

Next issue deadline
Sunday, May 31

The Spire

MAY 3, 2020

THE FIRST SUNDAY RECORD

VOL. 62, No. 9

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

Our New Second Minister!

We are excited to welcome Rev. Erica Richmond, who will join us this fall after she completes her work at North Parish in North Andover, where she has been Assistant Minister of Faith Formation for the past year. She was chosen from a highly competitive national pool after an exhaustive, ten-month process. Both the Search Committee and the Parish Committee unanimously voted to hire her. We can all take pride in this happy outcome, whether we completed the congregational survey, participated in the Beyond Categorical Thinking workshop, or offered feedback.

We chose Erica for her lifelong involvement with our liberal religion. She grew up in First Parish in Brookline, where she “learned what it means to seek, to question, to challenge, and to profess.” She vacationed with her family, and also worked, at Ferry Beach and Star Island. While attending Clark University she served as group president and worship leader of the Clark University Unitarian Universalists.

We chose Erica for her demonstrated commitment to social justice. In high school she was active in student protests against high-stakes testing as a way to begin to address the ways in which educational disparities overlap with race and class. After graduating from Clark with a degree in international development, she stayed to earn a master’s in community development, which prepared her for work as a community organizer with a particular focus on women’s issues and criminal justice reform. These commitments have continued throughout her ministry.

We chose Erica for her intelligence and humility, and for the depth and complexity of her calling to ministry, which led her to Union Theological Seminary in New York. By choosing Union over other programs, she sought to explore theological perspectives different from her own early humanist

experience. One of the “greatest gifts of Unitarian Universalism,” she wrote in her ministerial record, is that “it has allowed me to hold multiple truths at the same time.” She grounds her own “theology of hope in the fact that we continually show up again and again to recommit to this beloved community.

We reconstitute our world in tangible and intangible ways. It happens through prayer, through presence, through meaning-making, through tears, and through recognition of the holy and hope.”

We chose Erica for her warmth, compassion, and profound pastoral presence, nurtured during six years as a hospital chaplain in Seattle and Hartford – work in which “I am reminded again and again that hope is complicated,” she wrote. “That it requires us to move beyond wishing. That what I pray for might not be a cure but rather that my patient knows the blessing of love, support, and

connection. To accompany someone in unknown waiting is holy and hard work.”

And we chose Erica for the persuasive power of the testimonials we gathered from the people who know her best. Former colleagues describe her as “the most thoughtful and compassionate person I know” and “a bright spot on the team;” someone who “sees religious diversity as a way to build community,” who is “always reading, open to other’s perspectives,” and who “finds joy in finding new ways to connect.”

Erica will offer the homily in our virtual service on May 3. Afterwards she’ll remain for a 45-minute Q&A moderated by the Search Committee.

As always, the committee welcomes your questions and comments at secondministersearch@firstparish.info.

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



Easing Food Insecurity

The Alliance is pleased to announce a contribution of \$1,500 to FoodLink, as the need for fresh food and the waiting list for people who need it is increasing.

Food insecurity has grown in Arlington and many surrounding communities, including Malden, Lowell, Lexington, Billerica, and Lawrence. According to Judi Bohn, a FoodLink board member, Medford was particularly underserved even before the pandemic. FoodLink is receiving calls from new groups and individuals who need food, as well as from places offering it for free. The organization is responding to this need with increased staff time to “rescue” food donations and deliver them to more recipients.

FoodLink provides the Arlington food pantry, now called Arlington Eats, with all of its fresh food; without it, the group could offer only canned goods. FoodLink is mostly powered by volunteers, but it needs funds to pay its two on-site staff members and an administrator. The Covid-19 crisis is forcing them to stagger shifts and pay overtime to keep their staff, now working in isolation, safe from infection as they try to remain open seven days a week.

Please feel free to add your donations to that of the Alliance. Visit foodlinkma.org.

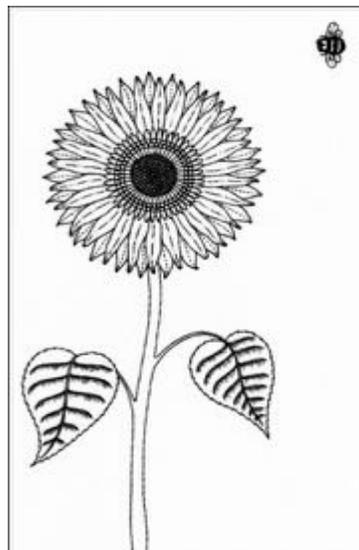
A Homegrown National Forest

Wondering how to help the natural world? According to researcher Doug Tallamy, the best thing we can do is convert our lawns into what he calls a “homegrown national forest.”

For over a decade Tallamy has been trying to draw attention to the fact that our landscaping ignores the decimation of pollinators.

A narrow focus on ornamental and invasive plants, tidy mulched lawns, and plants bred for double blooms and new colors have left bees, butterflies, moths, and birds dying in search of plants to sustain them.

The current crisis isn't just about the fact that more than 40 percent of honeybees and 70 percent of all flying insects have



vanished; 80 to 95 percent of all the plant species in our food chain depend on insect and animal pollinators. Without them, it's only a matter of time before humans don't have food, either.

Tallamy says that if each landowner converted some of their lawn to native plants, we could restore a semblance of ecosystem function to more than 20 million acres of what is now ecological wasteland. Your “pocket meadow,” no matter how small, can link with others to create green corridors to sustain birds, bees, moths, and butterflies.

To make a pocket meadow, cover a section of lawn with cardboard, or newspaper 10 sheets deep. Add rocks, shredded leaves, grass clippings, or mulch to keep the covering in place. Leave it until next spring.

While you're waiting, convert any outdoor night lighting to motion-detector lights so that pollinator moths don't bash themselves all night long, a significant source of attrition.

When spring rolls around, poke holes in the covering and put in native plants. Local sources include Garden in the Woods, Prairie Moon Nursery, Russell's Garden Center, and Mahoney's. Native plants are sturdy, spread quickly, and soon make enough to share. Here are the top ten local native flowers for supporting pollinators, according to the National Wildlife Federation:

- Goldenrod (*Solidago*) supports 115 species of pollinators (and doesn't cause hay fever, a bum rap that belongs to ragweed, which blooms at the same time).
- Aster (*Aster*) supports 112 species. Avoid the cultivars and get true natives.
- Sunflowers (*Helianthus*) support 73 species.
- Joe Pye (*Eupatorium*) supports 42 species.
- Morning Glories (*Ipomoea*) support 39 species. Many introduced varieties are extremely invasive.
- Sedges (*Carex*) support 36 species.
- Honeysuckle (*Lonicera*) supports 36 species. Do not plant Japanese Honeysuckle or invasive alien honeysuckles! Native species are wonderful for hummingbirds and butterflies.
- Lupine (*Lupinus*) supports 33 species, including endangered butterflies such as the Karner Blue.
- Violets (*Viola*) support 29 species.
- Geraniums (*Geranium*) support 23 species. Get natives, not hanging baskets in supermarkets.

Talk to Peggy Gardiner about getting National Wildlife Certification. You don't need much more than a birdbath and a few native plants to receive a nice plaque that will show people you are not being merely unkempt, but ecologically wise.

Visit nwf.org/garden-for-wildlife/certify, and feel free to contact Peggy or myself. We have such appropriate names!

– Cathie Desjardins

Love Endures All Things Pandemic



The bad news: Our wedding festivities, scheduled for June 13, are postponed.

The good news: We remain as committed to one another as ever!

When it is safe and wise to celebrate, we will be sure to let you know our plans.

– Charlie Duffy and
Marta Flanagan

ParSnips

A New Kind of Annual Meeting

With our world turned upside-down, we've had to re-think our Annual Meeting. With advice, guidelines, and technical suggestions from the UUA, we've decided to move the Annual Meeting on-line to Zoom. In order to ensure it all runs smoothly, we are also pushing it out two weeks, to Sunday, May 31.

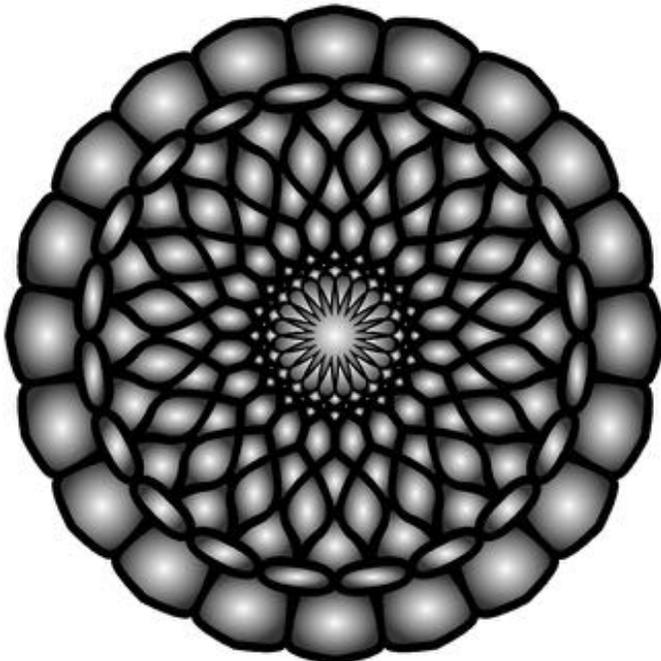
In the meantime, our wonderful Tech Team, who so successfully brought us all to Zoom for worship, will work with the Parish Committee through all the logistical issues to ensure that we count members to establish a quorum, discuss issues, and, most importantly, vote on the budget, staying as closely in line with both the laws that govern organizations such

as ours and our own bylaws. We will provide details in advance of the meeting.

We have also decided to postpone some of the business usually conducted at Annual Meeting until the fall. In particular, we will not elect new officers or standing-committee members. Making changes in committees when we are not able to gather and talk with one another easily seems an unnecessary burden for all. Instead, we are asking any committee members whose term is up if they are willing to stay in place over the summer. When we return, the Leadership Development Committee will pick up its work of recruiting committee members, and we will have a congregational meeting as soon as is reasonable to vote them in and to ratify our on-line votes.

We will send more information as plans unfold. Feel free to ask questions at parishexec@firstparish.info.

– Marie Meter, Chair
Parish Committee



Annual Meeting

via Zoom

Sunday, May 31

after the virtual service

Reflections

First Parish, and a New Renter

Many of our First Parish senior members have a second base. We see each other at Arlington Senior Center activities: thrice weekly exercise, monthly sings, Shakespeare readings

arts classes, coffee in the drop-in lounge. The building, at 27 Maple Street, formerly Central School, now houses the Arlington Center for the Arts on its elevator-accessible third and fourth floors. As plans developed for renovation of the lower floors, the Council on Aging and the Arlington Seniors Association joined forces to find homes for the myriad activities housed there. First Parish arranged to rent Council on Aging space on Mondays and occasional Tuesdays for a few of these activities: Monday exercises at 9 am in our Vestry, coffee hour, congregate lunch, and Tai Chi in the Stanton Parlor. On the second Tuesday of each month, the Maple Street Singers (open to all) meet in our parlor. In March the seniors came together for a first exercise class and coffee hour and the first of the second Tuesday sings. They were pleased with the welcoming feeling of the new and temporary quarters. One week later, everything changed, as we all accommodated to Covid-19.

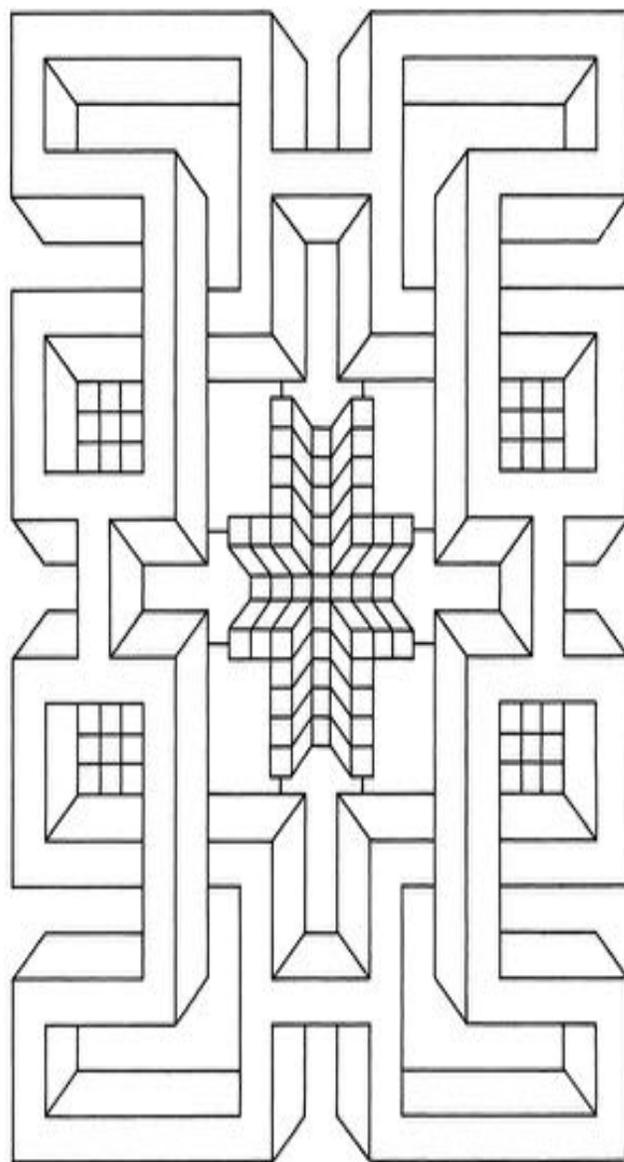
For our seniors, many of whom live alone, chances to gather stopped. For COA/ASA leaders, it was time to scramble: classes are now online. On our First Parish calendar, you will see bi-monthly sings happening virtually. Exercise classes, with an important social component, have resumed. COA is paying our usual instructors and encouraging seniors to join in without fees. As with all of us, there has been rapid learning about leading and participating in an online environment. What kind of equipment and software do we need? For me, as a senior, this time has been a poignant sample of life as it may be in my later years, when going out is no longer easy, or even an option. We have learned the potential of virtual connection, and we've learned the importance of taking care that our elders are connected.

Recently I heard a lovely singing of Bob Dylan's "Forever Young," and I was ambivalent about his lyrics. Why is young, metaphorical or literal, held up as the good? What does that say about the alternative? If we are fortunate, we will find out what it is like to be old – definitely a mixed bag, as is being young. We

want to treasure our time and our companions all along the journey.

We, of 27 Maple Street, want to thank First Parish, of 630 Mass Ave., for opening doors to us. In a time indefinite, we will be back to the Vestry and the Parlor, as our home away from home. Come into First Parish on a Monday morning and you will find the Vestry lively with music and exercising elders, ranging in age from 60s to 90s. Walk on through – no problem – just a quick glance or two and perhaps an acknowledgment from a First Parish friend. We are grateful for your warm welcome.

– Cheri Minton, 77 years old





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The Spire

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Submissions due by Sunday, May 31
Items may be edited for space and clarity.

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The Spire generally deals with the big picture.
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