

THE FOCALPOINT

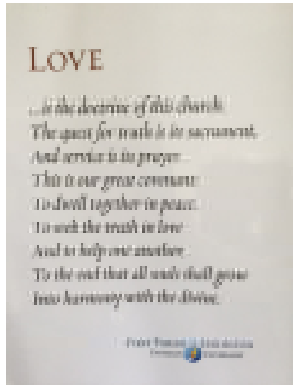
FIRST PARISH IN LEXINGTON
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

March 2018 — What Does It Mean to be a Community of Balance?

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Deadline for April issue: Friday, March 23rd

Worship Services for March
What Does it Mean to be a Community of Balance?



March 4
Rev. Anne Mason
"And Service is Our Prayer"

In this worship time for all ages, everyone is invited to explore together in thought, word and deed. What does it mean to live out our seven principles? Every week we declare that "service is our prayer." What might it look like to use our hearts *and* our hands to engage in service? Our special collection this week will go to the Inter-faith Food Pantry, and we will have a chance to engage our faith in our annual Amnesty International Letter Writing. Worship leaders today are Rev. Anne Mason and Lisa Maria Steinberg



March 11
Rev. Lara Hoke
"So, What is the Meaning of Life?"

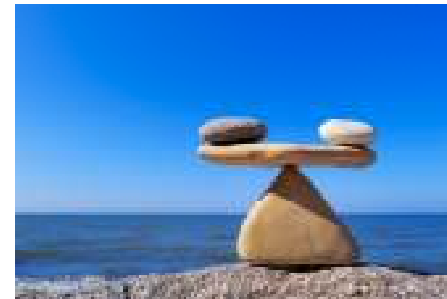
Against her better judgment, guest preacher the Rev. Lara Hoke will take a stab at revealing the answer to the biggest mystery of all in her sermon, "So, What Is the Meaning of Life?" Lara has been the consulting minister of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Andover since 2009. Lara is a graduate of Harvard Divinity School and Cornell University and is a veteran of the US Navy. She has been a healthcare chaplain and has worked for environmental and youth-services non-profits. She lives in Lowell, Massachusetts with her wife Emily Ferrara and their 17-year-old dog, Xena.

Worship Services for March
What Does it Mean to be a Community of Balance?



March 18
Rev. Anne Mason
"Celebration Sunday"

First Parish exists only through the generosity and vision of the members and friends who pledge their time, their talents, and their money to make this church the vibrant place it has become. Please bring your completed pledge cards to church as we celebrate all who are part of this community, and all that we still aspire to be. Preaching this morning is Rev. Anne Mason.



March 25
Rev. Anne Mason
"Union of Opposites"

On this Palm Sunday, we will experience a Unitarian Universalist version of the 7 Stations of the Cross. But instead of contemplating the traditional Christian themes of death and sacrifice, we will explore our theme of Balance. Think back to when you first learned to ride a bicycle.

Discovering our balance sometimes requires that we experience opposing sides of the same issue and work our way to the point where we can travel safely between both sides. We will look for our place between ease and dis-ease, between harmony and discord, between patience and impatience. This service for All Ages is lead by Rev. Anne Mason and Lisa Maria Steinberg.

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

From Your Minister
Rev. Anne Mason

Special Collection in March
Lexington Interfaith Food Pantry

In this month of March, we are contemplating the theme of balance. This reminds me that when I was a teenager, my great love was ballet. I spent hours in the studio, taking classes, going to rehearsals, listening to great classical music. I loved the artistry of it, and I loved the effort and energy needed to leap and spin. I was never the long willowy dancer - I was the action oriented character dancer who had some good 'hang time' in the air. But perhaps what I loved most was going en pointe, finding a way to balance on the tips of my toes, and enjoying that magical moment of stillness in the midst of motion. What I remember about finding that point of balance is that it took less effort than I thought it should. When I tried to muscle my way into a pose, fatigue would soon take over and I'd come down with a clunk. But when I could find a way to release the extra tension but still hold my center, suddenly the movements felt easy!

As we face the whirlwind that is our world, I hope that we can find a way to release the extra tension and still hold on to our center. To help us on our path, here is my favorite quote from T.S. Eliot, from his poem *Burnt Norton*.

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
Where past and future are gathered.
Neither movement from nor towards, Neither ascent nor decline.
Except for the point, the still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.

In faith,
Rev. Anne



Every year during March, First Parish has a month-long collection for the Lexington Interfaith Food Pantry. Housed in the basement of the Church of Our Redeemer, it has been active in Lexington since 1990, when the Lexington Council of Churches, including First Parish, founded the program.



In recent years, the number of families serviced has grown to more than 70 per week, and typical shoppers served are the elderly; individuals who are unemployed or underemployed; low income families with children; and people with medical or mental health issues.

There are two ways you can help during the month of March. First, please donate personal care products, which are not covered by the Federal food stamp programs. These include shampoos, lotions, dental care products, and other toiletries. Products containing alcohol or hotel sized items will not be accepted. There will be baskets at both entrances to the church marked Food Pantry donations. We will also continue to accept non-perishable food items as we have been doing on an ongoing basis.

The second way you can help is by making a monetary donation during the special plate collection on Sunday, March 4th. Carolyn Wortman, Director, will speak at the service. All non-pledge contributions will be donated.

Thank you as always for your generosity of spirit and gifts to others in need. If you have any questions or want more information about the Lexington Food Pantry, please contact Lynne Yansen or Tom Wanderer.

"Better to light a candle than curse the darkness."



First Parish's annual Amnesty International letter writing activity will be held **this coming Sunday, March 4**. The letter writing has been an annual event here at First Parish and is part of a similar effort being held at other churches here in Lexington.

This year we will have three letters, all involving prisoners of conscience:

- Two Iranian women who went on a hunger strike in protest of being transferred to a prison where women convicted of violent offences are held in inhumane conditions.
- Three members of the Burundian non-governmental organization who are on trial for "threatening state security" and using fake documents.
- Thich Quang Do, Vietnam's longest detained human rights defender and Supreme Head of the outlawed Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam. He has been imprisoned, placed in internal exile, or held under house arrest for over 30 years.

We are often asked "do the letters make a difference?" The answer is a resounding "yes". Two recent examples illustrate this point.

- A Palestinian human rights defender and media coordinator was released from Ketziot Prison in Israel on 7 December. He has now returned home to his family in Beit Hanina, in occupied East Jerusalem.
- A Venezuelan prisoner of conscience who had been denied urgently needed medical treatment. Since January 2018, he has been transferred to a military hospital for continuing treatment received of his medical needs.

How it works. Letters and envelopes for each of the cases will be provided. If you would like to bring self-addressed labels to place on the envelopes that is fine. Contributions to defray the cost of postage are welcomed.

Over the past year we celebrated 325 years as a presence in this community. We heard about our history in establishing this town and all the work that has been done over those years to search for truth and work toward justice. Our amazing staff has supported our volunteers in working tirelessly, still aspiring to act on the prophetic voice of our historical member, Theodore Parker: "I do not pretend to understand the moral universe; the arc is a long one, my eye reaches but little ways... And from what I see I am sure it bends towards justice."

Last month, through the Imagination Cafe events, together we shared our love and dreams for First Parish to do important work in the world. We need to support those dreams with resources. Let our steeple be a beacon of hope and justice into the world. We need to support our staff and programs financially to enable any of the amazing new ideas we imagined for our community.

What is the pledge drive?

This is the time of year when we make our financial pledges to the church to support the programs and mission of First Parish. Please visit our FAQ page to see valuable information about making your pledge.

How do I Pledge?

We expect members and long-time friends (non-members) to pledge. We also welcome pledges from the wider community. Pledge cards will be mailed in early March. On Celebration Sunday, March 18, please bring your card to the Sunday service at church or pledge online.

How much should I pledge?

The amount you pledge of course depends on your household's financial situation. Following guidelines for churches like ours, we encourage active and committed donors to pledge at least \$3,000, moderated by financial situation. Find out more at our FAQ page.

Why is it important?

The programming and the operations of our congregation is funded mainly by the commitment of our members and friends. Although we are always looking for new ways to fund our upcoming initiatives, community events, and expanded programming, the support of the church community is the foundation of the annual budget. As our circle of community widens, we hope that we will be able to create more opportunities to serve, to broaden the access to our programming, and to expand the reach our prophetic voice. Dedication to justice and the search for truth and meaning is needed more than ever.

Join our worship service on March 18th to hand in a pledge card or pledge online!

We will have several events promoting and discussing Stewardship goals and engaging with you in conversation. This will culminate with a Celebration Sunday with a food, drinks, and entertainment event in the month of April.

The Stewardship Planning Team members are: Bob Coyne, Marsha Fox, Katie O'Hare-Gibson, Elisabeth Jas, Erik Svenson, and Tom Rich. Send Questions or Comments to Stewardship@fplex.org.

Among Our Own
"We Remember Them"

All are invited to join the family of Phyllis Whitman as they celebrate and honor her life at a memorial service on Saturday, March 24, 2018, at 1:00pm in the sanctuary of First Parish.

Phyllis was a member of First Parish for about 55 years, attending regularly and participating actively. Phyllis is survived by her only child, Susanna Whitman, Susanna's husband Jonathan Kinghorn, and their 3 children, David, Liz, and Jeremy Whitman-Kinghorn.



June Smith of Lexington died in January. June and her late husband, Bob, were active members of First Parish for many years. In addition to other contributions, June was a member of the former Alliance and Lend-a-Hand and later the Unity Group and was an officer of the Laymen's League. As treasurer of the Alliance, she was able to make prudent investments that greatly benefited the church.

At June's request there was not a memorial service. She was buried in West Virginia with her husband.

Lisa Maria Steinberg
Director of Lifespan Religion

One way to support the Religious Education Program at First Parish is to serve on the Religious Education Committee. This group of volunteers works in collaboration with and in support of the Director of Lifespan Religious Education.

Do you have skills in planning and organizing? Or maybe you are a creative thinker, seeking to enhance and imagine new ways for families to engage in their faith development as Unitarian Universalists. Many of those who serve in leadership at First Parish today, first served as a leader in the Religious Education Program. Parents of current young children and youth, as well as those without kids or with adult children, are welcome to serve First Parish in support of this vital ministry in our congregation.

Members of the Religious Education Committee advise on programming for children and youth, schedule volunteers for the RE Program, engage families with kids and other families in the congregation in All Ages activities and projects, and are a voice for the continued success of First Parish's growing RE program.

Meetings are scheduled to fit around the schedule of the members, and we can even do meetings on Zoom via video chat.

Contact me for more information about what it would look like to serve on the Religious Education Committee at First Parish.

In Faith,

Lisa Maria A. Steinberg

Director of Lifespan Religious Education



At the last Senior High Youth Group meeting our youth discussed gun control and their feelings about the massacre in Parkland, FL.

Many of our youth are planning to attend the March in support of bringing an end to mass shootings and gun violence in schools. First Parish's Youth invite everyone to join them in this social justice action. Please contact Lisa Maria if you want to join in marching so you can be added to our communication list for those planning to attend. In the coming weeks we will be making plans to travel to, safely attend, and return from the march in Boston.



Official name: March for Our Lives

March 24th, Noon to 5:00 pm, Boston Common

Boston March Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1607397545975790/>

National March website:

<https://www.marchforourlives.com/>

Here are some thoughts from our youth on why they support legislation for gun control.

"Gun control matters to me because I want to come home to my family every day after school"

"Gun control matters to me because my best friend could be shot and I would have never gotten to say goodbye."

"A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.' We no longer need militias, arms do not necessarily mean guns, and the guns that were present at the time written were muskets, not machine guns."

"Why the march matters: To make a statement loud enough for those in power to hear."

"Gun control matters to me because the students of yesterday are the lawmakers of today, but these laws govern everyone. The students of today are the lawmakers of tomorrow."

"This matters to me because I want my future to be safe."

"I believe that the march matters to me because all of the people who are attending to show their compassion and care for the people who have been deeply affected by and to give "Us 'regular civilians' a voice and hope."

"Gun control matters to me because when Kinder Eggs posed a [choking] threat to infants, they were banned, but when 17 children are massacred, lobbyists are paid to keep the tool legal."

Sarasa Ensemble Concert
Sunday, March 4, 2018, at 3:30 PM
“Les délices de la solitude”

All are welcome to come to the third of Sarasa Ensemble's concert series at First Parish in Lexington.

Introducing the exemplary musician and gambist, Reiko Ichise, to our Sarasa family, this intimate program provides clear evidence why the bass viol was so revered by the Sun King, Louis XIV. As well as a celebration of the 350th anniversary of François Couperin's birth, this will be a rare chance to hear re-discovered works by two of the finest players of Georgian England, who were also great friends, Carl Friedrich Abel and Giacobbe Cervetto.

Tickets are \$10 for students, \$20 for seniors, and \$25 general and can be purchased here:

<https://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/3056988>



First Parish in Lexington presents
Paul Winter's Missa Gaia: A Mass for the Earth
Friday and Saturday, April 13-14, 2018, at 7:30 PM
Pre-concert drumming at 7:15 PM

Earth Fair & Reception in Parish Hall after the performances



First Parish in Lexington will present Paul Winter's *Missa Gaia: A Mass for the Earth* on Friday and Saturday, April 13-14, 2018 at 7:30 PM. This profound work, under the musical direction of Rip Jackson and theatrical and dance direction of Maris Wolff, will be a collaboration between the First Parish sanctuary and children's choirs, the Vermont Dance Collective, and a world music ensemble of percussionists, guitar, piano, electric keyboards, soprano sax, oboe, cello, and bass. Integrating world music with songs from tundra wolves, canyon and musical wrens, harp seals, a flight of loons and singing humpback whales to celebrate the whole earth as a sacred space, the *Missa Gaia* was commissioned by the Dean of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine as a contemporary ecumenical Mass for the Earth. There will be an Earth Fair and reception featuring Lexington environmental organizations in Parish Hall after both performances.

Tickets are \$25 for adults, \$20 seniors and \$15 for students. Reduced ticket prices are available for those in need. Visit fplex.org where tickets can be purchased, at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/missa-gaia-a-mass-for-the-earth-tickets>, or by calling the church office at 782-862-8200.



The Green Corner

News & Action

First Parish Climate Action Team

Thanks to all who attended the Climate Action Team's meeting on Sunday, February 26th. Below are the action items from the meeting:

- 1) to continue to encourage FP members to make calls in support of Clean Energy Omnibus bill (next page) in the coming weeks. If you have made calls, let Stephen know (mailto:stephenshick04@gmail.com) so we can get a sense of how many calls were generated.
- 2) to encourage parishioners to attend the Tuesday, March 6th, 9-10:30 am meeting with Senator Friedman at Lexington Community Center, 39 Marrett Rd. to thank her for supporting the bill and to encourage her to take a very active role to bring it to a vote. (If you plan to attend, contact Dave Pollock. mailto:joananddavid3@verizon.net)
- 3) to explore renewing the FP's UUA Green Sanctuary status.
- 4) to implement plans to support the Missa Gaia performance in April by inviting local environmental groups to put up information table for the socials hour If you can help in this effort contact Bob Kvaal (bkvaal@gmail.com)

The Climate Action Team agreed to meet every two weeks for the next two months to coordinate and expand outreach, including participation in up-coming demonstrations to stop the Pipe Line extension in the Back Bay, participate in up coming Lobby Days of environmental organizations, and meet with

Sierra Club to learn of their action plans.

CAT will meet again on Sunday March 11th at noon in the Parlor. Please join us!

Clean Energy Omnibus Bill

<https://cabaus.org/2018/02/12/senate-clean-energy-omnibus-bill/>

The first step is to get it out of the Senate Ways and Means Committee. Lexington Senator Mike Barrett and Cindy Friedman support this legislation and should be thanked: Cindy Friedman: Cindy.Friedman@masenate.gov 617) 722-1432 and Mike Barrett: Mike.Barrett@masenate.gov 617-722-1572.

Please call the following Senators to tell them that you support the Senate Clean Energy Omnibus Bill and that you have called your own senator:

Senator Karen Spilka: 617-722-1640 Chair, Ways and Means Committee

Senator Harriett Chandler: 617-722-1544 Senate President

Project Joy Building a Community of Joy at First Parish

Can we each bring more Joy into our everyday lives? In the face of what too often feels like a constant barrage of bad news, daily routines, and otherwise simply “hanging in there”, a small group of us at First Parish have formed Project Joy – a month long, church-wide event to celebrate and share moments of personal Joy, and in so doing, building our own Community of Joy at First Parish!

How will it work? While the details of a variety of activities are still being worked out, the broad outline of the plan is as follows:

April 1, Sunday service – this will be the effective launch date for Project Joy. As part of the Easter worship service we will prepare individual pendants of joy that will be displayed in the sanctuary.



April 1 through 29 – members and friends will be invited to build a Collage of Joy in the Parish Hall. The collage will consist of your own expressions and experiences of joy – thoughts, drawings, paintings, etc. – that you wish to share with others. The collage will be a dynamic and beautiful display of Joy as we each experience it.

Project Joy Building a Community of Joy at First Parish

April 13-14 -- Missa Gaia, the big musical/dance/choir extravaganza that Rip and the music department are putting together. It promises to be very joyous!

Additional activities planned throughout the month include music, games, dance, storytelling, movies, youth group and RE participation. Our aim is to maximize participation across all segments of our church community by bringing people together to have a joyful time.

If you have your own ideas, and suggestions on how we might build more joy at First Parish, or would like to get involved in helping out, please contact either Don Cohen or Al Jacobson.

But in the interim, let's all try to be more mindful of the joy we experience daily basis. “Wishing joy to all!”



Our popular evening series, Voices on the Green, attracted its largest live audience yet on Feb. 9th when 212 people crowded the sanctuary to hear stories, songs, and neuroscience, all on the topic of "Modern Love." For most regular attendees it was the most compelling and emotional evening of the series so far.



While there is no substitute for being there live, many people who were unable to attend have asked if it was recorded for later viewing. We are happy to announce that, thanks to the indispensable Bill Pittore, all of the Voices since the beginning have been recorded for sound. But, importantly, full video recordings are now available for the last two shows (thanks to Bill and LexMedia).



For the full "I Protest" show, go to LexMedia site: <http://www.lexmedia.org/ondemand.html>. Type in "Voices" and you will get the show.

For the "Modern Love" show, the LexMedia video is still in production. But a simple fixed-camera video is available for those of you who can't wait. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pt5Fyrg8c_U&sns=em). We will post on Weekly Update when the LexMedia production is available.

We will have one more Voices event in the spring. Email voicesonthegreen@fplex.org for info.

SUNDAY, MARCH 18, 2018 at 2:30pm

Temple Isaiah, 55 Lincoln St., Lexington, MA

Keynote Speaker: David H. Rosmarin, PhD, is director of the Spirituality and Mental Health Program at McLean Hospital and an assistant professor of psychology in the Department of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School. He supervises the provision of spiritually-integrated services in clinical units throughout the hospital's divisional structure, and collaborates with laboratories to study the clinical relevance of spirituality to anxiety, mood, psychotic, substance use, and other disorders.

Panel including:

- Opening teaching by Rabbi Howard Jaffe, Senior Rabbi, Temple Isaiah
- Shana Alexander, a Temple Isaiah and Mental Health Initiative member, will share her story of how spirituality has supported her mental well-being.
- Rev. Anne Mason, minister at First Parish in Lexington, a Unitarian Universalist Congregation
- Rev. Dr. Eno Mondesir, President of Agape Global Health and Senior Pastor of the Haitian Baptist Church of Cambridge

The program will also include a question and answer session and small group discussions followed by a reception with light refreshments and resource tables with more information from local organizations.

Free admission and accessible. Co-sponsored by the Temple Isaiah Mental Health Initiative, First Parish in Lexington, a Unitarian Universalist Congregation, and Lexington Youth and Family Services (LYFS).

Recurring Events
March 2018

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.

Special Events Calendar
March 2018

Thursday, March 1st
Nonfiction Book Group, 7:30pm, Parlor
Friday, March 2nd
LYFS Open House, 5:00pm, Parker Hall
Saturday, March 3rd
New UU Class, 9:00am, Parlor
Sunday, March 4th
Sarasa Ensemble Concert, 3:30pm, Sanctuary
Sunday, March 11th
Climate Action Team, 12:00pm, Parlor; Communities
without Borders, 1:00pm, Robinson Hall
Monday, March 12th
Unity Group Luncheon, 12:00pm, Parker Hall
Saturday, March 17th
OWL Retreat, 9:00am, Parker Hall
Saturday, March 24th
March for Our Lives, 12:00pm, Boston Common; Phyllis
Whitman Memorial Service, 1:00pm, Sanctuary

