

THE FOCALPOINT

FIRST PARISH IN LEXINGTON
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

February 2017

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Deadline for March issue, Wednesday, February 22nd .

Worship Services for February

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

February 5, Rev. Anne Mason "Balancing the Wheel"



Parker Palmer teaches that we live a 'divided life.' What does it take for us to find that hidden sense of wholeness and bring our full selves into community, together? As we begin our monthly study of Identity, we begin with our first step of looking within. As Palmer says "I now know myself to be a person of weakness and strength, liability and giftedness, darkness and light. I now know that to be whole means to reject none of it but to embrace all of it."

February 12, Rev. Anne Mason "Our Separate Fires Will Kindle One Flame"



For years this congregation has stood as a sanctuary of liberal religion in Lexington. Our purpose today is as critical as it was 325 years ago. What is it that we each must bring to keep our chalice flame alight and continue our positive influence on the world around us?

Worship Services for February

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

February 19, Rev. Helen Lutton Cohen, Minister Emerita "Boundaries"



Edwin Markham famously wrote, "He drew a circle to shut me out—/Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout./ But love and I had the wit to win:/ We drew a circle and took him In!" As individuals, and as communities, we actually need boundaries that keep us safe, that help us know that we have a home, even to help us know who we are. As Universalists, however, we believe we must reach beyond these boundaries to connect with the larger world. How do we both "belong" and "reach out"?

February 26, TBA



From Your Minister

In this month we explore together what it means to be a Community of Identity. This will lead us to many questions, I hope. What is it about each one of us that draws us to this Unitarian Universalist faith? Is it our desire for personal freedom of religious thought? Is it having an open mind? Is it our desire to work with others to make this world a better place? Is it our need to find a refuge from the craziness of the world around us? And importantly, what do we all need to do to sustain and empower this beloved community of ours?

I suspect it is all of these things. There is room for all of us in the wide embrace of our life-sustaining faith. Especially now. I share with you a poem by Vaclav Havel which speaks to me about our current situation:

It is I who must begin.
Once I begin, once I try --
 here and now,
 right where I am,
 not excusing myself
 by saying things
 would be easier elsewhere,
without grand speeches and
 ostentatious gestures,
but all the more persistently
 -- to live in harmony
with the "voice of Being," as I
understand it within myself

-- as soon as I begin that,
I suddenly discover,
to my surprise, that
I am neither the only one,
 nor the first,
nor the most important one
 to have set out
 upon that road.

Whether all is really lost
or not depends entirely on
whether or not I am lost.

Have courage, my friends. We are in this together. Let us find our way together.

In faith,
Rev. Anne

SAVE THE DATE!
The Installation of Rev. Anne Mason as
Minister of First Parish in Lexington
Sunday, March 26, 2017
4:00pm in the Sanctuary
All Are Welcome!



Our theme this month is *What does it mean to be a community of Identity?* We'll be digging into this topic in Worship Services, our Chalice Circles, in our Youth Groups, in Spirit Play, and in Chapel.

Our themes come from the Soul Matters curriculum—a rich collection of resources to support a community in diving deep and wide into a theme every month. This month's theme pushes us to examine our many identities, the identities of those in our life, and how we recognize, honor, reject, embrace, or ignore them.

In Spirit Play and Chapel, our children will engage with stories and activities about claiming the many identities they already have and how to cultivate identities they hope to claim. In Youth groups and in our Chalice Circles, participants will examine their relationships with their identities in a variety of ways, as fits the interests of that particular group.

Have you joined a Chalice Circle yet? This small group ministry is a great way to connect at a deeper level with others in the community around our monthly theme. Contact me for more information on how to join one.

And here's my question to you, intrepid reader of the Focalpoint, you've read this far in my column this month (woohoo!), and I'd love to know what poem or musical work, or other piece of artwork reminds you of the identity you are most proud to claim. Please drop me a line at dre@fplex.org. I will be compiling a list (all submissions will remain anonymous) and creating a way to share with our community the many ways First Parish folk identify. I want to hear from you!

~Lisa Maria Steinberg



First Parish's annual pledge drive begins in February, culminating with Pledge Sunday on March 12th. The annual Pledge party -- with food, beverages, and entertainment -- will be on Friday night, March 10th in the Parish

Hall.

The annual pledge drive brings in about 70% of the funds that provide worship and music on Sundays, pastoral care throughout the year, children and adult religious education programming, and community outreach. Our goal this year for the pledge drive is \$393,000. Pledge cards will be mailed to parishioners in late February.

Pledging can be a mysterious process -- How much should I pledge? What does my pledge go toward? When do I pay? How do I pay? Starting in late January and going thru early March, members of the Pledge team will be at a table in the Parish Hall during coffee hour to answer any pledge question you have. You can also speak to any member of the Pledge Team (Bob Coyne, Marsha Fox, Bob Gibbons, Katie O'Hare Gibson, Tom Rich, and Erik Svenson) or email your questions to stewardship@fplex.org.

On behalf of the Pledge Team and your Parish Board, I thank you in advance for your pledge to First Parish and for helping us reach our pledge goal.

In the spirit of community,

Tom Rich

A Night of Broadway Solos and Duets
Presented by Munroe Saturday Nights
First Parish in Lexington

Saturday, February 11th at 7:30pm in the Sanctuary

First Parish in Lexington's soprano and tenor soloists Elizabeth Walsh (Broadway singer) and Austin Burns (opera singer) will present an evening of Broadway solos and duets with accompaniment by Rip Jackson on piano. Come spend an evening serenaded with stunning and beautiful repertoire from the American stage. Austin and Beth will sing music from *Showboat*, *Phantom of the Opera*, *West Side Story*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Music Man*, and other exciting songs from Broadway musicals. Rip Jackson will also play George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* (excerpt).

Doors will open at 7 PM and the concert begins at 7:30 PM. Reservations are strongly recommended. For more info, call 781-862-6040 or visit www.munroecenter.org. Suggested donation of \$10/person is invited.

Lexington Choral Festival
Sunday, February 12th at 3:00 PM
Hancock Church in Lexington, MA
Free Admission

The First Parish Sanctuary Choir will join 11 other choirs from Lexington in raising their voices together in the 12th Annual Lexington Choral Festival on Sunday, February 12 at 3:00 p.m. hosted by Hancock Church. This year's festival features choirs from 12 area churches and temples with over 200 singers participating. Admission is free and open to the public.

Participating this year are choirs from, Pilgrim Congregational Church, Sacred Heart Church, Hancock United Church of

Christ, Church of Our Redeemer Episcopal, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, First Parish Church, St. Brigid Church, First Baptist Church, Lexington United Methodist Church, Temple Emunah, Trinity Covenant Church and the Chinese Baptist Church. Each choir will sing 2-3 numbers of their own choosing, then all the choirs will join in a mass performance together. The performance is approximately 90 minutes in length. A reception will follow. Free parking is available behind the church and around the Battle Green. The church is fully handicap accessible.

Blue Heron Medieval Ensemble
Friday, February 17th at 8:00 PM
First Parish in Lexington

Join the Blue Heron Medieval Ensemble as they present the fifth installment of the complete works of Johannes Ockeghem, featuring one of the composer's earliest masses, inspired by an anonymous English mass on the same plainchant melody, but utterly transformed by the Flemish genius. The program will include a movement from the English Missa Caput and other music by mid 15th-century English composers such as Robert Morton and Walter Frye. This program will also be offered on February 18 in Cambridge.

Blue Heron: Martin Near & Laura Pudwell, cantus; Owen McIntosh, Jason McStoots, Mark Sprinkle, Sumner Thompson, tenor & contratenor; Paul Guttry & David McFerrin, bassus.

Doors open at 7:30. [Click here to buy in advance and save](#): \$65 Preferred / \$32 General / \$27 Senior (General) / \$10 (Student (General)). At the door: \$68 / \$35 / \$30 / \$10. Under 18 free.

This program is supported in part by a grant from the Lexington Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

Economic Justice Initiative formed at First Parish

Two weeks after the U.S. election Rev. Anne conducted a series of Tuesday noon “Where Do We Go From Here?” gatherings. Out of distress with the country-wide assault on values that we hold dear as UUs, a small group of us pulled together an Economic Justice Initiative to focus our efforts on doing something about it. We interpret “Economic” as being related to narrowing the income gap through job creation, tax reform, and other actions designed to help economically struggling individuals and families. This is also very much as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. came to see justice, and recently has been the thrust of Rev. William Barber, Jr.’s Moral Fusion movement. There is a strong moral element of this Initiative.

In the past month, the Economic Justice Initiative has made connections with justice organizations; we have explored political and social activism tactics; and we have participated in advocacy events standing up for our values at the local, state, and national level. We have identified important actions each week and put the most important ones out to the congregation in Weekly Updates and the First Parish “CHAT” group. These actions have been—and will be—drawn largely from what other activist organizations that we collaborate with are recommending. Actions proposed to the congregation have been making calls to legislators or visiting their local offices.

At its January 25th meeting, the Economic Justice Initiative created three sub-teams. Two sub-teams are aligned with movements that have had ongoing support from our parishioners and are now under even more significant threat: Climate Change, with its potential to create good jobs—let alone help to mitigate severe damage to the planet, and Criminal Justice, with its Jobs Not Jails emphasis and focus on prison reform. The third sub-team is called Indivisible and is aligned

Economic Justice Initiative formed at First Parish

with mounting resistance to cabinet nominations that are particularly onerous and to legislation that attempts to undermine progress in justice causes over the past three decades. Individuals in the sub-teams lead advocacy in their areas of interest and are establishing or participating in coalitions with other local religious and advocacy organizations. Our teams’ coalitions will be offering educational opportunities to our congregation and the community, such as the recent January airing of the movie *Before the Flood* at Cary Library sponsored by the Lexington Global Warming Action Coalition; and upcoming airing of the film *Beyond the Wall* at our local Venue theatre on February 11th at 10am co-sponsored by Lexington and Bedford UU churches.

While members of the Initiative will be intensely involved in these activities, they will also offer opportunities for less-intense involvement by parishioners of all ages as those opportunities come up. Please keep an eye out in future weekly and monthly newsletters for these opportunities to learn and maybe get involved. This Economic Justice Initiative and the chosen focus areas are intended to complement First Parish involvement in other ongoing social justice and advocacy activities.

Questions? Contact Pete Tasker.





On Saturday February 11 @ 10am at the Lexington Venue, please bring family and friends to a free screening of the film, "Beyond the Wall."

Written and produced by Concord filmmaker,

Jenny Phillips, it was filmed locally at the Billerica House of Correction/ Middlesex Jail. Jenny Phillips and the main character, Louie Diaz, will be present after the film for conversation. The film, in coordination with the "After Incarceration There's Life" campaign, strives to break down common stereotypes and barriers, to stimulate new conversations about re-entry, and to support preparations of individuals for release. Middlesex County Sheriff, Peter Koutoujian, calls this documentary, "Riveting, gritty, powerful, and provocative-it is real life."

In the spirit of thinking globally and acting locally, please join us in moving forward in conversation and action on criminal justice reform. These once incarcerated individuals are our neighbors, friends, and family who are in need of understanding and support.

First Parish Lexington joins First Parish, Bedford and Follen Community Church in sponsoring and supporting this event.

On Sunday, February 19th, the plate collection will be donated to WATCH in Waltham. Daria Gere, Executive Director, will be speaking.

WATCH is a CDC (Community Development Corporation) that provides a variety of programs from a tenants' clinic, housing repair and weatherization, and language classes and tutoring to the new immigrant community in Waltham.

The community WATCH serves is diverse, but primarily composed of young, low income families from Guatemala and El Salvador. Thirty-five percent of Waltham school children are from Spanish speaking households. Several First Parish members have volunteered in the "Barnraising" housing program and at Breaking Barriers, WATCH's ESL program. Breaking Barriers at WATCH is the only ESL program currently offering classes in Waltham. Volunteer teachers and tutors are always needed.

Support for this vulnerable community is critical in these troubled times.



All are welcome to the next Unity Group luncheon and program, which will take place on Monday, February 13th in Parker Hall. This month's presenter will be Cammy Thomas' whose first book of poems, Cathedral of Wish, received the 2006 Norma Farber First Book Award from the Poetry Society of America.



Her second book, Inscriptions, came out in 2014. Both are published by Four Way Books. Her poems are forthcoming or have recently appeared in Ibbetson Street #40, The Missouri Review, The Maine Review, Off The Coast, Third Wednesday, and Spillway. A fellowship from the Ragdale Foundation helped her complete her new book.

After growing up on Long Island, New York, she was educated primarily in California, writing her PhD dissertation at Berkeley on Tennyson's poetry. An MFA in poetry followed, from the MFA Program for Writers at Warren Wilson College. She lives in Lexington, Massachusetts, and teaches literature and creative writing at Concord Academy.

Guests are invited to the social time and lunch, starting at 12:00 or just the program at 1:30. No reservations necessary.

Are you new to First Parish and/or interested in learning more about Unitarian Universalism? Please come to the New UU Class, which will be held on Saturday, February 11th from 9:00am to 12:00pm. The class is for new visitors to First Parish, new members, and anyone wanting a refresher!

The class will include discussion about UU beliefs, the Seven Principles, the six Sources, and the UU symbol – the flaming chalice. We will cover the benefits and responsibilities of membership at First Parish, what our motto Love, Seek, Serve means, our mission, and our covenant and why it is different from a creed. We will also speak about church governance and opportunities for connection and service.

Please contact Rev. Anne Mason at minister@fplex.org or Jane Foley, our Parish Administrator, at 781-862-8200 or admin@fplex.org.



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.



Sunday, February 5th

Coming of Age, 10:30am, Sanctuary; OWL, 6:30pm, Parker Hall

Saturday, February 11th

New UU Workshop, 9:00am, Parlor
Screening—*Beyond the Wall*, 10:00am, Lexington Venue;
Munroe Saturday Night, 7:00pm, Sanctuary

Sunday, February 12th

JHYG, 12:00pm, Parker Hall; Coming of Age, 5:45pm, Common Room; OWL, 6:30pm, Parker Hall; SHYG, 7:00pm, Common Room

Monday, February 13th

Unity Group, 12:00pm, Parker Hall

Friday, February 17th

Blue Heron concert, 8:00pm, Sanctuary

Wednesday, February 22nd

80+ Luncheon, 12:30pm, Parker Hall

Sunday, February 26th

SHYG, 7:00pm, Common Room

Images from the first Voices on the Green
Community Series, Friday, January 27th



Regie O'Hare Gibson hosts the first Voices on the Green.



Neuroscientist Todd Rose, Director of the Mind, Brain and Education Program at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, was a presenter.



Jeff Leonard, teacher, musician, and mentor extraordinaire to Lexington High School students for nearly 25 years, performed.

Stay Tuned for information about the next *Voices on the Green* when the theme will be

Living in the Hyphen

