

Next issue deadline
Sunday, January 26

The Spire

JANUARY 5, 2020

THE FIRST SUNDAY RECORD

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

Ready to Leap Forward

As many of us may already know, the New Year that we are bravely setting forth upon is a leap year. Of the many significant events we will experience in 2020, the fact that we will have a whole extra day – February 29 – to work or play with is probably not at the top of most people's thoughts. But for those of us on the Stewardship Committee, it looms large, because that day will usher in what we hope will be a big Leap Forward (that's this year's theme!) in First Parish's ability to do its good work: the 2020 Stewardship Campaign, which will take place from March 1 to 15.

Our church is well on the way toward hiring a second minister to help Rev. Marta and the rest of our staff expand their ability to minister to us and to the community around us. Hiring this additional minister

will take significant funds. We have already made a good start toward financing this, but ensuring that this step is sustainable will require us all to be good stewards, giving generously of our hearts and treasure.

In order to nurture the many worthy activities in which we are engaged at First Parish, this year's Stewardship Campaign will include arranging for volunteers to have one-to-one conversations with as many members as possible. We will talk about what we value about our faith community and how each of us can help contribute to it by making – and, we hope, increasing – our annual pledge to the church.

In early February we will be training our volunteers – 65 of them! – in how to initiate the intimate talks with you that we hope will allow us all to Leap Forward in 2020.

– The Stewardship Committee:

Jamie Aronson, David Desjardins, Kathy Greene,
Julius Pereli, Sue Sheffler, Phil Speare, Carolyn White
stewardship@firstparish.info



First Aid for Mental Health

In January you can learn how to perform Mental Health First Aid in a two-class course. You will learn a five-step action plan to help someone experiencing a mental-health crisis. The plan equips you to help loved ones, friends, neighbors, colleagues, and others cope with mental-health or substance-use disorders.

The course will be held at First Parish on two Saturday mornings – January 19 and 25, from 9 am to 1 pm. The instructors are First Parish member Ellen Faran and Joanne Grady-Savard, Executive Director of the Cole Resource Center. Attendance at both sessions is required, and a \$50 fee includes a substantial manual. Participation is limited to 30 people.

You can register at <https://e.onrealm.org/events> or you can sign into Realm, click on *Events* in the panel on the left, and click on *Adult Mental Health First Aid Course*.

Taking Action for Justice

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” – Margaret Mead

The Social Justice Committee is gearing up for a very busy 2020 with a multitude of action opportunities for our thoughtful and committed congregation members. We have a robust calendar for the next few months:

- **UU the Vote – Introduction Webinar**
January 12 / 3:45 to 5:30 pm
- **Border Stories: Arlington/Teosinte Sister City Project**
January 16 / 7 pm
- **Our Environment – Our State House: Taking Legislative Action**
January 17 / 7 to 8:30 pm
- **Rigged: The Voter Suppression Playbook**
January 19 / noon to 2 pm
- **Political Action Workshop**
January 23 / 7 to 9 pm
- **Living our Faith Service**
January 26 / 10 am
- **Annual Social Justice Dinner**
March 7 / 6 pm
- **Blood Drives**
January 8, February 1, March 4, April 4, April 26

Our many Working Groups provide ways to live our faith by joining with others to take action that will change the world. Consider joining:

- **Action Weekend Coordinating Committee**
Melissa Berczuk actionsunday@firstparish.info
- **Blood Drives**
John Hodges blooddrive@firstparish.info
- **Climate Action Working Group**
John Anderson and Alan Linov
climatejustice@firstparish.info
- **Cluster of Refugee Immigration Ministry (ArCS)**
Eric Segal arcscluster@firstparish.info
- **Emergent Issues Working Group**
Alan Linov emergentissues@firstparish.info

- **Education Justice Working Group**
Mary Cummings educationjustice@firstparish.info
- **Racial Justice Coordinating Committee**
Lois Fine racialjustice@firstparish.info
- **UU Urban Ministry**
Maryglenn Vincens and Edward Loveall
uum@firstparish.info
- **UU The Vote**
Mary Cummings socialjustice@firstparish.info

For more information about any of these opportunities, please visit our table after services in the Vestry, or contact socialjustice@firstparish.info.

– Mary Cummings, Co-Chair
Social Justice Committee

Music, Music, Music!

Events in January and February sponsored by the Music Committee promise to be a great deal of fun!

Do you love singing those big numbers from musicals? Our annual Show Tunes Sing is one of our most popular community offerings. On Friday, January 24, Ken Seitz will accompany us as we enjoy classics from *A Chorus Line*, *Cats*, *Hair*, *Hello Dolly*, *Oliver*, *Rent*, *The Sound of Music*, *Willy Wonka*, and many others. Lyrics will be provided. Bring a treat to share at the break. Meet in the Sanctuary from 7 to 8:30 pm.

On February 8, our intergenerational talent show will feature a variety of new and familiar faces, from soloists to choirs, performing folk, jazz, musical theater, classical, and original compositions. Come cheer them on! This is our first fundraiser working toward a new Sanctuary piano. The snow date is February 28.

From 6 to 7 pm we will enjoy appetizers, desserts, and wine, and from 7 to 8:30 enjoy the show. The suggested contribution at the door is \$20 for adults, \$15 for seniors, and \$10 for youth to age 18.

Please RSVP by January 26. Visit our table at coffee hour or contact us at talentshow@firstparish.info.

– Robin Baker, Music Chair
Jonathan Brennand, Music Director



Second Minister Progress

Even as you're reading this edition of *The Spire*, potential candidates to be our second minister are reading all about First Parish in the informational packet we filed with the UUA Transitions Office earlier this month. During the first two weeks in January we'll be collecting names of interested persons. Our goal is to settle on as many as three finalists by the end of this month.

We will conduct face-to-face interviews and hear sermons at neutral pulpits through the first week in March. We hope to make our choice by early spring. Because this is a hired position, not a called position, the committee will pass its recommendation to the Parish Committee for final approval. We fully expect to have our new second minister in time for Ingathering Sunday next fall.

Meanwhile, we hope you can attend a presentation and group discussion of the fascinating results of our recent congregational survey. Mark your calendar for Survey Says! on Sunday, January 12, after the service.

As always, we welcome your questions and input. Grab any one of us at coffee hour or send us a note at secondministersearch@firstparish.info.

— David Whitford
Second Minister Search Committee:
John Anderson, Lois Wainstock Fine,
Rev Marta Flanagan, Carolyn Hodges (co-chair),
Marc Jacobson (co-chair), Tina Silberman

Flowers for Sunday Services

The flowers that brighten our Sanctuary each Sunday morning are donated by parishioners, often with a dedication printed in the Order of Service. If you would like to bring floral beauty to a service, especially during these dark winter days, please sign up on our church website at www.firstparish.info/flowers. If a date is not listed on the signup form it has already been reserved.

The Flower Coordinator can help you order an arrangement from our florist, or you may provide your own. Contact the coordinator at flowers@firstparish.info.

Keep On Composting!

Since October, First Parish has been diverting compostable waste, using the green bins with labels that describe what belongs in the containers. If you haven't noticed them, please become aware of how you throw things away, as composting is an important step to help with climate change.

A special thanks to all those who made this possible: the Climate Action Working Group, the Social Justice Committee, the Parish Committee, Lori Kenschaft, Elliot Trilling, Peggy Gardiner, Office Manager Joan Dyer, and Anita Wolf. And thanks to all of *you* for doing your part.

Absorbing Reading for the New Year

The First Parish Racial Justice Library is tucked under the stairs that lead to the balcony and the Tobey Lounge, and all are welcome to visit. There's also a Racial Justice Library book cart at coffee hour.

Here are some suggested selections for the new year:

- Assimilation, identity, and fragmentation of self are some of the themes explored in Julia Alvarez's novel *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*.
- Rosa Parks had a lot of company in her work for equality. Learn more about Jo Ann Robinson and other courageous women in Robinson's memoir, *The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Women Who Started It*.
- Parents, check out *Hate Hurts: How Children Learn and Unlearn Prejudice*, which offers practical tips, sound advice, and role-playing to deal with difficult situations.
- Have you visited the African Meeting House on Beacon Hill? There you'll find the school that features in *Sarah's Long Walk*, about the fight to end legal segregation in Boston public schools.
- In *Unitarian Universalists of Color*, 15 contributors share their stories of love, challenges, faith journeys, hope, and despair.

To check out a book, find the box with index cards, locate your book alphabetically, fill out the card, and place it in the back of the box. You can check a book out for one month. If you have any questions, please contact racialjustice@firstparish.info.



Making Connections at First Parish

Newcomers to First Parish, or anyone seeking deeper involvement here, are invited to fill out a Connection Card to receive our weekly e-mail bulletin, which is chock full of information about the dizzying array of activities going on in this busy place. Provide your contact information, and (if you wish) indicate your interest in various aspects of life in our community.

You can pick up a Connection Card after church in the Vestry (the coffee hour room), in the lobby before the service, and under the *Welcome* sign at coffee hour.

The cards are also a handy way to let the church office know if you have a new address or contact information. Help us stay up to date!

Hosting Our Guests from Gagy

It's been a long time since First Parish had visitors from Gagy (2012, to be exact), but this summer we finally succeeded in hosting a multigenerational group from our partner congregation in the village of Gagy (pronounced "Godge"), in Transylvania, Romania.

Back in 2012, Rev. Zoltan Gal (Zoli) and his wife, Magdika, made their first visit to Arlington after Marta led our initial visit to Gagy in 2011, right after First Parish voted unanimously to partner with Gagy at a congregational meeting in 2010.

From August 28 to September 4, three new visitors from Gagy (in addition to Zoli and Magdika) made the journey. They included the ex-President of the Gagy congregation, Mihaly Pal, his wife, Edit, and youth group leader Arpad Fazakas, none of whom had flown on a plane before, much less visited the U.S.

The groundwork for this visit was laid about a year ago, when we realized that it really could happen. A planning committee was formed, led by myself as interim chair, with Holly Herring, John and Carol Chamberlain, Ellen Leigh, Julie Dunn, Jo Anne Preston, John Burt, and Julius Pereli.

Because having a partner church is a congregational-level commitment, our goal was to engage and get support from as many First Parish people and groups as possible, especially since our visitors represented a broad cross-section of the Gagy congregation. Through the hard work of the committee, we were able to obtain financial support from the Parish Committee (who made a pledge contingent on us raising a certain amount first), the Women's Alliance, visitors to Gagy

from previous trips, and dozens of individual First Parish members. Using the Realm congregational-membership software made individual contributions easy. We were also lucky enough to be awarded a \$500 grant directly from the Unitarian Universalist Partner Church Council.

And I haven't even mentioned fundraising events yet. We started with a small nest egg from previous events, such as the annual Transylvanian folk dancing event organized by Ellen Leigh. The largest fundraiser was the Hungarian-themed congregational dinner in June, organized by Julius. That event triggered the Parish Committee contribution, and also happened to coincide with the contribution from the Alliance. Once all those things came together in June, we knew the visit would happen.

The visit went way too fast, filled with home-cooked meals with various members of the First Parish community (including Rev. Marta), sightseeing around Cambridge and Boston (including major UU sites), organizing and facilitating a Partner Church-themed service, and a relaxing weekend at Michael and Holly's home by the beach in Rockport (with a visit to the local UU church). We concluded with a well-attended community dinner.

In addition to the Partner Church Committee, I'd like to extend a huge thanks to the Bogstad and Burt families for hosting Arpad, and to Julius and Martha Pereli for hosting the four adults. Thanks as well to Jo Guthrie for all her assistance in planning the Sunday service. And a final thanks to all who hosted meals, provided transportation, attended events, and have supported the Partner Church project over the past nine years.

The visit was a much-needed boost for the partnership project, and strengthened and reinvigorated both sides. We got to share our lives here with key figures in the Gagy congregation, and return their generous hospitality from First Parish's two trips there. Now that full visits have happened in both directions, keeping the momentum moving forward is important.

Discussions have already started as to what we can do together next, with a youth work exchange near the top of the list. But we need more help to keep this going. Please e-mail partnerchurch@firstparish.info to find out how you can help.

— Michael Friedman, retiring Chair
Partner Church Committee

Another Successful Fair

We did it again, welcoming the community into our sacred space for a day of delicious dining, great music, hand-crafted items, books, jewelry, and bargains galore. Our annual Harvest Moon Fair raised over \$17,000 to support the many ways our church seeks to do good in the world. Much gratitude to Aaron Kitzmiller for his steady hand guiding this huge, and hugely rewarding, effort!

Part of the tradition is publishing the receipts by booth or activity, even though all the proceeds wind up in the same place. Each year our intrepid Fair Treasurers – Ken Crasco, Rick Eastwick, Jim Jolley, and Dave Terkla – faithfully submit the details. Each year your *Spire* editor ponders whether or not we should do this, as it might foster an unwelcome spirit of competition. But who am I to meddle with tradition? With the caveat that these earnings do not indicate the value of any particular booth or activity, here is the breakdown.

Art Gallery	637.50
Artisan Table	1,010.77
Attic Treasures	1,316.10
Blue Table	614.49
Book Nook	1,622.00
Buttery	484.00
Harvest Moon Café	1,558.85
Fragile Fancies	642.40
Greenery	384.45
Holly Shop	927.50
Jewelry Box	3,953.95
Local History	51.00
Quilt Raffle	570.00
Reboots & Rewinds	1,502.00
Stitch & Sew	295.00
Toyland	1,296.62
Tuck Box	1,165.35
General Income	187.74
Subtotal	18,219.72
General Expenses	(739.72)
Net Proceeds	\$17,480.00

ParSnips

Into the New Year

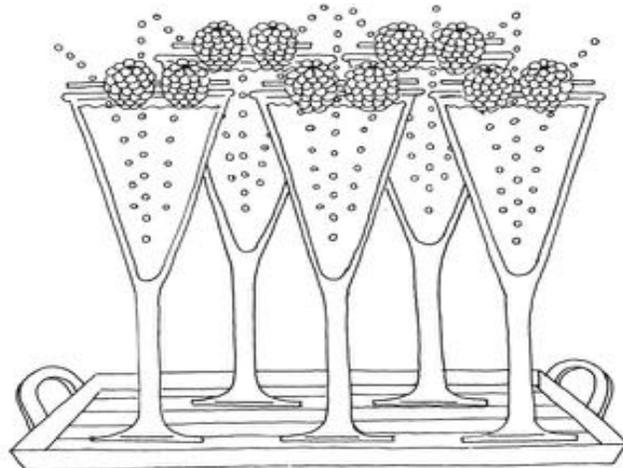
This month the Parish Committee began budget planning for our next fiscal year. We are starting early to make sure the transition to a second minister goes smoothly, and are working closely with the Stewardship Committee to develop a campaign that excites First Parish members about our growth.

The RE wing has a new roof that should put an end to leaks. Many thanks to the Property Committee for dedicated work on this important safeguard of our building's future.

In other roofing news, our solar panels save us money every month. During the spring and summer we weren't billed *anything* for electricity – in fact we generated credits worth about \$2,800. We can use these credits to cover our bills for at least the next three months. Sustainability is alive and well at First Parish!

The Second Minister Search Committee has collected more surveys than expected (a great thing) and are reviewing the results. They will soon make the results available to the congregation.

– Celia Wcislo, Clerk





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Kenneth Seitz, Director of Music Emeritus

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The Spire

Diane Shriver, Editor

Next issue: Sunday, February 2
Submissions due by Sunday, January 26
Items may be edited for space and clarity.

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If you do not have e-mail, contact the office.

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