

**Committee on Ministry Semi-Annual Meeting Presentation:**  
**Assessing our Shared Ministry at First Parish**

Hello everyone. I'm here to give a description of what we're about in the Committee on Ministry, especially as it applies to this year as we move into a new phase in our committee's evolution. Our committee charter reads in part:

**“The CoM is a sounding board for issues within our community that can be addressed sensitively in order that we may live up to the covenant and mission of our congregation. CoM is also a conduit for communication from the congregation to the ministers and an impetus for stronger communication from the ministers to the congregation. CoM members understand, assess, and support multicultural and multi-staff ministry. Any member of the congregation may contact a CoM member if there is an issue (joyous or troubling) that he/she would like the committee to address. CoM may address the issue directly or redirect the congregant to a more appropriate committee.”**

Together we discuss issues that have or might come up between individuals, committees, or groups, between any of those entities and the ministers, or even between the ministers themselves. Anything the ministers might want input on from laity, or need to hear about from community members, and sometimes vice versa, is part of our work.

This year the CoM is addressing the need, and requirement, for a community-wide evaluation of Shared Ministry here at First Parish.

So, what is Shared Ministry? Last Fall, Fred gave a sermon that described what we do for each other as ministry. I quote:

“In religious community, the gifts we share are all forms of ministry. To minister is simply to serve. By covenanting each Sunday ‘to nourish and serve each other,’ each of us promises to be a minister.” He goes on to say: “When we see everything we do here as ministry, we are more likely to recognize each other’s inherent worth and dignity, [and] to remember the interdependent web of which we are a part. Responsibility becomes reverence, each act of service a gift of love. Preparing refreshments, greeting newcomers, teaching our children, chairing a committee, all become ministries sacred and transformative.”

Anything we do together, one on one or in groups, in a Sunday service or a meeting, or just saying a caring hello to someone from church we run into on the street, can be seen through the lens of ministry.

Our Senior Minister has been here three years, our Associate is now in her second year. A great deal has happened here these past few years! We're growing, we've adopted a new Mission Statement, and we have a Covenant of Right Relations. And as a guide, we have our congregational Covenant dating from November 2003: “to answer the call of love, to nourish

and serve each other, our community and our world.” ..... So how are we doing in our work on our mission? Are we meeting our commitment to the covenants well?

In our evaluation process the CoM will:

--- maintain the posture that all of us own the success or failure of the congregation’s ministry, not just the professional ministers.

---see the mission of the congregation under the congregation’s own exclusive ownership.

--- assume that what is best for the whole of the congregation’s ministry is what is best for those parts of the ministry that make up the whole.

Over this coming year we will develop several approaches to give us a chance to look at ourselves, including our professional ministers, and how we are all doing in our Shared Ministry. This review will include a survey, as well, perhaps, as some meetings after church, such as those very fruitful ones held during the development of our new Mission statement. In addition, we will meet with chairs of committees or groups and/or entire committees or groups, if they would like. We want to know what people are really feeling, from praise to grumblings and anything in between. We welcome any input, in any form, from any individual or group, and promise to share what we learn in writing in a report that will be available no later than the next semi-annual meeting.

This is an initiative important to the healthy growth of our community... so stay tuned, keep ministering, and let us hear from you! Committee members are Jan Ellertsen, Irene Merwin and Peter Kelsey. You can contact us at [COM@firstparishcambridge.org](mailto:COM@firstparishcambridge.org)