

THE FOCALPOINT

FIRST PARISH IN LEXINGTON
UNITARIAN  UNIVERSALIST



In The August 2016 Issue:

Welcome from Rev. Anne Mason

Choir Schedule for September

Lifespan Religious Education Fall Preview

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Ingathering Sunday

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Note: Deadline for the September issue is

Tuesday, August 23rd.

Sunday, August 7, 2016

"Forget Your Perfect Offering"
Rev. Joanna Lubkin



Ever have something you cared about so much and wanted to get so perfect that you never do it? Together, we'll look at those moments when perfectionism paralyzes us and how we move past it to give our gifts to the world.

Sunday, August 14, 2016

"Prayer for Atheists"
Rev. Joanna Lubkin



There's some sort of joke out there that instead of beginning our prayers with, "Dear God," Unitarian Universalists begin their prayers, "To Whom It May Concern." Together, we'll explore the potential for prayer in our lives, and we may even explore the G-word.

Sunday, August 21, 2016

"How a Mormon Made me a Unitarian Universalist"
Otto O'Connor



Sometimes it's the people who challenge us the most that change us the most. Come hear the story of how an unexpected friendship with a Mormon lead Otto O'Connor to find Unitarian Universalism.

Sunday, August 28, 2016

"Choose Your Own Adventure: Sermon Edition"
Otto O'Connor



"What happens in this sermon? You decide! This sermon is based on the popular "Choose Your Own Adventure" book series where the reader gets to decide the fate of the characters. You'd be surprised at how much they can tell us about life."

Rev. Joanna Lubkin is the Unitarian Universalist Chaplain at Wellesley College, a part of an eight-person team of interfaith chaplains. She received a Masters of Divinity from Andover Newton Theological School and studied at Hebrew College Rabbinical School. Joanna is an affiliated minister at Arlington Street Church in Boston and is a member of the choir. She is an active leader and musician at The Sanctuary Boston and lives in Jamaica Plain.

Otto O'Connor graduated with his M.Div. from Andover Newton Theological School in May 2015. He is currently pursuing an M.A. in Global Interreligious Leadership at Andover Newton, and serves as one of the co-presidents of the Community of Unitarian Universalist Andover Newton Students. He is currently the Ministerial Intern at the Unitarian Universalist Area Church at the First Parish in Sherborn. He has also served as an Associate Chaplain at the Waysmeet Center, the United Campus Ministry to the University of New Hampshire.



Dear Friends,

What a summer this has been. It has been a time of transition for Simon and for me, as we have been preparing ourselves for this much anticipated move. And now the time is upon us!

It has been a time of transition for you, members of First Parish, as you have said your good-bye's to Rev. Jenny and celebrated your time together. I hope that it has also been a time of rest and relaxation, without the stress of the school year, so that you are finding some space for the regeneration of your mind and body. And, at the same time, it has been an extremely volatile time in our country. Our hearts are bruised and sore after experiencing the violence in so many cities - from Orlando to Baton Rouge, from Nice to Munich. Language of exclusion and fear is sweeping our national dialogue. If there has ever been a time when our Unitarian Universalist message of love and acceptance is needed, it is now. We meet together on the side of love, not the side of hate. And this love of ours is needed in this world of ours. Oh, is it needed. For together we must proclaim the hope of our faith for all who are weary and heavy laden.

So in this in-between, liminal space in which I have been living, where I have been saying good-bye to one beloved congregation while preparing to say hello to you, I find that my desire to be with you all is growing every day. We need

community to help us deal with the world around us. We need each other to hold vigil and open our hearts in prayer. We need the energy and the hope we find in each other to give us the courage for the living of these days.

I am eager to meet as many of you as I can in the weeks to come. I want to get to know you and hear your stories about your faith, your life, and how all of that fits together. I want to hear about your hopes and dreams for First Parish so that together we can shape the ministry of our work. August will be for us all a month of listening and sharing, so please make an appointment to spend some time with me. We can meet in my office, at one of the coffee houses in the area, at your house, or just to walk a trail. I'd love to meet your families and begin to share in the life of First Parish! Help me to know about your life in Lexington, what you enjoy, and what you are concerned about, and help me to understand where you think we should be traveling together as a community of faith.

There is much work to be done, and I am excited to begin to do it with you.

In peace,

Rev. Anne





Mid-summer is a good time to celebrate our collective accomplishments over the past year. I can think of many:

We called a new settled minister – the Reverend Anne Mason – who will join us on August 1, 2016.

We welcomed a new interim minister (the Reverend Jenny Rankin), Director of Lifespan Religious Education (Lisa Maria Steinberg), Director of Music (Rip Jackson), Parish Administrator (Jane Foley), and Youth Programs Coordinator (Katie Camire).

We saw attendance at our Sunday morning services increase 20% over the past year.

We saw participation in our Sunday morning religious education program increase 40% over last year.

We raised 5% more than last year in our annual pledge drive (canvass), which is very unusual for a transition year. The Great Fall Auction and Spring Mayfair also brought in record amounts.

We created a new church website that will present a more modern and up to date site for newcomers to learn about First Parish.

We were treated to a Fall and Spring Music Concert from Rip and the Sanctuary Choir that attracted over 250 people (the majority who were not First Parish members) to each.

We heard the largest children’s choir in years sing in several Sunday services.

We hosted a community forum on criminal justice reform, with a nationally recognized moderator and distinguished panelists.

We launched a monthly Congregational Conversation series that provided opportunities for parishioners to voice opinions about pressing matters for the church. The Transition Team hosted many of them.

We started a conversation about Shared Ministry — what it is and why it’s important — and developed a new approach to evaluating Shared Ministry at First Parish.

We created a “Tree of Hearts” that expresses what we love and appreciate about First Parish.

We publicized volunteer openings via a beautifully designed bulletin board in the Parish Hall.

We had numerous articles in the Lexington Minuteman on happenings at First Parish.

We heard from the Senior High Youth Group about their service trip to Washington, DC, that focused on homelessness and hunger.

We awarded the first in a series of annual grants from the Good Samaritan Fund to provide short-term assistance to

needy individuals.

We recognized that the condition of our kitchen had deteriorated and we took steps to address the problem.

We learned about and tasted amazing olive oil at a well-attended multigenerational event.

We provided input to the Town Selectman on a proposed one-way traffic plan for Harrington Road, to ensure that our needs were met.

It was a great year!

In fellowship,

Tom

BOARD

August Office Hours for Rev. Anne Mason

If you haven't done so, please sign up for a visit with Rev. Anne Mason as she begins her ministry with First Parish on August 1st.

Office hours will be Monday through Thursday from 9am to 1pm in her office and Wednesday evenings from 7pm to 9pm at Panera on Mass Ave.

Please sign up for a designated time slot by clicking on this link to [Signup Genius](#). If you have trouble opening the link, please contact Jane Foley at admin@fplex.org

Rev. Anne looks forward to meeting with you!

Open House to Welcome Rev. Anne

Starting on August 1st, our new minister, Reverend Anne Mason, will begin her shared ministry with us. To welcome her to our congregation, we are planning an Open House on **Tuesday, August 2 from 6:30-9PM** in Parish Hall, with coffee and desserts. We hope that everyone who is in town on that day will stop by, with their families, to say a warm hello to Reverend Anne!

The Committee On Ministerial Support

*Bobbie Hodson, Jane Eckert, Pete Tasker, Dan Fenn,
Amy Jamison*

Children's and Sanctuary Choir start up in September

I hope you are all having a great summer! I have been enjoying some time in the office, vacation time, and professional development.

In September, both the sanctuary choir and children's choir will resume. I will be sending out more information in the September Focal Point about the children's choir schedule. They will rehearse on Sundays after church and sing in church every 6 weeks or so. They will also sing on Christmas Eve, Easter, and in both the fall Folk concert and the spring Broadway concert.

Below is the September choir schedule. If you would like to try us out, please feel free to start coming to rehearsals in the sanctuary or to the choir retreat. Our choir rehearsals will be fun and full of music from many genres. All are welcome!

I am always interested in learning who plays instruments in the congregation (as well as singing!). I am available by phone, email, or appointment if you would like to share your musical talents in worship and concerts!

Questions? Contact Rip Jackson, Director of Music, at music.fplex@gmail.com or 781-862-8200 x 4 with any questions.

Peace and blessings,
Rip Jackson

First Parish Choir Schedule September 2016

Wednesday, September 7, 7:30-9:30 PM—
first choir rehearsal in the sanctuary

Sunday, September 11, 9:45 AM warm up and 10:30 AM
service (Ingathering Sunday)

Wednesday, September 14, 7:30-9:30 PM—choir rehearsal
in the sanctuary

Saturday, September 17, 3:00-7:00 PM—
mini choir retreat with potluck supper at First Parish

Sunday, September 18, 9:45 AM warm up and 10:30 AM
service

Wednesday, September 21, 7:30-9:30 PM—choir rehearsal
in the sanctuary

Sunday, September 25, 9:45 AM warm up and 10:30 AM
service

Wednesday, September 28, 7:30-9:30 PM—choir rehearsal
in the sanctuary



Adult Programs

We are very excited to start up our Soul Matters groups this fall. Previously known as Chalice Circles/Covenant Groups, our small group ministry at First Parish is transitioning into Soul Matters groups. We have openings in groups and also will be starting new ones. Please contact Debbie Armstrong or Ruth Rose if you are not currently part of a small group and want to join one.

Soul Matters groups will be led by a facilitator to engage in our monthly theme. This is a great way to develop deeper connections with the members and friends of First Parish, and dive deeper into how our monthly themes inform us as a community and support you on your personal spiritual journey. For information on other Adult Programs, including Meditation Groups, Non-Fiction Group, Creative Callings (Fiber Arts Group), and Affinity Groups (Over 80s Group, Unity Group), please visit the website or contact Debbie Armstrong or Ruth Rose while Lisa Maria is on maternity leave.

Youth Groups and Coming of Age

Our Youth Groups are ready to start up this Fall. Senior High Youth Group will continue to meet on Sunday evenings at 7:00-9:00PM. Junior High Youth Group meets once a month from 3:00-5:00PM on Sundays. Coming of Age meets twice a month from 5:45-7:00PM on Sundays. For more details on these programs, please contact Katie

Camire, Youth Coordinator at youth@fplex.org. If you have not enrolled your youth yet, please fill out our [Family Enrollment Form](#).

8th Grade OWL

Do you have an 8th Grader? Wondering about the Our Whole Lives program? Do you know an 8th Grader in the community who is not part of First Parish, but the family would like to participate in OWL? This year First Parish is offering OWL fully in-house and welcoming any outside families to participate. Parent Orientation is on October 4th at 7:00PM, and OWL sessions start on Sunday evening October 16th. If you would like to sign up for OWL, please fill out our [Family Enrollment Form](#).

Sunday Mornings for Children and Middle School Youth

Most Sundays our Spirit Play and Chapel Groups meet, but about once a month (usually in celebration of a holiday or other special observance) we have an All Ages Worship Service when our children attend all of the service with their families. September 11th is our Ingathering of Water Communion and is an All Ages service. Spirit Play and Chapel start on September 18th. Our Nursery is open for babies and toddlers starting on September 11th. If you have not enrolled your baby, toddler, child or youth yet, please fill out our [Family Enrollment Form](#).

Spirit Play for Pre-Kindergarten and First Grade

For children in Pre-Kindergarten through 1st Grade we offer Spirit Play. This popular Unitarian Universalist program is based in Montessori methods and centers on the medium of storytelling for young children to engage in spirituality and faith development. Our Spirit Play stories are selected to complement the church's monthly theme. Spirit Play is led by our long time and beloved staff teacher, Michelle Lee, along with the assistance of volunteers. If you feel your child may be more comfortable attending Chapel with the older children, please speak with our Director of Lifespan Religious Education.

Chapel for Second Grade through Middle School

Children 2nd Grade and up through middle school attend the worship service to experience our rituals, traditions, prayer time, stories and music. Chapel participants depart the service just prior to the sermon and gather for Chapel for a time of faith development that includes sharing in fellowship and engaging with the theme or topic of the service that day.

Questions about Programming during Lisa Maria's Maternity Leave? Contact the church office and Jane Foley will put you in touch with the right person to help you. Lisa Maria returns at the beginning of October.



Ingathering Sunday

During the Ingathering Sunday service on September 11th, all are welcome to participate in the Water Communion ceremony. Whether you are spending the summer months in your back yard or travelling abroad, please gather and save a small amount of water in a container.

The water communion is a Unitarian Universalist ritual, a time of sharing where you've been and reconnecting with one another. The water is poured into a common bowl and symbolizes the UU belief that many are one. Some of the water is saved, sterilized, and then used for ceremonial purposes, such as child dedications, at other times of the year.

Please join together with other First Parishioners for this special service and to welcome everyone back to church!

