

First Religious Society Parish Board

Meeting Minutes

March 13, 2019

Present: Maureen Adams, Rebecca Brodish, Rev. Rebecca Bryan, Kristen Fehlhaber, Tim Fountain, Ann Haaser, Art Henshaw, Rich Johnson, Lynn Kettleon, Sophia Lyons, Forrest Speck, Karen Young

Absent: Micah Donohue, Ann Power

I. Call to Order

The monthly meeting of the First Religious Society Parish Board was called to order at 7:03 p.m. on March 13, 2019 in the Lower Meeting House of the FRS by Art Henshaw, Parish Board Chair.

II. Chalice Lighting, Reading and Check In

Rev. Rebecca read “Prayer of Awareness” by Jane Ellen Malden.

Serving with Grace - Chap 5: “Mission and Community”

Ann Haaser began by reading the FRS Mission Statement as suggested in this chapter, followed by a roundtable discussion of what people were struck by in the chapter.

III. Strategic Thinking

Teams – a new direction?

Rev. Rebecca gave a summary of a Governance Committee discussion of this concept, which is in the beginning stages of exploration and how it might develop at FRS

- The team concept stresses collectivism vs. individualism
- Teams would be “action oriented”, responsive to what’s going on, formed around an issue/topic and having a purpose
- Teams are dynamic rather than static, they may dissolve or they may evolve

Rev. Rebecca will bring this idea to the Program Council and something will be developed for presentation to the Board at next month’s meeting.

Sanctuary Church Level 2 (Amesbury Level 1)

Annie Maurer joined the meeting at 8:07 to present information about the Merrimack Valley Interfaith Sanctuary Church network

- The Main Street Congregational Church in Amesbury is becoming a Level 1 sanctuary church, meaning they have the ability to house people seeking refuge

- Annie and other members of the Justice Action Ministry (JAM) group have attended informational meetings and are proposing that FRS become a Level 2 sanctuary church, which provides support to Level 1 churches
- JAM will have a speaker at its “first Wednesday” event to describe what it means to be a Level 2 church
- The proposal to become a Level 2 church will be presented for a vote at this year’s Annual Meeting

The following motion was made by Maureen Adams and seconded:

Motion: “I move that the Parish Board approves FRS becoming a Sanctuary Church Level 2, and as being coherent with the FRS mission, conditional on Social Action leadership of a discernment process with the congregation which results in a favorable decision by the membership at Annual Meeting, 2019.”

Vote: The motion passed unanimously.

IV. Communications

Minister’s Report

Rev. Rebecca updated the Board that good progress is being made in the selection process for a permanent music director. There will be no interim director; people are volunteering to help with directing the music program each week.

Finance & Admin reports

Kristen Fehlhaber reviewed the Income and Expense Statement. Currently we are in the black by approximately \$39,000 but that will change as the fiscal year goes on. Loose plate collections are markedly up.

Tim Fountain updated the Board on the status of cell tower leases. AT&T has asked FRS to approve its plans for upgrade of its equipment, and FRS has asked in return that AT&T agree to an increase in the monthly rental fee. AT&T does not yet agree with increasing the monthly rental.

Open Meeting Time

Art Henshaw asked the Board if this is something we should do, that is, open up a slot of time during each Board meeting for questions/input from congregants. The consensus was “no” due to time constraints, but we will make sure people know they can attend Board meetings.

V. New Business

Steeple Award

The Executive Committee thinks it would be a good idea to form a team, which would report to Rev. Rebecca, to review nominations made by congregants to receive this award.

Maureen Adams, Ann Haaser and Lynn Kettleon volunteered to be on this team.

Change annual meeting to June

The following motion was made by Kristen Fehlhaber and seconded:

Motion: “I move that the Parish Board call a special meeting of the membership on March 31, 2019 for the purpose of approving an exception to the bylaws for the Annual Meeting to be called on June 9, 2019.”

Vote: The motion passed unanimously.

Executive Session

At 9:01 pm, the following motion was made by Rebecca Brodish and seconded:

Motion: “I move that the Board go into Executive Session.”

Vote: The motion passed unanimously.

VI. Old Business

Rev. Rebecca updated the Board on the formation of a “Mission and Vision Process Selection” team. Only one person has volunteered so far, in addition to Karen Young as the participating Board member. A total of three congregants (in addition to Karen) are needed for the team.

VII. Routine Business – Consent Agenda

- Dir of Community Engagement, Feb 13
- Parish Board Minutes, Feb 13, 2019
- Finance Report (distributing at meeting)
- Governance Committee, Feb 26 notes
- Legacy Circle Announcement (DRAFT)
- CAP – Climate Action, Feb 13 notes
- CAP – Daily News Op Ed, Feb 4
- CAP – Greater Newburyport Green Expo

The following motion was made by Art Henshaw and seconded:

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

Vote: The motion passed unanimously.

VIII. Process Check & Adjournment

Process Checks were completed by Board members.

Art Henshaw moved to adjourn the meeting, which passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:14 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Ann Haaser, Parish Clerk