



Minister's Report

January 6, 2021

Monthly Worship Theme: Letting Go

Opening Words: Burning the Old Year by Naomi Shihab Nye *

	Ministerial Observations	Ministerial Wonderings	Ministerial Flags	Ministerial Celebrations
Governance and Leadership	The RPG leadership set guidelines and led the organization of the 12/18 outdoor holiday event, keeping it both safe and enjoyable for all.	When does the nominating committee start work on seeking candidates for new board members?	2021 Canvass: How much of a leadership role will the board take on Canvass? Are any board members willing to do Canvass testimonials and/or is that desirable?	Grateful to have a strong RPG team and board, as we begin to look forward to planning more ways to gather safely in person in 2021.
Staff	Emily Wheeler has been assisting with preparing prerecorded services, as Alisa's workload has increased.	Digital Ministry team has identified the need for a "Digital Custodian" – what would be the next	Most staff took vacation breaks over the holidays; (one is still upcoming.) We are returning rested	Music staff, (Keith, Emily, Aaron, Adrian and Elizabeth,) have creatively and collaboratively met the needs of our virtual

		steps to move ahead with this idea?	and refreshed for the work of the new year.	spaces with extraordinary musical offerings!
Worship, Ritual and Ceremony	We are working well with guest ministers to provide high quality prerecorded worship (e.g. Rev. Aisha Ansano, Rev. Mary Margaret Earl.)	Worship team is considering other rituals, like the 12/18 candle lighting, to bring the community together safely, in person, (possibly outdoors,) this Spring.	RL and Keith consulted by phone and now will meet with professional production consultants in January, to consider potential video, lighting, audio and other improvements for our live streamed worship.	Our candle lighting ritual on 12/18, followed by Keith's virtual concert, were both very much appreciated. At least 70 people attended.
Congregational Life and Spiritual Development	Small group ministries, committees, theme groups (Poetry workshop, Me and white supremacy, Men's,) groups organized by members (RRUULL, walking,) and ongoing groups (meditation, book group, Seasoned Souls,) keep members and friends connected	Pastoral care team will begin making calls to the membership of the congregation next week. We will report next month on our impressions from these calls.	RL's podcast, "Tiny Spiritual Practices," (5-7 minute spiritual experiences to sustain us,) has been released on Buzzsprout (also Spotify, and others) and has had over 50 downloads! https://www.buzzsprout.com/1499119	We have so much gratitude for all who helped to make our 12/18 holiday gathering such a great success. Special thanks to Barb and Charles S for the wonderful Christmas tree ornaments and to Bob W, Susan L, and all their "helpers" for set up, oversight and ushering.

	to our First Parish family.			
Community Engagement and Social Justice	IJC organized a collection of essentials and supplies to be shipped to families affected by the Honduras hurricanes.	RJAC is actively involved in the FPB history of wealth and slave ownership. There are initial thoughts about a congregational conversation about the work of UJIMA, related to wealth disparities in Boston.	RL is part of a planning group to cosponsor an interfaith MLK event on Sunday, Jan. 17. An opportunity for anti-racism groups from Brookline interfaith congregations to share their work and consider possible collaboration.	Gratitude for the Christmas Eve (hosted by Emily C,) and Christmas Day (hosted by Sally M,) zoom gatherings, which were greatly appreciated by all who attended.
Finance and Administration	Additional expenditures to continue to improve live streaming worship are anticipated. These should be well within our overall budget.	Will there be a virtual Canvass kick-off “dinner” and training?	RL is meeting in January with IJC, RJAC and Climate Justice committees to determine the best use/s of the Cedar Tree grant funds.	Finance Committee’s church comparison study is getting underway and promises to generate much useful information.

* **Burning the Old Year** by Naomi Shihab Nye

Letters swallow themselves in seconds.

Notes friends tied to the doorknob,

transparent scarlet paper,

sizzle like moth wings,

marry the air.

So much of any year is flammable,

lists of vegetables, partial poems.

Orange swirling flame of days,

so little is a stone.

Where there was something and suddenly isn't,

an absence shouts, celebrates, leaves a space.

I begin again with the smallest numbers.

Quick dance, shuffle of losses and leaves,

only the things I didn't do

crackle after the blazing dies.