

Next issue deadline
Sunday, May 30

The Spire

MAY 2, 2021

THE FIRST SUNDAY RECORD

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

Together, Stronger Still!

In spite of everything, our Stewardship Campaign has raised more than \$730,500, exceeding our goal of \$705,000! This is a wonderful achievement, and even more heartening is that a wide swath of First Parish members brought it about: 260 households. A good number came from brand-new contributors, and we are deeply grateful to these first-time donors.

Among the good works that this generosity will enable are two projects our community considers crucial in our challenging new world. One is to increase safety and flexibility in our meetinghouse by making improvements to the HVAC system and airflow. The second is to install equipment to allow remote participation during in-person services.

If you have not yet made your pledge, it's not too late! You may do so via Realm or by contacting Sara Hidalgo at the First Parish office, at 781-648-3799. All gifts, large and small, are welcome, and indeed crucial to First Parish's continued mission in the world.

Thank you all, beloved community members!

— The Stewardship Committee:
Jamie Aronson, David Desjardin,
Rev. Erica Richmond, Sue Sheffler,
Phil Speare, Heidi Swarts

Annual Meeting May 23 at Noon

Our Annual Meeting be held online, with the waiting area opened after the service and half an hour before the meeting begins. Volunteer tech team members will admit everyone, counting carefully to make sure that we have enough members eligible to vote for the meeting to take place.

We will celebrate the volunteers who have made our community so vibrant this year, elect new members to the Parish Committee, fill some positions, and elect members to standing committees. We will review last year's budget and learn more about the coming year as we prepare to approve next year's budget.

The week before the meeting, you can read Annual Reports from our committees and groups on the church website, at www.firstparish.info. E-mail parishexec@firstparish.info with any questions.

Please register in advance. This makes the process much easier for our tech team! The registration link is:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZlIdeisqj0iGdXMe5yuwm9gEZjQ-n3yy8Dy>



Congregational Snapshot

Where do we live?

First Parish in Arlington includes 437 adult members representing 344 households. Nearly three quarters of those households (248) are in Arlington. The overwhelming majority of the remaining member households are in neighboring communities: Cambridge, Somerville, Medford, Belmont, Lexington, and Winchester. About one out of a hundred households in Arlington are members of First Parish (1.3 percent of 19,065).

Who are our neighbors?

The population of Arlington is 45,000. If Arlington had only 100 people, then:

- 76 would be non-Hispanic white
- 12 would be Asian
- 4 would be Hispanic
- 3 would be African American
- 40 would rent their home
- 21 would speak a language other than English at home
- 20 would be born outside the U. S.
- 21 would be younger than 18
- 17 would be over 65
- 10 would experience food insecurity

Sources

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/arlingtontownmiddlesexcountymassachusetts/VET605219>

<https://datausa.io/profile/geo/arlington-ma/>

<https://www.arlingtonma.gov/departments/health-human-services/health-department/coronavirus-information>



Music, Music, Music!



Community Sing with Mark Miller

Thursday, May 6, at 7 pm

Enter into jubilant song and spiritual warmth with renowned composer, conductor, and musician Mark Miller. His hymns and songs focusing on racial equity and social justice issues are congregational favorites. E-mail music@firstparish.info to get the Zoom link.



Maple Street Mid-Day Sing

Tuesday, May 11, from 12:30 to 2 pm

Sing along, with your Zoom box on mute, to selections from *South Pacific* and songs of the WWII era, with a tribute to Vera Lynn. We will pause in the middle for breakout groups and introductions. Newcomers are always welcome. Please e-mail groupsing@firstparish.info to get on the mailing list for the link.



The Lusty Month of May / Diane Taraz

Saturday, May 15, at 7:30 pm

Celebrate springtime in all its vitality! Diane will start with a classic from *Camelot* and proceed through various genres, all linked by an ageless theme. E-mail diane@dianetaraz.com for the Zoom link.

Alliance Meeting and Program

On Friday, May 14, at 7 pm, the Women's Alliance will host an evening of reflections, on-line socializing in small groups, the annual business meeting, and a fine program.

The annual meeting may be of particular interest to Alliance members and women interested in becoming members; we will review the Board officers and vote on next year's budget. Our program, beginning at about 7:45, will be of interest to all. Please invite family and friends to join us as we hear from Elizabeth Hunter and Jo Guthrie about Theatre@First, which they founded in 2003. They will talk about this totally volunteer theater company based in Somerville, including its origins, accomplishments, role during the pandemic, and plans for the future.

Zoom invitations are sent via the Alliance Notices list. E-mail alliance@firstparish.info to be placed on the list.

Need Help Zooming?

Struggling with technology issues as you try to connect to our Sunday services? You can find help at the new Zoom Tech Section on our church website, at <https://firstparish.info/tech-support/>.

A Perennial Favorite!

Start potting now for the First Parish Plant Swap, which will be held at 10 am on Saturday, May 15 in the church courtyard. It's a great way to groom your own garden, acquire new plants, and meet others who share your enthusiasm for growing things. This is our eleventh year!

Bring pots to share of seedlings, plant babies, and divided perennials. If possible, label your contributions with the plant name, your name, and growing information (sun/shade, etc.).



At 10:15 sharp, we'll have a quick tour of what's on offer and take turns choosing plants to take home until all have been claimed.

All are welcome. There are usually extra plants looking for a good home, so come look even if you can't bring anything this year.

Looking Way Ahead

Mark your calendars for our Fall Clean-up Day, when we prepare our church grounds to meet the coming season. On Saturday, September 25, help trim hedges, rake leaves, and generally make our highly visible corner of Arlington seem welcoming and tidy.

E-mail property@firstparish.info to learn more or to let the Property Committee know you plan to participate.

Looking Way, Way Ahead

Our first blood drive of autumn will be Saturday, October 2, from 8 am to 2 pm. Donors, please make an appointment online with the American Red Cross Blood Donor app, at <https://www.redcrossblood.org/>, or by calling 1-800-RED-CROSS. Volunteers are always needed; please reach out to John Hodges at blooddrive@firstparish.info. Give the gift of life!

Reflections

A Revolutionary Legacy

April 4, 2021, marked 53 years since the assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. This year it was also Easter Sunday, providing a symbolic remembrance of Dr. King's concerns, hopes, and vision. The assassination of Dr. King cut short a life devoted to social justice and the reconstitution of society to enable the creation of the Beloved Community. His murder derailed his last chapter, the Poor People's Campaign, which challenged what he termed the "triple evils": systemic racism, poverty and capitalist inequality, and military empire. Often ignored in the yearly honoring of Dr. King on his birthday holiday is his fierce opposition to American militarism and how brutally his work was undermined, and his vision attacked, by regressive forces, including the FBI, Southern governors and police chiefs, Northern mayors, a significant portion

of the Democratic Party, many white liberals, and some establishment Black leaders.

What is easily missed is that Dr. King and Malcolm X were primary leaders in a Black united front and a larger anti-imperialist front, which made them so dangerous to the system. For years the FBI waged a campaign against Dr. King, attempting to destroy his character and prod him to suicide. A 1999 civil trial brought by the King family found abundant evidence of a high-level conspiracy in King's assassination on April 4, 1968; it was not a lone gunman.

Dr. King's last public act was marching with and supporting sanitation workers in Memphis, where he called for a general strike in support of the low-paid workers and their struggle for a living wage, safe conditions, and dignity. Dr. King viewed the Memphis strike as an important component in the Poor People's Campaign. He was preparing to launch an action in

Washington in May, gathering representatives of Native American, Mexican-American, and Appalachian populations, and other supporters, to demand federal funding for full employment, a guaranteed annual income, anti-poverty programs, and housing for the poor, a first step in a radical redistribution of wealth. As an eleven-year-old, I vividly recall driving past the campaign's Resurrection City encampment on the National Mall before it was torn down after 42 days in June.

Shortly before his death Dr. King wrote that the "black revolution" was "forcing America to face all of its interrelated flaws – racism, poverty, militarism, and materialism. It is exposing the evils that are rooted deeply in the whole structure of our society. It reveals systemic rather than superficial flaws and suggests that radical reconstruction of society itself is the real issue to be faced."

One year to the day before his assassination, Dr. King delivered his "Beyond Vietnam" speech at the Riverside Church in New York City, in which he called out U.S. foreign policy – particularly in the Vietnam War – for depleting the country of its moral vitality and financial resources for fighting poverty at home, while stating that America was approaching "spiritual death" if it continued to prioritize militarism and war over basic human needs. He called for a "moral revolution of values," a transformation of society in the image of peace and embracing life, by rejecting a politics of death.

Speaking to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in 1967, while addressing the intersection of racism and capitalism, Dr. King stated, "It means ultimately coming to see that the problem of racism, the problem of economic exploitation, and the problem of war are all tied together. These are the triple evils that are all interrelated."

In an interview in early 1968, Dr. King told journalist David Halberstam, "For years I labored with the idea of reforming the existing institutions of society, a little change here, a little change there. Now I feel quite differently. I think you've got to have a reconstruction of the entire society, a revolution of values."



The real Dr. King – in contrast to the sanitized King most often portrayed for the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday – was anti-racist, anti-capitalist, and anti-imperialist, a position he shared with Malcolm X and many other activists and leaders around the world at that time, and a position that many in the Movement for Black Lives, including scholar-activists

Ibram X. Kendi and Keeanga-Yamahtta-Taylor, have taken.

I am inspired by Dr. King's boldness and trenchant analysis of the problem of the triple evils that continue to plague our country and the world. I am not alone in considering him one of the great revolutionaries in U.S. and world history. Today, as in 1968, this country has an inhumane foreign policy, wages distant wars, and has a far-flung global military footprint (800 military bases in 80 countries), all of which have helped create at home a heavily militarized and surveilled society with immiseration for many.

Despite the important features of the current American Rescue Plan Act to lift up low-income and impoverished Americans, 53 percent of every federal discretionary dollar goes to the military, which deprives the country of being able to meet the housing, employment, economic security, health care, and education needs, and overall health and well-being, of all Americans. Moreover, pro-austerity and anti-poor economic policies since the 1970s have kept the country in a spiritual death spiral since Dr. King's time, only amplified by never-ending wars, a draconian criminal-justice system, extreme police brutality, and harmful immigration and refugee policies.

As in Jesus's time or Dr. King's time, the radical reconstruction of society today will require nothing less than a revolutionary social justice movement. Understanding Martin Luther King Jr.'s courage, vision, and politics continues to be essential for building that movement.

– Tom Estabrook, a member of the Racial Justice Coordinating Committee and the Parish Committee.
The views in this piece are his alone.



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The Spire

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The Spire generally deals with the big picture.
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