



A WELCOMING UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

Annual Report 2022-2023

***Called by Love
Sustained by Community
Committed to Justice***

Virtual Annual Meeting:
May 21, 2023

382 Walnut Street
Brookline, Massachusetts 02445
(617) 566-1933

www.firstparishinbrookline.org

Table of Contents

The following are those reports received as of the deadline date for publication purposes.

Contents/Reports	Authors and/or Committee Chair(s)	Page
Agenda	Nancy Clark, Clerk	2
Minutes of 22-23 Annual Meeting	Karla Baehr, Former Clerk	5
Senior Minister's	Rev. Lisa Perry-Wood, Former Senior Minister	11
Parish Board Report	Alfred Brownell, Chair	13
Parish Administrator	Ebiere Omoregie, Parish Administrator	19
Director of Family and Community Ministries	Jayleigh Lewis, DFCM	21
Religious Exploration	Micaela Coady, Chair	24
Musical Director's	Keith Kirchoff, Music Director	27
Ministerial Intern's	Erin Scott, Ministerial Intern	31
Congregational Life Events	Rev. Lisa Perry-Wood, Former Senior Minister	33
Bylaws Committee	Jim Womack	34
Building and Grounds	Clint Richmond	35
Facilities Assistant	Jeffrey Fogelman, Facilities Assistant	37
Canvass Committee	Ed Page, Margaret Williams	39
Climate Justice Committee	Alfred Brownell and Deane Coady	41
Book Club	Julie Horvarth	43
Common Hope	Melinda Maryniuk	44
Deacon's Committee	Sheila Hussey	47
Pastoral Care Associates	Tanya Gurian	48
Immigration Justice Committee	Ellen Blaney and Laura Walters	49
Nominating Committee	Carol Spitzer, Chair	51
Racial Justice Action Committee	Almas Dossa	52
Social Action Committee	Clint Richmond, Chair	58
Finance Committee	Ed Page, Treasurer	61
FY24 Budget		

May 23, 2021 First Parish In Brookline Annual Meeting Agenda

Welcoming and Call to Order

1. Welcoming Music
2. Orientation to the technology and voting process for a virtual meeting
3. Preview of process for small group and consensus seeking
4. Chalice Lighting and Blessing, Erin Scott
5. Call to Order by Moderator, Noah McIntyre
6. Review of First Parish Mission and Ground Rules for Congregational Meetings, Moderator

Routine Annual Business Required in order to Conduct Other Business

1. Presentation of the Annual Report, Alfred Brownell, Parish Board Chair
2. Recognition of outgoing Board Members, Alfred Brownell, Jen Guillemine, and Margaret Williams; and continuing Parish Board Members, Nancy Clark, Jody Leader, John Mignano, Ed Page
3. Recognition of today's agenda, Moderator
4. Recognition of New Members, Moderator
5. Recognition of Officers and Committee Members, as required by Bylaws
6. Recognition of Minutes from May 2022 Annual Meeting
7. Discussion and Vote on New Members, Officers, and Standing Committee Members, and Minutes (requires a quorum of 15%)

2023-2024 Budget

1. Motion to Accept Parish Board's Recommended FY 2024 Budget - Margaret Williams, Treasurer
2. Small group facilitated discussion of the Motion with Parish Board and Finance Committee members, using Budget Building Blocks and these Questions:
 1. At last year's Annual Meeting, we approved a major financial commitment from the Endowment to grow our Family and Community Ministries. What ideas do you have on how we could measure our progress on this?
 2. What concerns do you have about the budget?
 3. Where are you on the consensus ladder, 5-4-3-2-1
 1. 5 = "unqualified yes"
 2. 3 = "I can live with this decision, but I am not especially enthusiastic about it"
 3. 1 = "I don't agree and feel the need to stand in the way of its acceptance"
3. What amendment, if any, is needed for everyone in the group to be at a 3 or higher on the consensus ladder?
4. Review of Consensus from small groups and proposed amendments, Noah McIntyre

- Vote to approve an operating budget for FY 2023-2024 as amended and withdrawal from endowment principal to pay a portion of operating costs (requires 2/3 vote), Noah McIntyre, Moderator

Note on Routine Business:

To save time without sacrificing the opportunity to ask questions and discuss, we will have a single vote on the typically more routine business of Annual Meeting: accepting the agenda for the meeting, accepting new members, electing new officers and members of standing committees, and accepting the minutes from past congregational meetings.

- Budget approval requires a 2/3 vote because it involves withdrawing principal from the endowment, not just earnings

Ground Rules for Congregational Meetings:

- One speaker at a time
- Listen with an open mind
- Speak for yourself (“I”)
- Tell your own truths and let others tell theirs

The Mission of First Parish in Brookline

Called by Love, Sustained by Community, Committed to Justice

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

New Members: Christopher Clarke, Allen Davis, MK Fernandez, Charlotte Hanson, Eric Hanson, Sara Hanson, Sarah Pearl

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

Christopher Clarke	Allen Davis	MK Fernandez
--------------------	-------------	--------------

Charlotte Hanson	Eric Hanson	Sara Hanson
------------------	-------------	-------------

Sarah Pearl

Officers and standing Committee Members

The Nominating Committee nominates the following members:

For the Parish Board:

- Susan Faja, Sarah Luchansky, Whit Larrabee, Brad Reich, Kristen McIntire

For Officers:

- Ed Page, Treasurer,
- Nancy Clark, Clerk

Nominating Committee:

- Sue Andrews
- Debba Andree

Moderator - Noah McIntyre

Alternate moderator - Marilyn Tressel

- Treasurer - Ed Page

Annual Meeting Minutes

Note: The 2022 Annual Meeting was held as a hybrid meeting, with some participants attending in person in Lyon Chapel and others participating via videoconferencing (Zoom) to accommodate the continuing health threat posed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Welcome and Orientation

In Moderator Jami Jordan's unanticipated absence, Alternate Moderator Marilyn Tressel welcomed in-person and virtual attendees to the Annual Meeting beginning at 12:45pm. Parish Board Chair Bob Williamson explained how the hybrid meeting would be conducted, and previewed the agenda.

At approximately 1:00pm. Clerk Karla Baehr confirmed that more than 31 members had joined the meeting, the minimum number required to achieve a quorum which is 15% of active members. She explained that a larger quorum would be required for the vote on the Annual Budget because the budget as proposed will require a withdrawal from the endowment. First Parish Bylaws require that any vote to withdraw funds from the endowment requires a one-third quorum, or in this case, 67 of our 202 members.

Rev. Lisa offered a Land Acknowledgement, lit the chalice, and read *We are Connected* by Leslie Jordan. Together, members read the First Parish Mission Statement and Ground

Rules:

- One speaker at a time
- Listen with an open mind
- Speak for yourself ("I")
- Tell your truths and let others tell theirs

Routine Business

Parish Board Chair Bob Williamson presented the Annual Report for 2021-22. Members of the Board and Rev Lisa recognized continuing and out-going Board members and other long-time members who have stepped down from leadership positions this year:

- Continuing Board members: Alfred Brownell, Jen Guillemin, Jody Leader, John Mignano, and Margaret Williams
- Departing Board members: Karla Baehr, Micaela Coady, and Bob Williamson
- Other longtime leaders: Sue Andrews, Jeff Cadow, Ann Dinsmoor, Elizabeth McIntire and Kristin McIntire

After discussion, members voted to approve the following actions:

- Approve the Agenda for this Annual Meeting
- Accept New Members:
 - Grace Huang
 - Luciano Lima
 - Amelia Szymkowicz
 - Mark VanDerzee
 - Sasha VanDerzee
 - Kiara Zani
- Elect Officers and Committee Members, as required by Bylaws
 - Parish Board:
 - Nancy Clark
 - Lori Day (one-year term)
 - Kathryn Kirshner
 - Ed Page
 - Officers:
 - Jami Jordan (Moderator)
 - Marilynn Tressel (Alternate Moderator)
 - Margaret Williams (Treasurer)
 - Nancy Clark (Clerk)
 - Nominating Committee
 - Jeff Cadow (Member-at-Large)
- Approve Minutes from the May 23, 2021 virtual Annual Meeting

Budget for 2022-23

Treasurer Margaret Williams presented the Parish Board's 2022-23 budget, highlighting changes from last year, including:

- Increased rental income and decreased pledge income
- Funds for a two-year intern minister
- Funds to support the minister's sabbatical
- A 7% raise for our Music Director as recognition of his exceptional long-term service
- Creation of a new position of Director of Family and Community Engagement
Nathan Freitas presented the rationale for the new position of Director of Family and Community Ministries.

Members discussed and took votes on whether or not to have the small group budget discussions called for in the agenda. Ultimately, members decided to forego small group discussions and proceed directly to a vote.

Some members expressed concern that the meeting format and process was not meeting the congregation's aspirations for inclusion. Some concluded that in-person participants' voices were being privileged. And some participants felt they were being valued as "votes" not as participants in meaningful dialogue. At one member's suggestion, it was agreed that the chat entries from online participants be included with the minutes.

After discussion, members voted to adopt the budget and permit a 5.8% draw from endowment: 73 in favor, 4 opposed, 1 abstention (including 5 early ballot “yes” votes)

Resolution on Repair and Reparations

On behalf of its co-sponsors, the Parish Board and Racial Justice Action Committee, Board member Jody Leader presented *A Resolution on Repair and Reparations*:

To learn, acknowledge and work to repair the harm done to Black and Indigenous people, we the community of First Parish in Brookline covenant to continue to learn about, acknowledge and work to repair the historic and ongoing moral and material harm to Black and Indigenous people and communities. This harm has resulted from centuries of subjugation and systemic institutional policies and practices that have led to significant racial gaps in wealth, health, criminal punishment, education, and enfranchisement. During this journey, we commit to be guided by and be in relationship with the leadership of Black and Indigenous organizations and individuals.

RJAC member Ron Wilkinson led the ensuing discussion which focused on what obligations First Parish could be incurring if the resolution were adopted. Members then voted to adopt the resolution, as presented: 70 in favor, 0 opposed, 2 abstentions (including 5 early ballot “yes” votes).

Closing

Bob Williamson applauded the online presentations from the team developing the FY 2022-23 budget and the plan for the new position of Director of Family and Community Ministries.

Officers offered to stay online for an additional 15 minutes after adjournment as a post meeting opportunity for those interested to “chat”.

After Rev Lisa extinguished the chalice and offered a closing reading, members voted to adjourn the meeting at 2:28pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Karla Baehr
Clerk of the Parish

Addendum: chat entries from online participants

Welcome and Introduction

From Kiara Zani (she/her/hers): Link to Annual Report with Agenda
<https://firstparishinbrookline.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/2022-fpb-annual-report-rev1.pdf>

From numerous people: Sound problems

From numerous people (10 minutes later) Sound much better

Budget

From Kristen Mcintire : I'm not sure where best to direct questions in this format but I would like to ask when the last time was that the membership #/congregation size was assessed to ensure we are still within the salary ranges set by the UUA. Based on the numbers just shown we have moved from Midsize 2 down to Midsize 1 between 2019 and now, which means the ranges have changed. I am happy to see an increase for Keith but by the UUA salary guidance he is still extremely underpaid for his position in comparison for the ministerial salary, as an example, and this is not equitable. Are there plans beyond this 7% increase to continue to bring the music director salary within fair ranges?

Additionally, how is time off determined for our music director?

Here is the UUA file that lists compensation for all positions within our geo index:
https://www.uua.org/files/2022-01/salary_recs_22-23_geo6.pdf

From Kiara Zani (she/her/hers) : I think it is very important to have small group discussion today

From Kristen Mcintire : agreed, advocating for the people online here

From Kiara Zani (she/her/hers) : those of us attending virtually are having a real hard time hearing

From Elizabeth : I agree

From Kristen Mcintire : we also tend to try to squash discussion opportunities as a trend, we need to stop doing this

From George & Melinda Maryniuk : No need for breakout

From Elena Garofoli (she/her) : I think we should have breakout

From Tara Washburn (she/her) : no need for breakout

From Elena Garofoli (she/her) : it has been hard to hear online

From Sally Dwyer : I'm OK without a small group discussion.

From Tara Washburn (she/her) : I agree with Sue! I would vote in favor of the budget. Less time is better.

From Eliza Blanchard : I also feel that we can do without a small group discussion given all the opportunities to discuss this issue.

From William Dwyer : I agree with Sue. I can't hear most of the presentation.

From Ann Eldridge Malone she/her : is it a simple majority that decides this?

From Elizabeth : We need to think carefully about equity and inclusion here. When we vote to eliminate the small group with a majority of people in person, and we don't have a majority of people voting that way online, it strikes me that we have privileged those in person over those attending remotely.

From Margie Beal : Please raise your physical hand for the next vote instead of using the zoom hand raise feature. Thank you!

From Sue Andrews : Can't hear what she is saying

From Margie Beal : Can't hear the speaker at all

From Margie Beal : And no idea who is speaking

From Prilla S Brackett : I can't hear this speaker.

From Kristen Mcintire : I agree with Elizabeth, the people joining online may as well

leave and then we won't have a quorum to vote anyway at this point. If you are literally asking people to attend just so that votes can happen, I would advocate to remove this entire virtual experience as it is not equitable.

From Gene TG (she/ her's) : I can hear the speaker but don't know who it is

From Sue Andrews : Can you summarize what she is saying once she is finished?

From Eliza Blanchard : I agree with Sue.

From Gene TG (she/ her's) : About sustainability and the endowment

From Gene TG (she/ her's) : She's worried about financial sustainability and declining membership - doesn't see how that is accounted for in the budget

From Gene TG (she/ her's) : Eleanor Clarkson was the speaker?

From Keira Cronin : Yes

From Gene TG (she/ her's) : Laura is speaking now about outreach and building community as a path toward sustainability

From Sasha Abby VanDerzee and Mark VanDerzee : We can hear you.

From Elena Garofoli (she/her) : Bob, you are the only person I can hear clearly

From Gene TG (she/ her's) : Laura says that is reflected in the budget

From Eliza Blanchard : Yes, Bob is very easy to understand.

From Margie Beal : bob - we had a majority of online people on that last vote

From Ann Eldridge Malone she/her : But it was a majority online, too. I did not vote yes but 22 voted yes I recall hearing out of 34

Eliza Blanchard : Thanks, Ann, for those facts.

From Sue Andrews : I don't feel in any way that those present in person are privileged.

From Elizabeth : I didn't hear the count, Ann. Thank you.

From Madeline Fine she/her : Marge said it was a majority and it was on line people voting

From Kristen Mcintire : The amount of time spent talking about eliminating the small groups could have just been a discussion that would have been done by now. The trend of this congregation even when it is 100% in person is to squash discussion, which is what I am trying to point out

From Eliza Blanchard : We're forgetting all of the opportunities before this meeting to meet and discuss the budget. I don't understand.

From Prilla S Brackett : what are we voting one??

From Tara Washburn (she/her) : I only see 8-10 raised hands online for 5 minutes of discussion

From Ann Eldridge Malone she/her : and we should learn and grow from this. I appreciate Kristin's comments very much

From Rev. Lisa (she, her) : That vote was to reinstate the small discussion groups.

From Rev. Lisa (she, her) : It failed.

From Madeline Fine she/her : can someone repeat what Martha's muffled comment was?

From Ann Eldridge Malone she/her : can this document be put on the screen, please?

From Kiara Zani (she/her/hers) : Martha was advocating for Keith to get some time off, which I whole-heartedly support! She said "he has been the glue" for us through many changes and he has been!

From Eliza Blanchard : Martha was affirming Kristin's observation of the value and loyalty Keith has shown and that he deserves more recompense in money and time.

Repair and Reparations Resolution

From Kiara Zani (she/her/hers) : Here is the resolution:
<https://firstparishinbrookline.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/resolution-repair-restore.pdf>

From Paul McLean (he/him/his) : Thank you Ann. I couldn't agree more. Well said.

From Prilla S Brackett : Brava Ann!

From Sue Andrews : Can someone summarize what Betsy is saying? Can't hear very well.

From Ann Eldridge Malone she/her : Thank you for the support I feel for my heartfelt comments... <3

From Kiara Zani (she/her/hers) : Is there a monetary commitment woven into this resolution? I am curious about the quantifiable impact of making this resolution.

From Ann Eldridge Malone she/her : "guided" does not compel us to abandon our responsibility to decide for our community, but doing so after being open to being "guided by...". I disagree with breaking it up or changing the language

From Kiara Zani (she/her/hers) : In other words, how are we ensuring this is not just lip service?

From Sue Andrews : Thank you Ron. Whatever you did with the mic, it worked well for the sound!

From Elena Garofoli (she/her) : I find Betsy's comments unnecessary. It almost feels to me insulting to people of color said, of course, from a privileged white women

From Gene TG (she/ her's) : I am 100% + supportive of this resolution and am grateful to the group that has brought us to this place and to the board for supporting them

From Margie Beal : Everyone please raise your physical hands for the vote, not the zoom hand, thanks!

Assessment and Appreciation

From Gene TG (she/ her's) : Hybrid is always clunky - at least in my experience to date - and requires that we all extend grace

From Gene TG (she/ her's) : Thank you Elena - I had a similar feeling deep in my being

From Ann Eldridge Malone she/her : What Gene said!!

From Eliza Blanchard : Well done to everyone who put this together! I agree about the need for grace, GT.

From Gene TG (she/ her's) : The presentation by Nate and the group recommending the new position was one of the best presentations I have ever read. I urge you to go to the FPB website and look at it!

From Prilla S Brackett : I think the hybrid worked OK. We really need to improve how those of us online can HEAR. Thank you so much!!

From Madeline Fine she/her : Have a blessed day everyone

From First Parish : Here is the presentation on the Director of Family and Community Engagement that Nate prepared and Gene recommended
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bVI8HrpMchgdUBeYsLPk0BX-Q2VS5Raw/view>

Senior Minister's Annual Report

Beloved First Parish Members,

This year has been full of challenges for all of us at First Parish. Just when we thought things might settle back into a routine, maybe a “new normal,” we discovered that Covid is still with us, some people are still reluctant to come back to church or have found other activities on Sunday mornings, and volunteers are even more scarce than before. And yet, like Sen. Elizabeth Warren, we persisted! The words “small, but mighty,” described the heroic efforts of many hardy teams, including Pastoral Care, Worship, Greeters, Willing Hands, Community Dinner, and, not least, the Parish Board. In hard times, we’ve learned that the First Parish community comes together to support each other, as well as the larger world.

This was a rebuilding year for Religious Exploration, with the leadership of our new Director of Family and Community Ministries (DFC), Jayleigh Lewis, who started in November 2022. It was wonderful to see our children back, in the sanctuary, blazing trails in the woods, being creative and taking leadership everywhere. Kiara Zani also gifted us by initiating and leading a Youth Choir, bringing even more joy to our worship services. Jayleigh has just begun to help us think more broadly about community events and programming, with the help of an advisory committee. We look forward to more great things in the future!

While worship attendance is still consistently lower than pre-pandemic, we have had many visitors this year and added seven new members in a New Member ritual this Spring. We also enjoyed a Child Dedication. Our First Friday Community Dinners grew in popularity, and we were so grateful for all of the work done by the Willing Hands and others to renovate Lyon Chapel, with a beautiful floor and much-needed storage closets.

Once again, our Justice Committees did incredible work this year. Immigration Justice hosted our Ecuadorian neighbors in Milford and supported families and children in Chelsea, as well as individual immigrants in need of housing. Racial Justice Action began connecting with the Brookline public schools to work on racism and antisemitism and started to build an interfaith coalition with members of local congregations. Climate Justice offered the third Earth Defenders service, producing a spectacular banner for our front lawn, which will be on display at other local congregations. Members of Climate Justice also initiated a science and nature collaboration with Lincoln School, which resulted in the Indigenous History podcast on our website. The “Justice Calling” group kept up their excellent work on Thursdays, broadcasting targeted messages to legislators and others. And Common Hope sponsored another successful service trip to Guatemala. Justice is always on the move at First Parish!

Our hardworking and dedicated staff deserve tremendous appreciation for a year that

was extra challenging. We welcomed Erin Scott as our Ministerial Intern and Jayleigh Lewis as DFC, while Ebiere Omoregie, our Parish Administrator, was on leave, for the birth of her son, Nasir. Luckily, Jeff Fogelman was able to step in as temporary Parish Administrator, in Ebiere's absence. And even more fortunately, we were able to keep Jeff on as our Facilities Assistant, helping Bob Williamson (our "volunteer facilities manager") with rentals, building maintenance issues and a variety of other tasks. As always, Music Director Keith Kirchoff, the section leaders and choir provided beautiful music for our worship services. And we were so glad to be able to offer Keith a well-deserved 8-week sabbatical at the end of the program year.

Beginning in Spring 2022 and continuing into Fall, voices of discontent with my ministry became evident. After lengthy debate with the board, I decided in January to step down from my ministry, electing to leave mid-April. This was not an easy decision for any of us, but, in the end, I believe it was the right one for First Parish and for me. In my final months, I have worked to leave with dignity, honoring all of our shared ministerial contributions over the past (nearly five) years. Meanwhile, the board has acknowledged the work ahead, forming an interim ministry search team and preparing to support the staff in my absence.

In March we had a wonderful Celebration of Shared Ministry, lifting up the many accomplishments of our five years together, including surviving a worldwide pandemic. And then, in April, we had a Releasing of Covenant ritual, guided by our Minister Emerita, Rev. Martha Niebanck. symbolically letting each other go. Although it has been painful at times, we have made a good ending, one of which we can all be proud.

I wish this congregation all the best as you find your way into your next stage of ministry. As I said in my goodbye message: Please know that I will always hold all of you close to my heart, wherever I go, remembering fondly our precious years together. It has truly been an honor to serve First Parish in Brookline as your settled Senior Minister these past five years and I wish you all the best for the future.

With love and gratitude, always,

Rev. Lisa

First Parish Board Annual Report

Board Members: Alfred Brownell (Chair), Nancy Clark (clerk), Margaret Williams (treasurer), Jen Guillemain, John Mignano, Ed Page, Jody Leader.

A Memorial Tribute to Kathryn Kirshner, Board member 2022 to 2023

The board would like to pay tribute and recognize the invaluable contributions and services of its former esteem member, Kathryn Kirshner, who passed away peacefully on February 8, 2023, just two days after participating in a subcommittee meeting of the board. A memorial Service will be held in Kathryn Kirshner honor on Sunday June 18th 2:30 PM, in Lyons Chapel, here at First Parish Brookline.

Enthusiasm, Hope and optimism- Ushering in the New board -2022 to 2023

Looking into the future, the 2022 - 2023 Church year started off with a lot of enthusiasm, hope and optimism- the recruitment of a Minister intern, financial and budgetary commitments to hire a Director of Family & Community Ministries, reopening the doors of the Church to in person worship as the result of the COVID-19 outbreak and a board committed to experimenting with share ministry.

Even the board retreat in September became a morale booster as board members discussed the following:

- a. "What motivates you to do this work, serving on the Board?"
- b. What are the gifts that you bring?

As the retreat made progress, Board members also focused their attention on (a) "strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, (b) the "recent institutional history, (c) the financial picture of church and the drain of building upkeep; (d) recent practice of specific board goals; (e) Justice Pause; (f) departure of a member from the previous board in the fall 2021 (g) the important but challenging conversation concerning the planned report from the Ministerial Task Force and (h) the recent practice of creating specific board goals.

During the retreat, Board members were called upon to visualize a flower and how they envision the board would work during the reporting period.

The roots are our shared history, our church history, the UUA.

The Petals of the flower are the different parts of the church and its ministry. Each board member opted to engage more deeply with a petal (or two):

- Finance Committee and Canvass Ministry
- Religious Exploration Ministry
- Social Justice Ministry: Racial Justice Committee, Immigration Justice, Climate Justice
- Building and Grounds Ministry
- Pastoral Care Ministry including the work of the Ministries Task Force

The stems: The Board, the building (physical space), online engagements (virtual space), the Choir, the Pastor, the congregation - the nutrients that connect, feed, create, enable linkages with the roots, the stem, the petals and flower.

At the end of the retreat, the board agreed to be a loving, caring and kind board in a manner that our board duties and responsibilities would not end up being a burden.

Guided by the practices and institutional memories of previous boards, the members reviewed and adopted the following covenant to guide our work:

- **Energy:** We will focus our work on policy-level issues, especially as they relate to the community's well-being and rebuilding a sense of community.
 - We will be responsible for our own limits and self-care.
 - We will invite fun and joy.
 - We commit to listen, to understand and learn.
 - We will practice deliberate ways to give all voices a chance, making space for minority views, and for differences in processing and reflection time.
 - We will bring clarity and focus to our work.
 - The board will be a small group ministry with each other, providing support and personal and spiritual growth as we accomplish our work.
 - We commit to hold each other and ourselves with tenderness and care, especially during this liminal time.
 - Our goals will be aligned with the mission of First Parish in Brookline

- **Shared leadership model:** This year we adopted a shared leadership model that focuses on growing, diversifying and expanding our community. We will collaborate with committees to better integrate goals, and responsibilities.

Building upon the goals from the previous years, the Board focused on these priorities in 2022-2023:

Making Sense of the Ministerial Task force (MTF) Report: Receive, review, discuss, consult widely within the First Parish and the greater UUA community, act upon and report its decisions or recommendations to the First Parish community concerning the results of the anonymous survey conducted by the Ministerial Task force (MTF).

Financial Sustainability: This is a continuation of previous year's goal: By comparing FPB finances to those of other churches, our building-related costs are significantly higher than those at many other churches. Each expenditure needs to reflect our Mission Statement and priorities; for example, the decision to invest in Religious Education and growth. Funding from the endowment was approved at the 2020 annual meeting to provide consulting services for the Financial Sustainability priority goal but due to COVID, the funding has been carried forward.

Environmental sustainability: This is a continuation of previous year's goal and is related to finances, including the costs related to the heating system. Funding from the endowment was approved at the 2020 annual meeting to provide consulting services for the Environmental Sustainability priority goal but due to COVID, the funding has been carried forward

Family and Community Ministries: Support the recruitment of a Director of Family & Community Ministries. This is a continuation of previous year's goal and will also involve the implementation of the new RE Program focusing on children, youth, family and community.

Legacy and history of land disposition and enslavement: Support Racial Justice Action Committee work related to First Parish history of land disposition and enslavement. This is a continuation of previous year's goal. The board will support RJAC work within First Parish in Brookline's history of land theft, the enslavement of Indigenous and African peoples and the necessary repair and reparation

Challenges in making sense of the Ministerial Task force

Despite the aspirations, enthusiasm and optimism that board members expressed at its initial inception for the reporting period including during its September retreat, the board was challenged with the critical decision of responding to the anonymous

survey reports from the Ministerial Task force (MTF) and decided to call upon outside help to facilitate a painful healing process while helping members back into covenant and right relationships. Below inserted in a box, we share excerpts from the [First Parish Brookline Board Presentation](#) to the Congregation - March 12, 2023.

- The majority of the Board agreed that the survey results provided important data that couldn't be ignored or dismissed.
- Among the things we learned from the survey is how much great ministry is happening in the congregation. People reported many good things about their experience as members of the First Parish Community.
- We also learned that some of the data were more than anecdotal and that there were differences of opinion about Rev. Lisa's ministry, especially in the areas of pastoral care and worship. Some of the 80 respondents expressed satisfaction; others expressed dissatisfaction; and some remained neutral.
- As you might imagine, consensus about how to interpret the data was difficult to achieve. There was no clear answer to the question of how widespread the feedback was beyond those who took the survey. Some Board members questioned the validity of the data and whether the negative responses were truly indicative of a systemic problem.
- While not ignoring views of the greater First Parish Community, the board, as per our bylaws, has fiduciary responsibilities to active members of this congregation in good standing – those who have the authority to elect the board and call the minister. That is to say voting members.
- There were no grounds for terminating Rev. Lisa's employment based on her Letter of Agreement with the congregation. That Letter clearly lists just grounds for dismissal. These include conviction for a felony, suspension from UUA Fellowship, misconduct, and serious neglect of ministerial responsibilities.
- The only way to learn more about the extent of congregational dissatisfaction was to conduct a vote by the congregation. That was one of the options the board discussed as it worked through its many questions and divergent understandings.
- Rev. Lisa chose to step down rather than to engage with a painful and highly divisive community vote regarding next steps.
- In January, the board reached consensus about the terms of Rev. Lisa's departure.
- There are differences of opinion on what to do with the survey results. Some want everyone to see the data collected by the Ministries Task Force through the surveys and interviews. Others feel that having the

same debates and arguments within our entire community can be even more damaging if not handled sensitively.

We are in agreement that some of the data in the survey results provides food for thought. The information could be one of the tools to inform how we work together when deciding what kind of church we want to be in the future – especially considering the erosion of rights.

THE BOARD CHAIR'S CLOSING - INVITATION TO THE CONGREGATION

- In closing, (our UUA consultant) has told us that anonymous surveys, anonymous interviews, and anonymous letters characterize a congregation with low levels of trust. She posed the questions: How has trust been eroded over time – not just in the past five years, but the last ten, the last fifteen? What patterns do we see that need attention and invite greater awareness?
- The congregation must establish mission-centered processes for reviewing the ministries of the congregation – not only the minister's role in the ministry, but the role of everyone participating in the ministry.
- We need to learn together how to tell each other our deepest truth without fear that we will be dismissed, argued with, or marginalized. Rather than debating our truths, can we learn first to really hear each other?
- As we enter a period of interim ministry, it is critical that the congregation learn more about those differences and how they can strengthen us rather than divide us. Our differences are not the problem. In the spirit of shared ministry, they can help us live our mission more fully, more whole-heartedly, more expansively. But first we have to learn more about what those differences are, why they undermine our ministries, and what gifts lie within them. (the [First Parish Brookline Board Presentation](#) to the Congregation - March 12, 2023)

Managing and Messaging the Transition- Next Steps

Rev Lisa's last day was Friday, April 14th 2023. The Board immediately began mapping a pathway forward, taking into account the responses from the congregation and the UUA. To date, the Board has received advice and guidance from long-time members of First Parish, and from specialists at the Unitarian Universalist Association and has incorporated those responses and feedback into next year's planning to help manage the transition process.

The Board is working with the Staff at First Parish to help ensure that each staff member has the information, resources, and support they need to continue their work in the absence of a minister.

Worship services are scheduled through **June 11, 2023**. Our 2023 Summer Services will be delivered, as always, by First Parish members and guest ministers. **Interim minister Erin Scott will oversee and conduct worship services in the month of July.** The board, with the support of the deacon, has established an interim search committee and we can report that the committee has received three candidates' submission for the Interim Minister placement.

As per the UUA calendar for the interim Minister search adopted by the Interim Search Committee, by June 30th the board will have selected an interim minister.

Parish Administrator Annual Report

This Past Year was filled with tremendous Joy, collaboration and various transitions. Despite the continuous shifting, fiscal year 2022-2023 demonstrated the continued flexibility of our staff and volunteers. In January of 2022, it was announced that Parish Administrator, Ebiere Omoregie will be expecting and planning her maternity leave beginning August, 26th, 2022. Custodian Oppong Serebour was expecting to travel to his hometown to celebrate his wedding, for a month in October. With many transitions approaching, the staff collaborated successfully, as we prepared to hire a temporary administrator, ministerial intern, Director of Family and Community Ministry and custodial assistance. In July, 2022, First Parish hired temporary administrator, Jeff Fogelman. Jeff began training with Ebiere to learn the communication and administration areas of which he would be covering for the next 4 months. LRM cleaning services stepped up and filled in for Oppong during his leave. They ensured the building met its cleaning needs and more. Erin Scott, was hired as our Ministerial intern and worked closely with Rev. Lisa, other staff and congregation members on her ministerial learning journey. Jayleigh Lewis, was then hired as our Director of Family and Community Ministry, serving the youth, community and congregation in various ways.

On January 3rd, 2023, Ebiere returned to work from maternity leave. Upon return, it was learned that many changes occurred, one of them being that the congregation will be undergoing a minister transition. Rev. Lisa Perry-Wood, would no longer be with our congregation starting April 14th. This news was alarming to the congregation members, staff and affiliates. We began to work together as a whole to ensure the transition goes smoothly, the staff receives all necessary support while continuing to serve our lovely congregation.

We have continued sending out the Weekly Bulletins and Calendar updates, Among Us, and Sunday emails. This has been an exciting and colorful way to share important information with you all. We also collaborated effectively to bring the congregation to connect more deeply by hosting a monthly church dinner. This event has been successful and rewarding in many different ways.

Keith Kirchoff continued producing beautiful music, videos and worship for us on a consistent basis. Keith will be on Sabbatical leave starting May 1st, 2023 until the Mid August of 2023. Yaliza Bacchus, was hired in March of 2022 as our Religious Exploration Assistant, assisting with the needs of RE classes. Adam Berman, remains as our Bookkeeper, working primarily with Parish Administrator and the Finance Committee.

Our Volunteers continue to work effectively throughout the fiscal year. We couldn't be more grateful for the ways that our volunteers and willing hands have stepped up when needed. We continue to produce our Order Of Service, both online and on paper, with hopes to establish a more enticing system in the near future.

At this time First Parish is experiencing a transition that calls for support throughout the congregation. We are working together without a minister and currently on the search for an Interim Minister. There is currently an Interim Minister Search Committee in place (Almas Dossa, Ron Wilkinson, Edward Page, Nathan Freitas). Currently, Bob Williamson is supervising Ebiere, Martha Nieback is supervising Erin, Jen Guillemen is supervising Jayleigh, Ebiere is supervising Jeff and Oppong and Jen is the point of contact for all staff. We continue to work as a union, support one another and with hopes to secure an Interim Minister this fall.

Respectfully Submitted,
Ebiere Omoregie, Parish Administrator

Director of Family and Community Ministries Annual Report

I began working in this new role at First Parish in mid-November 2022. My first nearly six months have primarily been spent becoming acclimated to the church, getting to know congregation members of all ages, becoming familiar with the work of the various groups and committees (with particular focus on the Religious Exploration Committee), engaging in trainings (including OWL facilitator training and a four-week study of transitional leadership hosted by the Guild of Interim Religious Educators), and exploring ideas for potential future directions in the next year and beyond.

Religious Exploration

Since the beginning of my time here, I have attended all RE Committee meetings and have actively helped shape and coordinate the Committee's work. I have taken on regular RE administrative tasks, including tracking weekly attendance and maintaining the calendar of classes. I have led the planning for RE-focused worship services, coordinated the hiring of a new Child Care Assistant, begun to explore partnerships with local youth interfaith organizations, and designed new marketing efforts, including postcards with QR codes that link to the First Parish website and to an interest form on Breeze.

My work with RE for children and youth has included teaching a half-year session of the Coming of Age class for ninth graders. (There are two youth participants this year.) Since we decided that the class would be held on Sunday mornings during the worship service, most of my Sunday mornings since January have been occupied with teaching class. There was no available co-teacher, so I have also been the primary curriculum developer, with the support of UUA resources and the members of the RE Committee.

Through my work with Coming of Age, occasional visits to other RE classes (especially Neighboring Faiths, for which I coordinated many of the class's recent visits to other faith communities), leading the Time for All Ages during worship, and all-RE projects and activities (including the recent RE Sunday worship service), I have been getting to know many of the children and youth who are active participants at First Parish. It has been a joy to develop relationships with them. This relationship building will serve as a foundation for expanded RE programming over the next few years, including a revival of youth group opportunities for older youth, more intentional and cohesive interaction across classes and age groups (weaving spiritual and social justice themes across the various curricula), and enhanced connections (including shared classes and service projects) with children and youth who attend other area UU churches.

Church and Community Connections

I have begun to embed myself within several of First Parish's justice committees, as well as the First Friday Community Dinner planning team and the Pastoral Care team. My role uniquely positions me to form connections to many different aspects of the church's functioning. This allows me to see potential partnerships among different groups and committees and to suggest ways in which their work can complement and support each other. I am also a member of the Brookline Interfaith Clergy group, and in that role, I can relay requests and updates from First Parish groups to leaders in other local faith communities, with the hope of generating broader collaboration on projects of shared interest.

The most prominent recent examples of collaboration and connection-building that I have taken part in: becoming involved in the Climate Justice Committee's efforts to share their Earth Defenders banner with other local faith communities (inviting them to display the banner as an act of public witness), organizing a children's and youth RE service project/craft activity that partnered with the Immigration Justice Committee to fill Easter baskets that were donated to La Colaborativa, and leading the planning of an all-ages May Day-themed First Friday Community Dinner. I look forward to more co-created efforts being established in the next program year.

Goal Setting and Future Directions

As part of a process of review that was initiated after I had been at First Parish for three months, I gathered a discernment circle composed of members of the RE Committee and others with whom I have worked closely during my time here thus far. After listening to the feedback of this group regarding the direction of my work, I set some tentative goals that will guide my focus for the next six to nine months.

Three of these goals pertain to the three main areas of responsibility that make up the DFC role: Religious Exploration for children and youth, Religious Exploration for adults, and community connections both within and beyond First Parish. My goals for children's and youth RE are outlined above. Adult RE is not yet well defined at this church, so my goal in that area is to explore possibilities and listen for the needs and desires of community members. My main goal for community connections is to help increase the clarity and coherence of church communication systems and of the infrastructure that makes existing opportunities (both ongoing groups and special events) accessible to the community. Strengthening the existing community will provide a solid foundation for any efforts at expansion.

My fourth goal, which is in the process of being actualized, is to gather an advisory group of First Parish members (representing multiple perspectives from within the community) to assist me in focusing my work, identifying resources and priorities, and planning action steps. Since my role is new, and also evolving, it is important to have

this group to provide grounding and support so that my energies can be used in the most effective ways.

Challenges

While I have been able to accomplish some very exciting things in the past six months, I have also had to contend with some significant challenges. Chief among these has been the ongoing ministerial transition. With the departure of Rev. Lisa, some extra administrative and communication tasks have been temporarily added to my responsibilities, leaving me less time to attend to the primary work of my role. I have taken on extra work in weekly worship planning, and I have invested extra time in connecting with the Board, adjusting to new supervision, and filling in information gaps that ordinarily would have been bridged by a minister.

I anticipate further adjustment tasks for this fall, with the arrival of an interim minister. Since I do not yet know in what directions the interim minister will seek to guide First Parish, it is possible that I will need to adjust my goals to be in line with those directions. In an unsettled time, it is virtually impossible to walk a straight line from idea to accomplishment, or to count on being without unexpected diversions. However, this is also a time filled with opportunity and a chance to redesign ways of relating (both within and beyond the church) to better align with hopes, dreams, and desires, and with the realities of a changing world.

Submitted by Jayleigh Lewis

Religious Exploration Annual Report

Committee Members: Micaela Coady (Chair), Nathan Freitas, Jennifer Goulart, Jayleigh Lewis (Director of Family & Community Ministry), Kiara Zani

Highlights from the Year

- Hired Jayleigh Lewis, Director of Family & Community Ministry, to focus on Religious Exploration for kids, youth and adults and community-focused programming
- Engaged with 35 children and youth across Spirit Play, Pathfinders, Neighboring Faiths, Our Whole Lives, and Coming of Age (Challenge)
- Led or participated in old and new Parish community events, including Brookline Porchfest, Halloween Huzzah!, Annual Christmas Pageant, Solstice Easter Games, and Mother's Day Walk for Peace.
- Held Campfire Services, RE Sunday Worship Service and Coming of Age Worship Service connecting youth with the congregation
- Revived the Youth Choir which increased (and continues to increase) youth engagement in services.

Accomplishments

- By Class
 - Coming of Age/Challenge (Grade 9+)
 - *Our half-year Challenge experience will guide youth to answer the questions: What is my spiritual practice? Who are the people that I connect with in my faith community? How might I live out my faith in the world? Their year-long exploration will include being paired with a mentor in our parish, culminating in leading a worship service, where they will share their Faith Statements with the congregation.*
 - Taught by Jayleigh Lewis, with guidance from Jonathan Richardson and Kiara Zani
 - Run as half-year program with 2 students
 - Topics explored include Spiritual Autobiography, Spiritual Vocabulary, Visions of God, Nature, and Spirituality, Trinity/Unity/Polytheism Discussion, Poetry and Music as Worship
 - Students will share their Faith Statements at the Coming of Age Worship Service on 5/21/23
 - Our Whole Lives (Grade 8)
 - *The full ["Our Whole Lives" program](#) is offered this year. Based on interest and capacity, the trained OWL facilitators will engage youth to clarify their values, build interpersonal skills, and understand the spiritual, emotional, and social aspects of sexuality.*
 - Run as a year-long program with 11 students (including both FPB and non-FPB members)
 - Hired 2 outside professional OWL teachers (Elisabeth Jas and Erik Svenson (members, First Parish Lexington) and 1 OWL coordinator

(Maggie Fryerwood), supplemented with 2 OWL trained parish members (Bob Williamson, Kiara Zani)

○ Neighboring Faiths (Grades 6-7)

■ *An introduction to world religions using the [UU Building Bridges](#) curriculum. Met at church on Sunday mornings to learn about different faiths, followed by in-person visits to houses of worship in the greater Boston area. The class includes discussions, lessons, cultural sharing and more, with connections to the diverse spiritual backgrounds of many members in our own parish & community.*

■ 4 youth participants (6th and 7th graders)

■ 3 teachers/coordinators (Jennifer Goulart, Tanya Gurian, Whit Larrabee), with coordination support from Jayleigh Lewis.

■ Studied 8 major religious traditions

■ Visited 7 houses of worship in person - UU Arlington St. Church in Boston, Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Jamaica Plain, Lohri celebration at Hindu Temple in Medford, Kurukulla Tibetan Buddhist center in Medford, St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in Cambridge, Peace Islands Community Tent Iftar event in Cambridge, Common Cathedral Boston - outdoor worship service on the Boston Common that is open to Boston's homeless community, which includes a service project preparing sandwiches to distribute that day

■ ~2 to 4 parents also attended each in-person visit

○ Pathfinders (Grades 3-5)

■ *Teaching through exploration, adventure and discovery, on the church grounds and in nearby gardens, woods, ponds and paths. The Seven Principles of UU continue to be explored through the [UU Tapestry of Faith](#) curriculum and resources.*

■ 2 teachers, 5 youth participants

■ Focused on "7th principle" earth-focused curriculum from UUA, "World of Wonder" and "Circle of Trees"

■ Engaged in projects focused on connecting to the nature around the church and continuing to build our "pathfinders" path and meditation circle in the woods

○ Spirit Play (Grades Pre-K-2)

■ *Interactive stories illustrating the themes of the Seven Principles of UU plus art and play in The Tree Room and on the church grounds, following the Montessori-based approach of the [UU Spirit Play program](#).*

■ 2 Spirit-play trained teachers (Micaela Coady, Mori Insinger), 4 children that attended regularly

■ Focused on different stories each week which illustrate our UU principles

● **Special Activities**

- Campfire Services

- Brookline Porchfest
- Halloween Huzzah!
- Christmas Pageant
- Solstice Celebration
- Easter Games
- RE Sunday Worship Service
- Coming of Age Worship Service
- Mother's Day Walk for Peace
- Camp @ FPB (upcoming)

Challenges

- Significantly reduced numbers of program participants compared to earlier years; directly tied to less families attending worship and participating at FPB
- In 2023-2024, we need a strong focus on communications, marketing and promotion to local families in an effort to help grow and sustain our program
- All REC members are also teachers - need to increase, recruit, train volunteers to increase parish participation and support for RE

Music Director's Annual Report

Music Overview:

Throughout this year, the church gradually shifted into more of a “post-pandemic” mindset, and as such, my goal was to engage the choir as much as possible, celebrating the opportunity to sing together in a more unrestricted manner. It was important to me to create a safe space for everyone to sing, and so at the beginning of the year, I issued an anonymous survey to the choir assessing general comfort levels of singing masked or unmasked: if even one choir member expressed discomfort with the ensemble singing unmasked, we would continue singing masked. The survey revealed that multiple choir members, in fact, strongly preferred everyone stay masked, and thus that became the norm for the entire choir until Easter when the survey was administered again (this time revealing unanimous support for singing “masks optional.”)

The Choir:

The choral experience was a tremendous improvement over last year: we resumed our 2-hour rehearsals in the sanctuary, sang three songs (introit, anthem, offertory) most Sundays, and due to an improved live streaming setup, no longer had to pre-record our music. This year also saw the return of the Chamber Choir which sang on average once every month, and the birth of a new Youth Choir led by Kiara Zani.

Choir attendance was generally lower in comparison to our pre-pandemic numbers, most notably amongst the tenor and bass sections (unfortunately, with the exception of our tenor section leader, Adrian, there was no tenor section this year). This led to me composing and arranging more music each week to fit the choir's strength and numbers. Despite the lower attendance, however, the energy and camaraderie amongst the choristers was as high as it has ever been. I am hopeful that we may see the choir grow again next year as the church enters a transition period and we become further removed from the pandemic.

The Youth Choir averaged about 4 singers and sang about 5 times in the year. Though First Parish has a history of a robust Youth Choir, since my arrival in 2010, we have never successfully launched a Youth or Children's Choir, despite multiple attempts. Kiara deserves tremendous praise for her work in spearheading this effort, and I am excited to see this grow over the years.

Soloists/Section Leaders:

All three section leaders - Elizabeth McIntire, Lisa Barone, and Adrian Jones - returned to the choir this year. I ran a search for a bass section leader and auditioned a few singers, but was unable to find the right fit and did not fill the position this year. I will certainly be trying again next year.

With no tenor section to lead, Adrian did his best as a bass section leader. I often arranged or composed music that tried to find a middle ground between our basses' voices and Adrian's. This proved challenging, though I am pleased with the final results and the quality of the music that the choir was able to put forward each

Sunday.

I want to acknowledge, applaud, and thank Adrian for the extra work this year: it is very difficult (bordering on physically impossible) for a tenor to lead a bass section, and Adrian did so extremely well. While I really hope we can fill this position in the future, Adrian deserves a lot of credit for helping the section prepare as well as they did each week.

Guest Musicians:

We regularly hired Jessica Sanz as a substitute section leader for both Elizabeth and Lisa throughout the year. Additionally, Siyu Yang filled in for me on piano in my absence.

Sabbatical:

Starting in May of this year, I will be taking a 6-week sabbatical that the church generously gifted me at the start of this year. During that time, I will be in Oaxaca, Mexico, studying and improving my Spanish, as well as learning as much as I can about traditional cooking and distillation methods. I am truly grateful for the amazing opportunity!

While I am away, Adrian Jones will be leading the choir, Lisa Barone will be accompanying the rehearsals on piano, Jessica Sanz will be helping as an alto section leader, and Siyu Yang will be accompanying the services.

It is important to acknowledge just how fortunate we are to have such an amazing team of section leaders: these singers not only show up each week to sing, but go above and beyond the average call of duty. Adrian has regularly filled in for me conducting the choir and Lisa has done a great job as a rehearsal pianist. Having section leaders offering to do anything more than just sing is incredibly rare in church work, and I feel tremendously lucky to have the opportunity to work with such amazing people each week.

Livestreaming Worship:

As in past years, I again assumed the position of Technical Director for the church. We entered the summer with a goal of having a new live streaming system properly in place, and remarkably, this process has continued to be as frustrating and flabbergasting as it was the year prior.

With Bob Williamson's help, we found and hired Shannahan, Inc as our installation company. We reached out in June of '22, and by September we met with their Systems Consultant and carefully outlined everything we needed done. They were months behind in getting us their quote, and we were scheduled to start the installation in January '23. Unfortunately, due to some health issues of our electrician, we needed to subcontract to get the necessary cables installed. Scheduling remained a hassle, and Shannahan was finally able to install the system the week after Easter.

Unfortunately, Bob and I were both shocked to discover that in the intervening time, they had actually forgotten (or mixed up) our initial request, and only installed 75% of the required audio (leaving multiple microphones uninstalled and absolutely none of the necessary video work installed). At the time of this writing, this remains an ongoing saga, and Bob and I are both working with Shannahan to schedule a time to complete the installation we had agreed upon nearly a year ago.

Despite the myriad of setbacks to this process (which began in 2021), I am optimistic that we will have a robust and stable live streaming system fully in place by Fall, with the added bonus that our live sound capability will be significantly upgraded as well.

I want to thank Bob for all of the work he has done arranging this installation. He has stepped up in innumerable ways this past year (in many aspects of the church), and I would not have been able to do any of this installation work without his help. Thank you, Bob!

At the start of the year, we hired Chris Clarke as our live streaming assistant. With his help, we hired Kathleen Hall and Ben Rothman to take over the live streaming duties each week.

Inventory - Instruments

Pianos: First Parish owns three pianos and is the keeper of a fourth on indefinite loan. Mark Whitlock continues to be our piano technician and maintains the instruments.

Sanctuary: Our 1916 Steinway A was rebuilt five years ago and remains in wonderful condition and sounding beautiful.

Lyon Chapel: Our 1919 Steinway O is a great rehearsal piano that gets used regularly. At the start of the year, I had some significant work done on the action, lightening the touch and evening out the voicing. This is also suitable for small concerts.

Pierce Hall: Our Kranich & Bach grand piano was built in the 1940s and is a wonderful instrument for rehearsal purposes and small services.

Dana Room: Voices (a youth choir that rehearses at First Parish) has left us a lovely Yamaha M500S upright built in 1963. The piano is in excellent condition and is extremely useful for rehearsals, retreats, and renting out for private lessons.

Organ: Our organ was built in 1893 as Hook & Hastings Opus no. 1557, was reconstructed by H&H in 1905 as their Opus no. 2005, and again in 1926 as Opus no. 2527. The organ was renovated in 1993 by the John Bishop Organ Co., and the blower motor was rebuilt in 2010.

Joseph Rotella has continued as our organ technician this year. The organ remains in

need of significant rebuilding work due to faulty installation work in the 90s. [Please see the 2018-19 Annual Report for more details.] However, it continues to be usable, and Rotella's most recent work on the instrument, shortly before Easter of this year, has noticeably improved it.

Inventory - Music Library: We have a fairly extensive sheet music library, and it remains a goal of mine to have the entire library digitized. This project got started in 2019/20 with the help of Jami Jordan, and this past year, Eleanor Clarkson has been a tremendous help in digitizing much more of the library. (A rough estimation is that we now have about 10% of the library digitized.) It is my long-term goal to provide the choir with iPads from which to read their music, though that is likely a long way off.

A huge thank you to Eleanor for all of her work this year! This remains a monstrous task, and if anyone is interested in helping Eleanor and myself, please reach out!

Additionally, our library shelving is in need of replacement as it has collapsed under the weight of so much music. I am hopeful that we can install new shelving over the summer.

-Keith Kirchoff

Ministerial Intern's Annual Report

It has been my honor to serve the First Parish in Brookline as Ministerial Intern this year. As I train to become a faith leader, I see leadership as *service* first and foremost. It is essential, before one tries to lead a group of people, to first know who and where they are, and where they want to go. Therefore, my intention this year was primarily to observe and learn about this community- to deeply know, understand, and love this group of people. And in this, my #1 goal, I have succeeded.

I then met one-on-one with many members of the congregation to learn about the wide variety of gifts, skills, concerns, and interests of this community. I also learned about the history of the Parish itself, explored the church building thoroughly (thank you, Bob!) and explored the grounds and surrounding geography, in order to deeply understand the Parish in both place and time.

In order to understand the *good works* of this Parish, I attended at least one committee meeting per month (but usually more than one), rotating through each committee as evenly as possible. I included the various Justice Committees, the Friday Dinner, Pastoral Care Committee, and evening Vespers in this rotation. In addition to FPB gatherings, I also attended the monthly meetings of the Interfaith Clergy of Brookline, until my Spring class schedule conflicted with their meetings.

On Sunday mornings, I performed the Worship Associate duties over a dozen times. I helped to teach the New Members workshops, and was lucky to participate in a New Members ritual and a Baby Dedication ceremony. I co-created and led the Samhein pagan ritual with Jayleigh in October, and the New Year's Day "circle service" in January- flying solo for the first time. I am excited to participate in the upcoming services, especially RE Sunday and the momentous Coming of Age service. I have preached five sermons at First Parish so far, and I look forward to co-creating the Flower Communion service in mid-June. After General Assembly, I will be back with you in July. I hope to see you all then!

It has been a pleasure to work closely with Jayleigh, Keith, Ebiere, and the other staff as we navigated Rev. Lisa's departure and faced uncertainty of what came next together. I am grateful for the passionate and visionary lay leaders of this congregation, including those on and off the Parish Board, all of whom have stepped up to guide this beloved community. I am proud of what we have accomplished together so far. I am also grateful to the esteemed Rev. Martha Niebanck, who has temporarily taken me on as her mentee. She has given me guidance and counsel in Rev. Lisa's absence, and has been a real asset to my ministerial formation.

The most important work I performed for First Parish this year has been to listen to and hold in love the stories, struggles, griefs, and victories of this congregation through a troubling time of transition. In addition to attending the formal Listening Circles, I often stayed late after services and social hour, having been pulled aside by one or a few congregants to discuss something specific on their minds and hearts. Almost all planning meetings became impromptu pastoral care meetings.

In times of transition, this is normal, expected, and healthy. I am honored that you trust me, and I hold your vulnerability in confidence, reverence, and deep respect. Thank you.

Yours, in love and service,

Erin V. Scott

Ministerial Intern at First Parish in Brookline,

Master of Divinity student at Meadville Lombard Theological School

Congregational Life Events Annual Report

Commissioning of Ministerial Intern

Erin Scott

Child Dedication

Emma Graham Cecchi

Releasing of Covenant

Rev. Lisa Perry-Wood

Bylaws Committee Annual Report

The Bylaws Committee did not meet this year, as we had no requests from the Board or from members of the congregation.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Womack, Bylaws Committee Chair

Building and Grounds Committee Annual Report

Buildings and Grounds supports the church with planning and capital projects. Our budget complements the Maintenance budget and volunteer improvement teams to allow our physical plant to serve our religious community. We very much appreciate the way our church administrator Ebiere Omoregie - masterfully supported again this year by Bob Williamson - 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:

- Old electrical infrastructure (knob & tube) in the Sanctuary (\$33,500), which was a safety issue. - Bob
- Insulation of floor of the Sanctuary to save energy and improve comfort (\$16,458). - Bob
- Increase storage area for RE and long-term renters in Lyon and Pierce including replacement of altar area in Lyon with closets (\$21,983). Demolition was done by the Helping Hands volunteer group. - Bob
- Plaster restoration and painting of water-damaged area in the Northeast corner of the Sanctuary (\$3,200) - Clint
- Additional cabling and audiovisual equipment to support hybrid services (\$12,985) - Bob
- Upper driveway improvements including drainage (\$1,845) - Bob
- Energy monitoring system (\$2,245) - Bob

Buildings and Grounds completed a comprehensive plan with Climate Justice to decarbonize our heating systems at a cost of \$995, which came from a dedicated budget. The plan was prepared by Massachusetts Interfaith Power & Light (MIPL), a non-profit education and advocacy group that we are long-time members of. The insulation and monitoring were the next early action items in that campaign.

This past fiscal year, the annual B&G funding from the endowment was again \$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. We always maintain a significant minimum amount for unexpected expenditures.

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 for the remainder of this and the next fiscal year:

- Annual Roof Maintenance (c. \$2,000) - Clint
- Periodic non-lead window maintenance in Parish House to improve operability, security and weatherization (c. \$1,500) - Clint

- Parish House Bell Tower North wooden window frame restoration (c. \$ 12,000) - deteriorated condition. This could be divided into phases. - Clint
- Pierce roof drain reconfiguration (c. \$3,000) - Bob & Clint
- Pierce subsurface roof drain system and site repair (c. \$20,000) - Bob

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:

1. Improve the accessibility and safety of the sanctuary entrance. This will include additional drainage systems to prevent winter ice build up in the gravel area.
2. Improve the outdoor areas to be part of the spiritual and social life of the Church.
3. Be good stewards of the building. We remain committed to maintaining and restoring the exterior masonry of the tower to address structural and envelope integrity issues. Funding for this remains an open issue but could be assisted by a capital campaign. In the meantime, we will undertake limited Tower projects on a 2-3 year schedule.
4. Create more classrooms and accessible toilet rooms in the ground floor of Parish Hall.
5. Renovate Pierce Hall to better meet the multifunctional space needs of the Church.
6. Renovate the Sanctuary to improve worship experience.

Green infrastructure was a part of this but has been subsumed by the Decarbonization Plan.

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, Chair
 Debba Andree
 Tim Dailey
 Sam Dennis
 Robert Williamson

Facilities Assistant Annual Report

The facilities assistant role was created in January 2022 to help with rental coordination, facilities upkeep, and administrative support. Since that time, I have worked closely with Bob Williamson, Oppong, and Ebiere on a number of facilities related projects and have been the point of contact for several rentals. The breakdown of the role is as follows:

Facility Use Management

- Manage Event Rental - primary church contact
 - Manage client inquiries, sales, and event coordination
 - Meet, negotiate, schedule and complete lease agreements for one-off events
 - Follow up one week prior and one day prior with tenant
 - As events require, coordinate with custodian and staff event as required by the church, paid by the tenant
- Manage Long-term Tenants - primary church contact
 - Manage tenant requests and monitor tenant use for lease compliance.
 - Communicate with Administrator and Finance in fielding long-term rental requests
- Maintain Facility Use Calendar
 - Input Tenant events and recurring use on the church calendar. Coordinate with Administrator, who inputs church events, to keep calendar current

Facility Maintenance

- Manage Annual Inspections and their Vendors
 - Schedule and meet with contractors for fire alarm and sprinkler systems, kitchen fire suppression, fire extinguishers, Brookline Building and Fire occupancy certificate inspections,
- Manage Building Systems repair vendors and contractors
 - Contact, schedule and meet vendors and contractors. Maintain a log of repairs and check invoices as requested by the bookkeeper. Building system maintenance and repair activities include but are not limited to:
 - Plumbing, Heating and Electrical, Data and Phone Network, Kitchen equipment (dishwasher, range hood, etc.), office equipment (copier), locks and hardware
 - Fuel oil delivery and heating system, gas and electric utilities, snow removal and landscape maintenance, surface finishes and furniture maintenance

- Communicate with Administrator and Buildings and Grounds when facility emergencies arise
- Perform minor handyman duties
 - Install minor furnishings and equipment as needed.
- Manage Energy Use
 - Adjust thermostat settings weekly in response to calendar event needs
 - Report on annual oil use.

Custodial Management

- Manage custodian and cleaners for all tenant events
- Monitor custodian and cleaner schedules and performance, sends reminders and adjust their work schedule as needed
- Maintain and order Custodial supplies and Sunday Hospitality staples in consultation with the Custodian

Administrative Support

- Manage production of the weekly Order of Sunday Service
 - Produces paper and online versions of the OOS from content supplied by others
- Assist with general administrative tasks when needed and hours are available.
- Assist in the preparation of the annual budget for Building Operations

It is my hope that with more time, this role will be fully integrated in the church, and will alleviate pressure on volunteers and the Parish Administrator.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff Fogleman

Canvass Committee Annual Report

Progress of the Fiscal Year 2023 Annual Membership Canvass

The FY23 canvass concluded last year in May 2022 with pledges totaling \$352,212 versus a budget goal of \$370,000. As of May 5, 2023 the church has received \$300,000 in fulfillment of these pledges and another \$50,000 expected to be collected during the final months of this church year. As evident in the chart below our experience in FY23 represents a significant drop-off from prior years, both in the number of pledging households and in funds contributed. The loss of two major donors from FY22 points to the congregation's vulnerability when we are dependent on a few large contributors and pledge amounts are not more evenly distributed among members.

Status of the Fiscal Year 2024 Annual Membership Canvass

In April 2023 we launched the canvass for Fiscal Year 2024 with an initial goal of seeing pledges increase by 8% - to a total of \$374,000 - in order to reflect increased operating costs. However based on the further decrease in number of pledging households and pledge commitments to date, we have set a goal of \$327,00. As of May 5, 2023 our canvassers had generated pledges totaling \$294,000, or 90% progress toward our budgeted goal.

We had certainly hoped that our canvass would have generated greater member commitments to support a larger canvass goal. We ask members to stay engaged in their generous financial support of First Parish, not only during the canvass that takes place for one month in the spring, but also forward into the new church year. How great it will be if in our next report to the congregation we can announce that our \$327,000 goal was well exceeded by your added generosity!

Please refer to the Finance Committee May 2023 Annual Report for a more in depth analysis of the canvass trends and of our overall financial condition.

Edward Page, Chair
Margaret Williams, Co-Chair



Change in Pledges		13,029	(5,001)
20,063	(64,301)	(23,000)	
Major Contributor Losses			
(30,000)	(10,000)		

Climate Justice Committee Annual Report

Summary of Actions, Programs and Activities, July 2022 - June 2023

The Committee members are committed to honoring and taking action on our church's mission statement, which ends with "care for our living Earth" as well as the Unitarian Universalist Seventh Principle "Respect for the Interdependent Web of All Existence of Which We Are a Part". Given the global warming crisis unfolding around us, we believe it is critically important that our church community do its part to quickly reduce its carbon footprint as well as educate our community on what steps all of us can take collectively and individually to address climate change.

Accomplishments:

- Continued with our annual commitment to honor, remember and raise awareness of the "Earth Defenders", men and women who have been murdered for standing up to defend their communities' natural resources against corrupt governments and businesses. We created a banner with the 200 names and countries of origin, as reported by Global Witness, a London-based international human rights organization. A Sunday service was dedicated to these brave individuals. To broaden awareness, the committee is seeking other faith-based organizations and universities to display the banner. In May 2023 the banner will be displayed on the grounds of the UU Church in Concord. Discussions are underway to display the banner at other locations - possibly Harvard University's Chan School of Public Health, Boston's University, and the United Parish Church in Brookline.
- Took action toward environmental and financial sustainability of our church property, as recommended in the consultant report, Environmental Stewardship Assessment (ESA):
 - Floor insulation completed
 - Piping insulation completed
 - Monitoring devices installed on heating systems - data collection underway
 - Hot water heating system converted to air source heat pump system
 - Contracted with Black Earth Compost to provide curbside weekly pickup of food waste.
- Launched "GoodNature Brookline", our facebook page listing events and activities aimed at building community within the First Parish neighborhood. First Parish was a destination for Porchfest in fall 2022. "Footprints", a podcast/self-directed tour of the Walnut St., First Parish, and burial grounds as they relate to the history of indigenous people settled in the area. More events and activities to come!
- Supported state and town climate action initiatives through letters to the Select Board and our legislative representatives, volunteering at the high

school cafeterias to monitor food waste diversion from trash, participating in climate action demonstrations, and tabling at town events to raise awareness about climate justice issues.

Book Club Annual Report

The First Parish Book Club read and discussed a wonderfully varied selection of books once again during the last year. We continue to be a group of voracious readers with wildly different literary appetites, as shown in the list below! You can see examples of fiction (gothic, mystery, magical realism, science and historical fiction) and non-fiction (history, memoir, chemical science).

We're still meeting via Zoom, because we have people joining us from afar: two from New Hampshire, including our FP friend, Julie Flood Page; and occasionally we're joined by Mary Rogers, who's now living in Oregon! One day we might figure out how to run a glitch-free hybrid meeting...

Here's the reading list for the church year just ending:

- The Disappearing Spoon, Kean, Runnette, et.al.
- Cloud Cuckoo Land, Anthony Doerr
- The Elephant's Journey, Jose Saramago
- The Murmur of Bees, Sofia Segovia
- I'm not Scared, Niccolo Ammaniti
- Mexican Gothic, Silvia Moreno-Garcia
- Virgil Wander, Leif Enger
- The Searcher, Tana French
- Lincoln Highway, Amor Towles
- Born a Crime, Trevor Noah
- American Dirt, Jeanine Cummins

The Book Club meets every month on a Sunday evening at 7:30 PM via Zoom. The schedule is determined by the length of each book and an effort to avoid busy holidays. We advertise our meeting dates and book selections in the various church newsletters and announcements. We do meet over the summer.

There's something for everyone, so consider joining us for entertaining -- and often amusing -- discussions!

Contact Julie Horvath (jrhovath123@gmail.com) to be added to our mailing list and/or to receive a copy of our current schedule.

Common Hope Social Justice in Guatemala - Annual Report



Poster making for the Oct 30 Walk for Hope



February 2023 Vision Team – Home Dedication

Active Participants:

Anne Copeland and Jim Womack, Susan and Whit Larrabee, Steve Davis, Melinda Maryniuk (and others from time to time. All are welcome!)

Overview: Since 2009, First Parish in Brookline has supported global education, health, and welfare through its involvement with Common Hope, an NGO in Guatemala. “Vision Teams” of approximately 15 individuals representing First Parish have traveled every other year to the Common Hope campus/work site in Antigua for a one-week experience involving building a home and deepening a relationship with the community. For more information, see the section of the FP website describing Common Hope activities:

<https://firstparishinbrookline.org/socialaction/common-hope-social-justice-in-guatemala/>

Activities:

- Sent a Vision Team of 9 people representing our church for a week in February to Antigua.
 - o First Parish Video (2 minute summary)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jVTkFfXFB58>
- Hosted (along with Immigration Justice and “Under the Same Moon”) a holiday sale of Guatemalan handcrafts to benefit the sponsorship of our Vision team. (December 10, 2022)
- Continued our sponsorship of Jose’ Martinez, a 9th grader who lives and attends school in Antigua. Send /receive letters so we keep in touch.
- Held a poster-making activity in collaboration with the Halloween Party- to create awareness posters for the Walk-for-Hope.
- Susan Larrabee, team captain, led the Walk for Hope around the Brookline Reservoir on October 30, 2022. The event not only raised awareness, but donations were collected for Common Hope.
- Meetings/communication with (former) RE leader regarding ways to increase attention toward Common Hope activities for our children and youth - so they can look forward to possibly making a trip themselves. Began the process of

orienting Jayleigh Lewis to Common Hope.

- Participate in FP Justice Coalition Meetings.
- Hold had bi-monthly phone meetings to discuss current activities and future plans.

Plans for the coming year:

- Continue sponsorship of Jose' Martinez, currently a 11 th grader.
- Host the fundraiser, Walk for Hope on September 15.
- In the fall, offer a presentation summarizing the Vision Team's activities in Guatemala as well as the Common Hope mission to one of the Friday night dinner groups.
- Identify someone to take over Melinda's role Faith Community Partnership Liaison
- Begin building interest for a 2025 Vision Team to travel in February.

Report from the Common Hope Headquarters in St Paul, MN regarding our "Faith Partnership": (Note: We receive an annual summary of our activities. This excerpt is taken from that report dated 1/11/23)

In 2022, First Parish in Brookline continued its impactful partnership with Common Hope. 39 households were on Common Hope's mailing list and 9 students were personally connected with sponsors from the First Parish in Brookline community, including José, the church's sponsored student. José successfully studied and passed 10th grade, and will begin 11th grade in 2023! First Parish in Brookline hosted a Walk for Hope to raise funds for education in Guatemala and a Common Hope Giving Tree to raise support for the 2023 Vision Team. All this helped make it possible for 212 students to graduate with their diplomas, 3,200 students to continue their elementary and high school education, and 8,500 family members to receive access to healthcare, housing, and family development programs! Common Hope is grateful to have First Parish in Brookline as a partner in ensuring Common Hope could meet the needs of the 1950+ families we serve in our partnership to create a thriving Guatemala.

Respectfully Submitted,
Melinda Maryniuk; Faith Community Partnership Liaison



First Parish Brookline Vision Team visits our sponsored student and his family - Jose' Martinez. Feb 2023

Deacons Annual Report

Members: Bill Dwyer, Sheila Hussey, Laura Walters, Ray Wellbaum, Midge Wilcke, Bob Williamson and Jim Womack.

Purpose: The Deacons, proposed by the minister, approved by the Parish Board, are the designated elders of the church.

We act as the institutional memory of the church and support the wellbeing of the congregation by being a strong presence in institutional life.

It was a quiet year for the deacons. We offered the Parish Board our assistance as they dealt with Reverend Lisa's departure. They asked if we could provide background information on how the previous ministerial transitions were handled, particularly interim minister searches. We were able to share that information with them. We will continue to offer assistance as needed. We participated in Reverend Lisa's going away party presenting her with a proclamation thanking her for her services.

Respectfully submitted,
Laura Walters.

Pastoral Care Associates Annual Report

Our pastoral care team this year included: Jeff Cadow, Marga Dieter, Anna Eisengart, Madeline Fine, Tanya Gurian, Jami Jordan, and Rev. Lisa. This year we added our ministerial intern, Erin Scott, and our Director of Family and Community Ministries, Jayleigh Lewis.

This has been a chaotic year for us, with Rev Lisa's resignation and personal issues among the team members. Despite this, members continue to offer a variety of support to some of our community members. This included:

Offering support, including meals to a member with pancreatic cancer;

Ongoing support for a member with dementia, so her spouse could continue to engage in choir;

Ongoing support for a family with a member who has early onset Alzheimer's disease;

Intermittent support for a woman who has moved to the area and moved into assisted living;

Some rides for members who live some distance from First Parish; and
Meals for parents with a newborn.

Jami continues to administer our Lotsa Helping Hands group, which coordinates our "parish care", including meals, rides, dog walks, etc. We have had several occasions to use this resource this year.

Meetings have been primarily via Zoom. There have been a couple of in-person meetings on Sunday afternoon. Meetings have been focused on reviewing concerns of our committee and reviewing the needs of community members.

Rev. Lisa attempted to set up a training for our committee this month with the Rev. Liz Webber. Sadly, we were unable to organize the time. We will attempt to reschedule this for May.

Respectfully submitted,
Tanya Gurian
with help from Erin Scott and Jeff Cadow

Immigration Justice Committee Annual Report

The Immigration Justice Committee is guided by our vision of community to live into our congregational mission and UU spiritual principles together by keeping the “borders” of our hearts and church open. We take our cues from the leadership and priorities of immigrant neighbors and immigrant rights organizers and networks in greater Boston and beyond. We strive to practice cultural humility, radical hospitality and moral accountability with individuals and families enduring the direct impact of U.S. immigration policies; to respond to anti-immigration tactics and outcomes; to raise consciousness, encourage solidarity actions, and mobilize resources at FPB through partnering opportunities, educational events, crowdfunding efforts, and outreach to legislators, elected officials, and decision makers; and to collaborate with neighboring UUs and other faith groups to build relationships and amplify efforts when possible.

The IJC has a shared leadership structure.

Members: Ellen Blaney, Barbara Cone, Julie Horvath, Sue Kalt, Jody Leader, Martha Leader, James Shillaber, Marilyn Tressel, and Laura Walters

Over the past year, members of our committee continued solidarity and accompaniment efforts within and beyond FPB:

- Continued solidarity and support with Haitian families arriving in the Boston area - outreach to Immigrant Family Services Institute in Mattapan and collaboration with others at FPB included ongoing deliveries of clothing, household, and baby items in response to IFSI’s specific requests. Invited IFSI staff to our monthly meetings to learn more about their priorities and strategize to support their current efforts and asks. Networked with First Parish in Cambridge to fund-raise for Haitian families arriving as part of IFSI’s “Circle of Hope” sponsorship initiative.
- Continued partnering activities with La Colaborativa, a Chelsea-based organization empowering Latinx immigrants to enhance the social and economic health of the community and its people. Transported 120 lbs of

meat on behalf of the Turkish Cultural Center to La Colaborativa's community food distribution program. Conducted Christmas Toy Drive in solidarity with Colaborativa families. Engaged with FPB's RE children in preparing 100 Easter baskets in support of La Colaborativa's community Easter event.

- Continued relationship building with our Kichwa neighbors from Ecuador, members of Iglesia Bautista Nueva Jerusalen in Milford, and response to their stated goals and needs. Collaborated with Pastor Marco Tulio Orellana and members of their congregation to lead a trilingual (Kichwa, Spanish, and English) worship service at FPB together in December followed by a community lunch in Lyon.
- Sustained mutual community circle/cooking exchange with Centro Presente member family.
- Partnered with other UUs and community organizations as members of UU Mass Action's Immigration Justice Working Group to mobilize action and support for key legislative campaigns - including the Safe Communities and Yes on 4 Family Work and Mobility bills - family accompaniment, and other immigration justice initiatives. Contributed \$500 of congregational funds to UU Mass Action's annual appeal.
- Participated in Massachusetts Refugee and Immigration Advocacy Coalition (MIRA)'s four-part immigration justice training program.
- Participated with Rev. Lisa in a roundtable sponsored by the town of Brookline to learn more about the needs of immigrants living in Brookline.

Nominating Committee Annual Report

Members of the current Committee:

Carol Spitzer, Chair, Former Board Chair Bob Williamson, Parish Board liaison Jody Leader,

Members at large Lori Day and Kiara Zani, Rev. Lisa non-voting ex officio member.

The committee met virtually beginning in February to compile a list of candidates for open seats on the Parish Board, the nominating committee, and Moderator/ Alternate Moderator. All members of First Parish were invited to self-nominate and to suggest others for nomination.

The Nominating Committee puts forth the following candidates for 2023-24 to be voted on at the Annual Meeting, May 21, 2023.

Parish Board: Susan Faga, Sarah Luchanksy, Kristen McIntire, Brad Reich, Whit Larrabee

Continuing members are:

Jody Leader,

John Mignano,

Nancy Clark, Clerk,

Ed Page, Treasurer

Nominating Committee: Sue Andrews, Debba Andree

Moderator: Noah McIntyre

Alternate Moderator: Marilyn Tressel

Respectfully submitted by Carol Spitzer

Racial Justice Action Committee Annual Report

Members: Karla Baehr, Alfred Brownell, Steve Davis, Almas Dossa, Ann Gilmore, Jami Jordan, Jody Leader, Martha Leader, Michael Luke, Paul McLean, Ginger Melton, Mark Vanderzee, Sasha Vanderzee, Ron Wilkinson

The Racial Justice Action Committee (RJAC) would like to first recognize the many contributions of Kathryn Kirshner, who passed away on February 8, 2023. We miss her wit, intelligence, and warm heart.

The RJAC continues to feel called to create opportunities for engagement in the ongoing journey to be a Multicultural, Anti-Racist Beloved Community. We are committed to the deep exploration and subsequent actions regarding First Parish in Brookline's history of land theft, the enslavement of Indigenous and African peoples and the necessary repair.

At the 2022 Annual Meeting, the congregation passed the following resolution which has guided the RJAC during the present church year:

“We, the community of First Parish in Brookline, covenant to continue to learn about, acknowledge and work to repair the historic and ongoing moral and material harm to Black and Indigenous people and communities.

This harm has resulted from centuries of subjugation and systemic institutional policies and practices that have led to significant racial gaps in wealth, health, criminal punishment, education and enfranchisement.

During this journey, we commit to be guided by and be in relationship with the leadership of Black and Indigenous organizations and individuals.”

The RJAC continued to appreciate that justice work does not follow a straight line and that the concepts of Praxis play out repeatedly. Our focus for the year followed this path:

- Understanding and taking action on racist and antisemitic events at Brookline High School
- Creating the Brookline Interfaith Justice Coalition
- Further exploration of Repair and Reparations
- Expanding and sharing Indigenous History in Brookline
- Justice Seekers continued weekly work

Racist and Antisemitic Acts in Brookline High School

In June, Alfred Brownell raised the specter of the ongoing racist and antisemitic acts being committed at Brookline High School to the committee. Upon hearing and understanding the situation, the RJAC committed to several actions:

- Gaining a better understanding of work underway in Brookline to address these issues
- Working with the Brookline Interfaith clergy, via Rev. Lisa, to take a stand
- Contacting FPB families with children at BHS to hear their perspective
- Talking to Dr. Darnisa and Gene Thompson-Grove about their engagement with BHS

Over the summer and into the fall, the committee spoke with Suzanne Federspiel who is an FPB member and a member of the Brookline School Committee. She shared a draft Brookline Equity Policy and a presentation by Jenee Uttaro, Senior Director of Educational Equity.

Several conversations were initiated with FPB families, Dr. Darnisa Amante and the Brookline Interfaith Clergy which resulted in a general outline of work that unfolded over the winter and into the spring.

Steve Davis and his daughter, Val Peterson-Davis, shared their experiences around race/white supremacy at the high school. Mark Vanderzee, who is a BHS teacher, shared his perspective as well.

RJAC connected with Jenee Uttaro, Senior Director of Educational Equity, to learn about her initiatives. Jenee provided an overview of her work with Boston Public Schools. She made it clear that there is much to do to make the community more aware of what has been happening at BHS and to better understand what it will take to ensure that every child feels safe and has an equal opportunity to succeed at school.

It was agreed that there are two interrelated, but different challenges to face: first, how to acknowledge and confront the current situation in which students of color at BHS may not feel safe and do not feel sufficiently supported by the staff or by school policy addressing racial discrimination; second, the longer term issue (8 - 10 years?) of how to bring about more systemic change in values and beliefs through renewed discussion and revised policy decisions at the School Committee level.

After hearing the presentation, RJAC agreed that this is a time for proactively engaging in a more disruptive approach on behalf of students of color at BHS.

What follows is a brief summary of things to do going forward:

- Support the so-called disruptors
- Support thoughtful conversations after disruptions
- Support POC para-educators
- Speak to the School Committee and advocate for anti-racism program funding to support the partnership with Boston University enabling para-educators to continue and complete their teacher certification
- Support building a culture of anti-racism

- Encourage white people to talk with other white people about these issues
- Support skill building training (SEED) by providing funding and/or space for training and/or for training additional Trainers
<https://nationalseedproject.org/>
- Continue to work to promote culture change at FPB and in the community

Creating the Brookline Interfaith Justice Coalition

The RJAC recognized the opportunity to join forces with other faith groups in Brookline. Rev. Lisa, as one of the co-chairs of the Brookline Interfaith clergy group, arranged for several members of the RJAC to present our efforts so far and to extend an invitation to form a coalition.

There was agreement among the attendees at the meeting that a coalition should be formed. The following sequence of events was then undertaken:

- Send a letter to the interfaith clergy that could be shared with their congregations as they deemed appropriate.
- Garner support and participation in the coalition whose purpose is to:
 - Counter evidence of racism and antisemitism in the Public Schools of Brookline
 - Offer “Witness and Advocacy” with the School Committee and/or Town Meeting focused on addressing root causes of the racism and antisemitism at Brookline High School, that has been described by families who are members of our congregation, while calling attention to
 - The urgency of addressing unacceptable student and staff behaviors effectively,
 - The seeming inconsistency between the Handbook’s specificity in addressing threats to learning and student well-being posed by misuse of technology, on the one hand, and the threats posed by racist or antisemitic behavior, on the other, and
 - Urgent budget needs related to adequate support for the Office of Equity, availability of accountable and effective professional development for all staff, and funding for the BIPOC paraprofessional-to-teacher pipeline.

There was an immediate positive response from Brookline congregations and the group’s first planned action was to attend the April School Committee meeting. The following statement was prepared, sent to the School Committee in advance and read during the April 10th meeting:

**Final Statement to Brookline School Committee
April 10th 2023**

One statement written and sent to School Committee and Superintendent
One 3-minute statement to be read at April 10th School Committee Meeting

Statement #1

Good evening. Thank you for offering this opportunity to speak. We represent a newly-forming interfaith coalition of members from Brookline houses of worship. We

are committed to ensuring that manifestations of racism and anti-Semitism in Brookline schools are addressed forcefully. And that they are addressed in ways that recognize and address their root causes.

Young adults and their parents/caregivers have described many experiences of both anti-Semitism and racism at Brookline High School. Some are blatant, like hearing the “N-word” snarled at a student of color with no attempt by bystanders to intervene and hold the tormentor accountable. Others are more subtle, but no less hurtful, like watching an administrator reflexively take the word of a white teacher over the word of an African-American student.

Anti-Semitic and racist behaviors have no place in Brookline schools. They erode the spirit of everyone involved, most especially our young people of color and of the Jewish faith.

We know that you know this. Yet we are puzzled. The BHS handbook devotes X pages (X words) to detailing the consequences for using personal technology in ways that may be disruptive of the educational process. At the same time, it devotes just X words to the consequences for behaviors that reflect racist or anti-Semitic assumptions or beliefs - behavior we KNOW disrupts the educational process AND erodes the human spirit. We ask that you insist that Brookline administrators and staff examine the assumptions and beliefs that undergird this discrepancy - and share their discoveries with you. We hope that such an examination will lead to greater understanding of why the Handbook is so (relatively) silent on the consequences of racist and anti-Semitic behavior (whether that behavior is intentional or not). We hope, too, that such an examination will lead to greater clarity and specificity about how both students and adults will be held to account for racist and anti-Semitic behavior (again, whether intentional or not). Most importantly, we hope such an examination will lead to the kind of learning and growth that is critical to building the culture of trust and accountability that is foundational to anti-racist practice.

Statement #2

The emerging interfaith coalition of members of Brookline houses of worship has a second request: that the School Committee adopt a budget that adequately supports the work that must be done to advance Brookline’s goals related to anti-racism. Specifically, we ask that you ensure funding for the following:

- 1. Staff the Office of Equity adequately.**

The urgency and scope of the work required to effectively address root causes of anti-Semitism and racism in a school community of X schools, X staff, and X students demands more than a one-person office.

- 2. Provide locally-appropriated professional development funding sufficient to ensure that - within four years - every member of the staff will have completed and be applying foundational principles of anti-racist teaching and counseling practice.**

Brookline needs to establish a goal and plan for ensuring that every member of

the staff is supported to model anti-racist practice. Time is short. Within 4 years every member of the staff needs to demonstrate their competency. The plan needs to account for staff turnover and needs to be funded with predictable dollars, not be dependent on private or competitive grants that can come (and go) and that take enormous time and commitment to write, sell, and monitor.

3. Provide the funding and contractual flexibility required to launch a paraprofessional-to-teacher pipeline.

A key to addressing underlying causes of racism and anti-Semitism in the Brookline schools is dramatically expanding the proportion of teachers and administrators of color. To do so, Brookline is going to have to do more than try to out-compete neighboring districts for experienced candidates. Brookline needs to draw on the experiences of other districts in Massachusetts and across the United States that have developed programs to “grow its own” teaching corps by supporting its paraprofessionals of color to pursue teaching certification and to begin their teaching careers here.

Our coalition is making these budget recommendations to the Board because we believe all three- taken together - hold much promise for addressing underlying causes of the anti-Semitic and racist behaviors that are threatening to break the spirit of our students and staff of color. We will be looking carefully at the details of the budget this Committee adopts later this spring. We look forward to seeing meaningful steps taken to address our hopes for the Brookline Public Schools.

Repair/Reparations

Throughout the year, discussion and exploration of Repair and Reparations continued. Martha Leader spoke with Dr. Darnisa Amante regarding her thoughts on FPB and Repair. In summary, Darnisa pointed out that a “pluck point” for FPB is the endowment. At some point, we will need to talk about money and how it factors into Repair. This also fits into the question Darnisa posed when a group convened with both Darnisa and Rev Eric after his recent service - “how far do we want to go with reparations?” Her suggestion was that we need to be clear on that before we engage in extended Repair conversations. She also suggested that when we do begin speaking with BIPOC members of our broader community, that we are clear on how decisions are made at FPB. Her example was - if we are talking to people this Fall, we need to recognize that FPB generally makes big decisions in May.

In the fall, Rev Karlene Griffiths Sekou was a guest minister. In December, she attended an RJAC meeting.

Martha Leader invited our guest, Karlene Griffiths Sekou, to offer insights and questions, including:

1. Not sure that it is “repair” that is needed
2. We’re talking about 244 years of unending hurt and harm

3. We need to know the history that isn't taught and is hard to hear AND it is not primarily an intellectual endeavor
4. The idea of "spiritual reparations" is a factor but the notion of "spirituality" needs to be clarified - we do need to say "yes" to spiritual healing
5. What does "restoration" of the humanity of everyone look like?
6. Reparations must include money, but the money can't be based on an effort to define someone's worth
7. Bearing witness to the harms and centering those harmed in co-creating solutions are essential
8. Action is possible and necessary even without the "answers", e.g., when one's neighbor is under threat, we act
9. Our humanity can't be compartmentalized
10. Reparations is primarily structural - and also cultural and spiritual
11. It's important to continue to work on First Parish in Brookline's identity: what are you called to be and do?
12. Interpersonal generosity, support, accompaniment are important AND reparations work is "upstream" work to end systems that are not repairable
13. There is a global conversation needed, as well - as neo-colonialism continues to oppress Caribbean and Africans in their home countries and their adopted U.S.
14. Education for the purpose of action is essential, too.

Indigenous History in Brookline

Jody Leader and Paul McLean created a walking tour of the Brookline neighborhood which highlights the heartbreaking invisibility of Indigenous people. This work was done to honor Indigenous People's Day.

Below is the link, which is currently on the FPB website:

<https://firstparishinbrookline.org/footprints/>

Justice Seekers

This group meets weekly to connect with one another, learn about, and take action on racial, immigration and environmental justice issues. They compose and send texts and emails, make calls, sign and send petitions on issues aligned with the First Parish mission and identified each week by its members. The recent focus has been on Policing, Prisons, Climate, Immigration, and Indigenous Solidarity. All are welcome to join on Thursdays at 1:00 pm. Contact Martha Leader or Jami Jordan for more information.

Social Action Annual Report

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 Spiritual 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 sustained and 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 guided by our congregational mission: Called by Love, Sustained by Community, Committed to Justice. Under this mission, Social Action is woven into the fabric of First Parish, and lived out by all of its members through various organizational structures. Our Social Action program focuses on three thematic initiatives: **Siding with Love**, **Economic Justice**, and the **Environment**. We use various media to communicate news and events on a wide array of issues and events.

We also build upon and integrate our efforts with the initiatives of the Unitarian Universalist Association, UU Mass Action Network, Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) and the Unitarian Universalist Urban Ministry (UUUM).

Typically, a large percentage of our congregation's adults and youth participated in some kind of Social Action activity. We collectively raise thousands of dollars every year to support the work of other justice-seeking organizations through special plate collections, events and appeals.

Siding with Love:

We walked in solidarity with survivors of homicide. In May, Clint Richmond and Jayleigh Lewis organized our congregational engagement at the annual Mother's Day Walk for Peace and against gun violence.

Justice Seekers. This team, led by Jami Jordan and Karla Baehr, provides an opportunity for members and friends to meet together for one hour each week via Zoom to connect with one another, learn about, and take action on racial, immigration and environmental justice issues. Participants compose and send texts and emails, make calls, and sign and send petitions on issues aligned with the First Parish mission and identified each week by its conveners. The focus continues to be on Policing, Prisons, Climate, Immigration, and Indigenous Solidarity. If interested in joining talk to Jami Jordan and Martha Leader.

We supported immigration justice. Please see the report of this committee.

Environment Initiative:

The Climate Justice Committee continues to be very active. Please read their separate report.

We support the [UU Ministry for the Earth](#) through an annual contribution. Members may also attend their programming.

Economic Justice:

We are a long-term partner with the UU Urban Ministry. The UUUM is a Roxbury-based collaboration of forty UU congregations that is working to live into its new mission and vision:

We work across race and place to dismantle racism and white supremacy culture to advance racial, economic, and social justice.

We envision a Greater Boston where all people live with freedom and dignity, and have equitable access to resources and opportunity to shape the present and the future.

We thank Karla Baehr for continuing to serve as the Chair of the Board and leading our participation at its Annual Meeting. We were again honored to have Rev. Mary Margaret Earl preach to us at a service where we also donated the collection to the UUUM. The Racial Justice Action Committee (RJAC) here at First Parish voted to endorse the Urban Ministry's sponsorship of Jubilee Three, the UUA-sponsored Anti-Racism Training led by UU activist Paula Cole Jones, Learning Together about Systemic Racism. Spaces in the three-day virtual intensive workshop series (October 20-22, 2023) will be saved for interested FPB members. Please contact Karla for details.

We continue our longstanding commitments through Common Hope, which provides social service and educational support to low-income families in Guatemala. Since 2009, our congregation has been directly financing the education of students through high school; and many families sponsor individual children as well. We are currently sponsoring another child through graduation. For details on this and more see the Common Hope report.

Overarching:

We value our ties to UU Social Action. We are congregational members of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee and UU Mass Action. First Parish members have been participating in UU Mass Action Boston regional team, which meets monthly

on Zoom. We have enjoyed meeting and sharing ideas with colleagues from other churches.

If you have ideas for Social Action programming please contact Clint. We have a small budget for guest speakers, film rentals, and food for example.

Clint Richmond, Chair

Finance Committee Annual Report

Mission

1. Review and monitor financial condition of First Parish Brookline
2. Submit recommendation of annual budget to the Parish Board and review quarterly
3. Advise the Parish Board on matters of financial interest to the Congregation as appropriate
4. Communicate financial information to the church community regularly and transparently

Organization and Membership

1. Finance Committee is a standing committee charged with fulfilling the mission laid out above. Members include the Treasurer, past Treasurer, Canvass representative, 1-2 Parish Board members, 1-2 other parishioners, the Minister and Church Administrator.
2. For 2023-2024, members include: Margaret Williams (Treasurer) Charles Sandmel (Former Treasurer), Ed Page (Incoming Treasurer, Parish Board and Canvass), Margie Beal (congregant)
3. Meetings occur monthly and are open to all congregants. Meetings dates are publicized through Congregational channels

State of First Parish Finances

When COVID hit in the Spring of 2020, the congregation rose to the occasion with increased pledging throughout the membership. The trend continued in Spring of 2021. The numbers of households pledging during the 2020 and 2021 canvasses remained in the 125 range. COVID grants brought in close to \$170,000 over two years, making up for lost rental revenue. We felt like we were making it through.

It took a good while for those dealing with church finances to realize that in 2022 and 2023 the ground was shifting beneath our feet. Members were beginning to disengage, our pledge totals decreased in 2022 and during this fiscal year (Fiscal Year 2023) some pledges were not fulfilled. Three years into a pandemic, families became more interested in soccer than Spirit Play and the pipeline of new families has not made up for those who have left the congregation. By May of 2022, the numbers began to reflect what was truly happening.

Numbers speak louder than words. In the last three years:

- Membership - dropped by 20%
- Pledging households - dropped from 115 to around 100 families
- Annual Revenue - down \$87,000 from 6/30/22 to 5/1/23
- A drop of \$40,000 over the last 3 Canvasses can be attributed to 3 pledging households, reflecting an overdependence on a small number of donors.
- The Endowment - lost \$500,000 over two years and the FY24 projected withdrawal is 2x the average of the past 5 years. More detailed information on the status of the endowment appears at the bottom of this report.

There is good news. In a survey conducted last Summer, the membership said loud

and clear that our community matters a great deal to them. And, as communities can grow smaller, with enough work and dedication, they can grow larger too. We have our work cut out for us, but we have highly committed members who have remained with First Parish.

At the May 2022 Annual Meeting, we answered the question of what sort of church we want to be and how we want to grow into sustainability. **We made a choice to invest in revitalizing our Family and Community Ministries - to further develop our RE program, and to be known in our region as a strong church for both children's and life-long religious education.**

We set goals that over the next four years, we will:

- Actively publicize and market our RE and OWL programs, which are not available in all UU Congregations.
- Expand our Community Ministries to an average of 125 youth and adults participating in a broad array of programming
- Attract at least 30 new families
- Grow from 200 to 300 members
- Record new donations of \$200,000
- Stabilize our finances by moving to a sustainable draw from our endowment. This involves using congregation funding for church programming and reserving endowment funding for its original purpose, which is to maintain our physical structure

Planning for 2024 and Beyond

Our planning for Fiscal Year 2024 and beyond must include strategizing about how we will meet these goals. We cannot simply hire personnel and assume that robust growth will follow. The planning for FY24 is not about stating our goals. It's about the "how" of getting there. We have the vision. Now it's time to create the strategies and work together to execute them. We look forward to reading the growing success story in the Annual Reports over the next four years.

Our Endowment and Its Future

In Fiscal Year 2022 we had an extremely challenging economic climate and our Endowment lost 16% of its value. During the first nine months of Fiscal Year 2023 the return of 6% was consistent with market returns and more than offset the draw of \$100,000 through March 30, 2023. As of March 30, 2023 the endowment balance was \$2,398,601, down from a high of \$2,929,262 in early 2022.

The budgeted draw for next fiscal year will be the largest in both absolute (\$200,000) and percentage terms (8.3%) since 2016. Draws of that magnitude are inconsistent with good practice. We have chosen to invest boldly in the future of First Parish; stewardship—the continuing act of keeping faith with our generous ancestors—demands that we provide sufficient income and prudent financial practices to sustain our community.