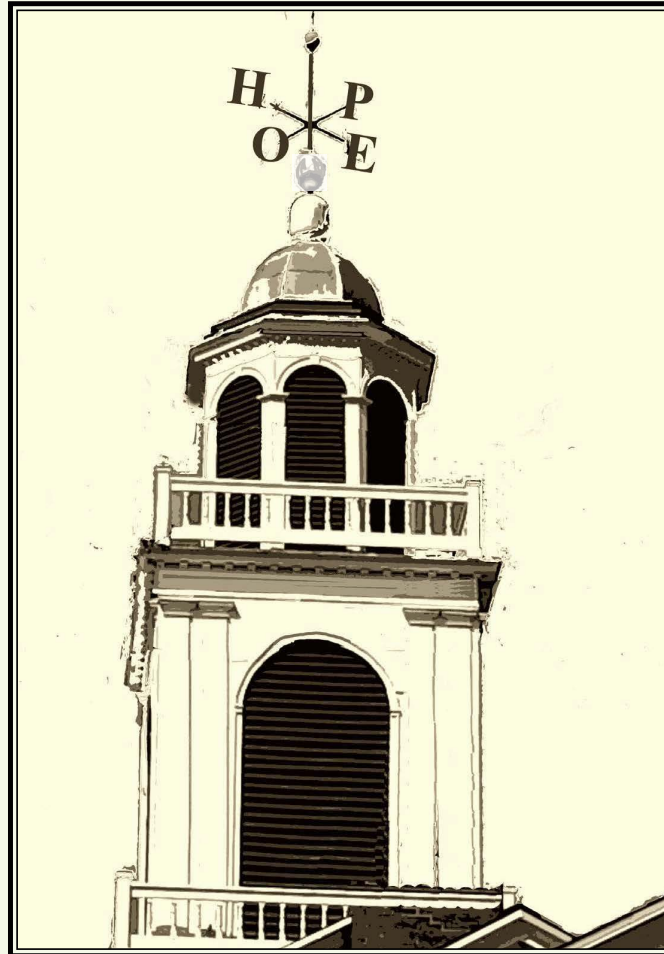


FIRST PARISH IN BEDFORD,
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST



Annual Report

2025-2026



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Warrant (ivory)	2
Leadership Reports (blue)	
Parish Board.....	4
Parish Council	6
Social Responsibility Council	7
Senior Minister.....	9
Minister of Faith Development	11
Director of Faith Development for Children	13
Clerk.....	17
List of Religious Services	18
Committee Reports (white)	
Ad Hoc Capital Campaign Committee	20
Environmental Justice	21
Fundraising	22
Gallery@First Parish.....	25
Hospitality.....	26
Immigration Justice	26
Info Tech (IT)	29
Interiors	31
Lay Pastoral Care.....	32
Membership	34
Music	36
Nominating.....	42
Partner Church.....	46
Personnel	46
Physical Plant.....	48
Stewardship	50
Parish Meeting Minutes (pink)	
Nov. 10, 2024.....	51
June 8, 2025.....	57
By Laws (yellow)	63
Committee Charters (salmon)	70
Treasurer’s Report (green)	79
Proposed FY26-27 Budget Summary (green)	82
Proposed FY26-27 Budget Detail (green)	83

THE WARRANT
 FIRST PARISH IN BEDFORD UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
 BEDFORD, MIDDLESEX COUNTY, COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS MIDDLESEX SS:

To the Clerk, First Parish in Bedford

In the name of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts you are hereby authorized and instructed to notify the voters of said First Parish in Bedford in the County of Middlesex to meet in person or remotely via Zoom on Sunday, the fourteenth day of June 2026, at 12 o'clock in the afternoon and then and there to act on the following articles, viz:

- I. To elect a Clerk and Moderator to serve from now until the June 2027 meeting. Nominees are **Rebecca Green Neale**, Clerk; and **Robert Dorer**, Moderator.
- II. To appoint a Minutes Committee. This group of three people will be responsible for reviewing the Clerks' minutes of today's meeting in a timely manner, prior to being presented for a vote by the parish.
- III. To hear and act on the minutes of the Parish Meeting held on November 9, 2025.
- IV. To hear the reports of the Senior Minister, Parish Board President, Minister of Faith Development, Director of Faith Development for Children, and Treasurer.
- V. To elect two members-at-large to the Parish Board. Nominees are **Tom Flannery** (term ending 2029) and **Marge Heckman** (term ending 2029).
- VI. To elect two members to the Social Responsibility Council. Nominees are **Ellen Scheiner** (term ending 2029) and **Stacey Katz** (term ending 2029).
- VII. To elect one member to the Nominating Committee. Nominee is **Susan Lincoln** (term ending 2029).
- VIII. Move to authorize the Parish Board to borrow up to \$200,000 from the endowment to meet cash flow needs associated with the "It's Our Turn" Capital Campaign Projects. Any such loans shall be repaid from payments received to fulfill "It's Our Turn" Capital Campaign Pledges, and/or funds received as rebates or other incentives for "It's Our Turn" Capital Campaign Projects. This authorization shall be in effect for the duration of the "It's Our Turn" Capital Campaign Projects.
- IX. To adopt an Operating Budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027.
- X. To authorize the Parish Board to approve funding for programs and services based on additional pledges received during the first six months of the fiscal year.
- XI. To hear from any members of the congregation who have short statements (less than three minutes) that they wish to make to the assembled group.

You are directed to serve this Warrant by posting an attested copy thereof at the Meeting House eight days before the fourteenth of June 2026 and to return this Warrant with your doings thereon at said meeting.


Witness our hands on this 24th day of May in the year 2026.

The Parish Board:

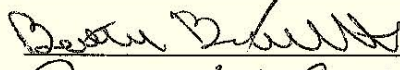
Stacy Chandler, President



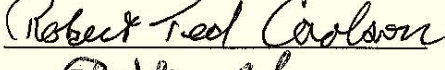
Mark Bailey



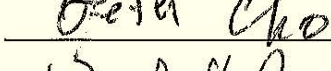
Bea Brunkhorst



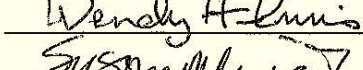
Ted Carlson



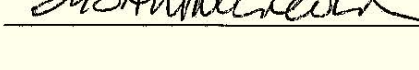
Peter Cho



Wendy Innis



Susan Lincoln



LEADERSHIP REPORTS

PARISH BOARD

Chair: Stacy Chandler, President

Members (2025-2026): Mark Bailey, Bea Brunkhorst, Ted Carlson, Stacy Chandler, Peter Cho, Wendy Innis, Susan Lincoln

Members Continuing on Committee for 2026-2027: Mark Bailey, Bea Brunkhorst, Ted Carlson, Stacy Chandler, Wendy Innis

Goals for 2025-2026 year:

1. Strengthen and grow church membership by creating, promoting, and supporting acts of invitation and inclusion.
2. Encourage church members and committees to seek out and utilize existing social justice resources.
3. Equip existing committee leadership with resources and skills that promote individual and group enrichment, in order to enhance communication between the Parish Council and the Board, and ultimately with the congregation at large.
4. Champion the capital campaign.
5. Support other existing spiritual, community, financial, and facilities work.

Accomplishments against goals:

Invitation and inclusion:

This year we launched a print media campaign under the leadership of Nate Sellers. New flyers were printed promoting our faith development programs and special events (i.e. Food for Thought and Christmas Eve & Easter services), and made available at town events and on our welcome table. We also mailed postcards with similar information to targeted regions of the Bedford, Burlington, and Billerica zip codes. Though the direct results are not always obvious, we did see an uptick in new visitors over the course of the year, with some of those families making the choice to stay or begin to weave First Parish into their lives.

Our usher team along with the clergy have placed more intention into their presence and welcoming on Sunday mornings. The membership team is driving the effort to enhance signage inside the Elm Street entrance, and introduce a sandwich board outside to usher visitors inside, including a map of the campus/building.

Our office assistant Claudia Brooks has taken the initiative to enhance our social media presence—offering a variety of old and new images and videos—and to post more consistently. As a result, parishioners have materials they can share in their cyber-neighborhoods!

Social justice resources:

Our many social justice teams and actions have not slowed down, and our work is contagious in the most hopeful way. Most notably our “new” Public Witness team, Immigration Justice Committee, and Environmental Justice committee have been getting the work done! Our parish’s active connection to and participation in UUA organizations such as UU Mass Action and UU Urban Ministry, as well as MassPower Forward, Stop Private Jet Expansion, BIJAN, and LUCE enhance this work. Our regular presence at the Burlington ICE public witness Wednesdays led by Rev. Jamie has kept our congregation engaged and broadened our access to action networks and our overall impact. Our continued collaboration with area UU congregations through our consortium has expanded beyond the summer services, most notably with the traveling nativity art piece this winter. The consortium is also intending to offer joint General Assembly viewing and engagement opportunities in June.

Parish council

Under the direction of board member Bea Brunkhorst, the parish council has been meeting throughout the church year as per practice. In addition to committee check ins, they have also explored how/whether/when to implement tools such as Breeze or long-term calendaring to improve their cross-committee work. A primary focus remains how to recruit new members to our various committees. An information and recruitment fair is planned for later spring during coffee hour to invite the congregation to explore the many options and needs.

Capital campaign

The Board acted as a sounding board and rubber stamp when needed for the capital campaign, but the grunt work and success lies with the capital campaign committee itself...and with our congregation who stepped up to meet the challenge. The fiscal goal was surpassed which means we can comfortably move ahead with the numerous projects on our list. However, even though the fundraising goal was met, there is always time to increase our *participation goal* at any dollar amount. The Board voted this spring on the creation of a Capital Campaign *Implementation* Committee and will support them throughout this process.

Support existing work

The work of First Parish is not bookended by months—we are dynamic across the calendar. The Board has been a champion of the Bedford Town Common improvements which in turn will enhance our property, including the renovation of the Elm Street entrance sidewalk to match the town’s design.

Our treasurer Wendy Innis along with Rev. Jamie and office administrator Brenda Rybicki have worked extensively to “clean up” not only this year’s budget keeping, but previous years. This includes working with the stewardship team to ensure that past pledges have been collected when able. Wendy has also worked to deepen the congregation's understanding of long-term giving.

And though it is not “existing work,” hosting a ministerial intern is “traditional work” of this congregation. We are pleased to support the arrival of Teresa English from Meadville Lombard Theological School in the Fall .

General Comments:

The work of our stewardship and capital campaign committees must be heartily applauded.

Knowing that our fundraising efforts were happening in tandem was a stressful perspective for both groups—and they rose to and above the challenge. The Board voted on a Capital Campaign *Implementation* Committee this spring to take over the reins from the fundraising team, but the stewardship team musters on. We invite all parishioners to give these two groups support and grace as they do the often invisible and hard work of following through after a campaign ends.

As we continue to send paper, digital, and in person invitations to the community to join us in worship, learning, and fun, please remember that growth is both in connection as well as numbers. New families and individuals are arriving, so let’s collectively commit to welcoming each of them. As the Starfish story goes, “it matters to this one.”

Goals for upcoming year:

Parish Board goals are set in the fall in tandem with rolling on new board members. On the heels of writing this report, however, I feel comfortable projecting that our FY27 goals will likely continue to support:

- acts of invitation and inclusion for the benefit of membership growth, as well as
- the implementation of our capital campaign projects.

The full FY27 annual goals will be presented at the November congregational meeting.

PARISH COUNCIL

Chair: Beatrice Brunkhorst

Members (2025-2026): Chairs and leaders of committees and task forces of the church.

Members Continuing on for 2026-2027: Chairs and leaders of committees and task forces of the church.

Goals for the 2025-2026 year:

1. Increase the effectiveness of communication between the Parish Board and the Standing Committees.
2. Work with committees to produce annual budget documents on a specific annual schedule.

3. Build/ Increase the capacity of the Standing Committees - Through member recruitment. Amplify via Parishioner. Hold events. Etc.
4. Use the Annual Committee Fair to help describe committees and recruit more people to build our leadership capacity in our church membership.
5. "Path To Serve" document – to be handled by the Membership Committee. This document would help parishioners understand how to have more of a role in First Parish Committee/Board structures.

Accomplishments against goals:

We met three times this year and were able to ensure good communication with committees and the Parish board using a hybrid format to ensure attendance. We shared best practices such as the communication officer role from the SRC. Other ideas such as a mentoring program and UUA leadership programs such as (<https://www.uua.org/leaderlab>) were shared. We discussed bringing together leadership support documents like: How to run a committee at First Parish. Document: [How to Run a Committee at First Parish](#). These how to documents are stored in the Common Resources folder. Common Resources Folder Link: [Common Resources Link](#). A survey of the parish was discussed as a way to build knowledge and recruit for the committees as well as to now make the Committee Fair an annual event.

The Committee Fair is scheduled for June 7th after church- make your own Sundae with the idea that in order to get a topping, a question needs to be answered. Such as, could you do a small task, what are your ideas for XX. Committees were encouraged to also showcase what can be learned by being on a committee (publicity, google docs etc.).

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY COUNCIL

Chair: Moriah Tumbleson-Shaw

Members (2025-2026):

Name	Role	Term End
Doug Denny-Brown		2026
Pamala Foresman	Treasurer	2026
John LaFarrier		2026
Jaclyn Olsen	Secretary	2027
Elise Randazzo		2027
Heather Black	Communications	2028
Moriah Tumbleson-Shaw	Chair	2028
Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger	<i>Ex Officio</i>	

Members Continuing on for 2026-2027:

Name	Role	Term End
John LaFarrier	Treasurer	2027 (<i>extended 1 year</i>)
Jaclyn Olsen	Secretary	2027
Elise Randazzo		2027
Heather Black	Communications	2028
Moriah Tumbleson-Shaw	Chair	2028
Stacey Katz	<i>New in FY27</i>	2029
Ellen Scheiner	<i>New in FY27</i>	2029
Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger	<i>Ex Officio</i>	

Goals for the 2025-2026 year:

- 1) Focus on communication and outreach both within and outside First Parish, strengthening existing relationships and creating new partnerships.
- 2) Use our Share the Plate platform to amplify and support work done by partner organizations which further Unitarian Universalist values.
- 3) Disperse all our grant funding to a diverse set of internal, local, and global organizations.

Accomplishments against goals:

- 1) Our Communication Officer updated the website info for the SRC, and regularly updated members through monthly entries in *The Parishioner* newsletter. Throughout the year our team connected with the FP community through several coffee-hour events and a service presentation.
- 2) We supported both known and new organizations through (10) *Share the Plate Sundays* which raised over \$6,071 (this total does not yet include May and June STPs, released after this report) to the following recipients:

Girls Inc. of Greater Lowell (Oct., \$729.83); On the Rise (Nov., \$836.22); Concord Prison Outreach: Holiday Gift Bag Project (Dec., \$501.85); UN World Food Programme (Dec. Christmas Eve Family Service, \$464.00); Bedford Food Bank (Dec. Christmas Even Traditional Service, \$1,767.00); Rise Above (Feb., \$606.24); International Justice Mission (Mar., \$603.40); Plan International (April, \$562.79); Beyond Bond and Legal Defense Fund (May, \$TBD); Lawyers for Civil Rights (June; \$TBD)

- 3) We fully awarded our FY26 budget allotment through grants to the following (10) recipients:

Cancer Connection (\$1,000.00); Concord Prison Outreach (\$1,250.00); Edgar Hooks Grade 2 Experiential Learning Field Trips (\$911.87); Partner Church Scholarship (\$1,000.00); Public Witness Team of First Parish in Bedford, MA (Reimbursement for No Kings Signs/Riders, Chris Wojnar) (\$138.13); Sexuality and Gender Alliance Club (JGMS) meet with Ken Gordon (\$500.00); Sowing Opportunities (\$1,000.00); The Tenacity Challenge (\$1,000.00); Tres Sueños Morados Foundation (\$2,200.00); UU Urban Ministry Roxbury Youth Program (\$3,000.00);

More info about all our Share the Plate and grant recipients can be found on the First Parish in Bedford website at <https://uubedford.org/social-action/previous-recipients-of-src-funding/>

General Comments:

A recurring challenge remains finding recipients, which often requires active, recurring solicitation by council members.

Goals for upcoming year:

- Continue regular communications with the congregation and our partners.
- Expand our outreach to new partners.
- Explore internal joint programming and funding opportunities (ex: funding initiatives led by First Parish youth groups.)
- Continue finding recipients for all our Share the Plate Sundays and for our grant funds.

*Respectfully Submitted by,
Moriah Tumbleson-Shaw, Chair*

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SENIOR MINISTER

Dear First Parish Members and Friends,

As I write this, I am still feeling the inspiration from the youth-led Coming of Age service this past Sunday. What a remarkable group of young people! They were so poised and eloquent, while also being humorous and self-aware, curious and open-minded, aware of what they don't know, aware there are challenges ahead, and intent on living lives of meaning, service, and joy. They give me hope for the future. I am so appreciative of Rev. Annie, the many volunteers who helped guide them through the program, and the parents who supported their participation. And to the youth for participating! It made my heart glad to hear that First Parish feels like home to them, a safe place and a community of support. This is one of the best things we do.

We are just a few weeks out now from the end of the church year. It has been a year filled with the best things that we do. And it has been a year of losses and challenges. We have had to say goodbye to too many beloved members of this community. We have felt the tumult around us in our country and our world. The stakes feel very high. And we have continued to respond with our offerings of hope and beauty, care and connection, and the vision of a world centered in love.

Now, let's look to the future. At the beginning of 2026, I identified for the Board three priorities that have emerged over the course of our first two years of doing ministry together that will guide our church work for the next three years at least (and possibly beyond.) In no particular order, these priorities are:

1. **Implement the projects identified during the capital campaign.** The capital campaign was a huge success. With a unanimous congregational vote in February, we set a goal to raise pledges totaling \$1.5 million to pay for needed repairs and upgrades to our campus. We exceeded that goal by almost \$200,000. Please join me in saying thank you to the Capital Campaign Fundraising team. They did incredible work in making the campaign such a success. That team will be replaced next year by a new team, the Capital Campaign Implementation team, who will have the task of working with consultants, vendors, staff, the Board, and the appropriate committees to actually carry out the various projects over the next few years. This work will be underway soon—the organ repair is slated to start June 15 and run through the summer.
2. **Grow our membership, with particular attention to serving families, growing our programs for children and youth, and building multigenerational community.** When you called me, back in 2023, it was clear that this was a significant priority for the congregation. Since then, we have invested in building an amazing staff team, revitalized and expanded our Faith Dev programming and multigenerational offerings, improved and increased our communication and outreach (including our social media outreach) and this year have begun collaborating with our neighboring UU churches to offer programming for young adults. We will continue to build on all these things to serve our families and children and youth and grow our multigenerational community.

This year the Board made welcoming on Sunday morning a point of special emphasis, so that when people do come in our door, they feel welcomed and have a clear path to connection. The staff and Membership committee have taken up the challenge and implemented a number of changes and improvements. We will continue to do so. Ultimately, welcoming is the job of the whole congregation. To that end, we offered a special workshop on “Welcoming Visitors and Talking about Unitarian Universalism.” Look for more of that next year. We are also focused on improving our outreach and engagement during events that bring the public to our campus, like the Holiday Craft Fair or the Plant Fair. (It was a privilege to wear the coffee backpack for the first time at this year’s Plant Fair and carry on Rev. John Gibbons’ legacy of creative outreach!)

3. **Support the congregation in organizing for justice work to meet the challenges of this moment.** This congregation has a proud tradition of bringing its UU values of love and justice out into the world. “The church has left the building” has been your slogan. We are certainly in a cultural and political moment where those values need to be lived out loudly and clearly. But it will take more than us acting as individuals. The organizers we met in Minneapolis asked us to get organized and connected. We cannot go alone.

This year the Immigration Justice Team, Public Witness Team, Environmental Justice Committee, and Social Responsibility Council have all expanded their outreach, built new relationships, and done meaningful acts of public witness, advocacy, and service. We will continue to build on this for next year and beyond. The focus will be on inviting new people into acts of service, growing our collective capacity to make a difference, and building relationships between First Parish and other groups in the community. UU Mass Action will continue to be an important partner in this work. We will also continue to collaborate with our “Consortium” UU congregations (Concord, Lexington, Lincoln, Waltham, Follen, and Carlisle) and seek to strengthen our interfaith relationships.

Outside of these specific priorities, we will continue to build joy, community, and connection in all the ways available to us. What makes First Parish go is music and art and coffee and conversation, shared meals, Sunday services, small groups, acts of service, and all the ways we care for one another. This is a special community, centered in love and grounded in our UU values. Before anything else, our highest priority is always to stay true to the spirit of this community. That is what we are inviting people into and that is what we are taking out into the world.

It has been a good year, and it has been a hard year. We have much to celebrate, many to thank, and many to honor and remember. And we have challenges ahead. I wish you a peaceful, joyful, and restorative summer. I look forward to all we will create together when we reconvene in the fall.

*Peace,
Jamie*

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MINISTER OF FAITH DEVELOPMENT

Another year in the books. This was my 8th year working at First Parish in Bedford and it was a good stable year despite all the political instability in our country. We have a solid staff team where nobody was brand new and I was able to keep some of our standard programs running strong, while re-doing our Coming of Age program and starting some young adult ministry. Next year will mean more focus on adult faith development and a continued emphasis on outreach to families with younger children.

Nate will share more details about our children’s faith development program in his report, so I’ll just highlight the wins and challenges of this year. One challenge is our Kindergarten - 5th grade population is dwindling as kids age out of this range, without many new kids joining our community. Another has been recruiting consistent adult volunteers to support our Sunday programming. On the bright side, Nate does a great job running engaging programming that works for the kids who show up, creating an inclusive and supportive atmosphere. Another big

win was hiring teens (age 16+) to work with our younger kids. Other teens have also volunteered regularly to help out, which is a win for the youth who get to develop leadership and make a little money and a win for the kids who love having teen teachers. I'm excited about our summer program in August that we'll be trying out, called "Pathways: Body, Boundaries and Belonging" based on the Our Whole Lives curricula for K/1 and 4th-6th grades.

Youth ministry has gone well this year! We found that Sunday morning is a time that works well for youth programming. Hosting Senior Youth Group (SYG) right after worship worked well for our youth and volunteers, though it creates challenges when there is programming right after worship that I or other advisors wish to attend. We also have noticed that after worship is better for middle school youth, and we've shifted our Junior Youth Group (JYG) structure so that Wednesday is more of a drop in time for snacks and games, with the new JYG 2.0 becoming a more structured youth group that a higher percentage of youth can attend. In SYG our biggest wins were 17 youth participating in the City Reach overnight service trip to Boston, and our upcoming retreat at Bob's Lake House that will be our first full youth group bonding retreat in some time. Big shout out to our amazing advisors. Next year we hope to consider a longer service trip, possibly during a school vacation week. And then of course, Coming of Age was a big win this year with a re-written curriculum and 10 outstanding participants who led a great service on Sunday. Lastly, we are collaborating with the UUA and the UU congregation in Nashua, NH to host a regional youth event this summer, focused on the UUA's "Deeper Joy" youth group materials, for youth and adult advisors to deepen our skills for creating joyful, connected, meaningful youth groups.

This year I started some young adult ministry, with a successful holiday reunion for "youth alumni" and three events held collaboratively with First Parishes in Concord and Lexington for young adults. We plan to turn this regional young adult group over to young adult leadership while continuing to support it, and I plan to continue hosting holiday youth alumni reunions while seeking ways to further support that population of young adults who grew up in our congregation. In "regular" adult faith development attendance is often low. An attempt at a grief group never quite formed a group, though people were always glad when they could make it. Vespers may be shifting away from a public facing worship and toward more of a small group ministry model. My small group at Carleton Willard will be ending due to low attendance and I'll use that time for pastoral visits instead. Next year I hope to try some of the following in collaboration with adult volunteers: a "Coming of Age" style program for adults, a shorter focused spiritual practices offering, and of course, a continuation of my support for Small Group Ministries, of which we currently have 9 active groups. In multigenerational ministry, Nate and I will continue with Food for Thought events in the coming year. And we'll continue to support beloved multigen events such as the winter holiday artisans fair, plant fair, and the Ferry Beach retreat, which this year included youth cabins and a stronger showing of families with youth.

This has not been an easy year. There is a lot of fear and anger about our country, and our congregation has experienced a lot of loss. Lives are full and have many challenges, especially health difficulties. And we are also such a strong community of generous, brave, active loving people. From the Capital Campaign to Public Witness to those showing up each Sunday to make

the coffee, you all are doing the work of church well. I want to especially extend gratitude to the following people: our amazing staff team (Claudia is rocking our social media! Brenda is so patient, competent and helpful. Janet is back doing amazing work with the kids! Brad is so high quality as always. Jamie is a super supportive supervisor who really values our faith dev program. Nate is so dedicated and brings the creativity, fun and values we need to grow.) Randi Currier for being my vespers co-pilot with wonderful ideas for adult faith dev, Doug Muder for re-starting our Lyceum, Mark Bailey, Cecile Mercado and Bob Doud for going above and beyond as youth advisors, Carlough Faulkner-Carroll and Bob Doud (again) for re-doing the CoA curriculum and co-leading it, Dorothy Anderson-Perales for being our JYG advisor extraordinaire, Rebecca Green Neale and Heather Black for throwing down to make Ferry Beach a lot better for youth and families, Nao Okamoto for consistently volunteering with our kids and showing up for everything, and our Sunday morning youth staff: Carinna Dogan-West, Isabel Gittins, and Sofie Olsen who are such team players and so great with the kids. Thank you to everyone who makes this congregation such a wonderful place to be a part of, which is all of you!

-Annie

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FAITH DEVELOPMENT FOR CHILDREN

2025–2026 Goals

1. A primary focus this year was building meaningful relationships with children, families, and volunteers during a continued period of growth and transition within the program. A major goal was to create an environment where children and youth genuinely wanted to be—one rooted in joy, belonging, creativity, and UU values.
2. Another important focus was strengthening the overall structure and sustainability of programming through curriculum development, volunteer support, and clearer organization of classroom spaces. This included continuing and refining the six-pillar curriculum cycle focused on Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), Social Justice, UU Identity, World Religions, Anti-Racism, and Spiritual Practices.
3. We also sought to support and sustain cornerstone programs such as Junior Youth Group (JYG) and Coming of Age (COA), while remaining flexible and responsive to the changing needs and schedules of families.
4. Finally, we hoped to continue building stronger communication systems and create more opportunities for multigenerational connection and community engagement within First Parish Bedford.

Environment

This year, like every year, the most meaningful part of my work has been building relationships with children and families and creating an environment where kids genuinely want to be. Seeing young people feel safe, included, and engaged, especially when they begin to take ownership of the space, is deeply fulfilling.

I also find a great deal of satisfaction in collaborating with volunteers and youth leaders and shaping a program that reflects our shared UU values in a tangible, lived way. Throughout the year, we worked to cultivate a culture that balanced fun, creativity, emotional safety, curiosity, and meaningful connection. And the kids kept coming back!

One continuing reflection I have is that we need to keep asking how we build a program that is not only needed, but truly wanted by families—something I believe is essential for long-term engagement and vitality. I also hope to continue exploring ways for the broader FPB community to become more actively involved in the life and growth of the program. Growth comes from community engagement, not just new families showing up!

Looking ahead, I think rethinking how we structure Sunday programming could be valuable. One possibility would be using the fall for more structured curriculum-based offerings, while opening winter and spring to workshop-style programming led by members of the congregation sharing interests and skills such as gardening, social action, woodworking, storytelling, music, art, and other hands-on learning experiences.

Accomplishments

Youth Sunday Paid Helpers

One of our biggest successes this year was the inclusion of high school youth as “Sunday Paid Helpers” during a period when we faced a shortage of Sunday morning volunteers. The relationships these youth developed with younger children were incredible to witness and brought tremendous warmth and energy into the program.

The impact was so positive that additional youth who were not being paid began arriving simply because they wanted to help and be part of the community. It created meaningful multigenerational bonding and strengthened connections across age groups in a very organic way.

Junior Youth Group Pivot

Another major success was moving Junior Youth Group programming from Wednesdays to Sundays. Attendance on Wednesdays had steadily declined due to school commitments and extracurricular activities, so we adapted the schedule to better align with family availability.

Since moving JYG to Sundays, participation and enthusiasm have significantly increased. This shift reinforced something important: many youth still deeply want connection and community—they simply need programming offered at times that realistically work for their lives.

Curriculum & Programming

This year we continued developing programming rooted in the six-pillar curriculum model. PreK–5th programming focused on SEL and experiential learning, while Building Bridges continued for middle school youth and Coming of Age (COA) remained strong and deeply impactful for 8th–9th graders, and was improved upon by Annie, Bob, and Carlough, which I’m sure will be reported in Annie’s annual report.

Programming throughout the year emphasized creativity, discussion, emotional literacy, spiritual exploration, and community-building.

Communication & Community Building

The FDC website continued serving as a central hub for registration, curriculum updates, resources, and communication with families. However, there is still room for improvement. During the winter, there was a roughly three-month period where the website was not consistently updated. This is something I plan to address moving forward. For the coming year, I intend to create a clearer seasonal structure for the site—removing fall programming when it concludes and replacing it with family resources, online activities, and interactive quizzes during the winter months until spring programming information is posted. This will help keep the website active, useful, and engaging for families year-round.

Monthly emails and postcards (a new addition this year) helped improve visibility and connection throughout the year. The postcards were especially effective during months with Family Services, serving as both a fun reminder to our congregation and an invitation to the wider Bedford community. However, communication remains an area with room for continued improvement and growth, which I will discuss further later in this report.

Food for Thought events were successful in both topic selection and engagement, though attendance gradually declined over time. In response, Annie and I plan to host two to three larger Food for Thought events next year rather than attempting more frequent gatherings. Our hope is that focusing on fewer, more intentionally advertised events will increase participation and strengthen community engagement.

Space & Program Structure

Continued work was done to maintain and organize classroom spaces in ways that better support age groups and create a stronger sense of identity and belonging within the program.

These organizational efforts have helped reduce confusion and create more welcoming, functional environments for children and youth alike.

Though many positive changes occurred this year, I would still like to continue strengthening consistency across the program, particularly in volunteer support, communication systems, and long-term planning. Additional volunteer recruitment and clearer institutional support around space usage would greatly support this continued growth.

Goals 2026–2027

Goal 1: Strengthen Volunteer Engagement and Sustainability

Develop and implement a clear system for recruiting, training, and supporting volunteers to ensure consistency across all age groups.

Action Steps:

- Create simple onboarding materials for new volunteers
- Establish regular volunteer check-ins and communication
- Identify meaningful ways to appreciate and retain volunteers

Desired Outcome:

A more stable, confident volunteer team that can help sustain and grow the program long-term.

Goal 2: Increase Family Engagement and Program Visibility

Strengthen communication and create more opportunities for families to connect with the program and with one another. Not give them more large events and tasks!

Action Steps:

- Expand and continue developing the FDC website
- Maintain consistent email communication and updates
- Host additional, smaller, community-building events throughout the year beyond Food for Thought

Desired Outcome:

Increased participation, stronger relationships with families, and a program that feels vibrant, visible, and integrated within both the broader church and town community.

-Nathan Sellers, Director of Faith Development for Children

CLERK'S REPORT

New members: Jeremy Hayes, Andrew Maggiore, Matt Porter, Sara Sullivan

Resignations: Carol Krusemark, Amy Lloyd, Terri SooHoo, John Wiedey

Deaths: Natalie Brierly, Susan D. Corey, Leslie Corin-Ash, Susan Ebbs, Dot Ellis, Richard Mark Golembeski, Abby Hafer, Pamela Herrick, Tom Larkin, Don Marshall, Sabrina Perry, Andrew Van Praagh, Pauline Salter, Hilda M. Swartz, Ara Tyler

FROM THE PARISH BOOK

WEDDINGS

- Nov. 29, 2025 *John Dundon and Julia Huston* at First UU Society of Newton, Newton, MA by Rev. John Gibbons
- Jan. 4, 2026 *Carlos Julio Carranza Alferes and Shannon Elise Leonard* at First Parish in Bedford, MA by Rev. Annie Gonzalez

MEMORIAL SERVICES

- Jun. 11, 2025 *Cynthia Yasinski Tenner*, memorial service by Rev. Annie Gonzalez
- Sep. 14, 2025 *Abby Hafer*, memorial service by Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger
- Oct. 4, 2025 *Andrew David Gaw Van Praagh*, memorial service by Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger and Rev. Annie Gonzalez
- Oct. 14, 2025 *Susan D. Corey*, memorial service by Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger
- Dec. 22, 2025 *Dot Ellis*, memorial service by Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger
- Jan. 31, 2026 *Tom Larkin*, memorial service at Carleton Willard Village by Rev. Annie Gonzalez
- Feb. 27, 2026 *Hilda M. Swartz*, memorial service at Bedford Funeral Home by Rev. John Gibbons and Rev. Megan Lynes
- Mar. 21, 2026 *Richard Mark Golembeski*, memorial service by Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger
- Apr. 8, 2026 *Mary Angelina Wardley*, memorial service by Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger
- Apr. 13, 2026 *Ara Tyler*, memorial service by Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger
- May 3, 2026 *Leslie Corin-Ash*, memorial service by Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger

NAMING AND DEDICATION CEREMONIES

There were no naming or dedication ceremonies.

RELIGIOUS SERVICES

Below is a list of the Sunday Morning and special services at First Parish for the past church year. Special thanks to the Worship Associates team: Jenn McClain (chair), Ian Carroll, Marya Dantzer, Ron Green, Doug Muder, Joe Pompei and Rich Suval.

Date	Title/Theme	Speaker/Coordinator
9/07/25	Season of Care: Ingathering	The Worship Team
9/14/25	A Meditation on Hope	Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger
9/21/25	Hope Looks Like Welcome	Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger
9/28/25	Facing Ourselves, Open to Change	Rev. Annie Gonzalez
10/5/25	Enough and Never Enough	Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger
10/12/25	All That Can Be Saved	Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger
10/19/25	What is Too Much?	Rev. Annie Gonzalez
10/26/25	Ancestor's Memorial Service	The Worship Team
11/2/25	We Shall Not Be Moved	Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger
11/9/25	One Last Sermon	Guest Speaker Rev. Bill Schulz
11/16/25	Try Everything	Rev. Annie Gonzalez
11/23/25	Wonderful World	The Worship Team
11/30/25	On Heritage Americans	Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger
12/7/25	A Mixed Bag	Rev. Annie Gonzalez
12/14/25	Re-gifting Hope	Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger
12/21/25	As We Await the Dawn	Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger
12/24/25	Christmas Eve – Family Service: All Ages Service	The Worship Team
12/24/25	Christmas Eve – Traditional Service	The Worship Team
12/28/25	Making Space for Hope: Burning Bowl Service	Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger
1/4/26	A Vision for the New Year	Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger
1/11/26	My Phone, My Frenemy	Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger
1/18/26	To the Light of Human Conscience	Rev. Annie Gonzalez
1/25/26	On Lowering the Temperature	Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger
2/1/26	Give Them Not Hell, But Hope	Rev. Annie Gonzalez
2/8/26	Making Our Dreams a Reality	The Worship Team
2/15/26	Minneapolis Part Two	Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger
2/22/26	Awe and Everyday Wonder	Guest Speaker Rev. Jo Murphy
3/1/26	Process Theology, Hope & One Tiny Barking Dog	Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger
3/8/26	Hope is Not a Lottery Ticket	Guest Speaker Eileen Campbell
3/15/26	Tea Parties and Mud Ball: Stewardship Sunday Service	Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger
3/22/26	It Matters What We Do	The Worship Team
3/29/26	On Loneliness	Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger
4/3/26	Tenebrae by Candlelight/Good Friday	Bradford Conner & Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger

Date	Title/Theme	Speaker/Coordinator
4/5/26	Traditional Easter Service (9:00AM)	Rev. Annie Gonzalez & the Worship Team
4/5/26	Family Easter All-Ages Service (11:00AM)	Nathan Sellers & the Worship Team
4/12/26	I Call That Mind Free	Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger
4/19/26	Freedom and Interdependence-Earth Day Service	Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger & the Environmental Justice Committee
4/26/26	Let the Storm Rage On	Rev. Annie Gonzalez
5/3/26	Music Sunday	Bradford Conner, Janet Welby, Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger & Rev. Annie Gonzalez
5/10/26	Follow the Goosebumps	Guest Speaker Rev. Ali Jablonsky
5/17/26	Coming of Age	FPB Youth
5/24/26	Sermon Auction Winner: Symptoms and Causes	Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger
5/31/26	Celebrating our Multigenerational Connections: All-Ages Service (Faith Development Appreciation Sunday)	Rev. Annie Gonzalez and Nathan Sellers
6/7/26	Choosing to be Queer	Rev. Annie Gonzalez
6/14/26	Flower Communion: All-Ages Service	The Worship Team

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Ad Hoc Capital Campaign Committee

Committee Chair: Peter Cho

Committee Members (2025-2026): Joan Bowen, Peter Cho, Robert Dorer, Tom Flannery, Jamie Hinson-Rieger, Gene Kalb, Jenn McClain

Members Continuing on for 2026-2027: This group will be superseded next year by a Capital Campaign project implementation team

2025-2026 Goals:

- Communicate frequently with and solicit feedback from entire congregation about campaign plans, choices & schedules
- Establish infrastructure project priorities, determine work plans & set timelines for procuring funds
- Obtain reasonably accurate project cost estimates
- Estimate fundraising capacity of FPB community
- Conduct campaign fundraiser in parallel with annual stewardship drive during spring 2026

Accomplishments against goals:

- Multiple meetings, surveys, webinars, newsletters, emailings, Parishioner articles, pulpit testimonials, glossy pamphlets & coffee hour conversations held with, by and for church community this year
 - Dedicated website established to serve as repository for “It’s Our Turn” campaign documentation
- Hired outside financial, energy & architecture consultants for technical guidance
 - Sara Green from UU Stewardship for Us prepared financial feasibility analysis based on private interviews with 20% of congregation
 - Consulting firm GreenerU developed energy & financial options for FPB’s biggest projects (rear addition HVAC, backup power, fire suppression)
 - Architecture firm Studio NDP studied options for passive energy savings & Common Room egress
- Congregation unanimously approved launching the “It’s Our Turn” campaign during a special vote in Feb 2026
 - \$1.5M set as fundraiser’s goal based on financial feasibility study results
- Campaign officially ran from 3/15/26 – 4/15/26
 - Community members asked to pledge online via campaign website or by returning physical cards

- As of late May 2026, \$1.7M+ has been pledged to cover FPB's many major physical needs
 - According to payment scheduling information helpfully supplied by donors, new capital campaign account is expected to receive approximately \$970K, \$380K and \$350K over next 3 fiscal years
 - While the pledged total to "It's Our Turn" amazingly exceeded the campaign's ambitious financial goal, the approximate 55% response from the community is lower than anticipated

Future work:

- Post-campaign individual outreach is hoped to increase community involvement percentage
- Infrastructure upgrades begin this summer
 - Refurbishing of FPB's historic organ will start in June soon after church year ends. Organ repairs are expected to be completed over the summer.
 - GreenerU has been preparing detailed plans to address rear addition's HVAC needs. HVAC work will likely begin this summer & possibly finish by early fall 2026.

With gratitude:

- We thank the many people who helped plan & run the "It's Our Turn" campaign over the past 2 years.
 - This once-every-15 year fundraising effort would not have been possible without their strong dedication & hard work.
- We thank the many people who generously pledged & made this capital campaign a financial success

Environmental Justice Committee

Committee Chair: Ginny Steel

Committee Members (2025-2026): Ginny Crocker, Corinne Doud, Don MacIver, Sabrina McClain, Bob McClatchey, Marjorie Roemer, Ginny Steel, Paul Vancutsem

Members Continuing on for 2026-2027: Ginny Crocker, Corinne Doud, Don MacIver, Sabrina McClain, Bob McClatchey, Marjorie Roemer, Ginny Steel, Paul Vancutsem

2025-2026 Goals:

- Support UU Mass Action priority legislative bills
- Support peaceful action opposing private jet expansion at Hanscom or Anywhere
- Participate and collaborate in peaceful protests that reflect our UU values
- Host one or more Climate Cafe discussions

- Contribute to the Earth Day service in April
- Do one or more Climate Moments during a Sunday service

Accomplishments against goals:

- Advocacy Day Watch Party at church with in-person/hybrid meeting with legislators on priority legislation (4/16/26). Promoted in UU Mass Action actions and events.
- Promoted peaceful action to oppose Private Jet Expansion, including:
 - Standouts, petitions, letters to legislators
 - Encouraged Faith Communities to adopt the Faith Resolution opposing private jet expansion.
- Promoted events that support our UU values, including: Third Act No Kings Day protest, UU Mass Action events, partner sign-on letters/petitions, co-sponsoring Dr. Moomaw event (forests & climate) & Chuck Collins event (billionaires & climate)
- Hosted Climate Cafe discussions:
 - The Serviceberry (by Robin Wall Kimmerer) book discussion (1/18/26)
 - Earth Day service discussion (4/19/26)
- Co-coordinated Earth Day Service (4/19/26)
- Climate Moment during Sunday Service (5/31/26)

General Comments:

- We thank Dorothy Africa for her contributions to the committee.

Goals for upcoming year:

- Support UU Mass Action & Mass Power Forward priority legislation and actions
- Advocate against private jet expansion at Hanscom or Anywhere
- Participate and collaborate in events/actions that reflect UU values
- Coordinate one or more Climate Cafe discussions
- Coordinate a festive community event (e.g., vegetarian potluck with music)
- Help with the April Earth Day service
- Do one or more Climate Moments during a Sunday service
- Identify steps we should take for the UUA Green Sanctuary 2030 program
- Support initiative to create a local mini-forest.

Fundraising Committees

Talents & Treasures Auction

Committee Chair: Peter Cho

Committee Members (2025-2026): Peter Cho, Erin Dorr, Rebecca Green-Neale, Natalie McClain, Linda Pollitz, Clayton Springer

Members Continuing on for 2026-2027: Peter Cho, Erin Dorr, Rebecca Green-Neale, Natalie McClain, Linda Pollitz, Clayton Springer

2025-2026 Goals:

- Continue annual auction which is one of FPB's largest fundraisers
- Aim to net \$15K+ for the church after expenses are reimbursed
- Involve the FPB community in a fun springtime evening event

Accomplishments against goals:

- Auction's total proceeds exceeded \$20K. After taking event costs into account, we estimate the auction netted around \$19K.
- Important caveat: Auction winners are expected to pay their bills on an honor system. Our team can send gentle reminders. But we're not a police force.
- Approximately 100 people attended the Auction in person on Mar 28, 2026. A fun time was had by all.

General Comments:

- We gratefully thank Linda Pollitz for serving as this year's "Kitchen Boss". Linda along with many kitchen helpers kept food flowing throughout the night.
- The auction team also gratefully acknowledges the many FPB volunteers who performed numerous tasks before, during and after the event. This fundraiser cannot succeed without the combined efforts of many people.
- For the first time, the sanctuary's big monitor was used this year during the live auction.

Goals for upcoming year:

- Try to grow auction team to help distribute this event's large workload.
- Aim to hold next year's auction on March 27, 2027. A Saturday in late March works well relative to other FPB and outside community events.
- Perhaps use FPB's mobile TV along with the sanctuary's monitor to simultaneously display live-item information and winning bid numbers.

70th Plant and Craft Fair

Team Chair(s): Dorothy Africa & Bea Brunkhorst (co-chairs)

Team Members (2025-2026): Plants - Dorothy and Paul Vancutsem, Crafters and Treasurer – Bea Brunkhorst, Susan Lincoln - head of the Bake Table and her co-chair Sara Angus, Paul Vancutsem & Dorothy - Heritage Plant digging, Linda Conrad, Melinda Ballou and Marie Duprey - entertainment, Melinda Ballou & Sandy Boscenowski – youth outreach (seedlings), Publicity - Gene Kalb & Christine Bennet, Facilities – Joel Parks

Wow what a great fair! The weather was perfect for the day of the fair with a fine mist the day before which the plants loved! As always- thanks to the legions of folks who volunteered – without you this event could not happen! Thanks to Caryn Libby, we made aprons for our cashiers to wear and Bea had a fun skirt! Susan Lincoln got some really pretty yellow Plant Fair ribbons in honor of the 70th.

Our list of vendors keeps growing every year- now up to 158 contacts. We so appreciate the artisan fair list together with face book publicity that causes it to grow every year! We had 38 crafters sign up with 37 attending and 3 information tables. This was an increase from last year. This year three crafters wanted to be inside... but with such a beautiful day they did not get much traffic! Among the crafters were the Ukrainian Cultural Initiative, Refugee Protection International, First Parish crafters and the Crafts for Justice, organizations we were happy to support at our fair! This year we welcomed 3 information tables from the proposed Bedford Mini Forest at the Job Lane house, Arbor Committee, Bedford Citizen and Mothers out front.

At the First Parish Children's table, we had face painting, peace rock painting and once again a popular scavenger hunt organized by Caryn Libby, Nate and Annie. Nate worked to have some really great First Parish programming literature available. Reverend Jamie walked around with a coffee backpack and worked the crowd!

We again had Jersey Mikes who provided tasty sandwiches. Once again, our amazing bake table took in over \$1000 in proceeds what a great success! We could not secure any petting zoo this year- all were busy on that day!

We had amazing music from the fun Waltham American Legion Dixieland Jazz Band, Crescendo Suzuki- our own Carlough Falkner's violin school, Plant Fair String Quartet (FPB's Nathan Kimball and Melinda Ballou), Dean and Buffy Groves performing folk, and finally FPB's Marie Duprey with family and friends with Lantern Light. We are fortunate to have such talent in our church! Gene Kalb not only got us into the Citizen with some great articles but also on TV!! We were mentioned during the weather the week prior as well as the Day of the fair! He also posted on numerous newspaper calendars. We appreciate his fun video as well as the historic one that Claudia Brooks put together for us as well! Bedford TV interviewed Bea at the fair.

This year we again relied on New England Nursery for our inventory of annuals and secured a nice 20% discount! Paul Vancutsem was able to secure a great inventory of herbs from Autumn and Hutchins Farms in Concord. We are also grateful for the assistance of Grace and Roseann Scimone for additional plant purchases also at a discount. Our First Parish gardeners again came through with over 100 plants from Wendell Smith and surprise deliveries of wonderful tomato seedlings, assorted house and garden plants that were added to the great inventory of heritage perennials. Thank you to Melinda Ballou and Sandy Boczenowski for organizing the planting and care of seedlings planted by our youth that grew under the lights in classroom L04. And finally, we had a wonderful collection of house plants from our beloved parishioner, Don Marshall, who passed away days before the fair, but made sure to donate lots of plants!

By Sunday after the Fair - nearly all the left-over plants were gone with at least \$75 donated. Big thanks go out to the cleanup crew as always - it's a big job!

We are still doing some accounting work but the estimate is that we again brought in over \$7000 for the church! It has become very clear to us that this event, though planned as a fund raiser for the church, has become an event for the whole town of Bedford which brings us the affection of our town in addition to the revenue it raises.

The Gallery@First Parish Committee

Committee Chair(s): Maria Green and Doris Smith

Committee Members (2025-2026): Robert Batt, Raquel Bauman, Nancy Daughterty, Christine Dudley-Marling, Kati Oates, Chris Tohline, Chris Wojnar

Members Continuing on for 2026-2027: Robert Batt, Raquel Bauman, Nancy Daughterty, Christine Dudley-Marling, Maria Green, Kati Oates, Doris Smith, Chris Tohline, Chris Wojnar / Additional members: Sara Angus, Marlene Myers

2025-2026 Goals:

To continue to bring art to First Parish that inspires members as well as offering art related workshops. We are hoping to create a directory of artists within our congregation. We would also like to find a way to display art created from fabric.

Accomplishments against goals:

We installed three art shows this church year. The first one was titled "This is what Democracy Looks Like" and included work by many First parishioners.

Our second show of the year included a display of inspiring work created by members of the local group "Bedford Arts and Crafts Society" and our third show featured local artist Rebecca Harper, whose sisters Sarah Dorer and Mary Levenstein are members of our congregation.

After each show was installed, a reception was held and members of the church as well as families and friends of the artists were invited. First Parish musician, Dean Groves provided delightful music for the events. We also reached out to members of the larger community to invite them to come see the art shows during hours that the office is open.

Goals for upcoming year:

To meet on the first Sunday of each month at 11:30 in Room 204. To submit more publicity to the Bedford Citizen. To offer more art workshops and opportunities for our First Parish members as well as providing inspiring and art events in The Gallery@First Parish.

Hospitality Committee

Committee Chair: Catherine Van Praagh

Committee Members (2025-2026): Carla Bradford, Kath McCafferty, Catherine Van Praagh

Members Continuing on for 2026-2027: All

2025-2026 Goals:

This year we planned to update kitchen signage and assess the age, functionality and estimated life expectancy of the appliances we all depend on. We also coordinated a few coffee hours for the Summer Service Consortium. We hoped to find a couple of new members for the Hospitality Committee, which is blessed by limited need for regular meetings and we continued to try to make volunteering in the kitchen accessible to as many people as possible.

General Comments:

Cost increases of food and materials in the kitchen are having an impact on the budget and will need to be closely watched going forward. We weren't able to have a church clean up this year, and with the level of use the building and kitchen have seen, we need one.

Goals for upcoming year:

Increase committee membership, organize a church-wide clean up, improve kitchen signage.

Immigration Justice Committee

Committee Chair: Cecile Mercado

Committee Members (2025-2026): Christine Dudley-Marling, Debbie Flannery, Sabrina McClain, Luana Read, Anne Schmalz

Members Continuing on for 2026-2027: Cecile Mercado, Ellen Scheiner, Luana Read, Christine Dudley-Marling, Debbie Flannery, Anne Schmalz, Sabrina McClain

2025-2026 Goals:

- Continue to respond to the ever-changing nature of immigration policies.
- Continue to educate ourselves about issues facing immigrants and share what we learn with the community.
- Connect with and listen to our immigrant neighbors so we can provide effective support.
- Collaborate with the wider community in advocating for just policies for immigrants in our communities and the world at large.

Accomplishments against goals:

- Held a forum at the beginning of the church year to talk about the past activities and future plans of the committee.
- Help the state of Massachusetts, through the Immigrant Family Services Institute (IFSI), provide temporary shelter for people needing emergency assistance. Hosted 12 families from January 2025 – May 1, 2026. Provided food, and sometimes clothes, shoes and suitcases.
- Continue to help the families that stayed at the parsonage and at Christine’s home. (Only initials are provided to give them privacy.) Helped 2 families get free furniture from Household Goods. Provided some funds and diapers to 2 families during a government shutdown when SNAP was temporarily stopped. Provided driving lessons to F since F does not have access to public transportation to get to work.
- Support the Boston Immigration Justice Accompaniment Network (BIJAN). BIJAN was the Share the Plate recipient on April 26. New volunteer orientation announcements from BIJAN were forwarded to the anno list.
- Support LUCE. Luana Read is very active with LUCE Rte 3 hub. Ellen Scheiner volunteered to help with the LUCE Supply Hub in Arlington. The first project is to get Know Your Rights cards in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian Creole and Chinese (simplified). Helped a family with rent when the breadwinner was detained by ICE. This request came from LUCE Lowell.
- Publicized protests at Burlington ICE and Hanscom.
- Support UU Mass Action. Supported their campaign on rent control by collecting signatures to put rent control on the ballot.
- Signed on and promoted the People’s PROTECT ACT Platform, to strengthen the protections for immigrants in the state. Advocated for this platform during UU Advocacy Day. This work is hand in hand with LUCE, BIJAN and UU Mass Action.
- Participated in the Public Witness Team’s May Day event and talked about the work of BIJAN, LUCE, UU Mass Action, IJC, and Christine Bennet’s morning team at Burlington ICE.
- Recruited 2 volunteers, Elena Pellegrino and Matt Porter, to collect food donations and bring them to Toni at Burlington ICE, who provides food to immigrants who are checking in.

General Comments:

IJC is very grateful to the Interiors Committee for the Queen sofa bed and cabinet in Room 201. They make our work so much easier!

We want to thank everyone who have made material donations to our efforts: air mattresses, clothes, shoes, suitcases, toys, books, and food.

We are very grateful to folks who volunteered their time with us this year: Ellen Scheiner, Doris Smith, Bob Batt, Matt Porter, Elena Pellegrino, Melinda Ballou, Paul Bradford, Marlene Myers, Ginni Spencer, Julie Zacharakis, Sanjeev Seereeram, Joel Parks, Sara Angus, Sarah Dorer, Tom Flannery, Clinton Fuller, Sophie Cos, and Patrick Oates. We would also like to thank Trudy Sadeghpour for continuing to practice English with M. If we missed anyone, apologies, but your contribution has helped us!

Immigration Families Support Fund

We are very grateful to everyone who contributes to the Immigrant Families Support Fund. The fund enables us to support many families that need our help. This report is from the start of the church year to expenses reported as of April 16.

Donations to the Immigrant Families Support Fund 7/1/2025-4/16/2026: **\$10,692.23**

Expenses 7/1/2025 - 4/16/2026:

- \$600 to Bade Law Group – remaining amount paid in July when IJC asked the law firm to provide legal advice to the 4 families (church friends)
- \$1250 – rent contribution to a family whose breadwinners got detained, request came from LUCE Lowell
- \$1704.54 to 2 “parsonage families” when SNAP was delayed during the government shutdown in 2025, plus help with diapers, plus truck rental and gas for Household Goods for E&W
- \$664.91 driving lessons for F, road test with driving school and 1 roundtrip Lyft to instructor
- \$2441.67 – hosting expenses (food, toiletries, detergents, sometimes clothes and shoes)

Balance as of 4/16/2026: **\$4031.11**

Goals for upcoming year:

- Help the state of Massachusetts, through the Immigrant Family Services Institute (IFSI), provide temporary shelter for people needing emergency assistance.
- Support the Boston Immigration Justice Accompaniment Network (BIJAN).
- Support LUCE. Expand support of LUCE Supply Hubs and build opportunities for more church parishioners of all ages, to participate in these activities.
- Support UU Mass Action Immigration Justice Team goals.
- Continue to help the families that stayed at the parsonage and at Christine’s home.

- Support protests for immigration justice.
- Participate in faithful resistance against authoritarianism by working with allied organizations and church committees.
- Update the committee description on the church website.
- Further publicize ways that parishioners can support immigration justice without investing a lot of time, effort, or expense – thereby increasing participation (e.g., post carding, letter writing or calling government representatives on key related issues, boycotting companies that underwrite detention centers/jails or participate in deportation or relocation of detained immigrants, pen pal writing to immigrants held in detention centers, collecting food for families of detainees).

Information Technology (IT) Committee

Committee Chair: Sandy Currier

IT Committee Members (2025-2026): Renu Bostwick, Sandy Currier, Craig Jackson

WORSHIP TECH TEAM

Audio Team: Bob Dorer, Sandy Currier, Bob Dorer, Kath McCafferty, Natalie McClain, Bill Rabinowitz

Camera Team: Bob Bass, Bob Batt, Clayton Springer, Chris Tohline

Video Zoom Team: Craig Jackson, Margaret Jackson, Clayton Springer, Chris Tohline

Members Continuing on for 2026-2027: All

2025-2026 Goals:

- Maintain IT systems
- Continued support and evolution of new TV
- Grow team

Accomplishments against goals:

- Removed tripping hazard from rear of church
- Evolved TV use to include multiple multimedia aspects
- Systems were maintained

General Comments:

Still need to figure out how best to configure and use the sanctuary TV - it will be iterative.

Goals for upcoming year:

- Continue to evolve how the TV is used in sanctuary services
- Continue to maintain network and other IT systems
- Grow the team to include more volunteer

The Annual Report for the Worship Tech Team**Audio-Visual Teams**

As was the case last church year, the A/V teams at First Parish, sometimes referred to as the “tech crew”, have provided steady reliable support for all of the Sunday services in the ’25-’26 church year, as well as a number of memorial services and musical presentations. Demand for the convenience of having the service available “live” over Zoom has remained and become an expected “standard” at most churches. All First Parish Sunday services have remained “hybrid”, meaning they have had live people in the pews and also gone out in real time over Zoom. Hybrid services require a three or four person crew: camera, sound, in-house Zoom coordinator, and usually an off-site Zoom host, especially if there is live participation by offsite congregants. Hybrid services are seen as the new standard for church Sunday services due to the added convenience for members who are elderly, disabled, and those at a great distance.

Following is a description and membership of each of the teams that covers one of the tasks to put on a Sunday service or other types of services requiring the same “hybrid” task.

Audio Team:

The Audio Team sets up the sound equipment and runs the sound board for Sunday services, in addition they will provide such services for various other events in the Sanctuary and the Common Room as members are available. The Audio Team also fixes and maintains the sound equipment in the Sanctuary and Common Room closet.

Video Team:

The Video Team members set up and operate the church’s JVC Video camera during Sunday services and for various other church related events, such as memorial services and musical performances, as they are available. Congregation opinion has been that the back of the center aisle in the sanctuary is the preferred location of the camera due to the more direct view of the speakers, from that location it is connected by cables to the sound board and to the Zoom laptop to live feed the service out on Zoom. The camera person operates the camera during the service to provide the best image and sound to the Zoom audience and, at the same time, the service is being recorded in the camera.

After the service the camera team member edits the service on their home computer and uploads it to YouTube and Bedford TV for cable casting within the town.

Zoom Team:

Interactive live broadcast of the services over Zoom is now a standard on Sundays. The year began with the Zoom tasks split between operators at each service. One operator is in the sanctuary close to the camera and sound booth, the other operator is at home or some other remote location. This two person configuration is still the requirement if the Zoom audience is to be provided live on air questions or remarks, such as a sharing during Joys and Concerns. If there is no Zoom audience participation some Zoom operators have combined the tasks so that only one operator is necessary for the service.

The “inhouse” operator establishes and maintains the link to YouTube, the camera and sound, and to the big screen TV in the sanctuary. Troubleshooting and adjusting audio and video signal going out over Zoom. The subtitle feature is also turned on and adjusted by the in-house operator.

The “remote” operator acts as “host” of the congregation, takes over operation of the Zoom controls during Joys and Concerns and manages participants who have a sharing, and generally controls member activity during the service. After the service they may manage an open conversation that congregants may wish to continue on Zoom.

Team members John McClain and Chris Tohline are adept at both Video and Zoom tasks as well as some Audio experience.

Each team has gained at least one new member in the past year which helps a lot and is greatly appreciated. Adding new crew members is a continuing effort especially as requests for performance coverage continues to grow. We are continuing our efforts to find a few more volunteers to help with tech on a rotating schedule. Anyone who might be interested in helping out or who might just be curious as to the operation, feel free to approach any of the members of each team. Providing these services to those parishioners who are not able to attend in person is greatly appreciated by all.

Interiors Committee

Committee Chair: Erin Dorr

Committee Members (2025-2026): Erin Dorr, Carlough Faulkner-Carroll, Deb McKenna

Members Continuing on for 2026-2027: All

2025-2026 Goals:

- Complete the music office and performance space

- Improve the sound quality of room 204 which has a considerable echo
- Refinish large table in the Bacon Room
- General closet cleanup and reorganization

Accomplishments against goals:

- We completed the performance space with sound boards, rug and consistent furniture
- We adjusted the 204 closet to hide the bins that were on the floor & made storage more usable by the various groups in that room. We created a soft seating area to help deafen the sound, and determined which sound panels to use and where, though we were stalled by the challenging repositioning of hanging cleats.
- Refinishing the large table in Bacon Room didn't happen
- Closet cleanup and reorganization has gone well and will continue. Discussed with Nate the idea of having color coded supply boxes for each RE room with the things clearly labeled as belong to (and needing to stay in) that room.

General Comments:

- The Immigration Committee asked for help with the apartment. In a short amount of time, the apartment updated in 2024 needed new furniture due to wear and tear from the guests in transition staying there.
 - We got a pull out couch, new chairs, new storage unit, rug, lamps, tables.
- Got rug corners to help keep ends down on the big rug in overlook.

Goals for upcoming year:

- Finish room 204 sound panels and soft seating section
- Other possible projects include:
 - Organizing storage for different activities around the church and establishing a system for people who are starting new projects to get assigned storage.
 - Finishing our project in the "Music Office/Meeting Room" in the basement.
 - I'd love to work with other committees to fill the church with artwork that tells the story of our church's values and the vibrancy of our community. That would make it more likely that people would grow interested in the church when we host events for the larger community.
 - Finally, we need to come up with a regular meeting schedule that we can sustain. Without that, we don't make progress.

Lay Pastoral Care Committee

Committee Chair: Liz Connors

Committee Members (2025-2026): Liz Connors, Carol Epple, Clinton Fuller, Marge Heckman, Jamie Hinson-Rieger, Anita Raj, Art Smith

Members Continuing on for 2026-2027: Liz Connors, Carol Epple, Marge Heckman, Jamie Hinson-Rieger, Anita Raj

2025-2026 Goals:

- To consistently be a caring, listening presence in our community as adjuncts to the Ministers.
- Maintain connections with vulnerable Parishioners, sharing information appropriately and confidentially with LPC team members.
- Development of a Bereavement Support Group at First Parish facilitated by the Lay Pastoral Care Team.
- Continue the tradition of Holiday Cookie Express – a longstanding event to reach Parishioners who may be homebound or have had a difficult year. Our goal is to maintain contact with a gift of cookies and a friendly visit.
- Continue the newer tradition of the Flower Express: the LPC Team, with the help of Parish volunteers, will deliver a flower bouquet to Parishioners who are homebound. The next Express is scheduled for Flower Communion Sunday: June 1, 2026.
- Continue to organize and staff the monthly Coffee Hour “Card Table” to give Parishioners the opportunity to sign cards to Parishioners with health or personal challenges, so they know they are remembered.
- Add new members to the Lay Pastoral Care Team.
- Offer resources to Parishioners with health or personal challenges. As we are able, the Team will provide referrals and information. LPC can also provide some short-term support for meals, rides, and other help as needed.
- Continue to clarify appropriate “asks” from Parishioners in need and develop strategies for balancing Team member self-care and effective support for Parishioners.
- Continue to host Joys and Concerns at the Candlestand and make note of what is publicly shared during Services.

Accomplishments against goals:

- The LPC Team provided consistent pastoral, moral and physical support to a number of Parishioners.
- Revs. Jamie and Annie launched and currently moderate 2 ongoing First Parish Bereavement Support groups.
- For Cookie Express, Lay Pastoral Care Team members and Parishioner volunteers delivered more than 30 cookie packages to Parishioners. Numbers are approximate because last-minute names were added to the delivery list.
- For Flower Express, Lay Pastoral Care Team members and Parishioner volunteers delivered more than 25 bouquets to Parishioners. Numbers are approximate because last-minute names were added to the delivery list.
- The Coffee Hour Card Table was organized and staffed once a month. More than 80 cards were prepared, signed and sent to Parishioners over the church year.
- The Ministers and LPC Team members continue to provide resources or referrals to Parishioners with health or personal challenges.

- The Team has further clarified appropriate “asks” from Parishioners in need. Rev. Jamie has been very supportive of both Team members and Parishioners, readily taking on more complicated requests.
- Team members continue to host Joys and Concerns at the Candlestand at Sunday services and make note of Joys and Concerns that are publicly shared.

General Comments:

- Two members of the Lay Pastoral Care Team withdrew this year due to personal challenges. We hope to add new members in the coming year.
- The Team will continue to develop a **Resources** list to assist Parishioners in finding information or assistance. The Team will review and update the list during the 2026-2027 church year.
- The Team has, for the moment, suspended work on the online courses provided by the UU Institute. The Team is currently short-staffed, but we look forward to resuming when the LPC roster is fuller.
- The Church purchased a chest freezer to have home-made meals on hand for Parishioners in temporary need of meals support. Meals requests have been surprisingly low. The Team will review guidelines for the 2026-2027 church year.

Goals for upcoming year:

- Maintain current successful ongoing projects:
 - Continued presence at the Candlestand for Joys and Concerns plus documentation as appropriate.
 - Continue to organize and host the Monthly Card Table.
 - Continue Parishioner calls and visits.
 - Continue Bereavement groups.
 - Continue to organize and successfully complete annual Cookie Express and Flower Express.
 - Review and maintain Prayer Shawl stock.
 - Welcome new members to the Lay Pastoral Care Team.
 - Review and determine the best use of the Meals Freezer.
 - Update and upload **Resources** List to FP website.
 - Resume pertinent UU Institute training modules.

Membership Committee

Committee Chair: Unfilled, Rev. Jamie functioned in this role

Committee Members (2025-2026): Sandy Boczenowski, Carla Bradford, Joanne Glover, Rev. Annie Gonzalez, Ron Green, Natalie McClain, Jenn McClain, Sharon McDonald, Doug Muder, Chris Tohline

Members Continuing on for 2026-2027: Sandy Boczenowski, Carla Bradford, Joanne Glover, Rev. Annie Gonzalez, Ron Green, Natalie McClain, Jenn McClain, Sharon McDonald, Doug Muder, Chris Tohline

2025-2026 Goals (from prior annual report):

The goal for next year is to gather the whole Membership Committee for monthly meetings. There will continue to be 3 sub-groups: Outreach, Pathway to Membership, and Sustaining Membership who will develop goals that focus on those areas. Among other plans, we are looking forward to expanding our use of social media.

Accomplishments against goals:

The Membership Committee met as a whole team this year and did not separate out as sub-teams to work on goals, but rather the three sub-team categories provided a framework for discussion and planning. Throughout the year we continuously checked in on how we were serving these three areas of responsibility.

Outreach:

- Staffed two tables at Bedford Day—one for the church as a whole and one for the Faith Dev program.
- Brainstormed engagement for the Plant Fair: The coffee backpack, livestreaming on social media, engaging visitors inside the building.
- Ran a full-page ad in the High School Musical program.
- Ran a full-page ad in the Bedford Citizens Annual Guide.
- Staffed a table at the Pride Festival on the Common.
- Posted First Parish announcements on the Events Calendar in the Bedford Citizen.
- Served as welcomers on Sunday morning, esp. during coffee hour, and resurrected the “Red Mug” system of identifying members of the welcome team.
- Led a workshop on Sunday after a service on Welcoming & How to Talk About UU.
- Consulted on social media engagement and other forms of outreach.

Path To Membership:

Offered programs and events to engage newer members, including:

- First Parish 101, led by Rev. Annie
- Quiche and Tell lunch for visitors and newer members (alternates years with the Wisdom Tea)

Sustaining Membership:

Offered a variety of programs to build community and engage both new and longtime members, including:

- Monthly First-Friday Potlucks

- Monthly games afternoons
- Women’s Holiday Breakfast
- Circle Suppers
- Ferry Beach

Goals for upcoming year:

- Our areas of focus will continue to be outreach, the path to membership, and sustaining existing members.
- Next year there will be increased attention to the welcoming experience of the physical building. We have acquired a sandwich board and are designing a poster to welcome people from the Common into the main entrance or else direct them to the accessible entrance. We are working on a map of the building that can be posted to help visitors navigate the space. We will be continuously reviewing and upgrading materials that are out on display—are they attractive, are they welcoming, do they communicate who we are? Accessibility will also be a regular point of review.
- We will consider the “Path to service” for both new and existing members at First Parish. How do people get invited into the work of the community? How do we raise awareness and education about opportunities to serve? How are people trained and mentored from service into leadership? How do we minimize burnout?
- We will continue to expand social media and other forms of outreach, to Bedford and other communities.
- Next year, we will provide more training for volunteers on how to talk about UU and First Parish, particularly for volunteers who are representing us at events (Bedford Day, Plant Fair, etc.)
- 2026-2027 will be a Wisdom Tea year, celebrating our long-term members.
- We will look at how we support the mid-range members, who have been here longer than five years but shorter than twenty-five years.

Music Committee

Committee Chair: Lisa Tohline

Committee Members (2025-2026): Sara Angus, Michael Boczenowski, Beatrice Brunkhorst, Carol Epple, Dean Groves, Cynthia Mork, William Rasschaert, Luana Read, Marilyn Richards, Chris Tohline, Lisa Tohline, Brad Conner (ex officio), Sandra LaBarge-Neumann (ex officio), Janet Welby (ex officio), Dorothy Bergin (“Citizen” articles), Nancy Daugherty (poster/flyer design), Karen Frederick (reception assistance), Lee Vorderer (thank you notes)

Members Continuing on for 2026-2027:

All of the members from the 2025–2026 roster will continue into 2026-2027 fulfilling committee responsibilities in some capacity. Not only are we fortunate to have a dedicated and

robust committee, but we are grateful to those who are able to assist us by performing more specific important tasks. Lisa Tohline was our chair in 2025-2026, but, while she has enjoyed her tenure as chair, due to increased outside commitments, Lisa feels it's time for a new chair to take charge. At the time of this report, discussions are ongoing to find a new chair. Our sincere appreciation goes to Lisa for doing a fantastic job. Janet Welby, as the youth choir director, and Sandra LaBarge-Neumann, as organist, will continue to fulfill ex officio positions on the committee. We started the 2025-2026 church year without a youth choir director following the resignation of Natan Wythe in June 2025. After an extended job search, we were very happy when Janet Welby expressed interest in helping by returning to her former position in October 2025. It has been very satisfying and productive to have Janet as part of the musical staff again and we were extremely happy when Janet said she would like to continue in the position through the upcoming year in order to give the youth choir program stability as it continues to expand and grow.

2025-2026 Goals:

- Provide support and accessibility as needed for church music programs (e.g., large print programs, hearing sound system, sound system for recording, online access) including better use of audio/visual capabilities.
- Produce a variety of music events that provide quality music for the community-at-large, including youth, families, and attracting audiences outside of the First Parish community.
- Concentrate on youth and explore additional ways to involve youth in music activities by featuring them in performances, including joint performances with the adult choir, as well as involving them in certain assigned production tasks for concerts (e.g., set-up and ushering).
- Continue to raise funds and financially support First Parish, occasionally supporting special causes with a portion of proceeds from events.
- Provide regular representation at the Parish Council.
- Explore the possibility of partnering with other committees.
- Continue community outreach activities.
- Continue to encourage involvement of volunteers (e.g., use on-line volunteer pages for sign-ups that are similarly used for service ushers and coffee).

Accomplishments against goals:

The committee produced or supported the following events and activities in 2025-2026:

- **Ravel Tribute Tea** **October 18, 2025**
A concert tribute to French composer Maurice Ravel featured the talents of local artists including pianist Eric Mazonson, violinist Rebecca Hawkins and cellist Young Sook Lee playing Ravel's Piano Trio, a masterpiece which was given a virtuosic performance. The first half of the program was a showcase of First Parish talent including performances by soprano Cynthia Mork, flutist Carol Epple, violinist Nao Okamoto, dancer Dorothy Anderson Perales and First Parish Music Director/pianist Bradford Conner. Given that

this program ended up being the same day as a “no Kings” protest, attendance was moderate albeit adequate. The costs against the receipts for this concert made it a break-even event.

- **Christmas with the Back Bay Ringers** **December 13, 2025**
 The Back Bay Ringers have been a favorite of the Bedford and First Parish communities for over a dozen years and have continued to return to First Parish for a bi-annual visit to present concerts of both classical and contemporary favorites. The ensemble played an array of handbells, chimes, and other percussion instruments. People were dazzled by the sound created by the extensive bell “orchestra.” They performed many of the group’s favorite songs as well as sparkling, new, recent additions to their repertoire. This was a well-attended concert with many audience members coming from outside First Parish and made approximately \$2100+ for the church.
- **16th Annual Valentine’s Concert – “This Heart of Mine - A Tribute to Harry Warren” and Romantic Violin Masterpieces** **February 9, 2026**
 This concert featured singing by FP’s own Cynthia Mork and Ben Sears with our Music Director Bradford Conner on piano. For the second half of the program, special guest artist Haig Hovsepien played violin accompanied by Ani Hovsepien on piano. Cynthia, Ben and Brad performed song favorites including “Chattanooga Choo Choo,” “42nd Street”, “You Must Have Been a Beautiful Baby”, “You’ll Never Know”, “Jeepers Creepers” and “That’s Amore” among others. Accompanied by Ani Hovsepien, Haig Hovsepien played virtuosic violin works by George Gershwin, Edward Elgar, Clara Schumann, Fritz Kreisler and Edith Piaf as well as others. Haig developed a relationship with First Parish when he played for our Gabriel Fauré tribute concert in September 2024. Haig is one of the up-and-coming musical stars in the Boston area. He has performed many solo concerts and has appeared with orchestras throughout the United States and abroad. Haig has also founded and manages the *Massachusetts Chamber Music Artists* (MCMA) which presented a concert at First Parish in November 2025. After the concert, guests were treated to a sumptuous chocolate reception. The concert was well attended. Since the honorariums/fees for Haig and Ani Hovsepien were covered by a donor, the event raised over \$800 for First Parish.
- **Irish Celebration: A Family Event** **March 14, 2026**
 This fifth annual all-age family event featured music, dancing, storytelling, and delicious Irish food. Celebration organizer and performer Ian Carroll created what the Irish refer to as “the craic,” an event about experiencing good times and positive energy in the company of others. Ian assembled a great line-up of Irish music specialists including Joy Grimes, Emily Peterson, and Dirk Tiede. Janet Welby conducted the combined First Parish youth choirs in two featured Irish choral selections. First Parish’s Faith Development Director for Children, Nathan Sellers, provided some delightful Celtic tales. Everyone also enjoyed a potluck during a mid-concert meal break. This event was well attended. The event raised \$220 for First Parish.
- **“Why Do They Shut Me Out of Heaven?”** **April 26, 2026**
 This concert featured Valerie Anastasio, soprano and Steve Sussman, piano performing songs by Richard Strauss, Kurt Weill, Aaron Copland and Leonard Bernstein. Valerie has long been associated with First Parish ever since she sang solo performances at Music

Sunday services in 2015, 2019 and 2025. She has also generously sung as an additional choir member during many Sunday morning and Good Friday services. Steve Sussman is First Parish's beloved "regular" pianist. This was a program Valerie and Steve first performed in the spring of 2025 and we were glad they were able to bring to First Parish. Attendance for this concert was moderate. The costs against the receipts for this concert made it a break-even event.

- **An Evening of Jazz!**

June 20, 2026

Our own musician extraordinaire, Dean Groves, put together a great line-up of talent including Dean on bass, Steve Sussman on piano, Buffie Groves and Cynthia Mork on vocals, Ian Carroll and Dave Southard on saxophones, Emory Carroll on drums and guest *a cappella* jazz group *Fretless*. Being the third year in a row for this extremely popular event, this seems to have become a welcome First Parish tradition. The audience was treated to a great evening of music in the Common Room with light bar snacks. Since this event has yet to occur at the time of this report, there was no figure yet for how much the event raised for First Parish, but based on income from previous years, it will most likely be well over \$500.

For fiscal year 2025-2026, via 6 concerts, the Music Committee was able to raise over \$3600+ for First Parish (including an estimate for receipts from the "Evening of Jazz"), well over the budgeted fiscal goal of \$2500. The committee's annual fundraising goal has been met successfully in an unbroken record since 2007.

These events provided entertainment and rich cultural experiences for Bedford and surrounding areas, bringing together First Parish members and many people outside the community. These events provided performance opportunities for our own adult, youth, and local musicians and increased our visibility as a church.

Each member of the Committee (along with help from others outside the committee) took on the following tasks for each presentation as indicated:

- Publicity (online and in print) – Mike Boczenowski, Brad Conner, Lee Vorderer (putting up posters around Bedford)
- Sandwich Board, Wayside Pulpit, and Website Updates – Mike Boczenowski
- On-Line Publicity – Mike Boczenowski (in conjunction with Marika McGrath and Claudia Brooks)
- "At the Door" Admissions for Events – Bea Brunkhorst, Carol Epple, Luana Read
- Food-Related Activities and Set Up and Take Down – Sara Angus, Bea Brunkhorst, Karen Frederick, Cynthia Mork, Bill Rasschaert, Marilyn Richards, Chris and Lisa Tohline
- Concert Poster and Flyer Designs – Nancy Daugherty
- "Bedford Citizen" Articles – Dot Bergin
- Sound and Audio Support – Dean Groves, Chris Tohline
- Post Event Thank You Notes – Lee Vorderer

With an eye for Music Committee sustainability, an online google doc Music Folder has been managed by Lisa Tohline and Brad Conner.

Notable music activities (2025-2026):

Under the dynamic direction of our youth choir director (again, we are happy about her return), Janet Welby, the youth choirs sang on a more-or-less monthly schedule including Sundays in October, November (pre-Thanksgiving), December (Christmas Eve), February (combined with the adult choir), March, April (Easter), and twice in May (Music Sunday and Bridging/Final Youth Sunday of 2025-2026). The youth choirs also sang in the annual "Irish Celebration: A Family Event" in mid-March. Notable Sunday morning service music for the adult choir included September, October, November and December Sundays featuring music around the themes of "More Love", "Immigration", "Death and Loss", "Peace" and Hebrew music in honor of Hanukkah. For Christmas Eve, the adult choir focused their talents on two Bach Cantatas with soloists and orchestra. In January, the choir sang appropriate music for MLK weekend including a newly commissioned choral work by Nigerian immigrant, Innocent Okechukwu, and on the final Sunday of the month, they sang music by Franz Schubert and Wolfgang Amadè Mozart. Music for services in February, March and April included music around the themes of "Imagining a Better World", "Hope and Support", International Women's Day and Earth Day. For the choral Good Friday service, the adult choir honored the 250th anniversary of American Independence by singing a wide variety of music around the theme of "Beauty in the Shadows" and honoring American and First Parish musical histories including works by William Billings, Harry T. Burleigh, Antonin Dvořák, Antonio Lotti and Lowell Mason. On Easter morning, the adult choir contributed to the celebratory spirit of the day with music by Dolly Parton and George Gershwin. Music Sunday was an incredible showcase of First Parish's musical talents performing a multi-textured variety of choral works centered around the theme of "We Are ..." including performances by some of First Parish's extraordinarily talented instrumentalists. Finally, the adult choir and instrumentalists performed a rich and varied group of selections for the final Sunday of the church year. On top of singing for Sunday morning services, the adult choir also sang 2 additional performances at the VA Hospital: a "Holiday Sing" in December and a "Spring Sing" in April. Also in mid-September, they sang at the memorial service for beloved First Parish member, Abby Hafer. Other Sunday morning service music in 2025-2026 included keyboard music played by Sandra LaBarge-Neumann and Steve Sussman. In-gathering music in September featured the talents of Bob & Fran Tyler, Linda Conrad and Richie Conrad; one service in the fall and another in the spring included Carol Epple-flute, Elizabeth Connors-clarinet and Brad Conner-piano playing for services, their spring appearance also included Nao Okamoto on violin and dancing by Dorothy Anderson Perales. Youth performances at services included Kat Nicoll-flute a vocal solo by Elliot Carroll.

Planned Activities (2026-2027):

At the time of this report, concerts under consideration for the 2026-2027 church year include a gala concert to celebrate the refurbishment of the First Parish organ which was funded by the Capital Campaign (October 4, 2026), the bi-annual return of virtuoso pianist, Paul Bempéchat, playing Beethoven sonatas (December 6, 2026), as well as the return of the annual Valentine concert (February 14, 2027) and the Irish Celebration: Family Event (March 14, 2027). There are

also plans for at least three other concerts, one yet to be determined, one being a small recital-type concert and there is great excitement around plans for the return of the First Parish Cabaret extravaganza sometime in Spring/Summer 2027.

General comments:

First Parish music programs continued to thrive. The size of the adult choir remained stable around 35 members, and, under the leadership of youth choir director, Janet Welby, the youth choir numbers have slightly increased from previous years. Organist Sandra LaBarge-Neumann and pianist Steve Sussman continued to make their extraordinary musical contributions to Sunday morning services. In-house instrumentalists and outside guest musicians added to the overall varied texture of music during many services.

Goals for the upcoming year:

- Provide support and accessibility as needed for church music programs (e.g., large print programs, hearing sound system, sound system for recording, online access) including better use of audio/visual capabilities.
- Produce a variety of music events that provide quality music for the community-at-large, including youth, families, and attracting audiences outside of the First Parish community.
- Concentrate on youth and explore additional ways to involve youth in music activities by featuring them in performances, including joint performances with the adult choir, as well as involving them in certain assigned production tasks for concerts (e.g., set-up and ushering).
- Continue to raise funds and financially support First Parish, occasionally supporting special causes with a portion of proceeds from events.
- Provide regular representation at the Parish Council.
- Explore the possibility of partnering with other committees.
- Continue community outreach activities.
- Continue to encourage involvement of volunteers (e.g., use on-line volunteer pages for sign-ups that are similarly used for service ushers and coffee).

Special Message from the Music Director:

This will complete my 21st year as Music Director of First Parish. It has again been a wonderful, sometimes challenging, sometimes unexpected, journey and I continue to learn from our beloved, multi-textured First Parish community. I appreciate First Parish's commitment to UU Principles as well as their commitment to the overall Bedford community and the world at large. There is never a dull moment.

As I've said previously, a successful music program is made up of many moving parts. While I'm always flattered when complimented about my musical contributions at First Parish, I am quick to respond "It's not just me!" It's our incredible musical staff. It's all the members of the

various choirs and the parents of the youth who bring them to First Parish and sometimes help them learn their music, the various instrumentalists who give so freely of their time and talent, the adult and youth dancers who dazzle us with their inspiring movements, the music committee members who produce such amazing musical productions, and let's not forget all the people who sit and listen to what the musicians have to offer and ... and ... and Whenever the congregation sings a hymn or song on Sunday mornings, that's part of the overall music program at First Parish, too. It takes a village and I love the village called "First Parish Bedford".

I would also like to add a special note of gratitude to Janet Welby. As mentioned at the beginning of this article, Janet decided to return to First Parish as Youth Choir Director. Her reappearance happened after an extensive search for someone who would not only understand and fit in with First Parish's overall mission, but for someone who could musically guide our youth through very uncertain times. Simply, Janet's return has been a blessing.

Let's continue to look to the future with hope and anticipation and celebrate who "we are ..." and what we've been able to create together.

– *Bradford Conner*

Nominating Committee

Committee Chair: Sarah Dorer

Committee Members (2025-2026): Sarah Dorer (2027), Jennifer McClain (2028), David Southard (2026)

Members Continuing on for 2026-2027: Sarah Dorer (2024-2027), Jennifer McClain (2025-2028), Susan Lincoln (2026-2029)

2025-2026 Goals:

- Fill committee positions as needed, while keeping in mind the committee's small size of 3 members requires us mostly to focus on the elected positions of the church.

Accomplishments against goals:

We succeeded in filling all elected positions that we were tasked with filling:

- Church Moderator: Robert Dorer (1-year term)
- Clerk: Rebecca Green Neale (1-year term)
- Two Parish Board positions (3-year terms each: 2026-2029):
 - Tom Flannery
 - Marge Heckman

- Two Social Responsibility Council Members (3-year term: 2026-2029):
 - Stacey Katz
 - Ellen Scheiner
- One Nominating Committee Member (one 3-year term: 2026-2029):
 - Susan Lincoln

General Comments:

The Nominating Committee is comprised of three members, each serving a three-year term, where all terms are staggered to ensure there are two remaining on the Committee with historical knowledge. The Nominating Committee is charged with nominating candidates to fill positions for all elected positions on the Parish Board, the Social Responsibility Council, Nominating Committee, Moderator and Clerk as needs arise. Typically, the Nominating Committee's activities pick up in the Spring as we prepare for the Annual Meeting in June. This year, we began our search in late March/ early April knowing that it might take a while to find willing candidates. We are so fortunate that our proposed candidates willingly and quickly accepted our invitation to join these groups. It has also been the tradition that the next open position of the Nominating Committee is someone who has just completed their term on the Parish Board since they are extremely familiar with what is happening in all aspects of church life. It does not have to be that way, but we have found that it is useful in being able to explain to candidates the most salient issues that they might face in their new positions.

Goals for upcoming year:

The goals of this committee remain the same from year to year – to find candidates who represent different constituencies to fill the elected positions of the church and to help find candidates for other committee vacancies if asked to help.

Below please find a list of the 2025-2026 Committees and their members.

First Parish Committees

2025-2026

Parish Board

Stacy Chandler, *President* (2027)
 Mark Bailey (2028)
 Bea Brunkhorst (2027)
 Ted Carlson (2028)
 Peter Cho (2026)
 Susan Lincoln (2026)
 Wendy Innis, *Treasurer* (2027)
 Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger, *ex officio*
 Rev. Annie Gonzalez, *ex officio*
 Nathan Sellers, *ex officio*

Clerk: Rebecca Green Neale
Moderator: Bob Dorer

Leadership Team

Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger, *Sr. Minister*
 Rev. Annie Gonzalez, *Min. of Faith Dev.*
 Nathan Sellers, *Dir. of FD for Children*
 Stacy Chandler, *Board President*
 Bea Brunkhorst, *Parish Council Chair*
 Wendy Innis, *Treasurer*
 Brenda Rybicki, *Parish Administrator*

Parish Council

Bea Brunkhorst, *Chair*
 Rev. Annie Gonzalez
 Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger
 Wendy Innis, *Treasurer*
 [All Committee Chairs]

Social Responsibility Council

Moriah Tumbleson-Shaw,
Chair (2028)
 Pam Foresman, *Treasurer* (2026)
 Heather Black, *Communications*
Officer (2028)
 Doug Denny-Brown (2026)
 John Laferriere (2026)
 Jaclyn Olsen (2027)
 Elise Randazzo (2027)

Nominating

Sarah Dorer (2027)
 Jenn McClain (2028)
 Dave Southard (2026)

Capital Campaign Committee

Peter Cho, *Chair*
 Joan Bowen
 Bob Dorer
 Tom Flannery
 Gene Kalb
 Jenn McClain
 Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger

Environmental Justice (EJC)

Ginny Steel, *Chair*
 Corinne Doud (*rotating*)
 Ginny Crocker
 Bob McClatchey
 Don MacIver
 Sabrina McClain
 Marjorie Roemer
 Paul Vancutsem

Faith Development

Rev. Annie Gonzalez, *ex officio*
 Nathan Sellers, *ex officio*

Children's FD Team

Christie Martin
 Moriah Tumbleson-Shaw
 Ian Carroll

Jr. Youth Team

Mark Bailey
 Nora Bailey-Black (youth)
 Nina Sonpal (youth)

Sr. Youth Team

Bob Doud
 Jerry Ross
 Carinna Dogan-West (youth)
 Taelor Nichols (youth)
 Nao Okamoto (youth)
 Devin Sonpal (youth)

Adult FD Team

Randi Currier
 Doug Muder
 Jerry Ross

Finance

Wendy Innis, *Chair & Treasurer*
 Vicki Gaw, *Asst. Treasurer*
 Joan Bowen
 Irene Gravina
 Bill Rabinowitz
 Jeff White

The Gallery@First Parish

Maria Green, *Co-Chair*
 Doris Smith, *Co-Chair*
 Bob Batt
 Raquel Bauman
 Stacy Chandler
 Christine Dudley-Marling
 Kati Oates
 Chris Tohline
 Christine Wojnar
 Nancy Willett, *emeritus*

Hospitality

Cath Van Praagh, *Chair*
 Carla Bradford
 Kath McCafferty

Immigration Justice

Cecile Mercado, *Chair*
 Christine Dudley-Marling
 Debbie Flannery
 Sabrina McClain
 Luana Read
 Anne Schmalz
 Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger

Information Technology (IT)

Sandy Currier, *Chair, Lead*
Network
 Renu Bostwick, *Lead Workspace,*
Google Groups
 Craig Jackson, *Lead Website*

Worship Technology Team

Audio Team
 Sandy Currier
 Bob Dorer
 Kath McCafferty
 Natalie McClain
 Bill Rabinowitz

Camera Team

Bob Bass
 Bob Batt
 John McClain
 Chris Tohline

Video/Zoom Team

Em Bradford
 Paul Bradford
 Craig Jackson
 Cecile Mercado
 Cath Van Praagh

First Parish Committees 2025-2026

Page 2

Interiors Committee

Erin Dorr, *Chair*
 Carlough Faulkner-Carroll

Lay Pastoral Care

Liz Connors, *Chair*
 Carol Epple
 Clinton Fuller
 Marge Heckman
 Anita Raj
 Art Smith
 Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger

Membership

TBA, *Chair*

Outreach Team

Em Bradford
 Joanne Glover
 Benji Linden
 Natalie McClain
 Deb Picciuto
 Chris Tohline
 Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger, *Staff Liaison*

Pathway to Membership Team

Sharon McDonald
 Doug Muder
 Dave Southard
 Rev. Annie Gonzalez, *Staff Liaison*

Sustaining Membership Team

Jenn McClain
 Sandy Boczenowski
 Carla Bradford
 Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger, *Staff Liaison*

Music

Lisa Tohline, *Co-Chair*
 Sara Angus
 Dot Bergin
 Mike Boczenowski
 Bea Brunkhorst
 Nancy Daugherty
 Carol Epple
 Karen Frederick
 Dean Groves
 Cynthia Mork
 Bill Rasschaert
 Luana Read
 Marilyn Richards
 Chris Tohline
 Lee Vorderer
 Brad Conner, *ex officio*
 Sandra LaBarge-Neumann, *ex officio*

Partner Church

Sharon McDonald, *Chair*
 Dorothy Africa
 Bea Brunkhorst
 Brad Connor
 Nancy Daugherty
 Rich Daugherty
 Sarah Dorer
 Marge Heckman
 Dorothy Johnson
 Ben Sears
 Ron & Cathy Cordes, *emeritus*

Personnel

Carol Gregory, *Chair*
 Bob Dorer
 Ed Schwartz

Physical Plant

Joel Parks, *Chair*
 Bob Dorer
 Brett Leida
 John McClain
 Christine Rabinowitz, *Parsonage*

Stewardship

Sarah Dorer, *Co-Chair*
 Bill Rabinowitz, *Co-Chair*
 Irene Gravina
 Linda Pollitz
 Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger, *ex officio*

AD HOC, TASK FORCES & TEAMS**Council on Ministry Team**

Ian Carroll
 Sharon McDonald
 Kiya Nicoll
 Joe Pompei

Fundraising Teams**Auction**

Peter Cho, *Chair*
 Erin Dorr
 Rebecca Green Neale
 Gene Kalb
 Linda Pollitz
 Clayton Springer
 Cath Van Praagh

Plant & Craft Fair

Dorothy Africa, *Co-Chair*
 Bea Brunkhorst, *Co-Chair*

Chili Cook-Off

Linda Pollitz
 Gene Kalb

Memorials Task Force

Carla Bradford, *Chair*
 Kath McCafferty
 Wendy Innis
 Rich Suval

UU Urban Ministry Delegates

Cecile Mercado
 Robert Schmalz

Worship Associates Team

Jenn McClain, *Chair*
 Ian Carroll
 Marya Dantzer
 Ron Green
 Doug Muder
 Joe Pompei
 Rich Suval

Partner Church Committee

Committee Chair: Sharon McDonald

Committee Members 2025-2026: Sharon McDonald, Sarah Dorer, Nancy and Rich Daugherty, Ben Sears, Brad Connor, Dorothy Africa, Bea Brunkhorst, Marge Heckman, Dorothy Johnson, Rev. John Gibbons

Members Continuing on for 2026-2027: All

2025-2026 Goals:

Maintain relationship with Abásfalva Unitarian Church

Accomplishments against goals:

Received \$1000 grant from Social Responsibilities Council; held Baked Potato Sale, Pole Capping Breakfast; sent \$100 as Christmas gift to the children of the church; sent \$600 for Minister's stipend, sent \$3000 scholarships.

General Comments:

Thirty-two years and counting!!!

Goals for upcoming year:

Maintain relationship; prepare for 2027 summer pilgrimage to Transylvania.

Personnel Committee

Committee Chair: Carol Gregory

Committee Members (2025-2026): Bob Dorer, Carol Gregory, and Ed Schwartz

Members Continuing on for 2026-2027: Bob Dorer, Carol Gregory, and Ed Schwartz / New members may be appointed by the Parish Board per the Charter of Standing Committees language for this committee

2025-2026 Goals:

- Be available to First Parish employees, Ministry, and the Parish Board for consultation on employment issues.
- Review ongoing UUA recommendations for employee compensation and benefits and advise Parish Board of inconsistencies with FP salaries, policies and/or benefits for possible adjustments.

- Review and revise the Personnel Policy Manual as needed. The Manual was last revised on 6/25/2024.
- Monitor key Personnel Management Calendar tasks and dates and adjust as necessary.
- Maintain a monthly meeting schedule for the committee.

Accomplishments against goals:

- Assisted in the selection of our most recent office staff hire.
- Assisted in the review of offer letter development for the Assistant Office Manager.
- Provided the annual review and update of compensation, including benefits, at First Parish in relation to UUA requirements and recommended guidelines to the Parish Board during a period of continued transition for Bedford's place in the UUA salary guidance framework – size C and now GEO zone 6 (we were GEO 5 for the last few years since the start of the new UUA salary recommendations framework).
- Continued personnel related support to the Church Office Administrator; including elements of onboarding for new employees and their related benefit options, and annual staff evaluation tracking and filing best practices.
- Reviewed the annual compensation documentation letters prepared by the Church Office Administrator for all staff reflecting salaries and benefits in the church's budget accepted by the Parish annual meeting for the fiscal year starting July 1, 2025.
- Monitored updates from the UUA on personnel and compensation issues via the UUA Compensation and Staffing Newsletter and related information updates from the UUA.
- Added items to the committee's reference material for church managers related to performance reviews and related follow-ups actions.
- Supported church leadership in ensuring continued compliance with updated exempt and non-exempt employee definitions.

General Comments:

It has been a typical year of support to First Parish leadership and staff within the charge of our committee (details of charter of this committee are listed in the section of this annual report that lists the "Charter of Standing Committees")

Goals for upcoming year:

- Monitor the current Personnel Management Calendar (7/19/2024) and provide reminders on key items and make adjustments of elements and dates in the calendar as needed;
- Be available to First Parish employees, Ministry and the Parish Board for consultation on employment issues;
- Conduct our annual review UUA recommendations for employee compensation and benefits and advise the Parish Board of inconsistencies with FP salaries, policies and/or benefits;
- Monitor details in the Personnel Policy Manual and revise, as needed; and

- Continue adding to the human resources related reference material available to First Parish managers and consider formalizing other management resources in a separate Management Manual or Handbook.

Physical Plant Committee

Committee Chair: Joel Parks

Committee Members (2025-2026): Bob Dorer, Brett Leida, John McClain. In memoriam: Don Marshall

Committee Mission

The Physical Plant Committee (PPC) plans and supervises the maintenance, repair, and improvement of the church, parsonage, and grounds. The committee oversees building systems and equipment, develops long-range maintenance plans, and works with the Parish Committee on capital planning and stewardship of church facilities.

Status

The committee this year continued addressing several significant facility challenges that will continue into future years:

- Aging HVAC rooftop units and development of replacement strategies in conjunction with the Capital Campaign and GreenerU consultants.
- Ongoing concerns with the dry fire suppression system, including air leaks, moisture accumulation, compressor reliability, and evaluation of long-term replacement or rehabilitation options.
- Backup power planning for critical building systems, particularly the fire suppression compressor, elevator, refrigeration, and life-safety systems.
- Water intrusion issues, including ice dams, roof leaks, and resulting interior repairs and painting.
- Evaluation and repair planning for historic sanctuary windows and deteriorating exterior trim.
- Exterior maintenance needs, including painting, masonry, landscaping, and snow removal planning.

The successful Capital Campaign has created opportunities to address several of these long-term needs through larger capital projects currently in the planning and implementation stages.

Major Accomplishments and Occurrences

In no particular order:

- Completed the long-awaited steeple railing restoration project.
- Installed drum-drip assemblies on the fire suppression system for improved drainage related to testing activities.
- Developed and tested experimental backup power options for the fire suppression compressor during power outages.
- Worked with GreenerU and other consultants to evaluate HVAC replacement options and overall building energy improvements.
- Replaced obsolete Nest thermostats and completed additional building controls upgrades.
- Completed sanctuary ceiling repairs and repainting associated with prior A/C condensate water damage.
- Continued investigation and planning for solutions to recurring ice dam formation.
- Coordinated emergency lighting repairs and replacements.
- Performed numerous door, lock, hardware, and accessibility-related repairs throughout the building.
- Continued maintenance and monitoring of the sanctuary and steeple clocks.
- Supported parsonage maintenance projects, including roof planning, attic insulation improvements, door and shower repairs, and exterior maintenance recommendations.
- Worked with telecommunications tenants on equipment changes, lease renewals, and facility access issues.
- Evaluated and prioritized exterior painting, window restoration, masonry repairs, landscaping, and common room stair repairs.
- Continued development of maintenance tracking systems and project documentation to support long-term facility stewardship.

Looking Ahead

Key priorities for the coming year include:

- Working with GreenerU toward implementation of Capital Campaign-funded building projects.
- Advancing HVAC replacement planning and related building envelope improvements.
- Developing a comprehensive strategy for the aging fire suppression system.
- Addressing sanctuary window restoration and replacement priorities.
- Completing repairs associated with ice dams and water intrusion.
- Evaluating permanent backup power solutions for critical building systems.
- Continuing exterior maintenance, painting, masonry, and accessibility improvements.

The committee appreciates the assistance of church staff, volunteers, contractors, and consultants who helped maintain and improve our facilities throughout the year.

Stewardship Committee

Committee Co-Chair(s): Sarah Dorer and Bill Rabinowitz

Committee Members (2025-2026): Sarah Dorer, Irene Gravina, Linda Pollitz, Bill Rabinowitz

Members Continuing on for 2026-2027: Sarah Dorer, Linda Pollitz, Bill Rabinowitz

2025-2026 Financial Goal:

Our overall goal for the year was to raise \$560,000 – the amount requested by the Parish Board for the 2026-2027 church year. Our theme for the year was Embrace Hope which followed the church's theme of HOPE for the current church year. We were very thankful that the Board did not raise the Stewardship goal from last year especially in a year when a Capital Campaign for the high sum of \$1,500,000 would be running concurrently.

Accomplishments against goal:

As of June 5th, the congregation has pledged \$578,004. This was the first time in many years that the Annual Stewardship Campaign met its goal without having to go back to the congregation for a repeat request. This is quite remarkable especially since the Capital Campaign was running at the same time. We are so thankful to the 181 individuals and families who have pledged so generously. This number represents approximately 90% of the congregation. We recognize that in any given year, the financial health of families may change and understand when someone is unable to pledge. However, we do hope that we may still hear back from several parishioners who have yet to contribute.

General Comments:

This continues to be a turbulent time for our country where the national government is playing by their own rules which do not match our UU values. Our UU values of kindness, empathy, generosity, service to others, the democratic process, and belief in working for the common good are so important to this First Parish community. The congregation has demonstrated its faith in these values by contributing to this Stewardship campaign so generously. Thank you! We are also very thankful to Nancy Daugherty for sharing her artistic expertise. Year after year, she has designed the Stewardship posters that are on exhibit outside the Sanctuary from the end of March through the end of the year. Her work is amazing!

Goals for upcoming year:

The Stewardship Committee will continue to work closely with the Ministerial Team and the Parish Board in following along with the church's theme for the year. We will continue to be available to do the financial stewardship work for the annual pledge drive.

THE FIRST PARISH IN BEDFORD, UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
BEDFORD, MIDDLESEX COUNTY, COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

**Approved Minutes of the Semiannual Meeting of the Parish
November 10, 2024**

The legal voters of First Parish in Bedford gathered in person and via Zoom teleconference on Sunday, November 10, 2024, for the Semi-Annual Meeting of the Parish. A quorum of 44 people being present, the meeting was called to order at 12 p.m. by Moderator Robert Dorer.

The meeting then moved, discussed, and voted on the following articles:

I. To appoint a Minutes Committee. This group of three people will be responsible for reviewing the Clerk's minutes of the meeting in a timely manner, prior to being presented for a vote by the parish.

- Bea Brunkhorst and Anita Raj were approved to serve on the Minutes Committee.

II. To hear and act upon the minutes of the Parish Meeting held on June 09, 2024.

- The minutes were edited and approved unanimously.

III. To hear the reports of the Senior Minister, Minister of Faith Development, Director of Faith Development for Children, Parish Board President, and the Treasurer.

Parish Board President: Susan Lincoln

- Susan announced that the UUA granted Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger full fellowship status.
- Ellen Scheiner reported that the Immigration Justice Team was formed in September as a UU response to the immigration crisis. They focus on assisting Jamie and his partner, Suzanne, in support the migrants sheltering at the parsonage. Parishioners have given their time, in-kind goods, and donated over \$3,500 to the Immigration Justice Fund. Those funds have supported costs for the parents to support their children in school and BIJAN (Boston Immigration Justice Accompaniment Network). The Team is evaluating other ways to support immigrants in our community, including possibly housing a family at the church or joining First Parish Concord's "Blue Boat Home Cluster."
- Article VII is on the Bedford Semi-Annual Town Meeting warrant. It addresses improvements to the Town Common. The Board encourages Bedford residents to support the Article.
- Capital Campaign Task Force is getting started to strategize fundraising for improvements required for the building, including a new fire suppression system, a back deck with accessible egress, updated HVAC system.

- Comments and Questions:
 - i. Ellen Scheiner commented that Article VII reduced the amount being asked for.
 - ii. Sarah Dorer commented that the article asked for \$350,000 at Annual Town Meeting in March 2024 and now is \$185,000.

Senior Minister: Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger

- Jamie thanked the folks who completed all of the paperwork to allow him to be approved for fellowship by the UUA.
- The Summer Service Consortium, with 5 churches alternating services during the summer, was a success and likely to be repeated next summer.
- FP as been looking at how we can support volunteers and Jamie said he is happy to share the following:
 - The Worship Associates Team is 8 members strong, functioning at a high level. They are collaborative and really enriching Sunday Services.
 - There is an 8-member Usher Team, which has been a successful change from trying to recruit different people each Sunday.
 - The Lay Pastoral Care Team is engaging in a 1-year training through the UUA. It's another example of how we can respond to volunteer recruitment and support needs, because the team members are learning a lot from the training – not just about lay pastoral care, but also listening.
 - The Outreach Team, a sub-team of the Membership Committee, is charged with growing our outreach into the community. It could use some new members. If you would like to welcome visitors and bringing our work out into the community, please contact Annie.
- Communication is a continuing point of emphasis, which has already increased by revamping our Order of Service, increasing our social media presence, as well as a new Faith Development website.
- We have a new banner, which will be hung outside the church soon.
- The Spirit of Democracy service this fall was excellent and we hope that it kicked off an entire year of learning more about racial justice.
- Immigration Justice: In August, a call went out to congregations, to support immigrants impacted by changes to the MA immigration support. We supported 5 families at the Bedford Plaza Hotel for a week. One of those families then sheltered with a First Parish family for several weeks until they moved into long-term housing. Another family is sheltering at the parsonage. This was possible because of the Minister's Discretionary Fund and the time and donations of First Parish members.

- In this time of political uncertainty, FP is preparing for the possibility that things are going to move very quickly compared to 2016. Churches are not set up to move very fast. You may see the church having to make decisions very quickly. We are going to be as transparent as we can be. We will try to get as much feedback and outreach as we can, but we may not be able to convene a congregational meeting. Please ask questions. Resist the urge to jump to conclusions and reach out to us. Please pay attention to your spiritual grounding and stay connected, so we can draw on our strength.
- Comments and Questions:
 - Luana Read: Can you post sermons online?
 1. Jamie responded that it's possible and, in the meantime, just ask and I will send you a printed copy.
 - Shawn Hanegan: Is there anything in particular that comes to mind, regarding how we meet or hold services or anything like that?
 1. Jamie responded that he's concerned with how our immigration support will be received in the community; he's concerned with the OWL program becoming criminalized or exposing teachers to different kinds of risks; he's concerned with how being liberals in an illiberal world might risk our safety and security; and what does effective organizing mean in this moment?
 - Chris Rabinowitz: Have you been working with the police? When we housed Maria and after the Pittsburgh shooting, we were in contact with the police to support us.
 1. Jamie responded that he's met the Chief and several officers, but has not discussed specific questions. We have discussed code requirements for housing someone at the church. I plan to attend the quarterly community leader meeting with the police department. We do plan to look at what safety looks like on Sunday morning. I will be re-convening a Sunday Morning Safety Team.
 2. Annie added that strengthening personal and professional relationships with agencies that could provide internal resistance to unjust laws could be helpful.

Minister of Faith Development: Rev. Annie Gonzalez

- Annie reported that she attended the virtual General Assembly. Article 2 was passed. In December, we will explore what it means to put love at the center.
- Annie helped to bring our new Director of Faith Development for Children on board.
- In adult faith development, we have Vespers services and Small Group Ministries. Also, the Pathways to Membership group will have an "FPB 101" class that helps orient people to how FB runs things, and BINGO.

- Senior Youth Group is steadier and larger this year. It kicked off with a cookout and short filmmaking. Some youth were involved with a rally for youth rights for shelter. SYG will go to CityReach, to support unhoused folks.
- There are 16 youth in the current OWL group, including 4 youth whose families aren't members of FB. Annie is part of the teaching team, which is possible because the Worship Associates have been supporting worship and she doesn't have to present as much.
- Annie is going on sabbatical in January. She hopes to come back to the parish refreshed and ready to keep the charge going.
 - i. Bea Brunkhorst: How long is your sabbatical?
 1. Annie responded that she will be back in April.

Director of Faith Development for Children: Nate Sellers

- Nate reviewed the various Faith Development programs going on each Sunday, including the nursery, a K-5 curriculum, grades 6 and 7 Building Bridges, Grades 8 and 9 is doing OWL. Attendance is about 18 kids typically; a high is 25 kids on Sunday (not including OWL).
- Nate has been observing classes and sees that the younger kids are engaged until about 10:50. He will start developing transitional activities for that timeframe.
- First Parishioners have stepped up to volunteer for Faith Development, including several "superstar" Faith Development volunteers. There is room to boost more volunteering for religious education, to ensure that there are backups if teachers are ill.
- Wednesday programs are running smoothly, with 10-14 kids on average. Game Club started last year, for grades 3-5. This year it has shrunk. But Junior Youth Group has 9-11 kids each week. Nate is working to grow the Games Club Group. The kids also want to do more social action work. Two weeks ago, they made Halloween goodie bags for migrant children. Nate will be looking into more social action work.
- There is now a Faith Development website. It has sample lessons for parents to see, including "You, Me, and Everyone We Know," which is the current K-5 curriculum. There are resources for families, including LGBTQ+ topics, starting conversations with kids on current topics, and flyers for people to print and hand off to friends.
- The Board approved allowing youth aged 16 and up to assist in FB classrooms. This is a great way to help them transition into becoming leaders in the community and engaging with younger children. It's valuable for the younger children and the youth volunteers.
- Faith Development Workshop Retreat is planned, to update everyone on safety practices and teaching practices.

- Comments and Questions:
 - i. Rebecca Neale: It's great to see the church buzzing with youth activity and thinking about growth now.
 - ii. Susan Lincoln: Having youth teachers is great modeling for the youth.
 - iii. Mark Bailey: It's a great sign to see the youth at church and getting new families here. Having non-FP youth going to OWL is a great sign.
 - iv. Christine Rabinowitz: Is Food for Thought available for people to participate on Zoom? Our son Elliot was one of the first kids to participate as a Senior Youth to assist in classroom, and it helped him get involved in religious education at the Follen Church.
 1. Annie answered: It will not, but we can think about having a separate event that will be virtual.

Treasurer: Wendy Innis

- Wendy reflected that our finances look pretty good. We were a tiny bit short of our pledge goal, but not too badly.
- Wendy presented a copy of a report, First Parish Dashboards, which reported on the 13 months of the last church fiscal year. Going forward, the fiscal year will be 12 months. This year was 13 months because we moved the start date of the fiscal year.
- Updates on this budget:
 - i. Health insurance costs will go up 7% next year, but we anticipated this and already built a 7% increase into our budget.
 - ii. The HVAC repairs that we need will be funded by the money that has already been set aside for repairs.
- We lost membership during COVID, which is typical for lots of churches. Now we're stable with our membership. We have had an increase in attendance from 2023 to 2024.
- Income: In 2023 and 2024, we took in more money than we spent. Pledges account for 56% of our income. Steeple leases account for 19% of our income. We take 5% from the endowment each year. Top 25% of donors (16 people) donate an average of about \$11,000. The next 25% pledge an average of about \$5,000. The third 25% has an average pledge of \$2,645. The fourth 25% is \$889.
- Expenses: The largest portion of our expenses is to pay for our ministers. Faith Development is 9%. Music is 10%. 80% of our total expenses are for staffing.
- Comments and Questions:

- Bea Brunkhorst: What does the chart mean, when it says the Endowment is 9%? How was the transition to Quickbooks Online, and can the committees get an income report?
 1. Wendy: We draw 5% of the endowment, but it accounts for 9% of our budget. The transition is frustrating, but it's moving along. The committees should get their reports monthly, starting in the next 2 weeks.
- Jen McClain: What is the 25% referencing on the Pledge Breakdown slide?
 1. Wendy: I'm not sure, but I can answer this question after I look into it.

IV. To hear from any members of the congregation who have short statements (less than three minutes) that they wish to make to the assembled group.

- No one made any statements.

There being no further business, the Moderator adjourned the meeting at 1:29 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Green Neale, Clerk

THE FIRST PARISH IN BEDFORD, UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
BEDFORD, MIDDLESEX COUNTY, COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

**Approved Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish
June 8, 2025**

The legal voters of First Parish in Bedford gathered in person and via Zoom teleconference on Sunday, June 8, 2025, for the Annual Meeting of the Parish. A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order at 4:05 p.m. by Moderator Robert Dorer.

The meeting then moved, discussed, and voted on the following articles:

I. To elect a Clerk and Moderator to serve from now until the June 2026 Annual Meeting. Nominees are: Rebecca Green Neale, Clerk; Robert Dorer, Moderator

- The motion passed unanimously.

II. To appoint a Minutes Committee. This group of three people will be responsible for reviewing the Clerks' minutes of today's meeting in a timely manner, prior to being presented for a vote by the parish.

- John McClain, Kath McCafferty, Virginia Crocker were appointed.

III. To hear and act on the minutes of the Parish Meeting held on November 10, 2024.

- The Minutes were approved unanimously.

IV. To hear the reports of the Senior Minister, Parish Board President, Minister of Faith Development, Director of Faith Development for Children, and Treasurer.

Senior Minister, Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger stated:

- Annie successfully completed her sabbatical. We celebrated Brad Conner's 20th year here as Music Director, and said goodbye to our youth choir director, Natan Whythe.
- There have been many volunteers this year who have taken on big tasks, including the Stewardship Committee and our new Treasurer. We are grateful for our many volunteers throughout the year.
- The railings on the steeple of the church had been removed, but they are now back on the building. There were a lot of facilities and administrative issues this year.
- Launched an immigration justice team that supported Haitian immigrants. Our environmental justice work grew and it is anticipated that it will grow more in the near future. We hope to take a look at our social justice work in order to prioritize it and help interested folks identify how to engage in social justice work.

- We will be evaluating how we engage with the larger community, in outreach, and support multi-generational communities here. We will be hiring a new youth choir director.

Parish Board President, Susan Lincoln, stated:

- We revitalized the Parish Council, updated the Standing Committees, the Immigration Justice Committee has evolved and had two successful auctions, social justice activities include weekly demonstrations on The Common and occasionally at Veteran's Park. Additionally, the railings are back up on the building.
- Susan singled out Jenn McClain for her thoughtful guidance and service on the Board since 2019, including serving as Board President during COVID.
- We are advocating for basic human and environmental rights at a time when they are under threat. It's important for us to practice communal care.

Minister of Faith Development, Rev. Annie Gonzalez stated:

- Many folks stepped in to continue running Faith Development programs while Annie was on sabbatical.
- We had a strong Senior Youth Group this year and anticipate having a full SYG next year, with youth in every grade. We ran a successful Our Whole Lives program this year.
- Vespers is a short, meditative service that runs every month with Randi Currier's stewardship. It has been running smoothly.
- Annie hopes to focus on getting a Young Adult Ministry started, because there are several young adults at the church now and it would be great to get them plugged in.
 - Peter Cho asked: How much interest is there in RE for adults? And, is there a thought to get the young adults engaged in immigration justice?
 - Annie responded: The Adult Faith Development Committee has discussed this, but we have found that consistency is challenging -- having people attend something that has many sessions. Annie said she's open to it and happy to collaborate. As far as the young adults, Annie said that she would pose the question to them about what would engage them.

Director of Faith Development for Children, Nathan Sellers:

- Focused on relationship-building and community culture. He showed up and consistently engaged with families, collecting feedback and analyzing it.

- Attendance was consistent all year, with small dips during ski season and the beginning of spring. Week to week, children returned with curiosity and enthusiasm. This sense of community wouldn't have been possible without the efforts of volunteers.
- The year began with games that required teamwork, problem-solving, and communication. Then we moved to Social-Emotional Learning, focusing on empathy. The spring curriculum was Experiments and Expressions of Faith, mixing science experiments with faith topics.
- Junior Youth Group attendance was consistent, around 13 at the beginning of the year and then 10 by the end. There were racist acts happening at the middle school, and sometimes JYG was a time just for checking in about that.
- Nate created a website for the program. It was visited 600 times in the fall and 360 times in the spring. Next year, we are making sure the site can be easily found on the homepage. We are looking into starting a listserv for parents with kids in the Faith Development program. We were also develop a calendar of events for the year that we can hand out.
- 48 total kids attended Faith Development, with 36 enrolled. 83% consistent engagement per week -- either Wednesday, Sunday, or both.
- We had two Food for Thoughts that had great engagement. We would like to have more events where families can connect. We are looking at a meal after JYG on Wednesdays as a possibility.
- Outreach: Families should be actively building the community they want here at church by personally inviting new people. We have a lot of great things going on. Families don't need more things to put on their plate, and we can create a space where they can be comfortable.
 - Maureen Richichi asked: What are the K-5 numbers? Also, it's important for everyone to personally invite folks, not just RE parents to invite families.
 - Nate replied: 9-12 kids in the fall; 6-8 kids in the ski season; and on two Sundays there were 3 kids; but then the numbers grew in the spring.
 - Christine Rabinowitz asked: What does it mean to be unenrolled? Do some kids attend without their parents?
 - Nate replied: Those are the kids that show up once or twice a month, but their parents haven't registered them. Specific programs like OWL do require enrollment. It's not typical that K-5 kids attend without parents, but there are enrolled kids whose parents don't attend, such as with OWL.

- Peggy Potter-Smith stated: It's moving that kids have opportunities to talk about how they feel.

Rev. Jamie Hinson-Rieger spoke on behalf of the Treasurer:

- We switched many systems this year, including: from a dedicated bookkeeper to a bookkeeping service; to Quickbooks Online; a new Treasurer; and pledging through the OneChurch system. Later this summer, we will close the 2024-2025 books and report the financials at the November 2025 meeting. The project has taken longer than anticipated but it's almost done.
- The Treasurer role requires a lot of work each week, so we are re-establishing the Finance Committee. The Committee will take on some of the work of the Treasurer so that it can be a more sustainable role.
- We will re-invigorate The Legacy Society. The endowment is \$1.7 million and a little under-sized for our church. It has been underperforming over the past few years. We withdraw 5% out of it every year, so this is not sustainable if it's not earning 5%. We are communicating with the UUA about increasing the performance of the fund.
 - Corinne Dowd asked: Are we committed to staying in the UUA Common Endowment Fund?
 - Jamie responded: We are committed to staying with it for now, but communicating to the UUA that we need to see progress and improvement. If we do move our funds out of the Common Endowment Fund, and that is a big "if," then we have other alternatives to maintaining our socially responsible investment prioritizes.
 - Tony VanDerMude stated: The Black-owned banks invest their money in their own communities. If we really believe that Black Lives Matter, we should put out money in Black-owned banks.
 - Jamie thanked him for the comment and stated that he would take that suggestion to the Finance Committee.
 - Brett Leida stated: What do you mean by "underperforming?"
 - Jamie responded: We are comparing it to other ethically-managed "green" funds.

V. To elect two members-at-large to the Parish Board. Nominees are Robert "Ted" Carlson (term ending 2028) and Mark Bailey (term ending 2028).

- Christine Rabinowitz asked: Are Board members allowed to serve two consecutive terms? Has this changed?

- Susan Lincoln responded: The bylaws state that people can serve up to two consecutive 3-year terms.
- Sarah Dorer stated: It's fairly rare for folks to serve two consecutive terms. During COVID, it was such a difficult time that some folks decided to stay on.
- Ted and Mark were approved.

VI. To elect two members to the Social Responsibility Council. Nominees are Heather Black and Moriah Tumbleson-Shaw (term ending 2028).

- Heather and Moriah were approved.

VII. To elect one member to the Nominating Committee. Nominee is Jennifer McClain (term ending 2028).

- Jennifer was approved.

VIII. To adopt an Operating Budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026).

Rev. Jamie presented on behalf of the Treasurer.

- There have been two budget sessions open to the congregation. The pledge drive was successful. Consultant recommended a 5% staff salary increase, due to the cost of living in the area. Facilities are anticipated to be less costly. Last year we drew \$60k from reserves but this year we have a mostly balanced budget, with an \$11k draw.
- Comments:
 - Craig Jackson asked: Where are we on the exterior paint schedule?
 - Brett Leida responded for the Physical Plant Committee: There have been repairs to some rotted wood recently. The painting schedule will go forward as planned.
 - Maureen Richichi thanked the Stewardship Committee for a successful campaign this year.
- The Budget was adopted unanimously.

IX. To authorize the Parish Board to approve funding for programs and services based on additional pledges received during the first six months of the fiscal year).

- The Article was adopted unanimously.

X. To approve revisions of the By-laws of First Parish in Bedford Unitarian Universalist as follows:

- Article III (Membership) item C: on last line change the word “Destructive” to “*Disruptive*”
- Article VI (Governance of the Parish) item C: Standing Committees; *item 1 and item 2 (a-i)*; [see handout with revised wording and additions]
- Article VII (The Nominating Committee) item C; reword the last sentence to read “No member may serve more than one *consecutive* three-year term, fractional terms being disregarded.”
- Article VIII (The Social Responsibility Council) item B: add “..., *another to serve as treasurer, and another to serve as communications officer*” at the end of the second to last sentence.
 - The Article passed unanimously.

XI. To hear from any members of the congregation who have short statements (less than three minutes) that they wish to make to the assembled group.

- Marge Heckman asked: How many people are on Zoom?
 - Moderator Bob Dorer responded: at least 15.
- Bill Rabinowitz stated: As a member of the Finance Committee, our investments really need to improve. Bill suggested that, in the fall, we should take up the discussion of what it means to invest in a socially responsible way.

There being no further business, the Moderator adjourned the meeting at 5:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Green Neale, Clerk

BY-LAWS OF THE FIRST PARISH IN BEDFORD UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

As amended June 8, 2025

Article I (Name) The name of this religious society shall be “The First Parish in Bedford, Unitarian Universalist,” referred to hereafter in the by-laws as “The Parish.”

Article II (Purpose) We unite to celebrate in community the values of liberal religion that illuminate our lives. Cherishing the heritage of the past, we seek to grow through continuing renewal and reasoned change. We seek to provide for public religious worship, charitable and benevolent activities, and instruction in liberal religion as is needed by a religious society. Aware of human potential and limitations we affirm the ideals of mutual love, justice, peace, and human dignity, and strive to realize the religious commitments we share. The Parish is organized exclusively for charitable and religious purposes, including, for such purposes, the making of distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

Article III (Membership)

- A. Any person at least sixteen (16) years of age may become a member of the Parish by signing the Parish Record and will be eligible to vote thirty (30) days after such signing.
- B. A full record of the voting membership shall be kept by the Clerk of the Parish.
- C. Membership will be reviewed at least annually. Members who have died or who have submitted to the Clerk of the Parish a written, voluntary notice of withdrawal will be removed immediately. Membership will also be terminated upon the Clerk’s certification that the member has not responded to the church’s good faith efforts to contact the member for at least one year, or upon removal for cause by a vote of the Board per the Disruptive Behavior Policy.
- D. Any member shall have the right to hold office or to serve on any elected or appointed committee as outlined in Article VI.
- E. No subscription to creed, participation in ceremony or test of race, color, nationality, gender, physical challenge, affectional or sexual orientation shall be required of prospective members, employees or religious leaders.
- F. Friends of the Parish shall have all the advantages and privileges of the Parish except the right to vote and the right to hold office.

Article IV (Denominational Affiliation) The Parish shall maintain active membership in the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), in the New England Region of the UUA, and in the Unitarian Universalist Urban Ministry.

Article V (Meetings of the Parish)

- A. The Parish shall be governed in accordance with the majority will of those members voting at Regular and Special Meetings of the Parish.
- B. Two (2) Regular Meetings shall be called each year by the Parish Board: one within the first fourteen (14) days of June, and one within the first fourteen (14) days of November.
- C. Notification of Regular and Special Meetings shall be by a warrant drawn up by the Parish Board, specifying questions to be brought before said meeting for decision or topics for the information of the members.

1. The warrant for each Regular Meeting shall provide for reports by the Parish Board, the Minister(s), and the Director of Faith Development, and the presentation of the Clerk's minutes of the previous meeting.
 2. The warrant for each Regular Meeting shall provide for the consideration of any question, proposal or information specified by a petition presented to the Parish Board in writing, over the signatures of at least seven (7) members of the Parish, at least eighteen (18) days prior to the date of said meeting.
 3. The warrant for the Regular June Meeting shall also provide for consideration of:
 - a. a proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year;
 - b. a preliminary account by the Treasurer of all funds collected, maintained or disbursed by and for the Parish in the preceding fiscal year;
 - c. written reports from all committees made available to members at the meeting within the Annual Report of the Parish;
 - d. the election of Parish members to fill expired and/or vacant positions on the Parish Board and other Parish offices. The warrant shall contain the list of nominees for expired and/or vacant position(s) on the Parish Board and other Parish offices put forth by the Nominating Committee.
 - e. a review and vote by the Parish on the terms of the agreement negotiated by the Parish Board and called ministers relative to the called ministers' compensation and other terms of service as stated in Article IX, Paragraph H, of the by-laws.
 4. The warrant for the November Regular Meeting shall provide for a full account by the Treasurer of all funds collected, maintained, or disbursed by and for the Parish in the previous fiscal year. Committees shall report at the Regular November Meeting upon prior request of the Parish Board.
 5. The warrant for each meeting shall be prominently posted in the vestibule of the Meeting House for at least eight (8) full days prior to the date of said meeting.
 6. Notice of each meeting, including the warrant, shall be emailed or mailed to each member as part of the Parish newsletter or as a separate document, and posted on the church website in a prominent location at least eight (8) full days prior to the date of the meeting.
- D. Additional Special Meetings of the Parish may be called at any time by the Parish Board, or any seven (7) members of the Parish who shall present a petition in writing to the Parish Board or the Clerk of the Parish.
1. Article V.C.2 shall also apply to the warrant of Special Meetings.
 2. Provisions may be made for election of Parish members to fill vacancies on the Parish Board.
 3. Special Meetings may be called for any purpose, including the Parish Board's desire to ascertain the views of the Parish on large expenditures or change in policy.
- E. A quorum of twenty percent (20%) of the current membership of the Parish residing in Middlesex County, or twenty-five (25), whichever is the lesser figure, shall be required for conducting any duly called meeting.
- F. Members may cast an *in absentia* ballot only in an election by expressing their vote in writing and filing it with the Clerk prior to the Regular Meeting.
- G. Each meeting of the Parish shall be called to order and presided over by the Moderator.
1. The Moderator shall have full charge of conducting any meeting in accordance with the most recently published edition of Robert's Rules of Order, unless it is inconsistent with any provision of these bylaws, for the determination of the true will of the members present.
 2. Any member present may raise a point of order to question procedural rulings or by-law interpretation and, when seconded, a motion to change the ruling must be voted immediately.

3. Records of the proceedings and decisions of each meeting shall be made and preserved by the Clerk who shall present the minutes at the next Regular Meeting.

Article VI (Governance of the Parish)

A. Officers

1. The Officers of the Parish shall include a Moderator, a Clerk, a Treasurer, and the Parish Board. The Moderator and Clerk shall be elected at the June Regular Meeting of the Parish for terms of one year. The Treasurer and each member of the Parish Board shall be elected for terms of three (3) years. Resignations by any officer should be submitted in writing to the Clerk of the Parish.
2. The Moderator shall preside at all official meetings of the Parish. In the Moderator's absence, the Clerk of the Parish shall preside until a moderator *pro tem* is nominated and elected.
3. The Clerk
 - a. shall maintain records of all official meetings of the Parish and shall prepare such reports as are required;
 - b. shall have custody of all official records and archives of the Parish;
 - c. shall maintain the list of qualified voters of the Parish, and shall provide this list of membership at any Regular and Special meeting of the Parish;
 - d. shall make the Parish Record available so that persons may join the Parish at any time;
 - e. shall maintain the by-laws of the Parish;
 - f. shall be the official signatory for the Parish.
4. The Treasurer
 - a. shall receive and have custody of monies of the Parish;
 - b. shall pay all proper bills of the Parish;
 - c. shall maintain the financial records;
 - d. shall report to the Parish Board as requested;
 - e. shall make a report for the previous fiscal year at each November Regular Meeting of the Parish;
 - f. shall, jointly with the Parish Board or its agent, be responsible for the investment of funds and securities of the Parish, and shall report on the status of such funds and securities at each November Regular Meeting of the Parish;
 - g. shall be a member of the Parish Board with full privileges;
 - h. may be bonded.

B. The Parish Board

1. The general governance of the Parish between Parish meetings shall be vested in the Parish Board. The Parish Board shall have seven (7) members, including the Treasurer of the Parish, two (2) to be elected each year from the general Parish membership. No person shall serve for more than two (2) consecutive three-year terms, fractional terms being disregarded. The Senior Minister shall be a member *ex officio*, without vote. The Parish Board shall elect one of its members to serve as President and principal lay officer of the Parish, who shall have the right to vote on all matters. Should any vacancy on the Parish Board occur due to death, inactivity, resignation or removal, a majority of the remaining members of the Parish Board may, upon consultation with the Nominating Committee, appoint any member of Parish to fill the vacancy until the next Parish Meeting.
2. The Parish Board shall:
 - a. hold regularly scheduled meetings at an announced time and place, and shall maintain a written record of their transactions. All meetings shall be open. Provision shall be made at meetings for non-Board members to address the Board. The Board may meet in executive session only to discuss personnel matters or to receive legal advice, but any decisions

must be made in open session. All decisions of the Parish Board shall be by majority vote of those present and voting, with the provision that a quorum of four (4) members must be present at the taking of any such vote;

- b. oversee the management of the business affairs and property of the Parish, subject to such directions as they may receive by vote of the Parish;
 - c. make provisions for obtaining and maintaining the services of a Minister (or Ministers), subject to the provisions of Article IX of the by-laws;
 - d. appoint the Director of Faith Development for Children and all other employees of the Parish after due consultation with the Minister(s) and pertinent committees, and shall fix their compensation and supervise their employment through the Senior Minister;
 - e. nominate candidates for Nominating Committee vacancies, to be elected by the Parish;
 - f. designate annually the standing committees of the Parish and their charters;
 - g. oversee the work of the standing committees, including by convening a Parish Council of standing committees;
 - h. set policy and procedures;
 - i. establish and oversee the achievement of a long-term strategic plan.
3. The Parish Board may:
- a. fill vacancies in any standing committee of the Parish after consultation with the chairperson of that committee;
 - b. establish such ad hoc committees as it deems necessary.

C. Standing Committees

1. Members and friends of the Parish may join committees through appointment, recruitment, or volunteering to fill vacancies. In order to facilitate fresh and diverse voices, as well as opening opportunities for all Parish members to participate, leadership should ideally be reviewed annually and cycled off at least every four years. However, consideration of each particular committee's functionality and the expertise required to fulfill its responsibilities must be the priority when considering leader/membership change.
2. Best Practices and Duties Common to All Committees:
 - a. to hold the first meeting within one month of the Annual Parish Meeting to elect a chair to ensure readiness for the new Church year in September;
 - b. to meet as needed and, at the least, three times throughout the Church year in order to fulfill the committee goals, unless otherwise stated in the charter;
 - c. to maintain communication with the Parish Board via the Parish Council;
 - d. to present a written report to the Parish Board for inclusion in the Annual Report of the Parish;
 - e. to present a proposed budget to the Parish Board for use in planning the Annual Canvass;
 - f. to maintain communications with the Congregation via the newsletter, announcements, and other means;
 - g. to take minutes of meetings, and share lessons learned from events and ensure these are accessible to members of all committees;
 - h. to create opportunities for Parish members and friends to assist in fulfilling the duties of the committee;
 - i. to create, review, or revise the committee charter, and obtain Parish Board approval.

Article VII (The Nominating Committee)

- A. There shall be a Nominating Committee of the Parish, consisting of three (3) members, who shall:
 1. prepare a slate of nominees for all vacancies among the officers of the Parish and the Social Responsibility Council for the ensuing term of office and include it as part of the warrant for the June Regular Meeting of the Parish;

2. recruit candidates for positions on the standing committees of the Parish, and shall submit a report at the regular June Regular Meeting of the Parish;
 3. recruit candidates, at the discretion of the Parish Board, for ad hoc and standing committees at any time of the year.
- B. At the June Regular Meeting of the Parish, the slate of nominees shall be placed before the meeting for its action. Additional nominations may be made from the floor for any and all positions on the slate.
- C. Members of the Nominating Committee shall serve for terms of three (3) years, one (1) to be elected at each June Regular Meeting of the Parish, following nomination by the Parish Board or from the floor. The Parish Board nomination shall be posted within the warrant. The Nominating Committee members shall choose their own chairperson. In the event of vacancies, the Parish Board shall appoint others to serve until the next Parish meeting. No member may serve more than one consecutive three year term, fractional terms being disregarded.

Article VIII (The Social Responsibility Council)

- A. The purpose of the Social Responsibility Council (SRC) shall be to help the Parish express UU principles and purposes in society at large through the primary facets of social outreach: education/aware-ness, service, action, and dialogue. It will do so in a way that promotes the Parish and UU values in society while respecting diversity within the Parish.
- B. The SRC will consist of seven (7) members elected from the Parish membership for a three (3) year term. No person shall serve for more than two (2) consecutive three-year terms, fractional terms being excluded. Terms will be staggered so that normally two or three members are elected each year. The Senior Minister will be a non-voting ex-officio member of the SRC. The SRC will annually elect one of its members to serve as chairperson, and another to serve as secretary, and another to serve as treasurer, and another to serve as communications officer. Should any vacancy on the SRC occur, the Parish Board may appoint any member of the Parish to fill the vacancy until the next Parish Meeting.
- C. The Social Responsibility Council (SRC) shall:
1. Follow the by-laws in Article VI, section C.2. for a standing committee. In addition, announce the time and place of all regularly scheduled meetings and maintain a written record of all transactions. All meetings shall be open. All decisions of the SRC shall be by majority vote of those present and voting, with the provision that a quorum of five (5) members must be present at the taking of any such vote.
 2. Establish, assist, and supervise social responsibility initiatives involving the use of the resources or the name of the Parish. The SRC will assess collective goals and resources related to possible social action within the Parish; explore and communicate opportunities for social action in the community at large; and act as liaison between the Parish and other organizations with potential for cooperation in social action.
 3. Foster the establishment of Social Action Projects of members of the Parish to undertake projects and programs of social outreach. If accepted by the SRC, funds from the SRC's budget may be allocated to accomplish project goals. The SRC will report its current slate of Social Action projects at the Regular Meetings of the Parish.

Article IX (Endowment Fund)

- A. The purpose of the Endowment Fund (hereinafter called the "Fund") shall be to receive gifts of accumulated, inherited and appreciated resources and for their management to enhance the mission of the Parish by provision of limited operating fund support and the funding of projects outside the general operation of the congregation.

Article X (The Ministers)

- A. The Parish may have ministers that are called or appointed. The Parish Board shall designate one called minister as the Senior Minister.
- B. All Ministers shall be spiritual leaders whose primary concerns are to uphold, further, and deepen the values of liberal religion.
- C. All Ministers shall have freedom of the pulpit. The ministers shall also have the freedom to express their opinions outside the pulpit, but not to represent the church without authorization from the Board or the membership. The Senior Minister shall be an ex officio, non-voting member of the Parish Board and of all standing committees. Other specific duties shall be negotiated between the ministers and the Board in a Letter of Agreement.
- D. The Senior Minister shall have general charge of all formal ceremonies and services conducted in the name of the Parish. The Senior Minister shall supervise the use of the Meeting House and the services of all paid employees of the Parish in accordance with the policies established by the Parish Board.
- E. A candidate for called ministry shall be chosen by a special Ministerial Search Committee of seven (7) members of the Parish who shall be elected at a Regular Meeting or a special meeting of the Parish called by the Parish Board for that specific purpose, It shall be the duty of the Ministerial Search Committee to propose a suitable candidate as a called Minister of the Parish, with the understanding that said committee may be either retained or dismissed and replaced by another similarly elected committee should the candidate it proposes not be accepted by the Parish.
- F. A Called Minister shall be called by vote of the Parish at a Special Meeting of the Parish called for this purpose.
- G. A Called Minister's term of office may be terminated after ninety (90) days notice, either by written resignation or by a majority vote of the Parish.
- H. A Called Minister's compensation and terms of service shall be set forth in a written agreement. The agreement shall be reviewed by the Parish Board and acted upon by a duly called meeting of the Parish at intervals of no more than twelve (12) months.
- I. Any Called Minister whose term of office has started for three (3) months or more before any Regular Meeting of the Parish shall present a written report to the members of the Parish.
- J. Additional ministers may be appointed by the Parish Board. The terms of employment shall be set forth by the Parish Board in a written agreement.
- K. The title Minister Emeritus, Minister Emerita, or Minister Emeritum may be granted to honor long and Meritorious service to the Parish. A nomination must be made according to the guidelines in the congregation's Policies and Procedures. Conferring the Emeritus/Emerita/Emeritum title requires a two-thirds (67%) vote at a meeting of the Parish.

Article XI (Dissolution) In the event of the dissolution of the organized and operated exclusively for such purposes the Parish, all outstanding debts shall be paid and the remaining assets, both real and personal, and including all property heretofore and hereinafter donated to the Parish, shall become the property of the Unitarian Universalist Association, 24 Farnsworth Street, Boston, Massachusetts, or its successor, subject to all applicable laws for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code or corresponding section of any future tax code. Any such assets not disposed of shall be disposed of by a court of competent jurisdiction in Middlesex County of Massachusetts, exclusively for such purposes or to such organization or organizations, as said Court shall determine, which are organized and operated exclusively for such purposes. Any action to dissolve the Church must be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of eligible Voting Members of the Church present at a meeting called to specifically consider such action, for which meeting written

notice has been issued to all Members eligible to vote in accordance with the provisions of these bylaws.

Article XII (Amendments) These by-laws may be amended only by majority acceptance of proposed revisions substantially as included in the warrant of any Regular or Special Meetings of the Parish.

CHARTER OF STANDING COMMITTEES

Members and Friends of the Parish may join committees through appointment, recruitment, or volunteering to fill vacancies. In order to facilitate fresh and diverse voices, as well as opening opportunities for all Parish members to participate, leadership should ideally be reviewed annually and cycled off at least every four years. However, consideration of each particular committee's functionality and the expertise required to fulfill its responsibilities must be the priority when considering leader/membership change.

BEST PRACTICES AND DUTIES COMMON TO ALL COMMITTEES:

- *to hold the first meeting within one month of the Annual Parish Meeting to elect a chair to ensure readiness for the new Church year in September;*
- *to present a written report to the Parish Board for inclusion in the Annual Report of the Parish;*
- *to present a proposed budget to the Parish Board for use in planning the Annual Canvass;*
- *to create opportunities for Parish members and friends to assist in fulfilling the duties of the committee;*
- *to meet as needed and, at the least, three times throughout the Church year in order to fulfill the committee goals;*
- *to maintain communications with the Congregation via the newsletter, announcements, and other means;*
- *to maintain communication with the Parish Board via the Parish Council and send a representative to meetings of the Parish Council;*
- *to take minutes of meetings, and share lessons learned from events and ensure these are accessible to members of all committees;*
- *to create, review or revise the committee charter and obtain its approval from the Parish Board.*

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

Purpose

The Environmental Justice Committee helps facilitate and coordinate action in personal, congregational, and civic spheres for the Unitarian Universalist (UU) faith community to engage in an Environmental and Climate Justice Movement that seeks to live fully through our UU shared values towards achieving our vision of a viable and just World for all.

Responsibilities:

- 1) Build awareness of the significance and complexity of environmental issues

- 2) Encourage personal, congregational, and civic lifestyle changes to promote sustainable living, especially reducing our energy imprint
- 3) Engage in community action on environmental issues
- 4) Strengthen the connection between spiritual place and Earth consciousness
- 5) Work to heal environmental injustices
- 6) Connect with the wider UU community
- 7) Maintain recognition as a UUA-certified Green Sanctuary Congregation

FAITH DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Purpose

In conjunction with the Minister of Faith Development (MFD) and the Director of Faith Development for Children (DFDC), the committee plans, organizes and coordinates a general program of faith development for all ages. There are four sub-groups of the committee focused on four different life stages in our congregation: children, junior youth, senior youth, and adults. The sub-groups work with the MFD (senior youth and adult) or DFDC (children and junior youth) on programming specific to that age group. The committee as a whole meet to plan multigenerational events for the congregation and share relevant updates and ideas between sub-groups.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Purpose

The Finance Committee shall review and provide guidance to the Board and Parish on financial matters.

Responsibilities:

- 1) Review financial reports and identify issues that the Board may need to address in relation to the budget
- 2) Provide financial advice to the Parish Board and Leadership Team on financial questions identifying issues and potential options
- 3) Manage the preparation of the annual budget for approval by the Parish Board
- 4) Present the annual budget for final approval at the Annual Meeting
- 5) Formulate operating fiscal policy of the Parish
- 6) Forecast long-term strategic fiscal health of the Parish
- 7) Maintain active communication with staff, committees, Parish Board, and the Congregation as a whole on the financial health of First Parish

Membership

Five (+) members to include:

- Treasurer serving as Chair
- Chair of the Stewardship Committee
- Chair or Member of the Endowment Committee

- Members at large (2+)

Other

- 1) The Finance Committee shall hold regularly scheduled meetings once per month or at a minimum of once per quarter, at an announced time and place and shall maintain a written record of their transactions
- 2) All decisions of the Finance Committee shall be by majority vote of those present with the provision that a quorum of four members be present for such a vote
- 3) All meetings shall be open to Parishioners

THE GALLERY@FIRST PARISH COMMITTEE

Purpose

The Gallery Committee maintains the gallery space in the church and provides three or four visual art shows each year, often with after-service receptions, sometimes with musical accompaniment provided by First Parish musicians. When people are in the Gallery for various events and meetings, they are able to enjoy the displayed art.

Responsibilities:

- 1) Provide art shows in the Gallery
- 2) Feature First Parish artists and sometimes include invited local artists
- 3) Offer Arts Ministry with related visual arts workshops
- 4) Contribute art to the Sunday morning focal pieces
- 5) Community participation will include hosting the Bedford Cultural Districts Artisan Fair

HOSPITALITY COMMITTEE

Purpose

The Hospitality Committee plans and implements hospitality and social activities.

Responsibilities:

- 1) Recruits volunteers to make coffee for community hour and clean up afterwards
- 2) Maintains the kitchen and its equipment
- 3) Keeps the kitchen supplied and organized
- 4) Organizes two major kitchen clean-ups annually, enlisting the help of Parish volunteers
- 5) Maintains the use of compostable materials with no single use plastics
- 6) Works closely with the Memorials Team

IMMIGRATION JUSTICE COMMITTEE

Purpose

The Immigration Justice team works to promote the just and compassionate treatment of immigrants and refugees through direct action, education, and advocacy.

Responsibilities:

- 1) Support immigrants and refugees in our community based on the UU principles of justice, equity, and compassion in human relations
- 2) Engage in community action and advocacy to address immigration injustices
- 3) Build awareness of the significance, complexity, and impact of immigration issues
- 4) Connect and share resources with the wider UU community, other faith communities, and social action organizations that focus on immigration justice

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

Responsibilities:

- 1) Plan and budget hardware and software related to information technology
- 2) Ensure legal use of technology that is consistent with our principles and values
- 3) Plan and manage hardware and software upgrades
- 4) Provide support to staff to solve technical problems
- 5) Provide technical assistance for creation or automation of business processes
- 6) Manage archival and backup of church data
- 7) Ensure the Worship Technology Team is supported for providing audio, video, and videoconferencing at church services and events

Membership

Under the umbrella of the Information Technology Committee is included the Worship Technology Teams, all of which work closely together. This allows for friends and members of the Congregation to access committee meetings and services when they are unable to attend in person. These currently include the Audio, Camera and Video/Zoom Teams.

INTERIORS COMMITTEE

Purpose

The Interiors Committee works to enhance the visual beauty and physical comfort of the interior space of the Church.

Responsibilities:

- 1) Identify areas within the church space that need attention
- 2) Research and make decisions about the use of a valuable addition of artwork, furniture, rugs, etc. when it is made
- 3) Consideration of gifts and loans within the guidelines of FP policies

LAY PASTORAL CARE COMMITTEE

Purpose

The Lay Pastoral Committee functions as an extension of the Congregation to comfort and assist Parishioners in a time of need. It works closely with the Senior Minister to support connections between the Ministers and Parishioners as requested or needed. Circumstances that may prompt contact with the LPC team include times of grief, illness, injury, disability, marital changes, relocation, unemployment, caregiving, isolation, job loss, inability to attend church, or other difficult life situations. Likewise, transitional times of celebration such as a marriage, an anniversary, a birth or adoption of a child/ grandchild, or a new opportunity may bring stress and the need for acknowledgement and extra support.

Responsibilities:

- 1) Availability to respond to Parishioners who are in need of extra emotional support in a time of transition
- 2) Confidential and appropriate information sharing between LPC Team Members of Parishioners requests to facilitate supportive response planning
- 3) Coordinates events to connect with Parishioners who may be homebound or having a difficult time with cards, visits, and an occasional meal
- 4) Activities include monthly card signing at community hour, hospital and home visits, Winter Holiday Cookie Express and Spring Flower Express delivery

Membership

No less than five members including the Senior Minister. Pastoral supervision and guidance provided by the Senior Minister and through the UUA Lay Pastoral Care training program.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Purpose

The Membership Committee provides orientation and integration of potential members through communication and programs; encourages prospective new and current members to participate fully in First Parish activities; and leads Parishioners as a welcoming community. The committee is organized into teams to support each of these mission areas.

Responsibilities:

The **Outreach Team** welcomes visitors, follows up on inquiries and conducts community outreach through personal contacts, with a view toward engaging prospective members. (Blue Connection Cards, Greeters, Welcome Table, Bedford Day).

The **Pathway to Membership Team** provides orientation, information, and guidance to prospective and new members with the aim of encouraging broad participation in church life. (New Member Sunday, FPB 101, FPB Bingo).

The **Sustaining Membership Team** brings together the First Parish community through communications and activities. (community gatherings and dinners, celebrates birthdays monthly, FPB photo directory).

MEMORIALS TEAM

Purpose

The mission of the Memorials Team is to support families celebrating the lives of their loved ones. Provides general coordination of the physical setup and special arrangements.

Responsibilities:

- 1) Set up coffee/tea service; linens; easels for photos, etc
- 2) Set up tables and chairs; is often facilitated by the sexton
- 3) Arranging for Video Team service assistance as necessary
- 4) Reach out to the congregation to supply food for a given Memorial service
- 5) Works closely with the Hospitality Committee

MUSIC COMMITTEE

Purpose

To support, advise, and promote excellence in our music program.

Responsibilities:

- 1) Assist the Music Director in the planning of the Church music program
- 2) Assist in the evaluation of the music program
- 3) Produce events with the goal of increasing community outreach
- 4) Raise funds for the general First Parish budget and other charities

Membership

The Music Committee should have no fewer than five members that represent the musical interests of the congregation, in addition to the Music Director and Organist as ex officio, non-voting members.

PARISH COUNCIL

Purpose

The Parish Council promotes communication and coordination between the Church committees, Leadership Team and Parish Board regarding Church programs, scheduling, and the development of the annual operating budget.

Responsibilities:

Council Chair:

- 1) Develops an agenda in coordination with the Leadership Team
- 2) Schedules and invites committee chairs and task force leaders to attend meetings
- 3) Facilitates the meetings
- 4) Ensures minutes are taken, approved and available to all members of committees
- 5) Promotes cooperation and supportive relationships among Committee Chairs, Parish Board Members, and Staff.

Committee Chairs:

- 1) Contributes to the development and implementation of the annual budget under the guidance of the Treasurer within the context of the long-term plan developed by the Parish Board
- 2) Consideration of budget requests for items that are not covered by the approved budget must go to the Treasurer who will direct the request, as appropriate

Members

Council Chair (appointed by the Parish Board); Minister of Faith Development; and all Committee Chairs (or their delegate), Fundraising Team Chairs (or their delegate) are encouraged and expected to participate.

PARTNER CHURCH COMMITTEE**Purpose**

The Partner Church aspires to be a link between First Parish and Unitarians around the world. It concentrates on supporting the decades-long relationship between First Parish and the Abásfalva Unitarian Church in the village Abásfalva in Transylvania (Romania).

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**Purpose**

The Personnel Committee will advocate for the inclusion of UU principles in the exercise of the Parish's responsibilities as employer. It will provide the Parish Board (representing the Parish as employer) and Staff (as employees) with advice and guidance for the establishment and implementation of responsible personnel policies and practices. The Personnel Committee will also monitor and report on the implementation of policies and programs.

Responsibilities:

- 1) Stay current with employee/employer issues in the Parish
- 2) Participate in establishing and recommending changes to compensation and benefit programs
- 3) Monitor and facilitate the implementation of a performance review program
- 4) Investigate and recommend policies and practices where needed
- 5) Assist in recruiting efforts, as needed

- 6) Consult with affected parties and facilitate resolution of perceived conflict in the performance of work duties
- 7) Assist in resolution of individual issues which might arise from time to time

Membership

The Personnel Committee will consist of three members, experienced in the management of church matters at First Parish and demonstrating strong capabilities in the personnel management area. Members will be appointed by and serve at the convenience of the Parish Board.

PHYSICAL PLANT COMMITTEE

Purpose

The Physical Plant Committee members are stewards of the health, function, and maintenance of the Church building, the parsonage and the grounds belonging to the Parish.

Responsibilities:

- 1) Plans and supervises the maintenance, repair and improvement of the church building, parsonage and the grounds of each
- 1) Supervises the maintenance of equipment and fixtures of the church building, parsonage and grounds
- 2) Proposes long-range plans for the maintenance and enhancement of the properties to the Parish Board and the Parish
- 3) Works with the Parish Board on capital budget planning
- 4) Interfaces with tenants such as wireless carriers to facilitate beneficial leases

Members

Physical Plant Committee members are often skilled in building repair and/or knowledgeable about building systems; however, an interest/skill set in preservation and skills in project management are equally important and welcome.

STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

Purpose

The Stewardship Committee conducts the annual budget drive and collaborates on future capital fund drives; integrating these infrequent requests with the annual budget drive.

The Committee will focus its attention on how an individual's financial participation will enable the Parish to fulfill its mission most effectively. The objective is to engage every donor in taking responsibility for giving financial support to the Church. The Stewardship Members provide an additional vehicle for in-depth dialogue with Congregants, including opportunities for questions, answers and feedback.

Responsibilities:

- 1) Organize and conduct the annual budget drive
- 2) Develop concept of Stewardship within the parish
- 3) Coordination of all aspects of the Stewardship program
- 4) Follow up to ensure that commitment forms are received
- 5) Identify candidates for Stewardship Moments during the annual campaign
- 6) Provide graphics to convey progress during the annual campaign
- 7) Assist office staff in the creation and distribution of pledge materials

Members

The Parish Board will recruit two co-chairs for staggered two year terms. The co-chairs will then recruit the remainder of the team with the assistance of the Nominating Committee.

Treasurer's Financial Report for FY26, July 1 , 2025-June 30, 2026

As is our practice each year, the Year-End Financial Report will be published later this summer. This allows sufficient time to properly close the books for the fiscal year and to develop the dashboards we use for monitoring our finances. These dashboards will be presented at our semi-annual meeting in November.

We've had a busy and an exciting year running a capital campaign in addition to our annual pledge drive. The capital campaign exceeded both our goals and our expectations so we should be able to take care of many of the building needs.

Special thanks to our Office Manager Brenda Rybicki for keeping the office up and running while hiring a new assistant. Unfortunately for us, the new assistant reassessed her decision and decided to move to a new online, part time job that was a better fit for her needs. Luckily, Brenda stepped up, took on additional tasks, and found Claudia to support the work of the church.

Since we migrated to keeping our books as a nonprofit organization about two years ago, it has been much easier to make sense of the budget and keep track of expenses. The transition from QuickBooks to QuickBooks Online is complete. Our bookkeeper has successfully cleaned up our accounting. Our bookkeeper can now be laser focused on our current financial functioning. We have taken the normal draw from the endowment which is transferred to our Reserve Fund with Fidelity. The Reserve Fund continues to be invested in Money Market Funds with Fidelity which allows the Reserve Fund to Grow at about 3.3% annually.

When our HVAC systems began to fail (including one which failed entirely during the heating season), the decision was made to run a Capital Campaign. Since all the HVAC systems were originally installed at the same time, we consulted our HVAC company about our options. It became clear that the other three systems were on their last legs and would not make it through the next heating system. Armed with the knowledge that we would need to fund these major repairs or replacements and with the guidance from a UUA consultant, we began a Capital Campaign. The next task was to study our beautiful building to see what else was in need of repair. Special Listening sessions were held to be sure we knew what the building needed and what were the priorities for the congregation. GreenerU was also hired to assist us in understanding how to work toward a greener building. We learned a lot from them and were surprised to hear they recommended replacing many of our windows. As a result of discussions held by The Capital Campaign Committee under the leadership of Peter Chou and input from our Capital Campaign Consultant recommended by the UUA, the goal of \$1,500,000 was decided upon. The generosity of our church family became clear when we exceeded the goal. We are still looking for a greater percent of participation from our church families. As in any large building, there are always many projects waiting to be completed and ready to be added to the priority list.

Again with the aid of our consultant, the Pledge Campaign and the Capital Campaign were run at the same time.

FY 25-26 Overview

Our fiscal year is 12 months (July 1, 2025-June 30, 2026). We can do a direct comparison with the July 1, 2024-June 30, 2025 budget.

Income:

Our Cash flow was positive throughout the year.

Income Notes: The Plant Fair was very successful. We were fortunate with a perfect day and lots of help from the congregation. We were so successful with the Plant Fair the decision was made to share \$1000.00 with our local Food Pantry. The Food Pantry serves about 80 families weekly.

Expenses:

One of the HVAC systems needed to be replaced during the heating system. The final task to repair the steeple was completed with the installation of the railings were completed.

Overview of FY26-27 (July 1, 2026-June 30, 2027) proposed budget. As always, the budget is a planning document that may change as the year progresses. This year's budget is for 12 months and can be compared to last year's 12 month budget.

FY 26 Estimated Income:

- The Stewardship drive which occurred at the same time as the Capital Campaign hit its goal. Because the Capital Campaign and the pledge drive were running at the same time, the goal for this year's pledge drive was the same as last year's \$560,000.
- Both the regular pledge drive and the Capital Campaign drive were a great Success!!!
- We received pledges of \$576,000 with a 91% participation.
- The Capital Campaign received pledges of \$1,706,060, at 113 pledges with a 56.6% participation. We are hoping for a greater participation percentage since there are still more projects which need our attention to care for our beautiful building like replacing more windows so our building will be more energy efficient. We were very hesitant to have the original Capital Campaign goal be too high.

FY 26 Estimated Expenses:

- The largest expense is the staff. In order to reach closer to being a Fair Compensation church, all staff received a 4% raise. Since the UUA raised our Geo index last year from Geo 5 to Geo 6, we are playing catch up. The 4% raise is a step in reaching the goal of Geo index 6. Since some of our staff have chosen not to be part of the UUA health plan that has helped our budget. The cost of building and liability insurance continues to rise.
- We have hired a new office assistant for 25 hours a week.
- UUA Health Insurance rose 20% this year.
- Electricity and water bills reflect the actual usage.
- A pause on building and general reserves was held at zero since the Capital Campaign will probably cover those costs.
- Committee expenses remained almost the same.
- Program expenses remain even.
- We have hired a new part time custodian.
- We continue seeing inflation on contract costs and supply costs.

This is my second year as your Treasurer. It is an honor to continue in this role. During the mid year, I had to begin the learning process of keeping track of stock donations. We have received many stock donations to help support the Capital Campaign. The monthly financial reports from the bookkeeper are reviewed by Jamie and me. We are now using a summary report for the board.

The 2025-2026 First Parish Finance Committee is composed of six members: Vicki Gaw as Assistant Treasurer, Joan Bowen, Irene Gravina, Bill Rabinowitz as Stewardship chair, Jeff White and Thomas Flannery. I convene our regular meetings on the Monday before the Parish board meetings each month so we can review any financial concerns and present a report at the monthly board meeting. (Note: We do not meet in July.)

All Finance Committee meetings are open to the congregation and are held virtually. Please reach out to me if you would like to attend.

-Wendy Innis, Treasurer

First Parish in Bedford
Draft Budget for FY 2026-2027 - Summary

	FY25-26 Final	FY26-27 Draft	
<u>Income</u>			
Church Rentals	\$ 25,000	\$ 28,000	
Grant, Fundraising, Donations	\$ 82,200	\$ 82,500	
Steeple Lease	\$ 149,796	\$ 118,000	Sprint lease retired
Endowment Transfers	\$ 82,831	\$ 81,700	
Pledge Income	\$ 577,467	\$ 598,800	
Xfer from Reserves	\$ 11,000	\$ -	
Total Income	\$ 928,294	\$ 909,000	
<u>Expenses</u>			
Church Community	\$ 10,600	\$ 11,100	
Church Outreach (Partner Church & SRC)	\$ 13,600	\$ 13,600	
Communications	\$ 4,800	\$ 4,800	
Denominational Affairs	\$ 43,970	\$ 46,550	
Non-Salary Office & Admin	\$ 65,179	\$ 53,970	No capital campaign consultant fees in 2026-2027
Non-Salary Music (includes Sunday pianist)	\$ 17,492	\$ 18,791	Pianist comp adjusted \$175 to \$200 per service Electric bill adj. to reflect solar savings
Non-Salary Physical Plant	\$ 64,724	\$ 49,970	
Non-Salary Religious Ed	\$ 10,600	\$ 11,000	
Worship Services	\$ 2,805	\$ 2,805	
Senior Minister	\$ 153,350	\$ 163,752	
Minister of Faith Development	\$ 139,462	\$ 147,127	
Intern Minister	\$ -	\$ 18,236	
Director of Faith Development for Children	\$ 101,085	\$ 105,081	
Parish Administrator	\$ 101,136	\$ 108,011	
Office Assistant	\$ 44,894	\$ 42,982	
Music Director	\$ 28,014	\$ 29,175	
Children's Music Director	\$ 20,677	\$ 22,579	
Organist	\$ 14,871	\$ 15,488	
Sexton	\$ 19,676	\$ 20,492	
Nursery Care Provider	\$ 4,800	\$ 4,800	
Total Expense	\$ 861,735	\$ 890,309	
Staff - Note 1	UUA health insurance costs up 20% this year		
Staff - Note 2	Personnel recommended across the board 4% increase to staff salaries		
Net Operating Income	\$ 66,559	\$ 18,691	
<u>Operations Allocations</u>			
Bldg Maint Fund Alloc	\$ 40,000	\$ -	
Gen Reserve Alloc	\$ 10,000	\$ -	
Instrument Maint Fund Alloc	\$ 2,200	\$ 2,200	
Parental Leave Reserve Alloc	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	
Parsonage Maint Alloc	\$ 8,650	\$ 8,650	
Total Operations Allocations	\$ 65,850	\$ 15,850	
Net Income	\$ 709	\$ 2,841	

	A	B	D	E	F
1	Draft Budget for FY 2026-2027		FY25-26	FY26-27	
2			Final	Draft	
3					
4	Income				
5					
6		Xfer from General Reserves	11,000.00	-	
7		Church Usage	25,000.00	28,000.00	
8		General Donations	20,000.00	20,000.00	
9		Matching Donations	6,000.00	6,000.00	
10		Sunday Offering	25,000.00	25,000.00	
11		Auction	12,500.00	12,500.00	
12		Music & Concerts Fundraising	2,500.00	2,500.00	
13		Other Fundraising Events	1,500.00	1,500.00	
14		Plant Fair	2,500.00	5,000.00	
15		Blinn Fund	6,700.00	4,500.00	
16		Solar Production Income	5,500.00	5,500.00	
17		Total Grant, Fundraising, Donations	\$ 107,200.00	\$ 110,500.00	
18		Steeple Lease	\$ 149,796.00	\$ 118,000.00	
19		Endowment Transfers			
20		Endow Trf For Operations	76,131.00	75,000.00	
21		Endow Trf From SRC Endow	6,700.00	6,700.00	
22		Total Endowment Transfers	\$ 82,831.00	\$ 81,700.00	
23		Pledge Income - Current Year	547,904.00	560,000.00	
24		Pledge Income - Prior Year	30,000.00	30,000.00	
25		Shrinkage	-16,437.12	-11,200.00	
26		New Pledges	16,000.00	20,000.00	
27		Total Pledge Income	\$ 577,466.88	\$ 598,800.00	
28		Total NonPledge Income	\$ 350,827.00	\$ 310,200.00	
29		Total Income	\$ 928,293.88	\$ 909,000.00	
30					
31	Expense				
32		Church Community			
33		Art Gallery	1,000.00	1,000.00	
34		Environmental Justice Exp	800.00	800.00	
35		Fundraising Event Programs	0.00		
36		Immigration Justice Team	500.00	1,000.00	
37		Hospitality	4,000.00	4,000.00	
38		Lay Leadership Training	0.00	0.00	
39		Lay Pastoral Care	200.00	200.00	
40		Ministers Disc Fund Contribution	1,500.00	1,500.00	
41		Membership	1,000.00	1,000.00	
42		PILOT	1,000.00	1,000.00	
43		Staff Appreciation	600.00	600.00	
44		Total Church Community	\$ 10,600.00	\$ 11,100.00	
45		Total NO - Partner Church	1,600.00	1,600.00	

	A	B	D	E	F
1	Draft Budget for FY 2026-2027		FY25-26	FY26-27	
2			Final	Draft	
3					
46		SRC Admin & Grants	12,000.00	12,000.00	
47		Total Church Outreach	\$ 13,600.00	\$ 13,600.00	
48		Communications			
49		Total Info Tech	3,000.00	3,000.00	
50		Improvements/AV	1,000.00	1,000.00	
51		Supplies	200.00	200.00	
52		Web Hosting	600.00	600.00	
53		Total Communications	\$ 4,800.00	\$ 4,800.00	
54		Denominational Affairs			
55		GA Delegate Fund	1,050.00	1,000.00	
56		Mass Council of Churches	50.00	50.00	
57		UU Mass Action	7,000.00	7,000.00	
58		UU Urban Ministry Dues	500.00	500.00	
59		UUA Annual Prog Fund	35,370.00	38,000.00	
60		Total Denominational Affairs	\$ 43,970.00	\$ 46,550.00	
61		General Admin			
62		Bookkeeping Fees	10,000.00	10,000.00	
63		Bank & e-Payment Fees	500.00	500.00	
64		Canvass/Stewardship Expenses	20,000.00	1,000.00	
65		Furnishings/Interiors	1,500.00	1,500.00	
66		Insurance Exp	19,879.00	20,370.00	
67		Misc. Expense	1,325.00	4,200.00	
68		Office Equipment Maint	4,300.00	4,600.00	
69		Payroll Service	3,700.00	5,600.00	
70		Payroll Tax Exp - Mass Health	125.00	200.00	
71		Postage	1,750.00	1,400.00	
72		Professional Expenses	450.00	300.00	
73		Marketing	750.00	2,000.00	
74		Supplies	900.00	2,300.00	
75		Total Non-Salary Office & Admin	\$ 65,179.00	\$ 53,970.00	
76		Office Assistant			
77		FICA	2,834.25	2,752.78	
78		Insurance			
79		Dental insurance repayment			
80		Disability	491.00	647.71	
81		Health	0.00	0.00	
82		Health insurance repayment			
83		Pension	3,779.00	3,598.00	
84		Salary	37,789.50	35,984.00	25 hours a week
85		Total Office Assistant	\$ 44,893.75	\$ 42,982.49	
86		Parish Admin			
87		FICA	5,276.00	5,597.05	

	A	B	D	E	F
1	Draft Budget for FY 2026-2027		FY25-26	FY26-27	
2			Final	Draft	
3					
88		Insurance			
89		Disability	915.00	951.60	
90		Health	16,969.00	20,362.00	UUA Health insurance went up 20% this year
91		Life	591.00	620.55	
92		Pension	7,035.00	7,316.00	
93		Salary	70,350.00	73,164.00	
94		Total Parish Admin	\$ 101,136.00	\$ 108,011.20	
95		Total General Admin	\$ 211,208.75	\$ 204,963.68	
96		Ministry			
97		Faith Development Minister			
98		FICA Benefit	7,438.10	7,735.62	
99		Housing	27,000.00	27,000.00	
100		Insurance			
101		Disability	1,264.00	1,314.56	
102		Health	14,990.00	17,988.00	
103		Life	817.00	857.85	
104		Pension	9,723.00	10,112.00	
105		Prof. Exp	8,000.00	8,000.00	
106		Salary	70,230.00	74,119.00	
107		Total Faith Development Minister	\$ 139,462.10	\$ 147,127.03	
108		Nursery Care Provider			
109		FICA Benefit	300.00	300.00	
110		Salary	4,500.00	4,500.00	
111		Total Nursery Care Provider	\$ 4,800.00	\$ 4,800.00	
112		Senior Minister			
113		FICA Benefit	9,450.00	10,024.56	
114		Parsonage Expense (utilities)	6,400.00	6,400.00	
115		Housing Equity Fund	6,000.00	6,500.00	
116		Insurance			
117		Disability	1,638.00	1,703.52	
118		Health	16,604.00	20,269.00	
119		Life	1,058.00	1,110.90	
120		Pension	12,600.00	13,104.00	
121		Prof. Exp. - Sr. Minister	8,000.00	8,000.00	
122		Salary	91,600.00	96,640.00	
123		Total Senior Minister	\$ 153,350.00	\$ 163,751.98	
124		Intern (500-750 hrs per yr, 2 years)			
125		Salary		13,800.00	
126		FICA		1,055.70	
127		Health Insurance			
128		Professional Expenses		2,000.00	

	A	B	D	E	F
1	Draft Budget for FY 2026-2027		FY25-26	FY26-27	
2			Final	Draft	
3					
129		Pension		1,380.00	
130		Total Intern		\$ 18,235.70	
131		Worship Services			
132		Guest Speakers	1,155.00	1,155.00	
133		Holiday Decorations	200.00	200.00	
134		Signing	200.00	200.00	
135		Supplies	1,250.00	1,250.00	
136		Total Worship Services	\$ 2,805.00	\$ 2,805.00	
137		Total Ministry	\$ 300,417.10	\$ 336,719.71	
138		Music			
139		Organist			
140		Organist FICA	1,037.00	1,100.61	
141		Organist Salary	13,834.00	14,387.00	
142		Total Organist	\$ 14,871.00	\$ 15,487.61	
143		Children's Music Director			
144		FICA	1,469.41	1,604.51	
145		Salary	19,208.00	20,974.00	
146		Total Children's Music Director	\$ 20,677.41	\$ 22,578.51	
147		Music Director			
148		FICA	1,954.00	2,073.30	
149		Salary	26,060.00	27,102.00	
150		Total Music Director	\$ 28,014.00	\$ 29,175.30	
151		Guest Musicians	9,172.00	10,232.00	Steve per service honorarium increase \$175 to \$200
152		Misc. Supplies & Equip	357.00	375.00	
153		Second Accomp	2,835.00	2,975.00	
154		Music Purchases	1,820.00	1,820.00	
155		Piano & Organ Maint Exp	1,654.00	1,735.00	
156		Prof. Expenses	1,654.00	1,654.00	
157		Total Non-Salary Music	\$ 17,492.00	\$ 18,791.00	
158		Total Music	\$ 81,054.41	\$ 86,032.42	
159		Physical Plant			
160		Sexton FICA	1,372.00	1,456.27	
161		Sexton Wages	18,304.00	19,036.16	
162		Total Sexton	\$ 19,676.00	\$ 20,492.43	
163		ADT Monthly Monitoring Fee	1,520.00	1,520.00	
164		Cleaning	3,000.00	3,000.00	
165		Electricity & Water	15,750.00	1,200.00	Adjusted to reflect actual expenses
166		Elevator Maint	4,727.00	4,725.00	
167		Fire Protection	10,500.00	10,200.00	
168		General Repairs	5,250.00	5,250.00	
169		HVAC Maintenance	6,405.00	6,400.00	

	A	B	D	E	F
1	Draft Budget for FY 2026-2027		FY25-26	FY26-27	
2			Final	Draft	
3					
170		Landscape Maint	982.00	985.00	
171		Natural Gas	7,350.00	7,350.00	
172		Parsonage Expenses	5,250.00	5,350.00	
173		Supplies	3,990.00	3,990.00	
174		Urgent Repairs	0.00	0.00	
175		Total Non-Salary Physical Plant	\$ 64,724.00	\$ 49,970.00	
176		Total Physical Plant	\$ 84,400.00	\$ 70,462.43	
177		Religious Ed			
178		Committee Expenses			
179		New Line Items			Changing the line items that we allocate the faith dev budget to
180		Children	NA	2,500.00	
181		Jr. Youth	NA	2,000.00	
182		Sr. Youth	NA	3,500.00	
183		Adult	NA	1,000.00	
184		Multigen	NA	2,000.00	
185		Old Line Items			
186		Curriculum & Equipment	800.00	NA	
187		Enrichment	500.00	NA	
188		Field Trip Scholarships	300.00	NA	
189		Food & Snacks	3,500.00	NA	
190		OWL Training/COA	1,000.00	NA	
191		Supplies	1,500.00	NA	
192		Teacher & Volunteer Appreciation	1,000.00	NA	
193		Youth Prog Exp - Jr. & Sr.	2,000.00	NA	
194		Total Committee Expenses	\$ 10,600.00	\$ 11,000.00	
195		Director Faith Devel Children			
196		FICA	6,063.00	6,432.43	
197		Insurance			
198		Disability	964.00	1,002.56	
199		Health	0.00	0.00	
200		Life	623.00	654.15	
201		Pension	8,085.00	8,408.00	
202		Prof. Exp.	4,500.00	4,500.00	
203		Salary	80,850.00	84,084.00	
204		Total Director Faith Devel Children	\$ 101,085.00	\$ 105,081.14	
205		Total Religious Ed	\$ 111,685.00	\$ 116,081.14	
206		Total Expense	\$ 861,735.26	\$ 890,309.37	
207					
208		Net Operating Income	\$ 66,558.62	\$ 18,690.63	
209					
210		Operations Allocations			

	A	B	D	E	F
1	Draft Budget for FY 2026-2027		FY25-26	FY26-27	
2			Final	Draft	
3					
211		Bldg Maint Fund Alloc	\$ 40,000	\$ -	Pause on building up bldg and gen reserves during launch of capital campaign
212		Gen Reserve Alloc	\$ 10,000	\$ -	
213		Instrument Maint Fund Alloc	\$ 2,200	\$ 2,200	
214		Parental Leave Reserve Alloc	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	
215		Parsonage Maint Alloc	\$ 8,650	\$ 8,650	
216		Total Operations Allocations	\$ 65,850.00	\$ 15,850.00	
217					
218		Net Income	\$ 708.62	\$ 2,840.63	
219					