

# The Spire

Next issue deadline  
Sunday, February 25

FEBRUARY 4, 2024

THE FIRST SUNDAY RECORD

VOL. 66, No. 6

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

## Our Spiritual Space

Picture a moment in our building: A young child gleefully runs to give a friend a big hug in the Vestry. Music fills our Sanctuary. Members of a Covenant Group sit in a circle, listening deeply to each other. The Reckoning and Repair Committee contemplates how to address injustices of today that are rooted in historic injustices. Our meetinghouse hosts diverse and vibrant activities that are united by shared values and our mission.



Our buildings are bustling. Every room is used to support our First Parish values. For example, the Stanton Parlor hosts Lunch for Arlington Clergy, art-show receptions, presentations about climate change initiatives, and receptions for life events such as births, deaths, and marriages. The Damon and Grady rooms host meditation gatherings, Covenant groups, and the Welcoming Congregation Committee.

The Vestry (the Coffee Hour room) is home to Women's Alliance meetings, Community Potlucks, and a Haitian Independence Day party. The Tobey Lounge hosts our intrepid Zoom teams, handbell-choir rehearsals, and many Youth overnight events. The versatile Bailey room in the basement welcomes support groups, racial justice events, and even a birthday party for a beloved service dog (you may know him!). In a recent sermon, Rev. Erica pointed out that even the Fan Room is a key space, housing not just hundreds of years of church archives but the guardian ghosts of our ancestors.

Seven days a week, our spaces are buzzing. Watch the bulletin board in the Vestry for more highlights. And please plan to make a pledge during our upcoming

Stewardship drive, to support our spaces, our staff, and all we do together for our shared mission.

John Anderson  
Stewardship Committee

## Parish Committee Notes

Many celebrations and a renewed commitment to our social justice ideals await us in the new year.

The Racial Justice Coordinating Committee asked the Parish Committee to support a bill that would set up a statewide commission to study reparations. The Parish Committee unanimously supports this effort.

A letter signed by the chair of the Parish Committee was sent to State Senator Liz Miranda's office.

Because the bill does not embrace a particular political party, making a statement based on our Unitarian Universalist values is within the scope of the Parish Committee. A copy of the letter can be found with the December minutes on our church website, at [www.firstparish.info](http://www.firstparish.info). Thank you to the RJCC for the opportunity to endorse broader work on social justice issues beyond our congregation.

On a similar note, a Rose of Recognition goes to the Reckoning and Repair working group for their work on diving into the history of First Parish and slavery. Over half of First Parish's original pew owners enslaved people. Education and events have been ongoing in the congregation.

The Parish Committee would like to thank and say farewell to committee member John Stutz, who resigned in January. On behalf of the congregation, the committee sends our gratitude to John for his steady service. The Parish Committee plans to appoint an interim person to serve until the Annual Meeting

in May, when a new member can be elected for a full term (the bylaws allow the Parish Committee to appoint an interim member). This person may join one of the working groups established during last fall's retreat, either visioning or volunteerism.

Parish Committee members have been gathering outside of monthly meetings to study and create reports on visioning and volunteerism. The volunteerism group contacted 19 leaders of committees to gather information about volunteers and engagement. We have a vibrant congregation!

Among various workings was a presentation by the Finance Committee for the budget for fiscal year 24/25. The process of shaping a budget based on our values continues this winter and spring, and it culminates with the Stewardship drive in March.

Parish Committee meeting minutes can be found at [www.firstparish.info/parish-committee-minutes/](http://www.firstparish.info/parish-committee-minutes/) or by contacting me at [clerk@firstparish.info](mailto:clerk@firstparish.info). Meetings are open to members of the congregation, except in the case of an executive session.

Joanna Pushee, Clerk

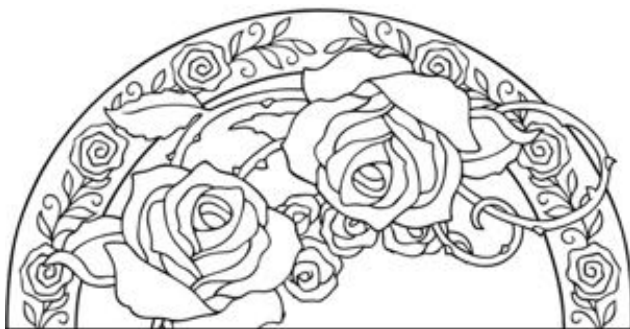
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## Charting a Course

Thanks to all who have contributed feedback about how we can set a course for First Parish over the next decade. More than 100 of you have answered questions with your thoughts and ideas; we've received over 1,000 comments. It's clear is that we are proud of and appreciate our community. We're living our mission through worship, music, education programs, social justice efforts, and more.

An all-community survey will happen early this spring. We hope everyone will respond. Our aim is to hear from the whole community so we can identify priorities for action, attention, and investment over the next five to ten years. We hope to share key results at the Annual Meeting in May.

John Anderson, Parish Committee



## A Social Justice Opportunity

The Social Justice Committee recently learned of opportunities to visiting people incarcerated at the Middlesex County Jail in Billerica, and we are coordinating a group from First Parish.

The Prison Visitation Program, run by the Frederick Douglass Project for Justice, facilitates structured meetings and respectful conversations between members of free society and incarcerated people. Their goal is "to foster a real understanding of incarceration, a recognition of the humanity of incarcerated people, and an appreciation for the potential for human change." Three Wednesday sessions are scheduled at the Middlesex County Jail from 5 to 8 pm on April 17, May 15, and June 5.

If you would like to participate in any of these sessions along with others from First Parish, please indicate your availability by using the Doodle poll at this link: <https://doodle.com/meeting/participate/id/b2GDYOjd>. Once we see which date or dates have the most people interested and available, we will choose one and coordinate a group, including carpooling.

If you would like to participate on your own instead (or in addition), you're welcome to do that by signing up on the website of the Frederick Douglass Project for Justice.

Alan Linov  
Social Justice Committee

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## Giving First to VoteRiders

We donate half of each Sunday Offering to an organization nominated by our members and selected by the Social Justice Committee. Since the program began in 2009 First Parish has donated over \$200,000 to more than 70 organizations that embody our values.

This month's recipient is VoteRiders, whose mission is to ensure that no eligible voter is prevented from casting a ballot that counts due to voter ID laws, either directly from lack of acceptable ID or indirectly because of voter confusion. VoteRiders educates voters and helps citizens secure their voter ID. They inspire and support organizations, volunteers, and communities to sustain such voter-ID education and assistance efforts.

For more about Massachusetts and voting, visit the VoteRiders website.



# 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*

**Emily 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,  
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, March 3  
Submissions due by Sunday, February 25

*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 Meter and Amy Speare

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

Andrea Winslow

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

Julie Dunn

**Worship Associates**

*worshipassociates@firstparish.info*

Elizabeth Hunter