

Next issue deadline
Sunday, March 29

The Spire

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THE FIRST SUNDAY RECORD

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

Leap Forward!

Our 2020 Stewardship Campaign begins today!

We who serve on the Stewardship Committee find ourselves reflecting on themes of flight and bounding energy. We are reminded of a poem by e. e. cummings, "I Will Wade Out," in which he proclaims that he will

leap into the ripe air

Alive

with closed eyes

to dash against darkness

There is indeed much darkness in the world to counter these days, and in this weighty Leap Year of 2020, charged with consequence in so many ways, we are not only challenged but heartened by the strength and support of our faith community, from which we draw sustenance to witness to the principles we affirm each Sunday.

Like the poet, we are leaping forward in our 2020 Stewardship Campaign, which begins today and ends on March 15. The campaign is crucial to allowing our church – that is, all of us – to continue to do good work for each other, our neighbors, and people in the larger world.

Think of the many inspired efforts in which we are engaged: religious education, social justice, community building, bringing solace to those with great challenges in their lives. None of these can take place without the financial support of all of us, which we renew each year when we make our pledge to First Parish.



The air is particularly "ripe" (to steal from cummings again) in our community this year, as we search for a second minister to join Rev. Marta Flanagan and the rest of our staff. Our need for this additional minister is a testament to the vibrant growth we have experienced here. Your financial pledge helps us continue and expand our work.

By now, each of you should have received a letter asking you to consider increasing your financial support of First Parish. Some of you will be contacted by Visiting Stewards, who have volunteered to reach out to you to share stories about the meaning of First Parish in our lives, thank you for past support, and discuss your pledge. If you are contacted by a steward, please be welcoming and friendly, and enjoy a pleasant visit.

We hope that, after considering your personal circumstances carefully, that you make the most generous gift you possibly can, cheered to be part of a centuries-long leap of benevolence aimed at "dashing against darkness" for generations to come.

Members of the Stewardship Committee will be at a table in the Vestry after the service for the next three Sundays. Please visit us with questions, pledges, or simply to share good fellowship!

– The Stewardship Committee:
Jamie Aronson, David Desjardins,
Kathy Greene, Julius Pereli,
Sue Sheffler, Phil Speare, Carolyn White



Our Second Minister Search

From an impressive 17 applications we have chosen three finalists, each of whom spent a weekend in Arlington. They had dinner at a committee member's home, spent all day Saturday in interviews, had a walking tour of our building and a driving tour of Arlington, and gave a sermon in a neutral pulpit. This exhaustive (and exhausting!) process was joyful and enlightening for everyone involved.

This month we will rank the finalists, alert the UUA, and hope for a happy match. Parish Committee gets the final say. Assuming all goes well, we hope to introduce our second minister next month, to start work in September.

Of course, there are no guarantees. We could lose the candidate we really want to another congregation. The UUA provides for a second round later in the spring, or we might extend the search into next year.

As always, we welcome your feedback at coffee hour or at secondministersearch@firstparish.info.

– David Whitford, for the committee:

John Anderson, Lois Fine,
Rev. Marta Flanagan, Carolyn Hodges (co-chair),
Marc Jacobson (co-chair), Tina Silberman

Dance for Dignity

On Saturday, March 14, we have the opportunity to support the good work of the ArCS Cluster, which helps refugees and asylum-seekers establish lives in our communities by mobilizing a network of local volunteers. The cluster now supports 18 people through its outreach programs, as well as a Passages program for short-term support of refugees not housed by the cluster. The ArCS Cluster was the first cluster to explicitly welcome LGBTQ asylum-seekers, and has now hosted people from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Liberia, Libya, Pakistan, Djibouti, and Uganda.

From 7 to 10:30 pm, you can dance in the Sanctuary to classic rock from Stanley & the Undercovers, enjoy complimentary international desserts and a cash bar, and witness a fabulous set by She-Boom, “The First Post-Menopausal Brazilian Percussion Band,” all the way from Somerville. We will hear from folks who’ve fled their homes in the hope of saving their lives.

All proceeds will support the ArCS Cluster as well as the Cambridge Foundation’s United Legal Defense Fund for Immigrants, which provides critical legal

services for our immigrant neighbors and friends who are being subjected to detention and deportation. The suggested donation for tickets is \$25, available in advance and at the door.

Meaningful Action on Climate Change

The Town of Arlington has a program that lets residents switch to green electricity that is generated from local renewable sources instead carbon-producing fossil fuels. At www.arlingtoncca.com you can find a description of the program, answers to frequently asked questions, a calculator to determine your individual costs, and an on-line form to sign up. Nearby towns have similar programs, and you can find links to those and other information at firstparish.info/climate.

The amount of renewable energy that Arlington residents get by default is 26 percent. You can “opt up” to increase the amount of renewables to 50 or 100 percent green energy. Opting up costs a little bit more for the electricity you use (a modestly higher amount per kilowatt hour), but it lets us contribute as individuals to a more sustainable environment by spurring development of renewable electricity-generation capacity.

Arlington and other towns participate in an initiative called Community Choice Aggregation (CCA), which empowers us to create large buying groups to provide energy at a lower rate. Grouping residential accounts creates economies of scale and thus lower rates. It also enables residents to purchase green renewable energy.

First Parish’s Climate Action Working Group, Mothers Out Front, and Sustainable Arlington are all involved in supporting this program. Please take a moment and choose to OPT-UP!

– The Climate Action Working Group



Who Will Inspire Us?

At the Living Our Faith service on Sunday, January 26, we heard members Gabriella Hakim, David Desjardins, and Heidi Swarts explain how their Unitarian Universalist faith grounds their work for social justice. That annual service has a counterpart, the Shinn service, when we hear about a social justice topic from someone outside our congregation. In December that speaker was Rev. Kathleen McTigue, who directs the Unitarian Universalist College of Social Justice, and about a year before we heard from Rev. Mariama White-Hammond.

Who will inspire us to take action next year? The Social Justice Committee invites you to suggest speakers for these services. A task group will contact potential speakers, make selections, and coordinate with our worship associates and ministers to prepare for these services. If you would like to be part of that group, or if you just want to know more about the process, please contact us at socialjustice@firstparish.info.

– Social Justice Committee

Save a Faraway Date

Save the date for our 20th annual Ferry Beach Retreat on October 2 to 4. Whether you are a newcomer to First Parish or a long-time member, whether you are seeking connection and conversation or quiet and

contemplation, this retreat has something for you. Come on your own, bring your family (with or without kids), or bring a friend.

“We love Ferry Beach because there are a number of things to do,” says one attendee, “including walking the forest trails, enjoying the beach, chatting with friends, sitting on the porch watching the kids run around, and, of course, enjoying the Talent/No Talent show!”

Says another, “I loved reading in the rocking chairs, doing group jigsaw puzzles, and judging the Squirrel Hockey tournament. The weekend is what you make of it. Watching the stars and being a part of the UU family was a treasured part of getting away.”

The 32-acre retreat center has an outdoor firepit and chapel, pine forest campsites, a dining hall, many gathering spaces, and 900 feet of beachfront. You can learn more at <https://www.ferrybeach.org/>.

Registration will be through Realm, our on-line directory and database at <https://firstparish.info/realm-database/>. If you don't have an account, please e-mail realm@firstparish.info to set one up, so you'll be ready when registration opens in the spring. (You do not need to be a member of First Parish to be eligible for an account.) Scholarships will be available.

If you have questions, please contact the Ferry Beach committee at ferrybeach@firstparish.info.

ParSnips

David Klingsberg, our treasurer, reports that our first seven months of income and expenses are going well, and we are on target to meet our projected budget.

The Second Minister Search Committee has narrowed the field to three candidates and have met with them all. Also, the search for a new office manager is underway as we prepare for the retirement of our much-loved current manager, Joan Dyer.

The Parish Committee (ParCom) attended the Stewardship campaign training, and are gratified that close to 55 stewards will visit hundreds of First Parish members starting March 1. Please be welcoming when they reach out to you!

Curious about how our volunteer governing board works to guide the busy life of our community?

ParCom gathers on the third Tuesday of each month, from 7 to 9 pm, and our meetings are open to all.

You can find the minutes of those meetings, and other important church information, in the Church Workings section of our website, www.firstparish.info. The link is in the footer of every page, along with links to Realm and the UUA. The Church Workings section also contains our annual meeting reports, the names and terms of all the members of all the committees, and our policies and procedures. Some information requires our standard password *thespire*.

This section is still a work in progress, so if there are other “church workings” you'd like to see there, please send an e-mail at website@firstparish.org.

– Celia Wcislo, Clerk



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The Spire

Diane Shriver, Editor

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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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by Wednesday at noon.

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