

Next issue deadline
Sunday, April 24

The Spire

APRIL 3, 2022

THE FIRST SUNDAY RECORD

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Thank You, With Cake!

Since March 2020, First Parish has remained a vibrant community, attracting 35 new members and engaging volunteer talents in ways we never dreamed we were going to need. Like pretty much every other cooperative enterprise, we discovered that keeping our community moving forward takes a lot more energy than it did before the pandemic.

We now host both in-person and online worship. We are also debating how to return to in-person use of our building, which the Property Committee has spent the last two years optimizing for a world of new realities. We are doing work we could not have imagined, including live-stream tech volunteers, airflow analysis, and Covid-safety opinion surveys, all under unpredictable and changing conditions. We are exhilarated and exhausted – both perfectly normal, and very universal, feelings.

As new volunteer jobs are added, our core committees continue to follow their charters, holding events, raising money, and trying to figure out how to meet the needs of families with young children. Our adult-education STAR programs are seeing a phenomenal amount of participation, with an expanded range of offerings. Racial Justice continues to educate. Social Justice switched up the Pie Palace but persevered, and found ways to engage dozens of volunteers with programming. We even found a way to have a form of the Harvest Moon Fair. This is far from an exhaustive list of the ways our community has remained active. We certainly did not surrender to the pandemic.

Some of you may have had a conversation with a member of committee on which I serve, the Leadership Development Committee (LDC). Our job is to connect members of First Parish with opportunities to get involved in our community. We hope to talk with everyone, but conditions are less

than ideal; it's much harder to run into people by chance for impromptu conversations these days.

The LDC's mission is to make sure that committees that are mandated to handle the core functions of the church have enough people to operate, and also to make sure that everyone who wants to help out can find opportunities to pitch in. Without a Parish Committee, there would be no governance. With no

Property Committee, our building would deteriorate rapidly. No Stewardship Committee? No budget.

Things have changed dramatically around us, and we're adapting, but for many of us it is harder to say "yes" when asked to volunteer.

The LDC has some big slots to fill. The Parish Committee needs a

Clerk, and other committees could use more people, including Stewardship and Social Justice. Odds are good that if you have an extra evening a month to attend a meeting, we can find a place for you. Please don't be shy!

Instead of hosting our usual Spring Roundtable of volunteer opportunities, the LDC will share some sweet treats (and will have a stash of gluten-free treats on hand, as well) as a thank-you to everyone who has pitched in as a committee member, event volunteer, program organizer, postcard writer, Wider Network of Care connector – you get the idea. Please stop by the Vestry on Sunday, April 10, after the service for a piece of something sweet, a thank you, and perhaps a conversation with a member of LDC about how we might be able to help you find a place to apply your talents and help our community continue to thrive.

Contact leadership@firstparish.info for more information, or to schedule a call with someone on the committee to learn more about getting involved.

– Helene Newberg
Leadership Development Committee



Postcards to Georgia

Join other First Parish folks to write postcards to encourage voting in the upcoming Georgia primary. Bring the packet of postcards you already have, or get a packet when you arrive on Thursday, April 7, in the Parlor, at 7 pm. This vital action is sponsored by our Social Justice Committee.

Starting an Eco-Garden

Interested in growing flowers, vegetables, and herbs organically, and learning about pollinators and native plants? Join a Zoom session to find out how from First Parish gardening experts, Cathie Desjardins and Peggy Gardiner on Monday, April 11, from 7 to 8:30 pm. To register, e-mail gardens@firstparish.info.

Spring Clean Up

On Saturday, April 23, help tidy our grounds and make our building sparkle. We will begin at 9 am and go until noon. Come for whatever part of that time works for you. Contact property@firstparish.info, or just show up!

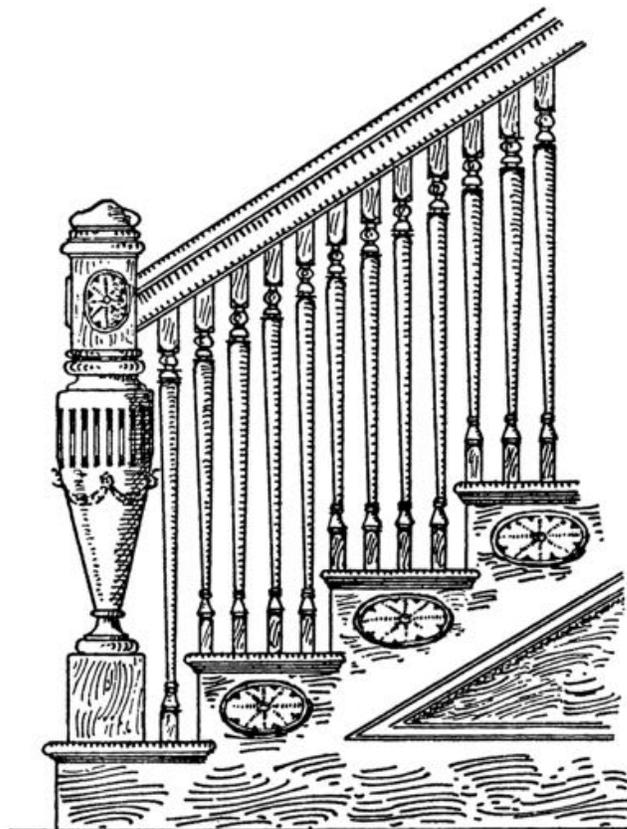
Need a Date Night?

Parents are invited to spend some time together without their little ones. On Friday, April 29, drop kiddos off at church between 4 and 9:30 pm, and they will be looked after and entertained. The reunion will all the sweeter for the break!

Giving First for April: Earthwise Aware

This month half of each Sunday's non-pledge offering will go to Earthwise Aware, which promotes nature conservation through participatory science, also known as citizen science.

The group sponsors ecological projects by training community volunteers to collect climate and ecosystem data at field sites. Citizen scientists learn to use specialized apps to compile data about pollinators and their host plants, arthropod and bird abundance, the timing of plant and animal life events, habitat degradation, and more. This data is invaluable for professional naturalists, scientists, and land managers, and cannot be obtained in any other way.



Summer Services

Do you ever think, I wish someone would give a sermon about _____? Do you ever then think, maybe that someone is me? Well, why not you?

Each summer, members of our congregation lead Sunday services, providing our ministers time and space for rest, study, reflection, and renewal. Leading a service is indeed a service to First Parish; more than a few current parishioners first felt a connection to our community while attending during the quieter summer months.

Our summer services celebrate the wisdom and insights of our congregation and the diversity of our spiritual practices and experiences. They affirm our commitment to our Fourth Principle, the free and responsible search for truth and meaning. They encourage us to bear witness to each other's journeys and to renew our commitment to one another and to the world beyond our meetinghouse walls.

What have you learned along your journey? What are you still wondering? How are you making meaning? How do you understand grief and consolation? How do you practice welcome? What do we ask of each other? What truths guide you and ground you? What mysteries spark your imagination? What renewed

commitments have you made? We are eager to hear your ideas and to work with you to create a summer of thoughtful, enriching, and enlightening worship services for our congregation.

A few practical details:

- Summer services will be held in the Sanctuary and simultaneously streamed via Zoom.
- Those who wish to lead a service must attend a training session via Zoom with Marta and the Worship Associates on Sunday, June 5, at noon.
- While groups may work together on a service, we ask that one person be designated as the contact person and organizing voice.
- As you consider your idea for a service, please remember that services and sermons must be respectful of differences (income, race, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, class, political affiliation, ways of worshiping, beliefs, educational background, etc.) and offer a message to those who may not share your experiences.
- We are looking for a variety of topics and a range of voices. For that reason, it may not be possible to schedule everyone who expresses interest.
- Those who lead summer services are responsible for making sure that the entire service, not just a sermon, is in place. Volunteers will assist to provide music, and you are also welcome to play or to involve other musicians from our archived recordings. Leaders will work with a Worship Associate to ensure that all the elements of the service have been thought through and fit together well.

To submit a proposal for a summer service, please complete the form on our church website, at info.firstparish.org. The deadline for proposals is May 1. The summer services team will meet periodically this spring to complete the schedule as soon as we can, hoping to finish by mid-May. If you have any questions, e-mail worshipassociates@firstparish.info.

Yard Fest Fair on May 7

Our Yard Fest will happen again this year, on Saturday, May 7, from 9 to 3, offering such items from our Harvest Moon Fair as jewelry, electronics, games, books, Attic Treasures, baked goods, and all things blue. Details on how to donate will be coming soon. To learn more, contact fair@firstparish.info.



The Choir Eternal . . .

No, not *that* one. The one here at First Parish.

Our choir has gotten a bit thin, and although we still make a joyful noise we could use a few more singers. Please consider joining our merry band of choristers. We are friendly and helpful, and making music together is powerful and uplifting.

For lo, these many decades, choir rehearsal ran from 8 to 9:30 pm, but we now begin at 7 pm and go for only one hour. We head home when we used to begin!

Do we miss that extra half hour? I think not, especially as there are now so many ways to learn the music on-line. We provide links to free apps that will play the whole piece, or just your part, as many times as you like. Many of our members use this great resource, and it makes our rehearsals more fruitful.

You do not have to be a musical whiz to join the choir, although it helps to have some acquaintance with music notation. We have strong singers in each section to lead the way. We do a wide range of styles and get to sing a lot of different pieces as the weeks proceed. If one piece is not your cup of tea, another will be along shortly.

You also do not have to be in church every Sunday. The choir gets regular time off and does not sing for every service. If you need to be away at times, we will carry on and then welcome you back.

One of the delightful benefits of being in the choir is working with our director, Jonathan Brennand, who is patient, witty, kind, thoughtful, and a superb

musician. It does not hurt that he has an elegant British accent. He has dedicated his life to removing the Amerrrrrrrican R from the choir, and is actually making some headway.

Another benefit is camaraderie. The choir gathers at 9 am on Sundays and finishes our run-throughs by 9:30. This gives us a half hour to rest and chat, kinda like a little breakout room before the service. We enjoy other social events throughout the year, as well.

ParSnips

One Way to Donate

We remain grateful to our generous and giving community. Did you know there are additional giving options that may provide tax advantages? One such option is a qualified charitable distribution, or QCD.

A QCD is a distribution of funds from your IRA (other than a SEP or SIMPLE IRA) directly to a qualified charitable organization, such as First Parish. Because the gift goes directly to the charity without passing through your hands, the dollar amount of the gift may be excluded from your taxable income up to a maximum of \$100,000 annually, with some exceptions. Please consult your tax advisor or professional financial planner for information regarding your specific exceptions.

QCDs can be made by IRA owners who are age 70½ or older (72 if you reached the age of 70½ after December 31, 2019). QCDs made prior to the age you are required to take a minimum distribution from your retirement assets (pre-required minimum distribution QCDs) will not reduce or otherwise impact future required minimum distribution.

Many individuals who are required to take money from their IRA but do not need it for living expenses have chosen to make QCDs from their IRAs to support the work of nonprofits that are important to them. This may make sense for you, too!

Your QCD must be made directly from your IRA custodian to First Parish on your behalf. Each financial institution has its own process for initiating a QCD. Many retirement plan administrators require you to use their distribution forms and comply with other requirements, so follow your financial

Give the choir a try! Speak with Jonathan, or just come to the Sanctuary on a Thursday evening at 7 pm. You can always bail out if it doesn't suit you. But you just might find a new community that lets you experience the thrill of presenting works of art that become works of the spirit.

– Diane Taraz, First Parish Choir

institution's procedures to ensure you receive any potential tax benefits associated with this gift.

To learn more about QCDs, please visit irs.gov.

If you're interested in exploring the benefits of making a qualified charitable distribution to First Parish, we encourage you to consult with your tax advisor to discuss the impact this type of gift can have on your philanthropy and the potential benefit to you as a donor. If you and your tax advisor determine this type of gift is right for you, contact treasurer@firstparish.info for routing information and next steps.

Thank you for your financial gifts supporting First Parish. As always, please don't hesitate to forward additional questions about the various ways to give. We are grateful for your support.

– Sara Galantowicz, Parish Committee Chair
Carolyn Hodges, Treasurer





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The Spire

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Items may be edited for space and clarity.

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