

INTRODUCTION TO DECLARATION OF CONSCIENCE

At the June 10, 2018 Annual Meeting, the members of First Parish will be asked to vote to adopt a Declaration of Conscience developed by our Faith in Action committee, headed by Marianne Hill. The Declaration of Conscience is an outcome of the justice ministry survey of the congregation. When the congregation was asked what focus justice work at First Parish should have, the answer receiving the most 'votes' was 'all of the above'. We want to 'do it all' — but what specifically does that mean? Faith in Action invited comments on the draft and revised it over several months. The final text is below.

Just as a 'welcoming congregation' is recognized as welcoming to the LGBTQ community, a congregation that has adopted this Declaration of Conscience will be seen as committed to justice: for the immigrant community, for blacks, for those working to ensure access to a living wage or to health care, etc. A vote "yes" indicates a belief that implies commitment. It shows what our principles mean in practice. It will be a useful tool for outreach. It provides a ready answer for questions about where First Parish stands on some key issues today.

In line with our democratic principles, this Declaration of Conscience will not be a First Parish Portland Declaration of Conscience unless it is adopted by vote of the congregation. The text of the proposed Declaration is below.

First Parish Declaration of Conscience -- As revised by FIA, 4/22/2018

At this extraordinary time in our nation's history, we are called to affirm our profound commitment to the fundamental principles of justice, equity and compassion, and to the search for truth, peace and freedom.

In the face of looming threats to immigrants, Muslims, people of color and the LGBTQ community, and the rise of hate speech, harassment and hate crimes, we affirm our belief in the inherent worth and dignity of every person.

We are committed to justice and compassion in human relations. We affirm the right of every citizen to vote. We call on our elected officials to protect the voice of citizens, ensuring the integrity of elections and voter initiatives, and respecting the outcomes of such processes.

We believe that all should have access to health care, including reproductive health care services, and that every worker should have access to a job that pays a living wage.

We affirm our unyielding commitment to protect the interdependent web of all existence. We fully support actions and initiatives to address the threat of climate change. We oppose any actions that would weaken measures that have been taken to protect our planet.

We will oppose any and all unjust government actions to detain/imprison, deport, register, discriminate, and/or seize or damage possessions of immigrant populations. We recognize immigrants as assets to our community.

As people of conscience, we declare our commitment to translate our values into action. We are on the side of love with the most vulnerable among us.

We welcome all to join in this commitment for justice.

The time is now.