

Next issue deadline  
Sunday, December 31

# The Spire

DECEMBER 3, 2023

THE FIRST SUNDAY RECORD

VOL. 66, No. 4

First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Arlington, 630 Massachusetts Avenue, Arlington, MA 02476 • Gathered 1733

## Congregational Summits

Where do we want to be as a church three years from now – or five, or ten? Two all-congregation events present an opportunity to inform a vision and shared priorities for who we want to be and how we will get there, as part of our year-long focus on strategic planning.

The first summit is today, December 3, after the service. Lunch and childcare will be provided.

On Tuesday, December 5, we will meet via Zoom from 7 to 8:30 pm.

We look forward to hearing from all who participate in life at First Parish.

## Giving First for December

The Cole Resource Center (CRC) is our Giving First recipient for the month of December, receiving half of our non-pledge offering. This organization offers custom support for those facing mental-health challenges. The CRC staff have both lived experience and expertise in navigating the healthcare system. There is something special about the understanding and guidance offered by those who have traveled similar paths.

CRC's Women's Support Group brings together family caregivers to share concerns and celebrate successes. The group's Workforce Development Program assists job seekers who have mental-health issues through its on-line Job Club and individual coaching. The nonclinical support offered by the CRC is an invaluable complement to



clinical care, especially during this time of intense community need for mental-health services. For more information, please visit [www.coleresourcecenter.org](http://www.coleresourcecenter.org).

## Parish Committee Notes

The Parish Committee held its monthly meetings on October 17 and November 14. The October meeting included a presentation from the Emergent Issues Working Group, during which ParCom reviewed the public witness policy.

We also heard from the Property Committee, which has been busy attending to the needs of the meetinghouse and its grounds. Projects have included painting the physical spire and repairing the dishwasher in time for the Harvest Moon Fair. The Property Committee has also switched our security system from American Alarm to ADT, which should mean better service.

We expressed deep gratitude for everything the Property Committee has done and acknowledges the vast time commitment needed to keep things running.

ParCom has started a Rose of Recognition practice and each month will send notes of appreciation to a person or group working hard to support the First Parish community.

### *Embrace the Darkness*

Friday, December 8  
7 to 8:30 pm  
Sanctuary

This service acknowledges that, for many, this season holds sorrow. Come share a calm, contemplative space and enjoy the voices of the UUlations.

### *Lessons and Carols*

Sunday, December 24, 10 am  
Vestry

Gather to watch a broadcast of A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols from Kings College Chapel at Cambridge University.

### *Christmas Eve*

Sunday, December 24  
Sanctuary

4 pm service, in person only  
6 pm service, in person and on-line

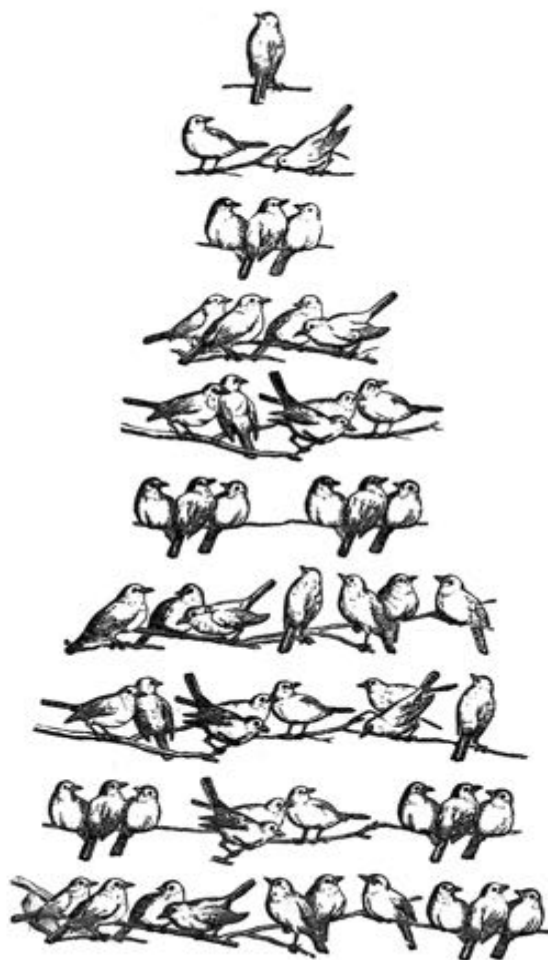
October's Rose of Recognition went to the Religious Education Committee, with gratitude for all that has been done and continues to be done for our children and youth, particularly during this time of leadership transition.

November's recipients are Alan Linov, chair of the Social Justice Coordinating Committee, and Lori Kenshaft, who is stepping down from the STAR Adult Education Committee. More information about some of the work Alan and Lori have done can be found on the church website under Rose of Recognition and church business. A note from Alan appears below.

First Parish has so much to be grateful for this year. Among our gifts are the many hours volunteers spent making the Harvest Moon Fair a success under the calm leadership of Aaron Kitzmiller. New and returning volunteers, thank you!

As First Parish enters the holiday season, we look forward to wonderful sermons by our ministers – Lead Minister Rev. Marta Flanagan, Parish Minister Rev. Erica, and Minister of Religious Education Rev. Stevie Carmody – and we welcome our new interim Music Director, Daniel Parsley.

Joanna Pushee, Clerk  
Parish Committee



### A Note from Alan Linov

I want to make sure that credit is shared as it is deserved, since everything good that's happened in social justice has been collaborative. The current organization of the social justice program was strongly influenced by lessons conveyed to me by Josh Davis and Marta Flanagan when I was on ParCom; by other members of the Turning Outward Strategic Planning Group, Tom Estabrook, Lori Kenshaft, and Tish Miller; by other recent and current members of the Social Justice Committee, including Maureen Dolan, Mary Cummings, Anne Wright, Linda Brown, Ellen Leigh, Joanne Pohl, Anne Ehlert, and Melissa Berczuk. The spectacularly good speakers for the Living Our Faith service were lined up and shepherded by the members of our 'Dream Team' Social Justice Worship Task Group: Danie Descoteaux, Amy Anderson, and Joanne Pohl.

### Treasury Lessons, Take Three!

I am Carolyn Hodges, First Parish Treasurer, and I serve along with Shay Crawford, Assistant Treasurer. Our volunteer roles ensure proper financial control, monitoring, and reporting for the church's income and expenses. We are especially grateful to be in our third year working with our fabulous First Parish community. Here's why:

#### Leadership and Community

In November we held our third Financial Summit, attended by members of committees supporting the financial infrastructure of First Parish (Parish Committee, Finance, Stewardship, Trustees, Human Resources, Property, and Leadership Development). This group is inspiring for its dedication to ensuring that First Parish thrives, and for their proactive work to ensure that the fiscal year proceeds smoothly. Each group has established priorities, and we collaborate to help achieve them. Many hands make light work – please consider joining one of our groups; it is a great

experience working with kind and knowledgeable colleagues to support our community.

### Parish Governance

The Parish Committee closely reviews the health of First Parish each month – spiritual, social, and financial. We are grateful that our leaders remain committed to supporting our wonderful community, prioritizing volunteer support, community connections and continued outreach while ensuring fiscal prudence. Their vision and focus helps us to perform our roles more effectively.

### Staff

The unwavering efforts of First Parish Office Manager Sara Hidalgo and Bookkeeper Liz McKersie ensure that Shay and I can do our day-to-day work successfully. Please thank them for their expertise and assistance when you next see them!

### Stewardship

Our Stewardship colleagues annually notify our community members of the status of financial pledges and gifts. Please watch for this notification to ensure that your pledge remains up to date. We are grateful for your generosity and that you honor your pledge commitments. Thanks to you, First Parish remains successful because of your financial support.

As a reminder, many of us give to First Parish online with Realm, using debit and credit cards. Please review your Realm activity regularly, as donation transactions require updated information for the amount and valid information for the card number, expiration date, and security code. For some of you, transactions were not fully processed when this information changed.

Instructions for Realm are available on the First Parish website at [www.firstparish.info/give/pledge-pay-options](http://www.firstparish.info/give/pledge-pay-options). If you need assistance, please send us an e-mail at [treasurer@firstparish.info](mailto:treasurer@firstparish.info).

We are fortunate to have First Parish in our lives. Thank you so much for helping to ensure that we thrive as a community.

Carolyn Hodges, Treasurer

In addition to the charitable deduction you may be able to take if you itemize on your federal tax return, you may be able to maximize your giving and reduce your taxes further by paying your pledge (even if you don't itemize) using one of these ways to contribute:

- Donate appreciated securities (stocks or mutual funds), which can eliminate the capital-gains tax if the securities have appreciated in value. Instructions are on the church website at [www.firstparish.info/connect/give/securities-donation](http://www.firstparish.info/connect/give/securities-donation)
- Give from a donor-advised fund, which you can set up at most large financial institutions (such as Fidelity or Charles Schwab). You get a charitable deduction when you fund such an account with cash, securities, or other non-cash assets. You can then make a contribution from your donor-advised account, known as a grant, to First Parish and other tax-exempt charities that you support. This is convenient, and you may be able to save on income and capital-gains taxes in the year(s) you fund your account.
- Make a qualified charitable distribution from your IRA if you are 70½ years or older. As long as the funds go directly from the IRA to First Parish, you won't pay income taxes on the withdrawal. If you are 73 or older, the distribution can also count towards the required minimum distribution from your IRA.

### Nominations for Giving First

Over the last decade First Parish has donated close to \$210,000 through Giving First, our tradition of sharing half our Sunday Offering to support good causes. Recipients are nominated by the congregation. If you wish to suggest a worthy group, you can do so through the church website at [firstparish.info/justice-inclusion/social-justice/givingfirst](http://firstparish.info/justice-inclusion/social-justice/givingfirst). The deadline is December 22. (If you submitted a nomination earlier this year and want it to be considered for next year, you will have to send it again.) Contact [givingfirst@firstparish.info](mailto:givingfirst@firstparish.info) with any questions.





# Staff and Contact Information

Staff serve the members, leaders,  
and mission of First Parish.

**Rev. Marta Morris Flanagan** Lead Minister  
*leadminister@firstparish.info*

**Rev. Erica Richmond** Parish Minister  
*parishminister@firstparish.info*

**Office** 781-648-3799 *churchoffice@firstparish.info*  
website: *www.firstparish.info*

**Hours** Monday to Wednesday, 10 am to 4 pm  
Thursday, noon to 6 pm / Friday, 10 am to 3 pm

**Sara Hidalgo** Office Manager  
*officemanager@firstparish.info*

**Joe Cook** Office & Communications Manager  
*office@firstparish.info*

**Jacqueline De Jesus**, Sexton

## Religious Education

**Rev. Stevie Carmody**, Minister of Religious  
Education *mre@firstparish.info*

**Elily Spisto**, RE Assistant

**Rose Sawyer Marsh** Youth Program Coordinator  
*youthadvisor@firstparish.info*

## Music

**Daniel Parsley** Interim Director of Music  
*daniel.parsleyr@firstparish.info*

**Kenneth Seitz** Director of Music, Emeritus

**Parish Committee** *parishexec@firstparish.info*

Sara Galantowicz (Chair), Anne Quaadgras (Vice  
Chair), Carolyn Hodges (Treasurer), Joanna Pushee  
(Clerk), John Anderson, Jeff Keffer, John Stutz,  
Allan Tosti, Celia Wcislo

**Finance Committee** *finance@firstparish.info*  
Eric Segal

**Human Resources** *humanresources@firstparish.info*  
Diane Barry

**Lay Ministry** *layministry@firstparish.info*  
Rainer Dressler and Carolyn Carlson

## The Spire

Diane Shriver, Editor

Next issue: Sunday, January 7  
Submissions due by Sunday, December 31  
*Items may be edited for space and clarity.*

E-mail to *spire@firstparish.info*.  
If you do not have e-mail, contact the office.

Time-sensitive details belong in the Weekly E-mail  
Bulletin – send to *weekly@firstparish.info*  
by Wednesday at noon.

## Leadership Development

*leadership@firstparish.info* Helene Newberg

**Membership** *membership@firstparish.info*

Amy Anderson and Maryanne McBride

**Music** *music@firstparish.info*

Alice Austin Panniello

**Property** *property@firstparish.info*

John Galantowicz

**Religious Education** *re@firstparish.info*

Ellen Robie

**Social Justice** *socialjustice@firstparish.info*

Alan Linov

**Stewardship** *stewardship@firstparish.info*

Marie Meteer and Amy Speare

**The Alliance** *alliance@firstparish.info*

Andrea Winslow

**Trustees of Trust Funds** *trustees@firstparish.info*

Julie Dunne

**Worship Associates**

*worshipassociates@firstparish.info*

Elizabeth Hunter