

# THE MEETINGHOUSE NEWS

*First Parish in Cambridge, Unitarian Universalist*

February 2018

## Reflections from Our Lead Minister, Adam Lawrence Dyer



### Gratitude

I am still overflowing with gratitude for what we were able to share as a community during my installation and ordination. I am deeply grateful to the Minister's Welcome Team, the Governing Board and of course the incredible Search Committee that helped make this day a reality. Over the last two weeks, I have had time to reflect on this important milestone in my life and what it means not just for me but for those who love me and for everyone in this community.

Certainly, there is the history. Rev. Mikelson spoke briefly of the lineage of ministers that have served this church. But I am keenly aware that it is not just ministers that I am joining in the parade. There are incredible religious professionals and lay leaders who have served this community in a variety of capacities. Whether in religious education or administration and finance, maintenance and programs each of the people that have and continue to serve this community in leadership roles are people I look to for inspiration and example as to how I hope to carry myself.

Then there is the present. We are living with struggles in our own community and infrastructure, whether it is something like the elevator or understanding our roles and our boundaries with guests who may have different kinds of needs based on their mental health and/or perceptions. It is not easy and it stretches our patience and our comfort level. We are also trying to understand how we live in a world of increasing violence and violent rhetoric. What do our values call us toward and how do I frame and support those values in my own words and my work?

Finally, there is the future. What are we doing now to make sure that First Parish in Cambridge is still going strong 5, 10, 15 or 50 years from now? Specifically, I think about what do my priorities need to be looking to the future when I am no longer serving this community? How do I guide us toward investing in a future where we thrive and where we are able to show up in the world as we most desire? How do we sustain ourselves for the next 350+ years?

These are big questions and they weigh heavily on me every day. But this weight is not a burden because I know I do not carry it alone. We have an incredible team of professionals and advisors and we have each and every one of you in your unique ways, showing up to make First Parish the incredible place that is. As a result, I welcome the weight of responsibility alongside you because it gives me traction to dig in and help us move forward. Thank you for giving me your past, your present and your future. I am grateful for your trust, your patience and your encouragement every day. I am home.

Adam Lawrence Dyer

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CORNER**

### **Side with Love**

Did you know the Standing on the Side of Love campaign has a new name? Now it's Side with Love!

Participating in rallies with our yellow t-shirts and banners reading "Standing on the Side of Love," and singing that song, was motivating and it was wonderful to know we were part of a huge group of Unitarian Universalists working for justice. We are not leaving that work behind – in fact, it's growing!

The name change has grown out of years of advice from people with disabilities, who reminded us that the language "standing" did not include everyone. Rev. Theresa Ines Soto wrote in her Responsive Resolution at General Assembly 2017, "[T]he word 'Standing' as default justice language places a high value on the justice work and commitments of able-bodied people, while it makes invisible and excludes the justice work of people with a wide range of disabilities and autistic people." As a religion that strives to include, rather than exclude, people, we were called to make a change.

Jason Shelton, who wrote the song "Standing on the Side of Love," changed his lyrics to "Answering the Call of Love" in 2016. Momentum was building. At the 2017 GA, Soto's resolution to change the name passed. A group of UUA staff, EqUual Access members, the resolution authors, and former Standing on the Side of Love constituents worked on the name change, and the result was "Side with Love."

So, what can we do at First Parish to welcome this change?

The new Side with Love website ([sidewithlove.org](http://sidewithlove.org)) advises: "Consider how you can begin making changes now that will continue over months and years. This may be an opportunity to create a new banner for your congregation to bring to protests with art that reflects the energy of this moment. Or it may be an invitation to explore anew what messages a congregation wants to share with its community through the signs and other visuals on display. When harm has happened, there is rarely one single change that will undo it. Instead, we work on many levels, identifying shifts and repairs that must happen institutionally, interpersonally, culturally, and within our own minds and hearts."

We have plenty to do!

Here's how we will begin: look for the bulletin board redesigned by our 6-7<sup>th</sup> graders, and a special worship, Side with Love Sunday on February 11, that begins to re-envision our language and heal old wounds. And look for other ways that you can join and help us further this work for change, as we grow into our mission:

*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.*

Mandy Neff

## Shared Offering for February

The Shared Offering recipient for February is **Black Lives of UU Organizing Collective (BLUU)**.

BLUU was formed after the July 2015 Movement for Black Lives convening in Cleveland, OH and is committed to:

- **Expanding the power & capacity of Black UUs within our faith**
- **Providing support, information & resources for Black Unitarian Universalists.**
- **Justice-making and liberation through our faith**
- 

In June, 2017, the UUA recognized the historic importance of this initiative by committing \$5.3 million in long term funding for the new organization.

BLUU has already provided important leadership for UU congregations through its White Supremacy Teach in campaign in the spring of 2017, which engaged scores of local congregations, including First Parish, in discussions of white supremacy and how we can commit to combatting it in the denomination and the country. At last year's General Assembly, BLUU provided critical, skilled leadership throughout the programming and plenary sessions, educating and challenging participants, while collaborating with all levels of denominational leadership. On April 28, 2018, BLUU will be hosting RECLAIM, a revival of body, mind, and spirit, in Kansas City, MO, for Black UUs and UU-adjacent folks, local Black organizers, and the communities they hold dear. The current leadership team of BLUU includes our former intern, Kenny Wiley, and Rev. Mykal Slack, former Community Life Coordinator here at First Parish.

## Auction Dinners

The First Parish Auction dinners and events began in January - have you heard about the great conversations and food? Auction events are a wonderful way to get to know people and build community. Some items are still available so please visit our available items list on the [website](#). You can reserve a spot by visiting the auction table in social hour on **February 4** or by emailing [auction@firstparishcambridge.org](mailto:auction@firstparishcambridge.org). Reminder that 25% of proceeds go to Tuesday Meals and the rest of the funds support the church's operating budget. Thank you for your support!

## **Journey with Immigrants in our Community**

Thank you to all who attended Beyond Borders/Sin Fronteras' recent showing of the film *Harvest of Empire*. Here's an opportunity to continue learning about this aspect of American history:

### *Hurricane Maria and Puerto Rico: Roots of the Crisis*

How was the groundwork for the ongoing hurricane disaster in Puerto Rico laid by a legacy of U.S. intervention, colonialism, neo-liberal economic policy, unsustainable agricultural development, and the deepening climate crisis? How are Puerto Rican activists promoting economic sustainability and social justice?

Who: Jovanna Garcia Soto of Grassroots International and Pedro Reina-Perez, University of Puerto Rico

When: Thursday, February 8, 6:30 PM

Where: Central Square Branch Library, [45 Pearl St, Cambridge](#)

### *First Parish Bedford has a Sanctuary Guest*

UUMass Action recently announced that First Parish Unitarian Universalist in Bedford has welcomed a woman from Central America into sanctuary. She is a mother and grandmother who faces imminent deportation to a country where her life would be in imminent danger.

Bedford's leadership team is working with a coalition of congregations who have pledged their support. What's needed most right now is financial support due to a number of unanticipated building code upgrades. Checks may be sent to: First Parish in Bedford, [75 Great Rd, Bedford, MA 01730](#). Please write "Sanctuary" in the memo line.

## **2018-19 Vision of Ministry**

The governing board's primary responsibility is ensuring that First Parish has a positive impact in the world through mission-aligned efforts. During this first year of our new governance model, the board continues to evolve toward a fully realized annual cycle of examining broad questions and setting priorities.

Early each calendar year, the board will establish two or three focus areas that will be given priority in attention and resource allocation for the following church year -- areas such as *strengthen outreach to elders in the congregation*, or *develop additional opportunities for families to gather in community* to name two possibilities.

On Saturday, February 17, the board will gather to engage in discernment about where it believes focus is should be put and to create its short list of priority areas for the church year beginning July 1 2018. This short list is called the Vision of Ministry. (Of course the priorities set out in the Vision of Ministry represents only a sliver of all First Parish activities.)

Next year's Vision of Ministry will be widely shared with the congregation as we work together in shared ministry to fulfill the Vision of Ministry.

The board would welcome your ideas. Email: [board@firstparishcambridge.org](mailto:board@firstparishcambridge.org)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### The Middle East Education Group

#### Letter-writing table on Sundays in February. February 4, 11, and 18

Members of the Middle East Education Group will provide materials for you to write letters to your Representative in support of **HR 4391**. You are asked to each sign a separate letter. One letter, one signer. Letters will be bundled by allies in the District of Columbia area and will be hand-delivered to the appropriate congress people by volunteers from a UU congregation in D.C.

HR 4391, introduced by Rep. Betty McCollum of Minnesota, is entitled "Promoting Human Rights by Ending Israeli Military Detention of Palestinian Children". The bill specifically addresses the brutal treatment of children by the Israeli military and the military courts which adjudicate their cases.

### Membership

Are you interested in becoming a member of First Parish? Are you a newcomer who's looking to learn a bit more about our faith community? Have you been attending services for a while and now want to learn more about what membership means? Join us on **Sunday, February 18th after the service** for our Exploring Membership class.

This inter-active orientation offers an opportunity to learn about our community, our activities, the history and philosophy of both Unitarian Universalism in general and First Parish in particular.

This class is one of the requirements of becoming a member.

All are welcome! Please RSVP at [membership@firstparishcambridge.org](mailto:membership@firstparishcambridge.org)

### Elders Group

The next meeting of the First Parish Elders Group will be on Tuesday, **February 6** at 2:30 pm in the Chapel. We will be examining many topics that affect our senior community, including medical issues, social issues and actions and activities that elders can participate in. All elders are invited. Please join us. Questions? Email Rev. Danielle at [devminister@firstparishcambridge.org](mailto:devminister@firstparishcambridge.org)

## **Anti-Racism 101 – Beginning February 25**

This workshop series is primarily focused on helping white people understand the racial component of their identity, how to live with authenticity and integrity as a white person in a society grounded in white supremacy. It involves understanding the structural foundation of racism quite apart from the bigotry and discrimination that flows from individuals and how it exists almost independently of individual racist people.

Racism itself is the source of great confusion among white folks because there are so many different definitions and conceptions of what it is and what it is not. Thus, one encounters claims of “reverse racism” from folks who have an entirely distorted concept of what racism is or is not. We work through what the role of white people can or should be in racial justice movements, what our role in Black Lives Matter might be, and what it means to be in solidarity with people of color and what it looks like to exhibit ally behavior. Each week, reading material for use in the following session will be sent out.

This series consists of six (6) two hour sessions, on Sundays from 12:15 pm – 2:15 in the Barn Room. Sessions will be held on the following dates:

February 25, March 4, March 11, March 18, April 8, April 15

Optional Film Event – “Years of Privilege, Making Whiteness Visible.” - Sunday, February 18 following the service

***The first session on February 25 is an open meeting for anyone interested in attending. For the remaining 5 sessions, a very important part of our covenant is that folks need to commit to the entire five weeks, not just float in and out. Each session builds on the conversation and content from the previous session. Of course, life often gets in the way and a person needs to miss a session or two.***

### **Workshop Leader – Ken Wagner**

**Ken Wagner** currently serves on the Unitarian Universalist Association’s Nominating Committee and is a founding member of the New England Region’s Antiracism/Anti-oppression/Multicultural Transformation team called GRACE. He has also served for the last nine years on the Executive Steering Committee of the Allies for Racial Equity and is currently the President of that organization.

Ken frequently conducts Sunday services on racism and white supremacy at congregations throughout New England and is a frequent speaker on this subject at church and community events. Since 2014, he has facilitated 8-week workshops focused on resistance to white supremacy at more than a dozen congregations and community groups across New England.

Ken has a law degree from the University of Wisconsin and lives with his wife, Laura (Executive Director of UUMass Action) in Marlborough. They have four children and three grandchildren.

**Paine Senior Services Would Like to Thank the Following Individuals  
for Their Generous Donations!**

Elizabeth Aguilo, (staff) in honor of David and Pearl Aguilo  
Vincent and Dorothy Albergo  
Anonymous (2)  
David Aptaker  
James Baptista, in honor of Esther Foster  
Una Barrett  
Amy Bernstein  
Clare Chapman  
Henrietta Davis, Frank Duehay and Jane Lewis  
Barbara and Eric Elfman  
Christa Fischer, in loving memory of Barney and Despina Duane  
Peggy and Maurie Fox-Warren  
Annie Fowler  
Eileen Ginnetty  
Gale Halpern, with thanks to Maureen Harty (PSS staff)  
Suzanne Hamner  
Maureen Harty (staff)  
Judith L. Herman  
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William and Sheila King  
Pat Leiby (staff)  
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Michael and Gail Lemily Wiggins