

Next issue deadline
Sunday, May 29

The Spire

MAY 1, 2022

THE FIRST SUNDAY RECORD

VOL. 64, No. 8

First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Arlington, 630 Massachusetts Avenue, Arlington, MA 02476 • Gathered 1733

A Fair in May!

On Saturday, May 7, from 10 to 2 pm, our May Yard Fest will offer goodies in yards and driveways near the church, as well as in the Meetinghouse.

We would love to have your extra stuff, as long as it's in good condition. Please refer to the following list to see where items should go, and finish making your donations by Friday, May 6, to give organizers time to deal with them.



These items go in the Vestry:

Attic Treasures, Jewelry, Books, The Blue Table, and Baked Goods

Please pre-sort books into youth, fiction, and nonfiction. Bring in baked goods on May 6 or 7. The First Parish kitchen refrigerator will be available.

These items go to other locations:

- **Games and Toys** Leave on the back porch at 12 Norfolk Road anytime from 8 am to 7 pm. If it is raining, please use the front covered porch.
- **Electronics** Drop off items at 93 Brantwood, from 9 am to 7 pm Monday through Friday.
- **Greenery** Bring plants and garden gear to 14 Brantwood, from 9 am to 7 pm any day.

The Holly Shop will give you a seven-month head start on annual gift-giving. (Remember, there are only 127 shopping days until Christmas!) Tables in the Vestry will offer two years' worth of handmade and decorations. We have enough inventory and are not really seeking donations, but if you must bring us items, we shall try to be gracious about it.

To learn more, e-mail fair@firstparish.info, or visit <https://firstparish.info/may-day-yard-fest/>.

Evaluating Our Ministry

Each year the Committee on Ministry (COM) evaluates ministry at First Parish from two perspectives: the work of our ordained ministers and our overall community ministry. Through surveys of our leadership and committee members we gather ratings and comments that inform our understanding of the accomplishments, challenges, and needs of our ministers and congregation, and deliver reports to the Parish Committee (ParCom) that help them set priorities for the coming year. This year we also solicited the reflections of our Adjunct Sabbatical Minister, Rev. Marc Fredette, whose perspective has been valuable in providing an outside view of aspects of our congregation we might easily take for granted.

The evaluation of Rev. Erica Richmond as our Parish Minister was done by a survey of our leaders, including ParCom and COM, as well as a self-evaluation. The anonymized ratings and comments from the survey were very much in line with Rev. Erica's own assessment. Survey results underscored how much we appreciate her talents as a preacher and leader, especially as she has moved into the role of Acting Lead Minister this spring.

We are grateful for her modeling of self-care and appropriate boundaries, and concerned that those remain a priority for her. And we are eager for her to continue her leadership of our congregation in areas of spiritual development and social justice, in particular. As we approach the end of Rev. Erica's second year of ministry with us, we celebrate all that she has accomplished and her grace in handling the challenges of the continuing pandemic.

Community Ministry comprises all the ways that we minister to each other and connect with our wider community. The community ministry survey was shared with 92 individuals within the congregation: leaders, committee chairs, and members of our standing committees.

The results demonstrate how grateful we all are for the work that we are doing together and for the vibrant community that we create. Beyond our appreciation for First Parish and each other, the evaluation reflects our eagerness to return to in-person worship and events, and the opportunities we see for this time of reconnection, balanced with concern that we not leave behind those who are moving at a slower pace into post-pandemic engagement.

There is deep concern for our children and their families, and a desire to ensure that their needs are a focus in the coming year. There is also concern, expressed with a variety of suggestions and priorities, that we continue to improve the focus of our social justice efforts and the diversity of our congregation. Finally, there is hunger for celebration, for opportunities to engage joyfully with one another.

COM is grateful to every individual who took part in the evaluation process. These results are consistent with what we have seen in past years and with our committee's sense of the underlying health of our faith community. Each year has its particular issues of concern, and as we continue to navigate the pandemic together that has been an obvious focus. We look forward to next year's evaluation, which will include the work of Rev. Marta Flanagan. Above all, we celebrate all the ways in which our congregation continues to thrive and adapt to the changing circumstances and needs of our community.

– The Committee on Ministry:
Sue Costello (chair), Elizabeth Hunter,
Julius Pereli, Tina Silberman,
Ebonié Smith-Cooper, Kate Tranquada



Reading About Indigenous Justice

The Indigenous Justice Working Group's top picks:

We Had a Little Real Estate Problem: The Unheralded Story of Native Americans and Comedy

by Kliph Nesteroff (Simon & Schuster, 2021)
Acclaimed historian Nesteroff focuses on one of comedy's most significant and little-known stories: how, despite being denied representation in the entertainment industry, Native Americans influenced and advanced the art form. Recommended by Ellen.

There, There

by Tommy Orange (Vintage Books, 2018)
A wondrous and shattering novel that follows 12 characters from Native communities, all traveling to the Big Oakland Powwow, and all connected to one another in ways they may not yet realize. Recommended by Ellen and Carolyn.

Ladder to the Light

by Steven Charleston (Broadleaf Books, 2021)
In the same voice that has comforted and challenged readers through daily social-media posts, Choctaw elder and Episcopal priest Steven Charleston offers words of hard-won hope, rooted in daily conversations with the Spirit and steeped in Indigenous wisdom. Recommended by Ellen and Carolyn.

Five Little Indians

by Michelle Good (Deckle Edge, 2020)
Taken from their families and sent to a remote, church-run residential school, five students are barely out of childhood when they are released after years of detention. The paths of the five friends crisscross over the decades as they struggle to overcome the trauma of their years at the Mission. Recommended by Carolyn.

Our History is the Future: Standing Rock versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance

by Nick Estes (Verso, 2019).
How two centuries of Indigenous resistance created the movement proclaiming that "Water is life." Recommended by Tom.

Braiding Sweetgrass

by Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013)
Recommended by Jen and Annie, this book was also chosen by Robbins Library for their Arlington Reads program in March. Please check it out at www.robblinslibrary.org/arlington-reads-together-in-march/

Alliance Sunday: Earthwise Aware

On April 24, the Women's Alliance welcomed to our pulpit Earthwise Aware's executive director and founder, Claire O'Neill. She reflected on the spiritual aspects of communing with the natural world, even in urban spaces. Through mindful observation we can become aware of the awe-inspiring beauty present in our parks, gardens and backyards. Claire notes, "Nature is everywhere if we care to pay attention; it is also there at our feet." Claire's stories and beautiful photographs prompt us to pay attention to and respect our natural world, and become nature champions.

Earthwise Aware was First Parish's Giving First recipient for April. For more about the group, visit www.earthwiseaware.org. A recording of the April 24 service is on the Alliance webpage; search for "alliance" at www.firstparish.info.

Our next gathering will include our annual meeting, on Friday, May 6, from 7:30 to 9 pm, via Zoom only. The opening part may be of interest to Alliance members and women contemplating membership, but the program that follows is open to all. To attend just the program, guests should Zoom in around 7:45 pm, when we will hear art therapist Michaela Kirby present "Quilting as a Means of Transformation," reflections on her experience creating a quilt as part of the Survivor Quilt Project, started by art therapist Michelle Napoli in 2005 as a proactive and preventive response to incest. The project works to counter shame and silence, and to foster responding from an empowered position.

To receive the link, e-mail alliance@firstparish.info.

– The Women's Alliance

Defending Democracy

When Unitarian Universalists face challenges, we unite for action! That is why the Defending Democracy Working Group was organized in January 2022 to promote free and fair elections. We participate in the democratic process through education, advocacy, and organizing, inspired by the second and fifth UU principles: treating people with "justice, equity, and compassion in human relations" and "the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large."

We are working on several initiatives:



UU the Vote

The UUA and UU Mass Action have initiatives to protect voting rights and expand participation. First Parish members have helped by sending postcards, making phone calls, and sending text messages. For more information, contact Mary Cummings.



The Fair Share Amendment

The Fair Share Amendment will be on the state ballot on November 8. It calls for an additional four-percent increase in taxes on annual income over one million dollars. This would produce two billion dollars in badly needed revenue for programs to enhance education and transportation in our state. For more information contact Maureen Dolan.



Economic inequality and democracy

To help educate people about how economic inequality affects our democracy, we plan to show Robert Reich's video "Inequality for All," which provides insights on how wealthy donors have come to dominate the democratic process. For more information contact Joyce Thompson.



Registering to vote

We want to make sure that every member and friend of First Parish knows how to register to vote. For more information contact Bill Gardiner.

Mary, Maureen, Joyce, and Bill can all be reached at defendingdemocracy@firstparish.info. We invite you to join us in these important efforts.

– Bill Gardiner

Defending Democracy Working Group

Ferry Beach in September

We return to Ferry Beach in Maine, for our first "annual" retreat in three years, from September 23 to 25. Everyone is welcome.

"Ferry Beach is a special place and our retreat weekend is a special time. We're thrilled to finally go back this year," says David D'Antonio, long-time co-chair of the retreat planning committee. "There are a number of things to do, including walking trails, enjoying the beach, and attending the Talent/No Talent show!"

Whether you seek connection or contemplation, Ferry Beach has something for you. Attendees organize most activities, which have included yoga and outdoor games. "But it's not just for extroverts," adds Susan Timberlake, another member of the planning committee. There are rocking chairs where you can sit and read or chat, and quiet places for nature walks.

"The retreat is a wonderful way to get to know folks," says Monique Chaplin, who joined First Parish after her first Ferry Beach retreat.

"I can't wait to get back to Ferry Beach with my kids. There's always something to do, or we can choose to do nothing," says Carolyn Carlson, a committee member and lay minister. Registration will be through Realm, First Parish's online directory and database. Contact realm@firstparish.info if you need to set up an account. Please visit our page at firstparish.info/ways-to-get-involved/seeking-community/ferry-beach/.

– Susan Timberlake



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The Spire

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Items may be edited for space and clarity.

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The Spire generally deals with the big picture.
Time-sensitive details belong in the Weekly E-mail
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by Wednesday at noon.

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