

THE FOCALPOINT

FIRST PARISH ^{IN} LEXINGTON
UNITARIAN  UNIVERSALIST

January 2017—Happy New Year!

Contents:



January Worship Services	Pg. 2
Rev. Anne Mason, Minister	Pg. 4
MLK Community Day	Pg. 6
Reflection on the Civil Rights Movement	Pg. 8
Social Action Ministry	Pg. 10
Voices on the Green	Pg. 12
Bystander Intervention Training	Pg. 14
News from the Board	Pg. 15
Music News	Pg. 16
Special Plate Donation	Pg. 18
Unity Group	Pg. 19
Committee on Leadership & Service	Pg. 20
Monthly Calendar	Pg. 21
Christmas Eve Candlelight Service	Pg. 23

Deadline for February issue, Monday, January 23rd.

Worship Services for January

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

January 8, Rev. Anne Mason
"Let the Hills Hear Your Voice"



The prophet Micah has famously taught us that we are required to “do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with your God.” Using feminist biblical interpretation, Rev. Anne will explore what this ancient Jewish prophet might teach us today.

January 15, Lisa Maria Steinberg, LDRE
"What Does It Mean to be a Community of Prophecy?"



Join us for an All Ages service engaging us with the lessons we can learn from the prophetic voice of Martin Luther King Jr. and how we can all live our way into the Beloved Community.

January 22, Rev. Anne Mason
"Enough is Enough"



The great Chinese sage Lao Tzu taught us that "he who knows that enough is enough will always have enough." Rev. Anne will explore the timeless teaching of the Tao Te Ching as we seek a new way of being through the study of ancient wisdom.

Worship Services for January

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

January 29, Rev. Anne Mason
"New World Order"



The prophet Bahá'u'lláh had a vision for the world working together and united in peace. He taught that we are all one race, and that we can live together with regard for each other, appreciating our differences while respecting our common humanity. What can we learn from the religious views of the Bahá'ís?

~~~~~



January (An Acrostic)  
By Paul Hansford

J ust as the old year ends the new begins,  
A nd once again the countdown is in motion.  
N ow we can say goodbye to last year's sins,  
U plifted hearts set out on this new ocean.  
A las, our resolution may soon fail  
(R elentless life is so full of commotion)  
Y et full of hope we willingly set sail.

From Your Minister

The month of January is named after 'Janus', the Roman god of transition whose face is shown looking backward to the past at the same time as he looks forward to the future. This time of year calls us to do the same thing. We must look with clarity at the turbulence of the past, and fashion a clear path forward into our shared future.

In the cacophony of our world, sometimes it is difficult to know to whom we should be listening to find the clarity we need. To our elders, perhaps? To our children? To our teachers? With so many voices within earshot, from so many sources of news and information and opinion, who are the wise people around us today? Who do you turn to when you need to hear a voice of wisdom? I would love to hear from you who you find to be the most reliable source of clarity for you - which scholar or poet or columnist do you read? Can you tell me who you might consider to be a prophet?

Sometimes we read only that with which we already agree. I encourage all of us to try learning from a source that we do not usually turn to. It is important for us to learn as much as we can about the diversity of opinion which has been exposed in the shift of power in our county. For is it possible that we are now a 'post-truth' nation?

This month we will explore prophetic voices from a variety of sources — from Hebrew scripture, from Chinese philosophers, from Persian prophets, and the 20th century prophet Martin Luther King. I hope that by looking backward we will be able to look forward with a deeper connection to the timeless truths which our religious prophets have exposed. For I believe that if we continue to sift through what is going on around us while we stay connected to the values we uphold, we will discover our own prophetic voice. If together we can seek the truth in love, then together we can speak the truth in love. And with the unexpected about to happen in this New Year, we will need to find our voice.

And the clarity of that voice will never be 'post-truth'.

In faith,  
*Rev. Anne*



**Monday, January 16, will be the fourth annual Martin Luther King Community Service Day**, and congregants can join with more than 400 volunteers from throughout Lexington for a variety of services to Lexington and to our surrounding communities: making cards for hospital patients, veterans, and disabled adults; making goody bags for homeless children with senior residents of Waltham Crossing; serving lunch at senior villages in Lexington; joining in activities with homeless children and adults at the Waltham YMCA; making scarfs for those in need; helping deliver donations to such organizations as the Lexington Food Pantry. Many of these activities are family-friendly and lots of fun.

**The Service Day also offers a wide variety of opportunities for sharing our resources with those in need:** food for the Food Pantry; toys for Birthday Wishes; books, DVDS, CDs, video games, and other media for More Than Words; gently-worn (or new) kids clothing for Cradles to Crayons; gently-used clothes and shoes for all ages at the Waltham Y; and financial donations to any of these organizations and to Lexington Community MLK Day for expenses.

**The day will begin at 9:00AM** with a Panel Discussion and Community Dialogue on Race at Grace Chapel, sponsored by the Lexington Interfaith Clergy Association and the Lexington Human Rights Council. Small group discussions will focus on the issues of housing, education, and immigration. Group leaders, using insights from J. Anthony Lukas' *Common Ground* about the Boston busing crisis, will help us understand the longstanding issues of racism, and why all these issues continue to challenge us today. Partici-

pants will individually identify and commit to a particular action on an issue, and arrange to check in with another group member to report on how that action is progressing after an agreed-upon time.

**At 11:00**, all participants who are able will meet at the statue on the Battle Green for the Unity Walk to Cary Hall.

**At 11:30** at Cary Hall, there will be an inspirational program of words and music by First Parish member Regie O'Hare Gibson and by the Special Needs Arts Program's (SNAP) Sing Along Chorus.

**Service activities begin following the program.**

Many First Parishioners have participated in this day since it began, and found it moving and community-building. It is a way for us to share in the work of providing concrete resources and hope to our nation's most vulnerable residents.

For further details, go to Facebook: [Lexington Community MLK Day](#). To volunteer: go to [lexingtonmlk.org](http://lexingtonmlk.org). For questions: go to [lexingtoncommunity@gmail.com](mailto:lexingtoncommunity@gmail.com), or contact Helen Cohen at [helencohen@rcn.com](mailto:helencohen@rcn.com).

Want to know how Martin Luther King, Jr. inspired a member of First Parish? Please read Dave Pollack's accounting of his involvement in the civil rights movement on the next page.

Recently, Elaine Hylek, Social Action Ministry chair, and I were talking about the upcoming Martin Luther King, Jr. Day celebration. I mentioned that I became involved in the civil rights movement when I was a teen, participated in the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, and heard Dr. King deliver his I Have a Dream speech. Elaine then asked me to write a piece for the Focalpoint about how these experiences affected my life. So, here goes.

In 1960, an effort began to end segregation at [Glen Echo Amusement Park](#) located up the Potomac River palisades about 10 miles from the White House and close to where I lived. A mixed group of black and white college students from the Nonviolent Action Group (NAG), organized by a Howard University divinity student, began picketing the amusement park calling for an end to the privately owned park's policy of barring African Americans.

The neighboring residents of the overwhelmingly white and majority Jewish community of Bannockburn, where I grew up, joined them. Together they sustained the picket lines through the summer heat in the face of American Nazi Party counter demonstrators until the owners gave in and finally desegregated the facility the following spring.

I was 15 at the time and my involvement was simply walking, holding signs, and singing on the picket line with other teens, college students, and adults. But I remember the events vividly, including meeting major civil rights leaders who joined the picket line. I met Roy Wilkins of the NAACP, A. Philip Randolph of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, and Walter Reuther of the United Automobile Workers. Although there was no violence, the effort involved harassment and arrests and resulted in a precedent setting court case establishing that

an off-duty sheriff deputy employed as a park guard conducting the arrests at the behest of the park owners was in fact an agent of the state. Such use of a state agent to enforce segregation was illegal, the Supreme Court ruled in 1964.

Another part of my involvement in the civil rights movement that left deeply engrained memories was the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. I remember arriving near the Capitol several hours before the march and being amazed by the huge flow of people coming from all directions. The march to the Lincoln Memorial was mesmerizing. Once there, I managed to worm my way near the steps of the memorial where I had a fine view of the podium and was near a loudspeaker.

The program started out slowly, and I was pretty bored. The first speech to stir excitement in me was the impassioned address by UAW President [Reuther](#). (To hear his speech, click on "Reuther".) Not long after that, Dr. King spoke. As I recall, he started with a somewhat tedious, at least to me, description of the sad history of civil rights in America, but then changed tone and began the most rousing speech I had ever heard. For years, whenever I heard the I Have a Dream speech replayed, the hair would stand up on the back of my neck, and I am still inspired every single time I hear it. I have found that being engaged in causes that seek greater understanding, justice, equity, and compassion has enriched my life ever since that summer almost 54 years ago.

The most important thing I took away from my Glen Echo experience, the 1963 March, and other involvement in the civil rights movement was realizing how much a few people can accomplish through grassroots, nonviolent activism that deepens understanding and stirs the conscience. We can make a difference! -- Dave Pollack



## Social Action Ministry UU Urban Ministry Donation

First Parish Delivers 55 Gift Baskets to the UU Urban Ministry

In conjunction with the highly successful annual FP Holiday Workshop held this past December 10, our Social Action Committee made and delivered 55 holiday gift bags to women residents of the UU Urban Ministry transitional housing program and mothers of the Roxbury Youth Program.

The project was led by Brenda Prusak. Dori Reuss, Dep Lapides, Jane Beswick, and Elaine Hylek. Items included in the bags were small lotion bottles, glitter markers, small notebooks, sanitizers, a handmade greeting card, tissue packets, socks, and a gift card to Dunkin' Donuts. The bags were topped off with Deb's cookie box (including her cookies plus those donated by Jane and the Youth Group).

The UUUM and the women were thrilled with the gifts.



## Social Action Ministry Lexington Refugee Assistance Program

On December 11th, First Parish donated money from the special plate collection to Lexington Refugee Assistance Program, and thanks to your generous donations LexRAP will be able to provide for a second asylum seeker, a significant achievement for our organization. Thank you, First Parish. We are currently seeking a family who would be able to house an asylum seeker.

Other plans for this month include beginning a tutoring program for unaccompanied minor refugees who have lost their families and live in foster care. We will be meeting with Ascentria, the agency that provides services to these young people, on January 25. The goal of the meeting is for those who have expressed interest in being a foster family to learn about the kinds of needs these young refugees have and the resources available to them.

Another January activity is a laptop drive. LexRap is seeking usable laptops to give to refugee families who have recently resettled in this area. If you have recently bought a new laptop and the old one is still sitting around, please consider donating it. Contact us for written procedures to get it ready for use. Also, if you are computer savvy and could help us prepare the computers, please contact us.

Marianne Boswell, Omar Khudari, and Jane Eckert are all very involved with LexRAP and would be happy to answer any and all questions. Please visit the LexRAP website at [www.lexrap.org](http://www.lexrap.org) for more information.



***Voices on the Green at First Parish***  
**Friday, January 27th, 7-9 p.m.**

On Friday, January 27, our new bi-monthly community series, *Voices on the Green*, will debut at the church. Each event in the series will coalesce around a central theme, and will include a brief scholarly talk by a local expert, 3 or 4 personal short stories, and live music performed by local musicians.

The theme for our debut outing is “Breakthrough.” This program will feature world-renowned speaker Todd Rose, local icon Jeff Leonard and our own Don Cohen, among others. An intermission will provide opportunity for general conversation with refreshments and music. Donations will be requested and a percentage of the proceeds will support the evening’s community-service partner, Lexington Center for the Arts.

*Voices on the Green* has been developed to meet a number of our congregational goals: public service through presentation of important issues for the church and community, strengthening the bonds within the church, reaching out to the world around us, and celebrating our upcoming 325th anniversary.

The church and our local communities are blessed with a wide variety of expert residents who illuminate the joys and challenges of the human condition in the sciences, the humanities, and the arts. There are individuals with com-

PELLING personal stories, and musicians who embody these themes in the music they create and perform. In *Voices on the Green*, we will bring together all of these resources to educate and inspire us.

For each program, our committee will develop a theme, recruit a featured speaker, solicit personal stories from within and beyond the congregation, and find musicians to enlarge our spirits. Suggestions for participants in all these aspects of the program are welcome.

Our theme for March will be “Living in the Hyphen,” an exploration of the challenges and opportunities inherent in growing up bi-culturally in this area. Our partner will be Lexington Youth and Family Services.

We are excited about the ways in which *Voices on the Green* will enrich and expand our own lives, and the world around us, and we look forward to seeing you on January 27. Please contact any of the committee members if you have questions: David Rose, Deb Lapidés, Regie O’Hare-Gibson and Laura Juitt.





A couple of days before Thanksgiving over 30 people joined Rev. Anne in a conversation about what we as people of faith can do to take action given the direction in which our country has moved since the Presidential election. There has been a rise in hate crimes and intimidation of people who are not straight white men, and many people are feeling vulnerable and afraid themselves. What can we do as a people of faith who stand against bigotry, hatred, and fascism?

The group of people met again the week after their first meeting and are meeting monthly, with the next gathering on January 10th at 12:00pm in Parish Hall. All are welcome.

One request from this group is for First Parish to hold a Bystander Intervention Training, which is in the process of being planned. Both Rev. Anne and I have heard from people since the election regarding concerns that they are unsure of what to do if they are witness to hateful language or actions. If you are one of these people, please know that you are not alone. Standing up to bullies is challenging work, and we as a community are looking for ways to support those who are looking for skills, language, and empowerment to do that work.

Mark your calendar for **Saturday, January 28th**, as we walk together and work together as a community to equip ourselves for the important task of renouncing hate and standing up to bullies.

*Lisa Maria Steinberg*



Each year First Parish conducts an annual pledge drive, which raises about 70% of the funds we need to operate the church over the year. These funds pay for our worship services, pastoral care, religious education for children and youth, outreach to the community, and all the other good works of our church.

This year's pledge drive will occur in February and March, culminating with the March 12th Sunday Service, when members and friends will indicate what their financial pledge will be for the 2017/2018 church year. (The pledge doesn't actually have to be paid until some point during the 2017/2018 church year, which starts on July 1, 2017.) Friday night, March 10th is when we will have our annual pledge drive party at First Parish.

Please mark your calendars for those two important dates. And stay tuned after the new year for more information on the annual pledge drive.

In the spirit of community,

*Tom Rich*



Celebrating Martin Luther King, Jr.  
at the 10:30 Worship Service, Sunday, January 15th

As part of our celebration of the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr., the sanctuary choir and soloists, accompanied by jazz instrumentalists and led by our director of music Rip Jackson, will sing uplifting jazz and gospel music. The sanctuary choir will sing Mark Hayes' joyful gospel arrangement of "This Little Light of Mine" and Andre Thomas' serene "I Dream a World." Elizabeth Walsh, joined by the jazz musicians, will sing George Weiss and Bob Thiele's iconic "What a Wonderful World." For the centering music and postlude, the jazz musicians (piano, string bass, drums, and sax) will play "God Bless the Child" and an up-tempo jazz medley.

~~~~~

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 11th 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.

The Lexington Choral Festival was first held February 26, 2006 at the First Baptist Church of Lexington. Minister of Music, Dr. Robert Eaton invited Lexington choirs to participate in an afternoon of sharing their musical talents and worship cultures with others in the community. The event was so well received it was decided to make it an annual event with different houses of worship hosting the Festival each year. Choral music is thriving in Lexington and this festival is an opportunity for some of the area choirs to share their talents with each other as well as with the public beyond their own institutions.

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.



Special Plate Donation for January
Lex Eat Together
Sunday, January 22nd

Lexington Eats Together is a new grassroots volunteer organization that serves free weekly community meals year round at the Episcopal Church of Our Redeemer. Over 70 guests a week come not just for a nutritious hot meal but for companionship and good conversation. Friendships are being made and people look forward to coming each Wednesday.

The food is donated and picked up by volunteers. Volunteers help to cook, set up, serve and clean up. There is great need in Lexington and the surrounding communities to reach out and help alleviate the current hunger situation. We are always looking for ways to expand our outreach further. For some volunteers the real draw is the feeling of making lasting and personal impact in people's lives. As one volunteer, Benson Margulies said, "Frequently we hear about big faceless problems in the world, and we're invited to send a check. This is an opportunity where I feel we can accomplish something right now. You can really substantively address what the need is right now."

Your donations will be gratefully received on Sunday, January 22nd. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Brenda Prusak for more information.



All are welcome to the next Unity Group luncheon and program, which will take place on Monday, January 9th. This month's program will be "Fairy Homes and Gardens," presented by author Ashley Rooney of Lexington who, along with Barbara Purchia of Bedford, has written a best-selling book on Fairy Homes and Gardens, which shows fairy worlds in a variety of settings with natural and contemporary mediums. Their designs have transformed the natural world into enchanting art that draws upon childhood feelings and dreams, uses natural objects, encourages recycling, and creates a sense of the fantastic.



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 D through H, please bring a dessert, and if your last name begins with any other letter, bring a main dish, side dish, or salad.

First Parish of Lexington is a free-thinking church that welcomes people of all types of beliefs and non-beliefs, all races, and all sexual orientations. Especially for women, the Unity Group meets monthly for lunch and a program (but men are welcome , too!).

**Committee on Leadership and Service
Wants to Connect with You!**

**Calendar
January 2017**

Part of the mission of The Committee on Leadership and Service (COLS) is to help members and friends connect meaningfully with the working life of the church and support them in that goal. To help in that effort, we have started a project to connect with all the members and friends of First Parish on a one to one basis for a dialog around what brings you to First Parish and how you engage in the congregational fabric of the community.

Over the course of the coming months, our team will be reaching out to you for a meaningful dialog. These interviews will be relatively brief (about 30 minutes) and should be quite engaging. When members of our team contact you over the coming weeks, please find time for this important opportunity to connect and let us and the rest of the congregation hear about your values and interests.

As part of this project, we are looking for volunteers to have their interviews recorded on video for publication on our church's website and for general sharing with the congregation. Please let us know if you'd be willing to participate.

We're looking forward to connecting with you!

Yours in Leadership and Service,

Erik Svenson & Elisabeth Jas

Committee on Leadership & Service Chairs

Sunday, January 8th

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

Monday, January 9th

Unity Group luncheon, 12:00pm, Parker Hall

Tuesday, January 10th

Where Do We Go From Here? Discussion Group, 12:00pm, Parish Hall

Sunday, January 15th

SHYG, 7:00pm, Common Room

Saturday, January 21st

OWL, 9:00am, Parker Hall

Sunday, January 22nd

Newcomer Drop-In, 11:45am, Minister's Office; JHYG, 3:00pm, Parker Hall; Coming of Age, 5:45pm, Common Room; SHYG, 7:00pm, Common Room

Friday, January 27th

Voices on the Green, 7:00pm, Parish Hall

Saturday, January 28th

Bystander Intervention Training, 9:30am, Parish Hall

Sunday, January 29th

OWL, 6:30pm, Parker Hall; SHYG, 7:00pm, Common Room

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.



Thanks to Lew Counts for the photos of the
Christmas Eve Candlelight Service.

