

# THE MEETINGHOUSE NEWS

*First Parish in Cambridge, Unitarian Universalist*

December 2018

## Reflections from Our Lead Minister, Rev. Adam Lawrence Dyer



### **Look...Don't Touch**

The holidays are descending upon us and with the season comes the onslaught of multiple parties and gatherings and get togethers on top of the usual meetings and appointments. We will also find ourselves in closer physical proximity to more people in many of these settings. This can be sheer terror for some people in our world. Because of this, I just wanted to offer a word of encouragement...

Ask first.

I spent years in fitness and wellness and working directly with people's bodies. I have zero trouble with touch or being touched. I have studied touch extensively and even teach a graduate course on the history of touch. And at the same time, I am not a "hugger". This is partly personal, and partly professional. The personal part of it comes from a cultural background (Jamaican) that didn't include masses of physically expressed emotion. I had to actually learn that it was okay to have contact with someone beyond a formal handshake. Professionally, I know that as a male identified, cisgender person who has power and privilege in the world, I have to be extremely aware of how my touch can be misconstrued. I try always to ask (whether verbally or physically) before I touch someone and I always feel better when someone asks me first as well.

The world continues to present us with unprecedented challenges through the media. On top of it, as we enter this season of holiday cheer, there are many of us who will feel the sting of broken, challenging, distant and non-existent family connections. Many of us will be looking for our "chosen family" for support...but this isn't a license to go about serially touching other people in search of fulfilling our own needs.

An important part of the way we cultivate our First Parish Family is by recognizing what each of us desires. Our individual need to be physically demonstrative cannot outweigh someone else's sense of safety when their space is randomly violated. We want to be present for each other and we want to emotionally embrace each other (if invited to do so) and we want to respect what that means for each individual.

We are actively building a robust community of trust and presence. We are forging new relationships and rekindling old ones. We are living into our mission in the way we live with one another. We are demonstrating for our children how healthy boundaries can actually strengthen relationships and a sense of trust and belonging. We are, in a word, awesome. Let's have fun this holiday season, let's share the love with each other, with our neighbors and let's make sure our joy is a safe place for everyone. Give each other a choice and the agency as to how they experience that joy.

Ask first.

**Rev. Adam**

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CORNER**

This month as we anticipate the holidays, I encourage your family to choose an Advent calendar. That sense of waiting was one of my favorite parts of December growing up – I used to inch the Wise Men and camels closer to the manger in our TV-top crèche every day until January 12<sup>th</sup>! When we have used Advent calendars with our own children, we really enjoyed the days we had done something fun and meaningful together, and it gave us great dinner table topics for discussion. We couldn't do the activities every single day – so please don't feel pressured to do that, but have fun with the activities when you can.

There are many choices available online. Here are my top 3:

To get out and about, doing little meaningful things for others that make a difference and make your day, too – try the Random Acts of Kindness calendar.

[https://www.coffeecupsandcrayons.com/random-acts-of-christmas-kindness-advent-calendar/?fbclid=IwAR0MtsjJkвуoz-nqoWcXvcVEG5L59Gslw87IBIfPs\\_OIelzfK6TzmVhcog](https://www.coffeecupsandcrayons.com/random-acts-of-christmas-kindness-advent-calendar/?fbclid=IwAR0MtsjJkвуoz-nqoWcXvcVEG5L59Gslw87IBIfPs_OIelzfK6TzmVhcog)

To dig a little deeper into the spirituality of the season, try the Faithful Families calendar. If you don't resonate with the term God, talk about what does work for you with your family.

<http://www.traci-smith.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/FaithfulFamiliesADVENTCALENDAR2018-1.pdf>

And finally, for some nostalgia and tradition, read a Christmas poem a day while you anticipate with the Advent Poems calendar.

<https://coffeehousejunkie.net/2012/12/13/2013-advent-poems-or-the-12-days-of-christmas-poetry/>

Enjoy your waiting, anticipating, hoping... and may your holidays be joyous when they arrive!

Mandy

## **Clara Barton Drive to benefit Tuesday Meals Collection ends – December 9, 2018**

Clara Barton was a Universalist who saw the medical needs of the Civil War and took it upon herself not only to provide nursing care, but to organize others to help her do so. She later founded the Red Cross. We honor her memory by joining together in this drive to provide basic winter health supplies to Tuesday Meals guests. The change of the seasons can bring health challenges to all of us, but most especially those who cannot afford to spend money on basic preventive care.

Please bring requested items from this list, and leave your donations in the basket at the front of the sanctuary.

- |   |                                 |
|---|---------------------------------|
| - Band-aids (big ones to cover blisters are nice) | - Tissues                       |
| - EmergenC, Airborne, or chewable multivitamins   | - Wet wipes                     |
| - Lip balm/chapstick                              | - Cough Drops                   |
| - Travel size lotion                              | - New white socks – men's large |
- \*Please no hand sanitizer\*

Children in Religious Education will be wrapping kits in a pair of new socks and then asking for your blessing on the kits before we give them out at the Tuesday Meals dinner on December 11. We encourage you to join us then or another Tuesday night as a volunteer chef or server! Please contact [mmennonno@firstparishcambridge.org](mailto:mmennonno@firstparishcambridge.org) to volunteer.

Thank you for your generosity!

### **Shared Offering for December**

This month's shared offering is chosen by our **Religious Education ministry**. Our recipient for December is Thrive: the UUA Leadership Schools for Youth and Young Adults of Color. We choose Thrive in support of our General Assembly Youth Caucus staff and their full inclusion in our faith.

As the struggle for racial justice lives on in our streets and classrooms, in courtrooms and corner stores, Thrive Leadership Schools help youth and young adults of color **get connected to hope and to the skills to lead!** There they form lifelong connections, carve out belonging, create practices of resilience and healing and build skills to lead. Unitarian Universalist Youth and Young Adults of Color (People of African Descent, Caribbean, Native/American Indian, Asian and Pacific Islander, Latina/o and Hispanic, Middle Eastern/Arab, and Multiracial) meet yearly for a five-day gathering to **deepen our faith, lift our spirits, and build critical skills for leadership in the face of our uncertain, broken and beautiful world.** Thrive participants are guided by experienced co-facilitators as we worship, feast, play, explore our racial and ethnic identities, practice transformative leadership skills, and create authentic, supportive community.

**For more, please visit** <https://www.uua.org/youth/events/multicultural-leadership-school>

## **What are you doing to further the mission of First Parish of Cambridge?**

“Awakened by worship, nourished by tradition, and united by love, we strive to create a multicultural, spirit-filled community that works for justice, fosters spiritual curiosity and faith formation, shares joy, heals brokenness, and celebrates the sacred in all. We welcome people of all beliefs, ages, classes, colors, ethnicities, abilities, sexual orientations, and gender identities and expressions.”

As part of our recently adopted governance structure and processes the board is tasked with creating opportunities for the church community to discern direction and priorities. One the ways this can happen is by posing “open questions.” The answers to these one or two questions per year might help to refine work already done, identify new directions, or offer insight into changing priorities for the community.

To that end, the board has developed a single open question for this, our first year using this process. That question is, “What are we doing to further our mission?”

Rev. Adam Lawrence Dyer helped to facilitate a first conversation at the November’s Ministry Team Leaders meeting. In that meeting, each ministry team talked about how the work of their team furthers the mission of First Parish, and what sorts of gaps and needed resources they were able to identify. It was a great meeting, but only the first step.

The board would also like to hear how the community at large might answer the question. Save the date for January 6<sup>th</sup> or January 27<sup>th</sup> after church to participate in a congregational conversation focused on the mission and how each of us is furthering our mission. More details will follow.

## MINISTRY TEAMS UPDATES



### First Parish Auction Update!

By Kathy Watkins

**The 2018 First Parish Auction** was a great success! Thanks to everyone that donated and bid on items, **we raised over \$16,000!** Stop by the **auction table on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, December 9<sup>th</sup> and December 16<sup>th</sup>** to pay your invoice; pickup your basket; reserve a spot in one of the remaining dinners and events; or reserve one of the remaining services. You can also email [auction@firstparishcambridge.org](mailto:auction@firstparishcambridge.org) to reserve any of the remaining items. Help us increase the total raised!

Every year the Auction raises critical funds for the operating budget, but **more importantly**, the Auction furthers our mission of **creating community at First Parish** through shared planning of dinners and flat-rate events and coming together with other members of our community to enjoy amazing food and company. Thanks to everyone that donated or bid on items.

For the first time, the Auction this year included a **raffle**. The tickets were available for \$1 each or 6 for \$5. We raised \$150 through raffle ticket sales and there were 8 lucky winners. Names of the winners will be on the bulletin board in the parlor along with the winners of the events and services.

#### RESERVE REMAINING DINNERS, EVENTS OR SERVICES:

Auction Table:

December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup>

Email:

[Auction@FirstParishCambridge.org](mailto:Auction@FirstParishCambridge.org)

Website for Full List of Remaining Items: [www.firstparishcambridge.org/auction](http://www.firstparishcambridge.org/auction)

## BEYOND BORDERS – SIN FRONTERAS

### Prayer Vigil at the Boston ICE Detention Center, Sunday, December 9, 2-3 pm

Boston-area congregations are organizing regular prayer vigils at the ICE Detention Center at the South Bay House of Corrections (20 Bradston Street in Boston) in solidarity with those detained there by ICE. Join members of First Parish as we come together to make a public statement that people of faith stand up for the rights of undocumented people. If you are interested in traveling over with a group, please email Rebecca at [bbsf@firstparishcambridge.org](mailto:bbsf@firstparishcambridge.org) to coordinate.

### Accompaniment Volunteering

First Parish is a member of the CISC, a coalition of 10 Cambridge-area congregations that is currently hosting a woman and her two children in sanctuary at a nearby church. "Accompaniment" volunteers are needed seven days/week on-site at the church - sometimes volunteer shifts are quiet, and sometimes there is a lot of interaction with the children. Volunteering fulfills an important role, and we can pair you with an experienced volunteer so you won't be on your own.

### **Child Care Volunteering**

If you enjoy time with young kids, please consider a powerful ministry opportunity: The CISC childcare team is looking for several new volunteers who can commit to regular monthly outings to ensure that the children (ages 2 and almost 4) are able to spend time outside each day. A simple hour or two of outdoor play means so much in the life of this family we've committed as a coalition to support. Because consistency and coverage are ongoing concerns, we are looking for people who can commit to at least 2 weekday morning or afternoon outings a month.

Please email Rebecca Balder, First Parish's volunteer coordinator, at [BBSF@firstparishcambridge.org](mailto:BBSF@firstparishcambridge.org) to learn more about either of these opportunities.

### **Building Ministry Team**

As many of you have seen, the bushes in front of the Mass Ave entrance were recently removed to provide more security, lessen undesirable personal behavior, and provide a more welcoming and attractive front space.

Director of Administration, Carol Lewis and Building Manager, Roland Ellies have spent many hours managing this removal and other improvements including upgrading outside signs; scraping paint, spackling cracks and repainting panels in the Meetinghouse; putting a new padlock on the gate to the alleyway to reduce trash. Carol is also working with other administrators in Harvard Square to develop safety training for staff and volunteers. We will also be creating a Safety Ministry Team that will develop a comprehensive safety policy for First Parish.

The building assessments of the Meetinghouse and Parish House are complete although we are awaiting an updated list of priorities from the various professional consultants working with David Torrey. Some smaller priorities, like exit signs and more accessible door handles, can be implemented over the next few months.

We know that, as the congregation determined and voted on in our capital plan, the repair and restoration of the Mass Ave façade and steeple are our top priority. Some funds are available for this purpose. Development Team members are pursuing grants and other ways of raising funds. We do know that more donations to our annual fund means less money will be needed to pay for building improvements and, therefore, more money will be available for our much needed building projects.

Updated status reports from the Building Ministry Team are available on our dedicated bulletin board in the Parish House hallway.

In our recent (November 8<sup>th</sup>) meeting, the Team agreed to move forward to create a small group to negotiate an agreement with David Torrey to work with our congregation and produce design options for how to improve the Mass Ave entrance and façade. We began to brainstorm WHAT we, the congregation, want to ensure as the results from these changes.

We considered the following categories and offered some ideas based, in part, on what we have heard from congregants and visitors. We now seek your ideas and suggestions.

*Appear Welcoming*

- Be a visible symbol and actually be accessible to all
- Shine lights from the inside which show on the outside
- Re-purpose the plaza
- Create a “picture perfect” entrance with a platform and other ways of providing opportunities for wedding photos, for example

*Demonstrate attractiveness*

- Light shining from the inside providing a sense of openness, spirituality
- Attractive lighting, especially at night to create beauty rather than a scary, hulk of a building
- Remove the heavy cobblestones around the entrance and tree to allow more connection with the sidewalk and building
- Provide transparency and light (perhaps through glass doors)

*Be accessible*

- Accessibility needs to be integral, central, intentional and not an after-thought
- Design the entrance around accessibility (versus directing people to the Church Street elevator)
- Make the front doors open with an automatic mechanism
- Ensure that signs that identify First Parish are large and easily read

*Provide security*

- Remove the tree at the corner of Mass Ave and Church Street (may require city approval)
- Do not encourage people to congregate, urinate, hide; instead encourage respect for the entrance
- Ensure that the front doors are secure

*Reflect sustainability*

- Have a “natural” plaza (“re-greening” with native plants)
- Think to be as simple as possible
- Create an ease of upkeep

*Retain historic legacy*

- Recreate key elements of the historically important original design (“cottage Gothic” style) incorporating modern materials and methods to respond to maintenance and weather conditions
- Window (which serves no real purpose) is a part of the design of the era the church was built and fits in with other churches in the neighborhood
- Explore using the window to provide light from the inside out
- Retain the visual integrity of the window (weatherproof from the inside)
- Place a sign describing the church’s history & importance
- Clock face is historic; the mechanism is not

*Add value to Harvard Square*

- See ideas already described about creating a “picture perfect” entrance; natural plaza; sign/s

*Be creative*

- Be colorful on the outside
- Add decorative elements
- Provide natural habitats (example: attract birds and butterflies with plantings)
- Make a water fountain in the shape of a UU chalice (perhaps where the tree on Mass Ave/Church Street is now located)

There are a number of ways for you to provide your responses:

- 1) Participate in an after-church session/workshop (creative brainstorming using multimedia art materials to spark imaginations) led by Kate Ryan, member of the Building Ministry Team (January 13);
- 2) Participate in an after-church open meeting hosted by the Building Ministry Team (February 3);
- 3) Email Elizabeth Kline ([elizkline@gmail.com](mailto:elizkline@gmail.com)), Building Ministry Team Chair

In early 2019, the Team will host a congregational presentation by David Torrey, our architect. He will explain and answer questions about what was learned from the detailed building assessments and what are the priority recommendations.

**GROUPS**

**Our GBLTQ-I covenant group** is open. This vibrant group meets on the first Wednesday of every month. If you are interested in this group, please contact Rev. Danielle at [devminister@firstparishcambridge.org](mailto:devminister@firstparishcambridge.org).

**Our Elders Group** is open and meets on the 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of every month at 2:30 pm in the Chapel. If you are interested, please contact Rev. Danielle at [devminister@firstparishcambridge.org](mailto:devminister@firstparishcambridge.org).

**Spanish Conversation Group**

¿Hablas español? First Parish's Spanish Conversation Group meets on first and third Tuesdays of every month at 6:00 p.m. in the Baldwin Room. Come join us for informal conversation in a relaxed, friendly atmosphere. All levels are welcome and no commitment is required! For more information, email [spanish@firstparishcambridge.org](mailto:spanish@firstparishcambridge.org). ¡Nos vemos pronto!

The **Young Adult Group (YAG)** is a community for people ages 18-35. YAG meets on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays at 7pm upstairs in the Nursery and sometimes meets for food and social events on other occasions. On December 9, YAG is doing a **Pizza Lunch** at noon in the Chapel. Newcomers are always welcome. For more information visit our website [cambridgeyag.org](http://cambridgeyag.org)



## WHAT'S THE EASIEST WAY TO CONTRIBUTE MONEY?

Whatever our dollar contribution to First Parish is, whether we give once or multiple times over a year, we want it to be stress free and to have maximum impact. What can a person do to make giving easy on both the giving and the receiving end?

### **BE A SUSTAINER**

Figure out a donation amount you feel confident you can commit to making each year for several years and email that amount to [office@firstparishcambridge.org](mailto:office@firstparishcambridge.org). (If you have already pledged for this year, email to the same address that you want to make a similar donation in future years also.) Use the subject line: Sustainer.

Each spring you will receive a confirmation note from the First Parish office; if you want to change your commitment, you can at any time.

### **How does this help?**

- Saves you time and energy: there's no need to do anything year by year unless you want to change your commitment. You can sit back during the annual fund drive knowing your sustained contribution is all set up.
- Saves our stewardship volunteers' time: during the spring annual fund drive they won't contact you and all the others who've made such commitments.
- Saves the office staff time: this reduces record keeping substantially.

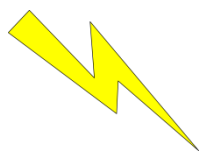
### **USE AUTOPAY**

Set up a one-time or regular payments using your bank's autopay function.

Or use the First Parish secure online giving system linked to this page <http://www.firstparishcambridge.org/connection/donate/> Again, you can give a one-time donation or make regular payments, at your option.

### **How does this help?**

- You can set and forget — your payments will happen without your thinking about it — and on your schedule.
- First Parish will realize regular donations automatically.



**SHAZAM! BE A SUSTAINER AND AUTOPAY**



By now you can see that committing to donations **sustained over time and automatically fulfilled** saves your time and that of our volunteers and staff, freeing energy and funding that can be focused on our mission and maintaining our historic building.

If you have questions, email [stewardship@firstparishcambridge.org](mailto:stewardship@firstparishcambridge.org)

## Events in December

### **World Rhythms Drum Circle, Sunday, December 9, 12:30-2:00 pm, Barn Room**

Come join the drum circle. Whether you are a shaker or a mover, come experience the power of music! Together we'll explore rhythms from around the world-Near Eastern, Afro-Cuban, Viking and more - and create our own organic beats.

Drums/percussion: Bring a drum of any kind, and/or shakers, woodblocks, cowbells, or other hand percussion. Contact Johara if you need to borrow one. Dancers welcome!

In this drum circle, drummers who are new along with experienced drummers can contribute to the drum song, the groove, the collective heartbeat of the circle. Dance and movement in and around the circle is another powerful and playful way to experience the rhythm as it pulses through us.

This drum circle is for adults and children 10 and up.

Feel free to contact Johara the facilitator at [johara@snakedancetheater.com](mailto:johara@snakedancetheater.com)

### **Prayer Vigil at the Boston ICE Detention Center, Sunday, December 9, 2-3 pm**

Boston-area congregations are organizing regular prayer vigils at the ICE Detention Center at the South Bay House of Corrections (20 Bradston Street in Boston) in solidarity with those detained there by ICE. Join members of First Parish as we come together to make a public statement that people of faith stand up for the rights of undocumented people. If you are interested in traveling over with a group, please email Rebecca at [bbsf@firstparishcambridge.org](mailto:bbsf@firstparishcambridge.org) to coordinate.

**The annual Massachusetts Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence Vigil** is at First Church Boston on **Wednesday, December 12 at 6:15 pm. GBIO is a member of the Coalition** and this annual vigil is always a powerful and moving service. Please join us at First Church on Dec. 12.

### **Christmas Caroling with the First Parish Choir December 15 and 18, 2018**

Nothing spreads joy during the holiday season like singing good old-fashioned Christmas carols. Please join the First Parish choir on **Saturday afternoon, December 15** as we bring holiday musical cheer to residents of Cambridge-area **nursing homes and assisted living** facilities.

We will meet in the Parlor at 1:00 pm for a short rehearsal, where Jonathan will ensure we are sounding our best, then leave FP at 2:00 pm to carpool to various sites (*we need drivers!*) We will return to the church around 5:00 pm for a delicious *potluck* dinner in the Parlor. Plan to stay, and *bring a dish to share!*

There is a second opportunity for caroling on **Tuesday evening, December 18**, when we will sing for our guests at **Tuesday Meals**. We will gather in the Meetinghouse around 5:45 pm to warm up, then sing in the Parlor starting at 6:00 pm.

These are both fun, spirited occasions. Everyone - including families with young children - is welcome. Hope to see you there!

*If you can help drive on the 15<sup>th</sup> and/or can contribute a dish to the potluck, please email Mark Pickering at [emarkworld@yahoo.com](mailto:emarkworld@yahoo.com).*

**The Cookie Swap - Sunday, December 16**

On Sunday, December 16, enjoy a First Parish tradition. Bring two dozen or more of your favorite cookies (home-made or store-bought) to the kitchen before the service. One dozen will be shared with all in the social hour. The others will be available for swapping with other cookie-bringers after service.

Whether you love to bake cookies or just to eat them, this will be a fun event for all. So grab your mixer and let the fun begin!

If you have any questions please contact Micah & Aedan [micah.altman@gmail.com](mailto:micah.altman@gmail.com)