



# **First Parish in Portland**

A Unitarian Universalist Congregation

## **2021-22 Annual Report**

**Annual Meeting**  
**June 12, 2022**

# Table of Contents

<a href="#"><u>First Parish Mission &amp; Principles</u></a>	3
<a href="#"><u>Annual Meeting Rules of Procedure</u></a>	4
<a href="#"><u>Annual Meeting Agenda</u></a>	5
<a href="#"><u>Minutes of 2021 Annual Meeting</u></a>	6
<a href="#"><u>Governing Board Report</u></a>	12
<a href="#"><u>Board of Trustees Report</u></a>	15
<a href="#"><u>Ministry Leadership Team Report</u></a>	16
<a href="#"><u>Buildings and Grounds Committee Report</u></a>	17
<a href="#"><u>Chalice Groups Report</u></a>	17
<a href="#"><u>Membership Committee Report</u></a>	18
<a href="#"><u>Pastoral Care Team Report</u></a>	18
<a href="#"><u>Safe Congregation Committee Report</u></a>	19
<a href="#"><u>Library Committee Report</u></a>	19
<a href="#"><u>Pageant Committee Report</u></a>	20
<a href="#"><u>Personnel Committee Report</u></a>	20
<a href="#"><u>Faith-in-Action Committee Report</u></a>	21
<a href="#"><u>Racial Justice Team Report</u></a>	22
<a href="#"><u>Youth and Family Outreach Report</u></a>	23
<a href="#"><u>Finance and Stewardship Committees Report</u></a>	25
<a href="#"><u>Music Committee Report</u></a>	26
<a href="#"><u>Faith Formation Committee Report</u></a>	27
<a href="#"><u>Communications Team Report</u></a>	28
<a href="#"><u>Director of Faith Formation's Report</u></a>	29
<a href="#"><u>Membership Coordinator's Report</u></a>	31
<a href="#"><u>Sexton's Report</u></a>	33
<a href="#"><u>Congregational Administrator's Report</u></a>	34
<a href="#"><u>Interim Minister's Report</u></a>	37

## **First Parish Mission & Principles**

**The First Parish in Portland, Maine, Unitarian Universalist  
strives to manifest its mission to:**

Nurture the spirit,  
Grow in community, and  
Help heal the world.

**We affirm and promote the seven Unitarian Universalist principles:**

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

**THE FIRST PARISH IN PORTLAND, UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST**

**Annual Meeting Rules of Procedure**

- Rule 1      These Rules of Procedure shall not be amended or suspended during the course of the meeting, except by a two-thirds vote.
- Rule 2      The order of the Agenda, as adopted at the beginning of the meeting, shall not be amended during the course of the meeting.
- Rule 3      All matters not covered by these Rules of Procedure or the by-laws of The First Parish in Portland, Maine, Unitarian Universalist, shall be governed by *Robert's Rules of Order*.
- Rule 4      Any motion must be presented in writing via the chat function (via Zoom) whenever possible.
- Rule 5      Each speaker from the floor, whether member or non-member, may speak for up to three minutes per issue.

**THE FIRST PARISH IN PORTLAND, UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST**

**Annual Meeting Agenda**

**June 12, 2022**

<b>I.</b>	<b>Ingathering</b>	Recording/Musician - TBD
<b>II.</b>	<b>Welcome by President</b>	Taryn Friedman, Governing Board President
<b>III.</b>	<b>Invocation and Memorial Names</b>	The Reverend Dr. Elaine Beth Peresluha
<b>IV.</b>	<b>Call Meeting to Order</b>	Taryn Friedman
<b>V.</b>	<b>Confirmation of Quorum</b>	Emily Bolt, Clerk
<b>VI.</b>	<b>Adoption of Rules and Agenda</b>	Taryn Friedman
<b>VII.</b>	<b>Approval of Minutes of June 13, 2021</b>	
<b>VIII.</b>	<b>Reports</b>	a. Vote to Accept Reports of Officers, Trustees, Committees & Staff
<b>IX.</b>	<b>President's Address</b>	Taryn Friedman
<b>X.</b>	<b>Leadership Recognition</b>	Dirane Kelekyan, Ministry Leadership Team Chair Taryn Friedman
<b>XI.</b>	<b>New Business</b>	
	a. Discussion & Vote: FY 2023 Budget	Claire Cowan, Finance Chair
	b. Nomination of New Officers	Taryn Friedman
	i. Governing Board	
	ii. Board of Trustees	
	c. Interim Minister's Address	Reverend Peresluha
	d. Nomination of Ministerial Search Committee & Charge	Taryn Friedman
<b>XII.</b>	<b>Special Recognition of Ministry Teams</b>	Dirane Kelekyan MLT Liaisons
<b>XIII.</b>	<b>Vision Goal Update</b>	Taryn Friedman
<b>XIV.</b>	<b>Closing and Adjournment</b>	Taryn Friedman

**THE FIRST PARISH IN PORTLAND, UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST**

**Minutes of 2021 Annual Meeting  
via Zoom Sunday, June 13, 2021**

**I. Ingathering** by Scott Wheatley, Music Director

**II. Welcome** by Jason J. Shedlock, Governing Board President

**III. Chalice Lighting** by Reverend Christina Sillari, Minister

**IV. Invocation and Memorial Names** by Reverend Sillari

**V. Meeting Called to Order** at 10:40 am by Jason J. Shedlock

**VI. Confirmation of Quorum** verified by Jamie Jarvis, Clerk

**VII. Adoption of Rules and Agenda:** Motion to adopt the rules and agenda by Cate Lund. Seconded by Michael Pancock. Approved with one abstention.

**VIII. Approval of Minutes:** Motion to approve the minutes of the June 14, 2020 Annual Meeting made by Kathy Vezina. Seconded by Steve Jenks. Approved with one abstention.

**IX. Approval of Reports:** Motion to accept reports of Officers, Trustees, Committees & Staff made by Jen Stenberg. Seconded by Emily Bolt. Approved with one abstention.

**X. President's Address:** Jason congratulated FP for rising to the challenges posed by undergoing a major construction project while also dealing with a departing Congressional Administrator, a departing Minister, and the global pandemic over the past year. Our amazing accomplishments, despite these challenges, demonstrates that we are a church with heart and that we care deeply. This motivates us to manifest our principles and work together to continue to thrive.

A team was established to search for and hire an Interim Minister: thanks to Jen Caswell, Tony Lacertosa, Leslie Runser, Richard Burbank, Bruce Carver and Marcy Makinen (as well as Sammy Riegel-Burbank for editing assistance). Because of their outstanding work, Rev. Dr. Elaine Peresluha will begin her two year term as our Interim Minister on 8/23/21. Her first day in the pulpit will be 9/12/21. Jason provided us with highlights of Dr. Peresluha's credentials and experience. He also informed us that Rev. Mary Gelfand has graciously offered to provide spiritual guidance between July 1st and Rev. Peresluha's start date.

Lastly, Jason offered words of farewell to Rev. Christina. He emphasized our love for her as a teacher, principal, therapist, friend, and at times our "crazy

aunt.” He thanked her for teaching us “how to fish” and for leaving FP in a better position than when she began, honoring us with a legacy. We will have a service in June to honor Reverend Christina.

## **XI. Leadership Recognition:** Dirane Kelekyan, Ministry Leadership Team

Dirane recognized volunteers for their services, reminding us that *“When the best leader’s work is done, the people say, ‘We did it ourselves.’”* - Lao Tsu

### **Thanks to these outgoing leaders:**

Jason Shedlock, Outgoing Governing Board President

Tony Lacertosa, Outgoing At-large Governing Board Member

Marcy Makinen, Outgoing At-large Governing Board Member

Bill Adams, Outgoing Stewardship Chair

Heather Tricket, Outgoing Chalice Group Leader

Devin Green, Outgoing Chalice Group Leader

Dan Hughes, Outgoing Chalice Group Leader

### **Welcome to new leaders:**

Taryn Friedman, Governing Board President

Jeff Logan, Interim Governing Board VP

Yvette McDonnell, Governing Board At-large Member

Jake Kulaw, Governing Board At-large Member

Ted Oldham, Full-term Trustee

Jaimie Mulligan-Brooks, Faith-in-Action Co-chair

Kate Stenberg, Faith-in-Action Co-chair

Jen Stenberg, Safe Congregation Co-chair

Liz Wasilewski, Safe Congregation Co-chair

Susan Cook, Stewardship Chair

Barb DeSerres, Chalice Group Coordinator

Bob Fowler, Chalice Group Facilitator

Chris Minister, Chalice Group Facilitator

Jean Fahey, Chalice Group Facilitator

**Call for leaders.** Leadership is needed for:

Communications and Outreach. If interested, contact Dirane Kelekyan at [mlt@firstparishportland.org](mailto:mlt@firstparishportland.org)

And for

Buildings and Grounds. If interested contact Austin Farrar at [ahfarrar47@gmail.com](mailto:ahfarrar47@gmail.com)

## XII. New Business

### a. Discussion & Vote - FY 2022 Budget: Claire Cowan, Finance Chair

Despite all of the challenges, FP is in good financial shape. Claire expressed gratitude for congregant and community support of FP this year. FP also received both PPP loans which have helped to mitigate losses. One has already been forgiven and we expect the 2nd to be forgiven this summer, putting us in a good position for our new fiscal year.

Stewardship pledges are steady at about \$200K/year. The expected increase in revenue (compared to FY21) is 8% and the expected increase in expenses is 3%. In terms of expenditures, the new addition to our building will lead to some long term operating cost increases, such as upgrades to the internet.

Our greatest portion (76%) of expenditures continues to be our personnel costs. Even so, until now, the only employee we have provided with health insurance has been the Minister. Claire and Rev. Christina stressed that this is not aligned with our values. This year, we are happy to report that we will be offering health insurance for all full time staff. However, to be able to continue this, we must find new ways to increase revenue. Possible options might include: repeating the raffle, having a second large fundraiser, increasing special events (especially now with our accessibility improvements).

Claire emphasized that we ALL need to help in large and small ways. She asked us to think about our skill sets and how we can all assist. She also suggested that we consider recommending FP if we have a group looking for a place to meet, or if we know of someone getting married, etc. We will have a \$19K surplus this year which will go into a contingency fund to support our employee insurance

funding.

Motion to approve the budget for the FY 21-22 made by Sammy Reigel. Seconded by Taryn Friedman. Discussion followed with a question posed by Bob Zager. Bob asked why the line item for health insurance is decreased in the new budget. Claire explained that some of our full time staff will not need the coverage in the upcoming year. She alerted us that this number will fluctuate in the future, depending on staffing patterns and needs, so we will need to have enough in future budgets to keep our staff covered. Budget approved with one abstention.

**b. Nomination of New Officers:** Jason J. Shedlock

**Governing Board:** Jason thanked outgoing Governing Board members Tony Lacertosa and Marcy Makinen for their service and presented the slate of new Governing Board Members:

**Officer:** Jeff Logan *Interim Vice President*

**Members-at-Large:** Yvette McDonnell and Jake Kulaw

Motion by Mariann Hill to approve the new Officer and Board Members presented. Seconded by Marcy Makinen. Approved with one abstention.

**Board of Trustees:** Jason thanked our current Board of Trustees and presented Ted Oldham as the new full-term candidate.

Motion by Steve Jenks to approve Ted Oldham's election. Seconded by Patty Renaud. Approved with one abstention.

**c. Minister's Address:** Rev. Christina Sillari

Rev. Christina voiced her appreciation to all who were present at today's meeting. She said our presence here today and hard work including our work on the CFE, getting healthcare coverage for full time staff, and our virtual accessibility were among the many testaments to our commitment to FP.

Rev. Christina has been and will continue to be saying goodbye in different ways. She is not feeling sadness from leaving her role as Minister, but, rather, in leaving us. Rev. Christina explained that protocol dictates that she must separate from all of us for two years, protecting the congregation, the new Minister, and herself. She would like, however, to attend the celebration of the CFE, expected to occur in the Fall. Her ability to do so will depend on decisions by the Interim Minister and the Governing Board. Otherwise, she will be inaccessible after June 30th. She encouraged us to make an appointment via Hannah if we would like to meet with her before then. Reverend Christina ended by saying that leaving is difficult and liberating, as well as exciting, scary, and powerful. She expressed

great faith in us as a congregation and believes this will facilitate even deeper commitments to First Parish. She assured us that we know how to do the work and to manage transitions.

### **XIII. Special Recognition of Ministry Teams: Dirane Kelekyan**

Dirane expressed gratitude and praise to all of the teams at FP but wanted to give special recognition to two groups in particular:

#### **a. The Worship Committee**

Led by Jenna Nunziato, with members Jaimie Mulligan, Sarah Collins, Brenda Franey, Francesca Galluccio-Steele, Elizabeth Guest, Deena Hastings, and Kate Stenberg. The Committee, along with the Rev. Christina Sillari, Scott Wheatley, and Toben Cooney-Callnan, contributed to and led worship services. They quickly pivoted to online services, assuring that the services were well-developed, meaningful, and inspiring. Their dedication, energy, and enthusiasm enabled First Parish to remain a vibrant and engaged Congregation during unusual times.

#### **b. The Safe Congregation Committee**

Consisting of Jen Stenberg and Liz Wasilewski, co-chairs, Kip DeSerres, Christine Hey, and Trudy Ballock. Rev. Christina Sillari, Toben Cooney-Callnan, Hannah Gilman, Moe Blanchard, and Laurie Hasty (who also provided leadership the previous year) also attended. The SCC monitored COVID-related measures and made scientifically sound recommendations regarding when and how to safely open our building. In addition, they coordinated several other safety-related procedures, ranging from negotiating with a security company to securing sharps containers for discarded needles. The SCC members have been dependable, diligent, flexible, compassionate, sensitive to inclusion and equity, and highly professional.

### **XIV. Words from Our New Governing Board President: Taryn Friedman**

Taryn has been working on the Governing Board as the Interim Vice President for the past year. She introduced herself to us and provided a brief biographical sketch. She thanked Jason, outgoing Governing Board President, for his wisdom, compassion, humor, and perspective. She greatly appreciated his service and inspiration. She hopes to keep in close contact with him as she

transitions into her new role.

**New vision goal:** To set the stage for our new vision goal, Taryn read us the 8th UU Principle: "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." In alignment with this UU Principle, our new vision goal will focus on working toward building a diverse and multicultural community to make deep and meaningful changes, rather than merely "checking a box." The Governing Board will be looking for input from the congregation over the next few months to more specifically define this year's vision goal. The formal goal launch will be presented at a special meeting, expected to occur in the fall of 2021.

#### **XV. Closing and Adjournment** Jason J. Shedlock and Reverend Sillari

Jason made a pledge to adopt the new vision goal and offered words of wisdom to our new Governing Board President. He presented her with parting gifts and expressed his confidence in her and in our congregation.

Reverend Christina closed by offering words of thanks to Jason. She encouraged him to now look to the church for self-nourishment after years of service. Motion to adjourn made by Steve Jenks. Kate Stenberg seconded. All voted in favor with one abstention. Meeting adjourned at 11:50 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Jamie Jarvis

Governing Board Clerk

## Governing Board Report

### **Officers:**

President: Taryn Friedman  
Vice President: Jeff Logan  
Clerk: Jamie Jarvis

At-Large Members: Emily Bolt  
Jake Kulaw  
Patty Renaud  
Kathy Vezina

Ex Officio: Reverend Elaine Peresluha, Minister

The 2021-2022 year has been a challenging and exciting year of transition as we entered into the first year of our interim ministry with Reverend Elaine Peresluha. Her leadership and guidance have helped First Parish navigate the interim ministry process in a skillful way, despite the challenges that Covid continues to bring. First Parish has continued to persevere through the challenge of online services. More than half of this fiscal year's services occurred on Zoom. As a board, it was challenging to connect with members and friends of First Parish for the first half of the year. It has been a blessing that since mid-March we have been able to worship in person. We recognize the importance of in-person worship for the spiritual, emotional, and social well-being of First Parish members and friends.

### **Vision Goal, In Progress:**

One of the primary responsibilities of the Governing Board is to create Vision Goals for the church. We are in the process of reflection and contemplation about the path we want to take in our next chapter.

In the [2020-21 Annual Report](#), Reverend Christina's parting words to the First Parish Community were, "May you reflect upon the ways in which First Parish holds on to white supremacy and colonization, and move towards dismantling the systems that keep our black, brown, and indigenous siblings from feeling welcome in our spaces and programs." She inspired the Governing Board to consider proposing our congregation adopt the 8th Principle, as over 155 Unitarian churches in the United States have already done.

During last year's Annual Meeting, our Governing Board president at the time, Jason Shedlock, introduced the 8th Principle Vision Goal to the Congregation. In November 2021, The Governing Board held a retreat with many of our FP leaders to introduce our Vision Goal idea and facilitate discussion about how we might incorporate the 8th Principle into church operations. There were a multitude of opinions and feelings on

the topic. One take-away was that, at that time, we were not united as a church to adopt the 8<sup>th</sup> Principle.

The members of the Board subsequently realized we needed to educate ourselves more, as well as provide more educational opportunities to the congregation. In this way, we hope to make a more complete and considered approach to this important task. We subsequently chose to slow down the process and make it a 2-year vision goal. At this time, our plan for the upcoming fiscal year includes: getting an audit by an outside organization to investigate what ways we are or are not upholding White Supremacy Culture; provide numerous educational programs including inviting speakers, initiating reading and/or discussion groups; and having Zoom meetings with other UU churches that have adopted the 8th Principle. At next year's Annual Meeting, we will put the adoption of the 8th Principle to a congregational vote.

As we are learning, truth-telling is vital to anti-racism work. In that spirit, it is necessary to report that one of our BIPOC members, Yvette McDonnell, served on the Governing Board beginning in July 2021. Although this is typically a 3-year position, she made the choice to resign from the Board after about 5 months, citing the negative emotional impact that the 8th 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." I would like to paraphrase a paragraph from the book we are reading that 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. We are also learning how to 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. The Governing Board encourages everyone in the First Parish congregation to educate themselves on the background information for the 8th Principle and the reasoning for its creation. Information about the creation of UU 8th Principle can be found online: <https://www.8thprincipleuu.org/>. Also [here is a useful article](#) written by the University Unitarian Church in Seattle, WA who adopted the 8th Principle this year.

## **Other Plans and Goals for 2022-23:**

Another important role of the Governing Board is connecting with the congregation. During the 2022-23 Fiscal Year, the Governing Board plans to provide monthly connections with the congregation on select Sundays after church. We want the opportunity to hear from First Parish members and get your direct feedback, joys, and concerns. These gatherings will also give the First Parish community the opportunity to hear about the work that the Governing Board is currently engaged in.

Finally, other major roles of the Governing Board are to create, uphold and, if-needed, modify the Governing Board Policies, and to protect the financial well-being of the church. We plan to have a trial Treasurer position on the Board to help us have a better pulse on the financial health of the church. If this test run proves useful and successful, we will make the change to our policies to incorporate a Treasurer as an official position on the Board.

To wrap things up, I would like to say how grateful I am to the members of First Parish who have stepped up with enthusiasm to search for our new settled Minister on the Ministerial Search Committee. The search process is no small feat. The Governing Board has full confidence in the abilities of our Ministerial Search Committee members and we will offer whatever support might be needed through this process.

I would like to thank all the members of the Governing Board for their hard work and dedication to First Parish: Jeff Logan, Jamie Jarvis, Emily Bolt, Jake Kulaw, Patty Renaud, and a special thanks to Kathy Vezina for stepping up and joining the Governing Board in January to fill our vacant seat. I would also like to thank the entire congregation of First Parish members and friends for their steadfastness, resilience, and commitment to the First Parish Community during these unprecedeted times.

With Love and Gratitude,

Taryn Friedman, Governing Board President  
First Parish in Portland, Unitarian Universalist

## **Board of Trustees Report**

### **Who We Are**

In 1906, the members of the First Parish Society approved a Declaration of Trust and designated a permanent Board of Trustees with authority to receive and hold the original funds of \$1,866.27 plus “any and all other property” for the benefit of First Parish. Today, the Trustees hold title to our trust funds and all church property, including our Meeting House and Parish House, with their contents, and our beautiful gardens. Our trust funds total a little under \$3 million, of which 4-4.5% is available for Trustee use each fiscal year to support church operations and fund property repairs, renovations, and maintenance.

### **Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 - 2022 Priorities**

Church operations and the Church for EveryBody accessibility project (CFE) have been the beneficiaries of a good portion of the Trustees' spending in FY 2021-2022. This will continue in FY 2022-2023 as overlapping Trustee and CFE priorities are addressed. The Trustees lent the CFE campaign a bridge loan totaling \$300,000 to help finance the costs of the project, of which \$100,000 was repaid in January 2022.

### **Current Trustees (end of term)**

Ted Oldham ('28), Facilities  
Austin Farrar ('27), President  
Janet Puistonen ('26), Secretary  
Stephanie Eglinton ('25), Treasurer  
Randall Weill ('24), Security  
Linda Shary ('23), Memorial Garden  
Charles Micoleau ('22), Legal

Respectfully submitted by Austin H. Farrar, President of the Board of Trustees. If you have a question or would like to offer feedback, please contact Austin at [ahfarrar47@gmail.com](mailto:ahfarrar47@gmail.com).

## **Board of Trustees Financial Reports**

The following financial reports are respectfully submitted by Stephanie Eglinton, Treasurer of the Board of Trustees. If you have a question or would like to offer feedback, please contact Stephanie at [seglinto@maine.rr.com](mailto:seglinto@maine.rr.com).

[2020-2021 Trustees Year End Treasurer's Report](#)

[2021-2022 Q3 Treasurer's Report](#)

## **Ministry Leadership Team (MLT) Report**

The MLT works to support our Minister in the leadership of all teams and programs that comprise the ministry of our church. We work as a team with leaders across groups and committees to identify synergies and opportunities that single teams cannot leverage. The group also helps address any conflicts that might arise across teams. The MLT Chair participates in monthly Executive Committee meetings with the Minister and the Presidents of the Governing Board and the Trustees.

In 2021-2022 we:

- Led the implementation of Google Workspace (an organization-level alternative to our previous Google Drive environment). Our nonprofit status allowed us to license the environment at no cost and also transition First Parish's email from Outlook to the Gmail platform. We helped staff and volunteers clean up and migrate their documents from their private Google drives to Workspace shared drives owned by First Parish, and provided one-on-one and group tutorials.
- Worked with the Interim Minister on two cross-team sessions to clarify the roles in First Parish's Governance: MLT and Committee on Ministry, and MLT and Governing Board.
- Began planning 2022-23 focus areas: Re-engagement and Leadership Training.

Respectfully submitted by Dirane Kelekyan, Ministry Council Chair. If you have a question or would like to offer feedback, please contact Dirane Kelekyan at [mlt@firstparishportland.org](mailto:mlt@firstparishportland.org).

## **Buildings and Grounds Report**

As the new Buildings & Grounds Chair, I came into the job with a new building posterior, a lovely update to our building! Our first project was to secure the remaining finials on the steeple. Chris Beasley noted that two of them had fallen in last year's report. We still don't have an affordable way to replace the two, but it was essential to secure the remaining six. This was done by capturing them with stainless marine cable screwed to the steeple. Thanks to Bob Fiske for helping with this task!

The next project was a problem with a waterfall effect on the East wall. This resulted from an undersized drain aperture in the gutter that caused overflow during heavy rain. We constructed a new drain aperture better aligned with the downspout.

Moe and I did some work in the Community Room, including transforming a large walled-off closet space into storage for rolling chair carts and folding tables. The Community Room bathrooms also had no heat. The problem was a seized circulator pump, which we replaced. The sink faucet in one of the upstairs bathrooms failed. We replaced the faucet and the drain piping. We also retained a licensed lightning protection professional to install protective "antennas" (as they're called) onto the new addition. We cleaned up after the removal of the ramp leading into the Parish Hall, and removed the wooden stairs that had overlain the historic stone stairs.

Those were the smaller projects that we completed over the last year. There's one very large project that will need to be addressed: the stone steps into the Meeting House. They lack support that would keep them from shifting slightly, opening up gaps between the steps. These were grouted a dozen years ago, but there's been movement since.

I want to thank Committee members Moe Blanchard, Chris Beasley, Bob Fiske, Lytfi Volksmyth for their cheerful approach to the unknown, and the Church For Everybody chair Ted Oldham for his invaluable advice.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Allen Armstrong, Buildings & Grounds Chair

## **Chalice Groups Report**

The Chalice Groups program remained active during the 2021/22 year. We currently have seven groups, with a total of 53 participants. The monthly meetings have reflected the changes in Covid safety protocols. At the beginning of the year, all groups met on Zoom. Now we have a variety of meeting formats, with some groups meeting in person and others more comfortable with Zoom. Leaders have also met monthly on Zoom. Church meeting rooms have been made available to groups, upon request.

Respectfully submitted by Barbara DeSerres, Chalice Group Coordinator.

## **Membership Committee Report**

The Membership Committee is dedicated to fostering community at First Parish, to supporting membership retention, and creating a welcoming environment to attract new members. We look forward to getting back in the saddle for in-person events. This year, we continued to meet online in order to meet everyone's safety concerns. Although in-person services are still relatively new, we were able to host a New Member Reception in the Memorial Garden and welcomed 3 new members to First Parish! We also continued our mentorship program for new members. Thank you to all who contributed to our Thanksgiving food drive. We were able to build baskets for 5 First Parish families. Next year, we are looking forward to planning more membership activities in person, as the CDC guidelines allow.

Respectfully submitted by Emily Bolt, Chair of the Membership Team. If you have a question or would like to offer feedback, please contact Emily Bolt at [emswah@gmail.com](mailto:emswah@gmail.com).

## **Pastoral Care Team Report**

The Pastoral Care Team responds to calls that come into the First Parish office that are of a pastoral care nature; makes phone calls to members in need and sends heartfelt cards; visits members in hospitals, extended care facilities, and their homes. We keep in touch with homebound members by regular visits and holiday cards. We support members in the end of life process and help facilitate celebrations of life and memorial services. We often reach out to other FP Committees and Chalice Groups to more fully support our parishioners.

Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, most of our contact with parishioners has been through phone calls. However, some team members have shopped for, cooked for, and given parishioners rides to doctor's offices and hospitals. While Sunday services were conducted on Zoom, we continued to offer support through PCT breakout rooms. In May, we were pleased to be able to usher as a team again in the Meeting House. We are currently in the process of updating our 2018 Charter Statement. We will soon be partnering with the Membership Committee to organize the congregation by zip code to enable more support and connection with all parishioners.

Respectively submitted by Judy Micoleau, Chair of the Pastoral Care Team.  
Members: Anne Heminway, Cathy Koger, Cate Lund, Jeanne Mullen, Rev. Elaine Peresluha, Phil Ptacin, and Wendy Stanley.

## **Safe Congregation Committee Report**

With the new energy towards opening our doors to more community services and events, the Safety Committee will share that there is a wall mounted first aid box and a Naloxone kit on each floor in the Parish Hall. The 2nd floor has an AED and we have 6 staff and members enlisted to complete Pro-CPR certification. For safety and risk management we also have sharps containers in the bathrooms and outside. A user friendly Incident Report has been created and is being utilized by staff for on-site mishaps (two incidents have been documented in two months' time).

The 3<sup>rd</sup> floor Fire Evacuation Plan is pending final approval with a fire drill in our near future. In April, an Active Shooter training was conducted by two PPD officers. The officers encouraged the development of an Active Shooter Policy, they made some concrete suggestions to improve our overall on-site safety, and they offered Self Defense training. We would welcome new volunteers and are actively setting measurable goals for 2022-2023.

Respectfully submitted by Liz Wasilewski, Safe Congregation Committee Chair. For questions or comments please email [scc@firstparishportland.org](mailto:scc@firstparishportland.org).

## **Library Committee Report**

The Library Committee has remained active during the 2021-2022 fiscal year. Despite the pandemic and budget freeze, FP members were able to access our library via the online catalog and borrow books using curbside pickup and return. The onsite self-service book signout and return system for parishioners is available again, since in-person services have restarted. Due to the budget freeze, no new books have been purchased for the library this fiscal year.

The Library Committee continues to offer a Book Club which meets on Zoom the first Tuesday of each month. This has been well-attended and we plan to continue during the 2022-2023 fiscal year. The Book Club will continue to meet via Zoom at this time, per member request.

Respectfully submitted by Elizabeth Garnett, Library Committee Chair.

## **Pageant Committee Report**

Due to the pandemic, we were unable to present the annual Nativity Pageant and Vespers Service again for the second year. On Sunday, December 19, 2021, however, Rev. Elaine reflected upon the importance of honoring our significant traditions - referencing the Pageant and weaving some of its readings, music, and history into the Worship Service. During the Time for All Ages, Pageant Coordinator Laurie Hasty told the story of her friendship with the Pageant's creator, Rev. Vincent Silliman. The altar decorations featured some of the props used during the traditional Pageant.

We are looking forward to presenting the 97<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Nativity Pageant this coming December 18, 2022! If anyone is interested in participating in the preparation or presentation of this service, please contact [gPageant@firstparishportland.org](mailto:gPageant@firstparishportland.org) or speak with Laurie Hasty.

Respectfully submitted by Laurie Hasty, Pageant Committee Chair.  
Committee members include: Linda Blue, Bette Brunswick, Lindsay Chard, Nancy Chard, and Cecily Merrill.

## **Personnel Committee Report**

Processes and procedures are always subject to revision and refinement, and this year we updated these to increase efficiencies, clarify the role(s) of our Committee, and ensure that no important tasks are overlooked. Paving the way for future Personnel Committee members to ease into their roles on our committee is vital. We strive to proactively provide members with a clear understanding of FP organization, governance, available resources, and people in relevant leadership positions who can provide support as needed.

Mid-year, Scott Wheatley resigned and committee member Richard Burbank worked with the Rev. Elaine to engage an interim Music Director who subsequently left due to health issues. Richard is on leave from regular committee duties to assist with providing quality Sunday Worship. As a Personnel Committee member, he will participate in a candidate search to fill this permanent position. The committee continues to advocate for health insurance for its staff. We plan to request that the Governing Board and Finance review and approve an associated policy.

Respectfully submitted by Sue Veligor, Personnel Committee Chair. Committee members include Stephen Jenks, Lois Winter, and Richard Burbank.

## Faith-in-Action (FIA) Committee Reports

On May 20<sup>th</sup> we received word from the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) that First Parish was the recipient of the Bennett Award for the current year! The Bennett Award is given annually by the UUA for congregational action on human justice and social action. The letter of award stated:

“This congregation's ministry with the Wabanaki peoples and several of their community organizations is a powerful example of how UU communities can engage in both the internal and external work to support indigenous liberation and sovereignty. The depth of their relationship that is enhanced by the honest self-learning and acknowledgment of historical harms caused by the congregation has contributed to an ongoing truth-telling and healing process that creates an accountable and shared foundation for mutual liberation. In addition, their model of learning and engagement is one that has been shared with their state action network, and successfully replicated among other congregations in Maine.”

I would like to give special thanks to the Wabanaki Ally Team (WAT) and our allies at MUUSAN and other UU congregations in Maine for their support. The WAT led the legislative effort to pass a number of bills designed to move forward tribal sovereignty. On behalf of First Parish, the WAT applied for and received the UUA's Bennett Award.

The FIA Committee at First Parish carries out its work through eight social justice teams. The Committee has not had a formal meeting in FY 2021-22 because of Covid restrictions, but a number of teams have been active via Zoom and, more recently, in-person meetings. As was true for last year, some teams are inactive due to the pandemic. Team contributions to the Annual Report follow this introduction.

I would also like to take note that the Racial Justice team is in the process, together with church leadership, of creating a strategic plan to promote First Parish's adoption of the 8th Principle proposed by the UUA – to work toward building a diverse multicultural beloved community. It has been my pleasure to serve as co-chair of the FIA Committee for the past three years. I leave the committee in the good hands of Jaimie Mulligan Brooks. Respectfully submitted by Carl Cappello, Co-Chair of the FIA Committee.

## **Racial Justice Team Report**

The Racial Justice Team mission is to lead and support the congregation and administration in becoming a Beloved Community that accountably dismantles racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our church. In our covenant, we pledge to conduct our work joyfully and in community, and we adopted the Poor People's Campaign principle that states: "poverty and economic inequality cannot be understood apart from a society built on white supremacy."

Our activities this year have included unifying Faith-In-Action toward a shared understanding of Fusion movement building, moving the church towards adoption of the 8th Principle, collaborating with the Wabanaki Ally Team for indigenous sovereignty work, and organizing and mobilizing congregant participation in the Poor People and Low Wage Workers Assembly and Moral March on Washington, June 18, 2022. We strive to apply the Poor People's Campaign principle of Fusion to FIA subgroups. We are also working to provide opportunities for the congregation to put our UU principles into action on specific racial and social justice projects.

Respectfully submitted by Kris Minister. Members include Carl Cappello and Marcy Makinen.

## Youth and Family Outreach (YFO) Report

### History:

Youth and Family Outreach (YFO) has a rich and unwavering history of serving some of Portland's most disadvantaged children and families. In addition, YFO has a longstanding, historical connection with First Parish. Founded in 1844 as a community outreach mission of the Unitarian congregations of Portland, from the very start its mission has been to serve "the poor of Portland." Throughout its long history, YFO has provided many different kinds of support to this important part of Portland's population. Beginning in 1853 with the establishment of Maine's first adult education school, the agency has always risen to meet the critical community needs of the time. Throughout the past 178 years, a sample of these community needs included: the Pride Training School for Developmentally Delayed Children, Beacon Teen Center for Homeless Youth, and a Teen Adventure Program for at-risk Middle School youth.

For the last 33 years, however, YFO has run an early childhood care and education program for children ages 6 weeks to 5 years. The program is licensed and nationally accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). In line with its mission, 60-70% of the families YFO serves are low-income families. YFO is First Parish's oldest social action endeavor. Though YFO has been independent of First Parish for over 33 years now, the ties between the two are still strong and healthy. Indeed, members of First Parish have served on the YFO Board of Trustees since its inception and continue to be active volunteers to this day.

### 2021-2022 Accomplishments:

- In December 2022, we completed a funding match from the Sam L. Cohen Foundation of \$250,000 toward our *Building A Brighter Future Capital Campaign*. In March 2022, with word from Cumberland County of one last grant award, we wrapped up our \$3M capital campaign. We will begin construction in June 2022 on our transformational, early education, and family resource hub with affordable housing, in partnership with Portland Housing Authority.
- We maintained accreditation with the National Association for the Education of Young Children. We also maintained Level 4 status (highest status) on Maine's Quality Rating System for child care providers.
- We were awarded a collaborative grant with Catherine Morrill Day Nursery from the City of Portland.
- We continued to operate a community-based public Pre-K classroom in Portland.
- Our board and staff completed a 12-month DEIB series to talk about our current anti-bias/anti-racist practices, learn about each other, and how we can improve.
- We completed our 15<sup>th</sup> year of collaboration with the USM School of Social Work Internship Program. YFO is an official Internship Site for USM's BSW students.
- We continued commitment to community collaboration through work with the Maine Shared Services Alliance and the Maine Department of Labor. Through this collaboration, an Early Childhood Specialist Apprenticeship Program was

developed. When slots are available both through the Program and at YFO, apprentices are placed at YFO.

- Our Executive Director continued to serve on a Task Force developed to identify barriers that families may experience when trying to access Public Pre-K here in Portland.
- We have kept all of our families and children healthy, safe, and thriving through a second year in a global pandemic. We kept our doors open all year and offered resources to families who were struggling.

#### YFO Board of Trustees:

The First Parish Bylaws call for the “official” election and/or endorsement of YFO Board Members by the First Parish Unitarian Universalist Society. This endorsement is meant to happen at the First Parish Annual Meeting.

Amy Grommes Pulaski (President)	Term expires February 2025
Melissa Cilley (Vice President)	Term expires October 2023
Lindsey Chard (Secretary) (Member First of Parish UU)	Term expires January 2025
Benjamin Schwartz (Treasurer)	Term expires September 2024
Brenda Norris (Member of First Parish UU)	Term expires August 2023
Emily Leibling	Term expires September 2023
Tom Marczak	Term expires February 2024
Owen Patrick	Term expires August 2024
Georgia Jenkins	Term expires September 2022
Elizabeth Pope	Term expires January 2023
Elizabeth Snell	Term expires April 2023
Emily Dupraz	Term expires February 2023
Kristin Dargis	Term expires September 2024
Gregory Michaud	Term expires September 2024
Camelia Babson-Haley	YFO Executive Director

#### YFO Administrative Personnel

Camelia Babson-Haley, Executive Director  
Michelle Greenlaw, Program Director

Respectfully submitted by Jackie Oliveri.

## Finance and Stewardship Report

For the fourth year in a row, First Parish finished the July 2020 -June 2021 church fiscal year with a balanced budget. A surplus of \$24,828 was set aside in the Contingency Fund to help us navigate future financial challenges. We are also expecting to break even for the current fiscal year which ends on June 30th. As of the April 30th financial report, First Parish has reached 72% of its \$419,000 revenue goal and has spent 75% of the annual budget. The link to the next fiscal year's budget is [here](#).

As we look ahead to our future, financial support from the annual Stewardship drive underpins the annual budget and reflects the commitment of members and friends to support the people and programs that fulfill our mission. To attract the right settled minister for First Parish, it is critical to establish a strong financial base to give the new Minister sufficient resources to enable First Parish to continue to be a strong voice and participant in social justice, racial justice, housing, and climate change issues. Thanks to the many members and friends who have made a financial commitment! To date, we have received \$204,000 in pledges, including pledges from five new households and increased pledges from 54 households. We are grateful for each and every pledge, because The Future is Us and We are UUs.

Despite our success with the Stewardship campaign, the church is facing a critical financial crossroads. Our revenue from rentals and fundraisers is around 50% of historical levels. We are facing operating cost increases for energy, internet, and live streaming capabilities. We have identified necessary new investments in communications, music, and faith formation that we do not yet have the funds to pursue. For the coming fiscal year we are proposing a 3% cost of living increase for all staff, and continuing to cover 80% of health insurance costs for full-time staff. The minister search will involve significant expenses for recruitment, as well as moving costs once a new settled minister is selected. The only way we could close the revenue gap for next fiscal year is to use \$30,000 from the Contingency Fund.

We cannot fund church operations with Stewardship alone. One of our biggest challenges is engaging volunteer support for fundraising. We have an opportunity to pull together as a community and come up with some creative and impactful fundraisers that will enable us to achieve our vision of a rising, growing, and thriving church. This could mean bringing back the spring fling dinners, putting together an art auction, or staging music benefit concerts... the sky's the limit and new energy is greatly needed! **Please consider how you can contribute your talents, time, and creativity to First Parish's fundraising efforts in the coming year and notify the Finance Team of your interest.**

Respectfully submitted by Claire Cowan and Susan Cook. If you have a finance or budget question or would like to offer feedback, please contact Claire Cowan at [finance@firstparishportland.org](mailto:finance@firstparishportland.org). This year's Finance Team members are: Bill Adams, Fundraising Chair; Carl Cappello, Income and Expense Treasurer; Susan Cook, Stewardship Chair; and Claire Cowan, Chair. Stewardship Team members are: Sue Cook, Debbie Schulz, Marlies Reppenhagen, Martha Burke, and Tom Rogers.

## **Music Committee Report**

2021-2022 has been a tumultuous period for the choir! Just as we were ready to start singing in the Meeting House again, our beloved Music Director, Scott Wheatley, decided to devote his energy closer to home and left the position. Following Scott's departure, we were led for a brief bit by an Interim Music Director, who had to resign from the position due to health reasons. Thankfully a very talented fellow choir member, Richard Burbank, stepped up to the task and has been leading the choir since March. A committee to recruit a new Music Director has been established with the hopes of having a permanent director for the start of the new church year. Choir membership has dropped significantly since the pandemic, and we would love to build it back up to pre-Covid membership of approximately 30 people. Music has been, and will always be, a critical part of First Parish. Our choir members are committed to bringing diverse musical selections to each service.

Respectfully submitted by Deena Hastings, Music Committee Chair. Members include Brenda Franey, Sue Woods, Cliff Hoover, Trisha Nadaff.

## Faith Formation Committee Report

Our committee has done our best to navigate during the pandemic, albeit not without challenges. We have continued to meet monthly via Zoom, and have continued to support Toben Cooney-Callnan in his work as the Director of Faith Formation. Toben has continued to share his time and gifts with both First Parish and the UU Church of Brunswick. Toben has been busy with multiple children's programs including Zoom Faith Formation sessions for the children, Children's Chapels, Junior and High School Youth Groups, 7-9 Our Whole Lives Program, and the recent Bridging Ceremony for Youth Sunday. Much of the programming has been open to members of both congregations, and the Coming of Age Service was the first shared Worship Service with UUCB.

Toben has noted difficulties with participation. In-person engagement for youth Faith Formation classes has been low. The two Youth Groups and OWL programs were better attended. Toben hired two new teachers this year, who have both agreed to return in the fall. As we discussed last year, we have followed Toben's lead and vision to transition towards the Faith Formation model, which is a whole congregational approach. To that end, we drafted a new Faith Formation Mission and Vision Statement and updated Toben's job description to include the Faith Formation duties. As you may remember, Faith Formation is a broader concept that reorients our perspective to the whole congregation, working to develop and foster our UU faith.

Toben did not have sufficient work hours to offer any adult Faith Formation classes over the last year, but he is planning some intergenerational programming with the Wabanaki Ally Team in the Fall of 2022. We hope Toben can provide and support more adult and intergenerational programming in the fall. The Faith Formation Committee needs **new members** with fresh perspectives to develop this vision, especially from people who may not have children, but have an interest in adult Faith Formation. The current committee has been long-serving and intends to remain intact into the Fall of 2022, but we hope to recruit new members to provide much needed energy and vision!

Respectfully submitted by Andrew Bloom. Faith Formation Committee Members: Toben Cooney-Callnan, Director of Faith Formation; Thomas Mauldin, Chair; Andrew Bloom; Mary Bloch; Maura Sullivan.

## Communications Team Report

This year, the focus of the Communications Team has been to review and clarify First Parish's external publicity outlets and procedures. An evaluation of the church website content and presentation has just begun. Documents have been developed for church leaders to follow that outline the information needed, the process, and timeline for publicizing a First Parish activity, event, or announcement on the church website, Facebook and Instagram pages, and in a Press Release. These can be found in the All Leader Resources folders for reference.

A social media ethics statement was drafted to address concerns regarding First Parish's use of the Meta Corporation platforms. We post on these sites at least 4 times per week. Members who participate in Facebook and Instagram are encouraged to engage with the First Parish sites by liking, commenting, or sharing posts which will boost our status in the algorithm and place First Parish posts higher on the feeds. This will help to spread our messages to a broader audience.

The team is designing a new general information brochure about First Parish. Information includes brief descriptions about the history, theology, and activities of our church. These will be available in the pew and information racks for visitors and renters and are included in all new member material packets.

The new television in the Parish House, which is part of the Church for EveryBody project, offers an opportunity for sharing visual information to all who enter our building. Teams are encouraged to contact [Hannah, our Congregational Administrator](#), with materials to be aired on the screen.

Another major project has been to clean up our membership directory, ICON. We now have an accurate, detailed database of our membership. This is important information especially for the work of the Membership, Stewardship, and Finance Teams. The Transition Team has also been using this updated contact information during the ministerial search process.

Respectfully submitted by Laurie Hasty. Communications Team members include Hannah Gilman, Chair; Jaimie Mulligan Brooks, Laurie Hasty, and Patricia Washburn.

## Staff Reports

### **Director of Faith Formation's Report**

#### **Shared Ministry**

This was our third year of shared ministry with the UU Church of Brunswick (UUCB). Rae Jett served as my assistant in making sure that the Faith Formation Program was running smoothly on Sundays when I was at UUCB. This shared ministry allowed First Parish (FP) to successfully run the 7-9 Our Whole Lives Program with a total of five youth (two from UUCB and three from FP). The Youth Group was also combined (two from UUCB and eight from FP). UUCB went back to in-person meetings in September, while FP stayed online. The FP Children's Faith Formation Zoom meetings were open to UUCB families, and we did have some engagement from UUCB families at some of our meetings. The FP/UUCB Youth Group put on a successful Youth Sunday and began the year by sharing the Coming of Age Program with UUCB. This was a well attended, successful sharing of programming. The Coming of Age Service marked our first shared Worship Service with UUCB.

#### **Faith Formation**

We have officially rebranded from Religious Exploration to Faith Formation. The intention behind this is to gradually transition away from the idea that the program is just for kids and families. Our vision is to include intergenerational learning and service projects, as well as offering Adult Educational and Community Building opportunities through workshops and service opportunities. I did not have enough work hours to offer any adult programming this year, but have begun some planning with the Wabanaki Ally Team for intergenerational programming in the Fall.

#### **Children/ Youth/ Families**

Engagement has been difficult this year in some aspects, and successful in others. We had limited engagement (often just one or two kids) in our weekly Zoom meetings. I continued to send out activity packets to families to offer those who were not attending online an opportunity to engage with FP and continue developing their UU identity. When we returned to in-person programming in February, we saw an initial increase in family engagement. Our first few Faith Formation meetings welcomed several different families each week. By the end of the church year, however, we were only seeing one to two families each week. One of the families that was regularly engaged with Faith Formation online fell back from participating in person and, though I tried to offer other avenues of engagement, we have not seen them since moving to in-person meetings. We have had one or two new families drop in for Faith Formation, but they did not attend regularly. We hired two teachers this year, who were both extremely helpful in creating a sense of ease and familiarity for the kids who did attend. Both have agreed to return next year.

We created a Junior Youth Group for 7th and 8th Graders from FP and UUCB that met online for a couple of game playing events as well as in person for a walk around Mackworth Island. In addition to teaching Children's Faith Formation on Sunday mornings, Sam Spadafore served as the co-facilitator for the Junior Youth Group. When FP returned to in-person meetings, the FP/UUCB Junior Youth Group began the 7-9 O.W.L. Program. This was well attended; families were very supportive of the program and grateful that it was offered. The plan for next year is to offer a Coming of Age Program for kids who were part of the Junior Youth Group.

The High School Youth Group offered several in-person meetings in the community that were well attended. We did a Corn Maze in the Fall, a Christmas Light Walk in the Winter, and we will be doing an Escape Room Event (per youth request) this Spring. We have a Pride Poster Printing Event with Pickwick Independent Press scheduled for this Summer. We also met online until February, when we returned to in-person meetings. In addition to teaching Children's Faith Formation and assisting on Sundays when I was at UUCB, Rae Jett served as the co-facilitator for the High School Youth Group. One of the first things that the youth were able to do when we came back in-person was to create goody bags and hide Easter eggs for our Easter Egg Hunt. They also created a lovely Youth Sunday Bridging service where three of our youth bridged. The plan for next year is to offer the 10-12 O.W.L Program in addition to our regular Youth Group Activities.

### **Challenges**

As previously mentioned, engagement was difficult to anticipate this year. Several families expressed that they were "Zoomed out." The hope was that those families would reengage once we returned to in-person meetings, but re-entry has been slower than we initially hoped for. Additionally, UUCB returned in person well before FP, which made my work more difficult because I was not able to share as much programming. The mindset of the Covid Response Team at FP was also very different from that of UUCB. I found myself feeling overwhelmed and unsure of the best measures to take to protect families while also trying to keep them engaged.

The Faith Formation Committee needs support. Several members of the committee (including the chairperson) have served on the committee for several years but continue to do so out of loyalty. This has meant that their availability to support the program has sometimes not been as great as their desire to do so. We also lost a member of the committee to the Transition Team. With family engagement being so low, it is difficult to imagine trying to build up support for the program without a larger, more available Faith Formation Committee and more staff hours to dedicate to family outreach.

Respectfully submitted by Toben Cooney-Callnan, Director of Faith Formation. For questions, please email [dre@firstparishportland.org](mailto:dre@firstparishportland.org).

## Membership Coordinator's Report

The job description of the Membership Coordinator is to “onboard and support new members and deepen congregants connection to First Parish by coordinating their involvement with the Church’s ministries. The Membership Coordinator will welcome visitors to the congregation, connect visitors, friends, and members to each other and the activities of the Church, and create a welcoming culture among all members at First Parish.” The Coordinator’s goal is to “work to increase membership at First Parish, diversify our congregational growth, increase congregants’ participation in programming, and boost our social media presence.” This is a part-time position of 18 hours/week for 10 months (September-June). On average, I have worked 23 hours/week this past year; over the summer, I logged 47 hours.

In spite of the building having been closed for almost 2 years with all of our activities and worship moved online due to the pandemic, I am so pleased that we had three people participate in the Membership Ceremony on May 1st and join First Parish. Two other people who were unable to participate on that date have also signed our Membership Book. In preparation for membership, a two-session history class was held in January 2022. Rev. Elaine Peresluha and Faith Formation Director Toben Cooney-Callnan led a class on the history of Unitarian Universalism, from our Judeo-Christian roots to our present broad UU theology. The second session focused on the specific history of First Parish, which had been thoroughly researched and explained by parishioners Charlie Micoleau and Kris Minister. These sessions were open to anyone interested in our church, including current members. In April, the “Path to Membership” class gave potential new members an overview of the specific management structure of First Parish. Dirane Kelekyan (Ministry Leadership Team Chair), Taryn Friedman (Governing Board President), Claire Cowan (Finance Chair), Sue Cook (Stewardship Chair) and Charlie Micoleau (Trustee). These three sessions are held at least once every year. All three sessions were held online this year and recorded.

Once a month, I host a Newcomer Conversation with the minister and any visitors or newcomers who are interested in learning more about First Parish and becoming a part of our community and First Parish activities. Each week, I am so happy to meet new people who join us for worship on Sundays and welcome them into our congregation! Through these conversations, we begin to build our connections to each other and to First Parish, which continues through email and further conversations between us and other members of our church.

The maintenance of our membership records is important. Our individual members are each also a part of the UUA. Each member of First Parish receives a copy of the quarterly publication, *The UU World*. First Parish’s level of commitment to the denomination and the recommended professional compensation standards for our staff are dependent on an accurate membership count. We currently have 336 individual members who have signed the Membership Book. Our membership rolls are recorded in-house in our ICON database and membership directory. Working closely with the Stewardship Team, I maintain updated contact information for our members and friends. I feel fortunate to know almost every member personally.

As an organization, First Parish cannot function effectively in silos. I intersect with many committees' work. The Membership Team is vitally important to my job. We work together to develop activities that support their mission of "fostering community at First Parish to support membership retention and creating a welcoming environment to attract new members." The major project for this year was a food drive and the creation of festive Thanksgiving baskets for households in our congregation. Some food was also delivered to the Freeport Food Pantry for distribution to refugee families awaiting permanent housing. The connections of our members to First Parish and to one another in times of need are thoughtfully supported by the Pastoral Care Team (PCT). I connect with the PCT periodically - sharing news, mourning the death of members, calling on parishioners to deliver an Easter lily or Thanksgiving basket.

There are many details of a Sunday morning worship service which I have been involved with this year. Working with the Worship Committee, we endeavored to create a warm environment welcoming people to our online worship services. In person, the ushers cheerfully greet each person entering our Meeting House and graciously collect the Offertory. Flowers on the chancel table under the pulpit present a joyous sight and an opportunity to share in honor or memory of a loved one. Palms were provided for congregants to take home on Palm Sunday. For Easter, a bright display of spring plants and Easter lilies filled the space; donors were able to take their plant home after the service. I also track our attendance numbers and data analysis of our live streaming and share this information with the Governing Board to help gauge the effectiveness of connecting with our membership.

The safety of our congregation has been a paramount concern. The staff has worked closely together and with the Covid Task Force to implement detailed health and safety protocols during the continuing pandemic. I was able to pick up some free face masks at Portland City Hall and hand sanitizer from Portland Downtown for church use. In the fall, Toben and I created and analyzed a survey to seek input on congregants' level of comfort with returning to in-person worship. I have completed safety training for our new AED equipment and other emergency procedures. I am very pleased that we have hired a security guard to monitor the exterior to the Meeting House during worship and that the Safe Congregation Task Force organized an active shooter protection training with the Portland Police Department.

The Transition Team's work to smoothly guide First Parish through the process of finding a new settled minister is another area where accurate member information is critically important and useful. I have created member lists so that all members may be personally contacted by the Team via phone and email, created a Listening Circles sign up system, and assisted with the Minister Search Committee nominee process in many ways.

A second aspect of the Membership Coordinator's job is managing the church's social media pages. Weekly posts are made on the First Parish Facebook page and Instagram. I have attended an online webinar to learn more about this important task. This role has grown in the past year and there is still much more to do. There is much detailed

information available in the data analysis about our engagement, if time allowed for the research. It would be good to react more regularly to significant current events as they occur, and post varied content about daily life at First Parish, but this position does not have enough hours for this. Now, the upcoming worship service is promoted twice during the week. Since April 2020, I have created an inspirational quotation and graphic for a Wayside Pulpit post every Wednesday. Originally begun at the beginning of the pandemic, its goal to provide a moment of reflection is still relevant. Events at First Parish are promoted on these sites and coordinated with co-sponsoring organizations such as the Wabanaki Alliance and the Poor People's Campaign. There is significant linkage with the Faith-in-Action groups and activities. It is very exciting that First Parish has been recognized by the new OUT App ([www.outqueerapp.com](http://www.outqueerapp.com)) as a safe and supportive LGBTQ+ space and included as one of their feature businesses. As a member of the Communications Team, I have crafted policies and procedures for the effective and timely use of First Parish's social media outlets. I support our Congregational Administrator, Hannah Gilman, in the weekly production of the enews and other promotional materials.

It has been a very full year! The main focus of this job is personal connections with the people of First Parish. I have enjoyed working with so many people in many different capacities to help build a strong community of friends and faith.

Respectfully submitted by Laurie Hasty, Membership Coordinator. For questions, please email [membership@firstparishportland.org](mailto:membership@firstparishportland.org).

### **Sexton's Report**

Hello everyone! I hope that all is well with you. I have been working extremely hard on the upkeep of our beautiful building, and managing the Church For EveryBody remodel. Early this year, we began in-person services, combined with live streaming, and it is so nice to see everyone again! I am really glad that everyone is able to make their own decisions for how to stay safe during these unprecedented times. I'm grateful to you all for supporting your church, and I am happy to help along the way, however I can!

I've been working closely with the rest of our incredible Staff to keep the church running smoothly. We have all been doing an amazing job at keeping everything on track. It's wonderful to have the help of our dedicated volunteers and lay leaders, as well. Thank you to everyone who has pitched in over the last year. Many thanks to the Trustees and Buildings & Grounds Committee for all their help in the building over the past year!

We will make it through anything, as long as we continue to work together, as we have in the past! Thank you for all your love and support over the last 20 years, and as we move forward! Respectfully Submitted by your Sexton, Moe Blanchard. For questions or comments, please email the office at [office@firstparishportland.org](mailto:office@firstparishportland.org).

## **Congregational Administrator's Report**

This past year has been a period with much transition for our entire Staff and congregation, and I am very grateful for the opportunity to have managed these transitions. I celebrated my one year anniversary with First Parish on March 1st, 2022, and I want to say thank you to everyone for seamlessly integrating me into our community here. I truly feel blessed to have a supportive Staff team and a large group of dedicated volunteers.

As the Congregational Administrator, my primary function is to keep the inner workings of the church running smoothly. This includes many responsibilities like bookkeeping, internal and external communication, managing rentals, directly supervising the Sexton, Membership Coordinator, and Security Guard, updating our website, creating our weekly eNews and special eBlasts, serving as Chair of the Communications Team, managing technological issues, and balancing the church and minister's calendars. There are many small details in this position that are critical to keeping the church operating cohesively.

The bookkeeping tasks that I handle on a weekly basis are small but vital. These include processing staff payroll, depositing checks, inputting data into ICON to track financial contributions, processing bill payments, writing checks, and tracking credit card expenses. For this year's Annual Report, I decided to submit a list of the accomplishments that I am most proud of from last year, in an effort to highlight the important details that I manage as your Congregational Administrator.

- I managed the transition between ministers last summer with Rev. Mary Gelfand's help and guidance. This included managing the process of reopening for rentals and working with the Covid Task Force to establish Covid related guidelines for our building.
- I helped Rev. Mary Gelfand, Rev. Elaine, and the rest of the Staff do a blessing of our entire building. This was nurturing to all of our spirits and helped us wipe our slate clean between ministers, transitions, and Covid.
- I managed the transition to the new security system, including returning all key deposits, establishing new security protocols, setting new security schedules, and getting every Staff member, volunteer, vendor, and rental client into the system.
- I assisted with the preparation of the ribbon cutting ceremony for the Church for EveryBody project. This included editing and distributing the Press Release, assisting on communications between committees and Staff, managing the preparation of the building, and loaning the church my personal canopy for the event.

- Serving as Chair of the Communications Team, I have collaborated with the other team members to create a Facebook Ethic Statement, edit and publish Press Releases, update our church informational pamphlets, gather content for our TV in the Parish Hall, strengthen communication between committees, create guidelines for social media posting, and attend webinars to increase our engagement on social media.
- I hired a new Security Guard, as the church was having a difficult time finding a company who had employees that were willing to work on Sunday mornings, unarmed and within our budget. Staff and church members were worried about their safety, so I jumped into action to handle the situation. We ended up hiring my friend, John Hamel, an Army Veteran, as a temporary subcontractor for the month of December. After he started the job and was welcomed into our community, he decided to stay on permanently.
- I worked closely with the entire Staff to reopen our Meeting House to our members and friends during the month of December. This included sending out holiday postcards to all of our members, coordinating and managing decorations for the building, creating new signage with our Covid guidelines, and managing the internal and external communications for the Worship Services.
- I have been doing a lot of extra work to increase our rental revenue over the last year, starting with raising our rental fees across the board. I also created a new rental pamphlet to market our building to potential rental clients. I took new photos from recent events and paired them with information on weddings, concerts, and memorial services.
- I spearheaded the process of the church becoming more involved with the issue of homelessness in Portland. At the same time that I was reaching out to the City of Portland to ask how we could help, they were searching for a space to hold an Emergency Warming Center for the unhoused during the Winter. We successfully opened our Community Room to the unhoused during emergency weather conditions, providing food, bottled water, warmth, winter clothing, Covid tests and vaccines, and transportation to shelters or motels at the end of the day. We even treated one person for the early stages of frostbite here! This required a lot of coordination with many organizations and volunteers in our church. It was incredible to see our community come together to donate items and their time to this cause. I especially want to give a big thank you to Jeff Logan for all his help with this!
- I have successfully established new rental relationships with three important clients. SPACE Gallery is a concert venue on Congress Street that cannot hold nearly as many attendees as we can. We have partnered with them to host larger concerts with 500+ attendees in our building; we have already hosted two of these concerts. I began a partnership with the Press Hotel, as well. Their wedding venue can only accommodate 150 guests, so they have been looking for

another venue to partner with that can accommodate more people. We have agreed to do joint-marketing, so that we encourage our wedding clients to have their reception at the Press Hotel, and they encourage their wedding clients to have their ceremony at First Parish. I also began a strong rental partnership with Cult of Art, a Boston-based company that does burlesque and variety shows. We have already hosted two large scale events with them, and we have a third show booked for August.

- I booked 6 weddings in 2021, 7 weddings in 2022 so far, and I have one wedding booked for 2023. We had one memorial service in 2021, as well.
- I handled many safety related issues this year, as well. These include: completing my CPR/AED training and assisting Moe with his CPR/AED training, replacing expired Narcan in our building, completing a Narcan safety course with Portland Public Health, creating Narcan overdose safety kits in our building, acquiring sharps boxes for indoor and outdoor use, scheduling and participating in an Active Shooter Training with the Portland Police Department, and updating our First Aid kits.
- I organized two benefit concerts in our building (one for Ukraine and one for the unhoused in Portland) during May 2022. This was really beneficial for our community and the world at large.

This job is challenging, ever-evolving, and extremely rewarding. I am beginning to feel like I am making a difference in our community, which is invaluable to me. I am so grateful for the opportunity to be able to help others, create a more diverse community, and be a place of hope for people who need it in Portland. Respectfully submitted by Hannah Gilman, Congregational Administrator. If you have a question or would like to give feedback, please email [office@firstparishportland.org](mailto:office@firstparishportland.org).

## Interim Minister's Report

With the physical departure of Rev. Christina Sillari in June of 2021, First Parish in Portland began its process of grieving, remembering, appreciating, and letting go of this eleven-year shared ministry. Each member carries a slightly different memory of Rev. Christina's ministry, the work accomplished during those eleven years, the visions fulfilled, and the dreams that will have to wait. Much of the emotional processing of that ministry was overshadowed by the ongoing presence of the pandemic, disrupting in-person goodbyes, norms of worship, work, and the very social fabric so essential to this congregation's identity and vitality. Mary Gelfand and Mark Gallup stepped in for the summer to support the congregation's ministry in worship and pastoral care.

Upon my arrival on August 15, 2021, Mary and Mark supported me as I began working with the Worship Committee, Worship Weavers, Staff, Governing Board, Trustees, Ministry Leadership Team, and Pastoral Care Team to understand and appreciate the many layers of shared ministry and priorities of the congregation. It became immediately clear to me that First Parish was managing deep levels of commitment to a wide variety of priorities with spreading disengagement due to the pandemic, virtual worship, and lack of in-person engagement. Faith-in-Action, Finance, Stewardship, Faith Formation, and Buildings & Grounds had all been competing for limited resources, the time of members, and attention of staff.

The Worship Committee and Weavers performed above and beyond the call of duty during the pandemic and following Rev. Christin's departure. Upon my arrival, they were committed, responsible, and exhausted. The months of extraordinary effort had left them depleted, overwhelmed by the responsibility of assuring quality worship. They slowly disbanded over the Fall. Scott Wheatley also departed at the end of the year for family health needs. John Powell replaced Scott briefly as our Interim Music Director. Since his departure Richard Burbank, the choir, our accompanist Matthew Jones, and the Music Committee have stepped up to assure musical offerings for worship.

The Safe Congregation Committee's Covid Task Force created a dynamic set of parameters, identifying phases for reopening and guidelines that would indicate the safety for reopening. The shifting nature of Covid, the emerging variants, and statistical data made it necessary to form a team that could utilize the guidelines while equally considering the financial implications of remaining closed, the mental and spiritual health of our members, safety of families and children, our aging adults, and the very existence of the church itself. That team has been meeting almost monthly since the beginning of 2022 to decide gradual, safe, balanced decisions on reopening slowly.

Upon my arrival, I formed a Transition Team to support the transition process and integrate all of the many facets of First Parish. I welcomed Marcy Makinen, Bruce Carver, Sammy Riegel-Burbank, Jen Caswell, John Schaberg, and Angus Ferguson into the planning of our interim transition. We began with Listening Sessions using an Appreciative Inquiry process to capture what was on people's minds. It became very clear, very quickly that people were not very interested in yet another zoom experience. For those who did attend, Covid and getting back to church was what was most on their

minds. Additional questions about the interim and the search for a settled minister were part of those conversations. We conducted 38 listening sessions with 2- 12 people each. The participants included random individuals, Chalice Circles, and committee members.

In the Fall, John Schaberg resigned from the Transition Team to travel, and we welcomed Richard Hooks-Wayman onto the team. We also transitioned our work from our focus on the listening session to the process of selecting a Ministerial Search Committee (MSC). At the beginning of 2022, we had structured a process for calling each and every member of First Parish to solicit their nominations for the search committee and to check in on their well-being and feelings about First Parish. Over 30 leaders made over 300 phone calls, and we obtained 100 names nominated for the search committee. Angus Ferguson also resigned from the Transition Team to pursue other passions.

The Transition Team checked in with each of the nominees, sharing the details of the role that the MSC members would play, and confirming if each nominee was willing to serve on the committee. Of the 100 nominees, 13 people agreed to serve and completed an application to assess their skills for being on the MSC. The bios of Allen Armstrong, Betsy Garnett, Dirane Kelekyan, Kip DeSerres, Kris Minister, Jake Kulaw, Jason Shedlock, Jenn McAdoo, Marianne Hill, Mary Wheeler, Philip Ptacin, Sue Cook, and Tom Rogers were posted and the online and in-person ranked choice voting began.

Allen Armstrong, Mary Wheeler, Jake Kulaw, Jason Shedlock, Sue Cook, Tom Rogers and Jenn McAdoo were chosen for the Ministerial Search Committee. That slate will be presented to the congregation at the Annual Meeting on June 12th for confirmation. The Governing Board will charge the MSC and the ministerial search will begin. So much effort, so inclusive a process, and the level of engagement of the entire congregation is to be commended and appreciated. I am so very grateful for all the collaborative effort that went into making this selection of a diverse, representative committee. All the callers, voters, nominees, applicants, and the final choices deserve our deep gratitude and praise for the successful process that selected this stellar team. Now, the Transition Team and I will shift our attention and intention to supporting the search. We will help members of First Parish articulate the identity of First Parish and a vision for its future, so that you will be able to recognize and call the very best minister for this next era in your long and meaningful history.

As I close this report, I realize there is so much more that shaped and informed our ministry together. I look at all I have written and wonder how we did all this? How are we managing to weave and shape the future of this congregation with all that we have integrated and confronted in our world? I haven't even mentioned the war, inflation, the social underpinnings of our ministry, or the stellar work of our Faith-in-Action team, winning the coveted Bennett Award for their work with the Wabanaki Alliance. There is so much more to say about stewardship, budgets, building renovations, and the completion of the CFE campaign. All that was swirling around, and so much of what I have accomplished has been due to the competent leadership of others. Thank you all. Your reports will reflect whatever I have missed here. Know that I see, love, and

appreciate all of you, your commitment to the work and presence that make First Parish a historic institution and vital presence in the city.

With much metta, Elaine

Rev. Dr. Elaine Beth Peresluha  
Interim Minister  
First Parish in Portland