



IN THE INTERIM

Dear Friends,

Can you believe that it is nearing the end of this church year!? **Help! Thanks! Wow!** (credit to Anne Lamott)

Help me to celebrate all that we have done together. The growth and love that has taken hold in this community is awesome. It has not been perfect nor painless – yet what kind of genuine growth ever is?

Thanks to every one of you who makes First Parish in Brookline the community that it is. Thank you for your quiet and steady volunteering, your honest and open conversations and your faithful and engaged participation in worship. Thank you for trying things on, and taking risks.

Wow! It has been quite a year. And it is not over yet. The journey is never really over; however, the markers in life are important. They help us to pause and take a breath. Seasons and rituals call us to both review what has been and look forward to what is coming.

This month at the annual meeting, you will be voting on your ministerial Search Committee that you nominated in a democratic process. You will also be voting on new member for the Parish Board and other positions as well as the budget for fiscal year 2018. These may look like items on an agenda. We know that behind each of those things is countless hours of volunteer work, engagement and commitment. (You make it look so easy!)

What those things represent is really **transformation**.

This year has been all about transformation. It has not been business as usual. It has been, and continues to be, a time of adaptation. Gil Rendle in his book, “Journey into the Wilderness” describes adaptation as when we are willing to change attitudes and habits of behavior.¹ Congregations that engage in adaptive work are communities of genuine learning where people are transformed. First Parish in Brookline is one of those congregations.

We will be spending time this month understanding, witnessing and being hopefully being inspired by our own and each other’s transformation. Come to our April 30th worship service where we will join over 600 other UU congregations in answering the call from Black Lives in UU² to hold a service on White Supremacy. Come and learn about personal transformation as we welcome two guest ministers on May 7th and 14th, Rev. Katie Lee Crane and Rev. Dr. William Schulz. Support our challengers as they share their faith credos with us on May 21st. Join us at Cape Cod Sea Camps for Memorial Day weekend or worship here with Rev. Eliza on May 28th!

Come. Join. You are welcome here.

Love,
Rev Rebecca

¹ Rendle, Gil, Journey in the Wilderness, Abingdon Press, TN, 2010 page 94.

² <http://www.blacklivesuu.com/>

MAY MINISTRY THEME

Inspiration

“We delight in the beauty of the butterfly, but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty.” — Maya Angelou

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

May 7 - Creating a Web – Guest Minister Rev. Katie Lee Crane will explore this month’s ministry theme: “Inspiration”. Much of the service is autobiographical. – told in poems and stories that have shaped her spiritual life. It is rooted in the principles and sources of our UU tradition.

There will be a Communion Service led by Rev Rebecca in the sanctuary immediately following regular worship. All are welcome.

May 14 - Bodies, Blessings and Bucket Lists – Prompted by his recent retirement from full-time ministry, the Rev. William F. Schulz, who has served as UUA President, Executive Director of Amnesty International USA and President of the UU Service Committee, will offer a metaphor for living wisely, no matter what one’s stage of life. He is currently a Senior Fellow at the Carr Center for Human Rights at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government and an Affiliate Professor of Preaching and Public Ethics at Meadville Lombard Theological School, our Unitarian Universalist seminary in Chicago.

Vespers: A Time of Quiet Reflection - *On May 14 there will be a lay-led Vespers service in Lyon Chapel, at 6pm. The intent of this service is to welcome a sense of quiet contemplation as a complement to Sunday morning services, closing the week in peaceful communion with each other. We welcome anyone who would like to add more quiet to their lives.*

May 21 – Challenge Sunday - The challenge class (9th grade) will conduct the service and present their faith statements, which is the final step in the youth religious exploration program at First Parish Brookline. In addition, the service will celebrate everyone who has been involved with Religious Exploration this year. All students in classes 5th grade and up are urged to attend this service with their parents. All RE teachers from this year are also urged to attend so we can celebrate your amazing contributions. This is a very special yearly event that is not to be missed!

May 28 - Picnic With the Dead: The Spirit of Remembrance - Today we'll explore the long-buried roots and some surprising truths about Decoration Day, a holiday born of a terrible war. Our journey into the past will honor veterans, especially veterans of color, who sacrificed much for our nation's freedom and unity. Following the service, those who wish to will join Rev. Eliza in paying tribute to the graves of Brookline's African American long-ago residents and veterans, just down the street. Please join Rev. Eliza Blanchard in this special day.

ANNUAL MEETING Sunday – May 21 – 1pm Lyon Chapel

BALLOT FOR MINISTERIAL SEARCH COMMITTEE TO BE ANNOUNCED SOON

On May 5th, all members of FPB will receive an email packet containing brief bios written by the 12 candidates nominated for our Ministerial Search Committee. Please read this information carefully as you prepare to cast your 4 votes at our Annual Meeting on May 21. Each bio will also include a photo so that you can be sure you have the right face associated with the name.

Also, remember that with our recent bylaws changes, you now have the opportunity to vote early if you cannot be here on May 21. Starting May 11, early voters may come to the church office, present identification, and receive a ballot to fill out. These ballots will be kept securely and counted along with all the other votes on May 21. Please call the office before coming in to make sure someone will be there to provide the ballot, and please do plan to attend the meeting if you possibly can.

TRANSITION TEAM CHECK IN

The Transition Team has been busy this winter/early spring helping to facilitate conversations among various committees that often don't find the time to talk together. As our congregation grows and changes, being intentional about staying in touch with each other's activities and concerns will be increasingly important. We have worked to support the nominations for upcoming ministerial Search Committee by interviewing the past two ministerial search committees and sharing their wisdom with the congregation. We've continued to share specific findings of our congregational survey with groups at the church who need the information we learned. And we're working with the Diversity Caucus and Parish Board to continue to find ways to build our church capacity for dismantling racism. It's an exciting time at First Parish – we'd love to hear from you if you have suggestions or comments about our interim period, as this church year winds up.

ANNUAL PLEDGING: We are ALMOST there!

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! As of April 25th, we are within \$6,000 of our \$420,000 pledging goal for 2017-18!

Several current pledgers have not yet decided on their pledge amount for the upcoming year. With those members – along with friends newer to First Parish pews this year -Canvass Team co-chairs Bob Williamson and Karla Baehr are confident that we will achieve the congregation's \$420,000 goal by the time our May 21st Annual Meeting votes on the First Parish budget for next year – and THAT will be a first in many years: voting on a budget that is based on actual pledge commitments made before Annual Meeting! Congratulations, First Parish!

We'll have a full report for Annual Meeting, but we wanted to report that many in the First Parish members found themselves willing and able to respond generously to the Campaign theme of "Now More than Ever" this year: more than half of the households who pledged for this year increased their pledge commitment for next year!

Special thanks go to:

- **Ellie Boynton** for posting Canvass materials promptly and, most critically, installing and managing our new on-line pledge and contribution system.
- **Laura Hatfield** for her detailed analysis of trends and patterns in pledging over the past decade that provided important insights and guidance for our efforts.
- **Sonya Abbott** for sharing history, preparing twice weekly reports on progress, and attending to the details of the campaign so carefully.
- **Lori Day, Laura Hatfield, and Bob Williamson** for their testimonials
- **Anne Modena** for her early support in helping craft the Canvass message for 2017.
- **Rev Rebecca** for her steadfast support throughout the process, and for sharing her insights and expertise from her earlier career as a fundraiser in the nonprofit world.

Next year, Bob Williamson will be stepping down from the Canvass Team and Karla Baehr will be recruiting new team members. Both of us have found the outreach involved in the Canvass process a deeply satisfying experience. We thank the many members who responded with such warmth, encouragement and openness to our invitations. We would encourage others who share the desire to connect more deeply with First Parish members – both new and old – to give serious consideration to joining the Canvass Team. Intrigued? Interested? Please talk to Karla, Bob or Rev Rebecca!

MAY HIGHLIGHTS and ACTIVITIES

Black Lives Matter Boston presents: The Power of Now: Where Do We Go From Here?

- Presenter: Karlene Griffiths Sekou
- Where: First Parish in Brookline
- When: **Saturday, May 6** – 9am – 1pm (*child care available*)

The current political moment in the United States presents some not so new challenges in immanent ways. There are real opportunities for resistance, growth, cultivating authentic and connecting relationships, and building collective power within a strong mass social movement.

This Level I Workshop will:

- A. Use personal stories, film, case study, and/or role play to build and strengthen participant conversation
- B. Offer a framework for interpreting historical and current racialized, ethnic, and religious social and political violence's
- C. Discuss what it means to grow--From Ally to Solidarity: Turning Privilege into Power and how we can support the Black Lives Matter Movement

Tickets (*Workshop fees will support Black Lives Matter Boston*) <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-power-of-now-building-allies-with-black-lives-matter-boston-tickets-33712946330>

Rapid Response Training – Join our Immigration Justice Group and an interfaith coalition in Brookline **Sunday May 7**, 2-5pm, at Temple Sinai, 50 Sewell Ave, to learn how to respond if an immigration raid happens in our area. Faith communities all across the country are preparing and responding to stepped up immigration enforcement activities. The purpose of “Rapid Response” is to call attention to ICE activity, to show immigrants and their families that they are not alone, and create greater public awareness of what’s happening.

- RSVP for this training at <https://goo.gl/forms/EMO3EF5Y6usrkqrf1>
- See James Shillaber or Tania Erlij for more information.

Book Group – Sunday May 7 at 7:30pm in the Peterson Room. Book to be discussed will be *Lab Girl* by Hope Jahren

Centro Presente Fundraiser at FP - Saturday, May 13 at 7pm in Lyon Chapel, First Parish is co-sponsoring a *People’s Café* fundraiser for Centro Presente, a statewide Latin American immigrant organization committed to building community power and resisting efforts to harm people seeking justice as immigrants. The event is dinner and a concert. Music is by Ari and Mia Friedman, both Berkley trained virtuosos, who play violin and fiddle, and whose voices blend beautifully in their creative and energetic original songs.



Join First Parish at the annual Louis D. Brown Peace Institute's **Mother's Day Walk for Peace** on **Sunday, May 14th**. The walk is in the morning and you have ample time to get back for service. Do the full walk (6.8 miles) or half (3 miles), come join us! And if you can't walk, pledge. This is an opportunity to connect with our neighbors and, as Rabbi Heschel said about the march in Selma, *we pray with our feet!*

FPB has participated in this community event since 2012, and we will be walking again with our church banner. We walk to support and bear witness for those who have lost family or friends to violence and to raise awareness about the important programs of the Louis D. Brown Peace Institute, a center of healing, teaching and learning for families and communities (<http://ldbpeaceinstitute.org>).

Please sign up to walk or pledge if you can't walk, there is a clipboard during hospitality or on-line on the team page at <https://goo.gl/BMqgtV>. Contacts: Liz Martin or Carol Spitzer if you have any questions.

Lection Divina Latin for "Divine Reading" - Monday's May 15th and 22nd 3:30 – 5:00pm. Rev Rebecca's office or outside as weather permits. Join others to explore an ancient spiritual practice. To register email Jon Hazilla.

UUA Presidential Candidate Discussion - Thursday, May 18 - 7 – 9pm - Come and learn about the three candidates running for UUA President. Rev. Alison Miller, Rev. Jeanne Pupke, and the Rev. Susan Fredrick-Gray Susan. <http://www.uuwf.org/uua-presidential-candidates> This is a critical year in our Association's presidency. Come and hear a taped panel discussion with the candidates followed by a conversation by all who are present. Rev Rebecca will facilitate the conversation and support those present in discerning who they envision as our next UUA President. The election occurs during General Assembly <http://www.uua.org/ga> this June, 21-25 in New Orleans, LA. First Parish has five delegates plus Revs Rebecca, Eliza and MaryHelen. We want to hear your thoughts to help guide our voting! Delegates include: Greg Buckland, Michele David, Ann Gilmore, Martha Leader and Steve Von Lichtenberg.

Monthly Conversations will not gather in May - Their next gathering will be June 4, and the topic will be announced later in May.

First Parish in Brookline 21th Annual Retreat - May 27-29, 2017(Memorial Day weekend) *Cape Cod Sea Camps Brewster, MA.* This year we will celebrate our 21th Annual Retreat to Cape Cod Sea Camps in beautiful Brewster, Ma. We will enjoy time for socializing, recreational activities, spiritual rejuvenation and a time for deepening our connections as a community. Please contact Rich or Lori Day with any questions, ideas or feedback. You can also Register now:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1hueiUFiopVW0RnIJY5X_gSga8h4eqiLpIZVB9hIdojc/edit?usp=sharing

FROM OUR ANIMAL CAREGIVERS MINISTRY



Dear Ones,

March brought me the gifts of leading a Pet Loss Healing Circle in the Dana Room, and leading a Blessing of the Animals service at First Parish Church Unitarian Universalist in Bridgewater. I'm so thankful to be your affiliate minister, able to minister within this amazing interdependent web of all existence.

Being with those who mourn is a gift because, contrary to what I once thought (and many people would think) I've found being with those who grieve reminds us all what love can be: inspiring, joyful, ecstatic (in the old sense of the word) and hard. Really, really hard. If you don't believe me, check out this new book, "Will's red Coat," by Tom Ryan, whose mountaineering adventures with the Buddha-like Atticus went viral. His dogs - Atticus and then Will - saved his life, and their stories might transform yours. I've read and heard many stories about the end of life, and this one affirmed and changed my conviction that love indeed can conquer death. Easy to say, harder to believe.

So if you need a booster shot of faith, here's the link:

<https://strikingattheroots.wordpress.com/2017/03/20/book-review-wills-red-coat-by-tom-ryan/>

And speaking of love and delight, I'll be leading our annual **Blessing of the Animals** service in Lyon Chapel at 10 a.m. on Sunday, **August 27th**. Hope you and your animal bestie(s) can join us!

With a listening love,
Rev. Eliza

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Want to get more involved in our programs for children and youth? The Religious Exploration Committee is looking for volunteers for next year, to care for toddlers, teach class, mentor youth and support as a committee liaison. Email us today rechair@firstparishinbrookline.org and we will find a place for you!

UPDATE on CLINTON PATH PRE-SCHOOL and BUILDING RENTALS

We heard you! 70% of the respondents to the fall survey by the Transition Team felt that First Parish should proactively undertake an effort to expand increasing First Parish rentals as one strategy for closing our financial “sustainability gap” – the gap between a sustainable annual draw from our endowment and our yearly spending on staff, programs and building maintenance.

An ad hoc task force comprised of Sara Warren, Bob Williamson and Karla Baehr began that effort when a local preschool, Clinton Path, approached First Parish about renting space on a long-term basis. In March, the task force reported in the newsletter that the Parish Board has authorized them to enter into “good faith negotiations” with Clinton Path.

What we learned from our discussions with Clinton Path. Negotiations began in earnest. Our work included completing a study of market rents. We learned that our space is likely more valuable than we had understood, and, as a small preschool, Clinton Path would be unable to pay the level of rent the space can command over the long term. That led the task force to begin to explore a more ambitious plan for space renovation and active recruitment of larger preschools to consider sharing renovated space.

The Task Force is encouraged by the possibility that a longer-term approach could result in dramatically improved space for our own RE programming AND substantially greater rental revenue from a compatible enterprise. We will keep the Parish Board and congregation apprised of our work – and welcome others to join the effort!

Our building can be an asset - An education space? A performance space? An incubator for budding cooking businesses? We can share the building with the community in creative ways and reap the benefits if we put our talent, time and treasure into the effort.

Many members and friends noted in the Transition Team survey their willingness to help expand rental opportunities. We will announce a meeting soon – either May 16th or June 13th - for those members of the community who are interested in helping. We’ll tell you about our ideas to date and ask you for your ideas to broaden our thinking. There will be opportunities for both short and long term involvement! Please be on the lookout for an announcement of date and time. In the meantime, if you’d like to find out more, please reach out to Sara Warren.

Racial and Immigration Justice: Take Action This Week

<http://firstparishinbrookline.org/social-action/racial-and-immigration-justice/>

We encourage you to save this link and check it early in the week. Action opportunities will be posted on the website each Monday morning. For more information, contact Martha Leader or Almas Dossa.

ANNUAL MEETING
Sunday – May 21 – 1pm
Lyon Chapel

Deadline for June Issue of this Newsletter will be Friday May 26