

First Religious Society Parish Board Meeting – June 21, 2022

Call to Order: Tina Benik, incoming chair, substituting for Holly Cashman, called the meeting to order at 6:05pm.

Attending: Rev. Rebecca Bryan, Rob Authier, **Tina Benik, Jim Supple, Kathy Desilets, Vern Ellis, Michelle Kimball, Renée Wolf Foster, Micah Donahue, Annie Maurer, Minnie Flanagan,** Laurie Evans-Daly, incoming board member. (**Note: Names in Bold are voting members.**)

Not Present: Holly Cashman, Lucy Litwin

Check-in/ Opening Reading and Welcome: Reverend Rebecca lit the chalice and offered opening words from Melanie Beatie's book, *Weathering the Storms*, which remind us that all storms pass in time.

New Business

Name Change Proposal: Laurie Evans-Daly brought a proposal for a name change for FRS. She presented a written report (attached) which detailed reasons for this suggestion. In summary, the name does not accurately reflect our history, our current beliefs, or our goals and purposes, and consideration of a name change would be timely in the lead-up to our 300th anniversary. Discussion revealed significant support for looking into this question.

Action: Kathy Desilets made the following motion: *I move that we develop a task force to explore the question of making a change in our church name.* The motion was seconded by Michelle Kimball and passed unanimously.

Minister's Report: (Sent to board members)

- **Pledge Completion:** Rev. Rebecca discussed the process for seeking pledge fulfillment, if possible, for the past year. Staff will send a letter to all who did not complete their pledges and asked if the Board or Stewardship Committee would follow up. This is still under consideration with focus on privacy of pledges.
- **Covenant of Right Relations:** We have worked on this and need to consider again how we will define our expectations for behavior of congregants, especially in times of deep disagreement.
- **Board Retreat:** We need to deal with defining the roles of Board members. It should be formal and captured in writing and accepted by all.
- **Sabbatical:** Rev. Rebecca is planning her sabbatical to come after the 300th anniversary celebration (later than originally planned) and the Board needs to consider what will be needed to allow this to happen with minimal disruption to church operation.

Note: a suggestion was made that we may need to allow more time for Minister's report.

Repair of Bricks in Front of Church: The Accessibility/Inclusion Ministry (AIM) raised the issue of this repair as a safety issue and as a matter of accessibility. We have had one case of a person falling and there are others for whom the state of the bricks is a problem. The cost is likely \$44,000 to get these bricks done. We need a plan to get this done. AIM plans to work with

finance and others who are interested to research options. It seems we may need a group to function as a facilities team.

Employee Manual: Jim Supple reported for the HR Committee that the employee manual, copies of which were distributed to the board for review, has generally been updated to meet the requirements of state law and is ready for approval. While the manual is fine, we should consider adding a DEI statement and consider any further changes as we move ahead.

Action: Renée Wolf Foster moved that the board should approve the employee manual as presented. Minnie Flanagan seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Open Issues

Retreat Reminder and Preparation: Tina Benik reminded the Board that the retreat is planned for this Friday and urged all to review the written material. We need to consider our role as a board and how we move it forward. We also need to consider how we can improve the cohesiveness in the congregation and how we can enhance our work as a body.

Meeting Dates: For the next church year, meetings will be held on the third Tuesday of each month.

Recognition of Departing Board Members: Micah Donahue, Juliana Beauvais, and Lucy Litwin (youth member) are leaving the board this year. Micah says he will be willing to serve again. All are sincerely thanked for their service.

300th Anniversary Celebration: Reverend Rebecca discussed the coming 300th anniversary of the church. This is an opportunity for many celebratory events to highlight the role of the church in the community. It is time to begin planning both fiscally and programmatically for this event. After some discussion, the formal recognition of this fact was established.

Action: Vern Ellis moved that FRS celebrate its 300th anniversary from January 1, 2025 to December 31, 2025. The motion was seconded by Annie Maurer and passed unanimously.

Action: Kathy Desilets moved that we develop a team to oversee planning for the 300th anniversary celebration of the church and to bring recommendations to the Parish Board. The motion was seconded and passed without opposition.

Annual Meeting Date: The date for the 2022-2023 church year Annual Meeting was established.

Action: Minnie Flanagan moved that the Annual Meeting date for next year be set for May 11, 2023. Annie Maurer seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Consent Agenda:

Action: Jim Supple moved that the board accept all items on the consent agenda. Renée Wolf Foster seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Parish Board minutes (May 17, 2022)

Trustees meeting notes (May 18, 2022)

Stewardship report
Finance Committee - operating budget (P&L)
Budget FY23
FRS Employee Policy Manual (HR Committee)

Closing

Closing words: Rev. Rebecca Bryan offered a blessing and encouraged all to consider what we will commit to doing for the board and the church this year.

Action: Kathy Desilets made a motion to adjourn, and Renée Wolf Foster seconded. The board unanimously approved. Meeting was adjourned at 8:10pm. The chalice was extinguished.

Tina Benik reminded members to sign Process Check Forms.

Notes prepared and respectfully submitted by Kathy Desilets, Clerk