

THE FOCALPOINT

FIRST PARISH IN LEXINGTON
UNITARIAN  UNIVERSALIST

December 2017—What Does It Mean to be a Community of Hope?

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Deadline for January issue: Wednesday, December 20th

Worship Services for December
What Does it Mean to be a Community of Hope?



December 3
Rev. Anne Mason
"Still Aspiring"

As the 325th Team planned our celebrations for this month, we were searching for the perfect phrase for our pressed glass ornaments featuring an image of our magnificent steeple. Our Minister Emerita, Helen Cohen, came up with "Still Aspiring." This morning we wrap up our 325th celebration with worship, a luncheon together, bell ringing and drama. What better way to spend the day together, as people of faith, learning from our past and Aspiring towards the future!



December 10
Rev. Anne Mason
"Ponder Nothing Earthly Minded"

Advent is a time to prepare our hearts for the mystery of the winter holidays. What better way to do that than to spend time in quiet contemplation of the holiness in the heart of time?



December 17
Rev. Anne Mason
"Will Hope, like Light, Return?"

Winter Solstice celebrates the return of hope to our land as our planet experiences the first slow turn toward greater daylight. We participate in this ancient ritual to connect with the natural rhythms of light and dark, of warmth and cold, of winter and spring. Is your Hope buried deep, like seeds in the earth? Come explore the nurturing darkness of Solstice.

Worship Services for December
What Does it Mean to be a Community of Hope?



Sunday, December 24
10:30am — No morning service on Christmas Eve.

5:00pm — Family Christmas Service. First Parish celebrates our annual Christmas Eve service with story and song and candles of joy. Come and sing your favorite carols, listen to Rev. Anne's Christmas message, and enjoy a story by Leo Tolstoy. Special music will be by the Children's Choirs and the Youth Choir.

7:00pm — Candlelight Christmas. Bask in the beauty of our sanctuary on this Holy Night, as the Adult Choir sings music of the season. Rev. Anne will consider how the ancient message of the birth of the Holy Child still has meaning for us today. The evening will end with carols on the front steps of the church, as we serenade the Green with our favorite song: "Oh Little Town of Lexington".

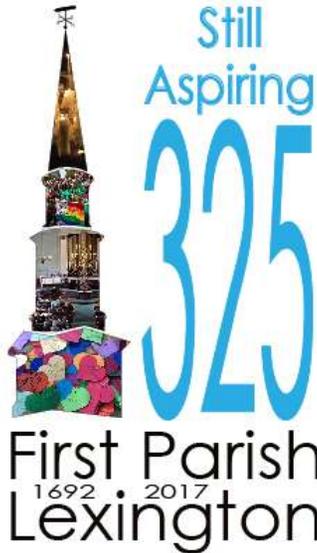


December 31
Lisa Maria Steinberg, DRE
"In Between Time"

Join us for a special New Year's Eve service around the fireplace in Parker Hall. We will say goodbye to 2017 and set our intentions for 2018 through story, song, ritual, and prayer in this cozy All Ages worship.

All Sunday services begin at 10:30am in the Sanctuary.

**Celebration of First Parish's 325th Birthday
Final Event**



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3rd is the final celebration event for our 325th anniversary. Please join us!

(The Colonial Lunch is sold out.)

2:00 p.m. BELL-RINGING: Gather at the Old Belfry, at the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Clarke Street. The Rev. Anne Mason will lead a litany of celebration.

PROCESSION THROUGH THE TOWN GREEN TO THE CHURCH

stopping at the significant sites.

3:00 p.m. "325 AND COUNTING: A FIRST PARISH HISTORICAL DRAMA" written and directed by Don Cohen, with music by Rip Jackson starring Elisabeth Jas, Suzanne Adams, David Bovet, Chris Hess, and David Meharry.

An account of the founding of the church, the covenant, the first building, public confessions, and other highlights of our history.

Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$5 for children and youth, and are available at the door.

**Celebration of First Parish's 325th Birthday
Help Needed for Final Event**

Our last event on December 3rd, a historical presentation of various events in our past, will include a delicious lunch!

Would you be able to help for a few hours, to support the logistics of seating and serving 100+ people?

You would be working alongside LHS students completing their community service. BTW: If you know any LHS students or their friends that need LHS Community service hours, please let them know I have a pre-approved forms ready for them to hand in.

Saturday December 2nd

- 5pm – 7pm – I need 6 people to help put up tables, tablecloths , plates, silverware, cups. Make centerpieces.

Sunday December 3rd

- 10 am – 12 noon – I need two people to be available to continue/complete set up of the tables for lunch. May help caterer bringing food from truck, setting up serving stations etc.
- 11 am – 2pm – I need six people to help bring food to the buffet, keep the buffet area clean, assist guests bring food to their table, etc. When the lunch is over, help clearing the tables and running the dishwasher.
- 2 pm – 4pm – I need six people to break-down/clean up the tables and chairs, bring dishes to kitchen, breakdown buffet, do the dishes in the dishwasher, put away dishes.

If you like, sign up for more than one slot!

USE ONLINE SIGN UP LINK:

<http://www.signupgenius.com/go/60b0d4faaa72aa57-history>

Thanks and feel free to email me with any questions.

Elisabeth Jas—svenjas@msn.com

From Your Minister

The world around us is settling into a time of darkness as we approach the Winter Solstice. People of all faiths gather in the gloom, lighting candles to spark the inner light of life and love, candles to comfort, candles to warm our hearts and our hopes. Now that Simon and I are living in a house built so many centuries ago, I imagine what our First Parish ancestors must have felt after they gathered in their crops and prepared their hearths for the coldness of winter. We are learning which doors to keep shut to stop the drafts, where to store our firewood, how to make our leaky home as warm and as comfortable as we can. I imagine that after all the preparations, our ancestors, too, were ready for a time of rest and reflection.

My hope for all of you, my dear parishioners, is that the coming winter will bring lots of time for you to reflect on what we have learned together about our history as a congregation for 325 years. And at the same time, I hope that you will help us to vision what we still need to do as people of liberal faith. For this world needs our message of love and dignity for all people now, more than ever. We are a creative, energetic and forward looking people. We have an incredible opportunity to visualize how we want to fill our beautifully repainted church with activities to benefit our neighbors and ourselves. What will that look like? Who can you see coming to our doors? How do you want to be a part of it?

May your days be filled with love and with purpose, and may your evenings bring you cherished moments of warmth and connection.

In faith,
Rev. Anne

Two Special Gatherings ~ One Special Place

Parker Hall, named for Lexington native and Unitarian theologian Theodore Parker, is where you will find two special gatherings this December.

I hope that you will mark your calendar for the delightful annual family event of Dan Fenn's reading of A Christmas Carol on Sunday, December 10th at 4:00pm 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 from First Parish's own national treasure- Dan Fenn!

And I invite all to join me for a Fireside Family service on Sunday, December 31st at 10:30. Families of elders, singles, empty nesters, families with babies, teens, and kids—and all other combinations and sizes of families—are welcome to a cozy worship service of story, song, ritual, and prayer around the fireplace in Parker Hall as we say good bye to 2017 and set our intentions for 2018.

~Lisa Maria Steinberg

A Note from the Parish Board

Katie O'Hare Gibson & David Rose, co-chairs

Every time we come to church, we are noticing new improvements to our beautiful building! We would like to extend a huge “Thank you” to all of those who are quietly working behind the scenes to help our historic building be a welcoming place to all. Some of the changes are also helping us to maintain our commitment to energy efficiency to protect our planet.

This year, the Board has two main areas of focus, which are: 1) to improve our governance structure so that our staff and volunteers can be more effective in serving our congregation and our community, and 2) to revisit and revitalize the mission of our church so that its programs, services, and facilities can be optimally focused and designed to meet the needs of our present congregation and the larger community we must attract and serve for the 21st century.

In the area of governance, we have created a Governance Task Force which will work over the next 5 months to organize current church policies, identify policies that need to be improved or created, and to recommend structures that will improve decision-making procedures going forward. We are grateful to those serving on this committee, and look forward to sharing their work with you in the spring.

In the area of mission development, we are already planning activities for this winter that we hope will engage the whole congregation in constructive (and fun) work on articulating our mission. After our Board retreat with Dan Hotchkiss (consultant to church boards), a subgroup of the Board worked to finalize a small set of “Open Questions” that we will be exploring together. The conversations that we hold,

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engaging with these questions, will help us all to more clearly articulate the mission of our church and our means for carrying out this mission in practice. This work is critical for us to be a growing, thriving church and to be effective in carrying out our message. The open questions we will address this year are as follows....

As First Parish moves well into its 4th century, we ask:

What creative ideas shall guide us as we reimagine our community's activities and facilities in order to:

- 1. Promote spiritual and personal growth within our community,**
- 2. Invite dialogue about and understanding of UU values in the wider community, and**
- 3. Serve others and advocate for social justice.**

We hope you will begin to ponder these open questions over the holiday season, as you attend Sunday services and many of the other wonderful events scheduled throughout the month of December. We hope you will reflect on how church fills your spirit, and maybe what is also missing from your experience, to help articulate what church does for you and your family and especially what else it must do to successfully serve a wider set of families.

BOARD

Christmas Music through the Ages
presented by Munroe Saturday Nights



On Saturday, December 9 at 7:00pm, Munroe Saturday Nights will present a concert of "Christmas Music through the Ages." Performers Austin Burns, Rip Jackson, David Meharry and Elizabeth Walsh will present beautiful seasonal vocal and keyboard (harpsichord, piano and organ) music from the medieval, renaissance, baroque, romantic and modern eras. Many well-know carols will be sung in their original form. "Stille Nacht," "Coventry Carol," "O Holy Night," "White Christmas," music from "A Charlie Brown Christmas," and many other beloved carols will be sung and played. For more information, visit www.munroecenter.org or call 781-862-6040 for more information. Free will donation.

Winter Solstice Celebration

Sunday, December 17, 2017 at 10:30 AM



On Sunday morning, December 17, First Parish in Lexington will present a special worship service celebrating the winter solstice at the 10:30am service. Through beautiful music, hymns, sermon and poetry, the powerful transformation from darkness to light will be uplifted. Artist and soprano sax player Katie Runde and pianist Rip Jackson 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. For more information call the church at [781-862-8200](tel:781-862-8200) or visit www.fplex.org.

**Poinsettia for Sanctuary
Deadline—December 3rd**

Let's make the sanctuary festive this holiday season! First Parish will be accepting orders for poinsettias from Wilson Farm until Sunday, December 3rd.

The cost is \$10.00 for a 6 1/2" pot, with proceeds going towards the purchase of greens and other items for holiday decorating of the church. Order forms and payment (cash or checks made payable to First Parish in Lexington) are due on Sunday, December 3rd.

After the Christmas Eve services, you may take your poinsettia home. If you'd like your plant to be in honor or in memory of someone special, please include a message. These will be printed in the Christmas Eve order of service.

Order forms are located on the piano in Parish Hall. Please contact the church office with any questions. Thank you!



**Winter Outerwear Coat Drive
Deadline—December 3rd**

Thank you for all of the donations of gently used or new fall and winter outerwear for children, women and men. The box has been overflowing!

The clothing will be donated to immigrants supported by WATCH in Waltham, which serves families with limited resources (www.watchcdc.org). Families particularly need winter jackets, coats, snowsuits, snow pants, hats, gloves or mittens, and boots. Rugged outdoor coats for men are especially appreciated (most of these guys have outdoor construction jobs). Men's sizes tend to be smaller (M and L, not XL usually), but WATCH can find a home for everything. Stylish coats for women are also a hit.

The outerwear needs to be clean and in good condition, so it can be distributed without delay.

Donations will continue through Sunday, December 3rd. Items may be brought to the Collection Center outside Jane's office.

Questions? Contact Marty Kvaal...and thanks!



Social Action Ministry Events and Deadlines

Climate Justice Advocacy #StandUpCharlie

On Thursday, November 16th, members of First Parish and others from around the region participated in a sit/stand-in at the State House as part of #StandUpCharlie, a grassroots movement asking Governor Charlie Baker to take the lead on climate change. Below is an excerpt of an email from one of the organizers:



"Thank you all so much for joining us yesterday for a powerful, moving event!

Our final count included over 300 people, with 26 staying until past the closing time of the building and being charged with trespassing and unlawful assembly...We heard powerful testimonies from those sitting in, as well as from honored

guests such as some Water Protectors who joined us yesterday, front line anti-gas leaders from groups like FRRACS and the Sugar Shack Alliance, faith leaders, and more.

There was powerful singing, positive energy, and a firm commitment from so many of us to continue seeing this through, until our state agrees to stop new fracked gas infrastructure projects once and for all...We are absolutely going to need to continue pushing Governor Baker to lead on climate and stop new fossil fuel projects..."

For more info, contact Bob Kvaal (rkvaal@gmail.com) or Dave Pollack (joananddavid3@verizon.net).

Social Action Ministry Events and Deadlines



UU Urban Ministry—Please join us for the next Fair Foods is on **Saturday, December 9**. Please email Elaine, if you are able to help: ehylek@bu.edu. We will meet in the church parking lot at 9:50am. Expect to wrap up around 1:30.

Amnesty International—**December 10** is HUMAN RIGHTS DAY to commemorate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Idil Eser, the Director of Amnesty International Turkey, has been jailed along with nine others. They have been charged with terrorism-related crimes. Letters of support are direly needed for their release. Please send a letter to the following:



Ambassador Serdar Kilic
Embassy of the Republic of Turkey
2525 Massachusetts Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20008



December's Special Plate Collection will go to the UU Urban Ministry's program, Believe in Success. From the UUUM website, this is a "new bi-lingual (Spanish/English) job- and educational-readiness program for low-income women/LGBTQ persons who have experienced domestic violence or other trauma. The mission of this 20-hour-per-week classroom/experiential program is to provide a set of skills that enable participants to be successful in taking their next step in life" Please donate during the worship service on Sunday, **December 10th**.

Got a beautiful, sad, complicated, funny,
surprising, love story to tell?

We'd like to hear it! At the next Voices on the Green event, just a few days before Valentine's Day, our theme will be "Love Stories." We will join together for an evening of songs, stories and talks about the wide range of human experiences and complications we call love. If you have a love story you might like to share, or know of a compelling one among your friends or colleagues, please contact David Rose or anyone on the Voices team (Laura Juitt, Anne Khudari, Deb Lapidés, Reggie O'Hare Gibson, Helen Cohen) so that we can consider it for the program and work with you. Or you may simply send a note to voicesonthegreen@fplex.org.

And save the date: Friday, February 9th.



The Soul Matters topic for December 2017 is: What does it mean to be a people of HOPE?

In this darkest month of the year, we think about hope, a turn toward the light. A question to consider: have you or someone you know ever been saved by hope?

Hope rarely descends or magically appears. Most often, it's passed on. It comes to us as a gift, sometimes in the form of a story. What stories of hope do you know—either your own, or those of others? Are there times when what is seemingly dark turns out to be a source of light?

If you want more information about the program at First Parish, please contact Lisa Maria Steinberg at dre@fplex.org.

You can learn more about Soul Matters at their website soulmatterssharingcircle.com.

**Special Events Calendar
December 2017**

**Recurring Events
December 2017**

Sunday, December 3rd

325th Events, 12:00—4:30pm, various locations (see page 4)

Saturday, December 9th

Munroe Saturday Night, 7:00pm, Sanctuary

Sunday, December 10th

Newcomer Drop In, 11:45am, Parlor
Dan Fenn's Christmas Carol Reading, 4:00pm, Parker Hall

Monday, December 11th

Unity Group Luncheon, 12:00pm, Parker Hall

Thursday, December 14th

80+ Luncheon, 12:30pm, Parker Hall

Sunday, December 24th

10:30am, No Sunday Morning Service
5:00pm, Christmas Eve Family Service, Sanctuary
7:00pm, Christmas Eve Candlelight Service, Sanctuary

Choir Warm-up, Sundays, at 9:30 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, 1st Tuesday, at 2:00 p.m.

Parish Board, monthly, 2nd Tuesday, at 7:00 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, 1st and 3rd Wednesdays, at 1:30 p.m.

Thursday Meditation, Thursdays, at 4:00 p.m.

