

Next issue deadline
Sunday, October 25

The Spire

OCTOBER 4, 2020

THE FIRST SUNDAY RECORD

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

Caring for One Another

Helping others in our congregation could be called “holy accompaniment.” One way to express this care, especially at times of transition in our lives, is by reaching out with cards and small services.

Everyone at First Parish is invited to join in this ministry, which is coordinated by our Lay Ministers. We call it the Wider Network of Care, a group of over a hundred members who deliver care packages and meals, run errands, or provide rides.



Signing up for the network lets us know you are willing to help. You can always pass on a request if you are not available. But if you accept, the lay minister will help you connect with the care recipient and offer suggestions about the task. These days our pastoral care must involve precautions, so please sign up only if you are comfortable giving this type of helping hand in our current pandemic environment.

To sign up, please complete the form on our church website, at <https://firstparish.info/lay-ministry/wider-network-of-care/>

– Lay Ministry

?

What original of a handwritten letter from a famous American is tucked away in our archives?

A copy of this letter is framed in the stairwell that leads from the main entrance to the balcony.

(answer on page 4)

Compelling Alliance Programs

Everyone is welcome to join the First Parish Alliance to hear from a series of speakers, and one singer. The Friday programs begin at 7:30 pm via Zoom. Links will be sent through fpuarl-alliance-notices@googlegroups.com. Contact alliance@firstparish.info to be added to the list.

Mental Health and Law Enforcement

Friday, November 13

Rebecca Wolfe, a mental-health counselor with the Arlington Police Department, will talk about programs that involve collaboration between law enforcement and mental-health services.

An Overview on Covid

Friday December 4

As the holiday season begins, Dr. Robin Schoenthaler will update us with the latest on the pandemic.

The Law and Human Trafficking

Friday, January 8

Julie Dahlstrom will discuss the program she works with to address this injustice of our time.

Home, Sweet Home: A Civil War Sampler

Friday, March 12

Diane Taraz will use the passionate, rousing music of the 1800s to explore fascinating aspects of a conflict whose echoes are still with us today.

Alliance Sunday

April 11, 10 am

Marta Pearson, winner of a UU Women’s Federation Sermon Award, will speak at our annual Alliance service. Some examples of her sermon topics: “Georgia Blew My Mind” and “How Racism Affects Us All.”

Theater at First

Friday, May 14

Elizabeth Hunter will talk about her theater company, Theater at First, including its beginnings and its current endeavors.

– Cheri Minton
The Alliance

Blood Drives Fill a Constant Need

Blood donors are needed now more than ever. Please make an appointment with the ARC Blood Donor app, at redcrossblood.org, or by calling 1-800-RED-CROSS, for an upcoming blood drive at First Parish. We hold them on the first Saturdays of the even months from October to April, and first Wednesdays of the odd months from November to March.

We cannot welcome walk-in donors who do not have an appointment. We will screen everyone before they enter the building, including checking temperatures, so donors should take theirs before leaving for their appointment. Once inside, our mantra is cover, distance, and clean.

I will open the building, set up, manage any outside line that donors try to form, answer questions, and clean up. As I am older with underlying conditions, I will not be indoors or outside taking temperatures.

Please do not come without talking to me first. I have requested two Red Cross volunteers to handle the inside tasks and outdoor screening. You could reduce that request or eliminate it, freeing those volunteers to serve elsewhere.

If you're hesitating to volunteer, this video may help you decide:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aChk4HIY24w>

To volunteer or to talk, please reach out to me at blooddrides@firstparish.info. Thank you so much!

– John Hodges

STAR Wants You!

Would you like to offer a program for adults at First Parish? A virtual retreat, panel discussion, or drop-in group? Such programs are organized by our adult-education program, called STAR, which stands for spirit, transformation, adventure, and retreat.

These programs deepen our spiritual and interpersonal lives. The STAR Committee helps facilitators develop ideas, helps get the word out, and offers practical support, such as technical help for virtual activities. All STAR programs will be outdoors or via Zoom until conditions change.

Our current STAR programs include:

- Lectio Divina
- Aging Well in Our Community
- Networking and Job Search Support Group

Past programs include:

- Drumming Circle
- Reigniting your Spiritual Practice
- Play Reading Group

For more information or to suggest a program, please contact star@firstparish.info. We look forward to hearing from you!

– Joanna Pushee, Chair
Linda Brown and Monique Chaplin
STAR Committee



Musical Thursdays

The Music Committee sponsors on-line events on Thursdays at 7 pm. To get the link, please contact music@firstparish.info.

On Broadway October 15

Broadway pioneer Beth Burrier was one of the first women conductors to lead the touring production of *Rent*, and has gone on to be a legendary coach and music director. Learn what's like to work in the theatre, the musical challenges, and the future of American theatre and its role in social justice.

Show Tunes October 22

Pianist Brendan Shapiro and singer Omar Najmi will lead our Community Sing in show tunes from favorite musicals. We'll provide the lyrics and Omar will get us started.

Choir Social Hour October 29

The choir will enjoy one another's company, and friends are most welcome to join in the virtual conversation. You will have a chance to chat with our new parish minister, Rev. Erica!

– Robin L. Baker
Chair, Music Committee

Celebrating American Truth-Tellers

Our seventh UU Principle – respect for the interdependent web of all existence – is a beautiful statement. More than an environmental idea, it helps me think about how we respond to the dangers of individualism and oppression, and it offers a solution to what appears to be conflict between the individual and the group.

This month we celebrate Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha and Ai Jen Poo, two Americans whose portraits hang in the Damon Room in our RE wing. They were created by artist Robert Shetterly as part of his series Americans Who Tell the Truth.

I am grateful for their work advocating for clean water, children's health, and home-care workers. Until we return to walk our meetinghouse halls, I share their biographies and a link to their portraits.

Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha is a pediatrician, professor, and public-health advocate whose research exposed the Flint water crisis, revealing that children were exposed to dangerous levels of lead in one of the poorest communities in America. She now directs an initiative to mitigate the impact of that crisis.

Dr. Hanna-Attisha, born in England in 1976, is the daughter of Iraqi immigrants, both scientists and dissidents who fled Saddam Hussein's repressive regime. She penned a *New York Times* opinion about her immigrant story and the impact of immigration restrictions titled "Corroding the American Dream," and wrote a dramatic first-hand account of the Flint Water Crisis titled, "What the Eyes Don't See," a *New York Times* 100 Notable Book of 2018, an NPR Science Friday Best Science Book of 2018, and a Michigan Notable Book of 2019.

The Flint pediatrician's research and advocacy helped end the city's use of corrosive river water in 2015. She spoke just this week on "Making the Case for Public Health: From Flint to COVID-19." In her words: "Flint is what happens when we dismiss science . . . dismiss people. Flint is what happens when saving money is more important than public health."

Ai Jen Poo, an American labor activist, was born to Taiwanese parents in 1974 who instilled in her strong social-justice values. Her father, a neuroscientist and one-time political activist, immigrated from Taiwan in

the 1970s. Her mother, Wen-jen Hwu, has a M.D. and Ph.D. in chemistry and was an oncologist at two of the top U.S. cancer centers.

At Columbia University, Ai-Jen was one of more than 100 students who occupied the rotunda in Low Library; this occupation led to the creation of Columbia's Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race. She is the founder and former lead organizer of Domestic Workers United, an organization of Caribbean, Latina, and African nannies, housekeepers, and elderly caregivers in New York that organizes for respect and fair labor standards. In 2010, Domestic Workers United was instrumental in New York State passing the Domestic Workers Bill of Rights into law; this law was the first in the United States to guarantee domestic workers basic labor protections such as overtime pay, three days' paid leave, and legal protections from harassment and discrimination.

Ai-Jen Poo is a leading voice in the future of work and family care solutions. Today she is the director of the National Domestic Workers Alliance and the co-director of Caring Across Generations. Under her leadership, domestic workers won eight state Domestic Workers Bill of Rights and federal overtime and minimum-wage protections for more than two million home-care workers. She is also an influential voice in the

Me Too and women's movements, and the author of *The Age of Dignity: Preparing for the Elder Boom in a Changing America*.

In her words, "The Twenty-first century way to create social change is to determine where we can create win-win situations around our values. Those values are simple: ensuring we take care of ourselves, our families, our communities, and generations to come."

These Americans do great work, and their actions do much to support our interdependent web of all existence! Until we meet again next month, visit these links to see the portraits of Dr. Hanna-Attisha and Ai Jen Poo.

<https://www.americanswhotellthetruth.org/portraits/dr-mona-hanna-attisha>

<https://www.americanswhotellthetruth.org/portraits/ai-jen-poo>

– Clarissa Rodriguez
Racial Justice Coordinating Committee



ParSnips

Important Work in the Wider World

At our September meeting, the Parish Committee had a long discussion about when our building might reopen. For the safety of all, and considering the intense work that will be needed to prepare, this cannot happen until February 1. Events such as the Harvest Moon Fair and Christmas services will be redesigned for our virtual community. If conditions improve, we will reconsider when and how small meetings and staff might return.

Also at that meeting we heard from Mary Cummings and Maureen Dolan, who updated us on the Social Justice Committee's work to get out the vote, through UU The Vote. UU The Vote works with other organizations to protect our democracy and is currently fighting voter suppression. For Unitarian Universalists, this is faithful, moral action because the right of all people to be heard lies at the heart of our Seven Principles.

One collaborator is Reclaim Our Vote (ROV), which helps under-represented populations realize and use

their power as voters. ROV made more than 79,000 calls for the Georgia primary, including contacting some 35,000 infrequent voters.

Mary Cummings has met with UU The Vote coordinators from several Massachusetts congregations, and with Laura Wagner from UU Mass Action, to work closely before and after the November election. We already have working relationships with Belmont, Concord, Lexington, and Wayland. Stephen Shick, a retired minister in Lexington, will speak at our annual Shinn service on Oct 25, addressing the work we have been and will be doing to promote democracy and social justice.

We need help getting the word out without posters and coffee hours. Our hope is that the enthusiasm that our team has shown will carry through after the election when there will still be plenty of work to do.

UU The Vote is also supporting Ranked Choice Voting, and Maureen Dolan is organizing an event focusing on that on Oct. 1.

— Celia Wcislo, Clerk

Reflections

Collaborative Gardening

For the past few weeks, masses of pink and white cosmos have formed a magical corridor along the sidewalks around our house. A First Parish member sent me a photo of their feathery beauty and thanked me for planting them. I replied that I did not plant them — well, perhaps a few seeds *many* years ago — but instead rely on them to seed themselves each year. I welcome them, water them, and thin them out to keep things under control.

I love to garden by collaborating with whatever comes up and gently managing it. Some lily-of-the-valley volunteered several years ago and have spread just enough, having chosen a particularly arid patch of yard. I have tried to plant alliums, those wonderful tall globes, but they refuse to sprout. It's much easier to go with the flow and let the yard surprise me.

When we moved in 25 years ago our corner lot had expanses of patchy grass, and I vowed to reduce the lawn to a minimum. We mow some small areas of turf, and the rest of the yard has ornamental grasses,

evergreens, and hollies that cheer us all winter. All spring and summer a procession of flowers unfold, and now our sedums are absolutely covered with bees as goldfinches eagerly nibble the cosmos seeds.

I'm sure our free-form yard bothers our neighbors as they thatch, fertilize, irrigate, mow, and whack. I much prefer our messy bit of pollinator paradise. Watching the birds is a treasured part of my day. The hum and buzz of life getting on with itself is very comforting in an uncomfortable time.

— Diane Shriver, Editor



The letter is from Booker T. Washington, who was once enslaved, thanking our Women's Alliance for a donation of \$50 to the college for people of color he founded, the Tuskegee Institute. This would be \$1,450 in today's money.



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The Spire

Diane Shriver, Editor

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