

# THE MEETINGHOUSE NEWS

*First Parish in Cambridge, Unitarian Universalist*

January 2019

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



### Greetings First Parish in Cambridge!

As we enter into 2019, I want to thank you all for making 2018 such a strong year for community building and energizing everyone around our goals and mission. In the coming year we have many ambitious plans that are dependent upon continuing this sense of investment by exercising our ability to work together, listen to one another and trust that we all have the best intentions for our shared community.

I am particularly excited about the many different ways in which we hope to enhance our 'infrastructure' that will help move us forward. For many, infrastructure brings to mind our physical plant and this is definitely going to get attention this year. We are starting off on January 13 with an exciting opportunity to do creative visioning for how we want the main, Massachusetts Avenue entrance of the building to look. We are hopeful that with the community in mind, we can continue the efforts to restore, repair and renovate our amazing structure...stay tuned for more details from the Building Ministry Team. 'Infrastructure' can also refer to our financial systems and we are looking forward to continuing the conversation about finances started in the fall with more information sessions and more opportunities for you to contribute to the way we shape and understand our financial picture. Another important piece of the infrastructure of First Parish is how we manage, store and share information. We are currently looking at ways to improve our internet connectivity along with updating our congregant records software so that it is more user friendly for the staff and so that parts of it are accessible to the full community to help us all stay connected. Lastly, we are continuing to understand the ways in which we can utilize social and web based media to be both up to date and agile in a fast paced world. Whether it is responding to an international or national crisis or sharing the successes of our community, we know that we can continue to grow in the area of communications infrastructure.

Again, thank you for your excitement and contributions as volunteers, thank you for your faith in the staff and Board and thank you for being willing to have some fun along the way. Here's to an amazing year to come!

**Rev. Adam**

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CORNER**

**Save the date for our middle school (gr. 5-8) Winter REtreat!**

**Sunday Jan. 20-Monday Jan. 21**

We'll be cooking together, going ice skating with Rev. Adam, worshipping by candle light in the Barn Room, and ending the overnight at Cambridge City Hall for the MLK Jr. Day of Service. Fill out the permission slip here: <https://goo.gl/forms/STCGPmHDa118olu22>

### **Shared Offering for January**

Our recipient for January is **On The Rise**. **On The Rise** was founded on the ideal that dependable relationships catalyze healing and transformation. Our programs seek relationships with chronically homeless women that are long-term and relevant to their entire life experience, not just singular challenges. Each year, about 450 women engage with On The Rise, with more than 12,000 contacts: at the Safe Haven near Central Square, through street outreach, and in apartments and other locations in Cambridge and surrounding communities – building relationships and community, taking care of basic tangible needs in a safe, supportive environment, and engaging in advocacy and assistance that address complex, long-term issues like housing and health. Since 1995, On The Rise has helped hundreds of women move from surviving on the streets to living and thriving in their own housing. Please contact [keyton.sheely@ontherise.org](mailto:keyton.sheely@ontherise.org) if you would like to explore volunteer opportunities or arrange a visit.

### **We are All Ears: A discussion of our mission-inspired activities**

Spring may be the last thing on your mind when you read this on a (cold!) January day, but it is not that far for planning purposes! Before the governing board and staff develop the budget for the next church year and bring it to the congregation, we need to discuss what kinds of things we would want to do.

First Parish in Cambridge has a wonderful mission that continues to serve us very well. It describes our core purposes, and focuses our attention and actions that may change the world around us. Inspired by the mission, we have very active social justice programs, inspiring services, great music, wonderful religious education classes, a terrific community, and much, much more!

Still, we should ask ourselves: what is the sum total of the 'things' we are doing? What are we doing well? And, are there things we can do better, and how? Within our mission, are there opportunities that we are missing? What is standing in our way? And, for each question, let's explore the role each of us plays -- as individuals or as a part of a ministry team -- or don't play.

The Board (nee the Standing Committee) invites you to two discussions of these and related topics on **January 6** or **January 27**, after the service, from 12:15 to 2:00 pm. After some initial background, we will break into small groups and discuss these questions in some detail. Light lunch and childcare will be available. The meetings will discuss the same themes; you are welcome to attend one or both.

This conversation is an important aspect of the "Open Questions" discussion that our new governance model stipulates. Responses to the open questions will help the Board develop the "Vision of Ministry" which will outline our activities for the next church year.

For further questions, please contact Rashid Shaikh, Chair, Governing Board ([rshaikh20@gmail.com](mailto:rshaikh20@gmail.com))

### **From The Membership Team**

The Membership Team has been busy this past fall and is looking forward to a great 2019. First Parish Cambridge has such a wonderful and engaged community. We are supporting a series of ways for people to connect with each other and with our UU faith.

Our programs take many hands to make light work. You can help out in a small way which could be a big help! Here are some of the ways you can connect:

**First Sunday Pot Lucks:** All are invited to attend **a pot luck lunch** after the service on **Sunday February 3rd**. New comers are especially welcome to this event as a way to get to know each other better and to meet more members of the congregation. Bring a dish either from home or pop around the corner and get a pizza or other food item and join us for fellowship. The lunch will start about 15-20 minutes after the service in Parlor. The kitchen oven and fridge are available if needed. Plates, silverware, napkins, cups, serving utensils, and tables and chairs will be provided. Please contact John Shaw ([js@jfds.net](mailto:js@jfds.net)) if you are interested in coordinating. Otherwise, just show up!

**Hospitality Team:** Isn't it nice to have snacks and hot beverages after worship services? We have been trying to keep the social hour hospitality flowing and have assembled a small group of regular contributors to bring in goodies to share. You could too! We welcome folks to sign up for a Sunday to help out. It's a great way to practice generosity and abundance. Contact Victoria Rowe ([victoria2626@gmail.com](mailto:victoria2626@gmail.com)) if you would like to sign up and get an orientation.

**Congregational Ambassadors:** We are seeking a few people to help out and be specifically welcoming to newcomers and visitors during the social hour on Sundays. Kind of like a greeter and the newcomer liaison. Rev. Adam will be providing a training later in January or February. Please let Will Williamson ([wwilliamson@firstparishcambridge.org](mailto:wwilliamson@firstparishcambridge.org)) know if you'd like to be a part of this.

**Do-Somethings:** This group is open to anyone who would like to “do something” together outside of church, but in fellowship as Unitarian Universalists socially. We have an activity planned for January 6th - visiting the Museum of Fine Arts. We’ll gather at 2:30 at the main entrance and head in at 3pm. Contact Ian Evans ([ievans272@gmail.com](mailto:ievans272@gmail.com)) if you’d like more details.

**Student Connections:** we are working with some students at the Harvard Divinity school to connect with students throughout the area who might be interested in connecting with a Unitarian Universalist community such as ours. Let Alex Jensen ([rojensen@csumb.edu](mailto:rojensen@csumb.edu)) know if you would be interested.

**Membership Recognition Ceremony:** we are going to hold a specially themed Membership Sunday on 3/3/19 to recognize 5-year-incremental anniversaries of membership and also the past year’s newcomers. Many people have been part of our Membership for 10, 25, even 35+ years and we want to say thanks! Stay tuned for your invitation, long-timers! Contact Jennifer Griffith ([jennifer.audrey@rcn.com](mailto:jennifer.audrey@rcn.com)) for more information.

The next Membership Ministry Team meeting is at 10am on **January 23rd** at First Parish.

We are looking forward to working on a couple of other things in the coming months: the Membership Directory, communications strategy and implementation, and supporting the various nodes of membership throughout our congregation. There are so many people fostering a sense of belonging here - keep up the great work!

Thank you,  
Grey Lee, Hannah Stites, Mark Pickering

### **First Parish Auction Update!**



There are spots remaining in workshops sponsored by the Auction including one spot in Candlelight Yoga (Friday, Jan 12th at 7pm) and one spot for a couple in the Partner Massage Workshop (Tuesday, Feb 12th at 7pm). There are also available spaces in the Storytelling Workshop on Feb 10th and the Tarot Evening on March 8th. Check out all the available items at <http://www.firstparishcambridge.org/connection/community-auction/>

If you would like to participate or would like more information, email the auction team at [Auction@Firstparishcambridge.com](mailto:Auction@Firstparishcambridge.com). Just a reminder to please pay your invoice if you haven't paid and won items in the fall. Thank you again to everyone who donated time and talent to make the auction possible and thank you to everyone who participated by bidding for items.

## **Beyond Borders – Sin Fronteras**

### **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.

## **The Middle East Education Group**

**Save the date.** The Middle East Education Group and the Cambridge Bethlehem People-to-People Project invite you to a coffeehouse presentation and discussion on Friday **February 8**, 6:30- 9:00 PM in the Parlor.

### **Being Queer in Palestine – Solidarity Across Borders.**

Presenter is Sa'ed Atshan with remarks by Abe Rybeck. Sa'ed is Assistant Professor - Peace & Conflict Studies at Swarthmore College and LGBTQ Palestinian human rights activist. Abe is an activist and also Founder/ Artistic Director of The Theater Offensive, a grassroots movement and voice for the LGBTQ community raising awareness, and fighting bigotry and hate through the performing arts. Free and open to the public.

## Congregational Giving at First Parish

Like all Unitarian Universalist congregations, **we raise all of the money required to operate First Parish and to have the impact in the world we aspire to**; there is no denominational contribution to programs, staff, or facilities.

On Feb 1 2018 First Parish reported **198 individual Voting Members** to Unitarian Universalist Association record keepers. Our congregation at large is substantially larger than that, numbering several hundreds.

A very **broad range of ability to contribute financially** is represented among families and individuals who make First Parish their spiritual home.

Given this range of abilities, members of the congregation are encouraged to give what they can. We look for depth of participation in giving and **aspire to 100% participation.**

During the previous church year 138 families and individuals **gave about \$255,000** through direct gifts.

During the same year members of the congregation **gave another \$32,000** through the Community Auction and via the Shared Offering during worship services.

Reflecting ability to give, congregation members' donations ranged from tens of dollars to tens of thousands of dollars.

The **average gift was a little over \$2000**, or about \$40 a week.

The **median gift was about \$1000**. (Median is the level where 1/2 of all gifts fall below and 1/2 above; it is the "middle" level.) That's about \$20 a week.

## THOUGHTS ON GIVING

People often wonder "How much should I give?" The answer for each individual or family involves their weighing the value the First Parish mission holds in their life.

We ask people to consider donating 2% to 10% of their adjusted gross income, increasing as their affiliation with First Parish grows and deepens. The gift you give expresses the value you place on what our congregation offers to your spiritual and family life, as well as to our community and our world.

## OUR GENEROSITY — EMPOWERING FIRST PARISH

How you can give:

- Give, one-time or recurring, in our secure online system: [firstparishcambridge.org/connection/donate](http://firstparishcambridge.org/connection/donate). (Or click DONATE in our newly designed website.)

- Drop checks, or cash in an envelope with your name on it, in the worship service offering basket or mail to the office.
- Set up payments to First Parish in your bank's online payment system.
- Designate First Parish as a beneficiary in your estate plan. (If you have already done so, let the office know.)

We are all available to talk to you about congregational giving at First Parish: Linda Clark, Tod Hibbard, Karin Lin, Cade Murray, Don Tucker, Linda West. Or send comments to [stewardship@firstparishcambridge.org](mailto:stewardship@firstparishcambridge.org).

## **Administration of Monthly Shared Offerings 2018-2019**

The Social Justice Council was charged by the governing board to administer the selections for the monthly shared offerings to worthy and appropriate organizations.

### **Priorities:**

- Local or statewide nonprofit social justice and/or service organizations with which we have partnerships or seek to develop new relationships.
- UU affiliated social justice organizations (state or national).
- Response to immediate crises (e.g. hurricane relief) - in these cases the Social Justice Council might make a recommendation to the board for a special collection on a particular week.

**The Social Justice Council will make final decisions on recipients and will solicit suggestions from designated ministry teams in the congregation for the open months. Months and groups are as follows for 2018-2019 (October-September):**

- 3 months:** Social Justice Task Force nominees
- 1 month:** Eighth Principle/Transformation Team nominee
- 1 month:** Tuesday Meals nominee
- 1 month:** Religious Education nominee
- 1 month:** Youth Group nominee
- 1 month and Christmas Eve:** UU organizations
- 1 month:** Middle East Education Group
- 1 month:** Elders Group
- 2 summer months combined:** Nominee from other ministry teams.

**Schedule for 2018-19:**

**October:** Beyond Borders/Sin Fronteras nominee:

**November:** Tuesday Meals nominee:

**December:** Religious Education nominee;

**Christmas Eve:** UU organization - UU Urban Ministry

**January:** Elders Group nominee

**February:** Youth Group nominee

**March:** UU organization - Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

**April:** Eighth Principle/Transformation Team nominee

**May:** Greater Boston Interfaith Organization Task Force nominee

**June:** Middle East Education Group nominee

**July and August combined:** – Open - Other Ministry Team nominee

**September:** Environmental Justice Task Force nominee

**Selection process for “Other Ministry Teams” nominee:**

First Parish ministry teams who wish to nominate a charity should submit an application. An application will consist of a written summary or link to a website of the group nominated along with the reason that First Parish should support them, including possible future relationship. The Social Justice Council will review nominations and select the open-month recipient based on the information provided during the nominating process, and how each organization fits the priorities listed above.

**Responsibilities of the nominating group and the monthly recipient:**

The nominating group will provide a description of the recipient for a Meetinghouse News (MHN) article and write a shorter description of the group’s work (165 words or less) to go in the announcements. The MHN article is due to the office on the 25<sup>th</sup> of the month preceding the collection, and the announcement is due the Wednesday before the first Sunday of the month.

The nominating group will also solicit a staff person from the organization to attend a service early in the month and give a short 3-minute spotlight announcement near the beginning of the service. The guest should be encouraged to stay for the service, and is welcome to bring brochures for coffee hour.

## Events in January

### Environmental Justice Task Force

**Please stop by the Environmental Justice Task Force table** at coffee hour after worship on **Sunday, January 6**. The first three weeks in January are when the Massachusetts House files bills for the 2019-2021 legislative session. The recent climate report from the United Nations said we have 12 years to cut our emissions in half. It's time for bold action on climate! We will have information on the bills being supported by our allies so you can call your representatives and ask them to support bold, equitable climate legislation.

### Building Ministry Team

Participate in an after-church session/workshop on **January 13** in the Barn Room. Do some creative brainstorming using multimedia art materials to spark imaginations. The workshop will be led by Kate Ryan, member of the Building Ministry Team.

### Racial Equity Team

**"White Supremacy Culture" - Sunday, January 20, 2019 12:15pm-1:45pm, in the Chapel**

Please join the Racial Equity Team for a light lunch and discussion of "White Supremacy Culture" - a short (8 page) article by Tema Okun found [here](#). Please read and reflect on the article in advance of the discussion. Questions? Contact Charlene Galarneau at [charlene.galarneau@gmail.com](mailto:charlene.galarneau@gmail.com). If you plan to attend, we'd appreciate knowing ahead (for food estimation), please email Charlene by noon, Friday, January 18. Even without advance notice, you are most welcome on the 20th.

### Social Justice Breakfast

What are First Parishioners doing for social justice these days? What else might we be doing? Come to a yummy breakfast on **Sunday, January 27, at 9:00 am in the Parlor**, and be part of an informal and informed conversation about our work for community engagement, climate action, racial justice, interfaith organizing for change, education about the Middle East, and immigration advocacy. This is a chance to celebrate victories, share concerns and ideas, and talk about what to tackle in the year ahead to help make First Parish even more of a positive force to be reckoned with.

### Cambridge Forum

**Living With Robots, Wednesday, January 30, 7 pm, in the Meetinghouse**

Computers are learning to read our emotions and it is big business. Alexa will soon be servicing all our needs. But can we really trust the robots? Join Judith Shulevitz from The Atlantic Monthly and filmmaker Maxim Pozdorovkin, "The Truth About Killer Robots", as they discuss the future. Free and open to all.

## **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. Because of the holiday, this month the group meets on January 8. 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. Newcomers are always welcome. For more information visit our website [cambridgeyag.org](http://cambridgeyag.org)