



First
Parish
in Brookline

A WELCOMING UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION



July and August Newsletter 2017

IN THE INTERIM

Dear Friends,

As I return from Ministry Days and General Assembly (the annual gathering of our Unitarian Universalist congregations), I am changed. I have a new trust and belief in our faith that is founded upon genuine transformation. We are *moving toward* the beloved community of racial equity and diversity that we have so long spoken about and have not realized. Before now. Until now.

GA evidenced this. Black people and other people of color were moved to the center of leadership and discussion. Ministers spent time together in restorative justice circles. We were led in our General Assembly by more black leaders than ever before including Revs. Sofia Betancourt and William Sinkford and Dr. Leon Spencer, interim co-presidents, Cheryl Walker, President of the Minister's Association, and Dr. Leon Burke III, GA Music Director. Most importantly, commitments were made to BLUU (Black Lives of UU) and people's stories of past and present were heard and deeply respected.

This kind of change is real and hopeful. We have a long way to go and we are doing things differently.

For the last few years, I thought that I was learning about racial equity, white supremacy and systemic racism. Now I know that it is about so much more than just learning; it is about transforming.

Bryan Stevenson, author of *Just Mercy* and keynote speaker at the Ware Lecture at General Assembly, talked with passion about the four things which he sees as essential for transformation toward a just world:

1. *Get proximate* – be in relationship to those who are poor, abused, and neglected. The answers to problems of justice come when we get proximate, he told us, not before.
2. *Change the narrative* – refuse to believe false narratives that perpetuate injustice. Question the beliefs and stories that we tell ourselves.
3. *Stay hopeful* – hope is the one thing that we cannot compromise.
4. *Be willing to do uncomfortable things* - for we will not change the world, or ourselves, until we do.

We can certainly aspire to live as Mr. Stevenson challenges us. These guidelines align with many great teachers: The Buddha, who left a privileged life and taught that none of us are free until all of us are free; Jesus of Nazareth, who welcomed prostitutes; Dorothy Day, who lived with the poor; and Bill Wilson, who found his salvation in working with low bottom alcoholics.

I'll be away from church for the month of July. Over that time and into August, I will be doing an 8-week practice of the spiritual exercises of Saint Ignatius, learning more of my family history through ancestry research, reading black authors, writing my own work, and loving – always loving – life, my family and friends, and each of you.

Have a blessed summer! May you find green pastures within which to rest, pathways to lead you to new understandings, and inspiration to carry you every day.

Love,
Rev. Rebecca

SUMMER WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Stay in touch with your First Parish friends this summer by coming to any or all of our Summer Worship Services. We will meet in **Lyon Chapel** and start at **10:00 a.m.** Following each service there will be a hospitality time with light refreshments and cold drinks. We look forward to seeing you.

July 2 – No Worship Service – church closed for the Holiday weekend

July 9 – Undoing Evil in the Other - We cannot deny that the “other” scares us, but how have we come to construct the “other” and how can we dig past that. Accompany us in these questions of identity and what we can do about it.

Worship Leader – Jennifer Hernandez. Jennifer Hernandez is the daughter of immigrants and the Immigrant Rights Organizer at Centro Presente a statewide Latin American immigrant organization. She also holds a Master of Divinity degree from Harvard Divinity School.

July 16 - Caring for the Earth for Future Generations.

Worship Leaders – Deane Cody and Nancy Clark

July 23 - The Joy of Adversity

Worship Leader –Whit Larrabee

July 30 - Living Our Question By Reading and Not Reading the Lotus Sutra: Becoming More Open to Blessing and Being Blessed

Worship Leaders – David Cave and Gerry Leader

August 6 - Authentic Connection. This service is the combined effort of six members of a small group ministry (*spiritual discussion group*) who discovered many different ways of connecting through being open and vulnerable with one another and thus, their authentic selves.

Worship Leaders – Six Members of one Small Group Ministry

August 13 - Improvisation in Jazz and Life

Worship Leader – Jon Hazilla

August 20 - Lost and Found - What is underneath our endless desire for more? How can we live in a consumer culture and not lose those things that matter most?

Worship Leader – Rev Rebecca

August 27 - Blessing of the Animals

Worship Leader – Eliza Blanchard

September 3 - No Worship Service – church closed for Labor Day Weekend

SUMMER BUILDING SCHEDULE

Church Administration:

- **Sonya Abbott** our current Parish Administrator will with us until mid-August but will be taking most Wednesdays off during July and August. We'll keep you updated via the Weekly Update should there be any other changes to this schedule.

Custodial:

- **Boateng (Kofi) Serebour** is the only custodian on duty during the summer months. Currently his normal days off are Tuesdays and Saturdays – unless other arrangements are made.

Please note: when staff is in the building, they will be working on a variety of projects, so they might not be in the office if you stop by or call, so do leave a message and they'll get back to you as soon as possible.

FROM OUR ANIMAL CAREGIVERS MINISTRY



Dear Ones,

Like many of us, too many of us, I've been recently caught up in a loved one's struggles with dementia. My dog, a loving-feisty member of the terrier and spaniel families, has comforted me during the most painful times. As a bonus, her wagging, happy presence has cheered my mother, and reminded her of her Scottie, a beloved companion of her childhood.

Blessings. When our hearts are open - even broken open- blessings may appear on the roughest roads.

This summer we'll show our appreciation of our animal companions AND celebrate the many other blessings of our dear Earth. With some wonderful lay folk, I'll be offering an earth-based worship service - see below for details.

"All Good Gifts Around Us!" Come join our [Blessing of the Animals](#) on **August 21st at 10 am to 11 am!** All species, ages and faiths are very welcome. Please bring your two-footed and four-footed (or six or eight footed!) friends! If you can't bring your animal companion, please feel free to bring a picture or momento!

Giving thanks and praise, we'll enjoy music, song, children's activities, stories, candles, and of course blessings. Stay for treats for all afterwards. We invite everyone to bring their extra zucchini, tomatoes, etc., or an item for [The Food Pantry](#). I look forward to sharing harvest blessings with you!

Peace and joy - Rev. Eliza

Please call me at [774-551-6071](tel:774-551-6071) for more information.

NEW BYLAWS COMMITTEE

The Board has appointed Sue Andrews as Chair of the newly forming Bylaws Committee. This committee will meet intermittently at the members' convenience, review the Bylaws, and submit suggestions for amendments to the Board as needed. Anyone interested in being on this committee, please let Sue Andrews know. There is some work to be done in Fall of 2017 related to bylaws issues that were postponed at our Congregational Meeting in February.

SUMMER HIGHLIGHTS

Book Club will continue to meet over the summer months on the following Sunday at 7:30 pm when they'll be discussing:

- **July 9 - *News of the World*** by Paulette Jiles
- **August 6 - *The Homegoing*** by Yaa Gyasi
- **September 10 - *Lincoln in the Bardo*** by George Saunders.

Monthly Conversation – July 30: Because our last Conversation about "Tradition" was so enjoyable, we decided to try for a summer meeting, and settled on July 30 following the service as the date. We will be sharing thoughts about how we think tradition might fit into UU Religious Exploration for all ages. Because the summer services are earlier, we will begin at 11:30 and end by 1:00, meeting in the Lilac Room downstairs next to the Dana Room. All who value reflective conversation for its own sake are very welcome. For further information, contact Dave Cave, Ann Congleton, Meredith Hall Ritter or Corey Thomas.

Lectio Divina Latin for "Divine Reading" August 23rd - 3:30 – 4:45pm. Rev Rebecca's office or outside as weather permits. Join others to explore an ancient spiritual practice. Readings from the Bible and other worldly sources. Read...meditate... reflect...share. Any questions email Nanc Marks or Laura Walters. To register contact Jon Hazilla.

Love and Blessings - Happy Summer! Jon

EXCITING OPPORTUNITY to HELP LEAD FPB through MULTICULTURAL / EQUITY TRANSFORMATION

Dear First Parish Congregation,

Our Parish Board voted in June to engage Dr. Darnisa Amante and Rev. Eric Jackson of DEEP (Disruptive Equity Education Project) to help our community work and learn together as we intensify our commitment next year to live into that part of our mission that calls for us to “celebrate multicultural community” and “work together to dismantle racism”. We will use DEEP’s “Equity Framework” (<https://digdeepforequity.com/our-approach/>), which helps organizations and their leaders in their equity work, equips organizations to analyze their institutional structures, and helps build an organization’s capacity to engage in a transformative process that leads to increased equity. A task force composed of representatives of the Board, Transition Team and Diversity Caucus and several “at-large” volunteers worked together over many months to study, research, interview and finally recommend DEEP.

Interested members of our congregation are now invited to consider serving on a “Core Leadership Team” to work with Dr. Amante and Rev. Jackson, during the coming church year and provide FPB-based leadership for our congregation-wide work on equity. This 15-18-member core leadership team will consist of members from the congregation, as well as representatives from the Parish Board, the Transition Team, and the Diversity Caucus.

A small planning team has been formed to recruit the larger leadership team, and to work out the preliminary schedule and project plan with Dr. Amante this summer. Our hope is to have our act together and an initial plan ready before September so we can hit the ground running. We will know more details about the Core Leadership Team’s full responsibilities after the planning team meets with Dr. Amante this summer, but members of the larger “Core Leadership Team” will most likely be counted on to:

- Work closely with Dr. Amante and Rev. Jackson, to learn and help implement the DEEP Equity Framework here at First Parish.
- Attend two workshops in September 2017, and if possible, participate in the four workshops that will be offered for the whole congregation during 2017-2018.
- Help co-facilitate small discussion groups during the workshop sessions, and/or following the workshops.
- Be available to congregation members as we undertake this learning together.
- Be committed to their own and others’ learning as we undertake this work of transformation.

Intrigued? Interested? Want to learn more? Please reach out to Almas Dossa before August 1st

MINISTRY THEMES are CONTINUING

FPB will be continuing with Ministry Themes for the coming church year September 2017 thru June 2018. The monthly theme will be explored from different perspective and styles in the worship services that month. Themes will be listed on the website with suggested quotes, question(s) for reflection, readings and podcasts. Congregants will be encouraged to offer ideas for materials connected to each theme. All committees and groups are encouraged to consider how you might integrate the monthly themes into your work. Feel free to contact Rev Rebecca with any ideas or questions.

Monthly Ministry Themes 2017/2018:

September	<i>Invitation</i>	February	<i>Surrender</i>
October	<i>Whiteness</i>	March	<i>Generosity</i>
November	<i>Harvest</i>	April	<i>Hope</i>
December	<i>Anticipation</i>	May	<i>Reconciliation</i>
January	<i>Courage</i>	June	<i>Gratitude</i>

THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSION GROUPS with REV REBECCA

Theological Discussion Groups will continue in the fall and each session is designed with the following purposes in mind:

- To offer people an opportunity to share what is on their heart and mind in a safe space.
- To brainstorm together how FPB could better meet the needs of all people in worship and beyond worship.
- To gather an understanding of the range of theological beliefs to help inform the Search Committee as they begin their work in the summer of 2017.

Every group will meet for the same amount of time 75 minutes and answer the same questions.

- What is precious to you about your theology?
- How does your participation at FPB hinder and support theological and faith journey?

Meetings are planned for 9am in the Lilac room on the following Sundays:

- September 24 Agnosticism and Religious Seekers
- October 8 Atheism, Humanism and Religious Naturalism
- November 19 Earth Based and Indigenous religions

Please email Rev Rebecca if you have any questions, or cannot participate on a particular Sunday and would still like to speak with Rev Rebecca about your theological journey.

DATES to HOLD for NEW YEAR

Since our next church year, September 2017 through June 2018, will undoubtedly be filled with all kinds of opportunities to connect and get involved, we thought it would be helpful to have some key dates on the calendar which are:

Opening Sunday – return to worshipping in the Sanctuary – 9/10

RE Classes Begin – Sunday – 9/17

Engagement Faire – Sunday – 10/1

Program Council – Tuesday – 10/3

Thanksgiving Feast – Sunday – 11/19

Christmas Pageant – Sunday – 12/10

Christmas Eve Service – Sunday – 12/24

Program Council – Tuesday – 1/16

Good Friday Vigil and Tenebrae – Friday – 3/30

Easter – Sunday – 4/1

Annual Meeting – Sunday - 5/20

Cape Cod Sea Camps – Saturday 5/26 thru Monday 5/28

Challenge Sunday – 6/3

Church Picnic – Sunday 6/10

Next Newsletter - September Issue

Deadline for material – Friday – August 25