

# THE FOCALPOINT

FIRST PARISH IN LEXINGTON

SPRING 2020

## *From Your Minister:*

The times they are a changin' .....

These are turbulent days, my friends. It is difficult to stay abreast of all the changes which whip through our consciousness. Our political landscape is volatile. The threat of plagues of biblical proportions seems overwhelming. Our stock market is on a roller coaster as a result, and that is sure to affect many members of our congregation.

And if you are like me, roller coasters are no longer any fun. In fact, my stomach never really liked them when I was a child even when my imagination was tempted by the challenge. One of my children absolutely loved the thrill of adventure and chose the scariest rides every time - and the others never warmed up to the feeling of hurtling through space, backwards, in the dark. Is it a matter of trust? Or is it just one human's response being different than another?

I'm sure that there are some in our society today who are enjoying the excitement of all the dynamic changes we are experiencing. But there are others who find these days to be unnerving. Whichever way you find yourself reacting, let us remember the words of James Baldwin who said:

*The entire purpose of society is to create a bulwark against the inner and the outer chaos, in order to make life bearable and to keep the human race alive.*

My friends, we spend time together as a religious community, preparing ourselves by deepening our spiritual lives, strengthening our interconnectedness, learning to listen to each other and to our inner voice. We know that we do not face these days alone. We hope that we are prepared for what may come. Again, as James Baldwin says:

*For the truth, in spite of appearances and all our hopes, is that everything is always changing and the measure of our maturity as nations and as (people) is how well prepared we are to meet these changes, and further, to use them for our health.*

Let us be agile and dynamic, so that we can adapt to the changin' world around us. I have confidence in you, my friends. Together we are making a difference. Together, we will get through it.

In faith,

*Rev. Anne*

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# **A Peace Concert: Uplifting Peace**

## **in the world and in our hearts**

**Sunday, May 3, 2020 at 3:30 PM**  
**First Parish in Lexington**  
**7 Harrington Rd. Lexington, MA**  
**Free Will Offering**



First Parish in Lexington will present a Peace concert of music from the gospel, world, jazz and mystical traditions celebrating Peace in the world and in our hearts on Sunday, May 3, 2020 at 3:30 PM. The concert, directed by Rip Jackson, will feature the First Parish sanctuary and children's choirs and soloists, guest singers, and a 10-piece Jazz band (piano, drums, electric guitar, electric bass, saxophones, woodwinds and brass). For more information call the church at 781-862-8200 or visit [www.fplex.org](http://www.fplex.org).

To contact Rip Jackson, email [music@fplex.org](mailto:music@fplex.org) or call 781-862-8200 x4

## **News from Lisa Maria Steinberg, Director of Religious Education & Family Ministry**

For their service trip this year our Senior High Youth Group will be traveling to Charleston, West Virginia with the Unitarian Universalist College of Social Justice (UUCSJ). The UUCSJ is organization that grew from a partnership of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee and the Unitarian Universalist Association. Their trip will be in August 2020.

Working with the UUCSJ is valuable for First Parish as it strengthens our connection to UUism outside of our four walls, and supports spiritual growth through social justice work in a UU context for our participants. This trip with the UUCSJ is a balance of learning experiences and service opportunities. The focus of the trip to West Virginia is to learn about the “significant environmental, social, and economic injustices that revolve around the United States’ long history of extractive industries, especially coal mining, for economic gain. Our group will have “first-hand experience working and learning alongside community members with diverse perspectives on West Virginia’s past, present, and future.” The youth selected this trip because of the component of climate justice engagement.

We have 10 youth who will be traveling on the trip and their chaperones will be John Roop, our Youth Coordinator, and First Parish youth advisor Meg Jackson. One benefit of the UUCSJ trip is the addition of program leaders from UUCSJ with our group the entire time who lead educational and spiritual reflections on the learning and service in a UU context.

Our youth have a number of fundraisers planned, including a recent Kids’ Night Out babysitting night, the continued sales of soup on Sunday mornings, coffee and doughnuts on Patriots’ Day, selling of Equal Exchange Products. Please support our group as you can!



To contact Lisa Maria Steinberg, email [dre@fplex.org](mailto:dre@fplex.org) or call 781-862-8200 x3

To contact John Roop, email [youth@fplex.org](mailto:youth@fplex.org)

# Annual Pledge Drive

Every year the Board begins the process of creating the new budget by getting recommendations from the Finance Committee in February. As plans for programming and events are explored this



month by our lay leaders and those of our valued partnerships, the congregation gets an opportunity to see how their contributions are reflected in the success the various programs and events that First Parish sponsors.

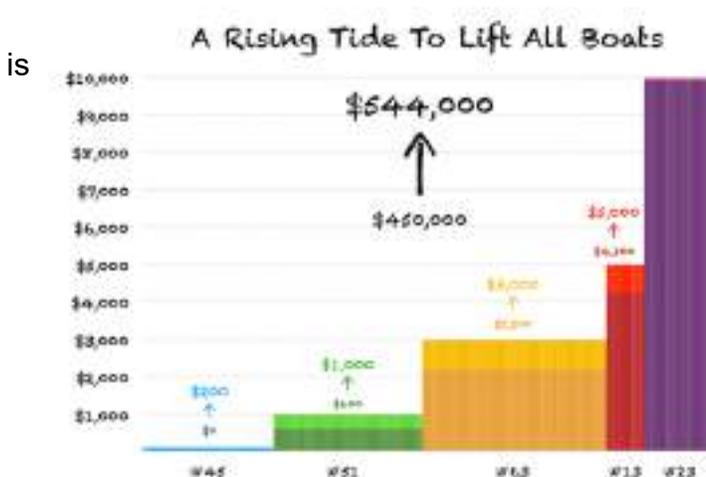
**Together we are creating the change we want to see in the world**

Our Board and our many lay lead teams have focused over the last few years on widening the scope of “our community”. It began by deciding to reclaim our building space from a private school program and have faith that by building partnerships that aligned with our values, we would be able to offset the loss of that rental income. These changes have been a great success as we have welcomed over a thousand new faces into programs and events sponsored by First Parish in Lexington. New families are joining the church and we have over 90 children and youth registered in our RE programs. Our steeple on the green has become a beacon for a community interested in interfaith partnerships, progressive social justice, and building deeper connections within the diversity of our daily life experiences.

## **Momentum continues when we all step up.**

Hosting events and lectures are just a few of the ways our congregation has been ***Growing Our Voices*** and reaching out to the hearts and minds of our community. We want to continue to enrich these programs and also be able to ramp up a new Board initiatives: (a) expand and increase the impact of our Social Justice projects, (b) fund a Ministerial Intern, (c) replenish the building maintenance fund, (d) begin funding future staff sabbaticals. Any of these initiatives require that each of us reflect on our financial contributions and consider investing even more deeply.

## **First Parish’s annual operating budget is primarily funded by the Annual Pledge Drive**



The reality is that almost 50% of our budget being funded by the just 22 households and some of our largest donors are moving on to new horizons. We are encouraging all members to incrementally raise your pledge. Together, we are able to fund the much needed maintenance to our building, expand our worship deepen pastoral care, enhance religious education programming, and widen our welcome to all who are searching for opportunities for meaningful service

*The Stewardship Team*

## **Upcoming Events—Save the Dates**

### **Confucian Spirituality Series**

**First Parish in Lexington and New Legacy Cultural Center**

present

### **A Confucian Spirituality Series**

Led by **Harvard Divinity School student, Shumo Wang (王舒墨)**.

Shumo Wang will lead the **Sunday Service on March 15, 10:30 AM**

“Seeking Peace in Action.”

Mr. Wang will also lead a three session series on **Confucian Spirituality**

**Thursday, March 19 at 7:00 PM** “What happened to Confucianism?”

**Thursday, April 2 at 7:00 PM** “Essential Teachings of Confucius”

**Thursday, April 9 at 7:00 PM** “How to Practice Spirituality”

Shumo Wang is a M. Div. student at Harvard Divinity School. He was born and raised in China and moved to Cambridge in 2017. He is a practitioner and minister of Confucianism and a young scholar of East Asian religions. Shumo aspires to serve the Chinese community and broader groups in the US with resources from the Confucian spirituality.

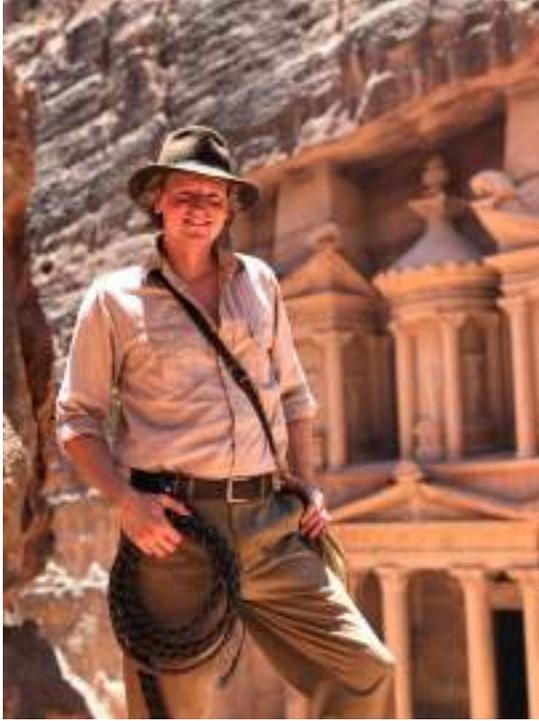
All are invited to First Parish in Lexington

7 Harrington Rd. Lexington MA 02420

To sign up for any or all sessions, please send an email to [admin@fplex.org](mailto:admin@fplex.org).

The New Legacy Cultural Center (<https://newlegacyculturalcenter.org>)

## ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE LAND OF THE BIBLE



Nate Ramsayer, an archaeologist and biblical scholar as well as soloist and tenor section leader in the First Parish choir, will give two lectures on successive Tuesday evenings in March.

**Tuesday, March 17, 7:00 to 8:30:** Nate will discuss biblical archaeology generally—the excavation process, how artifacts and sites are dated, and the differences between good and poor archaeological methods. He will also bring a number of artifacts that are up to 5000 years old.

**Tuesday, March 24, 7:00 to 8:30:** Nate will discuss what archaeology has told us about the Bible and how understanding material culture informs our modern perspective on biblical

events.

**Nate Ramsayer** received his bachelor's and master's degrees in Hebrew Bible and the ancient Near East, and he has been excavating for the past eight years. He has now done fieldwork at numerous sites in the U.K., Russia, and Israel, the most recent being two excavations in Israel—an Early Bronze Age Canaanite site in the Upper Galilee, and a late Iron Age site in the Judean hill country, just outside of Jerusalem.

## Voices on the Green

### Voices on the Green: “Then a Funny Thing Happened,” Friday, April 10



Over the last four years, Voices on the Green, First Parish's series of storytelling and music for the congregation and the community, has explored many different themes from breakthroughs to belonging, from justice to secrets and lies. Larry Prusak, FP's wise humorist, suggested a program on comedy, and on April 10, stories and songs will be about something funny (ha-ha, or weird), exploring surprise outcomes and the ways in which life may seem like a comedy of errors. Please look at upcoming Weekly Updates, or go online to [VoicesOnTheGreen.org](http://VoicesOnTheGreen.org) for details about the program and ticket purchases.

#### Voices on the Green: Mission and Plans

VOG's mission is community-building in three senses: first: helping members of the congregation get to know one another, exploring together our experiences and values, deepening the church's sense of community; second, sharing who we are as a spiritual community with the larger community around us; and third, working with community partners, local not-for-profit organizations whose social advocacy relates to the theme of the particular evening, in order to connect with and support outreach to the larger world.

Our partners have included Lexington Youth and Family Services, Communities for Restorative Justice, the Lexington Council for the Arts and the Munroe Center for the Arts, Zion Travelers Cooperative Center, Lexington Refugee Assistance Program, the Douglas House Supportive Living, and in our most recent program, "Timing Is Everything," the Global Warming Action Committee (GWAC), Sunrise Lexington, and Food Link.

The VOG committee has not yet come upon a partner for "Then a Funny Thing Happened," and, as always, we welcome suggestions. We depend on the congregation's involvement. The series could not continue without the storytellers, directors, food preparers, bartenders, and clean-uppers, and many other volunteers who contribute time, energy, ideas, and talents for each program.

Next church year, VOG will celebrate five years of programs with the Friday, February 5 theme "Milestones." Its first program of the year, "Just Ask," will take place on Friday, October 23, and the third event will be on Friday, April 23, theme to be determined. Any suggestions? Please let the Committee know your responses to the program, your interest in telling stories, your ideas for themes, and your suggestions for musicians and community partners.

THANK YOU! David Rose, Regie Gibson, Suzanne Adams, Deborah Lapidés, Lisa Maria Steinberg, Sara Mannix, Amy Jamison, Anne Khudari, Helen Cohen, and David Pollack.

# DO MORALS MATTER?

**PRESIDENTS AND FOREIGN  
POLICY FROM FDR TO TRUMP**



**BOOK TALK BY JOSEPH S. NYE, JR.**

Joseph S. Nye, Jr. one of the world's leading scholars of international relations, provides a concise analysis of the role of ethics in US foreign policy working through each presidency from FDR to Trump.

**THURSDAY  
APRIL 16, 2020  
7:30 PM**

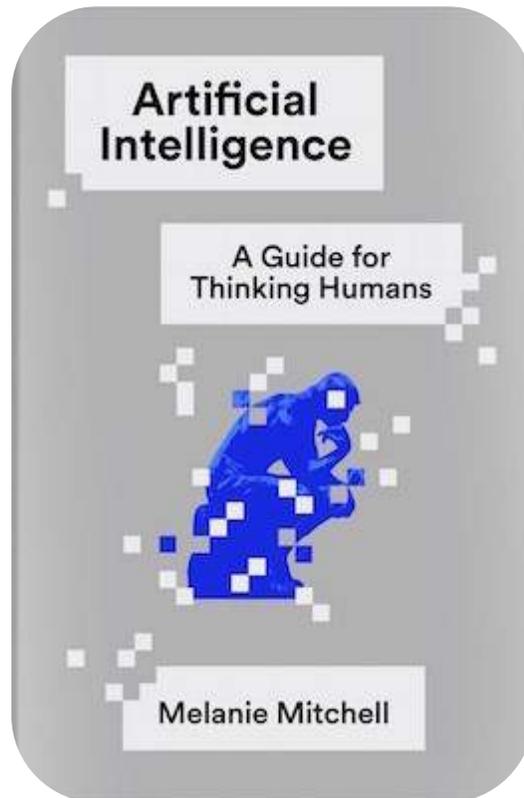
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# Artificial Intelligence for the Thinking Human

April 23, 7:30 at First Parish in Lexington.



By Prof. Melanie Mitchell, Santa Fe Institute

AI researcher and award-winning author Dr. Melanie Mitchell describes the current state of artificial intelligence, highlighting the field's recent stunning achievements as well as its surprising failures. Dr. Mitchell considers the ethical issues surrounding the increasing deployment of AI systems in all aspects of our society, and closely examines the prospects for imbuing computers with humanlike qualities.

## The Green Action Corner

First Parish Climate Action Team

**A Planet for the Children Initiative 2020**



The Climate Action Team puts our faith into action by addressing the global Climate Crisis. We focus our work in three areas: Legislative and policy advocacy at the local, state and national levels of government, encouraging sustainable and carbon neutral personal lifestyles, and promoting and assisting First Parish's property and its use to be more energy efficient, renewable and sustainable.

The Green Action Forum on March 1st focused on Community Solar Farms and how supporting them both expands sustainable energy resources and can also save you money.

Here is the link to subscribe: <http://newampion.wpengine.com/subscribe/>. We hope you will subscribe and share the information with others.

**Join us at the March 9<sup>th</sup> CAT meeting, 7:30 at First Parish**

**Come Celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Earth Day**

**Vegetarian/Vegan Potluck**

**SUPPORT OUR CLIMATE ACTION TEAM, OUR PLANET**

**AND YOUR HEALTH**

**SUNDAY APRIL 5th NOON**

Please remember this special day by celebrating our beautiful blue and green planet and make a veggie/vegan dish (your choice; just label which one it is.)

Every time we enjoy these tasty and healthy meals, we also have a chance to relax and enjoy each other. There will be a sign-up at the piano within a few weeks, just to let us know how many of you are coming with delicious food so we can plan ahead.

With thanks from the CAT team.

**April 19 Dedication of Climate Action Banner Series.** The first of a series of four seasonal banners, created by local artists, will be hung above the main entrance doors highlighting our global climate change emergency and our community call for action. The theme of the first banner will be "A Faithful Call for a Green Revolution. Also on the 19<sup>th</sup> information will be available during coffee hour to help individuals make personal pledges to live sustainably and work to address climate change issues.

## Care to Join Us?

### **Interfaith Garden Diggings and Doings**

If it's March, it's spring at Lexington's Interfaith Garden. We grow organic produce for Lexington's Food Pantry while gardening alongside folks from a dozen other faith communities in town. We're off and digging for this our 11<sup>th</sup> year!!

**YOU** are cordially invited to join us. The Garden is conveniently located just next door to our parking lot behind the Fortmanns' house. No gardening experience is needed.

Children (accompanied by an adult) and youth (community service credits available) are welcome. Work days are late Tuesday afternoons and Saturday mornings. You sign up to volunteer as you are willing and able.

We make new friends. We learn a lot. We have fun. For more information, pick up a brochure at the piano. If you'd like to give us a try or to get on the regular volunteer list, contact Marty Kvaal or Cherie Noe, the First Parish coordinators.

We hope to see you.

### **Thursday Afternoon Meditation Group**

New beginnings may occur at any moment – upon exchanging smiles with a stranger, after experiencing a meaningful event, when walking through the woods. Or with changing seasons. As emerging spring wraps our world in new beginnings, consider joining our small group of fellow wanderers who gather from 4:00-5:00 every Thursday afternoon in the Parlor for candlelit meditation, quiet conversation, and shared reflection. This is a drop-in gathering with no long term commitment - just come on those days when your schedule allows and your spirit moves. There always will be an open chair for those who come.

# Capital Campaign

Greetings from the Capital Campaign Committee! Recently, our work has begun to gain momentum. We are currently conducting a feasibility study—asking all our members individually for feedback on capital project ideas that have emerged over the past 2 years (starting with the Imagination Cafés). Each of you can expect to hear from a member of our committee some time in the next 3 months, and I hope you will make time to sit down with us for this important discussion.

At the same time, we will engage an architect to study our building—how we currently use it, and how we dream of using it differently. The architectural study will give us estimates of how much each building-related project would cost.

At the end of June, we will collect all the data being gathered now—what our members want, what total budget is reasonable to shoot for, and what different projects would cost. We will synthesize the data in a first draft of the Capital Campaign Case Statement, stating how much we hope to raise and what for. After the case statement comes out, you will have ample opportunity—from July until mid-October—to review, discuss, and respond in “cottage meetings,” culminating in a congregational vote at the fall semi-annual meeting to approve the plan.

Feel free to email me or call me at any time with comments, suggestions, or questions. I look forward to hearing from you!

Omar Khudari, Chair  
Capital Campaign Committee  
[capitalcampaign@fplex.org](mailto:capitalcampaign@fplex.org)

## Weddings at First Parish

First Parish is opening its historic doors to welcome gatherings such as family celebrations, weddings, anniversaries, and birthdays. On a sunny day this October, a young Japanese couple celebrated their marriage in the sanctuary officiated by Reverend Anne. A reception dinner followed for 50 family members from Japan as well as local friends. Recent immigrants to the states, the couple were looking for an historic, quintessentially New England site for their nuptials and found it at First Parish. Rip Jackson provided music and Elizabeth Gemelli, a First Parish member and head of the Wedding and Events Committee, coordinated the event. Parish Hall was transformed into an elegant reception space with intimate round tables covered in white linen and adorned with red roses. Capers Catering provided a delicious buffet and attended impeccably to every detail to the delight of the young couple and their families.

Hosting celebrations is one way First Parish can further embrace the community beyond its members while also providing some rental income for our aging structure. The Wedding and Events Committee has reached out to local caterers, florists, and party vendors to inform them of the availability of the venue. The First Parish website includes a link that provides venue information and welcomes inquiries. A poster in the church vestibule offers photos of the Sanctuary, Parish Hall, a bridal dressing room, and a view of the Parish Field adjacent to the church. There, a tent can accommodate more than 100 guests for dinner and dancing.

The Wedding and Events Committee continues to publicize the First Parish venue and establish relationships with vendors who can refer people seeking event space for their celebration. For more information, contact Elizabeth Gemelli at [eventsfplex@gmail.com](mailto:eventsfplex@gmail.com) or call 781-608-8512.





## Contact Us

Contact us for more information about our services and programs.

### First Parish in Lexington

7 Harrington Road  
Lexington, MA 02421  
781-862-8200  
admin@fplex.org

Visit us on the web at  
[www.fplex.org](http://www.fplex.org)

On Facebook & Instagram  
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*LOVE...SEEK...SERVE*

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PLACE  
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HERE