

Welcome!
You Belong Here...



First Parish Unitarian
Universalist of
Arlington, MA

Who is this booklet for?

Everyone!

This booklet introduces **newcomers** to First Parish UU of Arlington and to Unitarian Universalism.

It illuminates the path to membership for **those who are considering joining the congregation.**

For **all who wish to deepen their connection** to the shared values of our liberal religion, it offers an invitation to intentional reflection as you learn from and with others.

It is offered as a complement to First Parish's [Workings Booklet](#), which is a rich source of practical information about the day-to-day workings of our congregation.

information
invitation
inspiration

What does it mean to be a member of First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Arlington?

Membership does not commit one to any fixed creed but rather to a moral and spiritual purpose and a search—side by side with others—for the good and the true.

While membership is **not** required to participate in many aspects of our community, members **are** expected to support the ongoing work of our congregation through the contribution of time, talent, and treasure. Members chart our congregational course by serving on our standing committees and through exercising the right to vote at congregational meetings.

Please contact the **Membership Committee** (**membership@firstparish.info**) if you have any questions about First Parish membership.

How do I know if I want to become a member?

The decision of *whether* or *when* to become a member is an individual one. We invite those considering membership to first get to know the congregation by participating in **two highly recommended workshops** led by our ministers (see page 4) and sampling **2-4 of the many programs or gatherings** offered throughout the year—find events at <https://www.firstparish.info/events/>

How does one become a member?

If, after getting to know the congregation, you wish to join, simply reach out to the Membership Committee to arrange to sign *the Membership Book*. The ceremonial signing of the Membership Book signals your commitment to the congregation, and at our New Member Recognition Ceremony. The congregation in turn promises its commitment to you and other new members of First Parish.

Please contact the **Membership Committee** (membership@firstparish.info) if you have any questions about First Parish membership.

How can I get to know First Parish?

Workshops Offered by Our Ministers

UU History & Theology

- October 18
- December 20
- February 21

What Do We Mean By *Covenant*?

- November 22
- January 17
- March 21

Membership Committee Programs

- [Who are UU?](#)
- [Welcome table at Town Day, Harvest Moon Fair](#)

Other Programs

- [Monthly Potluck](#)/ Young Adults Potluck
- [STAR Programs](#) (Adult RE)
- [Lectio Divina](#)
- [Aging Well](#)
- [Spirit Talks](#)
- Alliance Programs



The Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA)

The UUA (headquartered in Boston) is a covenantal network of Unitarian Universalist (UU) congregations in the United States. Its mission is “to equip congregations for health and vitality, to support and train lay and professional leaders, and to advance Unitarian Universalist values in the world.” Each member congregation may send delegates to [General Assembly](#), the annual meeting at which UUA policy decisions are made through a democratic process.

<https://www.uua.org/about>

What is First Parish’s relationship with the UUA?

First Parish is a good standing member congregation of the UUA. In accordance with [UUA bylaws](#), we recertify our membership each fiscal year. We send delegates to General Assembly and pay congregational dues to the UUA. We receive the UUA’s guidance and support as we independently self-govern following democratic principles and our congregational bylaws.

What do Unitarian Universalists believe?

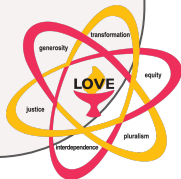


Although Unitarian Universalism is a non-creedal faith, we do have shared values and principles.

“Our beliefs are diverse and inclusive. We have no shared creed. Our shared covenant is expressed through the inseparable and deeply interdependent shared values of **interdependence**, **pluralism**, **justice**, **transformation**, **generosity**, and **equity**—*all centered around love*. Although Unitarianism and Universalism both have origins as liberal Christian traditions, today we embrace diverse teachings from many different global religions and philosophies.”

“Beliefs and Shared Values”

<https://www.uua.org/beliefs>



So... 7 principles or 6 values?



It's both! The *principles* are historically how we talked about our beliefs and the *values* are how we talk about them today.

The [2024 revision to Article II](#) includes this language under the heading **Freedom of Belief:**

“Congregational freedom and the individual’s right of conscience are central to our Unitarian Universalist heritage.

Congregations may establish statements of purpose, covenants, and bonds of union so long as they do not require that members adhere to a particular creed.”

Part of being Unitarian Universalist is constantly asking, *What do I believe?* and *How do I live my highest values and help others to live theirs?*

THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF
UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALISM

We, the member
congregations of the
Unitarian Universalist
Association, covenant to
affirm and promote:

The inherent worth and
dignity of every person.

Justice, equity, and
compassion in human
relations.

Acceptance of one another
and encouragement to
spiritual growth in our
congregations

A free and responsible
search for truth and
meaning

The right of conscience and
the use of the democratic
process within our
congregations and in
society at large

The goal of world
community with peace,
liberty, and justice for all

Respect for the
interdependent web of
existence of which we are a
part

But I've seen a bookmark that lists the seven principles of UUism...

Unitarian Universalism is a living tradition. The bylaws of the UUA dictate that Article II of the bylaws—in which the principles and purposes at the foundation of Unitarian Universalism are laid out—must be periodically reviewed. In 1961, Article II included [6 principles](#). The 1985 revisions named [7 principles](#). The most recent revisions to Article II—**six values with love at the center**—were adopted at UUA General Assembly in 2024.

Consider the Congregational Affirmation
First Parish members adopted in 2010:

“We choose to be a liberal religious community, welcoming to all. We encourage each other on our spiritual journeys, support one another through the changes in our lives, and challenge the excesses and injustices of our time. Called to love and upheld by joy, we live our faith.”

Consider these words penned by Unitarian minister Rev. James Vila Blake (1842–1925), which some UU congregations still recite:

“Love is the spirit of this church,
and service is its law.

This is our great covenant:

To dwell together in peace,

To seek the truth in love,

And to help one another.”

- Which words or ideas speak to your values?
- What, if anything, is missing for you?
- Do you hear components of the 7 principles or 6 values in these statements?

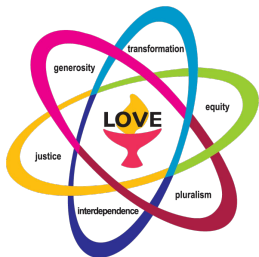


Getting to Know Our Shared Values



Where do you see people in
our congregation
breathing life into our
shared values?

As you get to know First
Parish, reflect on what you
see and feel, considering
which of these shared
values call most to you.





Justice

“Justice is what love looks like in public.”

Cornel West

“Freedom and justice cannot be parceled out in pieces to suit political convenience. I don’t believe you can stand for freedom for one group of people and deny it to others.”

Coretta Scott King

Reflection:

How are we called to work for justice?

Which social group at First Parish calls to you?

Equity



“... there is a mandate emerging from our theological heritage to dismantle the structures and systems which silence, harm, and exploit human beings and the varied ecosystems of our planet as well as to work to create just and sustainable communities without barriers to belonging in our communities for all those who share our values and theological perspectives. We understand that it is ours to do – to use our time, wisdom, attention, and money to build and sustain fully accessible and inclusive communities where every person can flourish with inherent dignity and worthiness.”

Rev. Dr. Sheri Prud'homme

Reflection:

How are justice and equity interrelated?

How is love at the center of equity work?

Transformation

“Transformation is a spiritual practice and a way of life we live together.”

— Shige Sakurai



Reflection:

How might a spiritual community support personal growth and change?

What kind of community helps you become your best self?



Pluralism

...We come with different theological and religious orientations, but we do not seek sameness or some common denominator. We engage in worship with open hearts and minds. Our sung and spoken words reflect a range of religious perspectives. ...We say, You sing my hymn, I sing yours. In worship we give and receive.

The First Parish Worship Associates, 2015

Reflection:

What have you come to believe in your search for truth? What traditions or practices or words speak to you?

How can we continue to learn from and with each other?

Interdependence

“All I'm saying is simply this: that all mankind is tied together; all life is interrelated, and we are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. For some strange reason I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. And you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be—this is the interrelated structure of reality.”

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Reflection:

Where or when do you feel a web of connection between you and others?
Where or when does the web feel tenuous?

How can we build the web together?



Generosity

“In practicing generosity, gratitude, and active hope we experience our interconnectedness, the ways we are not isolated beings but held in a vast web of connections and field of life, blessed by gifts beyond our own making.”



Rev. Dr. Sheri Prud'homme

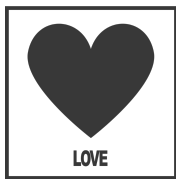
Reflection:

When do you feel most connected to others or to the world around you?

How do generosity or gratitude show up for you?

“Love is the power that holds us together and is at the center of our shared values. We are accountable to one another for doing the work of living our shared values through the spiritual discipline of Love.”

Article II: Purposes and Covenant



Reflection:

How do we live into Love?

How do we reflect Love?

How do we amplify Love?

(questions by Connie Goodbread)

Path to Membership

STEP 1: Recommended Workshops

- ☐ UU History and Theology
- ☐ What Do We Mean by Covenant?



♥ STEP 2: Choose 2–4 Community Events

- ☐ Social Justice Events
- ☐ Spiritual Practices Workshops
- ☐ Monthly Potluck / Young Adults Potluck
- ☐ STAR Program (*Adult Religious Ed.*)
- ☐ Any other community event...

♥ STEP 3: ✍️ Sign the Membership Book

♥ STEP 4: 🌈 Welcome to First Parish!

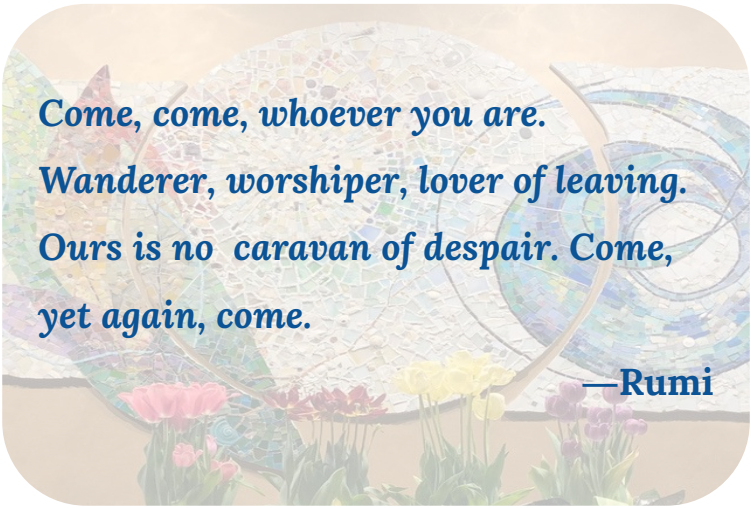
See <https://www.firstparish.info/events/> for current event listings, times, Zoom links, etc.

Email membership@firstparish.info with questions.

Our Benediction

May faith in the spirit of life
Hope for the community of earth
and love of the sacred in one another
Be ours now and in all the days to come.

- by Rev. Barbara Whittaker-Johns
adapted from the words of Rev.
Arnold Westwood



*Come, come, whoever you are.
Wanderer, worshiper, lover of leaving.
Ours is no caravan of despair. Come,
yet again, come.*

—Rumi



First Parish of Arlington, MA
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

630 Massachusetts Avenue
Arlington, MA 02476
781-648-3799

Membership@firstparish.info