



The Parishioner

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

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

Volume 54, Issue 6

February 2021

Rev. John E. Gibbons, senior minister
Rev. Annie Gonzalez Milliken, minister of faith development
Rev. William F. Schulz, affiliate community minister
Deborah Weiner, developmental director, faith development for children
Sarah Klockowski, youth coordinator
David Southard, parish board president

Carla Bradford, editor
Bradford Conner, music/choir director
Janet Welby, youth choir director
Robert Noble, organist
Joan Petros, parish administrator
Katie Johnson, administrative asst.

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Upcoming Sunday Services*

*All via Zoom - See www.uubedford.org/worship/upcoming-services/

Sunday, February 7 at 10:00AM

"Four Metaphors for Our Time"

Rev. John Gibbons preaching

Sunday, February 14 at 10:00AM

"All You Need is (be)Love(d) Community"

A multi-age service led by Rev. Annie Gonzalez Milliken and Deborah Weiner

We often say, "All you need is love..." but creating a true "beloved community" is challenging work. How can we make this ideal real? Our youth will help us imagine the way forward. We'll also celebrate the enduring importance of love, and the importance of 'trying everything' when our efforts to create the reality we imagine don't turn out the way we'd first hoped. Come join us for a service for all ages with music, poetry, inspiration and yes – love!

Sunday, February 21 at 10:00AM

Rev. Billy, Savitri D, and the Stop Shopping Choir, with John Gibbons

New York City performance artist and activist Rev. Billy has been with us in Bedford three times and joined in numerous environmental actions. At the direction of Bill's partner and producer Savitri D. they continue to prod our conscience, stir our hearts, and make a joyful noise. They say:

"We believe that the key to resisting evil (earth-killing consumption) is to share meaning (talk) by the free-falling from song. So many religious services start from conversational speech then heighten to preaching, then incantation then singing and finally ecstatic release into flight. In our quest to stop our shopping, we will conduct this guest appearance in Reverend Johnny's church by reversing this sequence, to sing preach and land on our feet talking cordially to you, and share with you our love of the Bedford Church community. Is this our fourth visit? Let us come to you from the sky."

Another of Billy's recent sermon topics has been, "Is There a Vaccine for the Extinction?" Earth-alujah!

Upcoming Services continued on next page—



Next deadline for submissions is February 28th

Upcoming Services (continued)

Sunday, February 28 at 10:00AM

“The Repairers of the Breach”

Led by Sarah Klockowski

The past weeks and years have shined a spotlight on the many breaches in our world, and calls for unity and healing have been ringing out. How might the words of the Hebrew Prophet Isaiah and the Christian practice of Lent offer insight into how to make that reparation a reality?

Common Thoughts

THE VACCINE is much on our minds. Did you know that vaccination has its origins in advice given by an enslaved African named Onesimus to his Boston master, the famed Puritan minister and lay scientist Cotton Mather (1663-1728)? Amidst an epidemic of smallpox in 1721, Onesimus told of “a procedure he had undergone back in his homeland that protected him from this illness. People in West Africa had discovered that they could fend off contagions by inoculating themselves with a specimen of fluid from an infected person.” Mather called it “variolation”, whereby a needle was stuck into a pustule from an infected person's body and then the infected needle was scraped across a healthy person's skin.

Learned persons “resented being told by a gaggle of ministers that Africans had devised the panacea they had long sought.” A lighted grenade was thrown into Mather's house, but he escaped. Violence is a tactic often used against truth. Mather saw little difference between Onesimus's approach and that of Native Americans who had traditional antidotes for snake venom which colonists had readily adopted.

Conventional opinion was that Onesimus's advice would spread disease but, when one physician, Zabdiel Boylston, tried it on his own son and the enslaved people he owned, only one in forty died, as opposed to one in seven who died without treatment. Ultimately, vaccination became standard treatment in Massachusetts and led to the eventual eradication of smallpox, the only infectious disease to have been successfully wiped out. As an aside, Cotton Mather ultimately had a falling out with Onesimus and, oddly, Onesimus bought his own freedom by buying Mather another slave. Onesimus's offense? Apparently, he resisted Mather's attempts to convert him to Christianity, and Mather was resentful. Never underestimate minority opinions.



John Gibbons

(The history of Onesimus is recounted in many places, including Isabel Wilkerson's profound new book, *Caste*)

Minister's Musings

Love is the spirit of this church we say together, muted on zoom, each Sunday.

As we move into this month of Black history and Valentines, this shortest month that somehow seems to drag on in endless winter, and now endless pandemic, how do we keep that spirit alive?

I know you all are doing it, in many ways. From supportive Facebook comments I notice you making on each other's posts, to hearing from parishioners that First Parish is checking in, sending meals and helping them cope I know that spirit of love is alive. This love I see extended to our guest in Sanctuary and her family, to the Bedford community, to our whole country, in our acts of public witness and private advocacy, our wrestling with big ideas and moves toward learning how to love better.

If you are open to one more way to help increase that spirit of love in our congregation, I recommend to you a role as a Caring Crew coordinator. What does a Caring Crew coordinator do you ask? This person spends one month at a time, maybe once or twice per year, coordinating rides, meals and other forms of tangible help. It is not up to this person to give the rides or cook the meals, but rather to send the needs out to the anno list, or to call someone up and ask if they'll give a ride or to send out a few emails or texts rounding up a few meals. This role is time limited, tangible, and if you don't like zoom, I have good news! It does not require regular meetings. If you are interested in learning more contact Rev. Annie at agonzalez@uubedford.org or 309-310-2341.

Love is the spirit of this church and it looks like many different things. Our great covenant is to dwell in peace, seek truth in love and to help on another. Let us keep that last part of our covenant strong through a healthy, well-coordinated Caring Crew.

Annie

**In Liminal Time - Thoughts from Deborah Weiner,
Developmental Director - Faith Development for Children
“Mission and Vision”**

As many of you know, transitional ministry work involves the religious leader working with a congregation on a number of key elements: to help the church understand its history; define its mission and vision; form new leadership; prepare for a new beginning; and much more.

As my final five months with First Parish in Bedford begin, it's a good time to take a look at the importance of the congregation, focusing attention on the mission and vision for a dynamic faith development program - with an eye toward the future.

It's often true that programs in churches – and the churches themselves – can be very focused on specific elements and lose sight of the larger UNIQUE identity that they want to put forward. Now is the time for this congregation to focus - not only on faith development but on every part of the congregation's life - to understand what your unique identity is...strengths, needs, challenges. At the same time, this is the moment to be building connection through all parts of the congregation to strengthen the whole 'body' of the church.

It's a time for discernment, vision, new energy, imagination. And of course, as you plan for new leadership and a much-hoped-for return to in-person programs sometime in the next twelve months, there is much that is unsure and unsettled.

There is opportunity in the future: for imagining what faith development programs can look like, how they can be offered, how to use today's technology to reach wider and to engage more families. There are challenges for sure: much-beloved education programs had to be re-imagined or put on 'hold' during the pandemic. Much as we wish for that time to be given back to us, children grow and mature and some of the programs or curricula that we love will not be able to be offered to our children.

So, what kinds of offerings will engage and build a Unitarian Universalist identity – particularly for children in the early primary school grades? Where can engagement with social justice and UU values be built in throughout all ages; how can programs that will help connect with a faith that can be lived out in the world - for older middle and high school aged youth - take hold? How can First Parish reconnect with “Our Whole Lives” - not just for middle schoolers – but for younger and older elementary and high schoolers?

What does the future hold? Although a new religious educator will be at First Parish in Bedford in the fall, the curricula and operating plan for faith development for next year will be identified this spring. The plans for 2021-22 will build on what has been offered this year – changing the curricula for variety, yet still remaining focused on those ‘pillars of learning’ that are so important. We'll look towards finding new combinations of age groups and a variety of special programs. We've learned

much during this ‘hybrid’ year: what we've learned, and how we've changed, needs to be part of the new mix that will shape this congregation's future.

The sociologist Howard Zinn said, “You can't stay neutral on a moving train.” Although the train this year might not have been the one we wanted to be on, we've learned from the trip, and these experiences will shape where you go in the future. *What does First Parish in Bedford want to be? What is most important in terms of faith and mission?* Let those values inform the faith development program the church offers – the possibilities are almost endless!

With love and faith,
Deb

The Bedford Lyceum
*A Forum on the Arts, Spirituality,
Science, and Justice*

Sunday, February 21, from 4:00 – 5:00PM

Please join us via Zoom for our monthly Lyceum. This month's presentation is entitled “Poetry and Process: A Reading by Joyce Peseroff.”

Local poet Joyce Peseroff will read from her sixth book of poems, Petition, published in November by Carnegie Mellon University Press. She will discuss her writing process in general, and the specific ways in which certain poems were written. She'll also discuss the vital support a decades-long writing group has offered her.

Ms. Peseroff founded and directed the Creative Writing MFA Program at UMass Boston, where she taught for 17 years. Her honors include grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Massachusetts Artists Foundation, as well as a Pushcart Prize. Ms. Peseroff's fifth book of poems, Know Thyself, was named a “must-read” by the 2016 Massachusetts Book Award.

Come and enjoy this exciting presentation!

All First Parish in Bedford Lyceums are FREE and open to the public. Feel free to share this link with family or friends who might also be interested. *

Zoom Link:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83429685798?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83429685798?pwd=anAwbEtRTnFGQzM4Tm5zTS8vd2ZxQT09)

[pwd=anAwbEtRTnFGQzM4Tm5zTS8vd2ZxQT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83429685798?pwd=anAwbEtRTnFGQzM4Tm5zTS8vd2ZxQT09)

Meeting ID: 834 2968 5798

Passcode: 116304

By phone: +1 646 558 8656

Questions? Please contact Ellen Scheiner at mountainbreeze52@gmail.com.

Sanctuary Update

January has been a productive month for church sanctuary residents across the country. Maria is a member of the National Sanctuary Collective, which held a national Press Conference event last week bringing attention to those in sanctuary and asking for immediate protection and relief from President Biden. Each of the leaders/guests spoke for three minutes, poignantly sharing their stories and hopes. Unfortunately, there was some technical difficulty with the live translation. This link provides English captions: <https://youtu.be/ESKNbuwr-RE>

Local media covered the story. Note especially the Masslive.com story – Maria is quoted at the end of the post!

<https://www.bostonglobe.com/2021/01/26/nation/markey-warren-castro-lead-democrats-urging-biden-protect-immigrant-families-living-churches/>

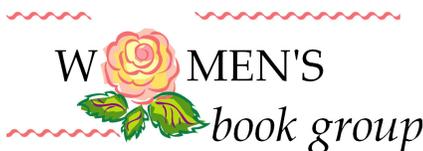
<https://www.masslive.com/news/2021/01/immigrants-living-in-sanctuary-appeal-to-president-joe-biden-for-policy-change.html>

The final letter to Biden included signatures from MA Senators Markey and Warren, and Representatives McGovern, Trahan and Pressley.

Many of you have questions about Maria's legal situation. We feel most comfortable saying that there are a number of avenues being pursued in the hope of finding a safe way for Maria to leave sanctuary, pursue her legal case and move forward on a path to citizenship. Thank you for your continued support and stay tuned!

In love and hope,

Maureen Richichi for the FPB Sanctuary Committee



The February book for the women's book group is "In Regalia" by Erin McCormick. Erin lives in Bedford and will be

joining us on Sunday, February 21 at 7 p.m. (via Zoom).

A meeting reminder and zoom info will be sent a week before the meeting to the anno list.

Please contact Margaret Jackson (mjacksonfpb@yahoo.com or 781-275-6580) with any questions.

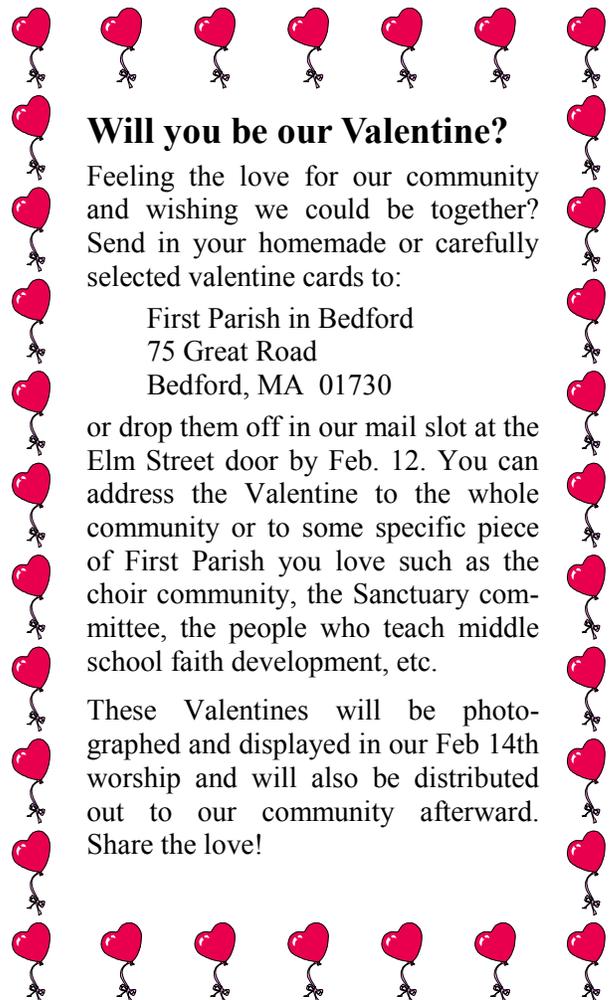
The remaining 2021 meeting books and dates are:

Unaccustomed Earth (Jhumpa Lahiri) - March 21
 The Tattooist of Auschwitz (Heather Morris) - April 18
 The Book of Longings (Sue Monk Kidd) - May 16
 The Giver of Stars (Jojo Moyes) and choosing books for the following church year - June 6

Ferry Beach Update

Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 concerns, we do not plan to convene at Ferry Beach on Mother's Day weekend 2021 as usual for our annual parish retreat. The feeling is that not enough vaccine will be accessible by then to allow us to gather safely. Rest assured that your Ferry Beach retreat coordinator is ready and willing to make arrangements for a 2022 retreat. Hopefully, we will have a large group then due to pent-up demand for opportunities to engage in community experiences!

—Carla Bradford



Will you be our Valentine?

Feeling the love for our community and wishing we could be together? Send in your homemade or carefully selected valentine cards to:

First Parish in Bedford
 75 Great Road
 Bedford, MA 01730

or drop them off in our mail slot at the Elm Street door by Feb. 12. You can address the Valentine to the whole community or to some specific piece of First Parish you love such as the choir community, the Sanctuary committee, the people who teach middle school faith development, etc.

These Valentines will be photographed and displayed in our Feb 14th worship and will also be distributed out to our community afterward. Share the love!

Social Responsibility Council Update!

The Social Responsibility Council (SRC) awarded funds to the following grant proposal at our January meeting:

- **The Guinea Pig Sanctuary** - submitted by Liz Hanegan. The sanctuary takes in abandoned guinea pigs and delivers extensive community services including placement of emotional support guinea pigs for children struggling with anxiety during COVID. It also supports visitors to the 150 guinea pigs living at the sanctuary, including those from adult group homes, special needs children, and children learning to read.

Approval was also given for the following "Share the Plate" proposals for February and March:

- **February 7 - Chelsea Eats** – proposed by the SRC Committee to address food instability. This foundation was created by the City of Chelsea to provide emergency food to residents during COVID, with the goal of transitioning to a more sustainable model of food relief, including maximizing all public dollars already allocated to food.
- **March 7 – The Ujima Fund** - proposed by Cecile Mercado. The Boston Ujima project pools capital for communities of color to meet financing needs that traditional banks will not serve. The goal is to build wealth in the community.

Our December "Share the Plate" netted \$408.18 for the Malala Fund. The January "Share the Plate" numbers are still in process. The Christmas Eve offering from the 8PM service provided \$3,452 to the Sanctuary Fund, while the early service offering sent \$853.85 to the World Central Kitchen. Your generosity is so appreciated!

Full information about how to submit an application for a grant or "Share the Plate" proposal and appropriate forms can be found on the SRC page of the church website. Any comments or questions can be directed to Marge Heckman, SRC chair, at maheckman@gmail.com.



Congratulations to *Devon Tate* and *Mark Dunlea*, who were married on January 17 at the 1629 Winery in Plymouth with John Gibbons officiating. John was, uh, their 3rd choice of officiants after #1 wasn't allowed to travel due to COVID, and #2 tested positive. Devon and Mark were nonetheless joyously married!...

Congratulations also to *Sarah and Bob Dorer*, who welcomed their third grandchild, *Henry Howard Dorer*, son of *James and Reed*, born January 6...

Our thoughts are with *David Linden* on the recent death of his nearly 94-year old father...

Uniquely beloved by friends, family, and generations of Bedford children who were delighted by her reading aloud, *Judith McConnell* was able to return to her lifelong home where she squeezed hands until her last breath. Her legacy of graciousness and love surround son Laurie, his wife Hina, and their son Zeno.

Alas, we'll soon be having a memorial service for *John McClain's father David*, a frequent presence in our services. We'll gather on zoom on Saturday, Feb. 6 at 2PM:

<https://zoom.us/j/8958866876>

or participate by phone by dialing (929)436-2866.

For either option, the meeting ID is 895 886 6876

We'll also have a zoom memorial for beloved parishioner *Donna Cole* on Friday, February 12 at 4PM:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84181938457?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84181938457?pwd=RmJNYitYeUFvSjVksVNWWC9UNm1Pd09)

[pwd=RmJNYitYeUFvSjVksVNWWC9UNm1Pd09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84181938457?pwd=RmJNYitYeUFvSjVksVNWWC9UNm1Pd09)

Meeting ID: 841 8193 8457

Passcode: 881551

By phone: +1 646 558 8656

News from the Parish Nose

After a time in the hospital, *Ellen Michaud* is home with help from her daughter. She sends her cheers... *Mary Van der Mude* is recuperating at home after a hospital sojourn... *Ron & Cathy Cordes* now have an apartment in Philadelphia but will be in Bedford until their house sells... *Mark Bailey* is exploring the possibility of a public labyrinth... Numerous parishioners are running for town offices: *Chris Gittins* for Planning Board; *Maureen Richichi*, *Anita Raj*, and *Cath VanPraagh* for Board of Health; and *Dennis Ahern* for Library Trustee... Our *COVID-19 Testing Tuesdays* have now provided more than 2,500 tests, including subsidies of more than \$47,000 for town employees and those unable to pay. Deep thanks go to generous parishioners who have contributed... *Maria*, our guest is sanctuary, who is cautiously hopeful for her freedom with the change of administration. Note recent publicity (in addition to those on p. 5):

<https://the-journal.com/articles/200141>,

<https://www.kob.com/new-mexico-news/migrants-seek-action-from-biden-administration/5991318/>,

<https://www.fox7austin.com/news/noncitizens-living-in-churches-ask-to-be-included-in-immigration-plan>.



14 New Members...Wow!

Now is a time when a lot of churches have been, well... going out of business. It's a hard time to stay connected and it's a hard time for us, too. Thus, we are joyful to welcome the following new members of First Parish: *Suzanne Paradis, Sanjeev Seereeram, Niti Seereeram, Jihane Lefebvre, Sheila Albrecht, Paul Pelligrini, Ed Schwartz, Sue Baldauf, Dorothy Johnson, Ali Sadeghpour, Rosie Brennan,* and the renewal of membership by *Bill Schulz, Ladi Volicer, and Joyce Simard.* Membership simply says you feel at home here. We are stronger by your presence! We report our membership to the UUA each February and that date has been delayed until 2/17. If you'd like to be included in the "class of 2021" please let us know asap.... With deep appreciation.... —*john*



We are fortunate at First Parish to have a great community with many caring volunteers who can provide assistance to members who need temporary help with shopping or a few homemade meals delivered. If you or someone you know at First Parish needs temporary assistance, please let us know. The Coordinator for the month of February is Sandy Boczenowski. Reach her by phone: 781-222-4094 or email [Sandy at sandyboz@gmail.com](mailto:sandyboz@gmail.com). Please make note of the phone number above as it will remain the same every month to reach the current Caring Crew Coordinator.

Sandy Boczenowski

From the Treasurer Stewardship Reminder

Pledge payments and donations are always needed to carry on the work of the church. You can send a check by mail to:

First Parish Bedford
75 Great Road
Bedford MA 01730

or donate electronically using Give Plus. A "Donate with GivePlus" button on the home page of our website (www.uubedford.org) will take you to the page for this. All contributions are gratefully received.

Vicki Gaw,
FP Treasurer



Plans for February ... and Beyond

Due to continu

ed widespread cases of Covid in Massachusetts, the meetinghouse remains closed to most activities, including all group meetings. The Leadership Team will re-evaluate regularly, but re-entry is unlikely before spring, if then. Questions about specific activities should be directed to John.



Have you ever wanted to visit Alaska? If so, **WhaleCoast Alaska 2021** is for you! Four Alaska UU congregations invite you to experience our unique environmental and spiritual tour program this summer, when it will be safe to travel again. See Alaska through the eyes of local UUs, with friendly homestays and awe-inspiring tour activities. See wildlife, including moose, bears, caribou, whales, bald eagles, sea lions, etc. Visit Denali National Park. Experience Native Alaskan culture. WhaleCoast Alaska is an inspirational way to visit our beautiful state. Complete info at: www.WhaleCoastAK.org. This is a once-in-a-lifetime experience you won't want to miss!

David Frey

WhaleCoast Alaska Tour Director
www.WhaleCoastAK.org
dfrey@whalecoastak.org
907-322-4966

Shop to Support First Parish

When you shop on Amazon.com, keep in mind that you can benefit First Parish through your online shopping at no additional cost to yourself. From the First Parish home page (www.uubedford.org), click on "Shop to support First Parish" under the "Quick Links" on the right side, then click on the Amazon Smile link. First Parish earns a commission on all purchases originated through this link all year round!

You can also go to www.smile.amazon.com and choose "First Parish of Bedford" as the supported charity.



Important Info & Ways to Stay in Touch

While the church building may be closed to face-to-face events, the church community remains OPEN and ACTIVE! The best way to stay in communication and involved in all that is happening is to be sure you are subscribed to the First Parish Electronic lists (www.uubedford.org/community-life/email-lists/) – especially the **ParishBiz** list. This Google Group sends out important messages from church staff and leadership. And for news for families with children and youth, we have the **uubedford-re** google group. If you are not subscribed, or need help in any way with subscribing to any of the lists, send an email to: uubedford-it@googlegroups.com.

The church website (www.uubedford.org) is updated regularly and contains lots of useful information.

The **Main Calendar** of events on the website (www.uubedford.org/main-calendar/) is also being regularly updated with listings of all virtual events happening within the First Parish community.

All events, including Worship Services, are taking place via the Zoom (www.zoom.us) platform. If your committee or group would like to meet remotely, contact the church office (office@uubedford.org) and Parish Administrator Joan Petros will be happy to get your meeting set up.

Sunday Services on YouTube



To find FPB services on YouTube: Go to the church website: www.uubedford.org. Under the pull down menu at the top for “Worship,” select “[Sunday Services on YouTube](#)”. You will be taken to a YouTube page of FP Bedford videos. Click on “Uploads” in the upper left corner for a complete list. To put them in chronological order, click on “SORT BY” (on the right-hand side).

From the Video Team:
*Bob Bass, Bob Batt,
 John McClain & Webb Tilney*

Below are some of the Zoom events coming up that can offer support and connection to you and yours. (Note: Always good to check the [Main Calendar](#) and [website](#) in case any of these meeting links need to be changed.)

Day/Time	Event	Hosted by	Details
Sundays at 10AM	Sunday Worship & Community Connections	FP Staff	https://us02web.zoom.us/j/936829478?pwd=eFUrbnZYbVZoSDUrWWIRrk5TWUIFUT09 Meeting ID: 936 829 478 Passcode: 485478 by phone: +1 646 876 9923
Sunday, Feb. 14 at 4PM	Valentine's Day Sing-Along	Brad Conner	https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89737729308?pwd=UzISVTBrLzVLSitHVFIPITIZmbjFFQT09
Sunday, Feb. 21 4:00-5:00PM	The Bedford Lyceum	Ellen Scheiner, coordinator	https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83429685798?pwd=anAwBtRTnFGQzM4Tm5zTS8vd2ZxQT09 Meeting ID: 834 2968 5798 Passcode: 116304 By phone: +1 646 558 8656
Sunday, Feb 21, 7:00PM	Women's Book Group		Contact Margaret Jackson (mjacksonfpb@yahoo.com) for Zoom info if you'd like to join.
ONGOING:			
Thursdays at 9:30AM	Short Stories Discussion Group	Short Stories Group	Open to all – If you'd like to join in the discussion, email (office@uubedford.org) for the Zoom info
Thursdays, 5:30-6:30PM	Junior & Senior Youth Choirs	Janet Welby	https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86016021142?pwd=RE9ucUFzTGllde15d2szNnArTkkRUT09
Thursdays at 7:30PM	Story Time for Children	Ministerial Staff	https://us02web.zoom.us/j/771525457
Thursdays at 7:30PM	Adult Choir Check-in and Rehearsal	Brad Conner	https://us02web.zoom.us/j/197342633?pwd=bVpjcUxNVHJkdNINFoxRkJ1UINEdz09
First Friday of ea mo at 6:30PM	First Friday Potluck	Ron Green, convener	https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87697104799?pwd=K2Zad1V0ZndEUcTmRDVmb215VUdUZz09
First Sunday of ea mo @ 4PM	Storytelling Group	Peter Ash	Open to all – If you'd like to join in, email (office@uubedford.org) for the Zoom info
Bi-weekly on Sundays @ 7PM	Parents Support Group	Rev Annie & Deb Weiner	Please contact dre@uubedford.org if you would like to join in and need the Zoom link