

THE FOCALPOINT

FIRST PARISH ^{IN} LEXINGTON
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

In The December 2016 Issue:

Holiday Events — Solstice Music Service, Holiday Workshop, "A Christmas Carol" reading, and more!

Special Plate Collection recipient — Lexington Refugee Assistance Program

Unity Group Guest Speaker — Rip Jackson

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Deadline for January issue, Wednesday, December 21st.

Worship Services for December

Theme: What Does it Mean to be a Community of Presence?

December 4, Rev. Anne Mason "Soaked to the Skin"



Leonard Cohen, of blessed memory, famously said about his nature: "I don't consider myself a pessimist. I think of a pessimist as someone who is waiting for it to rain. And I feel soaked to the skin." Come to church and wring out a bit....the season of Advent is upon us. What is it that you would like to prepare yourself for? Could we make room for joy?

December 11, Rev. Anne Mason "Scattering the Proud"



When Mary, mother of Jesus, found that she was with child, scripture ascribes some powerful words to her. Mary sings of a time when the proud will fall because of the conceit of their hearts. In these ancient words we find hope for our future. The promise of scripture has always been that justice will reign — some day. We must never lose hope.

December 18, Rip Jackson Solstice Music Sunday



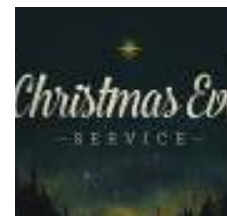
On Sunday morning, December 18, the First Parish Sanctuary Choir, directed by Rip Jackson, will present a special Music Sunday celebrating the winter solstice.

Worship Services for December

Theme: What Does it Mean to be a Community of Presence?

Through beautiful music and poetry, the powerful transformation from darkness to light will be uplifted.

December 24, Rev. Anne Mason Christmas Eve



5:00 is our family service. Come for carols and candlelight, Children's Choir, and a new twist on the telling of the Christmas story.

7:00 will feature our adult choir accompanied by the beauty of the harp. Rev. Anne will deliver a Christmas Homily, and we will end with our traditional singing of Silent Night while lighting our candles of hope. Come to worship, bring your friends and neighbors, and celebrate the joy of Christmas with your First Parish family.

December 25, Christmas Day



Worship at home today! The church will not be holding regular services today. Instead, we encourage all church members to celebrate Christmas with their loved ones. If you are alone this holiday, please let us know and we will try to connect you with a family who wants to share their hospitality with you. Please be in touch directly with Rev. Anne.

From Your Minister

What does it mean to be a community of presence? This is our question for the month of December. With the upheaval of this election, and the effect it is already having on members of our society, the idea of dwelling in presence is a good one to explore together. For in the face of the presence of negativity and fear, what can we do to resist? We do not want fear to creep within us. Nor do we want to be complacent. We want to remember that the opposite of fear is love, and we long to create a stronger presence of love within our world.

I hope that you will begin exploring what 'presence' is within your own spirit. Take time in these next few weeks to nurture yourself before you get worn out. If we want to be resilient people we must be sure to be as healthy as we can. Eat well. Take walks if you can. Find time for beautiful music. And remember that for every negative thought or interaction you may experience, we need to counter with several positive ones. So be intentional about shifting the balance. Because if you can find more moments of happiness in the day, it will spill out into the lives of those around you.

As a church community, we will join together many times this month to celebrate the traditions of the season. This year, because Christmas Day falls on a Sunday, we will not be gathering in the sanctuary on the morning of Dec. 25th. Instead, we will celebrate Christmas in our homes. But there may be some among us who do not have a family

with whom to share this holiday.

If you would be willing to offer the gift of hospitality to a member or friend of this congregation, please let me or a Pastoral Associate know. Let us practice the radical hospitality of people who welcome each other's presence not just in church, but in the church of our own hearts and our own homes.

May the peace of this season warm your hearts.

May the joy of this season lift your spirits.

And may the generosity of this season offer us all a new vision of a world in which all are welcome.

In faith,

Rev. Anne



"A Christmas Carol" Fireside Reading

Please join Dan Fenn as he reads Charles Dickens's "A Christmas Carol." All are invited to gather in front of the fireplace in Parker Hall, drink hot cocoa, eat cookies, and be transported back in time with this Christmas classic on Sunday, December 4th from 4pm to 6pm.

Published in 1843, Dickens's timeless tale of the curmudgeonly miser Scrooge and his transformation to benevolent benefactor following visits one Christmas Eve from the ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Yet to Come, was an instant classic that still enchants audiences today.

Reading this story has been a tradition in Dan Fenn's family: his grandfather and father read it before him, and for several years now Dan has shared this tradition at First Parish. With a real storyteller's skill, Dan brings Dickens's colorful language alive, to many a chuckle by the audience.

Refreshments will be served.



Holiday Workshop Saturday, December 9th

We're less than two weeks away from the annual Holiday Workshop which will take place Saturday, December 9, from 9 AM - 12 Noon. This event is a wonderful chance to get into the spirit of the season by making crafts and cards and enjoying the company of First Parishioners of all ages in front of crackling fire in Parker Hall. Feel free to bring your friends – the workshop is open to anyone and is free of charge.

This year we will be contributing to gift baskets for the UU Urban Ministry. Everyone is encouraged to make crafts to put in the gift baskets for families at Renewal House, a temporary emergency shelter in Boston, and other people who are part of the UUUM's programs.

Please feel free to email Margaret Counts-Klebe at margck@yahoo.com if you have questions or want to know where best to help. Looking forward to sharing the fun of the holidays with you!



On Sunday morning, December 18, the First Parish Sanctuary Choir, directed by Rip Jackson, will present a special **Music Sunday** celebrating the winter solstice at the 10:30 am service. Through beautiful music and poetry, the powerful transformation from darkness to light will be uplifted. Artist and soprano sax player Katie Runde and contrabassist Ben Green will be the guest instrumentalists. Together with Rip Jackson, they will play some of the music from the Paul Winter Consort that can be heard at St. John the Divine during the Winter Solstice Concerts there each December, including the rousing piece "Dancing Day." The sanctuary choir will also sing deep and mystical settings of solstice poetry and other seasonal music.



On **Christmas Eve**, beautiful music will adorn both the 5 pm and 7 pm candlelight worship services at First Parish in Lexington. For the 5 pm family service, the children's choir will sing music from "A Charlie Brown Christmas." There will be two boy soprano soloists, Andreas Padilla and Mckenna O'Hare Gibson. A group of high school musicians from the church will sing a calypso carol and there will be jazz Christmas music for the centering and postlude. For the 7 pm Candlelight service, the sanctuary choir will sing Christmas carols by John Rutter. Elizabeth Walsh, Julia Jaffe, and Jamie Willis will sing solos with accompaniment of harp, flute, horn, clarinet and piano. Martha Moor will be the guest harpist. For both services, the congregation will sing familiar Christmas carols to celebrate the season.



Music and gardening are the perfect combination to counteract the dark, cold days of December. Rip Jackson, Director of Music, will give a program featuring these two of his numerous talents for the Unity Group, and guests, at their meeting on Monday, December 12th. Guests are invited to the social time and lunch, starting at 12:00 or just the program at 1:30. No reservations necessary. If your last name begins with A, B, or C, please bring a dessert, and if your last name begins with any other letter, bring a main dish, side dish or salad.

Beginning at 1:30 PM, our director of music, Rip Jackson, will give a presentation about his life in music and his passion for gardening and nature. For 15 years, Rip lived on the side of a remote mountain in Vermont. During this time, he grew vegetables, fruit and flowers on his four acre property. Rip has prepared a video presentation with many beautiful pastoral images along with a number of musical examples from his many concerts including symphonies, Broadway, organ, harpsichord, choral, and some of his own compositions. He will also give a short bio on growing up in Atlanta and how music, gardening, and nature became the center of his life. Rip will also play Christmas carols on the piano for the Unity group. Audience members can request carols that Rip will then turn into musical variations. Please come and join us in Parker Hall.



I am so happy to share the news that we are back to a full staff team in Lifespan Religious Education!

Our Spirit Play classroom (prekindergarten-1st Grade) is now skillfully headed up by Jeb Kahn-

Greene. Jeb is Spirit Play trained, and has years of experience with religious education in UU churches; I know Jeb from when she was active in the Marblehead congregation and I was DRE there years ago. And our own Nina Rich is our new staff Nursery Caregiver. Nina grew up here at First Parish, has experience in church childcare from doing that work at the Carlisle congregation.

As a mother of young children, my goal with any of our staff is that I am able to say that I would happily have my children in their care, and I am so delighted to be able to continue to say that about our team, even though they are both new in their positions here at First Parish.

As we move into the quieter days of winter, I hope that you will mark your calendar for the delightful annual family event of Dan Fenn's reading of A Christmas Carol on December 4th at 4:00 pm in Parker Hall around the fireplace. There will be light refreshments, and if you come with little ones (or big ones!) who may prefer to keep their hands busy while listening to Dan's fantastic telling of the story, there will be simple crafts and coloring available. Bring your friends and neighbors to this wonderful holiday event!



I want to thank everyone who made this year's Great Fall Auction a success, including folks who helped that night, everyone who donated an item, and everyone who purchased an item. Special thanks go to the auction team that planned the event -- Toni Tasker, Pete

Tasker, Margie Gibbons, Bob Gibbons, and Tom Rich. The team had overall responsibility for making the whole event happen. In the end, the auction yielded \$24,000 for the church!

The auction team is a great example of a short term, well-defined, and high payoff volunteer opportunity at the church. If more open-ended commitments, like serving on a committee, aren't your thing, please consider joining a team that takes responsibility for a single event or project. Some upcoming opportunities include our Voices on the Green event series, Rev. Anne's installation service in March, and a to-be-defined Patriots Day event.

Please contact me if you'd like to get involved in these events or if you have an idea for organizing a new event.

In the spirit of community,

Tom Rich
Board Chair

Special Plate Donation Sunday, December 11th



On December 11th, the donation plate will be given to Lexington Refugee Assistance Program. LexRAP is a grass roots organization that started a little over a year ago when Marianne Boswell sent an email to the Lexington Listserv and to FP Chat expressing distress over the exploding refugee crisis in the Middle East and Europe, wondering how we can help. The response was tremendous, and a group formed to explore what could be done that is hands-on and tangible.

Lexington has a strong history of supporting refugees. Many from FP were active leaders in the 80's housing and support of Cambodian refugees. LexRAP learned that there are strict international laws defining that "refugees are people fleeing conflict or persecution." Before achieving refugee status, people must apply to and be vetted by the UN. Next, they get assigned to one of 20 countries, and, for the U.S., cleared through Homeland Security. The process usually takes years during which time people live in camps in terrible conditions. From the UNHCR: "An unprecedented 65.3 million people around the world have been forced from home. Among them are nearly 21.3 million refugees, over half of whom are under the age of 18." Unaccompanied minors are kids in camps who have no parents or guardians and come here and live in foster homes.

By the time refugees arrive in the U.S., they are often without money or resources. Even though someone with refu-

Special Plate Donation Sunday, December 11th

gee status arrives with the right to work and receive food stamps, the financial aid is small and assistance ends in months. We also learned that people fleeing and arriving in the U.S. without going through the UN and US vetting are called asylum seekers. These people have no legal status in the U.S. – no right to work or receive government aid until they prove their refugee status. Asylum seekers can live with families and LexRAP has provided financial support to asylees being hosted by families in the area.

As an organization, LexRAP has applied and is waiting for Federal 501c status as a non profit. We have begun a tutoring program for families and for unaccompanied minors. LexRAP is working with five refugee families, helping them find housing and providing support as they find their way. LexRAP also works with resettlement agencies, all of which are stretched for resources. Currently, we have one asylee living in Lexington, for whom we provide monetary support. The person arrived and needed warm clothes and Lexingtonians donated sweaters, coats, and boots. Jane and Bob Eckert gave bike riding lessons and First Parish responded with offers of bikes, and now the asylee has wheels! We would like to be able to support more asylees and there are families in the area ready and willing to open their homes but LexRAP does not have the funds to do this. And, come the New Year, we will be launching a laptop donation drive so that we can give refugees, asylum seekers and unaccompanied minors laptops.

Tom Tsaros, Bruce Neumann, Pat Moyer, and members of First Parish will be at church on December 11th.

The Halalisa Singers

World music choral ensemble The Halalisa Singers presents *Stars of Wonder*, a concert of contemporary choral classics for the holiday season, on Saturday, December 3, 8 pm, at First Parish Church, 7 Harrington Road, Lexington and Sunday, December 4, at 3 pm at First Parish Church, 327 Concord Road, Sudbury. The ensemble is led by First Parish Member and Artistic Director Mary Cunningham and accompanied by Trevor Berens, piano.

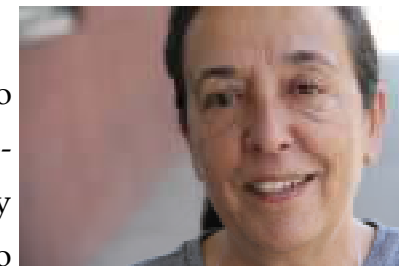


Munroe Saturday Nights

Five Lexington and Metro West writers working in different genres will discuss the creative process in “Pen to Paper: An Exploration of Writing” for the next Munroe Saturday Nights presentation on December 17. The panel will take place at 7:30 PM at First Parish in Lexington, 7 Harrington Road. Participating are Cynthia P. Anderson (non-fiction/memoir), Don Cohen (short stories and play-writing), Abby Hafer (non-fiction – science), Erin McCormack (novel), and Jane Sutton (children’s literature).

Beginning on December 7th, the First Parish Art Gallery in Parish Hall will feature photographs from the *Boston Beginnings* series by Will Gibbons, which will run through January 31st. Will writes:

“On September 24th 2014, I started walking around Denver with my camera. I didn't really know where I was going. I was new to Denver and wanted to get to know the city better through its people. I took strangers' pictures and talked with them. What brought them to this part of Denver? What brought them to Denver in general? The conversations took off from there. I approached almost anyone I saw, though I gravitated towards people sitting by themselves. I heard their stories and became attached to these people. Their words stuck with me. I saw them days and weeks and months after we first met—sometimes in completely different parts of the city—and took new pictures and had new conversations.



In July 2015, I moved back to Boston and began the same project here. I wanted to use my camera again as an excuse to hear people's stories and listen. I wanted to stop and meet all the people I'd usually walk by without approaching. ”

Recurring Events

Choir Warm-up, Sundays, at 9:45 a.m.
Worship Service, Sundays, at 10:30 a.m.
Children's Choir Rehearsal, Sundays, at 11:45 a.m.
Social Action, monthly, 3rd Sunday, at 11:45 a.m.
Sr. High Youth Group, Sundays, at 7 p.m.
Members & Friends, monthly, 4th Monday, 7:30 p.m.
Music Committee, monthly, 2nd Tuesday, at 3:00 p.m.
Parish Board, monthly, 2nd Tuesday, at 7:00 p.m.
Insight Meditation, Tuesdays, at 7:30 p.m.
Finance Committee, monthly, 1st Tuesday, at 7:30 p.m.
Building & Grounds, 3rd Tuesday, at 7:30 p.m.
History Committee, 2nd Wednesday, at 1:30 p.m.
Choir Rehearsal, Wednesdays, at 7:30 p.m.
Creative Callings, 2nd and 4th Thursdays, at 2:00 p.m.
Thursday Meditation, Thursdays, at 4:00 p.m.



Saturday, December 3rd
B&G Work Party, 8 am, Church-wide
Memorial Service for Kathryn George, 1 pm, Sanctuary

Sunday, December 4th
"The Christmas Carol" reading, 4 pm, Parker Hall
Coming of Age, 5:45 pm, Common Room
OWL, 6:30 pm, Parker Hall
SHYG, 7 pm, Common Room

Saturday, December 10th
B&G Work Party, 8 am, Church-wide
Holiday Workshop, 9 am, Parker Hall

Sunday, December 11th
JHYG, 3 pm, Parker Hall
Coming of Age, 5:45 pm, Staples Hall
OWL, 6:30 pm, Parker Hall
SHYG, 7 pm, Common Room

Monday, December 12th
Unity Group, 12 pm, Parker Hall

Tuesday, December 13th
80-plus Luncheon, 12:30 pm, Parker Hall

Saturday, December 17th
Rehearsal for Music Sunday, 3:00 pm

Sunday, December 18th
OWL, 6:30 pm, Parker Hall
SHYG, 7 pm, Common Room

Sunday, December 24th
Christmas Eve services, 5pm and 7pm, Sanctuary