

First Parish Cambridge Governing Board Minutes  
February 20, 2024 at 7:00 PM  
(Virtual)

Present:

Cade Murray, Chair	Sylvia Wheeler, Past Board Chair
Jane Stabile, Member at Large	Rev. Rob Hardies, Contract Minister 2022-23
Lindsay Lucke, Treasurer	Carol Lewis, Director of Administration
Patrick Sullivan, Member at Large	Grace Hall, Governance Advisory Committee
Rich Lawson, Clerk	

Regrets: Nina Lytton

Chalice Lighting & Check in – Rich

The reading was from [Peacebang - Napping on the floor of the aerobics studio](#).

Participants were asked to pick one or more questions:

- What does “shared ministry” mean to you?
- How do you go about sharing ministry?
- What obstacles do you perceive today to broader sharing of ministry?

Consent Agenda – Cade

Rev. Rob did not submit a written report this month due to illness. His topics were all addressed during the meeting.

Cade Murray noted that Carol Lewis’ report indicated that the attendance numbers were for December; they were actually for January. The report will be updated.

There was also a question about whether rental income is likely to be back to pre-pandemic levels by the end of the church year. Carol Lewis thought that it would. Harvard Bookstore alone is bringing in significant funds, and there are several other sources in addition.

Jane Stabile moved to accept the consent agenda. This was seconded by Tod Hibbard. There was unanimous approval.

Racial Equity Team Update – Charlene Galarneau and Karin Lin

Charlene Galarneau and Karin Lin provided this update; their last update from RET was Sept 2023. The group has continued to have monthly meetings, which are well attended, including the four new members: Siobhan Bredin, Margaret Drury, Cassandra Montenegro, Susan Leslie.

They continue to see RET as an incubator, having been involved in the initiation of: Slavery Legacy History Project and HEART as two examples. A new Indigenous Justice Working Group was also recently started, and Susan Leslie is now keeping up with Ceasefire Now.

Recent activities within RET include work around education and the arts. Lois Markham includes one action every week in the newsletter. They supported Siobhan Bredin's play. After the service last week they facilitated conversations about racial equity. They also are active participants in the monthly session of the 8th principle UU Learning Community led by Paula Cole Jones.

RET also has a number of activities in development. An indigenous justice working group is getting started following a recent conference at Harvard related to this. RET will look for new members on this group once the mission is clear. They are also exploring a possible Ray Shepherd book discussion group regarding *A Long Time Coming*.

City of Cambridge Employee - equity and inclusion

#### Requests of the board

- 1) DRUUM holds a public worship every year and looks for congregational support. \$500 or more gets group membership. Can we support public worship on May 8th. Sermon is about joy

Carol - Money is already in this year's budget for DRUUM

Cade - anything you can send in writing will be good for the budget discussion for next year. Karin agreed to send the material

- 2) Continue to support and participate in events sponsored by RET

Model attitude of continuous learning

8th principle learning community tomorrow - soul work anti-racist theologies. Susan Leslie will also be speaking.

You need to register in advance

#### 2 other general requests:

1. Keep RET in mind as part of developmental ministry. She doesn't know where that is.
2. Anti-racism work is also structural work. When FPC hires, the board should consider the RET mission.

This led to a discussion about whether it is time to think about related training or development opportunities for the congregation. Mistakes and Miracles was the last program. The congregation has done beloved conversations in the past. Jubilee 3 is available now, but it is relatively expensive, i.e. in the range of hundreds of dollars per person.

There was also a discussion about how to sustain momentum for whatever program we choose. It was pointed out, though, that we don't need to sustain the program per se. What people learn should be expressed in how they go about their lives. It's never a waste to just complete a program

Karin Lin and Charlene Galarneau indicated that they still intend to have a leadership transition in RET, but there are no immediate plans for change. They also still see RET as an incubator model for new programs and for emerging leaders. This is especially important with younger members of the congregation because they are often willing and able to lead activities.

This led to another observation regarding newer members. It is important to offer programs that let them know about all the work we've done over the last 10-12 years. That builds credibility since there has been impressive progress over time.

## **Board Priorities**

### Membership Program/Team

Rev. Rob indicated that the congregation will be entering into a fertile period for membership in March. The strategy is to approach about 15 people who have been waiting on the fringes for the last year or two and invite them to officially join the church. Rev. Rob will reach out to them directly. All parishioners, especially leaders, are encouraged to take one step closer to the center of our community.

Karin Lin also reported that work on membership is going well. Interacting directly with individuals makes a huge difference. The newcomer table has a high return rate. She enjoys the challenge of talking to newcomers to find what their connection to the congregation could be.

The membership team had one practical request of the board: volunteers for childcare on March 3rd after church for the newcomer orientation. Lindsey Lucke and Rich Lawson volunteered.

Rev. Rob added that one goal is to redevelop the membership process. The team is experimenting with the very personal process, which is sustainable in a church the size of FPC. The team recognizes that the individual connections need to be institutionalized into a clear path to membership

Karin Lin said that this is a limited process now. There is a lot more that could be done - it just takes time and energy. As we grow, we may need a bigger committee with more process.

There was a question about whether newcomers are introduced to expectations for pledges. Pledges are addressed as part of the process. They are asked to make a gift that feels generous to them. There is also a "suggested giving guide" on the web site.

It was also recognized that it would be good to talk about the connection between membership and leadership development. It will be valuable to include this as part of the new member process. This could be a Board goal for next year.

#### Ministerial Transition and DG – Cade

FPC now has a contract with Jen Hayman. The Board can now send a congregational update since this is final. The next step is to work with Rev. Rob this spring to formally extend his contract

#### Rebuilding RE Program – Rob

Rev. Rob provided an update on RE program. February was a big month. RE launched a teen class - there were seven people in the initial class. Caleigh is the teacher. Cade Murray has agreed to be a group leader. They will meet twice each month: once at church; once at Cade's house for a hang-out.

The RE staff has had some setbacks. Zara got a full time job, so is no longer available to us. Lisa injured her leg and has been out for a few weeks. She is expected to return in March.

The team is looking forward to a busy Easter Sunday. They are also planning for the budget for next year.

#### Updates to Board Policy Book – Tod

The Board Policy Book had been reviewed by the Board electronically in advance of the meeting. Everyone appreciated the amount of time and effort Grace Hall invested in making improvements.

Tod Hibbard moved to approve the board policy as revised. This was seconded by Jane Stabile. There was unanimous approval.

### Stewardship – Tod

Tod Hibbard provided an update on the spring stewardship drive. It will start Sunday March 3rd. An email will go out on the 29th of Feb. Carol Lewis can send separate letters to friends who are not members to see if they would be willing to contribute. An invitation has been sent to major donors for a reception on Saturday, the 2nd of March.

Each Sunday in March, the lay worship leaders will also offer their personal testimonial. The Stewardship team will send a letter to the congregation every week with a different, but consistent message. Visiting stewards will make calls and visits during the month. There is an organizing meeting for them soon. Celebration Sunday will be April 21st; Rev. Rob will be in the Pulpit. Tod will meet with Rob, Cade, and Carol to discuss messaging and the budget target.

### Begin planning Board retreat/2025 goals

Cade Murray indicated that he would like to start this in May, or possibly June. The aim is to have this in person at church on a Saturday. One possible date considered was Saturday, May 18th, but this was not finalized.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 pm.

Note: Chalice lighting/check-in monthly rotation: March: Lindsay, April: Nina, May: Jane, June: Patrick. (Sylvia is a substitute as needed)