



The Parishioner

News of the First Parish in Bedford

Unitarian Universalist

On the Common, Bedford, Massachusetts

Spirit...Justice...Community

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January 2022

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

Inside this issue:

“In the Interim” 2
 Minister’s Musings 2
 Musical Notes 3
 Bedford Lyceum 4
 Stewardship Update 5
 Social Responsibility Update 5
 Holiday Greeting Cards for Inmates 6
 Partner Church 6
 Women’s Book Group 6
 Exploring Uncomfortable Conversations on Racism 7
 Parish Nose 7-8

Upcoming Sunday Services*

*While we can’t gather in person, please join us via ZOOM. Link can be found at: <https://www.uubedford.org/worship/upcoming-services/>

January 2nd
 Title: “Lessons from the Nap Bishop” – Rev. Annie
 Tricia Hersey, otherwise known as the Nap Bishop, is a rest evangelist. She preaches the gospel of naps against what she terms "grind culture." As we start this new year, what can we learn about intentional rest from this wise teacher?

January 9th
 Title: “Man...Monkey...Mammoth...Mindfulness!” – Rev. Wendy
 A man, a monkey, and an elephant go up a hill. It’s not a joke. It’s the beginning of a wisdom tale. This morning we reflect on living with intention in the present moment...mindfully.

January 16th
 Title: “Paved with good intentions” – Rev. Annie
 You know what they say about the road to hell... Together we'll explore ways to prioritize impact over intention while holding compassion for ourselves and others.

January 23rd
 Title: “Living with Intention: A Multigenerational Service”
 Join us for an all ages service exploring the role intention plays in our lives.

January 30th
 Title: “Wanting to Want It” – Rev. Annie
 Sometimes before we actually make a change, we have to spend some time wanting to want to. How do we know when to set our intentions on a goal that feels out of reach, and when is it time to practice intentional acceptance?

Next deadline is Jan. 30

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

“In the Interim”

Some will begin their New Year with capital “R” Resolutions, vowing to improve. Some will choose to develop new habits or to let go of old ones that no longer serve. Some will choose goals – specific things they want to accomplish within the space of twelve months.

Still others will speak of wanting to begin to live with greater intentionality.

The word “intention” comes from the Latin *intentus*, meaning “to stretch out” or “to lean toward.” That reminds me of plants and the way they grow toward the sun. If the pot gets turned or moved, the plant within will soon begin to reorient itself toward the life-giving light source.

Omicron has turned our lives around once again. Two years into this pandemic, and there is still no “situation normal.” Our lives keep being turned upside down and all around. It’s very disorienting as well as disheartening.

My invitation to you, as we prepare to begin a New Year together, is to reflect on what it is that serves as your “sun?” Toward what “life-giving” source are you oriented? Toward what will you stretch out and lean in this New Year in order to keep growing and thriving despite the continual upheaval and disorientation?

May all our lives be blessed with more light as the days before us lengthen...

- Rev. Wendy



Minister’s Musings

A week or so ago I saw a quote going around on social media that read "Nobody claim 2022 as 'your year.' We're all going to walk in real slow. Be good. Be quiet. Be cautious and respectful. Don't touch anything." I chuckled. I got it. At the end of 2020, there was a lot of "phew that's behind us! 2021 has to be better!" Now we are cynical; we've learned our lesson. Of course, the truth is, every year is like this. While collectively we've continued to have political, climate and pandemic ups and downs (well mostly downs; aside from the incredibly needed vaccines...), personally we've also had our own ups and downs. Births and deaths. Marriages and divorces. Medical findings of "all clear! looking good" and diagnoses that turn our worlds upside down. We've had surgeries and mental health crises; we've seen care and compassion from one another. While the post was just a funny joke, I think there is something to be said for approaching each year, each month, each day with a little bit of caution and respect. Not fear and anxiety, but humility. Holding our expectations lightly and holding one another with love. Of course, no amount of "not touching anything" will prevent new strains of COVID, political fiascos or weather disasters. But if we are gentle with ourselves and one another it might make the whole situation a little more bearable.

- Rev. Annie



Musical Notes

“Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness” – Desmond Tutu (b. 1931)

Here’s the planned music for 10 a.m. services in the upcoming month (pandemic willing) –

Sunday, January 2nd: Sandra LaBarge-Neumann will be playing organ.

Sunday, January 9th: Sandra LaBarge-Neumann will be playing organ. The adult choir will sing the gentle “Lone Wild Bird” from *Southern Harmony* with Carol Epple – flute. Sandra and I will play an organ-piano duet of an arrangement of a tune from *The Sacred Harp*.

Sunday, January 16th: Sandra LaBarge-Neumann will be playing organ. The adult choir will sing the spiritual, “Stan’ Still Jordan”, arranged by Harry T. Burleigh. Burleigh was the first significant black composer in the United States and his arrangements are always moving and powerful.

Friday, January 23rd: Steve Sussman will be playing piano. The youth choirs will be singing, led by our ever-dynamic, Janet Welby.

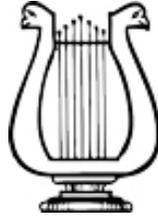
Sunday, January 30th: Sandra LaBarge-Neumann will be playing organ. The adult choir will sing Mozart’s beloved “Ave verum” and Schubert’s “An die Musik”. Cynthia Mork – soprano, Elizabeth Connors – clarinet and me (on piano) will perform Schubert’s masterpiece, “Shepherd on the Rock”.

Now that 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



Please join us for a fascinating presentation by **Rebecca Neale** on **Sunday, January 9th from 3:00 pm – 4:00 pm** via **Zoom**.

Title: **“You’re not Going to Believe What Happened in Turkmenistan!”**

On September 12, 2001, Rebecca Neale learned of the 9/11 terror attacks as told to her in Uzbek. Her friend recounted what the state-run news reported: That two planes crashed into each other over New York City. She thought maybe she should get out an Uzbek-to-English dictionary. If only she had one.

Thus began the end of one year of Peace Corps service in Turkmenistan, a nation bordering northern Afghanistan. Turkmenistan and Afghanistan may share ethnic origins and have a similarly challenging geography, but they have many differences because Turkmenistan was once a Soviet Republic, which indelibly shaped Turkmenistan’s culture. There is nowhere quite like Turkmenistan, a country with a golden statue of their president dominating the skyline and an equally large crater ceaselessly burning leaked methane in the middle of the desert. Rebecca was welcomed into many homes and shared countless cups of tea with people living lives of extraordinary challenges. She will introduce attendees to the unique country of Turkmenistan with photos and stories.



Rebecca Neale grew up going to the First Parish. After leaving Bedford for college, she lived in Turkmenistan, California, and New York before returning to start her own law firm right here on Great Road. She helps families with their wills and trusts (aka “estate planning”) and helps people navigate divorce. She was a Community Health Educator in the Peace Corps and in California.

**** First Parish in Bedford is proud to host this presentation as part of The Bedford Lyceum, a monthly lecture series on a wide range of topics. All talks are free and open to the public. Registration is not required. ****

Zoom Meeting Link:

<https://zoom.us/j/99742168325?pwd=cGFKaGw0c29RQXRkci8rU0wydGVaUT09>

Meeting ID: 997 4216 8325

Passcode: 656405

One tap mobile +19292056099,,99742168325#

By phone +1 929 205 6099

Questions? Please contact Ellen at mountainbreeze52@gmail.com

Stewardship Update

Pledges or donations are always needed and 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).

In these uncertain times, we understand financial situations may change. If you will be unable to fulfill the pledge you made last spring, please notify the church office. This will help us plan for the remainder of the year. Thank you.

- Vicki Gaw, Treasurer

Social Responsibility January Update

We have received final numbers for our Share the Plate collections for October through December. The organizations we have supported thus far include:

- *October – Greater Boston Food Bank -- \$474.62
- *November -- Transylvania Scholarship Fund -- \$276.26
- *December -- Immigration Justice Task Force of First Parish UU Concord -- \$398.67

As the New Year begins, we again invite 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. Due to the holiday weekend, the January Share the Plate will be on the second Sunday, January 9th.

At our December meeting, we approved a grant submitted by Ellen Scheiner for:

- * \$2000 for Hearth, Inc. / Hearth, Inc. supplies “housewarming boxes” of household supplies required to set up a new apartment for formerly homeless elder adults in the greater Boston area who are transitioning off the streets or out of a shelter into their own apartments. Funds requested will pay for supplies needed to fill 10 “Housewarming Boxes”. Learn more at : <https://hearth-home.org/>

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, January 12th. Get those proposals in for consideration this month!

Since there was not an early Christmas service this year, donations from our 8:00 pm Christmas Eve Offering this year will be equally split between:

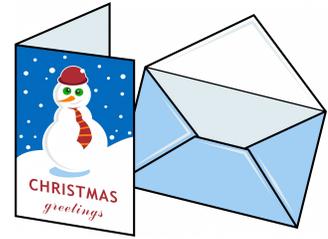
- USA UNHRC, selected by the SRC committee. USA for UNHCR is the main funding conduit for US citizens to support the work of UNHCR, the Office of UN High Commissioner for Refugees. This front line organization of the United Nations works to protect and care for our hurting world’s refugees, now numbering over 82 million.
- The Sunrise Movement, a youth led climate movement to stop climate change. Our Junior Youth requested that the funds from the early service be directed to a group devoted to climate activism.

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. If you have trouble downloading the form, please email Marge and she will send you a copy. Any comments or questions can be directed to Marge Heckman, SRC chair, at maheckman@gmail.com.

Holiday Greeting Cards for Inmates

Thank you too everyone who donated holiday cards for the men at the Billerica jail. We collected six good sized bags. Your generosity is greatly appreciated.

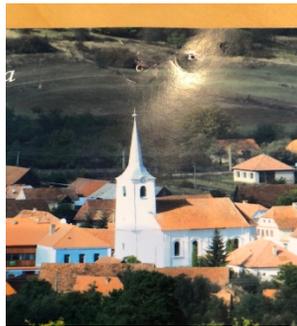
-Joanne Glover



Partner Church

First Parish has just sent scholarships to 16 teenage students from our Partner Church in Abásfalva, Transylvania, Romania! Every bit of encouragement for them to remain in school is essential. Many thanks to you who are their sponsors, and also to the Share the Plate offering in November. Though far away, they are indeed our *Testver Egyhaz*, our *Brother/Sister Congregation*.

Sharon McDonald, Chair, Partner Church Committee



Women's Book Group



The women's book group annual book swap is scheduled for January 9 but the current plan is to postpone until the end of the church year when we can gather outside (date to be determined).

The schedule for the other 2022 meetings is:

2022 Church Year Book Group Books		
Meeting Date	Book	Author
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	

Please contact margaretjacksonfpb@yahoo.com with any questions.

Exploring Uncomfortable Conversations on Racism

Since February 2020, a small group of parishioners have met monthly to explore our country's racial divide. We've shared personal stories about racial issues, read books, watched videos and movies, gathered resources, and learned a great deal. To share what we have learned, we are offering a short discussion series to all parishioners.

We invite you to a safe and supportive zoom space to explore how racism impacts our lives and everyday actions, and the changes we can take now to address this important issue.

Sessions will be based on the book *Uncomfortable Conversations With a Black Man* by Emmanuel Acho and accompanying video conversations from his YouTube channel. This short but powerful book is an essential guide to conversations we all need to have in order to increase our understanding and our capacity to act and change.

An introductory session will be held on February 1 from 7:00 PM -7:45 PM via Zoom and will be open to everyone. Folks interested in registering for the subsequent series can then sign up for the three sessions, which will be held February 15, March 1, and March 15 from 7:00 PM – 8:15 PM. Those signing up for the series are expected to attend all sessions, then read a short section of Acho's book and watch a short video before the next session. Each session will include discussions for the entire group as well as in breakout rooms. Acho's book will be available for purchase at a steep discount prior to the first session.

For more information, please contact Sylvia Cowan (cowan.sylvia@gmail.com) or Lois Pulliam (brownpulliam@gmail.com) with subject line: "Racism Conversations."

Parish Nose



We kicked off December with the fun of serving hot chocolate on the Common during the Tree Lighting led by our own Lois and Brown Pulliam, the Bedford Citizens of the Year!

Our celebrated author Kiya Nicoll reports that their short science fiction story, "A Dragon in Two Parts", will be published online (both webpage and audio podcast) at Escape Pod (escapepod.org) on 30 December. This story is about chronic pain/disability, identity, and transformation.

Diana Archibald reports a new puppy named Gracie, pictured next page. She and Dane are finding raising a puppy to be beautiful chaos and while it's been a real challenge they are in love!



In terms of updates, for any who were not aware, Sheila Albrecht and family have moved to Plymouth and no longer reside in Bedford.

An update on some folks at Carleton Willard Village comes to us by way of Nancy Daugherty who reports that she made a batch of Donna Argon's Turkish Apricots, a recipe that can be found in the 2006 FP Cookbook courtesy of Donna's Turkish husband and her willingness to learn new styles of cooking. So, Nancy decided to deliver some to Donna who is on the Memory unit, doing quite well. As Nancy says, "her sons and grandkids visit her and/or contact her... so what more can a body ask?"

Betty Slechta is also doing relatively well, alert, up and expecting a visit from a grandchild. Last but not least, Louise Curtis will be 100 years old this coming month. How about that!

Otherwise the big news of the holiday season seemed to be which local drug store had COVID rapid tests in stock. A wild goose chase! We hope those who need them found them.

We had a fun filled Christmas Eve with more cocoa on the common and people singing carols around the fire (thanks to Peter Okamoto for his very warm fire pit!) We forgot most of the lyrics to most of the songs, but we did Silent Night beautifully and our candles stayed lit. We were so sad to cancel our performance by our youth choirs, but felt it was the right move for our community. Our 8 pm service was zoomed from the sanctuary with choir and handbells and music galore. We are grateful to everyone who made it all happen and hope that folks had a safe and meaningful holiday time.

