



The Parishioner

News of the First Parish in Bedford

Unitarian Universalist

On the Common, Bedford, Massachusetts

Spirit...Justice...Community

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December 2021

Rev. Wendy Bell, interim minister
Rev. Annie Gonzalez, minister of faith development
Lisa Maria Andreoli Steinberg, director of faith development for children
Sarah Klockowski, youth coordinator
Rev. John Gibbons, minister emeritus

Jennifer McClain, parish board president
Carla Bradford, editor
Bradford Conner, music/choir director
Janet Welby, youth choir director
Sandra LaBarge-Neumann, organist
Brenda Rybicki, parish administrator
Stacey Katz, acting assistant parish administrator
Samuel Coiro, Jr., sexton/custodian

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Upcoming Sunday Services (In-Person & Zoom) / Zoom link:

<https://www.uubedford.org/worship/upcoming-services/>

December 5th / Title: "The Radical Advent Adventure"
 This morning we take another look at the season of Advent and its four "virtues:" hope, peace, joy and love. It all sounds so gentle and calm and lovely, doesn't it? But what might it mean to celebrate an Advent that is instead radical and subversive, an Advent that promises to turn the world upside down?

December 12th / Title: "The Grinches Who Steal Our Joy"
 The Grinch learned a lot from trying to steal Christmas from the Whos in Whoville. What can we learn from the grinches who try to steal our joy? We'll look at comparison, "shoulds" and guilt and see how we can persist like the Whos of Whoville, despite some best efforts to rob us of delight.

December 19th / Title: "And They'll Know We Are UU's By Our Love"
 Somewhere around the year 200 C.E., Tertullian described the early church, saying, "It is mainly the deeds of a love so noble that [led] many to put a brand on us. See, they say, how they love one another..." On this fourth and final Sunday of Advent, we reflect on church – what it is, what it ought to be, and what a difference it could make in our lives and in the world.

December 24th (Friday, 3:30PM) / Title: "Christmas Eve"
 Join us for an in-person experiential Christmas Eve service for all ages! We'll move through the church in smaller groups due to COVID precautions on a journey inspired by Dickens' A Christmas Carol. What can we learn from the ghosts of Christmas past, present and future? Come find out while you enjoy hearing our youth choirs, candles in the dark, and cocoa on the Common.

December 24th (Friday, 8:00PM) / Title: "Christmas Eve – Traditional Service"
Prelude Music begins at 7:40 p.m. Service begins at 8:00 p.m. First Parish's Traditional Christmas Eve service with a homily by Rev. Wendy Bell and our adult choir & soloists accompanied by orchestra and members of the Back Bay Ringers performing music with the theme of bells including "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day", "I Saw Three Ships", "Ding Dong Merrily on High" and "Carol of the Bells". Favorite Christmas carols will include "Silent Night" and "Joy to the World".

Next deadline is Dec. 26

The Parishioner is published monthly. Deadline is generally the last Sunday of each month. Send submissions to: editors@uubedford.org.

“In the Interim”

Advent is one of my very favorite times of year. Ever since I was a small child, singing in the youngest children’s choir in our United Methodist Church, it has been a magical season. I’ve loved the candles in the windows, the greens on the bannisters, and the poinsettias on the chancel steps and altar. I’ve loved the rituals of lighting the candles, of the Advent wreath each week at church and decorating the Christmas tree at home. And I’ve always loved singing the old, traditional Christmas carols.

All those things were for me a part of learning to wait. Not the waiting that is accompanied by dread or fear or feelings of foreboding, but the waiting for something really special and wonderful and magical and good.

As a parent, I have worked hard to recreate some of the magic of the season for my own child. I’ve wanted her to feel the same wonder, awe and amazement that I used to feel. I figure, if nothing else, I’m helping her to develop emotional muscle memory, so that when she’s an adult – even though she may no longer believe in Santa – she’ll still have that same capacity to hope, to anticipate the arrival of something joyful, wonderful and beyond belief.

And I wish the same for you! May your December be filled with wonder and with an abundance of hope, love, joy, and peace!

-Rev. Wendy

P.S. – Beginning this month, I plan to write weekly Interim updates and post them on Wednesdays to the Parish Biz and Anno lists. If you want to receive these updates, please make sure you are subscribed to one or both lists. Also please add my email RevWendyLBell@gmail.com to your contacts to prevent the updates from going into your spam folder. And finally, if you still don’t see the updates, remember to check your spam folder. 😊



Minister’s Musings

This Sunday as I write marks the first Sunday of advent. That time of waiting before Christmas. This Thanksgiving holiday I had the unfortunate experience of doing some rather anxious waiting. I found out on Monday, after I had flown to Normal, IL with Moira to be with my parents and my brother and his partner, that a fully vaccinated friend of mine I had spent significant time with over the weekend had tested positive for COVID.

So, there I was. Every ache or tiredness I felt seemed like a sign. Do I have it? Am I infecting my whole family? Will I get my partially vaccinated kid sick? Will I have to quarantine here in Normal, IL in my childhood bedroom? Who will preach on Sunday?

Waiting. The joy of cooking and eating and playing games with my family all against this backdrop of uncertainty and dread. I will say that when I got that notification on my phone with my negative test results from the PCR test, I threw my hands up with joy. "Thank you Moderna!" I cried.

Waiting involves holding multiple realities. The reality you are living in (the joy of a delightful Thanksgiving gathering) and the future reality you anticipate (having COVID or not having COVID). It was not easy, but I did my best to enjoy that time with family as thoroughly as I could, not knowing when we'd be all together again.

So it is for advent. We wait. Maybe we wait for a test result, a surgery, to see if a treatment will work. Maybe we wait for a big holiday event, for Christmas itself, or for 2022 to come along and be a better year. We wait for graduation, for the promotion, for retirement. We wait to see who will be on our ministerial search team and who our next settled minister will be. We wait to see how things will turn out for our loved ones and for our country and for the whole world.

In this waiting, may we find what joy we can, experiencing the fullness of the present as deeply as possible with hearts turned toward the future, expectantly.

-Annie



Stewardship Update

Pledges or donations can be paid in any amount at any time. You can make a pledge payment or a donation by sending a check by mail to First Parish Bedford 75 Great Road Bedford, MA 01730, donate electronically using the Give Plus link on our web site or texting **1-833-765-0091** on your smart phone. (Credit card information will be required).

If you have any questions about your pledge payment status as the end of the year approaches, please submit them to Brenda. You will receive the information you request as soon as the new version of QuickBooks has been brought up-to-date. Thank you.

-Vicki Gaw, Treasurer

Bookkeeping Transition Update

Brenda is now the point of contact for submitting bills and invoices for payment as well as all bookkeeping questions and issues. She will be paying the bills, managing the check and cash deposits and submitting payroll.

The migration of our financial records from QuickBooks 2014 to QuickBooks 2022 was completed this past week. Your continued patience is appreciated as Genevieve updates the new system. Genevieve will be maintaining the books, managing the electronic donations, creating pledge statements and tax forms through the end of the calendar year. As your treasurer, I will be working closely with them and welcome any questions or concerns you may have.

-Vicki Gaw, Treasurer

Access for All

Hello, all. You know that we spent a lot of time last year finding and practicing with RE, a closed captioning service for Zoom. We use it now for Sunday services, and most people I've talked with who use it, like it. I read this today in a [blog post](#), [Zoom](#) confirmed that it is working towards making automatic closed captioning, aka 'Live Transcription', available to all users in the fall of 2021. Automatic closed captioning is part of Zoom Meetings accessibility features that also includes keyboard accessibility, pinning or spotlighting interpreter video, screen reader support, and a range of other accessibility settings. This is a paid feature currently, but it looks to go free sometime later this year. I'll keep you all posted about this. When it arrives, it means that anyone running a Zoom meeting can have transcription amiable for free - A great step forward!

-Lee Vorderer, for Access for ALL

Partner Church

Have you been planning to sponsor a Transylvanian student? Now's a good time to send your check to FP for all (\$300) or part of a scholarship!

- Sharon McDonald

Musical Notes

Saturday, December 4th (2:00 p.m.): The **Back Bay Ringers** return for their bi-annual visit (details elsewhere in the newsletter).

Sunday, December 5th (10 a.m. service): Sandra LaBarge-Neumann will be playing organ. The adult choir will sing a madrigal-carol, "The Bells of Heaven", composed by John Jacob Niles, the scholar who resurrected the Appalachian carol "I Wander as I Wonder" and made it a holiday favorite.

Sunday, December 5th (3:00 p.m.): I will be presenting "The Bells of Christmas" for the **Bedford Lyceum via ZOOM** (look for details elsewhere in this newsletter).

Sunday, December 12th (10 a.m. service): I will be playing piano. Carol Epple – flute and Elizabeth Connors – clarinet will join me in playing arrangements of Ralph Vaughan Williams' *Fantasia* on "Greensleeves", Scott Joplin's "Bethena" Rag and a lively traditional carol.

Friday, December 17th (7:00 p.m.): For my annual sing along, like last year, it will be on Zoom, but there's a twist! This year's presentation will be in conjunction with the Bedford Council on Aging. I'll be joined by Carol Epple – flute, Elizabeth Connors – clarinet and others in presenting holiday music and carols from around the world. You will be able to come in person to the sanctuary or watch the performance on Zoom. If you come in person, there will be a chance to give a donation to the Bedford Food Bank. Either way, here's hoping it will be a fun addition to your holidays (more details elsewhere on this page)

Sunday, December 19th (10 a.m.): Steve Sussman will be playing piano.

"Christmas Eve", Friday, December 24th (3:30 p.m.): This service will feature our youth choirs under the dynamic direction of Janet Welby. This service is an uplifting way for families to spend time together and celebrate the joy of the evening. Ideas are still being considered about the structure of the service, but the present plans include Sandra LaBarge-Neumann playing organ and Steve Sussman playing piano. Alumni of the youth choirs will be there to sing "Carol of the Bells".

"Christmas Eve", Friday, December 24th (7:40 p.m. Prelude Music; 8:00 p.m. Traditional service):

"Hark! the Herald Angels Sing", "The First Nowell", "Joy to the World", "Silent Night", and the ringing of the church bell. Also, Wendy Bell's homily and the adult choir, soloists, orchestra, and members of the Back Bay Ringers performing music with a bell theme including "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day", "Ring Merry Bells", "Ding Dong Merrily on High" and "Carol of the Bells". It all adds up to a magical ap-PEALING night!

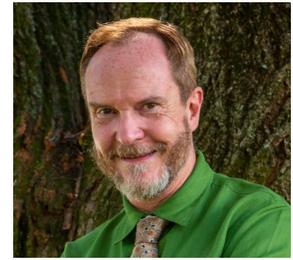
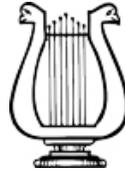
Sunday, January 2nd (10 a.m. service): Sandra LaBarge-Neumann will be playing organ.

After the craziness of the holidays are over, maybe it's time to think about joining choir! If you're interested, e-mail me at bconner@uubedford.org Plans for the coming year include a Christmas Eve service filled with music around the theme of bells and Music Sunday 2022 (May 1, 2022) will be a Sunday of joyful music by favorite composers Handel, Haydn, Bach, Beethoven and a host of others.

Bradford Conner, Music Director



The Bedford Lyceum



Sunday, December 5, 2021 from 3:00 pm – 4:00 pm (VIA ZOOM ONLY)

Please join us for a joyful and fascinating presentation by **Bradford Conner** on Sunday, December 5th from 3:00 pm – 4:00 pm via Zoom. Brad will be speaking about "**The Bells of Christmas**" just in time to get you into the holiday spirit.

Here's a preview:

Some of the most significant moments in history have been defined by the presence of bells. Besides the obvious connection with music, more than that, bells are part of everyday life. They announce births. They celebrate joyous events. They call people to congregate. They start revolutions. "Let freedom ring!" They announce the end of wars. They summon workers in from the fields. They indicate the time. They call us to answer the door. They tell us when our dinner is cooked. They tell us what fun it is to ride in a one-horse open sleigh. They toll for solemn events and for our deaths. From the time we are born until the time we die, bells are everywhere. They have inspired poetic masterpieces by Longfellow and Donne amongst others. They even have the power to tell us when an angel gets its wings. This presentation will explore the stories of bells and what makes them such an important part of our existence and our common experiences. Does that "ring a bell"?

Brad Conner has been the Music & Choral Director at First Parish in Bedford for 17 years. Brad has a vibrant enthusiasm for all genres of music from classical to contemporary to jazz to blues, to the Great American Songbook, to Broadway/film music, to classic rock ... to all good music. Brad has multiple degrees from West Virginia University including musicology, vocal and piano performance, and teaching. During the COVID-ID lockdown, Brad used his time to work on piano works by Schubert and Beethoven. As things have begun to open back up, he has happily started to resume his professional performing life as a conductor, pianist, singer and as lecturer at First Parish Bedford, Beacon Hill Seminars and the Cambridge Center for Adult Education.

*** First Parish in Bedford is proud to present this talk as part of its free, monthly, community forums (lyceums) on a wide range of topics. All talks are free and open to the public. Registration is not required. ***

Zoom Meeting Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82102237269?pwd=cDFHUURCdkxCSDBBM0lXMEVDc3NkZz09>

Meeting ID: 821 0223 7269

Meeting Passcode: 488677

One tap mobile +13017158592,,82102237269#,,,,*488677#

By phone +1 301 715 8592

Questions? Please contact Ellen at mountainbreeze52@gmail.com

Congratulations to John Gibbons, First Parish & The Bedford Research Foundation!

The Bedford Chamber of Commerce presented their sponsored award on Tuesday, November 23, 2021 for a "2021 Bedford's First Covid-19 Citizen Response Award" to John Gibbons and the First Parish/ Bedford Research Foundation's Testing Tuesday Team. Very proud of this team: Maureen Richichi, Sue Baldauf, Sarah Dorer, Steve Hagan, Rich Daugherty (tent maintenance), Ann Kiessling, and Rev. Gibbons.

John's words of acceptance:

"Please let the Chamber Board know of my appreciation for today's COVID response recognition. While I'm appreciative personally, I again want to accept this award on behalf of First Parish, our Testing Tuesday Team (all those with the yellow shirts), the Bedford Research Foundation, and I'd also want to note the many sung and unsung Bedford businesses, private citizens, and Town officials who rallied in support of public health at this time of crisis. I am astounded to recall that many town organizations and individual Bedford residents - including teenagers and seniors - worked tirelessly to provide masks, face-shields, and PPE to needy first-responders. Very many Bedford individuals and organizations are deserving of this recognition. I hope that this experience will encourage all of Bedford to work more collaboratively as we prepare for future challenges."



Please Join Us at General Assembly 2022!

General Assembly is the annual gathering of Unitarian Universalists for conducting business of the Association, exploring the theological underpinnings of our faith, and leaning fully into our mission and principles.

In 2022, we will have the option of meeting online or in-person! For those who enjoyed the convenience and accessibility of remote participation, General Assembly will continue to offer a virtual experience with robust programming and enhanced delegate discussion tools. For those who miss the in-person experience, GA 2022 offers opportunities to re-connect with friends old and new, local site attractions, and more! **Join us June 22 - 26, 2022 online or in-person in Portland, Oregon.**

Registration is now open for in-person attendance. Full-time registration is \$475 for adults, and \$250 for high school youth and retired and candidate ministers. [Financial support](#) for registration, lodging credit within the [GA room block](#), as well as a payment plan are available. In-person registration rates will increase on March 1 and again on May 1. **Registration for virtual participation will open March 1.**

<https://www.uua.org/ga/registration>

Storytelling Group

I learned to tell stories from the late Brother Blue over 30 years ago and would like to share with anyone the love of story that he taught me. That's why I have been holding a weekly storytelling meeting for adults, not necessarily affiliated with First Parish, who are interested in the art of storytelling.

I invite you to join me for an hour devoted to the art of storytelling on the second Sunday of every month. It is 4 – 5 pm, on Zoom (for now). Check the main calendar on the First Parish web site, watch the Anno list, or email me at peterash3@gmail.com to confirm meeting deadlines and get a Zoom invitation.

This is for people who enjoy telling stories or listening to stories, and for people who have a story they would like to tell, but don't know how to start. In the spirit of Brother Blue, I interpret "story" in the widest possible way. It includes true personal stories, tall tales, fairy tales, original fiction, non-original fiction (with credit given to the author), ethnic folktales, re-telling of traditional tales with a modern twist, sung ballads, etc. I think of storytelling as a spiritual practice that has the potential to connect people.

I have been getting only one or two people showing up the last few months, so if this is something that interests you, please don't put it off. If you know of people outside the church community who might be interested, feel free to pass on the invitation. If more people don't attend, I am going to have to stop offering these meetings.

Peter Ash

News from The Gallery @ First Parish

We had just installed our latest exhibit in the Gallery when the church closed due to the Covid epidemic. The artist we were featuring was Mary Aloyse Firestone, a member of First Parish and of the Gallery Committee. Mary had recently passed away and it seemed a fitting recognition of the work she had created.

Now almost two years later, the exhibit of her work is still up, but largely unseen by many parishioners. Our committee has put together a power point slide show to give you an overview of her work. That will be posted on the Gallery webpage on the church website <http://uubedford.org>.

If you want to go to the church and see the exhibit, remember to please sign in at the small table in the entry way. In addition to her artwork on the walls, there are many loose pieces of art that are yours for the taking. Pieces with red dots on them have already been spoken for so please do not take them.



Women's Book Group December Meeting

Please join us on Sunday, December 12 on Zoom at 7 p.m. to discuss the book "Anxious People" by Fredrik Backman.

Though we inhabit a messy, ambiguous world, Backman shows we can turn toward one another to find calm and assurance. - Chris Schlupe, Amazon Editor

We'll post the meeting link to the church calendar and to the anno list the week before.

The meetings for the remaining church year are:

2021-2022 Church Year Book Group Books		
Meeting Date	Book	Author
1/9/2022	Book Swap	Location TBD
2/27/2022	A Knock At Midnight: A Story of Hope, Justice and Freedom	Brittany K. Barnett
4/10/2022	What We Carry: A Memoir	Maya Shanbhag Lang
5/22/2022	Klara and the Sun	Kazuo Ishiguro
6/12/2022	Book Selection for following year	

Social Responsibility Council Update

Final numbers for our Share the Plate collections for October and November are still pending due to the transitions in the office staff and updating of procedures. We have received a proposal for the December offering as noted below. We hope to have final numbers to report in the January newsletter. The organizations we have supported thus far include:

- October -- International Institute of New England
- November -- Transylvania Scholarship Fund
- December -- Immigration Justice Task Force of First Parish UU Concord (for Afghani resettlement work)

The SRC again invites all parishioners to consider organizations they support as possible recipients for our Share the Plate collection. If your proposal is selected, we ask that you or someone from the organization you are proposing give a brief overview to the congregation during the service on the first Sunday of the month.

We are also accepting proposals for social outreach projects of education and awareness, service, and social action that you would like to see funded this year. Our next meeting is Wednesday, December 8th. Get those proposals in for consideration this month!

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 on the church website. We are in the process of updating our website information. If you have trouble downloading the form, please email Marge as below and she will send you a copy.

Any comments or questions can be directed to Marge Heckman, SRC chair, at maheckman@gmail.com.

From the Director of Faith Development

I welcome with excitement my first winter holiday season with First Parish in Bedford! While safety practices to mitigate covid are still part of our lives, we can still find ways to be in community together. I'm looking forward to experiencing my first Bedford Common tree lighting and helping the youth serve hot cocoa- I'm sure it will be an energetic and laughter filled evening. And then, to slow down, the following weekend we'll offer Labyrinth walk for reflection and meditation in the season of Advent and the approaching Winter Solstice. I'll have the opportunity to spend more time with more members of the community at these events, and to continue to build our relationship together. Cheers to my first December with First Parish in Bedford with hopes for many more to come!

Lisa Maria Andreoli Steinberg

Update on Mobile E-giving at First Parish

There are a few changes coming soon to e-giving using mobile devices at First Parish. In the next few months, we will be rolling out OneChurch Giving, which is part of the new OneChurch management software. This will integrate credit-card and bank-transfer giving with the traditional giving by check and allow donors to check on the progress of their pledge. Look for more information about this in the coming months.

In the shorter term, our current e-giving vendor, Vanco Payments, is making some changes to their offerings. We have been using an interface named GivePlus for both mobile and online giving. Vanco has decided to retire the GivePlus Mobile app in favor of a new app called Vanco Mobile. There are new apps for iOS and Android, and a new web interface. We have not been publicizing this because of our planned move to OneChurch Giving.

The GivePlus Mobile app will not be supported by the vendor after January 31, 2022. The apps will no longer be available from the relevant app stores. The vendor has told us the apps may continue to work, but they won't be supported. The replacement app, called Vanco Mobile, is already available from the app stores. It allows most of the same giving options as GivePlus. Unlike GivePlus, it requires logging into a Vanco account before giving. Also, iPad support is not available yet.

We will be e-mailing everyone who has used GivePlus in the past with more details about switching to the Vanco Mobile app if they choose to do so.

However, you may prefer to donate directly on the web using the browser from a smartphone, laptop or desktop. In fact, OneChurch software will always redirect to the browser (including from a smartphone app). To do this go to <https://www.uubedford.org/donate>. If you are on a smartphone you will be presented with a mobile-friendly interface.

If you have any questions, please send email to uubedford-giveplus@googlegroups.com.

Craig Jackson

News from the Parish Nose

There are many reasons to be proud of our First Parish Community this month and many causes for celebration:

Our minister emeritus, Rev. John Gibbons was given the Bedford Chamber of Commerce Certificate of Appreciation Covid-19 Citizenship Award on 11/23/21. The award cites his "unselfish contribution and efforts to the Bedford Community during the Pandemic and his unwavering commitment to our Citizens." John accepted the award on behalf of First Parish, Bedford Research Foundation, and the Covid testing team, some of whom were present at the awarding. Present at the ceremony with John were Ann Kiessling, Steve Hagen, Sarah Dorer, Maureen Richichi, Rich & Nancy Daugherty, and Sue Baldauf.

Elisabeth Watson (daughter of parishioner Deb Picciuto) wed Nathan Rogers on Sept 4 at the Museum of Science. Adding to the reasons for celebration, Elisabeth Watson Rogers will be honored and named to the Bedford High School Athletic Hall of Fame. Deb's other daughter, Dr. Sarah Watson, was named Chief Resident in Family Medicine at Lourdes Hospital, Binghamton, NY.

Our own Rebecca Green Neale was named one of the Top Women of Law for 2021 in an event that "celebrates the achievements of exceptional women lawyers who are pioneers, educators, trailblazers and role models".

Gray Hanegan, one of First Parish's senior youth, was approved for her Gold award from Girl Scouts after completing her project connecting senior citizens and youth in Bedford through a pen pal program. This is the highest honor a Girl Scout can receive.

And congratulations to Emelia Heckman, daughter of Marge and Norm Heckman, who will graduate on December 11th from the University of New Hampshire with her Master's in Occupational Therapy!

A community event to watch out for is that Grace Chapel in Lexington Mass has a wonderful art gallery. Its current juried show, *Radiance*, includes several pieces by members of First Parish (Doris Smith, Janet Powers and Bob Bass), so check it out. Grace Chapel is at 59 Worthen Road in Lexington, and the show closes on Jan 7, 2022.

In unfortunate news, Jenn McClain was in a car accident in October and continues to recover slowly from the concussion she suffered. Your patience with our valiant leader and chair of the First Parish Board is appreciated as her screen time needs to be limited.

The Gravina family is sad to learn that their dog Ginger, who Hilary has taken a lot of care of, has cancer. They are hoping for the best but bracing for the worst. She's 12 though and has had setbacks these past few years. Irene notes that all dogs are good dogs in heaven!

One of Melinda Ballou's brothers is currently under treatment for prostate cancer and is having difficult symptoms, so holding him in light and healing love.

In milestones of note,

Carla & Paul Bradford celebrated their silver anniversary on Nov. 16. Congratulations to them both!

Deb Picciuto joined the Medicare Club and commemorated the 1-year anniversary of the passing of her 104 year-old mom, C. Clare Picciuto on the same day.

Melinda Ballou turned 64 (a milestone birthday due to Beatles song) and that same day saw her oncologist after some worrying symptoms, but good news: MRI results confirm there is no recurrence of the cancer she was treated for in 2018-19 She also remembers her mom who would have turned 100 on Oct 8, 2021. And as of Nov 1, 2021, Mainely Pottery closed its doors. Jamie Oates -- remarkable potter and brother to Kati and Patrick passed away in April 2021 and co-founded this magical store 33 years ago with his partner Jeannette. An ending and transition for many.

Thanks so much to everyone who submitted items to our new Parish Nose! It is deeply appreciated.

December Happenings!

Faith Development

Your Faith Development Team is excited to offer the opportunity to walk a Winter Lights Labyrinth. The weekend of December 10th-12th we'll have a labyrinth of greenery and twinkle lights set up in the Common Room after dusk for meditation and reflection. There will be a sign up for individuals, families, or pods to sign up for a window of time to walk the labyrinth without crowding for both spiritual and covid-safety benefits.

Bedford Tree Lighting on the Common

The Bedford Community Tree Lighting is on December 4th at 5:00 on the Common. First Parish's own Lois and Brown Pulliam have the honor of lighting the trees, and our junior and senior youth will be serving hot cocoa to the community. Join us in this festive community gathering!



Holiday Workshop!

Faith Development for PreK-8th grade on Sunday December 19th will be a holiday workshop with a variety of crafts to make small gifts and ornaments. If you like to craft but aren't in PreK-8th grade- please be in touch with Lisa Maria so we can include you in the fun!



“Gliding Along with a Song”

First Parish in Bedford Music Director Brad Conner’s annual Christmas singalong lives and will take place on **Friday, December 17th**, 7:00 pm. Like last year, it will be on Zoom, but there’s a twist! This year’s presentation in conjunction with the **Bedford Council on Aging** will include the airing of a program of holiday music and carols from around the world. The **Silver-Ebony-Ivory Trio** of Carol Epple – flute, Elizabeth Connors – clarinet and Brad Conner – piano, joined by Cynthia Mork – soprano, Benjamin Sears – baritone, and Dean Groves – percussion, will have everyone singing along and moving to the music in a program themed as “**Gliding Along with a Song.**” Enjoy favorites such as “White Christmas,” “Simple Gifts,” “Fantasia on Greensleeves,” “Sleigh Ride,” and much more.

Viewers will be able to come in person to the sanctuary at the church, **75 The Great Road, Bedford, MA** for a screening or watch the performance remotely on Zoom. Either way, here’s hoping it will be a fun addition to your holidays. In-person viewers may wish to put a donation in the basket to help the Bedford Food Bank and as a way of spreading holiday cheer.



Lay Pastoral Care

Delaying Cookie Express due to Covid - With regret, the Lay Pastoral team feels it best to delay our tradition of parishioners playing the part of Cookie Elves due to the increasing spread of Covid. For many years we baked, packed, and delivered packages of sweet treats and made an in-person visit to our dear friends who are not getting out and about. We are planning to provide some very limited deliveries to those in need, and to hold a Zoom Tea during December so that we can socialize safely and toast to good health and a return to many in-person hugs and gatherings. Watch for a Parish Biz announcement about the date and time for the Zoom Christmas Tea.

Caring Network

We are fortunate at First Parish to have a great community with many caring members and friends who gladly provide assistance to members who need short term help with meals delivered, errands run, or rides to medical appointments. If you or someone you know at First Parish needs temporary assistance, please let us know. The Coordinator for the month of December is Sandy Boczenowski. Reach her by phone: 617-943-0691 or email: sandyboz@gmail.com.

Earth Connections

Winter Solstice - The Earth Connections event (alternating with "Braiding Sweetgrass" discussions) is set for Sunday Dec. 19 at 4:00 pm - both outside and inside First Parish Church. We can gather that sunset to celebrate Winter Solstice traditions, musical and otherwise, as done for centuries by cultures all over the world.

-Environmental Justice Committee.

Music Committee

Bell Ringers Concert at First Parish

The First Parish Music Committee is delighted to present the Back Bay Ringers, who have serenaded Boston-area audiences with their annual Christmas concert series for over 15 years. The concert will take place on **Saturday, December 4th at 2:00 pm** at First Parish in Bedford, 75 The Great Road, Bedford, MA. As the weather cools, the leaves change colors, and fall marches steadily on towards winter, and The Back Bay Ringers return for their bi-annual visit. The concert will feature traditional, but perhaps slightly less often heard, pieces. While the program will inspire peace and contemplation with classics like "**Silent Night**" and "**The Christmas Song**" (Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire), it also might have you fighting the urge to clap your hands and sway to "**On This Day, Earth Shall Ring**" (and ring and ring!). Either way, it is a program you won't want to miss! Especially the grande finale: "**All I Want for Christmas is You.**"

Tickets for in-person or online are available at www.backbayringers.org/events .

For the safety of the performers and audience, masks and social distancing will be required.

