

# NEWS & VIEWS

Annual Meeting of the Congregation  
THE FIRST PARISH CHURCH IN WESTON, UU  
349 Boston Post Road  
Weston, Massachusetts  
**Sunday – February 2, 2025**

Join us IN PERSON or on Zoom after the Worship Service, approximately 11:45 am

The 2024 Annual Reports are published in advance of the Annual Meeting to give you the opportunity to reflect on the church's previous year's activities in advance of the meeting. A copy of the proposed 2025 budget and the Nominating Committee's slate of officers and committee members are included at the end of *News & Views*.

All members of The First Parish Church in Weston are urged to attend the Annual Meeting to act on items in the Warrant, to pass the 2025 budget, and to provide the thoughtful discussion necessary to give guidance to church committees.





## MINISTER'S INTRODUCTION

*In the love of truth and the spirit of Jesus Christ,  
We join for the worship of God and service to humankind.  
– The Ames Covenant*

This last week I was reading an [article on happiness by the author Dan Buettner](#) who is the Research Director for the Gallup National Health and Wellbeing Index. Buettner has studied some of the longest living people around the world in areas that he calls “Blue Zones,” places where people tend to live much longer than others. One of the factors he has examined is the level of self-reported happiness among some of the longest living people. He even identified 15 “cowbell metrics” that signal whether or not you are happier than most. Many of these factors make obvious sense. For example, you are probably happier than others if you:

- eat healthy every day or most days;
- don't smoke;
- exercise at least 30 minutes 3x per week;
- feel safe and secure in your community.

There is one factor however that I believe he overlooked in his list; one having to do with participating in a community that inspires us and provides support and meaning. I think both transcendence and inspiration are critically important to our sense of satisfaction and happiness in this life; inspiration to strive to be our best selves. First Parish Church is one of those communities where we find such inspiration. We are reminded that true happiness involves not just self-care and but the care we extend to others. We are reminded that in helping others we are indirectly helping ourselves over time. And we are reminded that the best way to be on a journey is together with others.

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Here in this document are a series of reports and updates attesting to the good work and dynamic ministries of the members and staff of this congregation. I often tell people that in a community like First Parish Church the ministry is shared among many and not vested in one or two professionals exclusively. It is practiced and made real through the contributions of many different people.

So while I encourage you to read my report and those of the other staff, I also hope you will take the time to read through all the reports by our officers and committees and appreciate the diversity and quality of our “collective ministry” that happens in various places and spaces. We are a wonderful and engaging church community; one that inspires and encourages us along our life's journeys. The Minister's Record follows.

I have conducted one baptism (Helen Simone Pasterczyk) and eleven different funeral and graveside committal services, for twelve individuals. This included memorial services for longtime church members Mary Menino and Winifred Li, both of whom left behind wonderful legacies of service here, as well as the service for The Rev. Dr. Harry H. Hoehler, *Minister Emeritus* at The First Parish Church in Weston, who served as its 12th minister for three decades.

I have preached 32 times since February 4, 2024, and led worship 37 times. My sermons have covered a wide range of topics including: the history of war and peace in the Middle East, Boeing and the corrupting power of spreadsheets, “Having Sympathy for Judas,” “Donut Thinking” and a more sustainable world, and the Rise in Christian Nationalism in the U.S. I was particularly proud of the sermon I preached last September on the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday of church members Mel Rines and Jerry Lynch. I was also liked my two “election” sermons: “A Male Minister's Case for Reproductive Rights” and “The Dangers of Misinformation,” (featuring a song I co-wrote with Chap GPT). I was also proud of my sermon on the Bethlehem in December, and my remarks on the legacy of Jimmy Carter on Epiphany Sunday, and the influence of the Rev. Harry Hoehler on my life and ministry, on the Sunday after his memorial service.

I participated in and spoke at the Memorial Day Ceremonies here in Weston last May and the Veteran's Day Ceremony last November. I also attended the annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Breakfast in January.

I was pleased to have my colleague, the Rev. Sarah Napoline lead worship and preach several times over the last year, including February 25, June 30, and December 29.

Guest Preachers over the last year included:

|                   |                                                                      |
|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| February 11, 2024 | Matt Meyer, UU worship and song leader                               |
| March 17, 2024    | Rev. Tricia Brennan                                                  |
| April 7, 2024     | Rev. Mary Catherine Morn, Exec. Director of the UU Service Committee |
| May 18, 2024      | Rev. Kelly Murphy-Mason                                              |
| August 4          | Rev. Johanna Murphy, Exec. Dir. of UU Mass Action                    |
| August 11         | Rev. Danielle di Bona, Chaplain to the UUA Board                     |
| August 25         | Rev. Hank Peirce                                                     |
| October 6, 2024   | Mary Margaret Earl, Exec. Dir. of the UU Urban Ministry              |
| November 10, 2024 | Rev. Danielle di Bona                                                |

Guest Speakers and Pulpit Editorials:

|                    |                                                                                 |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| April 26, 2024     | Kinga Birro from Torda, Romania                                                 |
| September 22, 2024 | Jane Carlson sharing "One of My Favorite Hymns"                                 |
| October 20, 2024   | Caroline Marple, Chair of the Stewardship Committee                             |
| Jan. 26, 2025      | Chloe-Rose Crouch, Operations Director from The Community Day Center in Waltham |

I include the full list of special services below. Since February 4, 2024 through the present, I have officiated at the following rites of passage at First Parish (unless otherwise noted):

**Baptisms**

| <u>Date</u>     | <u>Name</u>                                                                                                                                      |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| August 18, 2024 | Helen Simone Pasterczyk<br>(b. December 2, 2023)<br>Daughter of Hannah (Roman) and Maxwell Pasterczyk and granddaughter of David and Fiona Roman |

**Memorials/Committals**

| <u>Date</u>      | <u>Name</u>                                                     |
|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| April 18, 2024   | Arthur Richard Hersum                                           |
| April 20, 2024   | Catherine H. Ditmore (committal<br>by The Rev. Steven Wilson)   |
| May 11, 2024     | Suzanne Stutz (committal)                                       |
| May 26, 2024     | Paul Warren Wiggin<br>Phyllis Ann Hunter Wiggin                 |
| June 1, 2024     | Mary Margaret Menino                                            |
| June 22, 2024    | Winifred Li                                                     |
| October 26, 2024 | Christopher Scott (committal)<br>Linell Scott Ready (committal) |
| November 2, 2024 | Steven William Matthyse                                         |
| January 11, 2024 | Rev. Harry Heyden Hoehler                                       |
| January 18, 2024 | Sarah Richardson Bates Gilman                                   |
| January 31, 2024 | Dorothea Wyman Thomas                                           |

The Rev. Jeffrey Barz-Snell

## ASSISTANT MINISTER FOR FAMILIES & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Most Sundays, our church speaks aloud the words of the Ames covenant: “In the love of truth, and the spirit of Jesus Christ, we join for the worship of God and service to humankind.” These sentiments are paralleled by the covenant our children speak: “We are Unitarian Universalist Christians, with minds that think, hearts that love, and hands that are ready to serve.” A covenant is a sacred promise, a statement about how we choose to be together in community, what we are seeking along the spiritual journey, and how we want to live in the world.

First Parish supports a wide variety of activities and initiatives representing our diverse interests and the never-ending challenges presented by the outside world. These covenantal words can serve as guideposts for the ministry we do together. Does it bring us together, inspiring hope, compassion, and loving kindness? Does it uphold truth, reason, and justice? Does it invite us into service to others? If we can answer ‘yes’ to those things, then we are on the right track. My role at First Parish encompasses a variety of responsibilities, all of which align with these covenantal commitments.

### The Love of Truth (“Minds that Think”)

During 2024, we implemented three primary curricula for our church school programs (K-8th grade). In the spring, they explored the beauty of creation and the sacred responsibility of stewardship for the Earth. This fall we began a curriculum about what it means to have power, considering both healthy empowerment and structural oppression. We began a curriculum which explores various stories from the Bible, beginning with the Hebrew prophets. In January 2025, we began a curriculum lifting up the Shared Values and Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism.

We believe in nurturing curiosity and self-reflection along the path of faith formation, starting with our very earliest experiences in church school, to create a foundation for lifelong spiritual growth. This year we began holding a Middle School program with a curriculum designed around the BIG questions we all consider throughout our lives.

Our church school program continues to grow; as our society grows increasingly secular, family time on Sunday is no longer sacred, and church competes with rehearsals, games, grandparents, and a myriad of other commitments. We declared First Parish a “guilt-free zone,” and I encourage families to participate however and whenever they can. We have had many new families joining us over the last year, with quite a few becoming regular attendees or members.

Our Committee for Children & Youth Ministry submitted a separate report about all our children & family programs, which can be found elsewhere in News & Views. I must applaud the members of this wonderful committee for their efforts and energy: Karen Edwards, Mia Fourreau, Haley Kulow, and Allison Trumbull. Extra kudos and appreciation go to Meghan Scott, committee chair and liaison to the Standing Committee, for her commitment and support of the committee, our children’s programs, and the work we do together.

### Joining Together in Spirit (“Hearts that Love”)

We continue to reach out to and mindfully welcome families with young children for worship and congregational involvement. The Sunday worship experience is usually the first introduction for visitors who are “window shopping” for faith communities. Our services typically incorporate a Time for All Ages which is intended to engage young minds (and remind older ones!) about the theme for that week. Over the year I created three different video slideshows for picture books to incorporate dynamic visual elements into our worship.

Our sanctuary “Busy Bags” – pouches with paper, pencils, pipe cleaners, figurines, play-dough – continue to get regular use (let me know if you find one that’s missing anything!). We also set up a “Pray-ground” at the back of the sanctuary – this is a small space with a rocking chair, play rug, kid-size table, and quiet toys (e.g., coloring pages, soft blocks, Etch-a-Sketch) so that parents can stay in the sanctuary to enjoy worship while letting fidgety children move about quietly.

I offered a homily on April 21st talking about being “part of the puzzle,” lead an intergenerational worship on June 30th, and lead a New Year’s star card ritual in December. Jeff and I presided over the Blessing of the Animals in the fall, and children participated in both Flower Communion and RE Sunday in June.

We are beginning to introduce music into our children's program (and children into our music program) through periodic singing performances, directed by the wonderful Rose Hegele. In November the children sang "Peace, Salaam, Shalom" on the week before Thanksgiving, and then they sang a rousing rendition of "We Wish You a Merry Christmas" directly after the Christmas Pageant. We are glad to support the ongoing development of the "Chalice Singers" as part of our worship experience.

#### Service to Humankind (*"Hands That are Ready to Serve"*)

Our website, front lawn and physical campus (building & grounds), and Sunday worship are the initial "storefront" that visitors experience; keeping those "touch points" active, welcoming, and friendly are crucial to attracting new visitors. Our website has been dynamic and engaging throughout the year; I work to maintain and update the event listings, news items, home page sliders, and program pages. In addition to putting out signs to celebrate regular holidays (Christmas, Diwali, Lunar New Year), I created new lawn signs about yoga, meditation, solar energy, and messages of peace for Israel & Gaza.

Our community events and engagement serve to tell the wider community who we are, what matters to us, and what it means to be part of a church. We hosted a myriad of programs — a WCCA movie night, a vibrant Easter Egg hunt, an Earth Day Cleanup Walk, three Summer Movie Nights, and our annual Trunk or Treat event. At this year's Celebrate Weston event, the Library & AIC did a scavenger hunt; I asked for First Parish to be a stop on the hunt, and a couple of our features (bell tower tours & the art gallery) were added as "bonus points" and drew in a few families. I had a table at the WCCA's Halloween Parade to welcome all the ghouls and goblins and was able to wave and high five some First Parish kids as they marched proudly around the green.

Throughout the year I taught yoga (first and third Friday mornings), including a mellow flow for Good Friday, and a Solstice Flow which incorporated a ritual of letting go in darkness. I welcomed many new visitors who were totally unconnected to First Parish and found out about the classes online or through word of mouth.

#### With Gratitude

Whether my work involves a thinking mind, a loving heart, or helpful hands, it would not be nearly as successful without my exemplary colleagues and co-workers. Many thanks to Betsy Gibson, Alan Flynn, TJ Rufo-Curran, Geoff Wieting, Paula Leger, Hussein Al-Masarani, and Peter Constable. Robert Jones, our Youth & Family Ministries Coordinator, is affable, authentic, kind, and truly invaluable; he is beloved by high school teenagers and cranky two-year-olds alike, which speaks for itself.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not express appreciation for the encouragement and partnership of Rev. Jeff Barz-Snell. I feel very lucky to have found a job that capitalizes on my skills and interests, serving a church whose mission and personality align with my own, and with a colleague who is supportive, knowledgeable, and enthusiastic.

#### Think, Love, Serve

The work of ministry is vast and beautiful. There are people who are hungry, or scared, or in pain who need love and support. There are systems of injustice and oppression that need to be challenged and dismantled. There are people with broken hearts and deep questions who need inspiration and comfort. There is a beautiful planet filled with wonders which need our respect and care.

There is a beautiful quotation (which many of you may know) that is an amalgamation from the Bible and Talmud: "Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief. Do justly, now. Love mercy, now. Walk humbly, now. You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it."

When I am daunted by the enormity of the task, or paralyzed by the world's pain and grief, I come back to simple messages of faith that tell me what to do next: Do justly, love mercy, walk humbly (Micah 6:8). Lift up truth, follow Jesus, join together in love, offer service. Think, Love, Serve.

In a complicated world, it sometimes helps to keep things simple. Not easy, or inferior, or dumbed down... just simple. For today (...and tomorrow, and this year), I will follow these clear and simple reminders as guides along the shared journey of spiritual community.

Yours in faith and service,  
Rev. Sarah Napoline

## STANDING COMMITTEE

The Committee is comprised of 16 members elected at the Annual Meeting. In 2024 the Standing Committee included:

Nancy Piedra (Chair); Kurt Flory (Treasurer); Pam Wood (Parish Clerk); Trish Mordas (Welcome); Caroline Marple (Stewardship); Dusty Reeder (Facilities); Janie Plank (Member-at-Large); Mary Shaw (Member-at-Large); Richard Weeks (Denominational Affairs), Ray LaFrance (CAMP), Meghan Scott (CCYM), Sharyn Lenhart Price (Member-at-Large), Leila Hooper (Member-at-Large), Carol McKeen (Music), Camille Schmidek (Outreach) and Maggie Gill (Member-at-Large).

The Standing Committee meets at 7:30 PM on the third Tuesday of each month, except for July and August. Agenda and meeting minutes are available in advance of each meeting.

### **Overview:**

The Standing Committee met both in the Parish Hall/Parlor and on Zoom. Although most members attend in-person, the Zoom option is convenient for those who may be out-of-town, or whose schedules makes it more convenient to attend remotely. The typical 90-minute meeting agenda includes: Opening Prayer by Reverend Barz-Snell; Clerk's Minutes from the previous meeting; Treasurer's Report on financial transaction during the past month; Progress Reports by one of the committees; Update on the past month's activities by the Minister and Assistant Minister for Families and Community Outreach; and Announcements.

### **Actions:**

Below are some of the significant actions taken by the Standing Committee in 2024.

- In February, as is customary, the Standing Committee elected a chair, appointed a Personnel Liaison, approved staff salaries and appointed the following ad-hoc committees: Alter Flower Committee, Art Gallery Committee, Finance Committee, Investment Management Committee, 41 Ripley Lane Task Force, Library Committee, Minister's Advisory Committee, Parish Historians, Partner Church Committee, Pastoral Callers Committee and Social Justice Committee.
- In March, the Standing Committee discussed the content of a potential lawn sign that reflected the church's values regarding the war in Gaza.
- In April, the Standing Committee voted to approve new signage for the Mary Jo Rines Art Gallery and voted to approve the content of the lawn signs reflecting our values on the War in Gaza.
- In May, the Standing Committee voted to sell the church's Bass Viol to Volker Nahrman for \$5,000.00. The committee also voted to use the proceeds of the Bass Viol sale to purchase a digital piano. In addition, the committee voted to appoint Richard Weeks as a delegate to the 2024 UUA General Assembly and to empower Richard Weeks to appoint up to seven additional parishioner delegates.
- In June, the Standing Committee voted to approve the repair work for the regulators in the boiler room for the amount of \$12,000.
- In September, it was reported that three members of the Standing Committee attended the UUA Joint Board Retreat. It was also reported that the church would be requesting CPC funds to repair the church clock. It was also announced that two long-term staff members would be retiring in 2025: Alan Flynn, our Sexton and Betsy Gibson, our Administrator. We wish them all the best in their retirement and appreciate their many years of dedicated service.
- In October the Standing Committee voted to approve the parsonage roof replacement for approximately \$25,000. The committee also voted to adopt the UUA Retirement Plan for its employees.
- In November the Standing Committee voted to approve the hiring of two part-time sextons for a total of 35 hours and \$22-\$24/hour. The new Sextons would also clean the Church School Wing and eliminate the need for a contracted cleaning service.
- In December the Standing Committee voted to start a Clean Energy Fund seeded with a \$75,000 donation from an anonymous parishioner. The committee also voted to approve the use of the Clean Energy fund for solar panels on the parsonage for a cost of approximately \$25,000.

On behalf of the Standing Committee, I am grateful for the service of so many parishioners and staff. I am inspired by the leadership of our Minister, Reverend Jeff Barz-Snell. I am encouraged by the progress made in growing our family and youth involvement by our Assistant Minister for Families & Community

Outreach, Reverend Sarah Napoline, and our Family Ministries & Youth Coordinator, Robert Jones. I am delighted to have TJ Rufo leading our music program as our Music Director and Geoff Wieting as our organist. I am appreciative of the commitment of our Parish Administrator, Betsy Gibson and all other staff who keep First Parish functioning. I am thankful for the dedication of the members of the Standing Committee and all those who work behind the scenes to keep this 326-year-old institution vibrant.

Respectfully submitted,  
Nancy Piedra, *Chair*

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| <b>INVESTMENT COMMITTEE</b> |
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**Overview**

The Investment Management Committee is responsible for overseeing the church’s non-operating investment assets. Those assets consist of four separately managed portfolios: the General Endowment, the Natalie Coburn Trust, the Stoddard Fund and a small portfolio that is managed by the UUA (which is not summarized here). The Investment Committee members are Russell Brackett, James Dana, Steve Hibbard, Gene Miller, Charles Pohl and Kurt Flory, treasurer. The investment policy for the General Endowment, per the church’s By-Laws, is to maximize the rate of return without taking undue risk.

**2024 End of Year Account Summary**

The General Endowment ended the 2024 calendar year with a value of \$8,097,753. The current asset allocation is 18.7% cash (high interest money market) and 81.3% equities. At the end of 2023 the endowment allocation to equities was 78%, so during 2023 the equity allocation increased slightly (primarily because of equity appreciation). But the equity percentage remains within the overall equity allocation target range. The portfolio rose in value by \$760,817 or 10.4%. The church withdrew \$252,098 from the general endowment fund to help cover our operating expenses, so the assets grew at a rate closer to 13.8%.

The General Endowment performed below the S&P 500 Index equity benchmark, which closed the 2023 calendar year with a return of 23%. However, the performance of just the equity portion of the portfolio was closer to that of the S&P 500 index. We underperformed the S&P 500 index because our portfolio is more heavily invested in small and mid-cap stocks and international stocks, which returned less than large-cap stocks this year.

The Coburn Trust’s purpose is to fund the overall maintenance of our church organ, and the year-end value was \$187,823. The portfolio’s allocation is 20% in cash/fixed income and 80% in equities. The overall return was 10.5% (no withdrawals this year). By design this portfolio is focused on current income or high dividend equity which underperformed the market in 2024.

The Stoddard Fund’s purpose is to provide future Stewardship funding. The portfolio ended the year with assets of \$970,319, which are currently invested in 24.6% in high interest cash equivalents and 75.4% in equities. The portfolio rose in \$54,868 (about a 6% increase), and \$50,000 was withdrawn for current use, so the assets grew at close to 12%. The committee is increased equity holdings in the Stoddard Fund in 2024.

End of year figures are not yet available for the small UUA portfolio (about \$136,000 two years ago). Excluding that portfolio, the church had \$8,097,753 in endowment assets at the end of 2024.

**2024 Review**

As always, trying to make sense of the recent market performance can be an exercise in futility. The strong performance in 2024 is again inconsistent with Federal Reserve’s warnings that their interest rate policy could lead to a recession. The investment committee remains determined to focus on long run returns, to maintain a moderately aggressive investment strategy, and to not change its investment strategy in response to short term fluctuations in economic conditions. Nevertheless, the committee is aware that several indicators suggest that equities are currently overvalued.



## **2025 Planning**

There is bound to be some concern as to whether market can appreciate in the near term. The economy still faces many challenges. Nevertheless, the committee believes the portfolios have appropriate asset allocations at this point. It is important to remember a strong and steady commitment to equities is the best way for to grow the endowment in the long-term.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jim Dana, *Chair*

|                              |
|------------------------------|
| <b>STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE</b> |
|------------------------------|

The Stewardship Committee is elected during the Annual Meeting of the First Parish Church in Weston in February of each year. Caroline Marple (Chair), Anne Morgan and John Hennessey were elected as Stewardship Committee members in February 2024. The data contained in the report below is as of January 8, 2025, unless otherwise noted. Data is focused on the 2024 campaign as well as the 2025 campaign, which launched in October 2024.

### **Stewardship 2024**

As of January 8, 2025, we received pledge commitments from 140 families totaling \$428,647. To date we have received payments of \$443,393 on the commitments. In addition, nine families that did not make a pledge also made payments of \$6,780. As a result, 149 families made total payments of \$450,173 towards the 2024 Stewardship campaign. We mailed letters to 171 families, and the response from 140 families represents a participation rate of 81% (87% for all 149 givers). Fourteen commitments in 2024 were from families that did not commit in 2023. While the number of parishioners has declined over recent years, we are excited by the participation of new members over the past couple of years.

### **Stewardship 2025**

For Stewardship 2025 (year ending 12/31/25) the committee sent letters and pledge cards in late October 2024 to 147 families. For the handful of new members, we also enclosed a First Parish ornament (in inventory from a prior Stewardship year). Betsy Gibson deserves a huge thank you for her production of all these materials and for thinking of the ornament gifts!

As of January 16, 2025, we have received commitments from 111 families for \$390,845 in commitments. As of January 8, we have received payments of \$123,620. The participation rate (~74%) is about even with where we were last year at this point. Of note, 31.5% of the commitments received to date are increased from the prior year. There have been 5 brand-new commitments, and 10 decreased commitments.

As we are hoping for participation from all active members and church attendees, we will send a second mailing in 2025 to encourage further participation. In addition, we are regularly highlighting Stewardship in the e-Parish Post. We have also highlighted stewardship on the website to facilitate online participation.

These are the activities we have undertaken this year:

- October 20, 2024, was Stewardship Sunday, with Jeff and Caroline Marple making remarks and Anne Morgan lighting the chalice.
- The Committee members gathered with Betsy Gibson to prepare the mailings, and they were mailed the week of October 21 to 147 parishioners.
- The website has been updated for the 2025 campaign and there is a link for people to make a donation.
- Caroline Marple lit the chalice during the service on December 8 and reminded all present to contribute.
- The e-Parish Post has a regular Stewardship solicitation as does the Order of Service.
- On Friday, January 24, 2025, we will host another First Parish Trivia Night for all those who pledged before December 31, 2024.

**Comparison of Stewardship results for years 2020-2024:**

2020 Stewardship: 186 parishioners/families made payments totaling \$437,000 [Actual]  
2021 Stewardship: 166 parishioners/families made payments totaling \$439,000 [Actual]  
2022 Stewardship: 153 parishioners/families made payments totaling \$429,800 [Actual]  
2023 Stewardship: 145 parishioners/families made payments totaling \$426,300 [Actual]  
2024 Stewardship: 149 parishioners/families made payments totaling \$450,173 [Actual]

Respectfully submitted,  
Caroline Marple, *Chair*

**TREASURER’S REPORT**

The Treasurer, elected by the congregation, oversees the daily financial responsibilities of the Church, ensuring that financial policies approved by the Standing Committee are adhered to. The Treasurer and the Clerk are the two officers of the church. The Treasurer’s responsibilities include signing authority for all payments/transfers, overseeing the annual budget process, keeping the financial records, and participating in investment decisions for the endowment and operating funds. The Treasurer is also automatically a member of the Standing Committee, the Finance Committee, and the Investment Committee.

**Capital Improvements & Maintenance Reserve Expenditures**

We annually transfer money from a “reserve” budget line in our operating expenses to long-term Maintenance Reserve accounts on our balance sheet. This transfer accrues as an expense each year on the Income & Expense statement that is reserved on the balance sheet for future capital improvements and certain repairs/maintenance expenditures. The reserve accounts are split between the Church Maintenance Reserve and the Parsonage Maintenance Reserve.

In 2024, as in recent years, the transfer from our operating budget was \$40,200 to the Church Maintenance Reserve account. These transfers are recognized as operating expenses annually, but the projects to which they are applied occur irregularly and usually in later years.

The opening balance of the Church Maintenance Reserve was \$47,908 at the beginning of the 2024 year. A significant number of facilities projects had occurred over the last several years resulting in an overall reduction to the reserve balance. For 2024, we only incurred Church Maintenance Reserve charges of \$26,105 – this compares to prior year charges of approximately \$107,000 and \$47,000 in 2023 and 2022, respectively. The Church Maintenance Reserve funds used in 2024 were utilized on capital improvements and repair projects primarily related to the following: new circulator pumps for the boilers, replaced piping and improved floor drainage in the boiler room, a new heat pump hot water heater, masonry work and replacement & repair of stone stairs and walk to the church from the parking lot, and the planting of several new trees.

For 2024, we spent/charged less than we reserved on capital improvements at the Church, so our ending reserve balance is higher than what it was at the beginning of the year. After taking into account increases to the reserve of \$3,164 for SMART solar rebates and \$40,200 for the budgeted increase, and the offsetting reduction to the reserve account for current year projects of \$26,105, the 2024 year-end Church Maintenance Reserve balance stands at \$65,167.

Although the Parsonage Maintenance Reserve had not been charged in recent years, there were some capital expenditures in 2024 charged to the reserve. The charges totaled \$25,880 and included replacing the old roof on the Parsonage with a new roof and doing some masonry repair work around the Parsonage. The current year charges resulted in the Parsonage Maintenance Reserve decreasing from an opening balance of \$64,894 to an ending balance of \$39,014.

We hope that the 2024 charges to the Church Maintenance Reserve are closer to the norm than the high level of capital expenditures we experienced in 2022 and 2023, but unexpected facilities projects do arise each year and we need to be prepared for these unexpected projects and potentially significant expenditures in 2025 and beyond. The Treasurer continues to advocate for funding the Maintenance Reserve accounts on an annual basis as part of the Budget process to keep the reserve accounts at least partially funded for these future facilities related costs.

In closing our discussion on facilities reserves, I wanted to highlight a new reserve account we established in November of this year. A donor (who asked to stay anonymous) approached the Church and expressed an interest in making a significant donation to support clean energy initiatives at the Church. After some discussion, the donor made an initial donation of \$75,000 to allow us to establish the new Clean Energy Fund which is dedicated to supporting projects that advance our commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship at the Church and its Parsonage. This fund is open to others who would like to make donations to support these initiatives. We are starting to work on our first project, which will be to add solar panels to the Parsonage. We hope this project will start in the Spring of 2025.

## **2024 Results**

Following this report in the 2024 Annual Reports package, you will find a spreadsheet that details the operating budget and actual results for 2024, as well as the proposed budget for 2025. A brief summary of First Parish's 2024 financial results versus our 2024 budget follows:

### **Income:**

First Parish's 2024 income totaled \$839,100 and was above our budget amount of \$789,000 by \$50,100. All income items exceeded budgeted amounts except for plate receipts. Stewardship, Short-term Investment Income, and Facilities Use income were all more than the amounts budgeted for these items at the beginning of the year. These positive variances, especially Stewardship and Facilities Use increases, continue to demonstrate the increased support by our parishioners and the added receipts that come from others' use of our Church facilities. Our parishioners continued to show strong participation and support for our ministry and the many activities and programs at First Parish.

Stewardship payments totaled \$450,200 and was \$25,200 over its budgeted amount of \$425,000. This was our largest payments total in several years and added over half of the budget-to-actual increase for 2024. The breakdown of the Stewardship payment total for 2024 can be summarized as follows: payments on pledges \$428.6k, additional payments in excess of pledge amounts \$19.7k, pledge payments outstanding <\$4.9k>, and payments from annual givers who did not make a pledge \$6.8k. These are outstanding results. Although the excess payments on pledges may not necessarily continue, we certainly hope the amounts pledged will continue to expand and grow in the future.

**In aggregate, our 2024 income was \$50,100 above Budget.**

### **Expenses:**

Expenditures totaled \$858,000, which was \$5,700 above the 2024 budgeted amount of \$852,300. Overall, most expenditure items were within a reasonable range, either slightly above or below, the budgeted amounts set at the beginning of the year. With respect to Church committee expenditures, most committees stayed close to their budgeted amounts for 2024 – Thank you committee chairs and members.

Although we closely adhered to the 2024 budgeted amounts that were set at the beginning of the year, there were a couple of line items – one positive and one negative – where the actual amounts for 2024 varied materially from the budget. On the positive side, and similar to last year, the office budget was underspent by \$9,400. In addition to Betsy's close monitoring of office expenditures, the lower expense total for office & admin was due to a smaller than expected payroll for AV technical staff and a deferral in the hiring of an administrative assistant to help Betsy with her weekly responsibilities and duties. Note that the benefit of a lower than budgeted amount for office & admin is not expected to continue in 2025 as Betsy is expected to retire in August and the Church will need to find and hire both a new Parish Administrator and a new Bookkeeper to replace the roles that Betsy has been filling.

Our Facilities related expenditures for the year were above the budgeted total by \$17,100. The facilities related expenditures reflect the normal operating costs of the Church owned properties (Church building and school wing, Parsonage and Ripley Lane house), except for the Parsonage utilities and Ripley Lane property taxes which are separately stated. Although generally higher grounds and building maintenance costs drove the Facilities budget overage, increases to the following two items contributed to the higher costs: insurance costs \$3.5k and legal fees related to the Ripley Lane matter \$3.0k.

We know that repairs and maintenance on our aging Church buildings and equipment are not discretionary, and it usually requires immediate attention and action when there is a problem. Dusty Reeder and Bill Rousseau of the Facilities Committee manage the contractors and service companies that

regularly serve the needs of the Church and Parsonage. In addition, they help us save money by performing some of the repair and maintenance tasks themselves – Thank you Dusty and Bill!

**In aggregate, our operating expenses were \$5,700 above budget.**

**The above variations from the 2024 budget improved our overall results by \$44,400. This resulted in an overall 2024 operating deficit of \$18,900 – a much better result than our budgeted deficit of \$63,300. In addition, the 2024 result is a significant improvement over our 2023 deficit of \$54,800.**

The duties of this position are not accomplished by the efforts of just one person. The Treasurer relies on the advice and counsel of the Finance Committee to address and resolve some of the issues that come up during the year. In addition, the real power behind the Treasurer continues to be the work of our Parish Administrator (and parttime bookkeeper), Betsy Gibson. Betsy provides all the administrative support and does all the bookkeeping that keeps our finances up to date and in good order. As Treasurer, I appreciate all the hard work that Betsy puts into maintaining the books and financial records of the Church. On behalf of myself and the entire congregation – Thank you Betsy for all that you do for the Church.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kurt Flory, *Treasurer*

## CAMP – COMMITTEE FOR ADULT MINISTRIES & PROGRAMS

### Traditional CAMP

- 1) **Operationally**, CAMP has focused on organizing three events:
  - Church Year-End Picnic
  - Welcome Back Sunday Brunch
  - Christmas
    - Christmas party / set-up, cleanup and dinner
    - Christmas Eve candle prep and usher organizing/management during service
- 2) **Historically**, CAMP has also sponsored periodic speaker events, though not in the post-Covid years
  - a. Some speakers were CAMP-generated while many/most came through other individuals/committees
- 3) **Budget Responsibilities**, CAMP is a repository for CAMP expenses, plus a catchall for guest-minister expenses/fees, outside speakers' fees, church candles and miscellaneous costs that need a home. The Parish Administrator registers all expenses and has records of previous year spending on events. She/he is the person to check in with when assessing spending for an event.

### CAMP 2025 – Bifurcation into two separate groups:

**A) Church Events Group**– Host traditional events and responsibilities working with First Parish membership and fostering interactional events

- Traditional Church Events
- Welcome Back Sunday
- Annual Christmas Party
- All Church Picnic
- Traditional Events Committee
- Cheri Mahan, Leader
- Gail Palmer
- Joan Wilson
- Shane Mahan

**B) Speakers Series Group** – Sponsor speakers of interest to church members as well as to others in the greater Weston area; thereby growing involvement among our members and expanding our interaction and awareness within the greater Weston community

### CAMP Speakers Committee

- Ray LaFrance, Leader
- Kelly Shact
- Maggie Tyler
- Carrie Preston

**C) Operationally**, the two CAMP groups will work independently

**D) Ray LaFrance** will lead “CAMP Speakers” and will be the CAMP liaison to the Standing Committee.

### **CAMP Event Groups:**

#### **Church Picnic**

- Grills – Contact Weston Recreation Department (at least 2 weeks in advance for drop-off and pick-up of a town grill. Our picnic often coincides with High School graduation festivities, so get the grill reservation in early
- Purchase charcoal and lighter fluid as needed. Make sure long handle spatulas, tongs and insulated gloves are available.
- Solicit 3-5 grillers from CAMP and congregation membership
- Inventory the closet for cups, plates, plastic silverware and purchase whatever is necessary; and in the refrigerator for ketchup, mustard, relish etc.; and purchase what is necessary
- Purchase approximately 100 frozen hamburgers and 50 hot dogs and buns (Costco)
- Work with Parish Administrator on requests from the congregation for salads and desserts.
- Purchase any salads or sweets as necessary, depending on the signups.
- Sexton will have tables and chairs in place
- Place plastic tablecloths on tables and tape down with masking tape to secure from wind
- Two large coolers -
  - Mix Lemonade in large container with ice in one
  - Add ice and water in the second
- Set up serving tables with the water and lemonade plus paper plates, cups, napkins, plastic dishware, serving ware, salt/pepper packets, etc.
- At the end of the picnic, wipe and fold the tablecloths returning to the closet, stack the chairs and straighten up as needed. Sexton will later take down the tables
- Later, once the grills have totally cooled, spread the ashes and take the grill to the nearby parking area for town pickup
- Appropriate leftovers (especially sweets) can be dropped off at the fire or police station

#### **Welcome Back Sunday**

- Assuming level attendance year over year, work with the Parish Administrator to reorder from Roache Brothers the same things we had the previous year. Order can be picked up Sunday morning before church
- Also work with the Administrator on soliciting salad/desert contributions from the congregations
- Prep the Church Hall with tablecloths and any setup that is necessary
- Oversee the event and conduct cleanup
- As noted for Church Picnic, appropriate leftovers can be dropped off at the fire or police station

#### **Christmas Party**

**Below is my 2025 message to the CAMP team on the Christmas Party/Dinner. It pretty well explains what is necessary. One thing not mentioned is that the Parlor piano should be fully covered with a plastic sheet for protection and then a tablecloth on top of the plastic.**

#### **Fellow CAMPers,**

The Christmas season is on us with a number of activities involving CAMP.

#### **Christmas Party Details - Background**

- Friday, Dec 6, 6:30pm – 9:00
- We will start with a cocktail hour followed by buffet dinner. This year, similar to last year, cocktails/refreshments will be in the Parlor accompanied by hors d’oeuvres and sweets.

- I will bring a couple of bottles of wine and sodas to start the festivities flowing. We are asking attendees to also bring wine and/or non-alcoholic beverages
- For the buffet, we have ordered a number of small-plate foods and a ham from Roache Brothers which will be featured on tables in the church hall
- Often church members also bring food/sweets so the hors d'oeuvre table should be full

**Christmas Party - CAMP Responsibility**

- Camp Members are responsible for making sure all goes well. This means being proactive if you see anything that needs attention, spills, etc. – though this shouldn't stop you from also having a good time. Take ownership if you see anything that needs doing
- Set-up will be completed in advance so you should arrive 15-20 minutes early to assist in any final details
- I'll be around prior to this and then behind the wine table (serving) once the party starts
- CAMP members should help in cleanup for both the parlor and the church hall as guests move to the Sanctuary at 8:00pm for caroling  
We will not have Paula for kitchen help, so a couple of you should stay with me for cleaning up and putting away dishes, etc.

**Christmas Eve Services (4:00pm and 6:00pm)**

- Days in advance, make sure hand-held candles/candleholders are prepped and in two wicker baskets. Make sure the wicker baskets also contain several large candles for the usher to hold as congregants light their small candles
- Christmas Eve Services – For these services, CAMP is responsible for supplying 4-6 ushers for each service (in addition to regular ushering, they also distribute candles/holders at the door prior to the two services.) The candles will be in wicker baskets in the bell tower room. At the end of each service, they should assure all candles/holders are collected and returned to the library table
- Ushers will pass the collection baskets. There will be a bag for each service in the ball tower room. Ushers should empty the baskets in the appropriate bag for each service and leave it in the ball tower room. The minister will pick it up later

Respectfully submitted,  
Ray LaFrance, Chair

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|------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>COMMITTEE FOR CHILDREN &amp; YOUTH MINISTRIES</b> |
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**Committee Overview**

- **Our Purpose & Goals** – Religious education involves the whole church community nurturing the spiritual dimensions of family life by making sacred connections. The purpose of the CCYM is not only to exercise general supervision and budgeting for Children and Youth Ministries, but to encourage the participation of the congregation while increasing engagement through creative programming and activities.
- **Committee Members & Church Staff** – Members: Karen Edwards, Mia Fourreau, Haley Kulow, Meghan Scott (Chairperson & Standing Committee liaison), and Allison Trumbull. *Staff:* Rev. Sarah Napoline, Assistant Minister for Families & Community Outreach, and Robert Jones, Youth & Family Ministries Coordinator.

**Congregational Connections**

- **Worship Services** – On Sunday mornings, children typically begin in the Sanctuary for shared worship before leaving for church school. We continue to incorporate a time for all ages, and the congregation has begun singing “Go Now in Peace” as a sendoff. We had a successful RE Sunday in June to recognize our youth volunteers and present our younger children with books to enjoy over the summer.
- **Christmas Pageant** – Our Christmas pageant continues to be a highlight of the holiday season! It consistently brings in new families and re-engages those who have been less active. This year, 21 children (ages 2 to 13) from 11 families participated in the pageant. First Parish members loved hearing the story and seeing the tableau.

- **Chalice Singers (Children’s Choir)** – We are encouraging a nascent children’s choir through periodic singing performances; our “Chalice Singers” performed during the service the week of Thanksgiving, and then the children performed at the conclusion of the Christmas Pageant. We are happy to support the continued development of a children’s choir and the incorporation of children in our outstanding music program.
- **Pancake Breakfasts** – The Youth Group took the lead in hosting these popular pre-worship gatherings on April 7th & October 20th, contributing to a warm and lively community spirit.
- **Childcare and Family Participation** – We provided babysitting for a few events this year (our Annual Meeting, Trivia Night, and the Christmas party) which proved to be incredibly popular. More families with young children were able to participate in those events.

### Religious Education

- **K-5th Grade: (*Spirit*) Play, Sing to the Power, and Spark! Activate Faith** — Religious education (Church School) is held each week for grades K-5. Our average attendance is around 6-8 children, but our enrollment continues to grow; this year we had up to twenty children on a “regular” (non-holiday) Sunday, and we frequently welcome new families, visitors, and guests. We select curriculum from Unitarian Universalist, Christian, and various other sources. For 2024-2025, we are using *Sing to the Power* (from the Unitarian Universalist Association) and *Spark!: Activate Faith* (from Sparkhouse Digital, via Lutheran-affiliated Augsburg Publishers). Our nursery is staffed by Robert Jones and 203 of our high school youth, with attendance ranging from 2-6 infant through pre-school aged participants.
- **Middle School: *Riddle & Mystery*** – Our Middle Schoolers are now meeting after church for their own program. We are using *Riddle & Mystery* (also from the Unitarian Universalist Association); this curriculum explores one “big question” (*Where do we come from? What happens after we die? Why do bad things happen?*) each session.
- **High School Youth Group** – Our Youth Group provides a welcoming and supportive space for teens to connect, share, and explore meaningful topics and experiences together. Youth Group meetings are typically held twice a month on Sunday mornings before worship, with adjustments made for holidays and special events. This past year, the group enjoyed various outings, including hiking, trips to the cinema, a youth brunch, and a visit to a haunted house. They also participated in congregational activities such as event decorating, cooking and baking, and volunteering with church programs and nursery care.
- **Church School Registration** – Last year we updated our Church School Annual Registration Form! If you have children under the age of eighteen, please take a moment to fill it out so we have the most up-to-date parent information, health updates, and emergency contacts. Find the form at [www.FirstParishWeston.org/Children/Register](http://www.FirstParishWeston.org/Children/Register) and either fill out the form online or download/return a hard copy.

### Community Programs, Events, and Outreach

- **Connecting with Weston Families** – In January (2024), we hosted a movie night in collaboration with the WCCA (Weston Community Children's Association). We had about a dozen children under the age of ten spread out on the floor of the parlor in sleeping bags enjoying popcorn and pizza. We welcome more relationships with local groups.
- **Easter Egg Hunt** – Our Easter Egg hunt was very popular again! We continued to implement adjustments balancing crowd control and welcoming guests. We had 25 children attending church school on Easter Sunday. We hosted egg decorating on Palm Sunday, and Lenten pretzel making the Sunday before.
- **Celebrate Weston Event** – In May, First Parish yet again participated in the annual Celebrate Weston event. The Weston Public Library and the AIC (Art & Innovation Center) created a scavenger hunt to encourage kids to explore organizations in our community, and First Parish had two different stations as part of the hunt.

- **Movie Nights** –First Parish offered three “Third Thursday” Movie Nights this summer (June 20th, July 18th, and August 15th) with a projector and large screen in the playground or the chapel if it rained (or there was a heat advisory). The movies were intended for all ages, and we had anywhere from 4 to 15 participants, including many new visitors.
- **Harvest Fest & Trunk or Treat** – We held our annual Trunk or Treat event and were delighted to be back outside. We went through dozens of donuts, gallons of cider (both hot and cold), and a plenitude of candy. It continues to be a fun event for all of our host trunks and a wonderful gift to the Weston community.
- **Holiday Mitten Tree** – In 2024 our Mitten Tree was coordinated by Robert Jones, and families were able to select a Christmas wish list for local families in connection with Second Step and the Waltham Boys & Girls Club.

**Looking Ahead**

- We are glad that our church school enrollment is growing, and there are a number of ways we can ALL nurture that growth. CCYM encourages First Parish folks to invite new families to join us on Sunday for worship and church school or for family-friendly events. Additionally, we encourage members to attend or volunteer for family-oriented events, regardless of whether you have young children! We are the village that will nurture and celebrate our children.
- It is important that families feel welcome for all of who they are. Get to know the children in our congregation — ask about their hobbies, sports, favorite classes in school! And as we welcome the parents, we must recognize the hectic and unpredictable nature of family schedules. Welcoming parents should encourage their involvement in the congregation — not necessarily recruitment for additional time commitments, but engagement with their own interests.
- We believe that families and children are an integral part of our community. We are working to incorporate children and families into existing First Parish programs and outreach and welcome ideas from other First Parish committees. We are grateful for your support to make our community a loving home and second family for everyone who passes through our doors.

Respectfully submitted,  
 Rev. Sarah Napoline  
 Meghan Scott, *Chair*

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|-----------------------------------------|
| <b>DENOMINATIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE</b> |
|-----------------------------------------|

The Denominational Affairs Committee (DAC) held monthly meetings throughout the church year. Members of the committee included James Dana, Jean Masland, Larry Coburn, Dirk Coburn, Kathy Rousseau, Georgia Foote, Nancy Vescuso, and Richard Weeks.

DAC budget allotments for dues, donations, and program expenditures were as follows:

- |                                                   |          |
|---------------------------------------------------|----------|
| • Annual Program Fund (APF) to UUA                | \$28,000 |
| • UU Mass Action Dues                             | 600      |
| • UU Urban Ministry Dues and Donation             | 500      |
| • Massachusetts Council of Churches               | 2,000    |
| • Weston-Wayland Interfaith Action Group Dues     | 300      |
| • Andover-Newton Seminary at Yale Divinity School | 1,000    |
| • Harvard Divinity School                         | 100      |
| • UUA Disaster Relief Fund                        | 4,000    |
| • Massachusetts Interfaith Power and Light        | 250      |
| • UUA Wellspring Program                          | 600      |

**UUA General Assembly**, held virtually on June 21 – 23, 2024. Three members of the committee served as delegates and participated in the discussions and votes: Nancy Piedra, Jean Masland, and Richard Weeks.

The 2024 General Assembly was discussed at several DAC meetings. One of the resolutions was a proposed revision of the *Bylaws and Rules of Article II* of the Association. The proposed change would replace the “table format” listing the seven principles and six values with a diagram figure, re-imagining much of the



same content. Prior to the conference, the chairperson polled members of the committee as to their preference in voting to adopt Article II. Most committee members were opposed to adopting the proposed changes. Comments regarding Article II were expressed by members of the committee at its meeting on May 22, 2024. Delegates to the General Assembly had diverging views regarding this topic. After considerable discussion, delegates voted to adopt the revised article by a margin of 80 – 20%.

**New England Regional Joint Board Retreat**, Saturday, September 14, 2024. Three members of First Parish Weston attended the annual New England Regional UUA Board Retreat on Saturday, September 14, 2024, at First Parish Bedford. Presenters led representatives from 40 Boston-area UUA congregations in team building exercises, assisting church leaders in managing contentious discussions with members, and in improving congregational fiscal sustainability.

The chairperson brought to the committee’s attention the need to assist the **UUA Disaster Relief Fund** in its relief effort to fellow UUA congregations throughout the country, suffering from weather-related disasters. First Parish’s Outreach Committee Chairperson worked with the UUA Disaster Relief Fund coordinators and reported to our committee the need to assist UUA congregations in North Carolina and Florida after the recent hurricanes. A disaster relief donation was made for this purpose in November 2024.

Similarly, Pastor Jeff brought to the committee’s attention the ongoing work by **Massachusetts Interfaith Power and Light** in New England churches and faith- based communities. He related how their non-profit organization performs energy audits for building improvements and capital projects. The organization has done work at First Parish Weston. Committee members expressed interest in including this organization for consideration in the 2026 DAC budget.

As the year concluded, DAC began to focus more on UUA matters, including the **Wellspring** spiritual enrichment program. Initial planning was done regarding the **Voices in Christianity** lecture series.

Respectfully submitted,  
Richard Weeks, *Chair*

## PARTNER CHURCH COMMITTEE

This year saw the Partner Church Committee established as its own entity to promote and sustain our relationship with the Unitarian congregation of Torda, a Hungarian ethnic church in the Transylvania region of Romania. Successive generations of the Denominational Affairs Committee nurtured the relationship for its first 33 years. The first inquiry from UUA Moderator Natalie Gulbrandsen and President William Schulz about participating in the then “Sister Church” program came to that committee in January 1990, within a month of the overthrow of the despotic Ceausescu regime. Weston replied with an enthusiastic “Yes!” and the story from that point appears in documents available on the First Parish web site: <https://firstparishweston.org/our-partner-church/>

Establishing a committee specifically for the partnership brings First Parish Church in line with the practice at other churches that have longstanding partner relationships. The Partner Church Committee oversees our church’s continued support for the Torda church’s budget and ministry. A line item in the First Parish Church budget documents that support. Let me use this space to tell the human side of our partnership.

A highlight this year in our partnership was the visit by Szabo (Biro) Kinga, who was helpful in planning and hosting the group from First Parish that traveled to Torda in 2023.

During the first large “pilgrimage” to Torda in 1993, Kinga’s parents – the Biroes – hosted First Parish traveler Sally Kahn. As a young adolescent, Kinga was one of a very few in the Torda congregation who was fluent in English. That fact helped augment the highly capable efforts of our arranged translator from Kolozsvár, Farkas Emöd, who is now the lay leader of the Hungarian Unitarian Church in Transylvania. Kinga’s fluency also helped facilitate a lifelong bond with Sally, who considered Kinga “my Transylvanian daughter.” Sally helped Kinga first visit and then then move to the U.S., where Kinga lived for several years and had a remarkable career first in travel and hospitality and then in financial services.

Kinga came last April to visit Sally who had moved years ago to Northampton, MA. Sally and her family welcomed Kinga with a festive reception. After her visit to Northampton, Kinga came to Weston, where she stayed at the parsonage. At a potluck dinner held on Friday, April 26 at the parsonage Kinga reconnected with past Torda visitors and met leaders of our congregation. On Saturday, three of us accompanied her to the coast of Cape Ann, where Kinga relived fond memories of past outings with Sally. Then Kinga joined us the next day for worship, during which the choir welcomed her with the Székély Anthem in Hungarian. After church, Kinga graciously stayed for a forum in interview format. She told of her life in two countries of her deep affection for Sally Kahn, and of the factors that pulled her back to her home community to marry and to raise her family.

It was Kinga who first informed us sadly of Sally Kahn's passing on October 30. Kinga was grateful that our visit to Torda last year motivated her to think about visiting the U.S. this year to see Sally one last time. The close and warm mentor/protégée relationship between Sally and Kinga represents one of the highest potential hopes and aspirations for the partnership between our congregations.

The Torda-Weston partnership community saw another sad landmark with the death on May 7 of Mary Menino. Mary was among the travelers to Torda in the second and third pilgrimages in 2008 and 2014. Among the many good works for others that were the fabric of her life, Mary agreed to receive shipments of hand-crafted holiday decorations and housewares from the Torda congregation's Women's Association, and she started our tradition of selling those items during Advent. This year our partners sent two cartons of hand-crafted items directly to the church's address, and we have continued the tradition of Advent craft sales. Mary's loving spirit gave shape and substance to our partnership in ways that complement our face-to-face opportunities. Mary's illness and passing saddened our partners deeply, on behalf of whom the Rev. Jozsa Lajos and his wife Emese sent heartfelt condolences.

I also want to call out specifically a wonderful and supportive effort started and led for several years by First Parishioner Camille Schmiddek. She initiated winter-season "Soup for Torda" at coffee hour to raise additional funds to assist our partners in meeting the struggle of maintaining a community service institution in a financially challenging part of the world. The pandemic suspended that program, and Camille has since focused her considerable talents on our congregation's cherished tradition of outreach and service to others. Many would welcome a renaissance of Soup for Torda if a champion wants to step forward.

We want to assess interest in affinity events between our congregations: a youth exchange? a choir tour? a joint service project? If any of these thoughts – or others not listed – appeal to you, consider joining our ad-hoc committee. We also seek hosts for stays and events during a yet-to-be-scheduled visit by representatives from Torda.

The partnership between our congregations is first, foremost, and most deeply expressed in relationships between our people. Its success is due to the efforts of so many leaders and pilgrims. Whatever geopolitical challenges our world throws at the Central European/Balkan region, the tight communities of that region have seen it all before, multiple times, under different names, and for many centuries. In so many cases it is their faith that has held their communities together, given them the will and courage to live loving and productive lives, and redoubled their resolve to welcome people of good will. For all that is going on in the world, Romania is a peaceful, safe, welcoming, and beautiful place to visit. If you plan to do so, let our committee know if we can put you in touch with our partners to arrange anything from a stop for lunch to a day or more touring the historical interests in their part of Transylvania.

I want to acknowledge Sarah May, Jeff and Jennifer Barz-Snell, Larry and Gabriella Coburn, and all whose good work and enthusiasm this year have been pillars of the partnership.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dirk Coburn, for The Partner Church Committee

## FACILITIES COMMITTEE

### **Completed in 2024:**

- Rusted boiler room piping replaced, and two new circulator pumps installed on boilers.
- Heat Pump hot water heater installed in boiler room
- Boiler room floor drainage from rainstorms improved
- Repainting of lines and signs on parking lot
- Three Kousa dogwood trees added in the parking lot with watering bags.
- New outdoor faucet and hoses added
- Replaced faucet at hall near boiler room.
- School added ceiling fan in office
- Installed new American flag and cables
- Repair of parking lot light fixtures
- Replacement and repair of stone stair and walk to church from parking lot
- Trimming of ivy at chapel windows
- Trimming of parking lot trees
- Problems with hot water in school wing were resolved (faulty mixing valve)
- Microphones and additional AV work for chapel estimated.
- Heating and air conditioning for all office areas was explored
- Heating and air conditioning for main office areas (to be reviewed further)
- Gutter and downspout repairs estimated
- Parsonage garage door opener replaced
- Parsonage septic tank pumping and basement clean up completed
- Parsonage duct work cleaned
- Parsonage shingled roof replaced (preparation for solar installation)
- The Church Street tower clock face was removed and repairs to all clock faces are being estimated. Spring Town meeting approval required. The town-owned clocks were a gift to the Town from General Charles Paine in 1875 and stored with the 997Lb Paul Revere Bell until the existing church tower was completed in 1888.

### **To Be done 2025:**

- Solar photo voltaic collection system will be installed on parsonage
- Heat pump hot water tank for classroom wing to be estimated
- Microphones and additional AV work for chapel to be reviewed
- Gutter and downspout work to be completed
- Parsonage shutters to be replaced (wood to plastic)
- Repair of church tower clock faces

We will continue in 2025 to find solutions to problems as they arise and seek ways to reduce the complex's carbon footprint.

I am indebted to my fellow committee member, Bill Rousseau, whose advice is essential, and who, on his own has made many improvements to the complex not on this list.

We are also indebted to Parish Administrator Betsy Gibson. Her knowledge of where, what and how everything works is essential to the success of our efforts. She is a dedicated, caring and important member of the team.

Respectfully Submitted,  
William Rousseau and Dusty Reeder, *Chair*

## MEMORIAL GARDEN COMMITTEE

The Memorial Garden Committee has worked to maintain and improve the Courtyard Garden as well as the Memorial Garden. The committee members include Dick Floyd, Gail Nozik, Marnie Phillips, Stephanie Lynch, Ginnie Hibbard and Peter Knight, Chair.

The Courtyard Garden has been attended to by the Committee volunteers and Phil Jones. Weeding and cleanup is accomplished in the Spring, Summer and Fall. Lighting on a timer has been installed, allowing for nighttime viewing when desired. Irrigation has been updated with new plumbing and drip lines, providing water on a timer, with a WiFi controller maintained by Betsy Gibson. Additional plantings have been added, filling in the garden. The committee does not recommend any further planting. Posters on the windows have been limited, providing a better overall appearance.

The Hanson Memorial Garden has undergone major improvements. The Andromeda has been cut back, allowing the plaque of the interred to be seen. Debris from the nursery school has been removed. The two large River Birches have been cut down and the stumps were ground down so as not to be visible. Many new perennial plants and trees and shrubs have been added. The project was completed in the Spring. The original project estimate and cost were within budget. The garden shows different colors at different times of the year with views from the patio into the wooded rear area. There was a supplemental order of perennial plants that has been donated. Consideration is being given to bulbs being planted and possibly annual flowers. The garden is fully irrigated with a timer. Phil Jones sets the watering schedule. We added an additional teak bench so there are now three in the garden. The fence along Church Street has been repaired.

The Committee is pleased with the results and believes that the Courtyard Garden and the Hanson Memorial Garden are attractive and sustainable for the future.

Respectfully submitted,  
Peter Knight, Chair

## MUSIC COMMITTEE

The current members of the Music Committee are: Geoff Blum, Sharon Brown, Larry Coburn, Linda Kilburn, TJ Rufo-Curran, Carol McKeen, (vice chair), Pate Pierson, (chair), Mary Shaw, Jim Vernon, Aaron Yeater, Jeff Barz-Snell (ex officio).

Music at First Parish continues to thrive under the directorship of TJ Rufo-Curran. He has challenged the choir and expanded our repertoire with new music as well as programmed many of the works which we have sung in the past.

Following is a summary of some of the musical offerings since January.

- February featured the music of African American composers in honor of Black History Month. The choir presented a selection of pieces written and/or arranged by Nathaniel Dett, Moses Hogan, William Dawson, and Rollo Dilworth. In addition, Matt Meyer joined the choir to make music on February 11.
- March music featured a variety of repertoire that reflects the season of Lent. Among the pieces performed by the choir were: the Brahms motet *Warum ist das Licht gegeben*, an eclectic Palm Sunday service that featured the trio *On the Willows* from the musical *Godspell* and Bruckner's *Christus Factus Est*. On Easter, Nathan Savant presented a wonderful interpretation of excerpts of Vaughan Williams's *Five Mystical Songs*, accompanied by the choir and the organ.
- On April 28, All Music Sunday, the choir sang Mozart's *Solemn Vespers* accompanied by two violins and cello in addition to the organ. Four of our professional soloists (Rose, Sharon, Nate, and Nathan) performed the solos.
- Music in June included more contemporary stylings as we moved out of the choir season and into the summer. Much of the music presented was from the Musical Theater canon, including our new choir send-off, *Sunday* from *Sunday In the Park With George*. On Father's Day, we were fortunate

to enjoy a tenor/baritone trio (Ben, TJ, Nathan) who presented two pop songs to accompany the Question Box sermon: the Leonard Cohen classic *Hallelujah*, and the popular ballad *What Was I Made For?* written by Billie Eilish for the *Barbie* movie.

- On All Music Sunday, December 8, the choir sang Vivaldi's *Introduction and Gloria RV639 and RV588* with soloists and chamber orchestra. I would like to acknowledge TJ for locating substitutes at the last minute due to the emergency absence of three musicians. Mary Jane Rupert as organist, Regina Stroncek as soprano soloist, and Caleb Hall on trumpet did a superb job. We were fortunate to benefit from their musicianship for a successful performance.

### **Sale of bass viol**

The Music Committee explored the options for selling or restoring a bass viol which dated from the mid 1800's and was badly deteriorating in the archives room at First Parish. A careful investigation determined that selling it was the best option for First Parish. The Standing Committee voted at its May meeting to sell it to Volker Nahrman, a luthier in Billerica who restores basses and has a particular interest in Prescott bass viols. The selling price was \$5,000. Volker offered to play the restored bass viol at a First Parish Service in the future.

### **Purchase of sanctuary piano**

A subcommittee of the Music Committee, including TJ Rufo-Curran, Linda Kilburn, Mary Shaw, Larry Coburn, Geoff Wieting, Pate Pierson, and Jeff Barz Snell investigated replacing the Clavinova which is in the sanctuary. The goal was to identify an instrument with a higher quality of sound which could be moved from the sanctuary to the chapel or church hall. The committee worked with Dan Williams, owner of Williams Piano Shop in Brookline. After several visits and input, we selected the Yamaha N1X, a hybrid digital piano. The piano was delivered in July. The purchase proposal was approved by the Standing Committee. Funding of the piano came from the sale of the bass viol, a gift from Terry Decima's brother, and an anonymous gift from a member of First Parish. We plan to have a dedication of the piano with special music during worship on Sunday, March 2, 2025.

### **New Initiatives**

#### Addition of alto section leader

The Music Committee voted unanimously to request the addition of an alto section leader. A professor at Berklee College of Music, Sharon Brown has served as a volunteer section leader for fourteen years. At this time she will continue to sing with the choir but feels she can no longer serve in the role of section leader. As the choir ages, the section leaders provide critical support in making it possible for the choir to sing challenging music. We appreciate the willingness of the Finance Committee and the Standing Committee to consider ways to fund this position.

#### Music for children

TJ is working with members of CCYM to explore possibilities for children to sing at some services. Rose Hegele, our soprano section leader, is working directly with the children and helping to build relationships with younger families. They have identified several Sundays throughout the year for a group of children to sing during the service.

#### Music Page on First Parish Website

Thanks largely to the efforts of Geoff Blum, the Music page of the church's web site was substantially updated to include photos and bios of TJ, Geoff Wieting and Section Leaders; new choir photos; wording changes; and recordings/videos of several recent All Music Sundays and virtual performances.

### **Performance Evaluations**

The Music Committee has made significant progress in developing and implementing evaluation procedures for members of the music staff. These procedures will enable us to give clear feedback and offer opportunities for ways to improve in areas of concern.

**With appreciation**

Thank you to the Music Committee for thoughtful discussions and commitment to maintaining our strong music program.

Also, heartfelt appreciation to Betsy Gibson for her support.

Respectfully submitted,  
Pate Pierson, *Chair*

**NOMINATING COMMITTEE**

The Nominating Committee, comprised of Geoff Blum, Chet Cekala, Cindy Flory, Sharyn Lehnert and Janie Plank worked this fall/winter to contact the FPCW Committee members that currently serve the church as established by FPCW by-laws as well as potential members for the committees in 2024 that have vacancies. Rev. Jeff Barz Snell is an invaluable ex officio member of the committee.

The nominating committee met virtually to assess all the established committees and based on people's terms ending or being renewed, identified what vacancies existed and what the needs of each committee were with input from their chairs. We recruited new members to fill the vacancies and are very excited about the slate of members that are represented on these committees for 2025. The work of these committees is integral to the functioning of FPCW and also brings additional fellowship and friendship to those that are involved. We encourage any church member to contact Nominating in the fall (New Chair Chet Cekala) should they be interested in serving for 2026.

I'd like to personally thank the following members who have served and are moving off their committees: Christine Bishop, John McCahan, Mike Mordas, Sharon Brown, Janie Plank, Ellen Touart-Grob, Ginny Redpath, Sally von Rumohr, and Trish Mordas.

I'd like to thank my committee members for being so diligent, present and forthcoming in the fall/winter nominating process. Together we worked to make sure FPCW is in good hands. Thanks as well to Nancy Piedra and Betsy Gibson who provide additional support in this process.

Respectfully submitted,  
Janie Plank, *Chair*

**OUTREACH COMMITTEE**

**Mission**

The Outreach Committee strives to foster social awareness, volunteerism, and philanthropy through partnerships with local social service agencies where we can make a significant impact.

In collaboration with the Social Justice Task Force and other committees, the Outreach Committee accomplishes its mission through study and action, engaging the church community in volunteer projects and nonprofit activities, and stewardship of FPCW budgeted funds. While the Committee prioritizes local organizations, it also supports disaster and crisis relief efforts domestically and internationally.

The Outreach Committee welcomes feedback - please share your questions, concerns, and ideas with us! A brief description of the organizations/projects our church funded in FY 2024 follows, along with the name of the Outreach Committee liaison.

**Spring 2024:**

**Boston Teen Police Academy (BTPA)** (Bob Gill) - in partnership with HOPE worldwide Massachusetts and local civic groups, the Boston Police Department conducts a yearly program for 50-75 teens involving physical training, community service, character development and other areas of interaction. The end of

each summer program concludes with a celebration event in which the teens are honored in front of hundreds of family members, the mayor of Boston and the Superintendent of the Boston Police Department.

**Cole Research Center (CRC)** (Bob Gill) - an education and recovery community of peers and family members, dedicated to helping people affected by mental health challenges lead full and healthy lives. The CRC offers information, program opportunities, and referrals to resources, but does not provide clinical services.

**Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries (CMM)** (Camille Schmidek) - an interfaith action organization that mobilizes congregations and communities across economic, religious, racial, and ethnic boundaries so that, in partnership, we can work more effectively for a just and peaceful society and for spiritual growth and interfaith understanding.

**Human Relations Service (HRS)** (Ginny Redpath) - a private, non-profit mental health agency serving families and children in Wellesley, Weston, and Wayland. Its mission is to heal lives and strengthen communities by treating, reducing, and preventing mental illness and supporting the well-being of children, families, and institutions in our towns.

**No Books No Ball** (Cynthia Brisky) - provides boys and girls between the ages of six and seventeen opportunities to learn the game of basketball along with important life-lessons on sportsmanship and academic achievement. For thirty-three years, NBNB has been committed to increasing the high school graduation rate of children from some of Boston's toughest and underserved neighborhoods. Based in Roxbury, the program proudly serves 1,000+ youth and families annually.

**Partakers, Inc.** (Jean Masland) - advances the education of women and men in prison and bridges the divide that separates those inside and outside of prison. Partakers supports Massachusetts prison education by coordinating teams of volunteers who mentor incarcerated women and men as they pursue higher education through its *College Behind Bars Program*, *Extended Learning Program*, and *Seminarian Program*. The *Partakers Empowerment Program* helps formerly incarcerated men and women overcome the challenges of re-entry. Bob Gill, Carol McKeen, Mike Mordas, and Nancy Piedra formed a new First Parish volunteer team this year and are mentoring an inmate at Norfolk Prison.

**Pathway to Possible (P2P)** (Cynthia Brisky) - provides housing, support, and advocacy for people with cognitive and developmental disabilities - and their families - while erasing barriers, building confidence, empowering independence, and expanding opportunities that enrich their lives and their communities. First Parish supports a robust weekly drop-in program and a "Faith in Action" program, which provides developmentally appropriate, onsite worship services for residents and their families through monthly Shabbat services and ecumenical Christian services.

**Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC)** (Camille Schmidek) - protects and promotes programs and policies that empower women, defend the rights of children, and support the struggles of oppressed racial, ethnic, and indigenous groups in accordance with UU principles that affirm the worth, dignity, and human rights of every person.

**Unitarian Universalist Urban Ministry (UUUM)** (Jean Masland)- a non-sectarian, non-profit, social justice organization based in the Roxbury neighborhood of Boston, UUUM works across race and place to dismantle racism and white supremacy culture to advance racial, economic, and social justice. It provides ministry at large to disadvantaged youth and their families in Boston, focusing on three main areas:

- Safer shelter and workforce development programming for survivors of domestic violence - **Renewal House**
- Academic enrichment for Boston-area youth of color - **Roxbury Youth Programs**
- Arts and Humanities programming grounded in a social justice message that amplifies artists and historians of color in our neighborhood - **Artist Spotlight Series**

Georgia Foote, Jean Masland, and Nancy Vescuso serve as UUUM Delegates, and Robert Jones, FPCW Youth and Family Ministries Coordinator, is employed as UUUM's Congregational and Volunteer Coordinator.

## Fall 2024:

**Bristol Lodge Shelters** (Ginny Redpath) - operated by the Middlesex Human Service Agency, MHSA, the Bristol Lodge Shelters (Bristol Lodge Men's Shelter, Bristol Lodge Women's Shelter, and Mary's House, a family shelter) provide shelter, food, advice, and counseling to homeless people in the Waltham area. Outreach supports the Bristol Lodge Shelters directly and as needed, provides funds for food purchases for the monthly meal that First Parish volunteers provide for Bristol Lodge Soup Kitchen.

**Bristol Lodge Suppers** (Ellen Touart-Grob) - for nearly four decades our congregation has supported the Middlesex Human Services Agency's nightly meals at their Bristol Lodge soup kitchen in Waltham. The dinners are open to everyone, and demand has increased over the past year. Currently, about 90 guests (up from about 60) enjoy meals each evening at Christ Church Episcopal Church in Waltham.

**Community Day Center of Waltham (CDCW)** (Ellen Touart-Grob) - provides access to phones, mail, computers, healthy snacks, counseling and friendship for 50 – 60 homeless people in Waltham every day. The program works closely with Bristol Lodge, which provides the evening meal for many of them. Their mission is to assist homeless people in finding remedies to the problems that keep them on the street.

**International Institute of New England (IINE)** (Camille Schmidek) - provides humanitarian relief, education, skills training, job placement, family reunification, and pathways to citizenship for 2,000 immigrants and refugees each year. They work in Boston, Lowell, and Manchester, New Hampshire.

**The Knitting Connection** (Ginny Redpath) - supports children and families with crafted items utilizing the artistic talents of volunteer knitters, crocheters, and quilters. They connect people from the community to support each other during their time of need. Numerous members of First Parish knit for this organization.

**Weston METCO Scholarship Fund** (Cynthia Brisky) - provides financial aid to students who attended the Weston public schools through the METCO program. Several members of First Parish were instrumental in organizing this Fund and serve as Trustees of the organization today.

**OUT MetroWest** (Bob Gill) - supports the LGBTQ+ community in MetroWest Boston and the larger world through programming, education, and advocacy. It was formed in response to requests from local youth and their families, who sought a safe space for LGBTQ+ high schoolers in MetroWest Boston.

**The Second Step** (Ellen Touart-Grob) - offers transitional housing, advocacy, safety planning, mentoring, children's programs, legal case management, and an array of supportive services for families transitioning away from abuse.

**Waltham Alliance for Teaching, Community Organizing and Housing (WATCH CDC)** (Cynthia Brisky) - works towards a more just community in the Waltham area by promoting affordable housing, providing adult education and leadership development, and empowering underrepresented residents through civic engagement.

**Waltham Boys & Girls Club** (Cynthia Brisky) - inspires and enables all young people, especially those who need it most, to realize their full potential as productive, responsible and caring citizens. They provide after-school childcare, tutoring, and a variety of weekend activities for youth ages 6 -16.

### One-time Donations

- Greater Boston Legal Services
- International Institute of New England
- International Rescue Committee

### Weston Resettle Together

The Weston Resettle Together Team continued co-sponsoring the Hitimana Family (David, Mahoro, and their children, Israel, Patience, Ombeni, and Ahadi) with the International Institute of New England through October 2024 (the end of the official program contract). The team provided support in the following ways: Social Security, Medicaid, and SNAP enrollment, grocery shopping, school enrollment and engagement, ESOL enrollment, transportation and accompaniment to medical and citizenship appointments, banking and budgeting help, employment support, home improvement projects, and outings to the neighborhood playground and Lowell's Pollard Memorial Library.

Currently, David and Mahoro are working at Cirtec Medical in Lowell, taking ESOL classes, and singing in the choir at St. Paul Calvary Evangelical Church in Tynngsboro. The children love school - Charles Morey



Elementary - and are making lots of friends. As they helped the family get their bearings, WRT team members enjoyed getting to know the family, IINE staff, and learning the nuts and bolts of resettlement. While WRT has fulfilled its contractual responsibilities, members remain in touch with the Hitimana family and offer help when needed as part of the family's community of support.

WRT is grateful for the many generous donors from the First Parish community who contributed nearly \$16,000 in support of the family's rent and living expenses, provided furniture and household goods for their apartment, and contributed to donation drives throughout the year.

More information on the Outreach Committee's non-profit partners can be found on the church's community service web page, <https://firstparishweston.org/community-service/>. If you are interested in finding out more about how to volunteer and/or support one of these organizations, please contact Camille Schmidek (schmideks@comcast.net), or reach out to any of the following members: Cynthia Brisky, (cynthia.brisky@yahoo.com), Bob Gill (bobgill1946@gmail.com), Jean Masland, (eugmas04@gmail.com).

Two long-time members, Ellen Touart-Grob and Ginny Redpath stepped down from the committee at the end of the year. Very special thanks to Ellen (2019-2024) and Ginny (2020-2024) for their hard work and enthusiastic service!

Respectfully submitted,  
Camille Schmidek, *Chair*

## WELCOME COMMITTEE

The Welcome Committee started off in February of 2024 with a great group of committee members that were eager to greet new visitors to our community. Our members include **Holly Kulow, Alice Moylan, Caroline Marple, Beanie Marvel, Jessica Pohl and Trish Mordas**. We said goodbye to Sue Newbury who rolled off the committee and said hello to Jessica Pohl. Unfortunately, part way through the year, Alice seriously injured her back and had to step back from the committee. Her presence has been sorely missed. The good news is that she will be making a comeback in 2025!

As in past years, the Welcome Committee has a table set up at the side entrance of the church (breezeway door) where everyone enters for services. It has been nice to have one point of entry as we are able to greet everyone who enters the church. We provide a friendly face and a welcoming atmosphere. We have a guest book where new people can sign in and leave their email address if they are interested in receiving the Parish Post. We also have an introduction card that lists ongoing events, service and contact information.

The Welcome Committee also continues to be the official greeters and distributes the order of service as people enter the church. At the end of services, the Welcome Committee returns to the table in the breezeway and offers name tags to anyone interested in joining coffee hour. We then try to attend coffee hour ourselves and continue to make new people feel welcome - such a nice job to have!

As the year progressed, we have had a noticeable increase in attendance. Over the course of the year, we had approximately 26 new visitors (16 adults and 10 children). Many of those visitors are "shopping" around local churches trying to find a good fit for them. One of the best signs of progress has been the increase in families with children. Sarah has worked with us to keep an updated list of new/visiting parents. It has become apparent that much of the increase in new families has come from word of mouth from current members. That is a testament to the caring and kind people that make up our community as well as the new and innovative programs that continued to be offered.

On Saturday, May 18th, we assisted in the Celebrate Weston event held by the Town of Weston. We had our Welcome Table set up at the entrance to the church and greeted people as they came in for their clock tower tour.

A *Meet and Greet* Reception was held in the Parlor on Sunday, January 5th, 2025 after services. Jeff was joined by four current church member and five prospective new members for a fun and informative session. We had a lively conversation followed by a thoughtful presentation by Jeff about how we work as a community, our history and mission. We are looking forward to inviting approximately six new people to become new members and to sign the Book at the Annual Meeting on February 2nd!

In closing, I would like to thank all of the Committee members for their dedicated and warm spirit. It is truly a team effort.

Respectfully submitted,  
Trish Mordas, *Chair*, and Standing Committee Liaison

### **ALTAR FLOWER COMMITTEE**

We are grateful for the generosity of many families who contribute to the beauty of the worship service by offering flowers for the altar in memory of loved ones or to celebrate a special event. Another way that families choose to remember loved ones is to dedicate a memorial plant for the Christmas or Easter service and make a donation to the Flower Fund.

In 2024 I appreciated the support of Flower Committee members Gail Nozik, Pam Swain & Jessica Pohl. Summer watering help was offered by Ginnie Hibbard and Pam Swain. And at Christmas time, the holiday helpers also included Georgia Foote, Ellen Touart-Grob, Joan Wilson, April Kiskaddon, Debbie Toppan and Dee Perkins. The result was a beautifully decorated parlor which was lit up for most of Dec. while wreaths decorated windows and doors.

New ideas and new members are welcome on this committee! If you would like to arrange flowers for the altar or help plant or water the urns outdoors, please let me know.

Special thanks to our Parish Administrator Betsy Gibson and our sexton Alan Flynn who support this committee every week of the year!

If there is a special date in 2025 when you would like to donate and dedicate flowers for the altar, please contact me (LRT.1@comcast.net).

Respectfully submitted,  
Lynn Taff, *Chair*

### **ART GALLERY COMMITTEE**

The First Parish Art Gallery was founded by long-time parishioner and artist Mary Jo Rines in 2001, and shortly after her passing in 2011, it was named the Mary Jo Rines Gallery in her honor. Over its duration, the gallery has been generously supported by the Rines family.

The mission of the Mary Jo Rines Gallery is to “add another dimension to the spiritual fabric of our lives by exhibiting the work of visual artists who seek to contribute to a deeper understanding of the human condition.” The Art Committee - Larry Grob, Kelly Lyons-Schact, Fiona Roman, and Camille Schmiddek - strives to support this mission by engaging the church community with art and artists through installations in the MJR Gallery as well as online exhibits([firstparishwestonart.org](http://firstparishwestonart.org)) and other programming, such as artist talks and demonstrations, film series, studio visits, and museum tours.

#### **Year in Review**

The Rines family helped us ring in the new year with a generous donation of \$5,000 in support of the ongoing maintenance of the physical and virtual Mary Jo Rines Galleries. We are extremely grateful to the family for their generosity and partnership.

In 2024, the Art Committee organized physical and online exhibits showcasing the work of three local artists — the late Mary Jo Rines of Weston, Mark Thayer of Beverly, and Pamela Chiasson of Hudson. Open to members of First Parish and the broader community, these shows included opportunities to meet the artists and engage in their work through tours and conversations.

*Seeing Things Anew: The Work of Mary Jo Rines* (January-March) was a retrospective featuring previously exhibited works by Mary Jo Rines along with rediscovered paintings of scenes from the artist’s summer

home in Maine and her travels in Africa, Thailand, and the American Southwest. An opening reception with members of the Rines family was held after service on Sunday, January 21.

*Northshore: Photographs by Mark Thayer* (April-June) featured black & white and color photographs by Mark Thayer exploring the interplay of weather, tide, and terrain along the Atlantic coast north of Boston.

*Love, Grace, Hope: The Power of Art* (September-December) featured mixed media works by Pamela Chiasson exploring the dynamic between art and spirituality and themes such as truth, hope, grace, love, freedom, and transformation. Pamela joined us after service on Sunday, September 29 for an opening reception.

In December, the Art Committee began organizing an exhibit featuring photographs by Leann Shamash for a January 2025 launch.

In 2025, we look forward to organizing more virtual and physical exhibits, exploring creative projects beyond the display of artwork such as an art film series, and connecting through art and creativity.

Respectfully submitted,  
Larry Grob and Camille Schmidek, *Co-Chairs*

### LIBRARY COMMITTEE

The Library Committee receives, catalogs and purchases books and supplies for the First Parish library and maintains the library in an orderly manner. The committee consists of Stephanie Lynch (chair) and Joan Wilson, with Mary Marder as consultant. The library was quiet again this year, but we did acquire some donations and purchased some books on various topics.

Thanks very much to members of the parish for donations and suggestions!

Here are the books acquired:

- ***To Wake To Rise*** edited by William G. Sinkford, two books by Marte Carlock-Clifford  
From Al-Anon Family Groups:
- ***Women Traveling Alone***
- ***How It Will Be From Now On Out***
- ***Courage to Change***
- ***How Al-Anon Works***
- ***Alcoholics Anonymous*** by Alcoholics Anonymous,
- ***Search*** by Michelle Huneven
- ***Reversing the Rivers*** by William F. Schulz.

Respectfully submitted,  
Stephanie Lynch, *Chair*

### PASTORAL CALLERS & CARING COMMITTEE

The work of the Pastoral Care Committee is truly in alignment with our church covenant: “In the love of truth, and in the spirit of Jesus Christ, we unite for the worship of God and the **service of humankind.**” We aim to ensure that as a member of First Parish Church in Weston, you will be cared for and you will also be called upon to care for others. We work closely with Jeff Barz-Snell, along with Sarah Napoline, to assist in visiting and supporting homebound members and to reach out to members and their families during their times of need. The minister appoints the members of this committee.

We make regular or as needed home visits, prepare and deliver meals, assist with transportation needs, make check-in phone calls and send written notes. In addition, with Lynn Taff’s help, we regularly deliver donated sanctuary flowers to our homebound members and to those who are ill, experiencing difficult times or experiencing loss. Lynn uses the sanctuary flowers to create multiple new floral arrangements for us to

distribute. As we begin the fifth-year post-pandemic, we made in-person visits and offered support and helped members by phone, letter, email, plus delivered flowers and meals.

The Committee maintains a list of approximately 30+ members who are either homebound or temporarily in need, as well as a list of members living alone who might be at risk in the event of a snowstorm or other weather-related events. This was especially important in the past several years when many of us were isolated, lonely and needed a helping hand during the ongoing pandemic.

*To do this important work, we depend on everyone in our Church community to let us know when a fellow parishioner might welcome our support.* Be assured that we recognize the fine line between being helpful and maintaining confidentiality. Feel free to call or email Betsy Gibson in the Church Office or contact one of the committee members to bring any need to our attention. All information will remain confidential.

We involve volunteers from our Volunteer Caring Network to assist with rides, visits, and meals as needed. We are continually updating our list of volunteers and encourage all of our parishioners to become part of this Caring Network – especially as COVID, FLU and other viruses continue to be a problem. If you're willing to be a member of this Volunteer Network, please contact the Church Office or one of our Committee members with your information. We will periodically call upon those in the Network to let you know when your help is needed. This is also a great way to meet fellow parishioners and to strengthen our ties with one another.

**Thank you to all who have volunteered and lent a helping hand this year.  
YOU are what makes First Parish a vibrant and Caring Community.**

2024-2025 Committee Members:

|                      |                                      |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Rev. Jeff Barz-Snell | jeffbarz-snell@firstparishweston.org |
| Rev. Sarah Napoline  | sarahnapoline@firstparishweston.org  |
| Ray LaFrance         | rlafrance@parachutepartners.com      |
| John McCahan         | jmccahan@bu.edu                      |
| Jean Masland         | jdmasland@verizon.net                |
| Gail Nozik           | Gail_nozik@yahoo.com                 |
| Ellen Touart-Grob    | etouartgrob@gmail.com                |

Respectfully submitted,  
Ellen Touart-Grob and Gail Nozik

## FINAL 2024 RESULTS and PROPOSED 2025 BUDGET

|                                   | 2024<br>Approved<br>Budget | 2024<br>Actual<br>Results | 2024<br>Budget to<br>Actuals | 2025<br>Proposed<br>Budget | 2025 Budget<br>to<br>2024 Budget |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b><u>Income:</u></b>             |                            |                           |                              |                            |                                  |
| Stewardship                       | \$425.0                    | \$450.2                   | \$25.2                       | \$440.0                    | \$15.0                           |
| Prior year Stewardship            | \$0.0                      | \$2.9                     | \$2.9                        | \$3.5                      | \$3.5                            |
| Plate                             | \$20.0                     | \$17.7                    | (\$2.3)                      | \$20.0                     | \$0.0                            |
| Endowment                         | \$269.0                    | \$269.0                   | \$0.0                        | \$309.0                    | \$40.0                           |
| Net ST Investment Income          | \$20.0                     | \$24.4                    | \$4.4                        | \$20.0                     | \$0.0                            |
| Facilities Use                    | \$55.0                     | \$62.0                    | \$7.0                        | \$66.0                     | \$11.0                           |
| Directed Plate Sharing            | \$0.0                      | \$3.5                     | \$3.5                        | \$0.0                      | \$0.0                            |
| Other                             | \$0.0                      | \$9.4                     | \$9.4                        | \$0.0                      | \$0.0                            |
| <b>Total Income:</b>              | <b>\$789.0</b>             | <b>\$839.1</b>            | <b>\$50.1</b>                | <b>\$858.5</b>             | <b>\$69.5</b>                    |
| <b><u>Expenses:</u></b>           |                            |                           |                              |                            |                                  |
| Plate Sharing                     | \$0.0                      | \$3.5                     | (\$3.5)                      | \$0.0                      | \$0.0                            |
| Facilities                        | \$146.5                    | \$163.6                   | (\$17.1)                     | \$169.2                    | (\$22.7)                         |
| Parsonage (335 BPR) Utilities     | \$8.5                      | \$8.0                     | \$0.5                        | \$8.5                      | \$0.0                            |
| Real Estate Taxes (Ripley Lane)   | \$15.0                     | \$13.7                    | \$1.3                        | \$15.0                     | \$0.0                            |
| Outreach Committee                | \$53.9                     | \$53.0                    | \$0.9                        | \$53.9                     | \$0.0                            |
| Denom. Affrs. Committee           | \$39.0                     | \$38.6                    | \$0.4                        | \$41.5                     | (\$2.5)                          |
| Torda Partner Church              | \$4.5                      | \$4.5                     | \$0.0                        | \$4.5                      | \$0.0                            |
| CAMP                              | \$11.1                     | \$11.1                    | \$0.0                        | \$11.1                     | \$0.0                            |
| Music                             | \$80.0                     | \$82.5                    | (\$2.5)                      | \$89.5                     | (\$9.5)                          |
| Music (Short-term Funding Offset) | -                          | -                         | -                            | (\$7.2)                    | \$7.2                            |
| CCYM                              | \$31.2                     | \$26.6                    | \$4.6                        | \$31.0                     | \$0.2                            |
| Welcome                           | \$0.5                      | \$0.1                     | \$0.4                        | \$0.5                      | \$0.0                            |
| Stewardship                       | \$2.0                      | \$3.1                     | (\$1.1)                      | \$3.5                      | (\$1.5)                          |
| Marketing                         | \$3.0                      | \$3.3                     | (\$0.3)                      | \$3.5                      | (\$0.5)                          |
| Library                           | \$0.3                      | \$0.1                     | \$0.2                        | \$0.3                      | \$0.0                            |
| Ministry                          | \$149.4                    | \$149.2                   | \$0.2                        | \$152.6                    | (\$3.2)                          |
| Minister Housing                  | (\$34.9)                   | (\$34.9)                  | \$0.0                        | (\$34.9)                   | \$0.0                            |
| Minister Prof. Expenses           | \$8.0                      | \$8.0                     | \$0.0                        | \$8.0                      | \$0.0                            |
| Assistant Minister                | \$81.7                     | \$81.8                    | (\$0.1)                      | \$84.3                     | (\$2.6)                          |
| Assist. Minister Prof. Expenses   | \$0.3                      | \$2.2                     | (\$1.9)                      | \$1.5                      | (\$1.2)                          |
| Ministerial Intern                | \$3.0                      | \$0.0                     | \$3.0                        | \$3.0                      | \$0.0                            |
| Minister's Discretion             | \$1.0                      | \$1.4                     | (\$0.4)                      | \$1.0                      | \$0.0                            |
| Bank Charges                      | \$0.2                      | \$0.2                     | \$0.0                        | \$0.2                      | \$0.0                            |
| Office & Admin.                   | \$96.9                     | \$87.5                    | \$9.4                        | \$99.0                     | (\$2.1)                          |
| Staff Benefits                    | \$111.0                    | \$110.7                   | \$0.3                        | \$119.0                    | (\$8.0)                          |
| Comp & Benefit Adjustments        | \$0.0                      | \$0.0                     | \$0.0                        | \$0.0                      | \$0.0                            |
| To Reserves                       | \$40.2                     | \$40.2                    | \$0.0                        | \$40.0                     | \$0.2                            |
| <b>Total Expenses:</b>            | <b>\$852.3</b>             | <b>\$858.0</b>            | <b>(\$5.7)</b>               | <b>\$898.5</b>             | <b>(\$46.2)</b>                  |
| <b>Net Surplus (Deficit):</b>     | <b>(\$63.3)</b>            | <b>(\$18.9)</b>           | <b>\$44.4</b>                | <b>(\$40.0)</b>            | <b>\$23.3</b>                    |

REPORT OF THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE TO THE  
**ANNUAL MEETING OF**  
THE FIRST PARISH CHURCH IN WESTON, UU  
February 2, 2025

**STANDING COMMITTEE**  
**Members at Large**

Janie Plank - Second Term expires 2027  
Mary Shaw - Second Term expires 2027  
Leila Hooper - First Term expires 2026  
Sharyn Lenhart - First Term expires 2026  
Nancy Piedra - First Term expires 2025  
Gail Nozik - First Term expires 2027

**Parish Clerk:**

Pamela Wood (2023) - to be elected to a one-year term

**Treasurer-Collector:**

Kurt Flory (2023) - to be elected to a one-year term

**Assistant to the Treasurer (Audit):**

Bruce Kirch - to be elected to a one-year term

**COMMITTEE FOR ADULT MINISTRIES & PROGRAMS (CAMP)**

Kelly Shact (2024)      Joan Wilson (2020)      Gail Palmer (2025)      Ray LaFrance (2022)‡  
Shane Mahan (2025)      Maggie Tyler (2023)      Cheri Mahan (2024)      Carrie Preston (2025)

**COMMITTEE FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH MINISTRIES (CCYM)**

Mia Fourreau (2024)      Allison Trumbull (2023)      Haley Cuipa (2023)      Meghan Scott (2023)‡  
Karen Edwards (2024)

**DENOMINATIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

Georgia Foote (2024)      Jean Masland (2024)      Richard Weeks (2019)‡      Kathy Rousseau (2021)  
Larry Coburn (2013)      Jim Dana (2022)      Nancy Vescuso (2024)      Dirk Coburn (2017)

**FACILITIES COMMITTEE**

Henry Reeder (2019) ‡      Bill Rousseau (2019)

**MEMORIAL GARDEN COMMITTEE**

Dick Floyd (2019)      Ginnie Hibbard (2019)      Marnie Phillips (2020)      Stephanie Lynch (2020)  
Gail Nozik (2021)      Peter Knight (2023)

**MUSIC COMMITTEE**

Larry Coburn (2020)      Aaron Yeater (2024)      Carol McKeen (2020)‡      Geoff Blum (2021)  
Linda Kilburn (2021)      Pate Pierson (2021)      Jim Vernon (2021)      Mary Shaw (2022)

**NOMINATING COMMITTEE**

Leila Hooper (2025)      Cindy Flory (2020)      Geoff Blum (2021)      Chet Cekala (2023)  
Sharyn Lenhart (2023)

**OUTREACH COMMITTEE**

Camille Schmidek (2017)‡      Cynthia Brisky (2020)      Bob Gill (2022)      Carol Cekala (2025)  
Jean Masland (2022)

**STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE**

John Hennessey (2024)      Anne Morgan (2020)      Caroline Marple (2023)‡      Jim Metcalf (2025)

**WELCOME COMMITTEE**

Alice Moylan (2017)      Holly Kulow (2020)‡      Cheri Mahan (2025)      Jessica Pohl (2024)  
Beanie Marvel (2023)      Caroline Marple (2023)

(‡ designates Committee Liaison to the Standing Committee)

## SUMMARY OF PROGRAMS AND EVENTS



By the Rev. Jeff Barz-Snell for the Annual Meeting  
February 2, 2025  
For the First Parish Church in Weston, UU

### Special Initiatives

- Clothing drives to benefit the Community Day Center and the International Institute of New England
- Conclusion of work sponsoring the Hitimana family from Congo, as part of Resettle Together, as they establish a new life here in the U.S.
- Tower Clock Restoration Project with the Town of Weston
- Special Collection to support hurricane relief in Florida and North Carolina
- Special Collection to support humanitarian efforts in Gaza and Israel
- Christmas Decoration Sale to benefit our Partner Church in Torda, Romania
- Canned Food Drive to assist the Weston Community Food Pantry, November 2024
- Regularly hosted and organized programs sponsored by MetroWest Climate Solutions.
- Assistance to several single mothers in the Weston and Waltham area to help them avoid eviction for themselves and their children.
- WellSpring Small Group program, starting in January 2024

### Ongoing Programs:

- Choir Rehearsal, Thursdays at 7:30 pm
- Knitters & Stitchers on (most) Mondays
- Weekly Meditation, now on Thursday mornings on Zoom at 8:30 am
- Senior Men's Lunch, on the 1st Tuesday of the month (Sep – June)
- Ladies Who Lunch– 3rd Wednesday of the month (Sep - June)
- Bereavement Support Group, on the 1st Tuesday of the month (Sep – June)
- Book Discussion Group – 3rd Thursday of each month
- Bristol Lodge Dinner Preparation – 4th Wednesday of the month
- Yoga – 2x per month, on Friday mornings
- WellSpring Spiritual Formation Group, 1-2x / month

### Programs and Notable Events since February 2024

|                |                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Feb 9, 2024    | Trivia Night and Dinner, sponsored by the Stewardship Committee                                                                              |
| Feb 11, 2024   | Chocolate Sunday Fellowship Hour                                                                                                             |
| March 5, 2024  | Sponsored “Community Conversation” program organized by the UU Urban Ministry: The affordable housing crisis and MA                          |
| March 14, 2024 | Hosted Program for the Weston Local News Initiative (WLNI) and served pie on PI Day                                                          |
| March 15, 2024 | Pop Up for Pride program in the Parish Hall, celebrating 20 years of Same-sex Marriage in MA                                                 |
| March 21, 2024 | MetroWest Climate Solutions Program: “Why to Kill Your Lawn,” Mark Richardson, Director of Horticulture for the New England Botanical Garden |
| March 29, 2024 | Sears Chapel open for Good Friday                                                                                                            |

|                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| March 31, 2024     | Annual Easter Egg Hunt after church                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| April 7, 2024      | Spring Pancake Breakfast; Rev. Mary Catherine Morn, Exec. Dir. of the UU Service Committee, preaching<br>Display and Sale of handsewn items to benefit “Sewing Seeds for Hope,” an organization that works with Afghani women artisans in NH. |
| April 18, 2024     | Screening of documentary film, <i>Common Ground</i> , about how regenerating soils around the world can rapidly stabilize the Earth’s climate.                                                                                                |
| April 21, 2024     | Earth day Trash Collection and Walk near Weston Town Center                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| April 28, 2024     | All Music Sunday and with Welcome to Kinga Birro, a member of our sister church in Torda, Romania                                                                                                                                             |
| May 2, 2024        | Members attend Open House at the UU Urban Ministry                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| May 1, 2024        | MetroWest Climate Solutions Program: “Is MA Ready for Climate Change?”                                                                                                                                                                        |
| May 12, 2024       | First Parish members participate in the Mother’s Day Walk for Peace, Dorchester, MA                                                                                                                                                           |
| May 18, 2024       | First Parish participates in Celebrate Weston                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| May 30, 2024       | MetroWest Climate Solutions Program: “What is the State House Doing about Climate Change”                                                                                                                                                     |
| June 2, 2024       | Flower Communion Service followed by the Annual Church Picnic                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| June 5, 2024       | MetroWest Climate Solutions Program: “Climate Change in New England: Where Did the Snow Go?”                                                                                                                                                  |
| June 9, 2024       | Grilled Cheese Fellowship Hour hosted by our Youth Group;<br>JBS participated in Race Amity Day program                                                                                                                                       |
| June 20, 2024      | Outdoor Movie Night;<br>Performance by Musicians of the Old Post Road in the Sears Chapel                                                                                                                                                     |
| June 23, 2024      | Streamed the Sunday Service from General Assembly                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| June 26, 2024      | Summertime Soiree #1, on the Patio of the Memorial Garden                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| July 17, 2024      | Summertime Soiree #2                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| July 18, 2024      | Outdoor Movie Night                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| August 15, 2024    | Outdoor Movie Night                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| September 15, 2024 | 100 <sup>th</sup> Birthday party for church member, Mel Rines                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| September, 2024    | Partakers Ministry Team begins work with prisoner at MCI-Norfolk                                                                                                                                                                              |
| September 29, 2024 | Blessing of the Animals service;<br>After-church program for middle schoolers begins                                                                                                                                                          |
| October 6, 2024    | New Exhibit Opens in the Rines Art Gallery: Love, Grace and Hope;<br>Evening Bonfire and Outdoor Social                                                                                                                                       |
| October 9, 2024    | MetroWest Climate Solutions Program: Climate Change Legislation Update, featuring Senator Michael Barrett                                                                                                                                     |
| October 13, 2024   | World Communion Sunday service;<br>Letter Writing workshops after church                                                                                                                                                                      |
| October 20, 2024   | Fall Pancake Breakfast;<br>Letter Writing workshops after church                                                                                                                                                                              |
| October 27, 2024   | Annual Harvest Fest & Trunk or Treat                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| October 29, 2024   | Community Housing Forum, with local Affordable Housing Scholar and consultant, Amy Dain                                                                                                                                                       |
| November 3, 2024   | Annual All Souls Day and Candle lighting Service                                                                                                                                                                                              |



|                   |                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| November 6, 2024  | Post-election Vigil hosted in Sears Chapel                                                                                      |
| November 12, 2024 | MetroWest Climate Solutions Program: The Role of Mass. Forests in Combatting Climate Change                                     |
| November 15, 2024 | Wallet Friendly Wine Challenge and Tasting                                                                                      |
| December 4, 2024  | MetroWest Climate Solutions Program: “Electrify Everything in the Home”                                                         |
| December 6, 2024  | Annual Christmas Party and Carol Sing                                                                                           |
| December 8, 2024  | Holiday All Music Sunday;<br>Mitten Tree Gift Drive to benefit children at the Boys & Girls Club of Waltham and The Second Step |
| December 15, 2024 | Annual Christmas Pageant                                                                                                        |
| December 24, 2024 | Christmas Eve Services at 4:00 and 6:00 pm                                                                                      |
| December 25, 2024 | Bristol Lodge Meal on Christmas Day, prepared and delivered by members of First Parish!                                         |
| January 5, 2025   | Epiphany and Communion Service;<br>New Member Meet & Greet in the Parlor                                                        |
| January 11, 2025  | Memorial Service for the Rev. Dr. Harry Hoehler, <i>Minister Emeritus</i> of this church                                        |
| January 12, 2025  | Rines Art Gallery Exhibit Opening: Irma G. – A Century of Hats & Sprit                                                          |
| January 15, 2025  | MetroWest Climate Solutions Program: “Grow Native Plants in mini-Greenhouses in the Snow”                                       |
| January 24, 2025  | Trivia Night and Dinner, sponsored by the Stewardship Committee                                                                 |
| January 31, 2025  | 1 <sup>st</sup> meeting of new “Defending Democracy” book and discussion group                                                  |