

## **Slate of Candidates to be Voted upon at the Annual Meeting of The First Church in Belmont for 2024 – 2025**

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### **Parish Board Officers to be Elected (each annually):**

President: Laurie Graham (since 2022)

Vice President: Bruce Kozuma (new)

Treasurer: Martha Read (since 2020)

Clerk: Peter Whitmer (new)

### **New At-Large Trustees to be Elected:**

Donna Ruvolo (3 years, 2024-2027)

John Howe (3 years, 2024-2027)

### **Continuing At-Large Trustees in the Midst of their Terms:**

Susan Galli (3 years, 2023-2026)

Gabrielle Garschina-Bobrow (3 years, 2023-2026)

Eleanor Hobbs (3 years, 2023-2026)

Martha Courant (3 years, 2022-2025)

Ariane Frank (3 years, 2022-2025)

### **Past President:**

Samuel James

### **New Finance Committee Members to be Elected:**

Bob McGaw (3 years, 2024-2027)

Brian Kopperl (3 years, 2024-2027)

### **Continuing Members in the Midst of their Terms:**

Doug Burden, Chair (3 years, 2023-2026)

Joel Mooney (3 years, 2023-2026)

Jon Bridges (3 years, 2022-2025)

Catherine Claypoole (3 years, 2022-2025)

Lauren Corning (3 years, 2022-2025)

### **Ex-officio, Voting Members:**

Laurie Graham, Parish Board President

Martha Read, Parish Board Treasurer

### **New Committee on Ministry Members to be Elected:**

Katie Labounko (3 years, 2024-2027)

Nelina Backman (3 years, 2024-2027)

Annie Gardner (3 years, 2024-2027)

### **Continuing Members in the Midst of their Terms:**

Jackie James, Chair (3 years, 2022-2025)

Eleanor Sugarman (3 years, 2023-2026)

Bayard Klimasmith (3 years, 2023-2026)

Livia Racz (3 years, 2023-2026)

Leslie Kolterman (3 years, 2022-2025)

June Lattimore (3 years, 2022-2025)

Rev. Chris Jablonski, ex officio

### **New Nominating Committee Members to be Elected:**

Stefan Frank (3 years, 2024-2027)

Eva Patalas (3 years, 2024-2027)

### **Continuing Members in the Midst of their Terms:**

Jody Renouf (3 years, 2023-2026)

Leslie Talmadge (3 years, 2023-2026)

Martha Gallagher (3 years, 2022-2025)

Marion Westgate (3 years, 2022-2025)

Respectfully submitted by the Nominating Committee:

Jonathan Wolf, Chair

Catherine Stalberg

Jody Renouf

Leslie Talmadge

Martha Gallagher

Marion Westgate

## Nominations for 2024 FCB Annual Meeting

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### Parish Board Officers (2024-2025)

#### **President: Laurie Graham (since 2022)**

Laurie Graham, an (almost) life-long UU, has been a member of First Church for over 15 years. She served as chair of the Caring Connection and as a member of Lay Pastoral Care, was on the 2018-2019 Ministerial Search Committee, and is a member of a Small Group Ministry. She has served on the Parish Board since 2020. Laurie is active in town politics and governance and is currently a Town Meeting member and sits on the Belmont Food Pantry Board. Previously she served on the School Committee, the Belmont Human Rights Commission, the Youth Commission, the Special Education Advisory Council, the Disability Access Commission, and the Belmont Media Center Board. In her non-volunteer life, she works as an office manager in Boston.

#### **Vice President: Bruce Kozuma (new)**

Bruce Kozuma first heard about First Church from friends involved in the music program, then through spouse Livia Racz's involvement as music program language coach and soloist. Livia and Bruce joined First Church on the strength of its music program, its partnership with the Unitarian Church in Désfalva, Romania, and its liberal theology. Bruce and Livia have sung in the Senior Choir for many years and daughters, Hanna and Emma, grew up in the church. Bruce has been co-chair of the Stewardship Committee (twice), a member of the Membership Committee, and a member of the Partner Church Committee. Bruce is a product manager by profession, currently working for Ginkgo Bioworks, a synthetic biology company.

#### **Treasurer: Martha Read (since 2020)**

Martha Read has been a member of First Church for 30 years, and her son Willis grew up in the church. Over the years she has served on the Parish Board, Nominating, Finance, and Membership Committees. By day she is happily retired, takes care of her 3-year-old granddaughter two days a week, and has time to read and see friends.

#### **Clerk: Peter Whitmer (new)**

Peter Whitmer was raised a Chicago Presbyterian, but don't hold that against him. He moved to the Boston area with his wife Hannah and first child, Violet, in the summer of 2005. With a growing family, now including Eve, Peter shopped around to various churches. He stopped in to check out First Church during the COA presentations, he immediately felt how the spirit and welcoming nature of the church aligned with what he wanted for himself and his young family. After a few years getting to know the church, he joined in 2014, and he actively taught CRE and was a volunteer for the musicals. Both daughters grew up in the church and eventually made it through OWL and COA. When he's not cycling, learning piano, or growing his own food, he sidelines as the Sr. Director of Product for Visible Body, a science and medical instruction company.

## New Parish Board At-Large Trustees (2024-2027)

### **Donna Ruvolo**

Donna, her wife, Lauren Crocker, and their (now young adult) sons Ben and Josue, joined the First Church community in 2000 and have been enthusiastically involved ever since. Donna volunteered with the Welcoming Congregation during its nascent years, particularly with this group's advocacy of marriage equality at the state level, as chair of the CRE committee, as a member of the Stewardship Committee, and for several years as the chair of the Outreach Committee. At the community level, Donna has organized several large-scale events, coordinated town-wide grants and programming for the public schools, served as a Town Meeting and Human Rights Commission member, and as a liaison between the neighborhood and the Town of Belmont on Community Preservation Act initiatives at the Grove Street Park. Her professional background is in non-profit marketing and public relations, and she is currently employed by an international environmental consulting and sustainability organization based in Europe.

### **John Howe**

John Howe has attended FCB since 1995 and became a member in 2000. A senior chorister since 1998, he has been our church's lead historian since 2021. John led stewardship for several years in 2001 and the early 2010s, and was co-chair of the FCB Forward Campaign (2017-22) that successfully retired the church's building debt. He previously served on the Finance and Nominating Committees. A former member of the Parish Board (2001-04), John retired from a career in the cleantech energy industry and as former chairman of the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities. He and Teresa live in Cambridge.

## New Finance Committee Members (2024-2027)

### **Bob McGaw**

Bob has enjoyed this First Church community for over 36 years, and its atmosphere fosters his continued exploration of faith and spirituality. He's served on the Finance Committee, the Facilities Committee, and most recently on the team that leased Johnson House to The Henry Frost Children's Program. While at Harvard Law School, he met the love of his life, Eloise, when in Washington, D.C., in May 1971 for the Kent State massacre protest. Bob has moved through a spectrum of churches: Southern Baptist, Methodist, Roman Catholic, and UU, but likes UU best because it feeds his soul. Bob and Eloise's children Bridger (age 49) and Kaitlin (age 46) were fervent members of First Church and sang in the choirs and musicals, where their lives were indelibly bolstered by Alfa Joy Radner, so much so that Kaitlin won a Grammy! Bob believes that First Church enriches us all, and the Finance Committee seeks to ensure that we prudently use our riches to sustain and enhance First Church. He looks forward to working again on that Committee.

### **Brian Kopperl**

Brian Kopperl and his wife, Leslie Talmadge have been members of First Church since 2012. Their daughter, Asher Kopperl, is graduating this spring from Belmont High School after many years participating in Youth Group and First Church musicals, which were the original draw of his family into the FCB Community. Brian has served on the Stewardship Committee, in religious education, on the Sandy Island organizing committee, and as an unofficial Fellowship ambassador and BBQ griller for several June all-church annual luncheons. Brian is Managing Partner of Renewable Energy Massachusetts LLC, a regional solar development company; a nonprofit strategy consultant with Community Action Partners (a pro bono HBS/HKS alumni undertaking); a Harvard Mediation Project-certified court mediator; and as a member of the Belmont Town Energy Committee. His prior work included 10 years as a managing director and portfolio manager of a Boston-based investment firm and admission to the California bar.

### **New Committee on Ministry Members (2024-2027)**

#### **Katie Labounko**

Katie Labounko grew up in First Church, where she was christened in 1999. She remembers many aspects of the church fondly from her childhood, from acting in the musicals to many evenings spent with the Youth Group. As an adult, she has returned to the church and been delighted to find the same warmth and sense of community - as well as some familiar faces! Katie lives in Belmont with her husband Fedya and their two sons, Leo and Felix, and is grateful for the opportunity to raise her kids in the same welcoming church community that she grew up in. Most recently, she served on the Worship Committee, and is excited to continue contributing to First Church however possible. Katie works as a software engineer, and has worked on the Meta Quest and Amazon Alexa along with other products.

#### **Nelina Backman**

For the past three years, Nelina Backman has been steadily easing her way in from the periphery of the FCB community -inspired by its profound impact on two FCB veteran sons, Scott and Graham, as well as by friends in the congregation, the joys of small group ministry, and a general hunger to re-connect. A default "church lady" since her childhood in California and through her kids in Belmont, Nelina has actively participated in progressive Episcopal church settings, serving as a board member and Sunday School teacher. Nelina hails from two family lines of preachers-teachers-artists-seekers in alternating generations and variable denominations. Juggling the projects of child rearing (done!) and teaching High School English (still at it) overfilled Nelina's plate for a good while, but she is honored to have been nominated to serve on the Committee on Ministry.

#### **Annie Gardner**

Annie Gardner was initially part of the First Church community in the early 2000s at which time she was involved with the religious education program where her son Danny was a religious education participant. Annie came back to First Church in early 2020 and although

To be voted on at the 168th Annual Meeting, June 2nd, 2024

slow to attend in-person gatherings due to some health issues, she has begun to usher, and loves the mid-week meditations, small group ministry, and other small groups and classes. Annie recently ended 18 years of employment with Pfizer, where she was busy developing anti-infectives.

## **New Nominating Committee (2024-2027)**

### **Stefan Frank**

Stefan Frank and his wife Ariane have been members of First Church since they moved to Belmont in 2006. Their three children, Valentin, Julius and Leander, went through the church programs and are adulting by now. Stefan was Parish Board President in 2010/11 and has served as a board member, a Stewardship Committee member, a Youth Committee chair, an OWL teacher, a Youth Group service trip chaperone, a Coming of Age mentor, on the committee on Boy Scouts relations, on the Finance Committee and as a sound engineer. Stefan is a Product Manager on Android at Google in Cambridge.

### **Eva Patalas**

Eva Patalas came to First Church in 2005, a few years after moving to the area from Canada. She promptly joined the Nova Choir. Soon after, she joined the Social Action Committee and has been involved with it since. She has also been on the Parish Board, an earlier iteration of the Nominating Committee, and has been a Youth Group mentor. She was a chaperone for the service learning trip to Panama in 2023. She ran the FiberArts group and has co-chaired the Films about BIPOC Lives group since 2020. Eva lives in Belmont with her husband Richard Schaffer and two cats, Hershey and Klondike. She works as a pathologist at Cambridge Hospital and MGH.