

President Friedman's Address  
Annual Meeting June 12, 2022  
Taryn Friedman

Welcome to the First In-Person annual meeting in 3 years! And the very first HYBRID Annual Meeting! Yay Technology. It is exciting to be here with all of you both in person and virtually. This is my first time running an annual meeting so it should be an adventure! I want to say how grateful I am that First Parish is alive and well. We have had many ups and downs in the last year and we have also accomplished a lot despite spending 7 and a half months doing virtual Sunday services. I want to express gratitude and thanks to many people. I want to thank Reverend Elaine, Hannah Gilman, Laurie Hasty, Toben Cooney Callnan, and Moe Blanchard for working so hard to keep First Parish going on a daily basis. The work that all of you have done and continue to do is an inspiration, impactful, and so appreciated. I want to thank the members of the Transition Team: Marcy Makinen, Bruce Carver, Sammy Riegel-Burbank, Jen Caswell, John Schaberg, Angus Ferguson, and Richard Hooks Wyman for the work they did this year facilitating the formation of the Ministerial Search Committee. I want to thank the folks who have stepped up to serve on the Ministerial Search Committee: Mary Wheeler, Jake Kulaw, Jason Shedlock, Jenn McAdoo, Sue Cook, Tom Rogers, and Allen Armstrong. I'm really excited about this team of people. I will sleep well at night knowing they are on the mission to find our next called Minister. And I want to thank the amazing members of the Governing Board this year: Jeff Logan, Jamie Jarvis, Emily Bolt, Patty Renaud, Jake Kulaw, Kathy Vezina, and Yvette McDonnell. I thank all of you so much for your contributions, your time, and energy to help govern and care for our beloved Ministry and church community.

These people have been so giving of their time and talent to help this congregation thrive. And yet First Parish is struggling and in need of more people and financial resources. I have so much empathy and compassion for the folks who I reached out to during my board member recruiting process. I know that so many of us are tired, stressed, overworked, overcommitted, and very much in need of more and more self care during these difficult times. We need this amazing church community and all that it brings to our lives more than ever! And yet, keeping our spiritual home alive takes many hands.

It was an awe inspiring endeavor that we worked as a congregation for the Church for Everybody Campaign. If we can come together for a major building renovation to renew and strengthen the bones of our *physical* church, I believe that we can also come together to ensure we have the financial nutrients to fuel our daily operations, support our staff, and share the load as volunteer committee members. If this building is the bones of our congregation, our amazing First Parish staff are the lungs, heart, veins, and arteries of this church. In this upcoming fiscal year's budget, we came up \$30,000 short. We had to make some significant cuts and adjustments to make it all work. The impact of those cuts mostly falls on our staff. For example, Instead of having the budget to give Laurie Hasty more hours, she has to make due with the hours we can pay her which results in her working hours each week that she is not getting paid for in order for all of the work to get done. Or another example, instead of having the budget to hire Toben full time, he needs to remain another year splitting his time between First Parish and

Brunswick which is not ideal or energetically sustainable. Instead of having the budget to hire a part time communications person, Hannah and Laurie continue to do the best they can managing all the weekly tasks they both do and keep up with everything entailed in communications. I know that there have been a lot of questions. Asks to pledge more, asks to give to the Church for Everybody campaign, asks to sell raffle tickets. I think that the asks for all of those things would not hold so much weight if some more folks would step up to join the Stewardship committee to bring back some of the smaller scale fundraisers to offset the deficit we are experiencing right now.

Years ago, I spent time working on an educational Schooner in Puget Sound in Washington State. It was a 101 foot long schooner and took about 20-30 people to raise the MainSail. Working there I truly learned the meaning of “many hands make light work.” When we were anchored in the various harbors we would visit, everyone took turns doing a 2 hour watch during the night to make sure we were not dragging our anchor and drifting into other boats or towards land or deeper waters. First Parish is like that old schooner. She requires that everyone takes a watch through the night. She requires everyone to take a turn at the helm, a turn swabbing the deck, a turn cooking the meals, a turn charting the course, a turn raising the sails, a turn cleaning the heads, a turn being the captain, and a turn being a deckhand.....it all needs to get done. Was it painful dragging myself out of my cozy bunk at 2am for a middle of the night watch? Heck yeah it was painful! But you know...the stars were so brilliantly beautiful and Puget Sound was so peaceful and serene. Sometimes I would see or hear a dolphin surface nearby or see phosphorescent plankton in the water and witnessing all of that made it totally worthwhile! I'm here to remind you that stepping up to serve is not only about your output. It's about allowing yourself to be present to receive the gifts that come when you sign up for a watch.

In 12 step recovery it is said you can't keep it unless you give it away. Your spiritual, emotional intellectual cup will only be filled if you pour it out to others. If you try to stash away your recovery acorns and only save them for yourself, they will just rot and go to waste. You can't keep it unless you give it away.

Next I want to talk about our Vision Goal. The Governing Board's Vision for the 2022-23 Fiscal Year is to inspire the First Parish Congregation to adopt the 8th Principle of Unitarian Universalism. This was our Vision goal for this past year and we misjudged the length of time it would take to accomplish the goal of educating First Parish about the 8th Principle so that we could put it to a vote today. So we have turned this into a 2 year vision goal. Our mission to spread the word about the 8th Principle starts today.

The 8th Principle States: “We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.”

I'd like give you some history on the 8th Principle by reading this excerpt from the Unitarian Church of Evanston's website which was adapted from the information on the Black Lives of UU website: *It has been over 20 years since delegates at the 1997 General Assembly (GA) voted to require the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) to intentionally commit to become a multicultural and anti-racist institution. This act came some 5 years after the passage of the 1992 Resolution of Immediate Witness which, in part, affirmed the "vision of a racially diverse and multicultural Unitarian Universalism." The proposed 8th Principle is a call to action to explicitly address these multicultural and anti-racist goals.*

*The 8th Principle was written by Bruce Pollack-Johnson and Paula Cole Jones in 2013. Since then, over 102 congregations and UU organizations in 23 states and DC have adopted the 8th Principle. Black Lives of UU (BLUU) Organizing Collective affirms the adoption of the 8th Principle and encourages all Unitarian Universalists to advocate for the formal adoption of the 8th Principle within their congregations and by the UUA.*

*The UUA commissioned an Article II Study Commission in 2020 to review the Principles and Sources in Article II of the UUA Bylaws. This review includes the proposal to add the 8th Principle. Congregations are being encouraged to discuss the 8th Principle, adopt it, and live into it in order to create a groundswell of support and encourage the Study Commission to include the 8th Principle in its recommendations to GA in 2023.*

First Parish took a stand and declared that we support the Black Lives Matter Movement. We hung a flag outside of our church. It is time that we do more than just put a flag outside of our building. And it is not enough that we have Principle #1 that states we believe in the inherent worth and dignity of every person or Principle #2 that we believe in Justice, Equity and compassion in all human relations. If our 7 principles as they stand were sufficient to heal the generational trauma that resides in Black, Brown, Indigenous and People of Color, the BIPOC members of Unitarian Universalism would not feel unheard, unseen, and excluded within the Unitarian Universalist Community. In general, if what we have been doing as a nation to create equality and justice for people with melanated skin was effective, the Black Lives Matter movement would not be needed and the 8th Principle would not be needed.

What we as a nation, especially all of us who are white, have been doing, has been far from enough to heal the generational trauma caused by our ancestors and to deconstruct the system of White Supremacy that we all participate in and uphold in our daily lives even when we are not aware that we are upholding it. The voices of Black, Brown, Indigenous and People of Color need to be lifted up and put front and center. Space needs to be held for their experience, their ideas, their reality, their struggles, their pain and their joy. It was made apparent by the departure of Yvette McDonnell from our Governing Board in December that it is the tendency of many white people, myself included, to center the voices of white people and not those of the BIPOC Community. For those of you who do not know and in the spirit of Truth Telling, Yvette McDonnell, a valuable member of our congregation, was serving on the Governing Board as an At-Large Member. She decided that she needed to step down from the board due to the

emotional impact the 8<sup>th</sup> Principle discussions had on her as we began to work through our discomfort, white fragility, and internalized racism. In response to Yvette's resignation, we embarked on a journey as a team to read and discuss the book "Me and White Supremacy" by Layla Saad. Through this work, we realized that we had considered ourselves to be "enlightened" about racism and fierce objectors to it. We thought, we are the exceptions! We are allies! However, we discovered that this feeling is not uncommon and has a name called "White Exceptionalism". If I may, I would like to paraphrase a paragraph from the book we are reading. This hit hard for many of us on the board: *White exceptionalism is particularly rampant in progressive, liberal, spiritual white people because there is a belief that these qualities make us exempt or above it all. It does not. And this belief makes us dangerous to BIPOC because we cannot see our own complicity and therefore see no need to change.*

We have subsequently doubled down on our commitment to learn how to deconstruct our own internalized racism and bring into the light the ways that we unconsciously uphold the system of White Supremacy and thus continue to cause harm to Black, Brown, Indigenous, and People of Color. We are learning that we still have a lot to do, and this is a lifetime journey.

I want to encourage all of you to read about the 8th Principle of Unitarian Universalism and why it was created. You can find information online at [8thPrincipleUU.org](http://8thPrincipleUU.org) and also at [blackliveuu.org](http://blackliveuu.org). The Governing Board will also be providing opportunities on select Sundays after church to pick up information about the 8th Principle and speak with the board about why we feel it is important to adopt this Principle into our congregation.