

FRSUU Parish Board Meeting – May 21, 2025

Present: Tina Benik, Tom Himmel, Kathy Desilets, Jim Supple, Laurie Evans-Daly, Vern Ellis, Bob Higgins, Sarina Kahn Reddy, Andy Lobb, Liss Larsen, Renee Wolf Foster, Minnie Flanagan, Reverend Rebecca (Names in bold are voting members)

Call to Order: Tina Benik called the meeting to order at 6:05pm.

Welcome: Reverend Rebecca opened the meeting with a poem calling for peace, joy, and loving kindness.

Covenant Reading: Kathy Desilets read the first section of the Board Covenant which offers a statement of the Board's agreement to serve the mission of the congregation.

Refugee Immigration Ministry (RIM) Discussion: Rebecca Lobb offered information for consideration on RIM, a program where congregations unite to support refugees for consideration. Rebecca is working with Michael Sandberg on the exploration of this program. With the support of RIM program infrastructure, a group of churches would offer support as needed to a refugee individual or family until they are able to live independently. After a robust discussion, Rebecca invited us to reach out to her for additional information. In June, the board will vote on whether FRSUU will join this program.

Minister's Report: Rev. Rebecca provided a written report. Discussion included:

- We have not yet found an accountant or other financial support. Bart Bracken and Bob Higgins are working on the payroll. Betsy Latham is also providing support including financial reporting.
- Summer worship has been planned. The planning process may help to prepare for Rev. Rebecca's sabbatical.
- A meeting will be held to plan how to deal with large donations/behests.

Finance Report: Jim Supple reported on the Annual Giving Campaign and the Annual Budget

Annual Giving Campaign:

- We exceeded our goal through significant work by the Steering Committee, Diane Carroll, and Bart Bracken.
- Eliminating campaign captains put additional pressure on the Steering Committee, and the Committee will consider this for next year.
- The number of contributors increased this year.

Budget:

- The Finance Committee has been actively involved in the development of a new reporting structure that is clearer and more transparent and that breaks out specific expenditures for defined activities.
- Items in the endowment and other capital funds are reported separately from the operating budget including funds restricted by donors and other funds designated for specific purposes such as social justice and help to members of the congregation.
- The 2025-2026 budget was presented for approval.

ACTION: Approval of 2025-2026 budget

Motion: Tom Himmel moved that the board approve the 2025-2026 budget as presented. Andy Lobb seconded, and the motion carried without objection.

HVAC System:

After considerable discussion and collaboration between the Finance and Facilities Committees, there is a plan for replacing the current HVAC system in the Lower Meetinghouse with a heat pump system. This will require spending at a level that requires Congregational approval.

ACTION: Send request re: HVAC system replacement to Congregation.

Motion: Kathy Desilets moved that the congregation be asked to approve replacement of the HVAC system for the Lower Meetinghouse at the upcoming Annual Meeting. Vern Ellis seconded, and the motion carried without objection.

The work can be completed this summer, but a temporary solution may be required to maintain a comfortable temperature in the meantime.

Governance Committee: Tom Himmel

Tom reported that the primary work of the Governance Committee this month was to complete the Warrant and slate of Officers, Board Members, and Trustees that the congregation will vote on at the Annual Meeting. Tom reviewed the Warrant items. Articles 1-3 and 7 are routine business. Article 4 proposes a change to the bylaws to increase the spending, which is acceptable, without full congregational approval, from \$7,000 to \$20,000. Article 5 asks for congregational approval of continued research to determine the best language for a Land Acknowledgement which will come to the next Annual Meeting. Article 6 requests approval for spending on the HVAC system replacement.

ACTION: To approve the Warrant items for the upcoming Annual Meeting.

Motion: Renee Wolf Foster moved to approve the Warrant items and the slate of Officers, Board Members, and Trustees of the Endowment for the Annual Meeting of the congregation. Sarina Khan Reddy seconded, and the motion passed without objection.

Stewardship Committee: Renee Wolf Foster

- Online ticket sales for the raffle are moving, and Paula Renda and Michelle Kimball will promote the raffle at the Pride table and the Community Sing.
- Plans are underway for the next church year. FRSUU will hold its annual auction at the Newburyport Community Center. Recruitment is underway for various roles.
- Tina Benik and Paula Renda will run the book sale during Yankee Homecoming and others will sell T-shirts and other FRSUU items.

4th Century Committee: Vern Ellis

- No meeting this month.
- The Capital Campaign team met with architects working on assessment of the restoration of Parish Hall. They are confident that their six years of relevant experience will serve us well.

Grants Team: Andy Lobb

FRSUU member Deborah Kelsey, who is a librarian and who the team believes would be an asset, is interested in joining the team.

ACTION: To accept Deborah Kelsey as a member of the Grants Team.

Motion: Bob Higgins moved that the Board accept Deborah Kelsey as a member of the Grants Team. Renee Wolf Foster seconded, and the motion carried without objection.

Consent Agenda:

ACTION: Approve the minutes of the April Board meeting.

Motion: Minnie Flanagan moved that the Board approve the minutes of the April meeting with the notes from Tom Himmel presented at this meeting. Andy Lobb seconded, and the motion carried without objection.

Closing: Rev. Rebecca read a poem by Everett Himmel starting with the line “I see peace wherever I go” and following this theme.

Motion: Renee Wolf Foster moved to adjourn the meeting and Minnie seconded. The meeting adjourned at 7:50pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Desilets, Clerk