

FRSUU Parish Board Notes – December 3, 2025

Present: Bob Higgins, Tom Himmel, Kathy Desilets, Jim Supple, Renee Wolf Foster, Lori Clark, Andy Lobb, Julie Menin, Jeff Bard, Leslie Lawrence, Reverend Rebecca, Ed Budelmann, Wren Bellavance-Grace from the UUA. **(Bold denotes voting members.)**

Absent: Liss Larsen, Sarina Khan Reddy

Call to Order: Bob Higgins called the meeting to order at 6pm.

Welcome: Rev. Rebecca welcomed all with Brian Doyle’s “A Prayer for Small Things Done Well.”

Grants Team: CPA Funding Application: Ed Budelmann presented a plan for an FRSUU application to the City of Newburyport for a Community Preservation Act (CPA) grant to upgrade fire protection for both the Meetinghouse and Parish Hall with a cost of approximately \$149,000. Ed explained that this action addresses the CPA goal of preservation. The Team chose this project from options which included the Parish Hall roof, an infrastructure study for the Parish Hall, and a comprehensive plan for both buildings. Applications are due by December 12. If we do not apply now, we will not have another opportunity until next December. The Board discussed the feasibility and appropriateness of this proposal and supported the idea that discussion with CPA should include the idea that we are working on a bigger plan for preservation and improvement of our buildings, for which we plan to apply for funding in the future.

ACTION: Approve an application to the CPA for funding to upgrade fire protection for both the Meetinghouse and the Parish Hall

Motion: Jeff Bard moved that the Board approves the plan from the Grants Team to apply to the CPA for a grant to cover the cost of upgrading the fire protection plans for both the Meetinghouse and Parish Hall. Jim Supple seconded and the motion passed without objection.

Discussion of Ministerial Transition Process: Wren Bellavance-Grace explained that she is the liaison to our parish from the UUA Congregational Life staff and will support us through our transition to a new minister. We will also have access to an expert on transition issues (Christine Purcell). Wren has met with our transition team and will answer questions for all of us on the process of transition. She also referred us to a UUA booklet on the topic which can be accessed on the UUA website. Bob Higgins posed a series of questions to Wren with an invitation for Board members to add their own questions.

What Is the Process re Interim Ministry? The process is different from the calling of a settled minister. The congregation hires a transitional minister to help them adapt to the absence of the minister who is leaving and prepare for a new minister. It is advantageous to us that we can start to prepare early because Rev. Rebecca has let us know early about her plans to leave. Steps in the process include:

- Forming a transition/search team. March, April, and May will be the main work time.
- Creating a document to familiarize candidates with the church. UUA will make this available in April/May.
- Ministers interested in interim positions will also have a profile available. UUA will release names of available ministers in April.
- After a process of learning about each other, candidates and churches will work through UUA to find a match. Churches/ministers seeking transition will be informed of matches found by UUA staff. Sometimes a church may have more than one matched candidate. In any case they can accept or reject the suggested candidate. If there is no initial match, UUA will help with further steps to find a match.
- UUA has a pool of experienced candidates for interim ministry and a training program for ministers new to this role.
- Compensation for an interim minister is close to the salary of a settled minister.
- Larger churches may present challenges to candidates but also may be attractive due to their ability to offer a full-time position.

What is the role of an Interim Minister?

- Become familiar with the church, including its history and how it operates, take on appropriate ministerial duties, help the congregation to cope with emotions and concerns about loss of the previous minister, and consider what the congregation will want the church to look like with new leadership.
- A team will assist/support the new interim minister. The team should consist of members of various groups in the church, such as older members, parents, and those with an interest in music. Ideally the team members will be able to commit to the two years of the interim ministry. The interim minister will take on typical tasks of the minister and will help the congregation to prepare for change.
- In answer to a question, Wren said that this year is not the best time to make significant organizational or staff changes. The focus now should be on getting ready for the departure of the current minister and looking at patterns and practices that the church might want to improve. The Board should consider what skills they will want in a new minister. The church may need to delay some changes until the interim minister arrives.
- If the energy and excitement is available for the Capital Campaign, we should go ahead. The UUA can refer consultants if we want. While UUA staff are accessible through our membership, consultants will receive payment directly from the church.

Other Discussion:

- Transition and grieving process with Rev. Rebecca. Managing changes skillfully. Acknowledging emotions.
- The Board should communicate often in varied ways with the congregation—letting them know that the Board represents them and that we welcome comments and questions.

- Steps we are taking now include liaison with committees and work groups, board/congregation meetings, and helping the congregation to see that the church can weather change.
- Another suggested action is to include notes from Board in the Steeple newsletter, including how to reach the Board.
- The process of calling a settled minister is different and more intense than hiring an interim. UUA can help us with that. The focus now needs to be on the present situation.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 7:55pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Desilets, Clerk