



What's Happening at First Parish?

MEETING HOUSE NEWS

FEBRUARY 2018

Unitarian Universalist Valentines



*We go
together like
a flame and
a chalice.*

Thanks to Rev. Amy Freedman for the Valentines.

Next Meeting House News

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Unitarian Universalist Valentines



Thanks to Rev. Amy Freedman for the Valentines.



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Sundays at First Parish

All Sunday Worship Services are held at 10:00 a.m. unless otherwise noted.

Worship-at-a-Glance

Sunday, February 4 – “In Search of Social Justice Warriors”

Rev. Rosemary Bray McNatt, President, Starr King School for the Ministry
First Parish Choir

Sunday, February 11 – All Ages Service – “Love”

Rev. Amy Freedman
Combined First Parish Choirs

Sunday, February 18 – “Everyday Paganism”

Rev. Howard N. Dana
Gail Carey, piano/vocals; Anderson Manuel, vocals

Sunday, February 25 – “Shaking Hands with the Lion”

Rev. Howard N. Dana
Contemporary Vocal Ensemble

Sunday, March 4 – “Celebration Sunday”

Rev. Howard N. Dana
Combined First Parish Choirs



Celebration Sunday

2018-2019 Annual Pledge Campaign

Kickoff, Sunday, March 4

Here it comes! Please mark your calendar for the kickoff of our Annual Pledge Campaign on Sunday, March 4. On this special Celebration Sunday, we come together to pledge financial support to our shared community. Please come prepared to pledge. Your generosity will help sustain the warmth and momentum of this vibrant congregation, so we hope you will increase your pledge over last year's amount.

Sunday Forums

11:30 a.m. in the Sanctuary

February 4 – “Meet Rev. Rosemary Bray McNatt”

Rev. Rosemary Bray McNatt is president of Starr King School for the Ministry in Berkeley, California and a graduate of Yale University and Drew Theological Seminary. She is a widely acknowledged editor, as well as the author of six books. Her years of service to the UUA in the realms of education and





social justice, including UU leadership in the United States and UU leadership training in Kenya have been widely praised. Come to this Forum to be introduced to Rev. McNatt and to share in conversation with her.

February 25 - "The Nagog Pond Controversy"

Out West they say, "Whiskey's for drinkin,' water's for fightin.'" Here in Massachusetts we've been blessed with abundant rainfall and plenty of water to go around. But that is now changing. The ongoing controversy over Concord's proposal to increase water treatment capacity at Acton's Nagog Pond may be a harbinger of the future. In this Forum, Acton resident and geoscientist Dr. Kim Kastens will share her view of the Nagog Pond situation and lead a discussion of what lessons we can learn about water in a time of scarcity.



Save the Date

- March 18, 2018—[Ranked Choice Voting](#)

To suggest a topic or speaker, join the Forum Committee; or to get emails about future Sunday Forums, contact a Forum Committee cochair: Pat Brinkman, pabrinkman@comcast.net; or Alan Whitney, awhitney@alum.mit.edu.

Thank you for your continued support.

Year for Reflection and Visioning Survey Says...

Listening Sessions Complete

Members of the Standing Committee are so grateful to everyone who took the time to participate in the January Listening Sessions, where we collected valuable information to help us write a survey and set goals for First Parish for the next five years. It's still not too late to share your ideas. Feel free to speak with or send any thoughts to any member of the Standing Committee, listed below.



What's Next?

During the month of February, we ask you to complete a survey, based on what we heard during January's Listening Sessions. The survey asks you to evaluate aspects of First Parish, set priorities, and help us identify what needs attention during the next five years. All of this work is part of our *Year for Reflection and Visioning*, a new practice the Standing Committee will initiate every five years, to ensure church leaders are regularly consulting members of our congregation.

This year's survey also includes questions related to the 7.5% of annual pledges our



congregation currently sets aside for Social Action grants. A vote is scheduled at the June 2018 Annual Meeting on whether to reaffirm, revoke, or revise this practice. The Standing Committee will make a recommendation for the vote based on the sentiments you express in this survey.

Keep your eyes open. When the survey becomes available, early in February, links will be publicized in the yellow *Sunday News* insert, through the FP Announce email list, and on the home page of the First Parish website.

What's after the Survey?

The third and final part of this *Year for Reflection and Visioning* is the all-congregation retreat March 10, 2018. **Please mark your calendars now.** That's when we everything we have learned and begin mapping out goals for First Parish.



Whom to Contact

Feel free to direct questions to any member of the Standing Committee.

Jeff Brainerd, jeffbrainerd@gmail.com

Dave Elwood, daveelwood@hotmail.com

Kristin Haddad, chair, kristin.haddad@gmail.com

Peter Nobile, clerk, peter.nobile@gmail.com

Toby Smith Ropeik, tobyasmith@gmail.com

Michelle Fortier, treasurer

Kate Svrcek, katesvrcek@hotmail.com

Lora Venesy, venesy@comcast.net

Patty Popov, ppopov@nichols-pratt.com

Tom Wilson, twilson@wilsongroup.com

John Lowe, john.moore.lowe@gmail.com

A handout on this important initiative is also available at the end of this newsletter. Please see the December *MHN* for additional background information.

Religious Exploration (RE) News

LOVE – All Ages Service

Sunday, February 11, 10:00 a.m., Sanctuary

Join us for a service celebrating love! Each age group will help lead this service. We will reflect on what love is and how we can bring more love into the world.

Hospital Care Packages for Children

Collection Box in Coatroom

Our Neighboring Activists (Grade 6) invite the First Parish community to help them in supporting kids being treated at local hospitals: Emerson Hospital in Concord and Lowell General Hospital in Lowell. Items to donate include small toys, crafts, crayons, books, markers, and bubbles. All items must be new and in the original packaging. Please no food, candy, stuffed animals, or used items. A collection box is in the First Parish coatroom. They look forward to delivering our care packages in early February. Thank you for your support!



Parent Orientation, Middle OWL

Grade 5

Friday, February 9, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m., Emerson Room

First Parish is pleased to offer comprehensive sexuality education not only to adolescents but also to first and fifth graders! This program will be offered in the spring for eight Sundays and will begin a little earlier than our regular Religious Education time. These classes will meet from 10:00-11:15 a.m. Parents or guardians are required to attend an orientation session. If you decide not to have your child participate, he or she will be included in another RE class during the eight-week program.

Discover More

Discover more at <http://firstparish.org/wp/learning/re/>. If you have questions about our programs for children and youth, please contact Dawn Van Patten, Assistant Director of Religious Education, dvanpatten@firstparish.org, or Rev. Amy Freedman, Minister of Religious Education, afreedman@firstparish.org.



February Religious Exploration

Day, Date, Time	Theme	Description
Sunday, February 4 10:15 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.	Preparing to Lead Sunday Service	Religious Exploration
Sunday, February 11 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.	LOVE	All Ages Service
Sunday, February 18 10:15 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.	Art in Motion	Multiage Program
Sunday, February 25 10:15 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.	Lunar New Year	Multiage Program

Youth Group

Relationships and Social Justice

**Sundays, February 4 and 18, following worship at 11:30 a.m.
Pizza lunch provided.**

Attention, First Parish Teens! We will be trying a different format during the month of February! Following worship on February 4 and 18, the Youth Group will meet Sunday morning at 11:30 a.m. We will continue our work around identities to really consider how we are in relationship with others, and how that work impacts the social justice work that we do at First Parish. Please contact Jo VonRue with any questions you may have at jvonrue@firstparish.org.



Pastoral Care

Walking with One Another through the Changes Life Brings

Ministers

Minister for Pastoral Care, Rev. Marion Visel

Email: mvisel@firstparish.org

Church: 978-369-9602, ext. 414

Cell: 203-931-5239



Senior Minister, Rev. Howard N. Dana

Email: hdana@firstparish.org

Church: 978-369-9602, ext. 411

Cell: 717-412-8543

Minister in Residence, Rev. Jo VonRue

Email: jvonrue@firstparish.org

Church: 978-369-9602, ext. 412

Cell: 570-899-0457



February Pastoral Care Lay Minister, Virginia Taylor

Email: virginiarosstaylor@verizon.net

Cell: 978-727-3619

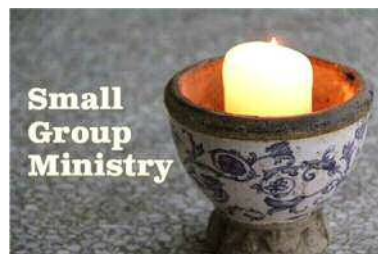
Caregiver Support Group

New Members Welcome

First Monday Afternoon of Each Month

Are you caring for a family member, an aging parent (perhaps while caring for your own children), an ill spouse, a sibling or a child with physical or mental issues? Whether you are providing direct care or overseeing care at a distance, you don't have to sacrifice yourself in the process. Get support from others while learning new coping skills. We welcome new members to join this ongoing group.

To learn more or if you are unable to attend Monday afternoon meetings, contact Marion Visel, Minister for Pastoral Care, mvisel@firstparish.org or 203-931-5239 (cell), or contact Diane Clapp, dianebamclapp@gmail.com.





SGM “Simple Gifts”

Small Group Forming (4 sessions)

This Small Group Ministry (SGM) group will explore deepening spiritually through practices and topics often thought of as “small” or “simple.” Group limited to ten.

- ♥ **When:** One Sunday a month, March to June, from 5:00 to 6:30 p.m.
- ♥ **Dates:** March 4, April 8 (April 1 is Easter), May 6, and June 10 (not June 3)
- ♥ **Facilitators:** Roselyn Romberg and Chuck McDonald
- ♥ **Topics:**
 - Gratitude as a spiritual practice
 - Simplifying busy lives to make space for spirituality
 - Exploring meaningfulness and fulfillments
 - Acts of kindness as spiritual practices
 - Cultivating experiences of grace
- ♥ **Sign-up** in the church office, or contact Marion Visel, mvisel@firstparish.org or 203-931-5239 (cell).

Photography as Meditation

Monday afternoons, April 2, 9, 16, and 23, from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

Explore photography as a form of meditation practice through accessible contemplative photography and centering/meditation exercises. No experience required except knowing how to use your camera or smartphone. Rev. Marion Visel will lead this four-session program.

Signup in the church office, or contact Marion Visel, mvisel@firstparish.org or 203-931-5239 (cell). Group limited to 14. Preference will be given to those who can attend all four sessions.

Holiday Plant Delivery

After Christmas, the beautiful poinsettias that decorated the Sanctuary during the holiday season were delivered to 36 members. The Pastoral Care Council thanks all of you who participated for continuing this wonderful tradition. (Submitted by Judy Dembsey)

Helpers

Caitlin Selle has been Pastoral Care’s dedicated holiday plant delivery organizer for a number of years. She thanks the many folks who helped this year with the delivery: Virginia Taylor, Paula Adelson, Brooks Stevens, Lori Gill-Pazaris, Susana Ardioz, Rachel Krebs, Lou and Mason Fackert, Caroline and Jim McCloy and herself.



“It’s a wonderful opportunity to meet new people, and the recipients are so very appreciative,” said Caitlin.

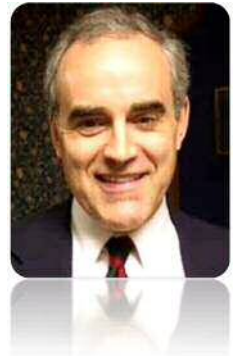


MUUsings

In another life (more years ago than I care to count) I served as music director for the Brooks School in North Andover, Massachusetts. During my four years there, I had the pleasure of working closely with Rob Humphreville, a wonderfully talented and facile pianist and organist, who arrived at the school the same year I did. He has remained on staff there ever since.

I appreciated Rob's musical skills as well as his wry sense of humor, which came out in some delightful ways:

Each Wednesday morning, the entire student body gathered in the school chapel for our weekly chapel service, a combination of an ecumenical religious service and school meeting. The "Chapel Choir," which was one of the groups I directed, usually sang these services and Rob would be there to play the organ. At the conclusion of the service/meeting there would always be announcements by various faculty and students. One Wednesday, one of the sopranos in the choir went to the microphone to announce that she had lost her music for "Somewhere over the Rainbow," and that if anyone found it, they could return it to her. The meeting concluded soon after and the student body filed out in their usual noisy fashion as Rob played his postlude. As I sat and listened (some habits persist!), I realized that what he was playing was an ingenious, improvised fugue on "Somewhere over the Rainbow." I wanted to stop everyone and draw their attention to this brilliant musical feat, but I decided I would just listen and enjoy the joke myself.



Rob Humphreville's formidable improvisational skills will be on display in our Sanctuary on Saturday night, February 24, at 7:30 p.m. when he accompanies the silent classic "The Cameraman," starring Buster Keaton and Marceline Day. Ever since we realized we could install the new organ console downstairs and that it would be able to move, I have dreamed of having a silent movie night in our Sanctuary. That dream will be realized on February 24! I invite you to come out and enjoy the show and hear our wonderful new organ in a completely different context. This event is suitable for all ages and is free of charge.



If you have never seen a silent movie with live accompaniment, this is an experience you can't miss. Hope to see you there!

May the day that is breaking bring us better understanding.

Blessings, Beth
Beth Norton, Director of Music
Contact at music@firstparish.org or 978-369-9602



Operations

Christmas Eve Numbers

Collections and Attendance

On December 24, 2017, the Christmas Eve collections totaled \$8,880. This included collections at the morning service and at three evening services. This did not include any items indicated as pledge payments.

Service	2017 Total	2016 Total	2015 Total	2014 Total	2013 Total	2012 Total
10:00 a.m.	123	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
3:00 p.m.	NA	72	209			
5:00 p.m.	589	560	520			
7:00 p.m.	194	233	191			
9:00 p.m.	316	425	426			
Attendance Total	1,222	1,290	1,346			
Collection Total	\$8,880	\$8,608	\$8,678	\$8,453	\$9,147	\$5,684

Thank You

Special thanks go to Fred Van Deusen, Alice Van Deusen, and Toby Smith Ropeik, who helped Peg Gallo count \$7,369 in cash. This included collections at the morning service and at the three evening services.

Donation Recipients

Christmas Eve donations were divided 50/50 (\$4,440) and sent to

- ♥ UU Urban Ministry / Renewal House in Roxbury
- ♥ Partner Congregation in Transylvania via the UU Partner Church Council

Thanks to all for your kindness and generosity!



Fifi Ball

Director of Operations

fball@firstparish.org, or the church office, 978-369-9602, x456



Minister in Residence

Seeking Sanctuary

This past Monday I had the opportunity to visit a woman who is seeking sanctuary in the Bedford church with our First Parish in Concord member Tony Rodriguez, who, along with the Immigration Justice Task Force, has been spearheading our Sanctuary Two status. We sat together for an hour while she shared her story with me, a story that I could not comprehend as an American—a vulnerable story of hurt, heartbreak, tears, and resilience. This woman, whom I will not name in this article for her privacy though I will call her Sonia, is a true testament to what it takes to raise and support a family against all odds.



And as I reflected on Sonia's story, I thought about the lives that we live here in the United States. Granted, while our government is unstable at best, working people can expect to make a minimum of \$8/hour. Yes, yes I know this is a terribly broken system. Sonia told me in her home country a person can expect to make \$7 per day. I was shocked. On seven dollars a day, when a sparse cut of meat may cost \$4, how can one expect to support a family? Can you even imagine making \$7 per day? If you were forced to live on \$7 per day what would you choose to give up?

I think about grocery shopping. While I treat myself from time to time, I normally buy the most inexpensive groceries I can on my limited budget. One day I had to purchase the more expensive milk as the WIC*-approved milk was all expiring soon. I could not believe the difference in taste (and nutritional value)! I found out then that the WIC-approved milk was merely opaque water. I now try to buy the more expensive milk, but wonder if I were making \$7 per day, what groceries I would choose to survive on?

People come to this country in order to make the money their family needs to survive, just survive. First Parish in Concord has voted to become a Level Two Sanctuary Congregation, which means that we are ready and willing to provide immediate and necessary support to a Level One Sanctuary Congregation. And Tony told me that you are turning out in droves. Once again your generosity and love of your fellow humans shines in the life of Sonia and the work you are doing with First Parish in Bedford. When I asked Sonia what we could do to support her, her single answer was, "Pray for me; please ask your congregation to pray for me."

So, my friends, I invite you to join me wherever you are each day for just a few minutes to pray for peace, well-being, and justice for our friend Sonia.

Warmly, Rev. Jo
Rev. Jennifer "Jo" VonRue
Minister in Residence, jvonrue@firstparish.org or 978-369-9602, ext. 412

*Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), a federal assistance program of the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the USDA



Standing Committee News

Next Meeting: Sunday, February 11, 6:00 p.m., Emerson Room

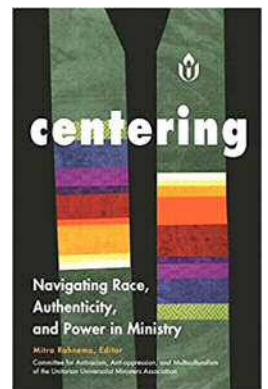


Meeting Summary

On January 7, the Standing Committee met in the Emerson Room. In addition to our regular business, Rev. Jim Sherblom presented on behalf of the Denominational Affairs Committee. Next month we will discuss our Standing Committee operations policy. Minutes from our meetings are regularly posted on the [SC website page](#).

Denominational Affairs Update

Rev. Jim Sherblom attended our meeting and discussed some of the current initiatives in the denomination, as well as our desire to reinforce some of the strong ties that exist between members of our congregation and the UUA. He encouraged lay leaders to read Centering: Navigating Race, Authenticity and Power in Ministry, by Mitra Rahnema. Jim expressed gratitude for the January share-the-plate initiative in support of Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism, and encouraged us to budget our fair share of UUA dues, especially during this time of radical changes in leadership and work to dismantle institutional white supremacy.



Jericho Road

We acknowledged the new beginnings of the Jericho Road Project (presented by Eric Van Loon at our December meeting) endorsing an official statement:

“The Standing Committee of First Parish in Concord wishes to extend our encouragement and support to your entire Jericho Road team for your efforts to rebuild and reinvent your mission. We greatly appreciate the work you have done, and look forward to working alongside you in making this a better world.”

Good luck to the board as they relaunch this organization that builds relationships between people of Lowell and our local community.

Sabbatical

The Standing Committee voted to adopt a revised Sabbatical Policy that is more simplified than our previous policy. Our policy remains consistent with the recommendations advised by the UU Ministers' Association. In addition, we formally approved Howard's request for sabbatical from December 2018-February 2019.



Survey and Retreat

Year for Reflection and Visioning

Thank you to the many parishioners who attended listening sessions this month. We are thrilled with the response and enjoyed the many



discussions about what has changed at First Parish in the past five years and what we look forward to in the next five years. This month, we will be releasing a survey, which will help us to organize our congregation-wide retreat the weekend of March 10. Please watch FPAnnounce, the *Sunday News* and the website for information on this survey.



We Want to Hear from You!

Standing Committee members are always eager to talk with First Parishioners. Please reach out to any of us at coffee hour, at an event, by phone, or by email to discuss your First Parish experiences. You can find the contact information for each Standing Committee member, along with meeting agendas, governing policies, meeting minutes, and reports on the First Parish website [here](#).



Best Regards,
Kristin Coffman Haddad, chair, Standing Committee
kristin.haddad@gmail.com or 978-254-5012

Finance Committee

IRA's and Qualified Charitable Distributions Even better in 2018!

Are you over 70½ and worried you won't be able to deduct your gifts to First Parish under the new tax law? Not to worry. Under the new federal tax law, many IRA owners who are 70½ or older can save money on their taxes by making a "qualified charitable distribution" (QCD) from their IRA directly to First Parish (or other qualified public charity). QCDs are free of income tax, up to a maximum of \$100,000, and count toward satisfying the donor's minimum IRA distributions required after age 70½.

While this technique is not new, it is even more attractive in 2018 in light of the increase in the standard deduction and limitation of the deduction for state taxes. Last year, the standard deduction for a couple over 65 was \$15,200: \$12,700 plus \$1,250 additional per person over 65. The standard deduction for a couple over 65 has now increased to \$26,500: \$24,000 for married couples filing jointly, plus \$1,250 per person over 65. At the same time, the deduction for itemizing state taxes – income and property – is now capped at \$10,000. Therefore, in 2018, an over 65 couple would need to have more



than \$16,500 of deductions, primarily charitable contributions and mortgage interest, to exceed their \$26,500 standard deduction. Many donors who have itemized their deductions in the past will no longer do so and will not save any additional taxes for their charitable contributions. But a qualified charitable distribution from the donor's IRA allows the donor to effectively keep the deduction, by removing the donated IRA funds from the donor's taxable income. And, as before, it effectively reduces your Massachusetts income by that amount as well.

Note that the requirements are specific. The company that maintains the IRA must transfer the gift directly to the qualified organization. IRA owners should not withdraw funds and then contribute them to charity separately. Amounts withdrawn in that way will be taxable to the donor. Consult with your financial advisor or IRA custodian to assure you satisfy the requirements.

Respectfully submitted by the Finance Committee. Please contact Director of Operations, Fifi Ball, fball@firstparish.org, with questions or comments.

Arts at First Parish

Fostering Community through the Arts



Each month the First Parish Arts Council will highlight arts events in the upcoming month 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.

Upcoming Events

Day	Date	Time	Events
Friday	February 2	7:00 p.m.	AWE Movie Night, "Albert Nobbs"
Saturday	February 10	9:30 a.m.	First Parish Photography Club (open to all First Parish adults)
Wednesday	February 14	6:30 p.m.	Arts Council meeting (all welcome)
Friday	February 23	7:30 p.m.	Rise Up Singing!—a monthly open folk song circle
Friday	February 24	7:30 p.m.	Silent Movie Night, "The Cameraman" with Rob Humphreville, organist. Free.

For more information on these events, check the FP Announce, the *Sunday News*, and see below.



Silent Movie Night

"The Cameraman"

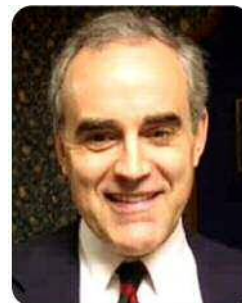
Starring Buster Keaton and Marceline Day

Rob Humphreville, organist

Saturday, February 24, 7:30 p.m., Sanctuary

"The Cameraman" is a 1928 American silent comedy film. This classic romantic comedy was a box office hit, and the MGM writing department used it as an example of a "perfectly constructed comedy" in screen writer trainings. Robert Humphreville is active as a freelance accompanist and organist throughout greater Boston. He accompanies silent movies all over

New England and has been singled out several times by the *Boston Globe* for his inventive improvisations. Free admission.



Social Action Community

Faith into Action

News from Zach

Happy February, First Parish Community! January was quite the busy month and February will be, as well!

Beloved Conversations

Starts Friday/Saturday, February 2 - 3

This month we will begin our journey through Beloved Conversations. For those who have registered, there will be a retreat on the evening of February 2 and throughout the day on February 3. (Read more in [Race Conversations Group](#).)



Funderburg Scholars Dinner

Saturday, February 3; Appetizers 6:30 p.m., Dinner 7:15 p.m.

RSVP by February 1 to Loretta Ho Sherblom, loretta@lhsbenefits.com.

First Parish will be hosting the annual Funderburg Scholars Dinner, beginning with wine and cheese, followed by a meal. Donations will be received, and the funds collected will go toward tuition assistance, textbooks, and computers for inner city youth beginning university. To attend, please RSVP to Loretta Ho Sherblom by February 1 at Loretta@LHSBenefits.com or by texting or calling Loretta's cell at 508-935-6750. (Read more on [Funderburg Scholars Dinner](#) under "Cool Stuff.")



Volunteering at Rosie's Place

Sunday, February 11, 1:30 p.m.

The Advocates for Women's Empowerment (AWE) group will be volunteering at Rosie's Place, a homeless shelter for women in Boston founded in 1974 as the first women's shelter in the United States. AWE will be serving a meal starting at 1:30 p.m. AWE volunteers regularly with this amazing organization. To join them for future trips to Rosie's Place, contact Lora Venesy [here](#). For more information on the shelter and its work, click [here](#).

Community Organizing Training

Thursday, February 22, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m., Emerson Room

RSVP by February 20 via email to [Zach](#) or on [Facebook](#)

This training will be led by Evan Seitz, a community organizer working with UU Mass Action and partially funded by First Parish in Concord. He will be discussing effective organizing for justice matters in a congregational setting. If you would like to attend, please RSVP by February 20 on Facebook [here](#) or email Zach directly [here](#).

Learn About True Islam

Wednesday, March 7, from 8:00 to 9:30 a.m.

Registration deadline February 27. Breakfast provided.

Save the Date! Join Concord resident Nasir Rana and members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community to learn about True Islam: what it is and how to counter ignorance about the world's second largest religion. This is a joint project of First Parish in Concord, the Concord-Carlisle Adult and Community Education, the Human Rights Council, and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community of Sharon, Massachusetts. Once registration is open, you can register [here](#).

SAC Calendar

Keep an eye out for more through FP Announce, the *Sunday News* insert, and our [Facebook page](#)! For more events, you can also check out our SAC Calendar on the church bulletin board or on the door to my office (the Loft).



In peace and hope,
Zach

Zachary Roe
Social Action Coordinator
zroe@firstparish.org, 978-369-9602, ext.450



Partner Congregation News

Documentary Fundraiser

Saturday, March 3, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m., Parish Hall



This April 27 pilgrims from First Parish will travel to Transylvania to visit our partner congregation in Székelykeresztúr. As a benefit for our Pilgrimage Assistance Fund, the PCC will show the documentary “Beneath the Surface,” with a suggested donation of \$20.

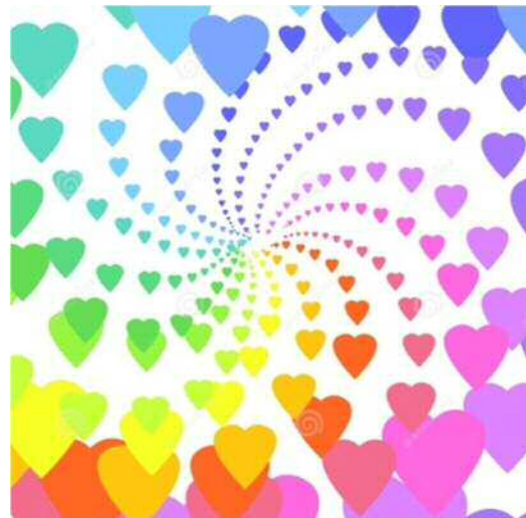
This moving film tells the story of the diverse and tolerant village of Bözödújfalú which was intentionally flooded and destroyed during the

reign of Nicolae Ceausescu (1965-1989) in the bid to eliminate the villages and force people into cities.

Refreshments and socializing at 7:00 p.m.; film starts at 7:15 p.m. Contact Rodger Mattlage, rmattlage@mac.com.

“I think... if it is true that there are as many minds as there are heads, then there are as many kinds of love as there are hearts.”

— Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*





Women's News

AWE Upcoming Events

Advocates for Women's Empowerment

- **Film Series:** Friday, February 2, 7:00 p.m., Chapel
- **Book Group:** Tuesday, March 6, 7:00 p.m., Brooks Room
- **LUNAFEST:** Friday, April 6; Doors Open at 7:00 p.m., Film at 7:30 p.m., Concord Academy
- **Nobel Peace Prize Speaker:** Sunday, April 8, 5:00 p.m., First Parish Sanctuary
- **Toiletry Drive:** Month of April
- **Next Meeting:** Saturday, February 17, 8:00 a.m., First Parish

Free Feminist Film Series

Join us for "Albert Nobbs," a story set in 19th-century Ireland about a painfully shy butler, Albert Nobbs (Glenn Close), who hides an incredible secret: He is a she. Some 30 years after donning men's clothing in order to make a living, she finds herself trapped in a prison of her own making. Contact: Lou Toussaint, mloutoussaint@gmail.com.

Book Group

Goodreads writes: "An intimate portrait of a family and an epic tale of hope and struggle, Sing, Unburied, Sing, by Jesmyn Ward, examines the ugly truths at the heart of the American story, and the power—and limitations—of family bonds." Contact: Jen Izzo, jbizzo@hotmail.com.



LUNAFEST

Save the date for our fifth fundraising film event cosponsored with Concord Academy and shown in their state-of-the-art theater. Proceeds benefit a women's health/reproductive health nonprofit. Watch for details! To help, contact Lora Venesy, venesy@comcast.net.

Nobel Peace Prize Speaker

Save the date to hear Tawakkol Karman, a Nobel Peace Prize women's rights and peace activist. Watch for details!

Toiletry Drive for Rosie's Place and Open Table

Save unopened full- and travel-size toiletries and feminine hygiene products for our collection drive in April. Watch for details.

Monthly Meetings

Our meetings are open to all who wish to advance women's rights and improve their lives.

Mailing List

To join, contact Lora Venesy, venesy@comcast.net.



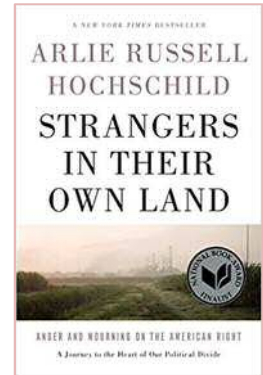
Women's AM/PM Book Group

Monday, February 26, 7:30 to 9:00 p.m., Brooks Room

Tuesday, February 27, 9:30 to 11:00 a.m., Brooks Room

The February book selection is Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right, by Arlie Russell Hochschild. All women of First Parish are warmly invited to read the book and join a discussion. There's no need to sign up!

If you would like to be added to the Women's Book Group email list, contact Darien Smith at darien@smithquest.com.



Dates and Books for 2018

Date	Book	Author
Feb. 26/27	Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right	Arlie Russell Hochschild
March 26/27	Commonwealth	Ann Patchett
April 23/24	America's First Daughter	Stephanie Dray and Laura Kamoie
May 21/22	Necessary Lies	Diane Chamberlain

Women's Parish Association

WPA Luncheon

Program: "A Compelling Look at Inspiring Resistance"

Wednesday, March 21, 11:30 a.m.

Reservations by March 17

Join old and new friends to hear fellow parishioner Prof. Shelley Hawks give an illustrated presentation about her recently published book, *The Art of Resistance, Painting by Candlelight in Mao's China*. Her findings present a very powerful picture of what dedicated resisters against oppression can accomplish. In addition to aspects of Chinese art and culture, her book provides inspiration to resisters who know well that resistance against tyranny and oppression are crucial to protecting a democracy. \$12 luncheon charge. Book signings follow.

For reservations, contact the church office at 978-369-9602 or Dian Pekin at pekindc@comcast.net.





World Day of Prayer

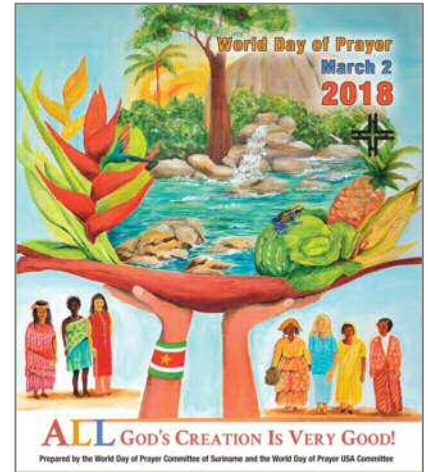
Service and Luncheon

Friday, March 2; Service 11:00 a.m., Luncheon 12:00 p.m.

World Day of Prayer occurs internationally on the first Friday of March every year. The host church for this year's Concord commemoration will be the West Concord Union Church at 1317 Main Street, West Concord.

The women of Suriname wrote the service based on the creation story, and will explore issues of climate change, natural disasters, pollution, and human abuse of the environment, which are harming our planet and its inhabitants.

If you have artwork, textiles, or decorative items from Suriname that you would be willing to lend for use in the service or luncheon, please contact Dian Pekin at pekindc@comcast.net. All men, women, and youth are warmly invited.



Flea Market

Saturday, April 28, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Parish Hall and Parlor

It's not too early to start setting aside items that you want to donate to this great fundraiser. Household items, gift items, collectibles, antiques, jewelry, toys, etc.—all in good condition are most welcome.

If you want to rent a table (rental fee is \$35), be sure to rent one soon as they go fast. Contact the church office at 978-369-9602 or Dian Pekin at pekindc@comcast.net.



Open Table Community Dinner

Thursday, February 1, 5:30 p.m.

Reservations As Soon As Possible



Come join the Women's Parish Association at Open Table's Community Dinner! All WPA members and friends are welcome to participate in a delicious communal meal and conversation. If you would like to join old and new friends at this very rewarding and enjoyable event, please contact the church office or Dian Pekin at pekindc@comcast.net.



Other Cool Stuff

Amnesty International, Group 15

Tuesday, February 20, from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., Greeley Room
Save the date: April 26, Sister Helen Prejean

First on the agenda is signing letters to support human rights activists determined by Amnesty/USA to be “urgent” cases. We’ll have progress reports on our plans for April 26, when Sister Helen Prejean will speak in Concord. Ongoing projects include Massachusetts prison reform, death penalty abolition, the prevention of violence against women worldwide, and the freeing of two Azerbaijanian student activists.



All are welcome to join us. For more information, contact Nancy Lyons, njlyons22@gmail.com or 978-369-6109.

Community Building Dinner

Tuesday, February 6, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., Parish Hall
RSVP by February 4

Join us for some warm companionship, entertainment, and yummy food. The First Parish Men's Group, the Women's Circle, and the Advocates for Women's Empowerment (AWE) cordially invite you to attend an Italian dinner! The cost is \$5 per adult; children are free. BYOB.



Please RSVP by February 4 to Jen Izzo at jbizzo@hotmail.com. Participation is limited to 64 people—don't delay!

Concord Area Humanists

First Wednesdays, 7:00 p.m., Parish Hall

February 7 – David Ropeik

“Cognitive Limits on Human Reason”

Humans claim superiority among species to reason and make choices. However, the brain is more an organ with which we “think” we think. David Ropeik, author and consultant on risk-perception psychology, will discuss research on human cognition which established that our “thinking” is a mix of thinking and feeling, all reasoning is “motivated,” and all perception is ultimately subjective. David will cite his 2012 book, *“How Risky Is It, Really? Why Our Fears Don’t Always Match the Facts,”* which is available for sale afterward.





March 7 – Alan Lightman **“Fact and Faith”**



Alan Lightman discusses differences between scientific and religious beliefs, how they are formed, and their different evidentiary bases. Central to spiritual beliefs is the personal “transcendent experience,” which supports subsequent belief. Most scientific beliefs are founded upon objective data from the external world. Science and religion differ profoundly in the process of revision: all scientific knowledge is considered provisional. Lightman is a writer and physicist who has taught at Harvard and MIT.

Questions? Contact Pat Everett, pne@aol.com. All are welcome.

Ferry Beach Retreat **Friday to Monday, May 25-28** **Registration in April**



Save the dates! Mark your calendars now to join families, couples, and singles for this relaxed weekend on the beach with First Parish friends, old and new, at the UU Ferry Beach Camp and Conference Center in Saco, Maine, over Memorial Day weekend. Registration details will be in the April newsletter. Rooms and camping are both available onsite.



To check out the campus, visit <http://www.ferrybeach.org/>. For questions, contact Darien Smith at darien@smithquest.com.

First Parish Auction

Kickoff Meeting: Sunday, February 4, from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m., Parlor
Save the Date! Auction: Saturday, October 27, 2018



The Auction is back! Mark your calendars. In the meantime, we need your creativity and inspiration! The 2018 Auction is going to be bigger and better than ever. We have plenty of time to plan the event at a relaxed pace.

Join us for an Auction Kickoff Meeting. We will select a theme, identify subcommittee leads, and develop an action plan. Hope to

see you there! For questions, contact Val Vallancourt at valvallancourt@gmail.com or Jen Izzo at jbizzo@hotmail.com.



First Tuesday Group

"Risks to Elders"

Tuesday, February 6, from 1:30 to 3:00 p.m., Parish Hall



The First Tuesday Group (65+) will feature Detective Scott Camilleri, Elder Affairs officer of the Concord Police Department. Scott will review senior scams, family issues, driving concerns, personal safety, alcohol and drug abuse, the disposal of old medications, and the Council on Aging (COA) lock box services.

After Det. Scott's brief talk, the floor will be opened for what should prove to be a lively and informative general discussion. Please plan to attend and participate!

Please come if you are interested, whatever your age. For more information, contact Virginia Taylor, virginiarosstaylor@verizon.net or 978-263-9777.

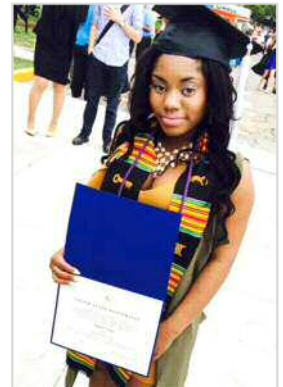
Funderburg Scholars

Fundraising Dinner

Saturday, February 3, from 6:30 to 9:15 p.m., Parish Hall

RSVP by February 1

It's not too late to join us on Saturday! Help Roxbury youth attend and graduate from college while you enjoy a delicious meal with great company! These engaging students will tell stories about their college experiences. Wine and cheese at 6:30 p.m.; dinner by Caroline McCloy at 7:15 p.m. No fixed "price"—donate what feels right to you at the dinner.



Reserve your place by February 1 either at coffee hour or by contacting Loretta Ho Sherblom (email, Loretta@LHSBenefits.com, text/call her cell at 508-935-6750).

Jewish Awareness Affinity Group

"Are Jews Safe in Europe?"

Friday, February 16, 7:00 p.m., Brooks Room

Mel Bernstein will lead a discussion on the causes and responses to the recent surge of anti-Semitism in Europe. Jews in Europe are saying for the first time in the post-World War II era that they live in fear of their lives and economic well-being. We will discuss the strange case of the Mayor of Dusseldorf, Germany, who for unknown reasons tried to cancel a much anticipated exhibition about the stolen art of Jewish art dealer Max Stern.





We'll share challah, wine, blessings, and conversation. All are welcome. For more information, contact Dana Snyder-Grant at dana.snydergrant@gmail.com or 978-760-1129.

Race Conversations Group

"Beloved Conversations"

Beginning Friday and Saturday, February 2 and 3

First Parish members and friends will undertake a joint Beloved Conversations program with First Parish in Lexington to explore the invisible footprint of race and ethnicity, and interrupting racism today. The opening retreat will be led by trainers from Meadville Lombard Theological School. Thereafter, groups of 10 to 12 participants will meet for two hours every other week for eight sessions. The opening retreat is Friday evening, February 2, and all day Saturday, February 3, followed by eight small-group sessions.



Sponsored by the Race Conversations Group. Free. Limited seats available. Sign up at coffee hour or contact Lea Delacour, leadelacour@comcast.net.

Editor's Notes

Next March *Meeting House News* deadline: **February 13, 2018**

Next Publication Date: **February 21, 2018**

Publicity Deadlines

- **FP Announce Deadline** – Noon Friday for the following week
 - **Sunday News Deadline** – Noon Wednesday before the Sunday service
- Please note that the order of service insert, or *Sunday News*, is compiled, formatted, printed, folded, and inserted on Fridays. As you can imagine, it takes time to pull this all together in an already busy office, and last minute submissions are problematic. Please plan ahead. Your insert copy **MUST** be received by Noon on Wednesday. Much appreciated. Thanks for your help.

Communications at First Parish

To whom and by when do I send my submission?

Please pick up a copy of "Publicizing Events at First Parish in Concord" on the table outside the church office.



Steps for Publicizing a First Parish Event

1. Plan ahead; then add a “fudge factor”—extra time for committee review and for Editor’s questions. We need you to adhere to deadlines.
2. How much lead time does the Editor need? Which Editor?
 - a. **Weekly** email – FP Announce; send to Sarah Burns by Friday Noon
 - b. **Sunday** insert – *Sunday News*; send to Sarah by Wednesday Noon
 - c. **Monthly** – *Meeting House News (MHN)*; send to Wendy by the deadline noted in the first two pages of your last *MHN* or on the [website under “News”](#)
3. Write draft, send for review, rewrite, and send to Editor before deadline.

Editor Information

FP Announce, *The Sunday News*
 Sarah Burns, Office Administrator and Editor
 978-369-9602
sburns@firstparish.org



Meeting House News (MHN)
 Wendy Wolfberg, Editor
 978-578-1077, cell
wolfberg@post.harvard.edu (email preferred)



We are glad to answer any questions. Please review deadlines and guidelines. Thank you.



Meeting House Newsletter Deadlines

Issue	Deadline	Publication
Mar	13-Feb-18	21-Feb-18
Apr	13-Mar-18	22-Mar-18
May	17-Apr-18	25-Apr-18
Jun*	15-May-18	23-May-18
Sep	21-Aug-18	29-Aug-18

*Include information for June, July, August, and first week of September.

Questions?

Please contact the Editor, Wendy Wolfberg: wolfberg@post.harvard.edu or cell phone, 978-578-1077 (email preferred). Thank you!

General Information

First Parish General Information

Hours

Regular office hours are from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Tuesday through Friday. A reminder that the office is closed on Mondays.





Contact Us

Address: 20 Lexington Road, Concord, MA 01742

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

Email: Contact@firstparish.org; **Website:** www.firstparish.org

Church Calendar: <http://firstparish.org/wp/news/calendar/>

Reserve a Room: <http://firstparish.org/wp/connection/reserve-a-room/>

FP Announce: Sign up for announcements by email: <http://firstparish.org/wp/news/>

FP Facebook: “Like” our Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/pages/First-Parish-in-Concord-Unitarian-Universalist/343822177494>.

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

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HAPPY
February

Year for Reflection and Visioning Survey Says...

Listening Sessions Complete

Members of the Standing Committee are so grateful to everyone who took the time to participate in the January Listening Sessions, where we collected valuable information to help us write a survey and set goals for First Parish for the next five years. It's still not too late to share your ideas. Feel free to speak with or send any thoughts to any member of the Standing Committee, listed below.



What's Next?

During the month of February, we ask you to complete a survey, based on what we heard during January's Listening Sessions. The survey asks you to evaluate aspects of First Parish, set priorities, and help us identify what needs attention during the next five years. All of this work is part of our *Year for Reflection and Visioning*, a new practice the Standing Committee will initiate every five years to ensure church leaders are regularly consulting members of our congregation.

This year's survey also includes questions related to the 7.5% of annual pledges our congregation currently sets aside for Social Action grants. A vote is scheduled at the June 2018 Annual Meeting on whether to reaffirm, revoke, or revise this practice. The Standing Committee will make a recommendation for the vote, based on the sentiments you express in this survey.

Keep your eyes open. When the survey becomes available, early in February, links will be publicized in the yellow *Sunday News* insert, through the FPAnnounce email list, and on the home page of the First Parish website.

What's after the Survey?

The third and final part of this *Year for Reflection and Visioning* is the all-congregation retreat March 10, 2018. **Please mark your calendars now.** That's when we everything we have learned and begin mapping out goals for First Parish.



Whom to Contact

Feel free to direct questions to any member of the Standing Committee.

Jeff Brainerd, jeffbrainerd@gmail.com

Dave Elwood, daveelwood@hotmail.com

Kristin Haddad, chair, kristin.haddad@gmail.com

Peter Nobile, clerk, peter.nobile@gmail.com

Toby Smith Ropeik, tobyasmith@gmail.com

Michelle Fortier, treasurer

Kate Svrcek, katesvrcek@hotmail.com

Lora Venesy, venesy@comcast.net

Patty Popov, ppopov@nichols-pratt.com

Tom Wilson, twilson@wilsongroup.com

John Lowe, john.moore.lowe@gmail.com