



The Parishioner

News of the First Parish in Bedford
Unitarian Universalist
On the Common, Bedford, Massachusetts

Spirit...Justice...Community...

Volume 53, Issue 5

January 2020

Rev. John E. Gibbons, senior minister
Rev. Annie Gonzalez Milliken, parish minister
Rev. William F. Schulz, affiliate community minister
Deborah Weiner, interim director of religious education
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David Southard, parish board president

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Bradford Conner, music/choir director
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Katie Johnson, administrative asst.
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Upcoming Services

Sunday, January 12 at 10:00am

"Janus, God of Thresholds: Looking Back, Looking Forward"

Rev. John Gibbons preaching

After 3 months away, I'll share where I've been, what I've been thinking, and what may lie ahead (as if I knew).

Sunday, January 19 at 10:00 AM

"People Get Ready!"

Rev. Annie Gonzalez Milliken preaching

How do we know when we're ready? Whether it's committing to a relationship, taking a big step at work, or taking a big risk for our values, we may never feel totally ready. But we can practice and learn so we're as ready as we can be for what life asks of us.

Sunday, January 26 at 10:00 AM

"Defiant Hope – Our Faithful Response to the Climate Crisis"

Rev. Jim Antal preaching

Sponsored by our Environmental Justice Committee

Jim Antal is a denominational leader, climate activist, author and public theologian. He serves as Special Advisor on Climate Justice to the General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ. He is the author of *Climate Church*, *Climate World*. From 2006-2018, Antal led the 350 UCC churches in Massachusetts as their Conference Minister and President. Of his sermon, he says, "*The climate crisis is the opportunity for which the church was born. Hope will emerge as parishioners engage some of the numerous suggestions for how they can faithfully join others – especially young people - to address the greatest moral challenge humanity has ever faced.*" Jim and John Gibbons met in jail after both were arrested in protest of the W. Roxbury Lateral Pipeline.



**Next deadline
for submissions
will be Jan. 26th**

Sunday, February 2 at 10:00 AM

Rev. John Gibbons preaching

Common Thoughts

Dearly beloved,

I read Barbara Crocker's poem "The New Year" as our opening words last Sunday, my first back from sabbatical:

*When a door bangs shut, a window doesn't open.
Sometimes, it slams on your fingers. God often
gives us more than we can handle. A sorrow
shared is a sorrow multiplied. There's a bottle
of Champagne waiting to be uncorked,
but it's not for you. Nobody wants another poem.
The prize-winning envelope has someone else's name
on it. This year you already know you're not going
to lose those ten pounds. How can you feel hope,
when the weight of last year's rejections is enough
to bury you? Still, the empty page craves the pen,
wants to feel the black ink unscrolling on its skin.
In spite of everything, you sit at your desk and begin.*

Yes, in spite of everything, we begin again. And it's a privilege, really, to feel pain, to share sorrow, to question hope. I know: God, Whom or Whatever, thanks A LOT. It's just that that's what we do here in this - dare I say? - **faith** community. (In due time, I'll have more to say about that loaded and vexatious word, **faith**.)

Yes, we begin again.

And if you don't want to call ours a *faith* community, perhaps you'd prefer to call us a *hick Camelot* (a descriptor favored by our late parishioner, Charlie Schwerin).

As I said last Sunday, thank you for letting me be away for three months. I loved being away from you, mostly. Nothing finer. Thanks to everyone who pitched in, did what you always do, and then did some more. And now, thanks for letting me come back. I love being with you, mostly. Nothing finer.

Like the empty page that craves the pen, our earth, our times, and our hearts crave what we do here, at least when we are at our best.

Thanks for showing up. Thanks for giving me a good place to show up. Thanks for this privilege. Nothing finer.

Open a window. Welcome to Camelot, my fellow hicks. Have faith. Or not.

We begin again, in love. Mostly.



John Gibbons

Minister's Musings

This is the third year in a row that I started a new year off with a spell. Now, you might think casting spells is something for Harry Potter books and fairy tales, not a spiritual practice for us science loving UUs. I would have said the same several years ago. But I've come to hold a deep appreciation for the spiritual practice of spell casting. It's possible that casting a spell, at least the way Adrienne Maree Brown leads it in her New Year spell casting practice on the Healing Justice podcast, is nothing more than creating a poem from prompted journal entries. And perhaps that in and of itself is enough. But I have kept my hand-written spell under my pillow each year and when I've gone to retrieve it at the end of the year and re-read it, I have felt that there was some magic at play.

These new year spells are not the kind that promise to bring you good fortune in business or in love. These are spells for letting go of what is too heavy and carrying forward what we've learned. For honoring our own power and dignity. For setting clear intentions for how we'll practice liberation in the coming year. It's a nice practice for the start of the year, but really anytime is a good time to cast a spell. To lay down what is too much. Too orient oneself in the direction of connection and love and freedom. And really isn't that what we come to church for? To lay some of our sorrow and fear down on the communal altar, to get a little inspiration for the practices that will shape our life to better match our values? Maybe coming to church is a kind of magic too, at its best. May it be so.

Annie

Deepening in UU

Join Rev. Annie and Doug Muder for "Deepening in UU" this winter and spring! This course will be a "coming of age" type class but shorter, more focused, and geared toward adults. We'll explore theological themes through a UU lens while creating our own "credo statements" to be shared in worship in May. The course will be from **noon to 2PM** on Sunday afternoons with childcare provided. We'll gather after worship on the following dates: **Feb. 9 & 23, March 8 & 22, April 5 & 26 and May 3. May 17** will be our worship service. If you are interested please sign up at bit.ly/deepeningUU or let Annie know at agonzalez@uubedford.org.

In the Interim – “As to the Meaning of Words”

Happy new year! With the start of a new decade, and the start of this election year, we wade back into church and plunge – almost like the L Street Brownies – into the frigid and sometimes unsettled waters of a year of campaigning for the highest office in the land. Increasingly we will be subjected to political announcements and advertising, and – with the likelihood of an Impeachment trial in the Senate – to allegations about what different individuals view as truth in a changing political landscape.

And there’s more: this is a time when words – the meaning and intent of them – are being called into question. Religious professionals – those of us who preach and teach and write and plan – use words to convey all that we and you are about. And in the world out there, right now, we’re finding that the meaning of words is unclear sometimes. Right now, for instance, I find myself continuing to wonder about the term “alternative facts” and the way misinformation and outright lies get thrown around frequently enough that the uninformed public begins to believe them.

Words matter. For children, and for adults as well. Stephen Sondheim in his brilliant musical, “Into the Woods” reminded us: “Careful of what you say – children will listen...and learn.” Words and accusations are thrown around more freely now - even at church. And we should not believe that our children and youth are not listening. While we may want to believe that verbal ugliness doesn’t occur in UU congregations, we know that in fact, it’s all around us. And we ignore it at our - and our children’s - peril.

All of us – by our actions and our words – model for each other what is acceptable and otherwise. All of us have the opportunity to teach, and to be students, about what civil discourse and respectful behavior means – even when we don’t agree with something that has been said or done. And all of us have the opportunity and (I would add) the *obligation* to speak out when something occurs that is out of relationship with our faith’s principles and our own moral ethics.

I hope that you all – parents or not, signed First Parish in Bedford members or not – will take your opportunity to contribute to the larger dialogue and action we all have the opportunity to engage in – with care, with commitment, and yes, with love --seriously. I am a fervent believer in our ability, as mere human beings, to be able to change our world for the better. We do that through our words and our actions.

We are approaching the mid-point in winter – at least that is true, according to my spouse. As a religious educator, I know that these are the times when historically, religious education attendance for children and youth tends to dip. It’s hard to bundle up and trudge out in the cold (and maybe the ice and the snow); so much nicer to stay by the fire, the computer, the book and the hot cup of tea or cocoa.

And yet, in this winter – and in this particular year – I want to encourage you to make the effort to get yourself to church, and for your family to do so as well. If there was ever a time when people, particularly people of faith, need to gather in supportive community; to learn and share and grow with one another – this is that year. It’s tough and cold out there, in every sense that those words can convey. Come in to a place where you can find acceptance, support, learning and shared perspectives. Come to church.

It begins here, now, with care. May it be so.

Faithfully yours,
Deb

Deborah Weiner, Interim Director of Religious Education



R.E. Schedule

Welcome back to the winter segment of the religious education year!

We have regular RE class running on Jan. 12 (as was the case for Jan. 5).

For Jan. 19 (MLK weekend) we will be having a One Room Schoolhouse Program and will be lending our hands and hearts to carrying forward work that Dr. King advanced. In this case, providing food and love for those who are homeless or in difficult times. We’ll be making sandwiches and snack bags for our friends at the Lowell Shelter. We welcome your donations (look for the box in the vestibule at the Elm St entrance starting on Jan. 5), your help as a volunteer for the activities, and/or your help in driving our donations to the shelter on Jan 19. Here’s what we’ll need for donations:

- Peanut Butter Cracker packs
- Cheese & cracker or cheese & pretzel packs
- Hummus and chip or pretzel packs
- granola bars
- fruit leathers (individually packaged)
- Fruit gummies in packages
- juice boxes
- chips in individual packages
- napkins

For sandwich making:

- Bread - white, wheat, oatmeal
- Peanut butter - smooth or creamy
- Jelly - grape, raspberry, strawberry, apricot
- Sandwich bags (resealable)

If you have questions about this info, please contact Deb Weiner (dre@fpbedford.org).

For Jan 26: regular RE class. Also the date when some of the curricula will shift (for 2 classes).

~ Grades 2 & 3 will be moving to *Love Will Guide Us*, a UUA Tapestry of Faith curriculum focusing on the ways in which love (for our planet, for one another, etc.) can help us in our lives. You can view the curriculum here: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/loveguide>.

~ Grades 6/7 will be moving to an adventure in the Twilight Zone with *The Fifth Dimension*, a curriculum by Karen Hager (author of our popular 4 & 5 grade curriculum on “Harry and UU”). *The Fifth Dimension* looks at some of the questions raised through the popular 1960s TV series, “The Twilight Zone” – which was written by UU Rod Serling. It should be fun!

—continued on p. 4

R.E. News (cont'd)

~Coming up: on March 1, the grade 4 & 5 group will be beginning *Our Whole Lives* for the older elementary level – a new undertaking for this congregation. Parents of youth in that age bracket will be receiving information and an invitation to attend a briefing on the program, which will be facilitated by Renae Nichols and John Wiedey.

~ Members of our new High School group will be moving into *A Chorus of Faiths*, modeled on the work of social justice leader Eboo Patel, to help them develop leadership skills and more deeply engage in justice-making in our communities. Stay tuned for info about this program!

Teachers Needed - Can you Help?

The spring term is the perfect time for newbies to explore involvement in supporting First Parish's religious education program. Teachers are needed for several of our class levels. Training and support are included – and you get to work with some of the most fun members of the First Parish community – our children and youth! On Jan 26, the RE Committee will host a dessert buffet and teacher briefing session in Room 202 for all who have volunteered to teach – present and future. Please join us! And to find out more about teaching: please contact Interim DRE Deb Weiner (dre@uubedford.org) or speak with a member of the RE Committee: Laurie Groves, Melinda Ballou, Susan Lincoln, Jennifer McClain (Board Liaison), Renae Nichols, Andrew Van Praagh.

Grateful Appreciation

There are many ways in which members of the First Parish community support the religious education and lifelong learning programs of this congregation. But a BIG contribution has been made and deserves special thanks. Carol Reynolds has donated many books (over forty of them!) from our 'wish list' to our growing First Parish Library. These books are now available for borrowing. THANK YOU Carol! Follow this link for a listing of the available books: <https://www.uubedford.org/religious-education/first-parish-library/>

Artistic Spirits (STILL) Needed: A Board for our Spirit Play Classroom!

We STILL need someone who feels artistic to work on a bulletin board outside of the Spirit Play classroom (Room L05). Deb has a picture of the design we're looking for - all it needs is your talent! This is not a big assignment, and it is a fun one. Supplies all provided for you. Can you help?? Please contact Deb Weiner for information and details on any of these items and thank you! dre@uubedford.org



Music Notes

"Snow was falling so much like stars filling the dark trees that one could easily imagine its reason for being was nothing more than prettiness." – from *Snowy Night* (2004) by Mary Oliver (1935-2019)

Here's the music for services in the upcoming month –

Jan. 5: Steve Sussman will be playing piano.

Jan. 12: Steve Sussman will be playing piano. The youth choirs directed by Janet Welby will welcome in the new year.

Jan. 19: Robert Noble will be playing organ/piano. The adult choir will be singing two spirituals in honor of Martin Luther King Day, "Stand Still Jordan" and "I Want to Be Ready".

Jan. 26: Robert Noble will be playing organ and Leslie Amper will be playing piano. The adult choir will sing three settings of "Kyrie eleison", one by Mozart from his famous *Requiem*, one by Beethoven from his *Mass* in C and one by contemporary composer, Paul Basler, from his "Missa Kenya", the latter featuring Fred Aldrich – French horn and Dean Groves – percussion.

Feb. 2: Steve Sussman will be playing piano and Janet Welby will be directing our fantastic youth choirs.

Mark your calendars! The annual Valentine's concert, "Berlin Meets Beethoven" with Cynthia Mork, Ben Sears, Nathan Kimball, me and Yoko Hagino is coming up on Sunday afternoon, February 9th. More info is below.

Now that the craziness of the holidays is over, maybe it's time to think about joining choir! We've got great plans for the winter and spring including fantastic music on Good Friday and Easter to honor the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth, and terrific music by Handel, Haydn and others for Music Sunday. Rehearsals for the adult choir are on Thursdays from 7:30-9PM in the sanctuary.

~Bradford Conner, Music Director

10th ANNUAL VALENTINE CONCERT!
Sunday, February 9th at 4:00 p.m.

The Music Committee presents *Berlin Meets Beethoven*

The program's first half showcases songs by one of America's greatest songwriters, Irving Berlin. Familiar faces Cynthia Mork, Ben Sears, Brad Conner and Nathan Kimball perform popular titles like "An Old-Fashioned Wedding," "You're Just in Love," "What'll I Do?" "Always," "They Say It's Wonderful" and many others! For the second half of the program we are pleased to welcome back pianist extraordinaire Yoko Hagino playing virtuosic solo piano works by Ludwig van Beethoven in honor of the 250th anniversary of his birth. As always, the concert will be followed by a scrumptious chocolate reception! A true romantic smorgasbord! Don't miss it! Suggested donation at the door: \$20, \$15 for seniors/students. Proceeds to benefit First Parish.

Giving to First Parish Using Your Cellphone

It's now possible to give to First Parish using your Apple or Android mobile phone. Install the GivePlus application using the App Store or Google Play. Choose First Parish in Bedford, select a fund, and enter your credit card information. You can make an account with GivePlus to allow this all to be accomplished in a few clicks. Use these QR codes to find the application:

Apple:



Android:



More information is available on the First Parish website at <https://www.uubedford.org/giveplus/>.

All-Church Climate Book Read and Discussions

Our all-church book read is *Climate Church, Climate World – How People of Faith Must Work Together for Change* by Jim Antal, who will preach at First Parish on Jan. 26 at 10AM. Before then, please join us in two book discussions, the second of which is open to all and our neighboring faith communities have been invited:

Jan. 12, noon-1:30PM: Join us for soup and discussion. Childcare available. Please RSVP through this link: <https://tinyurl.com/climatechurch> if you plan to attend (and of course if you do not get a chance to or are unsure, we welcome you too).

Jan. 22, 7-8:30PM: Join our discussion with those from other faith communities. Jim Antal is a denominational leader, award winning activist and public theologian. He serves as the national spokesperson on climate change for the United Church of Christ. While his belief is firmly rooted in Christian faith, his arguments are woven with current science and sees community action and participation as the ultimate vessel of hope. He truly speaks to all.

We hope to see you there!

*First Parish Environmental Justice Committee
and Peace and Justice Committee*



Membership, Anyone?

Annually on February 1, we report our membership numbers to the UUA. It's well known that church membership in most mainline churches has been plummeting – due to increased secular-ity and the tendency for many churches to be exclusionary or even hostile to issues of race, gender, and social justice. UU numbers nationally are not immune from these trends, and we've been growing if but slightly.

People become members at First Parish by signing our Membership Book. It's that simple...though it also signifies your willingness to participate and to share your gifts of "time, talent, and treasure." Nobody judges your contributions.

As our world becomes more parlous and dire, it's all the more important that we uphold the values we hold in common. "This is no time for a casual religion," says UUA president Susan Frederick-Gray. If you are not already a member, I urge you to consider signing our Book. We need you and we need one another. So speak with me or Annie if you are ready or have questions. We're ready when you are. – *John*

Stewardship Preview

Happy 2020 everyone! Now that we are in the new calendar year, planning for the Annual Campaign run by the Stewardship Committee is set to begin.

Last year we made some changes, and we were very pleased with the results. We hope you were, too.

Here's how it will happen this year:

- The shortened campaign was a hit! Once more it is going to be from the last Sunday in March to the last Sunday in April.
- You will pick up your pledge card packet from church on the last Sunday in March (we will mail it to you if you're not able to do so).
- At the end of the campaign will be a Stewardship Wrap-Up Party - your price of admission will be a completed pledge card!

Also expect:

- Stewardship Moments: where we hear from Parishioners about what First Parish means to them and why they feel it's important to give generously.
- Words of wisdom and challenge from our ministers about giving and Stewardship.

The Stewardship Committee is seeking new members! Come be part of the creative team dedicated to engaging every member and friend of FPB in the financial support of our community. Please consider joining us!

In love and service,

Your Stewardship Committee:

Dawn LaFrance-Linden (lafrancelinden@verizon.net)

Doug Muder (dougmuder@mac.com)

Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee continues to work on staffing the committees of FPB and identifying potential candidates for elected and appointed offices (for consideration at the June Annual Meeting). If you are looking for a way to make deeper connections with others at FPB while contributing to the well-being of our shared community, we would love to hear from you.

This month we are looking for new members for the Stewardship Committee. Our church runs on the time, talents, and treasure donated by each of us, and the Stewardship Committee is responsible for the Annual Campaign our budget is based on.

The Stewardship Committee meets, as the members deem necessary, roughly from January to April, to plan and conduct the Annual Campaign to solicit pledges from the Congregation to financially support FPB in the upcoming church year. This timetable is driven by the need to have a budget proposal ready for the Annual Meeting of the Congregation in June.

Stewardship consults with the Treasurer and the Ministers on the amount of support the church needs from all of us to achieve our vision, then seeks to engage every donor in taking responsibility for giving financial support to FPB through written materials and organizing direct outreach such as "Stewardship Moments" during the service, or providing soup at Community Hour. The committee also plans a Stewardship Wrap party (brush up on your FPB trivia!) to celebrate the end of the campaign and because it is good to be together.

Serving on this committee is a great way to give back and support the church we all love. Communication, organization, and creativity are the primary skills needed (not necessarily all at once, or all from one person). Absolutely no prior experience necessary! Please strongly consider volunteering for this, or another committee – we need everyone to pitch-in! We look forward to hearing from you

In love and service,
Your Nominating Committee:
Dawn LaFrance-Linden
(lafrancelinden@verizon.net)

Cecile Mercado (cecile-mercado@comcast.net)
Heather Black (heatherjblack@gmail.com)



First Parish Chili Cook Off

Save the Date: Chili Cook-off

The Annual Chili Cook-off will be held on **Saturday, February 15** at 6PM in the Common Room. Now's the time to practice your favorite recipe and be on the hunt for the spiciest peppers. We hope to see you there!

Circle Suppers are coming!

There will be three Circle Supper dates in late Feb. & early March; all will be on Saturday evenings (dates TBD, but likely Feb. 22, March 7 & March 14). Circle Suppers are a great way to get to know your fellow parishioners in a more relaxed and intimate way than you can at community hour or by serving on a committee together. Volunteer hosts are assigned guests to enjoy a dinner party at their home. Hosts prepare a main entrée, and their guests contribute other parts of the meal (bread, beverages, salad, dessert, etc.).

Signups for Circle Supper will be held at community hours on Feb. 2 & Feb. 9. If you cannot register at either of those two times, or you have questions about how Circle Suppers work, please contact Carla Bradford at 339-223-8789 or at carlajbradford@yahoo.com before Friday Feb. 9. We hope many of you will participate in this truly special way to get to know your fellow parishioners!



W  MEN'S

Meeting Sunday, Feb. 9

The book is "Dear Evan Hansen" by Val Emmich.

book group

From the book jacket:

"A simple lie leads to complicated truths in this bighearted story of grief, authenticity, and the struggle to belong in an age of instant connectivity and profound isolation."

We'll meet at First Parish at 6PM. Please bring a potluck dish to share.

Meetings/ books for the remainder of the 2020 church year:
(Note: all at the church at 6PM)

March 8: "The Witch Elm" by Tana French

April 5: "Where the Crawdads Sing" by Delia Owens

June 7: "Reservation Blues" by Sherman Alexie

Please contact Margaret Jackson if you have any questions:
mjacksonfpb@yahoo.com / 781-275-6580.



at First Parish

Painting Buddies: Friends in Art and Life

Artists Betty Canick, Andrea Karls, Anne Harrington, and Julia Terry will be showing their art in The Gallery @ First Parish beginning on January 11.

Encounters on Monhegan Island, Maine blossomed into the friendships for these artists. The First Parish Unitarian-Universalist Church in Watertown connected them with a fourth. Over the years they have painted together, sometimes side by side.

They found their way to First Parish because they are in a book club with Ginny Crocker. There will be a reception in February.

~Maria Green

Trips to the Border & to Transylvania

As you may know, First Parish plans to provide ways of deepening our awareness and engagement with issues of immigration, a defining issue of our times.

Among other things, we will have a multigenerational trip to the southern border, as organized by the UU College of Social Justice (a program of the UUA and UU Service Committee) in collaboration with an organization called BorderLinks. We're looking at April school vacation week, roughly April 19-25. I'm planning to go.

Here's a description that includes a sample itinerary: <https://uucsj.org/journeys/borderlinks/>.

As the website says, youth costs are typically \$700-1000 and adults \$800-1100. Plus airfare to Tucson and back. Financial aid will be available.

So far, eight parishioners have signed up to go. It is most helpful if you sign up as soon as possible, but we will be able to accept additional participants until February. Nonetheless, don't delay!

Please indicate your willingness to participate by signing up at <https://www.tfaforms.com/4650882>.

Please also let John, Annie, or Deb know if you sign up or have questions. Though the trip is open to everyone, we're hoping for a good mix of adults, youth and young adults. We will do everything possible to find scholarship assistance. Please DO NOT let finances deter your participation.

A few years ago, I (John) was on a BorderLinks trip, and it was eye-opening. I think this will be an amazing opportunity for our congregation.

—*John, Annie, and Deb*

p.s. Just for your planning, we also expect to have our biennial pilgrimage to Transylvania this summer, tentatively planned for August 10-22. This may be the last group trip that I (John) will lead for the foreseeable future. Due to airfare and land costs, this will be somewhat more expensive than the BorderLinks trip. We'll do our best to have financial aid for this, too.

These trips are hugely transformative for the participants (and hugely beneficial for everyone at First Parish, too) and we'll do our very best to make it possible for EVERYONE who wants to go, to be able to do so. If you're interested, please speak with me asap.

I hope you'll consider these opportunities. —*John*

Plant Fair Update

On Nov. 24, there was a meeting, as advertised on Anno, regarding the future of the Plant & Craft Fair. Eleven people attended, most of whom have been organizers for past Plant & Craft Fairs. (Note: there was one person younger than 55.)



The meeting started with people talking about the beginnings of the Plant Fair going back to 1954. It started with gardeners who wanted to share their passion for plants and there was much enthusiasm and activity around planning and executing the event. But its future is at risk as no one has volunteered to lead the planning and "doing" for a plant fair in May 2020.

Ideas were listed as to why it has had less attendance and participation the past few years, such as timing and conflict with other local events (Congregational church yard sale, garden Club plant sale). And that things have changed – people have many more places to buy plants and pay less for them, everyone works, Saturdays are filled with chores, kids have more sporting events on Saturdays, etc. and someone said "Sometimes things have run their course."

Given that it takes 10-12 people for the organizing committee, which usually has begun work in January, and another 4-5 working on the various tasks closer to the actual event, there seems to be no way the Plant and Craft Fair will happen this spring. The gardeners in attendance talked about the idea of have a simple "plant fair". Nothing else – no craft booths, no bake sale – just plants and plant advice. It will likely generate less attendance and raise less money (there is an expectation of \$5,000 revenue from the Plant and Craft Fair in the current budget). However, it would be an enjoyable event and help educate members of FPB and others new to gardening. And a plant fair, coupled with other congregational events during the year in support of climate justice and environmental concerns, would manifest our 7th principle.

The group was not able to come up with any feasible alternative fundraising events that would generate the revenue to meet the budget expectation.

~*Dorothy Africa & Maggie Debbie*

To Drive the Dark Winter Away...

Join us as we gather to read aloud Shakespeare's plays! We will start off with Twelfth Night on Feb. 2 at 2PM.

We will take turns and swap parts as the mood strikes us. We will likely meet at



my house (walking distance of the church), but please let us know if you will be coming so we know how big a space we'll need. Bring some snacks or drinks to share and a copy of the play, if you have one. There will be some extra copies provided. Contact Dawn LaFrance-Linden at lafrancelinden@verizon.net and please use "Shakespeare" in the subject line.



MEMBER PROFILES

Learn about some new members
at First Parish in Bedford:

Chris & Kristina Rio signed the membership book in April 2019. In response to our questions, they had this to say:

What brought you to First Parish and what made you decide to become a member? “We were looking for a local community that shared the values we believed in, and one that we'd be glad to raise our child/children in. We actually found you online!”

Before you came to First Parish, were you a member of another church? “We both grew up Catholic but grew distant from the church and fell out of favor with organized religion in general. Neither of us are hyper-religious, but we started going to the UU church in Reading and instantly found what we were both looking for – a spiritual home. The pastor moved away and so did we a while later, so we sought a new place to go!”

What do you enjoy most about First Parish in Bedford? “Absolutely the passion of the community and the feeling that everyone loves being there. The community is robust and everyone is very nice! The news feels like chaos sometimes, but sitting with like-minded people who just want to make the world better is inspiring and makes you feel like you are not alone!”

* * * * *

Peter Cho signed the membership book in November 2018. In response to our questions, Peter had this to say:

What brought you to First Parish and what made you decide to become a member? “My wife Delsey and I started coming to First Parish in 2003. We really liked the very first service we attended which was lay-led. We've been coming back ever since. Delsey joined FPB a few years after we started attending. I took over 15 years to officially join since I'm slower than she is.”

Before you came to First Parish, were you a member of another church? “We were not members of any other church before attending FPB.”

What do you enjoy most about First Parish in Bedford? “I most enjoy the special holiday services at FPB including Christmas-eve and Tenebrae on Good Friday.”

* * * * *

Sandra Swee signed the membership book in April 2019. In response to our questions, Sandra had this to say:

What brought you to First Parish and what made you decide to become a member? “After moving to Bedford and having kids, I began thinking a lot about their spiritual development and wanted to find a spiritual home for us. Honestly, I knew next to nothing about UU, except that a friend of mine who is in an interfaith marriage had mentioned to me that they are welcoming to all. Fast forward a while, and then I met someone involved in the RE program here at First Parish. My interest was piqued, so I asked her lots of questions about it. By chance, she shared with me her story about growing up Catholic and converting to UU. It really resonated with me, so we decided to give First Parish a try. It has been a great fit! This is the first year that both of my kids are in RE programs, and I've enjoyed volunteering with RE as well. The whole team of volunteers that I've had the pleasure of working with are amazing!”

Before you came to First Parish, were you a member of another church? “I've been Catholic for most of my life, and I attended Catholic schools while growing up. The last parish that I had the closest connection to was the one where I went to elementary and junior high school, St Jude's in Waltham.”

What do you enjoy most about First Parish in Bedford? “I love the sense of community that exists here at First Parish! The people are so welcoming and genuine. It's truly a special place where we can not only embrace and celebrate our differences, but we can also unite to support shared causes together. I'm so grateful to everyone who has welcomed me and my children into this wonderful community.”



There's a new leaf on our sanctuary Tree of Life honoring *Paul Vears*, "A Proud and Grumpy Old Man." Paul will be remembered in the Common Room at 11AM on Friday, January 31.

Tenacious, unsung, and extraordinary parishioner *Mary Firestone* died on December 21. As her friend and fellow parishioner *Marcia Chertok* would say, "Mary got her wings." Mary was a most creative artist, thinker, public citizen, and stalwart member of our Gallery Committee. A memorial gathering will be announced.

We've just heard news that former parishioner *Joanne Davis* died in early December. She was living at Newbury Court in Concord.

News from the Parish Nose

Mary Hyatt again has been at Lahey, bored by reruns of *Animal Planet*, but just returned home... *Laurie Groves* had a serious concussion following a fall, hence time in the hospital and rehab, and she now continues to recuperate at home... *Judith McConnell*, too, is home after a brief hospitalization... *Meg LeSchack* is getting a new hip!... Congratulations to *Bob & Ilona Johnson* who will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary in May... Congratulations also to *Alma & Brian Hart* whose daughter *Lizzie* got engaged over the holidays, as did *Kaden*, son of *Dave Southard & Tina Nappi!* —tpn



Caring
Network

January Caring Network

We are fortunate at First Parish to have a great community that provides assistance to members who may need temporary help with shopping, a few meals delivered, or rides to medical appointments. If you need some assistance this month, contact *Liz Hanegan* haneganliz@hotmail.com

or 781-271-0321.

As the new year begins it is a great time to respond to Rev. Annie's request to update your involvement as a volunteer. Here is a link to the form: bit.ly/caringFPB.

Thanks so much for all your thoughtful support,
—Sandy Boczenowski

WhaleCoast Alaska 2020

Have you ever dreamed of visiting Alaska? If so, **WhaleCoast Alaska 2020** is for you! Four Alaska UU congregations invite you to experience our unique environmental/ cultural/spiritual program this summer. See Alaska through the eyes of local UUs, with friendly homestays and unique tour activities. See wildlife, including moose, bears, caribou, whales, bald eagles, sea lions, etc. Visit Denali National Park. Find out more at www.WhaleCoastAK.org, email dfrey@whalecoastak.org or call 907-322-4966. Discount for groups of 8 or more. We would love to share our Alaska with you!



MLK Jr. Community Day Monday, January 20 from 9:30AM to Noon First Church of Christ, 25 Great Rd, Bedford

The Bedford Interfaith Clergy Network and Bedford Embraces Diversity are partnering to offer an expanded community day of learning and service in celebration of MLK Jr Day. For the first time, the commemoration will include a community service component, with a choice of activities that reflect Dr. King's message. The theme for the day is, "Who is My Neighbor?"

Doors will open for the event at 9am with a light breakfast, followed by a program featuring inspirational remarks on the witness of Martin Luther King Jr. by the Rev. Vernon K. Walker, to begin at 9:30AM. The speaker is affiliated with Berachah Church in Dorchester and is a leader in social justice and climate action. Following the program, participants will then have the option of joining one of the community service projects for the rest of the morning, some of which will be at First Church and others at offsite locations in Bedford. St. Paul's will be offering a workshop for all ages to help sew cloth bags for our Haiti Mission partners in Leogane.

Admission will be \$5, covering the breakfast, plus a donation of paper towels, tissues, toilet paper, or other paper products for the Middlesex Community College food bank. More info is available at www.bedfordembracesdiversity.org.

Bridges to Hope: a free mental health training for Faith Community Leaders Jan. 21, 9AM to noon at FP Bedford

This is a perfect introductory 3-hour training, which features:

- An informative overview of prevalent mental health myths and common symptoms of mental health disorders
- First steps to comprehensive action plans for building "bridges to hope" with your faith community
- A tool kit of community mental health resources

Who should attend? Rabbis, imams, clergy, priests, pastors, deacons, elders and lay leaders.

Registration required at <http://namicentralmiddlesex.org/>. For more info contact *Judith McKendry*: jdmckendry@verizon.net.



First Parish Upcoming Events



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p><i>January 5</i></p> <p>10:00 am Worship service (S) 11:00 am FP BP Clinic 12:00 pm -1 Bedford Lyceum (202) 5:00 pm -9 Sanct celebration (COM) 6:00 pm [Women's Book Grp @ Jackson's] 6:30 pm -8 Sr Youth Group (203) 7:00 pm -9:30 FP Bridge Grp (204orL02) <i>Newsletter deadline</i></p>	<p><i>January 6</i></p> <p>1:00 pm -2:30 Small Grp (202) <i>w/Ginny Crocker</i></p>	<p><i>January 7</i></p> <p>7:00 pm Peace & Justice Com 7:30 pm -9 Al-Anon Mtg (202)</p>	<p><i>January 8</i></p> <p>3:30 pm -5 Jr Youth Group (202) 7:30 pm -8:30 Vespers Svc (BR) <i>Parishioner published</i></p>	<p><i>January 9</i></p> <p>9:30 am -11 Short Stories Disc Grp (202) 3:30 pm -6:30 Youth Choirs (COM) 4:00 pm Leadership Team (MS) 6:30 pm -9:30 RE Com (204) 7:00 pm -8:30 Env Justice Com 7:30 pm -9 Adult Choir Reh (S) 7:30 pm Partner Church Com</p>	<p><i>January 10</i></p>	<p><i>January 11</i></p>
<p><i>January 12</i></p> <p>10:00 am Worship service (S) 12:00 pm -1:30 Book Disc (COM) 12:00 pm -2 Trans Incl Course (BRor202) 6:30 pm -8 Sr Youth Group (203) 6:30 pm -8:30 SGM Grp-Doud (BRor204) 7:00 pm -9:30 FP Bridge Grp (204orL02)</p>	<p><i>January 13</i></p>	<p><i>January 14</i></p> <p>7:00 pm Parish Board (204) 7:30 pm -9 Al-Anon Mtg (202)</p>	<p><i>January 15</i></p> <p>3:30 pm -5 Jr Youth Group (202) 7:00 pm Soc Resp Council</p>	<p><i>January 16</i></p> <p>9:30 am -11 Short Stories Disc Grp (202) <i>Open to all!</i> 3:30 pm -6:30 Youth Choirs (COM) <i>Jr Choir (3:30-4:15); KidSing (4:15-5); Sr Choir (5:30-6:30)</i> 6:30 pm Lay Pastoral Care Tm 7:30 pm -9 Adult Choir Reh (S)</p>	<p><i>January 17</i></p>	<p><i>January 18</i></p>
<p><i>January 19</i></p> <p>10:00 am Worship service (S) 11:30 am -12:30 gallery reception (BR) <i>w/Tim Brookes; arr. by Dorothy Africa</i> 12:00 pm -3 Enneagram Wkshp (202) 7:00 pm -9:30 FP Bridge Grp (204orL02)</p>	<p><i>January 20</i></p> <p> Martin Luther King, Jr. <i>Holiday - Office Closed</i></p>	<p><i>January 21</i></p> <p>7:00 pm Memb Com 7:30 pm -9 Al-Anon Mtg (202) 7:30 pm Phys Plant Com (L06)</p>	<p><i>January 22</i></p> <p>3:30 pm -5 Jr Youth Group (202) 7:00 pm -8:30 Book Disc (COM)</p>	<p><i>January 23</i></p> <p>9:30 am -11 Short Stories Disc Grp (202) <i>Open to all!</i> 3:30 pm -6:30 Youth Choirs (COM) <i>Jr Choir (3:30-4:15); KidSing (4:15-5); Sr Choir (5:30-6:30)</i>  7:30 pm -9 Adult Choir Reh (COM)</p>	<p><i>January 24</i></p>	<p><i>January 25</i></p>
<p><i>January 26</i></p> <p>10:00 am Worship service (S) 12:00 pm -2:30 RE Lunch (202) 12:00 pm Memb event (COM) 6:30 pm -8 Sr Youth Group (203) 7:00 pm -9 Small Grp Mtg (204) 7:00 pm -9:30 FP Bridge Grp (204orL02) <i>Newsletter deadline</i></p>	<p><i>January 27</i></p>	<p><i>January 28</i></p> <p>7:30 pm -9 Al-Anon Mtg (202)</p>	<p><i>January 29</i></p> <p>3:30 pm -5 Jr Youth Group (202) <i>Parishioner published</i></p>	<p><i>January 30</i></p> <p>9:30 am -11 Short Stories Disc Grp (202) <i>Open to all!</i> 3:30 pm -6:30 Youth Choirs (COM) <i>Jr Choir (3:30-4:15); KidSing (4:15-5); Sr Choir (5:30-6:30)</i>  7:30 pm -9 Adult Choir Reh (COM)</p>	<p><i>January 31</i></p> <p>11:00 am Mem gathering for Paul Vears (COM)</p>	<p><i>February 1</i></p>
<p><i>February 2</i></p> <p>10:00 am Worship service (S) 11:00 am FP BP Clinic 12:00 pm -2 Trans Incl Course (COM) 6:30 pm -8 Sr Youth Group (203) 6:30 pm -8:30 SGM Grp-Doud (BRor204) 7:00 pm -9:30 FP Bridge Grp (204orL02)</p>	<p><i>February 3</i></p> <p>7:00 pm -8:30 Energizing Food Grp (204or202)</p>	<p><i>February 4</i></p> <p>7:00 pm Peace & Justice Com 7:30 pm -9 Al-Anon Mtg (202) 7:30 pm Finance Com</p>	<p><i>February 5</i></p> <p>3:30 pm -5 Jr Youth Group (202)</p>	<p><i>February 6</i></p> <p>9:30 am -11 Short Stories Disc Grp (202) 3:30 pm -6:30 Youth Choirs (COM) 4:00 pm Leadership Team (MS) 7:00 pm SGM Grp (204) 7:30 pm -9 Adult Choir Reh (COM) 7:30 pm Partner Church Com</p>	<p><i>February 7</i></p> <p> 6:30 pm First Friday Potluck (COM)</p>	<p><i>February 8</i></p>
<p><i>February 9</i></p> <p>10:00 am Worship service (S) 11:30 am -1 gallery reception (BR) 12:00 pm -2 Adult CoA Class (204or202) 4:00 pm MuComm Concert (S+COM) 6:00 pm -7:30 Wmns Book Grp (BR) 6:30 pm -8 Sr Youth Group (203) 7:00 pm -9:30 FP Bridge Grp (204orL02)</p>	<p><i>February 10</i></p> <p>1:00 pm -2:30 Small Grp (202) <i>w/Ginny Crocker</i> 7:00 pm -9:15 Reh-Brad (S)</p>	<p><i>February 11</i></p> <p>7:00 pm Parish Board (204) 7:30 pm -9 Al-Anon Mtg (202)</p>	<p><i>February 12</i></p> <p>3:30 pm -5 Jr Youth Group (202)</p>	<p><i>February 13</i></p> <p>9:30 am -11 Short Stories Disc Grp (202) <i>Open to all!</i> 3:30 pm -6:30 Youth Choirs (COM) <i>Jr Choir (3:30-4:15); KidSing (4:15-5); Sr Choir (5:30-6:30)</i>  7:30 pm -9 Adult Choir Reh (COM)</p>	<p><i>February 14</i></p>	<p><i>February 15</i></p> <p>6:00 pm Annual Chili Cook-off (COM) <i>need Common Room from 4:30 on</i></p>

Bracketed events happen off-site -- All other events happen at the church