries Task Force (MTF): Bob indicated that the Charter of the MTF was interact with the Board and members of the congregation and provide guidance to the Board in regards to ongoing oversight of ministerial performance. The Charter and Guidance documents provide the detail. He stated that Hillary Allen of UUA has and will continue to be a resource in this regard. He reminded us that from discussions between Hilary Allen, himself, and Rev. Lisa came three recommendations that we (the Board) have agreed to act on:

- 1) Board members will speak more authentically in our discussions with Rev. Lisa (don't "sugar coat" or engage in gossip)
- 2) Create a "container" for the past data/experiences of the congregation and the board with regards to the ministries of Pastoral Care and Administration. (This is the MTF)
- 3) Create a process and a church culture of real-time feedback on the health of the church ministries. Make it beneficial to the minister and the congregation. As a church we need to understand our ministries (e.g., pastoral care, individual and group ministry, administrative, and other functions) and engage in continuous review and oversight

It was noted that these are challenging times (COVID-19, personal isolation, smaller congregations, etc.) and many congregations three or four years after a new minister arrives, need to reset the covenant between the congregation and the minister, so that the congregation and minister may meet each other's expectations more deeply and continue in right relations

Rev. Lisa was asked how she has experienced her interactions with the congregation (primarily since 12/2021). She stated that it has been a "very emotional experience" for her and that she has been deeply affected by direct (and indirect) comments from some parishioners and also by "anonymous feedback". Of note, today's Message to the congregation from Rev. Lisa included wisdom from Socrates in regards to "unfounded comments and gossip". He used 3 filters prior to spreading comments about a person to other individuals: Is it true, is it hurtful, and is it beneficial? (If not, keep the comments to yourself.)

Following discussion between members of the Board and MTF, it was recommended that the MTF broaden its scope beyond obtaining, containing, and filtering ministerial “data”, and to also provide positive problem solving, encourage direct dialogue and less anonymous feedback, and potentially compare the recent experience at FPB with other congregations.

Thereafter spirited discussion clarified the scope of work and the guidelines for the MTF. The MTF will:

- Obtain and assess “data” for the Board from primary sources wherever possible, and recognize that “anonymous feedback” while capable of indicating trends to research, is not the basis for data.
- Expand the research as needed to represent all voices in the congregation
- Approach the work with an expectation of a positive, useful outcome
- Gather and organize experiential “data” in a manner that is usable and replicable in future work
- Frame experiences as “needs unmet” rather than trends, as needs are more actionable
- Acknowledge that needs unmet that are discovered may be hard to hear for Rev. Lisa
- Understand that, while the MTF is not tasked with designing an ongoing shared ministry assessment process, the work of the MTF will be a steppingstone in that direction.
- Recognize the point of view expressed by Paul MacLean in his correspondence to the Board (that the MTF work may be corrosive, and to be aware of previous First Parish congregations’ difficult behavior towards ministers)

Bob tasked Jen to write a report to the congregation regarding the formation and purpose of the MTF, and its relation to the Board and the minister.

Ongoing Work:

Leadership Plan 2022-2023: Alfred Brownell was asked to be and has accepted FPB Board Chairperson. The 2022-2023 Board meetings schedule hasn’t been finalized.

Administrative Summer Planning: Rev. Lisa has a plan in place for Ebieri’s parental leave (and any other staffing issues).

Monthly Matters:

In a discussion of the music ministry at First Parish, a recommendation was made to offer Keith Kirchoff six weeks of paid time off as acknowledgement of his long and distinguished service to FPB. Margaret and Rev. Lisa will circulate a proposal touching on cost and Personnel Policy questions, and the Board will reach consensus via email

No additional questions from the Board were directed toward the Minister’s Activities Report.

Annual Meeting Debrief: Rev. Lisa and the REC will work this summer preparing a job description and a search committee for the approved position of Director of Family and Community Ministries (DCFM). Deb Weiner will assist with this task.

Approved Building and Grounds projects for this coming year includes removal of the dais in Lyons Chapel and installation of built-in storage in that area (and similar storage in Pierce Hall). The carpet in Lyons Chapel will be removed and the wood floor refinished. Bob will describe that work in the summer newsletter, with the expectation that the changes will be complete by early September.

The meeting was adjourned and the chalice was extinguished at 2:49 pm.

Respectfully submitted.

John Mignano, FPB Board Member