

# First Religious Society Parish Board

Meeting Minutes  
December 12, 2018

Present: Maureen Adams, Rebecca Brodish, Rev. Rebecca Bryan, Micah Donohue, Kristen Fehlhaber, Tim Fountain, Ann Haaser, Art Henshaw, Rich Johnson, Lynn Kettleison, Ann Power, Forrest Speck, Karen Young

Absent: Sophia Lyons

## I. Call to Order

The monthly meeting of the First Religious Society Parish Board was called to order at 7:04 p.m. on December 12, 2018 in the Lower Meeting House of the FRS by Art Henshaw, Parish Board Chair.

## II. Chalice Lighting, Reading and Check In

### “Serving with Grace”, Chap 3

Rev. Rebecca began by reading a piece called “The Art of Disappearing”. Board members then discussed what points they had taken from Chapter 3 of Serving With Grace. Reb. Rebecca asked board members to share an experience in their lives when saying “no” has allowed them to do something they otherwise would not have been able to do.

## III. Strategic Thinking

### Church Growth Patterns and Staffing

Rev. Rebecca and Kristen Fehlhaber reviewed “bubble” documents depicting FRS organization of worship and church life, and a ministry staffing chart

- Combining full-time and part-time staff, FRS currently employs an equivalent of approximately 5 full-time staff (“program staff” of approximately 4.5)
- Discussion centered on whether FRS has enough staff to engage the number of people currently in the congregation and to draw in new members
- In a few years, a part-time minister will need to be added
- At some closer point in the future, a director of adult programs will be needed to maintain and build the current level of membership; it’s hard to imagine that current staff will have time to develop new ways to meet the needs of people in a meaningful way
- Until FRS is able to hire a new staff member, perhaps volunteers from the congregation can develop ways for people to connect

The Board discussed church consultants on the relationship between church size (membership and/or attendance) and church staffs required to successfully support them. The consultants seemed to agree that no formula can be directly applied to

specific a specific church, since no two churches are alike. Nevertheless, they all seemed to agree that

- There is a natural relationship between church size (membership and/or attendance), the desire for programs and services, and the staff needed to support a thriving church.
- For the same “size” church, a growing church needs extra staffing to enable the growth than a church staying at the same size.
- Church which staff “reactively” to growth, rather than “proactively” are less likely to grow. In some cases churches actually lose growth if an insufficient staff is unable to provide desired programs and services.

#### **IV. Communications**

##### Minister’s Report

- Issues around the longer Sunday service (70 minutes instead of 60 minutes) will need to be resolved
- The recently hired office administrator has resigned. Search for a replacement will begin after the holidays. In the meantime, current staff and volunteers will fill the gap.

#### **V. New Business**

##### Habitat for Humanity – Plan of Action

After a description of the proposed plan of action was given by Rev. Rebecca, the following motion was made by Micah Donohue and seconded:

**Main Motion:** “I move that the Parish Board endorse the Habitat for Humanity Plan of Action.”

**Vote:** The motion passed unanimously.

##### Revised Housing Allowance

After a description of reasons for the revised amount was given by Art Henshaw and Kristen Fehlhaber, the following motion was made by Maureen Adams and seconded:

**Main Motion:** “I move that the Parish Board approve a Ministerial Housing Allowance of \$64,896 for calendar year 2019.”

**Vote:** The motion passed unanimously.

#### **VI. Old Business**

##### Preservation Agreement

Art Henshaw reviewed answers given by counsel to questions the Board had previously asked about the agreement. The following motion was then made by Tim Fountain and seconded:

**Main Motion:** “I move that the Parish Board approve the Preservation Restriction Agreement as approved by the Mass. Historical Commission and conveyed to FRS by the City of Newburyport.”

**Vote:** The motion passed unanimously.

#### Policy on Hiring of Members

Ann Power, co-chair of Human Resources Subcommittee, reviewed a proposed policy regarding employment of congregation members and relatives of staff. The following motion was then made by Rebecca Brodish and seconded:

**Main Motion:** “I move that the HR Committee recommended policy on hiring of members be approved as a first reading, and be referred to the Governance Committee for incorporation into the Parish Board Policies and returned to the Parish Board for final approval.”

After discussion of the main motion, the following motion was made by Art Henshaw and seconded:

**Motion:** “I move that the main motion be tabled.”

**Vote:** The motion to table passed unanimously.

Amendments to the proposed policy will be made by the Human Resources Subcommittee together with Kristen Fehlhaber, and the Main Motion will be taken off the table and reconsidered at the next Board meeting.

## **VII. Routine Business**

### Consent Agenda Reports

- Director of Religious Education
- Climate Action
- Friday Book Group
- Minutes of November 14 Meeting
- Process Check of November 14 Meeting
- Minutes of December 6 Special Meeting

The following motion was made by Rich Johnson and seconded:

**Motion:** “I move that all items on the Consent Agenda be approved.”

**Vote:** The motion passed unanimously.

### **VIII. Seasonal Closing**

Rev. Rebecca asked that each member take a turn thanking another person on the board for their service to the beloved community.

### **IX. Process Check & Adjournment**

Forrest Speck collected Process Check forms. Karen Young made a motion to adjourn, which passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

*Minutes submitted by Ann Haaser, Parish Clerk*