



The Meeting House News

March 2015

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Greetings!

Welcome to the March *Meeting House News*.
Enjoy!

Worship Services

Sunday, March 1

"Wind in Our Sails," Celebration Sunday
Rev. Howard Dana and the First Parish Choirs

Sunday, March 8

"The Fire Next Time"
Rev. Howard Dana and the Contemporary Vocal Ensemble, Gail
Carey, director

Sunday, March 15

"Mortality and What to Do about It"
Rev. Marion Visel and the First Parish Choir

Tuesday, March 17

Water Taize Service
Bethany Lowe, Beth Norton and the By Your Side Singers

Sunday, March 22

"Streams in the Desert"
Rev. Howard Dana and the First Parish Choir

Sunday, March 29

Palm Sunday
Rev. Howard Dana and the First Parish Choir and Children's Choirs

Thursday, April 2, 11:00 a.m.

Maundy Thursday Service, Followed by Chowder Lunch
Rev. Howard Dana and the Worship Planning Team

Friday, April 3, 7:00 p.m.

Tenebrae Service

[Donate Now](#)
[Pledge Now](#)

Pastoral Care
Lay Minister in March
Dana Snyder-Grant
danag@newview.org
978-266-9409

Minister for Pastoral Care
Rev. Marion Visel
978-369-9602, ext. 414
mvisel@firstparish.org

Senior Minister
Rev. Howard Dana
978-369-9602
hdana@firstparish.org

Ministerial Intern
Brian Chenowith
630-877-5371
bchenowith@firstparish.org

Caring Connection
Rides
Suzanne Hogan
978-318-9035
suzanne.hogan@comcast.net

Meals Delivery in March
Marian Stanley
marian.stanley@gmail.com
978-369-2008

First Parish Café
Every Sunday, 9:00 a.m.
Coffee, tea, hot chocolate
and muffins

Events This Month
Celebration Sunday
Sunday, March 1, 10:00 a.m.

Annual Pledge Campaign
Begins Sunday, March 1

Rev. Howard Dana and the Worship Planning Team

Sunday, April 5
Easter Sunday
Rev. Howard Dana and the Worship Planning Team

Saturday, April 11
Passover Seder

All Sunday Worship Services at 10:00 a.m.

REVeries

“M” is for March—and “M” is for Money + Mission. Once again it is time for the Annual Pledge Campaign at First Parish in Concord. It is time to renew our commitment to First Parish and its work in the lives of many. I hope you will pledge as generously as you are able this year. We have made some real strides and this year’s Annual Pledge Campaign can assure there is “wind in our sails”!



Just seven and a half months into Rev. Marion Visel’s ministry with us, we can see clear growth in the church’s Pastoral Care Program. Marion has brought vision, leadership, and good hard work to this program. Through her work, the lay Pastoral Care Team feels reinvigorated and members of the congregation feel attended to. Through the Annual Pledge Campaign, we can assure that Marion’s ministry continues strong next year.

Four months into our transition from one religious educator to another, we see a real need to devote more resources to our children and youth. Interim DRE Merrill Comeau, Assistant DRE Dawn Van Patten, and the RE Council are working hard to move the congregation through a process by which we can talk about the religious education needs at First Parish. This conversation will also explore what skills we will want our next religious educator to have. Through the Annual Pledge Campaign, we can assure that the salary and benefits we offer our next religious educator will make us competitive in the search process, thereby assuring that our children and youth are well cared for in the coming year.

Since First Parish is solely funded through the gifts of its own members and friends, it is important to participate in the Annual Pledge Campaign. As I did last year, I will pledge 5% of my gross income to First Parish for FY 2015-16. In my case, this comes to \$6,000 per year—or \$500 per month. I challenge you to make the same level of commitment. I challenge you to be as generous as your minister. If you cannot reach 5% this year, give 4% or 3%. And then raise it next year. First Parish can do as much as its members and friends provide for. The generosity is up to you.

Love,
Howard

**Religious Education
Congregational Conversations**
Sunday, March 1, 4:00 p.m.

Register for General Assembly
Sunday, March 1

**Mothers/Daughters Book
Group**
Sunday, March 1, 11:30 a.m.

**Advocacy Network to End
Family Homelessness**
Sunday, March 1, 2:00 p.m.

**Religious Education
Congregational Conversations**
Monday, March 2, 7:00 p.m.

First Tuesday Group (65+)
Tuesday, March 3, 1:30 p.m.

Finance Committee
Tuesday, March 3, 7:30 p.m.

RE Council
Tuesday, March 3, 7:30

Arts Council
Wednesday, March 4, 6:00 p.m.

Concord Area Humanists
Wednesday, March 4, 7:00 p.m.

**Religious Education
Congregational Conversations**
Wednesday, March 4, 4:30 p.m.

Speak Spanish?
Thursday, March 5, 7:00 p.m.,
offsite

By Your Side Singers
Thursday, March 5, 7:30 p.m.

**Religious Education
Congregational Conversations**
Thursday, March 5, 10:00 a.m.

World Day of Prayer
Friday, March 6, 11:00 a.m.,
offsite

An Evening with Chuck Collins
Friday, March 6, 7:00 p.m.

Intern-al Dialogues

As I was digging out my car for the fourth (or was it fifth?) time this past weekend, I realized that Concord really does feel like home. It's a bittersweet feeling since the months are flying by as your intern. While I am busy with visiting congregations and trying to find a good match for the next chapter of my ministerial career, I know that once March rolls around things will slow down again. I will be able to settle back into being just the intern for a little longer. Who knows, maybe in March the snow will even start to melt! I am continually grateful for the experiences I am having here at First Parish. Whether it is observation, making mistakes, receiving feedback, or just getting to know all of you—I know that all of this has helped me in growing in my ministerial identity.



One of the joys I've been a recent witness to here at First Parish is all of the excitement and energy behind the upcoming Annual Pledge Campaign. The team is ready and willing to share that excitement with you, and they welcome any nautical puns you have to share about the theme, "Wind in Our Sails." Part of the promise of having a successful pledge campaign is that it continues to fund internships like mine. Being a teaching congregation can be one of the richest experiences a place like First Parish can have. Not only does it bring in a diversity of people year after year to serve as your intern, but it also contributes directly to the health of our Unitarian Universalist faith. I know that I will carry the memories of First Parish with me wherever I go, and I am certain past interns have as well. Investing in First Parish invests in our wider faith. Our world is so desperately in need of the hope and joy that Unitarian Universalism brings. You can help make that possible by continuing to contribute to the mission of First Parish and by extension, the vision of Unitarian Universalism. So please, give generously. Your dollars have a far-reaching and lasting impact.

Warmly,
Brian

RE News

As I write this note, I am looking out the window of the RE office and it is snowing, again. Unlike many folks, I am happy to see more snow. The earth's covering of so many pure white crystals is evidence of nature's abundance. Yes, I have a short commute, and a very short driveway, so I am lucky... I am able to see this winter's snow as abundance.

Returning to First Parish as the Interim Director of Education I have enjoyed meeting so many smart, caring, engaged individuals. I see a profusion of congregants sitting in pews, walking through the side door to attend meetings, talking during coffee hour, rehearsing in choir, and sharing joys and concerns in classrooms. I see talents and efforts, sorrows and happiness... in abundance.

We are facing a leadership transition and soon you will be asked to join in congregational conversations to help shape the future of Religious Education at First Parish. (See schedule below.) You will be asked to share experiences, identify priorities, and envision

Investing Your Values Discussion

Sunday, March 8, 9:00 a.m.

Worship Service

Sunday, March 8, 10:00 a.m.

Nominating Committee

Sunday, March 8, 11:30 a.m.

Sunday Forum

Sunday, March 8, 11:30 a.m.

Religious Education Congregational Conversations

Sunday, March 8, time TBD

Social Action Book Discussion Group

Sunday, March 8, 4:00 p.m.

Denominational Affairs

Monday, March 9, 7:30 p.m.

Shawl Ministry

Tuesday, March 10, 2:00 p.m.

Vegan Potluck

Tuesday, March 10, 6:30 p.m.

Partner Congregation

Thursday, March 12, 6:00 p.m.

Photography Club Meeting

Saturday, March 14, 9:00 a.m.

Worship Service

Sunday, March 15, 10:00 a.m.

Ordination of Rachel Baker

Sunday, March 15, 4:00 p.m., offsite

Oriana Consort in Concert at First Parish

Sunday, March 15, 5:00 p.m.

Water Taize Service

Tuesday, March 17, 7:00 p.m.

Diversity Committee

Tuesday, March 17, 7:00 p.m.

Amnesty International

Tuesday, March 17, 7:00 p.m.

opportunities for Religious Education at First Parish. My hope is that many will share their perceptions of strengths, needs, and hopes for the RE program and First Parish... Religious Education ideas in abundance.

Religious education at First Parish will be shaped by your participation in open conversations, but it will also be shaped, to some degree, by the budget that sustains it. Will you choose abundance? When you are asked for your pledge on Sunday, please give generously. This is the time when people need to commit to Religious Education at First Parish. We need financial flexibility to realize important projects and to support new leadership.

Merill Comeau, Interim Director of Religious Education

MUSings

Drifting here with my ship's companions
All we kindred pilgrim souls,
Making our way by the lights of the heavens,
In our beautiful blue boat home. –Peter Mayer



These words are from the middle verse of "Blue Boat Home," No.1064 in our teal hymnbook, *Singing the Journey*. This song by singer-songwriter Peter Mayer quickly became a favorite for many UU's when the hymnal supplement was published almost ten years ago. I think Mayer's use of the well-known traditional Welsh hymn tune Hyfrodol, combined with the gently rocking piano accompaniment by Jason Shelton, were key to its appeal, engaging singers across generations.

These musical elements provide a perfect setting for Mayer's poem, which casts our planet, metaphorically, as a "beautiful blue boat home" ferrying humanity safely on the cosmic sea of the universe. Some interpret the word "home" as the ship's destination; I like to think of it as a description of the ship itself; a home for a spiritual community, like First Parish in Concord.

I remember a sermon years ago by our Minister Emeritus, Gary Smith, where he likened First Parish to a ship on a sea voyage. He invited the congregation up on deck to look to the horizon and share his vision of what lay ahead for our particular "boat home." At the time, that metaphorical ship of First Parish felt like an ocean liner; proud and stately; driven by powerful engines of our vision, talent and treasure.

Here, in March of 2015, with the fresh breeze of a new ministry, I feel our "boat home" to be more like a graceful historic schooner, gathering the wind in its sails and setting forth for new adventures. Yes, we may have drifted for a few years, as we transitioned into this new ministry, but now we can set the sails and "feel the great wind urging us on" as we chart our course into the future.

And we, the "kindred souls" who voyage together, keep this beloved ship on course, filling the sails with the prevailing winds of our hopes, our faith and our generosity. On Sunday, March 1, we will all have a

By Your Side Singers

Thursday, March 19, 7:30 p.m.

Worship Service

Sunday, March 22, 10:00 a.m.

World Water Day Panel

Sunday, March 22, 3:30 p.m.

WPA Luncheon Meeting

Wednesday, March 25, 11:30 a.m.

Finding Meaning program

Thursdays, March 26 – April 30

Partner Congregation Council

Thursday, March 26 at 7:30 p.m.

Challenges of Caregiving Workshop

Saturdays, March 28 and April 11

Rise Up Singing

Friday, March 27, 7:30 p.m.

Worship Service

Sunday, March 29, 10:00 a.m.

Women’s AM/PM Book Group

Monday, March 30, 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 31, 9:30 a.m.

Concord Area Humanists

Wednesday, April 1, 7:00 p.m.

Maundy Thursday Service

Thursday, April 2, 11:00 a.m.

Tenebrae Service

Friday, April 3, 7:00 p.m.

Worship Service

Sunday, April 5, 10:00 a.m.

Passover Seder

Saturday, April 11

Save the Date! Hope Out Loud 4

Sunday, April 12, 3:00-5:00 p.m.

Save the Date! A Reception to Unveil the Portrait of Rev. Jenny Rankin

Wednesday, April 15 from 7:00 p.m.

chance to renew and increase our financial support for First Parish during our annual “Celebration Sunday” worship. I hope that everyone will come and join in this annual ritual of generosity.

Blessings,
Beth

Social Action Community

Since I started working here two-and-a-half years ago, I have been part of numerous conversations around how we at First Parish in Concord might engage more with the larger UU denomination. We’ve tried to engage in some ways, and succeeded to small degrees.



Starting this month, I feel that something might be brewing in this area. This March, we will be kicking off two campaigns from social action groups in the church—both of which were inspired by denominational efforts.

The first is Commit2Respond, an environmental campaign run by the UU Service Committee (UUSC) between World Water Day on March 22 and Earth Day on April 20 to encourage awareness building and action around environmental justice issues. This is a new campaign by the UUSC, and its goal is to connect the actions of UU congregations around the country so that we can build on each other’s work. If we see that a church in California is running a campaign that we think might work here in Concord, we can easily contact that group and share their resources. The SAC Council is sponsoring the Commit2Respond campaign here in Concord, and we have a variety of great social action events and opportunities lined up, all surrounding the issue of the human right to water (see events listed below). During this time, we’ll also be selling rain barrels to raise money for the UUSC’s human right to water efforts. I hope you’ll join us for some of these great events.

Secondly, a small group of parishioners was inspired by the fossil fuel divestment movement spreading across UU churches and communities around the country, and they are ready to bring that conversation live—to you! We have done extensive research on the controversies and issues in the fossil fuel divestment movement, and we’re ready to start thinking about what the most responsible decision for our religious institution is. This past year, the Concord Town Meeting and the Unitarian Universalist Association both voted to divest from fossil fuels, joining many communities and churches around the world who have done the same. We’ll be having congregational conversations on three Sundays this spring to bring this conversation to First Parish, hopefully leading to a decision at this year’s Annual Meeting. The congregational conversations will happen on three Sundays: March 15, April 12 and May 17 at 11:30 a.m. I hope you’ll join me in these important conversations. These congregational conversations will focus on the role that First Parish—as an institution—can play in this movement. If you are interested in discussing what you can do personally, join me on Sunday, March 8 at 9:00 a.m. for a conversation about *Investing with your Values*.

Every Week

Worship Sharing Circle
Sunday, 11:10 to 11:30 a.m.
Rev. Howard Dana's study

Buddhist Group
Wednesday, 9:30 a.m.
Thursday, 7:30 p.m.

Additional details elsewhere

Members of the Standing Committee

Kate Crosby
kate_crosby@newview.org

David Elwood
daveelwood@hotmail.com

Kristin Haddad, Clerk
kristin.haddad@gmail.com

Jake Nunes
Jake_Nunes@shs.org

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alecwalker@aol.com

Tom Wilson, Treasurer
twilson@wilsongroup.com

Ministers & Staff

Rev. Howard N. Dana
Senior Minister
hdana@firstparish.org

If you have any questions about these two long-term social action activities, please don't hesitate to get in touch with me. I'd love to help you get involved.
In faith, Bethany

Pastoral Care Team

Walking with One Another through the Changes Life Brings

Minister for Pastoral Care: Contact Rev. Marion Visel at mvisel@firstparish.org, or by calling her cell phone at 201-931-5239, or the church at 978-369-9602, ext. 414.

Senior Minister: Contact Rev. Howard N. Dana at hdana@firstparish.org, or by calling the church at 978-369-9602, ext. 411, or his cell phone at 717-412-8543.

Ministerial Intern: Contact Brian Chenowith at bchenowith@firstparish.org, or by calling the church at 978-369-9602, ext. 412, or his cell phone at 630-877-5371.

The Lay Minister for March: Contact Dana Snyder-Grant at danag@newview.org or by calling her at 978-266-9409.

Meals Delivery for March: Contact Marian Stanley at marian.stanley@gmail.com or by calling her at 978-369-2008.

The above information is always available as the first item in the left-hand column of the Meeting House News for easy access.

First Tuesday Group (65+)

"Standing on the Shoulders of Giants"

Brian Chenowith, Ministerial Intern, will lead us in discussion on March 3, 1:30 to 3:00 p.m. about how our lives have been shaped by those whom we admire, especially our mentors. Who inspired us? How has that made us who we are today? And how have we stepped into the mentor role? ("Getting from Clutter to Clean, Part 1" is re-scheduled for April 7.)

The First Tuesday Group meets the first Tuesday of the month, 1:30 to 3:00 p.m. Don't worry about your age; all are welcome. You determine whether the topic is for you!

First Tuesday Group Steering Committee: Berni Jenkins, contact person, berni.jenkins@verizon.net, 978/369-2876; Bob Andrews, Mary Clarke, Dave Dawson, Sue Dobbie, Patricia Ellis, Bill Maxwell, Jack Nevison and Virginia Taylor.

"Coping with the Challenges of Caregiving" workshop, originally scheduled for Saturdays, February 21 and 28, has been postponed until Saturdays, March 28 and April 11, because the weather intruded on people's ability to attend. There is a sign-up sheet in the front office next to the volunteer desk, or contact Fred Van Deusen at FredVanDeu@gmail.com or 978-369-0435.

Rev. Marion Visel
Minister for Pastoral Care
mvisel@firstparish.org

Brian Chenowith
Ministerial Intern
bchenowith@firstparish.org

Fifi Ball
Director of Operations
fball@firstparish.org

Rachel Baker
Director of Membership
and Communications
rbaker@firstparish.org

Bethany Lowe
Social Action Director and
Youth Program Director
blowe@firstparish.org

Cassy Bosworth
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cbosworth@firstparish.org

Tina Storey
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Director of Operations
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Doug Baker
Sacristan and Curator
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Beth Norton
Director of Music
music@firstparish.org

Eric Huenneke
Parish Organist
music@firstparish.org

Gail Carey
Music Ministry Associate
music@firstparish.org

Anderson Manuel
Director of Youth Gospel Choir
music@firstparish.org

Merill Comeau
Interim Director of
Religious Education
mcomeau@firstparish.org

Dawn Van Patten

“Finding Meaning through Reflection in Later Life” a six-session program based on *Lasting Words*, by Claire Willis, originally scheduled for Thursday afternoons, February 26 – April 2, has been postponed until Thursday afternoons, March 26 – April 30. To register for this program, contact Sue Dobbie at 978-501-6969 or susandobbie@gmail.com or sign up on the clipboard in the front office next to the volunteer desk.

The Pastoral Care Library Gets a Facelift

The Pastoral Care Library, located in the hallway behind the stage, is undergoing a facelift. It will be finished by March; then parishioners should find it easier to use this fine church resource. The books are getting spine labels like a regular library, and there will be a paper catalog available. Check out our little library soon to see whether the perfect book for you is on the shelf. Can't find what you are looking for? Contact Enid Boasberg at harplayer@comcast.net. She will do her best to find the book you need.

Dear Friends,

Thank you so much for all the incredible work recently preparing delicious, healthy dishes for the Caring Connection freezer. It was a very full morning and each of you mattered so much in making it a success.



After the dishes were cooled, we reorganized the freezer a bit and noticed a couple of things. First, we noticed that since we have increased our food outreach over the years, we no longer have a backlog of food. We basically prepare and provide for our community all within a church year. We also noticed a shift in our offerings. More than two full shelves consist of vegetarian (and often vegan) savory offerings. Many of our meals are gluten-free. We offer vegan, gluten-free, and traditional sweets as well. Change and continuity... all within one freezer!

Love, Carolyn and Tracey

Thank You to the Caring Connection Cooks!

Thanks to Jeanne Williams, Marian Stanley, Peggy Claybrook, Linda Reynolds, Vivian Aldrich, Toby Smith Ropeik, M. Lou Touissant, Leslie Fisher, Faxon Greene, Lois Whitney, Donna Peterson, Joyce Cane Briggs, Vivian Walworth, Lois Suarez, Anne Fortier, Tracey Hurd, and Carolyn Shohet for working together to create healthy, delicious foods for the Caring Connection freezer. The freezer is now fully stocked with carefully labeled, lovingly created foods that can meet many different dietary preferences. It was a wonderful team effort! Special thanks to Tracey Hurd for her superb organization and follow-up, and to Carolyn Shohet for her culinary talents, and extraordinary gentle leadership.

Volunteers Needed for Pastoral Care

Pastoral care is in need of additional volunteers. Forms are available on the Pastoral Care bulletin board. Fill out a form and place it in the pastoral care mailbox (bottom shelf) in the office.

Assistant Director of
Religious Education
dvanpatten@firstparish.org

Rev. Gary E. Smith
Minister Emeritus

David Huston
Music Director Emeritus

Contact First Parish

Office Hours:
Tuesday – Friday
9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Address: 20 Lexington Road
Concord, MA 01742

Phone: 978-369-9602
Fax: 978-369-8701

Email: FPCConcord@firstparish.org

Website: www.firstparish.org

Church Calendar:
<http://www.firstparish.org/cms/about-first-parish/hours-directions-services/church-calendar>

Sign-Up for Emailed First Parish Announcements:
<http://www.firstparish.org/cms/about-first-parish/e-mail-lists>

"Like" Our Facebook Page:
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/First-Parish-in-Concord-Unitarian-Universalist/343822177494>

Reserve a Room:
<http://www.firstparish.org/cms/reserve-a-room>

Standing Committee

Thank you to all who participated in our mid-year congregational survey offering First Parish members and friends an opportunity to comment on how the Standing Committee is doing on its annual goals. This brief survey was distributed by way of the First Parish Announce and RE Announce email lists, and over 70 people responded. The returns suggest that we are doing well, but have a few things to work on. We plan to discuss the results in more detail at one of our upcoming Standing Committee meetings.

I encourage each of you to join the upcoming discussions about the future of the First Parish Religious Education program. We want to hear your thoughts so that we can all develop the best possible program for our congregation.

The Fiscal Year 2016 Annual Pledge Campaign is under way. As you consider your pledge for FY 2016, remember that nearly 75 percent of our budget comes from pledges, and we need an increase in pledging revenue to maintain the commitment we made when we asked Rev. Marion Visel to join us as our Pastoral Care Minister. And we would also like to strengthen our Religious Education and other important programs. Please give generously to support our First Parish community and to keep the "Wind in Our Sails."

Are you a "connector" and do you participate in many aspects of First Parish life? The Standing Committee is looking for potential candidates to serve on the First Parish Nominating Committee. The primary function of the Nominating Committee is to solicit and nominate other members of First Parish for open positions on the Standing Committee as well as the Treasurer, Clerk, and Moderator positions. There are two upcoming openings on the Nominating Committee, and we are especially interested in finding at least one person with an understanding of the workings of the current Standing Committee. The term is three years, with an option to serve two consecutive terms. The Nominating Committee meets monthly on Sunday mornings, and the time commitment is two to three hours a month. If you, or someone you know, might be interested in serving on the Nominating Committee, please contact Patty Popov at ppopov@nichols-pratt.com or 978-369-1990 by Tuesday, March 31.

Standing Committee members are always available to talk with First Parish members and friends about issues of interest and concern. We'd also like to hear about the things big and small that please and inspire parishioners. So please reach out to any of us, at coffee hour, or at an event, or by phone or email, to talk about your First Parish experiences. If you don't know us yet, our faces and contact information are available on our bulletin board.

Mark Russell Prior, chair, First Parish Standing Committee

Wind in Our Sails Annual Pledge Campaign

Fresh breezes are blowing here at First Parish. Over the past year, we've been enjoying an increased level of engagement, connection and commitment throughout our church community. As spring approaches, we have an opportunity to engage and commit in another way: through our financial support.

This year's Annual Pledge Campaign begins on Sunday, March 1, with a special service filled with celebration and song. You will be asked to pledge at the service. Please join us, and plan to pledge at your most generous level.

The Annual Pledge Campaign Committee is working to make this year's campaign engaging, fun, and reflective of the needs of our community. If you would like to join this crew and help us reach out to other members of our community, please contact Tom Wilson, Treasurer, at twilson@wilsongroup.com. We would love to have you aboard. Where we go and how soon we get there depends on you. Be the wind in our sails. Pledge on Celebration Sunday.

The Annual Pledge Campaign Committee

The Arts

Fostering Community through the Arts

Each month the First Parish Arts Council will highlight arts events that offer opportunities to participate in the ministry of the arts at First Parish. Unless otherwise noted, questions may be directed to music@firstparish.org.

March 4 at 6:00 p.m. – Arts Council meeting

March 14 at 9:00 a.m. – Photography Club meeting – open to all First Parish adults

March 15 at 5:00 p.m. – Oriana Consort – “Three Choral Visions: Musical Responses to Adversity”

March 25 at 11:30 a.m. – WPA Luncheon with Sarah Whitney, violinist

March 27 at 7:30 p.m. – Rise Up Singing, First Parish's monthly song circle

For more information on these events, check this *Meeting House News*, FP Announce, and the *Sunday News*.

The purpose of the First Parish Arts Council is to further the mission of First Parish through facilitating, promoting and coordinating a diverse arts ministry that inspires and celebrates creativity and connection. The council is open to all interested parishioners. Contact Susan Page, chair, for more information: srpage10@verizon.net.

Oriana Consort in Concert at First Parish



The Oriana Consort, a 28-voice chorale based in Cambridge, returns for its fifth annual concert at First Parish in Concord on Sunday, March 15, at 5:00 p.m. Director Walter Chapin and Assistant Director Caroline Harvey will lead the group in “Three Choral Visions: Musical responses to adversity.” In Francis Poulenc's *Un soir de neige*, winter and snow are metaphors for the Nazi occupation of France; William Byrd

wrote his *Mass for Five Voices* to be sung in secret at a time when Catholics were under oppression; and Leonard Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* cries out, “Why do the nations rage?” as a boy soprano, in contrast, gently sings the Twenty-Third Psalm.

In a review of last December's concert, the Boston Musical Intelligencer praised Oriana's "precision in tuning and dynamics," "full sound that satisfyingly filled the nave," and "supple balance between chorus and orchestra."

A reception in the Parish Hall for the audience, singers and players will follow the concert.

Save the Date! Hope Out Loud 4

Sunday, April 12, 3:00-5:00 p.m.

First Parish in Concord Returns to Roxbury

Once again, all First Parish Concord choirs will be participating in Hope Out Loud, an inner-city, multi-faith praise celebration. All First Parish congregants are invited to come out and celebrate with us. Our joint intention is to bridge communities and families together in praise and music. We will again be joined by the Boston Community Choir (BCC). Led by the renowned Brother Dennis Slaughter, choirs will join the BCC in A Resounding community sing. Other community participants will share in ministries of music, dance and spoken word. Door to door bus service will be provided. Stay-tuned for more details.

First Parish Choirs

For information about singing with the choirs at First Parish, contact Beth Norton, Music Director, at music@firstparish.org.

Business Office

Unpaid Pledges for This Fiscal Year

A recent report from our database revealed 60 households (individuals, couples and families) that have not yet paid anything toward their current year (FY15: 7/1/14-6/30/15) pledges. If you think you might be on that list, you still have over four months to make good on your pledge. The FY15 budget will benefit greatly from your generosity. As we get excited about our Annual Pledge Campaign for the next fiscal year (FY16: 7/1/15-6/30/16)—and it's going to be great—it's still important to finish this year strong. Please contact Fifi Ball, Director of Operations (fball@firstparish.org), to check your status and/or for help setting up a credit card or automatic debit payment plan. Thank you!

2015 Congregational Certification of Membership to the UUA

Members, Active (current): 754* (down from 797 last year)

Friends (non members, current): 214* (down from 240 last year)

RE enrollment (including Coming of Age and Youth Group, current): 240 (up from 234 last year)

Average weekly attendance at Sunday services (not including summer services or significant holidays like Easter): 262 (down from 282 last year)

Pledging units (households, for FY14/fiscal year ending 6/30/14): 438 (down from 449 previous year (FY13); this year we have 469 pledging units (will be reported to the UUA in January 2016))

Total expenses (for FY14/fiscal year ending 6/30/14): \$1,163,321 (up from \$1,110,113 the previous year (FY13); total expenses for current year (FY15) not yet known)

Pledging income (for FY14/fiscal year ending 6/30/14): \$878,229 (up from \$852,773 the previous year (FY13); total pledging income for current year (FY15) not yet known)

*These are more accurate figures than our membership numbers last year. Using the results from the second phase of the ambassador program, we recently cleaned the database of some people from whom we hadn't heard in over two years, and people who told us they'd left the church and/or moved away.

For more information, please contact Fifi Ball, Director of Operations (fball@firstparish.org).

Re~Member~ship

Membership: Benefits and Responsibilities

Joining a spiritual community is an important decision, one that calls for personal discernment and commitment. When you sign the membership book of First Parish, you covenant to participate in and contribute to the life and mission of the congregation. The primary benefit of membership is to be part of an open, diverse and inclusive community of religious seekers that support each person's spiritual journey and who practice living in kind, compassionate and healthy relationships with each other. As signed members of a Unitarian Universalist congregation you hold the responsibility to participate in the business of the congregation, vote at annual and special congregational meetings, pledge generously, chair committees, represent the congregation at regional and national events, plus many other benefits.

Before Signing the Membership Book...

Explore whether your worldview, beliefs, and values resonate with Unitarian Universalism and First Parish in Concord. Consider the gifts and strengths you bring to this congregation, and how this faith community might support you. Is First Parish "your" faith community? Are you ready to support the mission of First Parish in Concord and Unitarian Universalism in the world today and carry it into the future? If so, then contact Rachel Baker, Director of Membership and Communications, at rbaker@firstparish.org or during coffee hour, or contact Rev. Howard Dana.

RE Congregational Conversations

You are invited to join the Religious Education Council, Rev. Howard Dana, and Interim Director Merrill Comeau to discuss Religious Education at First Parish. What have you experienced in the past? What do you hope for the future? Seven Religious Education Congregational Conversations are scheduled in February and March. We will mine our history and envision our future. Broadly speaking, this is an opportunity to engage in an open discussion of learning at First Parish. Specifically, the information gathered will help to identify priorities for Religious Education programming and for the Director of Religious Education job description that will be used in the search for the next DRE. Please help us to nurture and sustain the culture of learning at First Parish. Lend your voice and share your understanding at this important time of transition. The Standing Committee is eager to hear what we discover and encourages everyone's input. As we sing to our children during services: "Let us open our eyes to see what is beautiful, let us open our minds to seek what is true, let us open our hearts to love one another..." Come join in! All are invited to share your ideas and inspiration.

Schedule of Religious Education Congregational Conversations:

Thursday, February 26, 7:00 to 8:30 p.m.

Friday, February 27, 10:00 to 11:30 a.m.

Sunday, March 1, 4:00 to 5:30 p.m.

Monday, March 2, 7:00 to 8:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 4, 4:30 to 6:00 p.m.

Thursday, March 5, 10:00 to 11:30 a.m.

Sunday, March 8, time TBD

Please sign up in the church office or email mcomeau@firstparish.org to reserve your spot.

Denominational Affairs Committee

Denominational Affairs Committee Urges Fair Share

As we enter the budget and pledging season, the Denominational Affairs Committee reminds you of how important the UUA is to our work and to First Parish. Their leadership and support in our ministerial search and our RE work is invaluable. The UUA provides us with resources for Sunday forums and social action. Dozens of members from First Parish attended General Assembly last June. Yet, as a congregation, this year we fell far short of the \$60 per certified member recommended by the UUA as our fair contribution, giving less than a third of that amount. Over 650 other congregations have met that obligation, including nearly 100 who have done so for at least 25 years. Many of our neighboring congregations are on that list.

Our giving to the UUA strengthens our covenant of mutual support, affirms our connection to other congregations, and invests in the extension of our common values and purpose. Please pledge generously this year, with the needs of the wider UU community in mind.



Be a GA Delegate

If you would like to learn more about becoming a delegate for the UUA GA this June in Portland, Oregon, please contact Alice Van Deusen (alicevandeusen@gmail.com). Early registration, volunteer applications and housing reservations are now being accepted.

An Evening with Chuck Collins

Inequality Matters: How Wealth Inequality Is Wrecking the World and What We Can Do About It.

Chuck Collins is a senior scholar at the Institute for Policy Studies, where he directs the Program on Inequality and the Common Good. He is a storyteller and organizer best known for his efforts to bridge the stuck national debate about wealth inequality and taxes. On Friday, March 6, at 7:00 p.m. come join with him and the Denominational Affairs Committee as we continue the discussion of escalating inequality and what we as UU's can do about it. The event will be in the Parish Hall, and there will be refreshments.

SAC Action

11th Annual Forum on Family Homelessness on Sunday, March 1, 2:30 p.m. at First Parish in Bedford

This year's Annual Forum on Family Homelessness will focus on "Communities Reaching Out to Support Homeless Families." There never have there been more homeless families in Mass. Each night, nearly 3,100 families are in shelters and 1,850 more families are in motels with great risk to their children's health and development. Join us on March 1st to understand more about this crisis, and what is being done in the Bedford area to help homeless families in a motel. Learn how barriers to employment are eliminated and find out how you can focus your advocacy efforts to have the greatest impact. The free forum, organized by The Advocacy Network to End Family Homelessness, is open to all. See www.endfamilyhomelessness.net. The Forum will take place at The First Parish in Bedford, 75 Great Rd, Rt. 62, Bedford Center.

Investing Your Values Discussion March 8 at 9:00 - 9:45 a.m.

Come to this discussion on how we invest with our values. Bethany Lowe, Director of Social Action, will lead us in a discussion of how we balance our desires to see a return on our investments and invest in companies that promote our personal values. We will not seek to inform how you invest, but ask you to examine how your current investment philosophy does or does not reflect your values. We will not provide investment advice, though resources on how to invest with your values will be provided. All are welcome. Coffee, tea and light snacks will be available.

Congregational Discussion on Divestment on Sunday, March 15 at 11:30 a.m.

Over the last year, a small group of parishioners, Bruce Blumberg, Bob Andrews, and Laura Bernstein, has been working alongside the Standing Committee, Trustees and the Environmental Leadership Team to research the current fossil fuel divestment movement and a possible action on the part of our congregation. This has been brought to the attention of these parishioners by recent votes at Concord Town Meeting, and the General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association last year. The next step in this process is to hear from you! Come to a congregational discussion on Sunday, March 15 at 11:30 a.m. to learn about divestment, ask any questions you have, and give input on how you'd like First Parish to respond to this international movement. Standing Committee member Kate Crosby will be present at this discussion. Can't make it on the 15? Additional conversations will take place on Sundays April 12 and May 17 at 11:30 a.m.

Concord Area Group 15 of Amnesty International

AI Group 15 meets regularly on the third Tuesday of each month from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. in the Ripley Room. The next meeting is Tuesday, March 17. We will be signing letters and petitions in support of human rights activists worldwide and against the death penalty in the United States. At this meeting we will also brainstorm about our next actions to support legislation against solitary confinement in Massachusetts, to campaign against global violence against women, and to advocate for the release of two journalists currently imprisoned in Swaziland. We welcome all to join us in March and beyond. If you'd like more information about Group 15, please contact Kathy Taylor, the group's coordinator, at Kly.taylor@gmail.com or 781-718-7640.

“The Future of Water: Too Little and Too Much” Panel Discussion Sunday, March 22 at 3:30 p.m.

In recognition of World Water Day, the next event in the Climate Solutions Speaker Series will be about the future of water and how we can act now to make that future a more positive and sustainable one for all life on this beautiful planet. The event will begin a short video by water expert Sandra Postel and then a live panel discussion with Drs. Paul Kirshen and Patricia Jones. Paul Kirshen is a Civil Engineer and Research Professor at UNH. Patricia Jones is the Senior Program Leader for The Human Right to Water with the UU Service Committee. A half hour reception will follow the panel discussion. This event is free and open to everyone. This event is co-sponsored by the Social Action Community Council, as part of its Commit2Respond campaign between World Water Day and Earth Day.

Climate Justice Month

First Parish's Response to UUSC's Commit 2 Respond Initiative World Water Day through Earth Day's 45th Anniversary

Water-themed Taizé Vespers Service

Tuesday, March 17, 7:00 p.m.

World Water Day/UUSC Climate Justice Sunday

Sunday, March 22, 10:00 a.m.

“Streams in the Desert,” Howard Dana preaching

Kickoff of Blue Bucket Campaign: Awareness and Action

Sunday, March 22, 3:30 p.m.

The Future of Water: Too Little and Too Much: A panel discussion on water issues

Environmental Film Series

Tuesday, March 24, 6:30 p.m., St. Anne's Episcopal

Lincoln: *Last Call at the Oasis*

Environmental Film Series

Tuesday, March 31, 7:00 p.m., St. Anne's Episcopal

Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret. Thought provoking documentary on the environmental effects of animal agriculture

Environmental Film Series

Tuesday, April 7, 7:00 p.m., St. Anne's Episcopal

Thirsty for Justice. Explores the lack of access to clean water in poorer communities and the power of grassroots action

Children's Chapel

Sunday, April 12, 10:00 a.m.

Water related activity for 2nd/3rd graders

Earth Day Sunday and Patriot's Day Interfaith Event

Sunday, April 19, 10:00 a.m.

Earth Day Sermon, Howard Dana preaching

All Day: Interfaith Event: "The SHOUT Heard Round the World: Revere Our Planet"

Morning: Revere Our Planet bike ride from Charleston to Concord

Afternoon: Concord Battle Road walk and rally at North Bridge

Environmental Film Series

Tuesday, April 21, 7:00 p.m., St. Anne's Episcopal

Climate Refugees. Examines how climate change causes the displacement of vulnerable populations, and the resulting global implications.

Musketaquid Earth Day Parade

Saturday, April 25

Passover Seder

First Parish Cooperative Seder

This year's Seder is going to be Saturday, April 11. All are welcome, and everyone that comes helps make it happen. We could also use your help in organizing the event. For more information or to offer help, please contact Jim Snyder-Grant at [508-572-2985](tel:508-572-2985) or jimsg@newview.org.

Jewish Awareness Affinity Group

The Jewish Awareness affinity group will meet on Friday, March 20, at 7:00 p.m. to listen to Klezmer music, at the home of Mark and Liz Ramras in Arlington, 88 Park Ave. For more info, contact Dana Snyder-Grant at [978 760-1129](tel:978-760-1129) or danasg@newview.org.

The Jewish Awareness Affinity Group meets on the third Friday of every month. We are open to all, including Jews, non-Jews, people related to Jews, fans of Jews, etc. We typically start with short Sabbath blessings over wine and challah, and then chat about a topic related to Judaism, watch a movie, or listen to someone who has prepared a short talk. We are more about questions than answers, and more about curiosity than closure. No credentials or special knowledge necessary.

Passover Seder

Save the date for First Parish's cooperative Passover Seder on Saturday, April 11. Watch for ticket sales on Sunday, March 22, March 29 and April 5. Space is limited.

Partner Congregation

On Thursday, March 26, at 7:30 p.m., we will present *An Evening with Dr. Rev. Sándor Kovács: "20 Years Later."* Rev. Kovács is the current Balázs Scholar at Starr King School; he is an Associate Professor at the Protestant Theological Institute in Cluj (Kolozsvár), Transylvania, where he teaches church history and the history of religion. He will present a historical review leading up to modern Transylvanian reality, changes in culture, and the ramifications for Hungarian Unitarians in the region, as well as new initiatives in interfaith conversations there. Dessert and beverages will be served.

The next PCC meeting will be held at the home of Dana Booth on Thursday, March 12, at 6:00 p.m. (44 River Road in Carlisle); he will serve a Chinese takeout assortment for dinner. All interested in our partnership are invited. Please inform Dana at dana.a.booth@gmail.com by Wednesday, March 11, if you plan to attend.

WPA

Women's Parish Association

WPA Luncheon Meeting

Enjoy a delicious meal and an interesting program at the Women's Parish Association luncheon meeting on Wednesday, March 25. Social time: 11:30 a.m. Lunch: noon followed by the program. The program will feature violinist Sarah Whitney who will perform and give an informative talk. Cost of the luncheon is ten dollars. Contact the office or Dian Pekin at Pekindc@comcast.net by March 22 to make reservations and to communicate food requirements. All women and men are cordially invited.

Sunday Forum

The Search for Earth 2.0, Prof. Sara Seager, MIT, March 8

Exoplanets are planets that orbit stars other than the sun. Thousands of exoplanets are known to exist and motivate the prime goal to find and identify a planet like Earth—an "Earth 2.0." Two recent factors make this goal achievable in the near term. First, astronomers have now ascertained, statistically speaking, that every star in our Milky Way Galaxy should have at least one planet, and that small rocky planets are extremely common. Second, engineers have matured the required technology for the sophisticated space telescopes capable of discovering Earth-like exoplanets. Because we can detect atmospheric gases produced by life on planets orbiting the nearest hundreds of stars, for the first time in human history, we therefore say with certainty that we are on the verge of being able to search for signs of life beyond our solar system.

Professor Sara Seager is a planetary scientist and astrophysicist at MIT. She has been a pioneer in the vast and unknown world of exoplanets, planets that orbit stars other than the sun. Her ground-breaking research ranges from the detection of exoplanet atmospheres to innovative theories about life on other worlds to development of novel space mission concepts. Often dubbed an "astronomical Indiana Jones," she is on a quest for the field's holy grail, the discovery of a true Earth twin. Dr. Seager earned her Ph.D. from Harvard University and is now the Class of 1941 Professor of Planetary Science and Professor of Physics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Professor Seager is a 2013 MacArthur Fellow and was named in *Time* magazine's 25 Most Influential in Space in 2012.

Women's Book Group

The Women's Book Group selection for March is *The Art of Travel*, by Alain De Botton. The evening discussion will be Monday, March 30, 7:30 to 9:00 p.m.; and the morning discussion will be Tuesday, March 31, 9:30 to 11:00 a.m. Both groups meet in the Brooks Room at First Parish.

All women of First Parish are warmly invited to read the current book and join one or both discussions. If you would like to be added to the Women's Book Group email list, please contact Darien Smith at darien@smithquest.com or 978-369-1471.

Remaining Books and Dates for 2015

March 30 and 31: *The Art of Travel*, Alain De Botton

April 27 and 28: *The Orphan Train: A Novel*, Christina Baker Kline

June 1 and 2: *Moloka'i*, Alan Brennert

June TBD: Potluck and Book Choosing for 2015-16

Portrait of Rev. Jenny Rankin

A Reception to Unveil the Portrait

All First Parish members and friends are invited to attend a reception to unveil the newly completed, commissioned portrait of Rev. Jenny Rankin on Wednesday, April 15, from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. in the Parish Hall. We will have light food and drink available. Jenny will be on hand to greet those who attend. Part way through the reception, we will pause to unveil the portrait. Please put this event on your calendar and plan to attend.

Rev. Howard N. Dana and Tim Blodgett, for the Portrait Committee

Concord Area Humanists

Concord Area Humanists (CAH) meet the first Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in the Parish Hall. Additional information is available on the website, www.concordareahumanists.org, under "Events." Questions to pne@aol.com.

CAH will present Walker Bristol, Tufts' Humanist Chaplain in Residence on Wednesday, March 4 at 7:00 p.m. in the Parish Hall. He serves the chaplaincy needs of nonreligious, Humanist, or otherwise nontraditional students. He offers spiritual caregiving, and works with other campus chaplains to meet the needs of the student community, whether part of organized religion or not. Join Walker to explore.

On Wednesday, April 4, author David Niose, past president of the American Humanist Association, will discuss his book, *Fighting Back the Right: Reclaiming America from the Attack on Reason*.

Concord Area

World Day of Prayer

Women, men and children in more than 170 countries and regions will celebrate World Day of Prayer, on Friday, March 6. This year, the women of the WDP Committee of the Bahamas will remind participants in the service that transformative radical love comes from deep humility, compassion and commitment to serving those in need. Concord's 2015 commemoration of the World Day of Prayer will take place at 11:00 a.m. at Holy Family Parish in Concord Center. A festive luncheon celebrating the people and cultures of the Bahamas will follow the service. Reservations are not required. Contact Dian Pekin at Pekindc@comcast.net if you have artwork or decorations from the Bahamas that you could lend for the event.

Editor's Notes

Next Meeting House News deadline:

Tuesday, March 17, 11:59 p.m. (yes, the middle of the night)

Email submissions, either in the body of the email or as an attached Word document (not a PDF), to Rachel Baker at rbaker@firstparish.org. Inserts will no longer be possible, due to the new format.

Next publication date:

Tuesday, March 31, 2015

First Parish in Concord, Massachusetts, is a welcoming congregation seeking ways to deepen spiritually, build community, and make a positive difference in the world.