

FRS Parish Board Meeting Retreat – August 13, 2024

Present: Rev. Rebecca Bryan, **Tina Benik**, Tom Himmel, Kathy Desilets, Jim Supple, Renée Wolf Foster, Laurie Evans-Daly, Vern Ellis, Minnie Flanagan, Bob Higgins, Sarina Kahn Reddy, Andy Lobb, Lori Clark. **Note: Names in Bold are voting members.**

Call to Order: Tina Benik called the meeting to order at 2pm.

Welcome/Reading/Chalice Lighting: Rev. Rebecca

Sharing and Check-in: All

Board Reflections:

To prepare for the new church year, Board members joined Rev. Rebecca in a discussion of important roles of the Board and of existing congregational/Board commitments. (See meeting agenda below for topics.)

Some Take-aways and reactions:

Board Roles:

- The Board has special responsibilities in leadership and policy development.
- Members have a responsibility to represent the Board to the congregation to demonstrate love and care to all.
- We are responsible for reviewing materials, understanding issues presented, bringing our independent thinking and our questions to meetings, and being committed to working together to come to the right decisions.
- We need to be honest and to act in the interest of the church not our own agendas.

VME and Covenants:

- General support for current documents.

Congregational Life and Priorities:

- Rev. Rebecca gave the Board a description of the evolving staff structure and the division of responsibilities between Rev. Rebecca and Rev. Laurel.
- Acknowledgement of the fact that staff make many day-to-day decisions (based on established policies), and that committee/team members act in an advisory capacity rather than a decision-making role.
- Board roles include supporting Rev. Rebecca, helping all in recognizing staff areas of specialization and encouraging approaches to staff with issues within their new roles, and understanding and supporting the continuing process of change.

Business Items:

Update on plans for 300th Anniversary: Laurie Evans-Daly

- The anniversary book is moving along. Vern Ellis is working on the cover.
- Banners will be posted inside and outside the church.
- Reference to 300 Years of love, truth, and service.
- Schedule of observances for the anniversary year is ready.

Opposition to Offensive Sign:

- A person who has posted offensive signs in the past recently posted an offensive sign on Rabbit Road in Salisbury that was particularly graphic and insulting to women.
- One of our congregants went to the Salisbury police and asked that the sign be removed.
- Our member would like to run a paid ad in *The Daily News* with 100 signatures of people who oppose gender-based violence and would like the support of the Board.

ACTION: Support ad to oppose gender-based violence.

Motion: Jim Supple moved that we support an ad being placed in *The Daily News* in the name of members and friends of FRSUU to oppose a sexually and politically offensive sign in Salisbury. Minnie Flanagan seconded, and the motion passed without opposition.

Bob Higgins and Vern Ellis will send out an invitation for people to sign up to have their names listed in the ad.

Support Newburyport YWCA proposal to use the Brown School for housing:

A local housing advocacy group has asked FRS to send a letter of support for a proposal which the local YWCA has submitted to use the Brown School (no longer in use as a school) for deeply affordable housing. The YWCA, which has been very active in both supporting and developing affordable housing, was responding to a Request for Proposals. This is time-sensitive because the YWCA needs to submit its proposal soon.

ACTION: Support for YWCA proposal to develop affordable housing

Motion: Tina Benik moved that the FRS Board send a letter to support the YWCA's proposal to use the Brown School for low-income housing. Minnie Flanagan seconded, and the motion passed without objection.

Update on Steeple Lighting:

FRS has submitted grant proposals (\$37,500 each) to the Hale Foundation and the Arakelian Foundation. Our current estimate is \$80,000 for repairs to the lights and windows. We borrowed from our endowment for the roof replacement. Since the roof work came in under our estimate, we will have funds to return \$18,000 to the endowment.

September 22 has been set as the date for a congregational meeting to vote to spend the money needed for steeple lighting repairs. Note: Our bylaws require a congregational vote for capital expenditures over \$7,000. We need a Board vote to bring this to the congregation.

Action: Repair of Steeple Lighting

Motion: Jim Supple moved to hold a meeting to ask the congregation to authorize the Parish Board to enter such contract or contracts as are advisable or required to replace the steeple lighting and to make advisable or necessary repairs to the steeple windows. Total expenses for such repairs are not to exceed \$75,000. Renée Wolf Foster seconded, and the motion passed without objection.

Closing: Rev. Rebecca offering a blessing about interconnectedness.

Action: Adjournment

Motion: Minnie Flanagan moved to adjourn the meeting and Laurie Evans-Daly seconded. The motion was approved, and the meeting was adjourned at 2:20pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Desilets, Parish Clerk

AGENDA: FRS Parish Board Retreat

August 13, 2024, 2pm to 5pm

1. Welcome! (5 min) Tina Benik
 2. Chalice lighting and centering (10 min) Rev. Rebecca
 3. Share and Check-In (20 min) Tina/All
 4. What does it mean to be a PB member? (40 min) Tina/Rev. Rebecca/All
Consider:
 - Who are We as A Board?
 - What are our individual commitments to being Board Members?
 - What are some of the ways we can live into those commitments?
 - What does Rev. Rebecca need from us as Board members?
 - How is a church board different from a nonprofit board?
 5. What is shared ministry (read our covenant) (10 min) Rev. Rebecca /All
 6. Review VME (5 min) Tina/All
 7. Create/Affirm a Board Covenant for 2024-2025 (15 min) All
 - Last Board Covenant formally accepted – 2019 (see attached)
 - RR/Congregation Shared covenant (excerpt attached)
 8. Congregational Life Rev. Rebecca
 - a. Staffing/new structure/how do we live into our Shared Ministry with this new structure and new roles? (15 min)
 - b. Article II: What does it mean for FRS now and in the future? (10 min)
- https://www.uua.org/files/2024-07/Article%20II%20Purposes%20and%20Covenant_Final%20as%20of%20GA%202024.pdf
- c. Church/State – Honoring and making space for where we are in the world (10 min) Rev. Rebecca and All
 9. 2024-2025 Priorities (40 min) Tina/Rev. Rebecca/All
 - a. Steeple Lighting/Congregational Vote
 - b. Future of Parish Hall
 - c. 300th Anniversary Celebration (second retreat in Oct./Nov.?)
 - d. 4th Century: Capital Campaign, Planned Giving
 - e. Paula Cole Jones
 - f. Leadership transition/evolution
 - g. Board/congregation relations – commitment to communication and an intentional presence?
 - h. Safety policy and procedures
 - i. Other?
 10. To Consider As We go Forward Together (5 min) Tina Benik
 - a. Your role on committees/teams?

- b. Your gifts and needs for being a part of our team
 - c. Other?
 - 11. Closing Comments (5 min)
 - 12. Closing (5 min)
- Tina/Rev. Rebecca
Rev. Rebecca