

THE FOCALPOINT

FIRST PARISH IN LEXINGTON
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

March 2017

What Does It Mean to be a Community of Risk?

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Deadline for April issue: Wednesday, March 22nd

Worship Services for March

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

March 5, Rev. Anne Mason

"What Will I Bring to the Feast?"



This morning through story, song, and homily we will explore what it means for a community to value individual participation. Each person's gift is so important that we could not be the congregation we are without your own, personal offering. Come and watch our young thespians share a story, and hear a homily by Rev. Anne.

March 12, Rev. Anne Mason

"Celebration Sunday"



The poet David Whyte says that "We are here essentially to risk ourselves in the world." For 325 years members of this congregation have been committed to our 'risky' ideals of the world. What foolishness to truly believe that we can create a community of love and justice! What happy foolishness to give our time, our talents, and our treasure to this noble experiment of ours. And what joy it is to come together and celebrate what we have given of ourselves to make this dream a concrete reality. What the rest of the world may consider to be foolish, we know is a sacred, powerful, and life-changing commitment. Preaching today is Rev. Anne.

Worship Services for March

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

March 19, Regie O'Hare Gibson

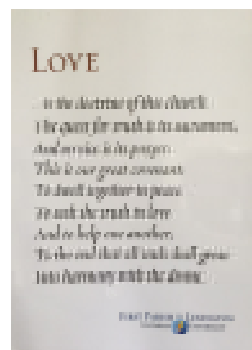
"Pandora, Lift that Lid: The Woman as Gift Bearer"



In western mythology, women are made responsible for all the world's woes. Unconscious adherence to this mythos has had a detrimental effect on the psychology of both men and women. In honor of Women's History Month, Regie Gibson dives into the story of Pandora to see what modern spiritual and life lessons we can draw upon to pass on to our daughters and help better our world.

March 26, Rev. Anne Mason

"Truth or Dare"



Every week we affirm that the 'Quest for Truth is a sacrament' of this church. What does truth mean in an age where anyone can gain publicity for a truth they may stake a claim to? With our religious history of skepticism and rationality, our faith is one which encourages us to seek the truth in love - and to use our whole selves on that quest.

From Your Minister

This month we recognize the risk that it has taken to care for our church. Our historic institution may have been funded with city taxes back in the beginning, back when church and town were a united entity. But with the diversity of our community comes the need to care for our own church without government funding. It has been through the generosity of the members of First Parish that we have been able to maintain this beautiful and historic sanctuary as home to the vibrant community that we are. And each of you has played a part in making this faith a concrete and important part of Lexington. We are a sanctuary from the roils of the storm, growing a greenhouse of beautiful souls to head back into the world every week refreshed and renewed.

This month you will receive a letter from the Stewardship Team asking for your support of the work of this congregation. I hope that you will read it with the same loving care with which it was prepared. Think carefully about how you and your family can not only support but help sustain the life-giving work of this church. Think of how you have been impacted and how you hope we will impact the community of Lexington and beyond. In these uncertain times, our message of love and acceptance is sorely needed, and we need you all to help us be a sacred force for love and for justice.

This is a month where we look deeply at who we are as a congregation and recognize our impact on the wider community. Come to the Pledge Party on Friday, March 10th to

enjoy our time together with music and laughter, food and film. Come to church on March 12th as we dedicate ourselves and our gifts to the work of this church. And come to the Installation as together, we pledge our shared ministry to the service and celebration of the Greater Good. It is good to be together! And it is an honor to work with all of you to bring our Unitarian Universalist values into the world around us.

With gratitude,

Rev. Anne

Installation of the Reverend Anne Mason

Sunday, March 26, 2017, 4PM

First Parish in Lexington

Come and celebrate our congregation as we join together to install Rev. Anne Mason as the 24th settled minister of First Parish.

Ministers from across the region will be present to share their hopes and dreams for us. Our guest speaker will be the Reverend John Gibbons of First Parish in Bedford, and our own Reggie Gibson will share a special poem crafted for the event. The choir will sing several pieces, including an anthem composed by Anne's husband, Simon Andrews.

Following all this revelry will be a reception in the Parish Hall. Child care for our youngest will be available. All are welcome!

Since we are in the midst of our annual pledge drive (we hope all members and friends pledge by March 12th), I thought I would explain how the pledge drive fits into the overall annual budgeting process at the church.

One of the main jobs of your Board is to prepare and present to the congregation a budget for the next church year. Here's how the process works:

- In March, the Finance Committee develops a first draft of the budget, with input from the Treasurer (who monitors past and current spending levels) and staff and committees (who submit budget requests to the Treasurer). A key input to the draft budget is the amount expected to be raised in the annual pledge drive.
- In April, the Board reviews the initial draft budget and then typically requests that the Finance Committee make one or more changes to the budget. In doing this, the Board is acting on its responsibility to ensure that the budget reflects the best interest of the First Parish.
- In May, the Board will present a draft budget to the congregation at an open meeting following a Sunday service. We will announce the date of that in the next couple weeks. Comment and discussion at this meeting may result in additional changes to the draft budget.
- At least 10 days before the June 4th Semi Annual Meeting, the Board will make available to the congregation the proposed final budget.
- Finally, on June 4th, First Parish members vote on the proposed budget at the Semi Annual Meeting.

I encourage all First Parish members and friends to participate in the budget process.

In the spirit of community,
Tom Rich



Please Join Us for our Annual
Stewardship Celebration!

Friday, March 10

7pm – 9pm

Wine and Desserts!

Original entertainment!





Who likes numbers? Although I personally prefer to measure growth and vitality through metrics other than cold hard numbers, numbers can be an easy measuring stick to look at. So how are the RE program's numbers this year? Fantastic.

But before I get to the specific number, let me also share some other wonderful news about our RE program. In our nursery, we have toddlers more Sundays than we do not (which is different from last year), and so we have brought on two of our youth, Liz Whitman-Kinghorn and Lucie Nolden, as Nursery Support Staff. Liz and Lucie are both experienced in childcare and babysitting, and we are so happy to have them join the team with Nina Rich.

So, the number. Last year at this time we had 65 children and youth from birth to 12th grade registered for programming. This year? 84. I told you it was fantastic.

~Lisa Maria Steinberg



**Lexington Choral Festival — *Rescheduled*
Sunday, March 19th at 3:00 PM
Hancock Church in Lexington, MA
Free Admission**

Due to inclement weather, the Lexington Choral Festival was rescheduled to Sunday, March 19th at 3:00 pm at the Hancock Church. The First Parish Sanctuary Choir will join 11 other choirs from Lexington in raising their voices together. This year's festival features over 200 singers participating. The performance is approximately 90 minutes in length. A reception will follow. Admission is free and open to the public. Free parking is available behind the church and around the Battle Green. The church is fully handicap accessible.

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**Other March Musical Offerings at First Parish**

**The Master Singers of Lexington  
Saturday, March 4th at 8:00 PM  
Pops! Color My World**

Songs and choruses of all the colors of the rainbow, including Berlin, Ellington, Foster, Gershwin, Lennon & McCartney, Raposo, and others. [Purchase tickets online here](#). General admission \$23, students and seniors \$18.

**Munroe Saturday Nights  
Saturday, March 11th at 7:30 PM  
Shakespeare for the Masses**

Come see an informal interpretation of a full-length Shakespeare play condensed into one hour that includes lots of comedic antics. Both the cast and audience share a great time!



As a result of a church wide visioning exercise called “Spirit and Sparks” several years ago, our First Parish community, with the encouragement of the board, undertook a mission to donate the money collected one Sunday morning a month during the offertory to a local organizations. There was a desire among congregants for a greater commitment to the wider community in the form of economic support and recognition of volunteer activity by church members. Over the past five years, we have given to a diversity of recipient organizations and church members have become very involved in searching for needs within the surrounding community.

The following list are the recipients:

Woburn Council for Social Concerns  
Lexington Youth and Family Service  
More Than Words  
The Children’s Room  
Camp Aranutig (Camp for LGBTQ Youth)  
Partakers (College Behind Bars)  
Community Legal Service and Counseling Center  
Families Against Mandatory Minimum Sentencing  
Lexington Food Pantry  
MLK Day  
Lexington Community Farm  
Lift Up Lexington  
Community Day Center Woburn  
EPOCA  
The Outdoor Church  
LGBTQ Community Center  
Bedford VA Hospital

Lexington Farmers Market (food vouchers)  
Parenting Resource Associates  
Lexington Campership Program  
Hospice of North Shore  
Lincoln Food Project  
Breaking Barriers  
Renewal House  
Lex Eat Together

In an effort to highlight this popular program, information announcing the upcoming recipient and date of the plate donation will appear in the Weekly Update. A report of the amount of money given will appear the following week.

In hopes of keeping the program more visible, we will also periodically publish the criteria for selection of beneficiaries. We depend on our church members to actively seek out needs within the community, utilizing the current guidelines.

- Mission, vision and values of the organization are in line with our religious principles
- Personal connection with or involvement of parishioner
- Funds raised will make a significant difference for the organization

Contact [Carolyn Fleiss](#) for more information.



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 5th. 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](#).

Everyone agrees that our criminal justice system should be fair and effective, but how do we get there from here?

Come learn about key bills that were recently filed at the State House and would contribute to true comprehensive criminal justice reform at "The Politics of Justice: Comprehensive Criminal Justice Reform in Massachusetts," Saturday, March 25, 12:45-5:00 p.m. at the First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Arlington.

Sen. Will Brownsberger will speak about the Council of State Governments omnibus bill, Middlesex District Attorney Marian Ryan about restorative justice, Idris Abdullah of Teens Leading the Way about juvenile justice, Sen. Ken Donnelly about mental health issues and pretrial reform, Cassandra Bensahih of Jobs Not Jails about the Justice Reinvestment Act, and Rahsaan Hall of the ACLU-MA's Racial Justice Program about the racial implications of this season's proposed legislation.

After the panel, panelists and participants will talk in smaller groups about how to move forward on the bills that most interest them. There will also be time for networking and action opportunities, plus an optional 30-minute workshop on interacting effectively with legislators led by Bill Gardiner and Rep. Dave Rogers.

[Please preregister here](#). Attendance will be limited to 280.

This forum is organized by the Mass Incarceration Working Group of the First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Arlington and co-sponsored by FP in Lexington and 24 other organizations.

Questions? Email [end-mass-incarceration@firstparish.info](mailto:end-mass-incarceration@firstparish.info).

Letter and Spirit: The Rants, Chants, and Coos of a Literarymusician.

Come check out First Parish's own Regie Gibson talk, rap, and sing about what it means to get into the swing of our human condition at the next Unity Group luncheon on program on Monday, March 13th. Social time and luncheon begin at 12, and the program begins at 1:30.

Literary performer and educator, Regie Gibson, has lectured and performed in the U.S., Cuba, and Europe. He's been published in Poetry Magazine, Harvard's Divinity Magazine, and The Iowa Review, among others. He's received the Walker Scholarship for Poetry from the Provincetown Fine Arts Work Center; a YMCA Writer's Fellowship; The Massachusetts Cultural Council Award for Poetry; and a Lexington Education Foundation Grant. His volume of poems, "Storms Beneath the Skin" has received the Golden Pen Award. Regie has performed with, and composed texts for, The Boston City Singers, The Mystic Chorale, and Boston's Handel+Haydn Society. His poem "This Building of Democracy" hangs on the wall of the Lexington Community Center. He is the host of First Parish Lexington's "Voices on the Green" Music and Storytellers Series, an event described as part Ted Talk, part Moth Story, and part house concert.



Join Rev. Anne and Lisa Maria Steinberg for an interactive discussion and process for end of life planning using the popular Five Wishes® Program. You may have made financial and other legal arrangements for when you die, but have you planned for your end of life care decisions, comfort, and treatment? This program is designed to help you understand the value in answering these questions, record them in writing, and have them available to your loved ones when they are needed, however far down the road that may be.

The program will be offered as a two part series on Thursdays April 6th and 13th from 11:30am—2:00pm and will include lunch. RSVP is required so we can have the right amount of materials and food. Please sign up with Lisa Maria by April 3rd by email at [dre@fplex.org](mailto:dre@fplex.org) or call 781-862-8200 x3. If you cannot attend this daytime weekday offering, let Lisa Maria know you would be interested in this program being offered again at a different time.



## Want to Stay in Lexington?

### An Economic issue

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Are you a long time Lexington home owner worried about the high real estate taxes you pay every year, but want to continue living in your own home? Dick Fleiss recently attended a training session on behalf of First Parish hosted by The Selectman's Tax Deferral and Exemption Study Committee and found out the following information that may be useful to you.

If you are at least 65 years old, the Town of Lexington has a property tax deferral program which enables you to pay your deferred taxes from the proceeds of your house sale whenever you decide to sell it. You can also defer your water/sewer charges. The Town annually sets an interest rate charge on the deferred amount. For this year it is 0.66%. That is right, under 1%. In order to qualify for this program, your gross income (married or single) must not exceed \$70,000.

Lexington also offers several real estate tax exemption programs. Every year residents pay a 3% Community Preservation Act Surcharge on real estate taxes. You can get an exemption from this surcharge if you are at least 60 years old and your income, if living alone, does not exceed \$68,650 (\$78,500 for two). If your real estate tax, for example, is \$10,000 per year, you will save \$300.

Also, a \$1,000 exemption is available if you are over 65, but this program has very restrictive income and asset requirements to qualify.

## Want to Stay in Lexington?

### An Economic issue

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Finally there is a Massachusetts "Senior Circuit Breaker" income tax credit. This state program will provide you with a maximum benefit of \$1,070 to the extent your real estate tax plus half of your water and sewer bill exceeds 10% of your income.

If you have any interest in learning more about these programs, please contact Dick, who would be happy to advise others either on the phone or at your home. Email him at [richardfleiss@gmail.com](mailto:richardfleiss@gmail.com).



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, March 5th

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

Friday, March 10th

Pledge Drive Party, 7:30pm, Parish Hall

Sunday, March 12th

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

Monday, March 13th

Unity Group, 12:00pm, Parker Hall

Thursday, March 16th

Empty Nester Meeting, 7:00pm, Common Room

Saturday, March 18th

OWL Retreat, 9:00am, Parker Hall

Sunday, March 19th

JHYG, 3:00pm, Parker Hall; Coming of Age, 5:45pm, Parker Hall; SHYG, 7:00pm, Common Room & Parish Hall

Tuesday, March 21st

80+ Luncheon, 12:30pm, Parker Hall

Sunday, March 26th

Installation, 4:00pm, Sanctuary & Parish Hall; SHYG, 7:00pm, Common Room & Parish Hall