

Next issue deadline  
Sunday, January 28

# The Spire

JANUARY 7, 2024

THE FIRST SUNDAY RECORD

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

## A Warm Chowdah Suppah!

On Friday, January 12, join the First Parish Women's Alliance for a Chowder Supper. After three years of hosting this event over Zoom, we are enthusiastic about enjoying this event with actual people in the Vestry! There will be no Zoom access.

The evening will be a social gathering, a time for conversation and fellowship. The Program Committee will provide a few prompts that may stimulate discussion and build connection.

After appetizers and beverages starting at 6:30 pm, we will savor clear chowder from Legal Seafoods; clam chowder and fish chowder from Fresh Pond Seafood; Robbie Rinearson's corn chowder; Cheri Minton's cornbread; and garden salad provided by Lisa Davis and Tina Silberman.

If you are able, please bring a dessert to share.



## Your Fossil Fuel Free Home

You have probably heard the wise statement, "Think globally, act locally." What could be more local than your home?

Perhaps you want to reduce your home's contributions to climate change but aren't sure how. The Climate Action Working Group is co-sponsoring educational events with Electrify Arlington, Mothers Out Front – Arlington, and Sustainable Arlington.

### Heat Pumps on a Cold Day – Home Tour

Saturday, January 27, 1 to 3 pm

Are you curious about heat pumps? The (statistically) coldest week of the year is a great time to visit a couple of all-electric homes, one with ground-source heat pumps (28 Twin Circle Drive) and the other with both ducted and ductless air-source pumps (100 Hillside Avenue). Come talk with the owners and enjoy hot cider. RSVPs are appreciated. Learn more at [tinyurl.com/HeatPumpTour](https://tinyurl.com/HeatPumpTour).

## Giving First to Harbor Camps

Each month we divide our Sunday offerings between First Parish and an organization nominated by our members and chosen by our Social Justice Committee. This month's recipient is Harbor Camps, which builds confidence, resilience, and community for transgender and non-binary youth and their families.

Since its first summer in 2010 with 40 campers, Harbor Camps has grown to serve over 850 people each year, including campers age eight to fifteen, counselor-in-training sessions, and weekends for families. To learn more about Harbor Camps, visit [www.harborcamps.org](http://www.harborcamps.org).

### How to Make a Plan to Electrify Your Home

Mondays, February 12 and 26

7 to 8:30 pm on Zoom

Do you hope to get your home off fossil fuels, either in the next few years or sometime in the future? Having a plan can help. This course will help you develop a plan that will work well for your home and your finances. It is offered by First Parish member and Arlington Energy Advocate, Lori Kenschaft. Register for this free course at [tinyurl.com/ElectrifyPlan](https://tinyurl.com/ElectrifyPlan).

## Heat Pumps: What Everyone Should Know Before Talking With Installers

Mondays, March 11, 18, and 25, 7 to 8 pm on Zoom

Heat pumps are essential for getting off fossil fuels, but they aren't cookie-cutter. The March 11 session of this course will provide an overview of heat pumps, financial incentives, and tips for finding installers. March 18 is about installing and using ductless systems, while March 25 will turn to ducted systems (both air source and ground source). This course is offered by First Parish member and Arlington Energy Advocate, Lori Kenschaft. Register for this free course at [tinyurl.com/ArlingtonHeatPumpCourse](http://tinyurl.com/ArlingtonHeatPumpCourse).

Also, if you're interested in electric vehicles, these resources can help:

The Green Energy Consumers Alliance's Drive Green website provides both useful information and shopping tools: [www.greenenergyconsumers.org/drivegreen](http://www.greenenergyconsumers.org/drivegreen)

Arlington Community Education will offer "An Introduction to Electric Vehicles" on Tuesday, February 6, from 7 to 8:30 pm. This course will provide an overview of all-electric vehicles and plug-in hybrid EVs, including charging options and financial incentives. Register for this \$10 course at [tinyurl.com/IntrotoEVs](http://tinyurl.com/IntrotoEVs).

If you have questions about any of these programs, please contact [climateaction@firstparish.info](mailto:climateaction@firstparish.info).

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## Christmas at Our Partner Church

There is a stone church at a crossroads in the center of the village of Gagy (pronounced *Gahje* with a hard *g*) in the Transylvania section of Romania. A banner on the outside, in Hungarian, Romanian, and English, celebrates 450 years of Transylvania, Land of Religious Freedom. The Gagy church is affiliated with the Unitarian Church of Transylvania, which adopted religious ideals recognizable to us before the Pilgrims landed on these shores.

This is our partner church. Since 2010 several members of First Parish and the Gagy church have made pilgrimages in either direction. Reverend Zoli and his wife, Magdika, have visited Arlington twice. I still remember the congregation gasping when it was revealed that Magdika was enjoying two years of maternity leave.

I asked Rev. Zoli to share some of his congregation's Christmas traditions. He wrote:

On Christmas Eve we celebrate in the church, and children recite poems and sing Christmas carols. We usually decorate the Christmas tree earlier with the youth, and prepare gifts for younger children in the local shop. In Transylvania and in Hungary the angel brings gifts to children instead of Santa Claus. Santa arrives on the sixth of December, so kids get presents twice in the last month of the year.

On the first day of Christmas we have church service and share communion. Usually for this service we have the greatest attendance. On this day we have a service in the small village of Kismedesér, two miles away from us, up in the valley. There are a couple of people, and a small church on the hill. On the second and third day of Christmas we have regular church services.

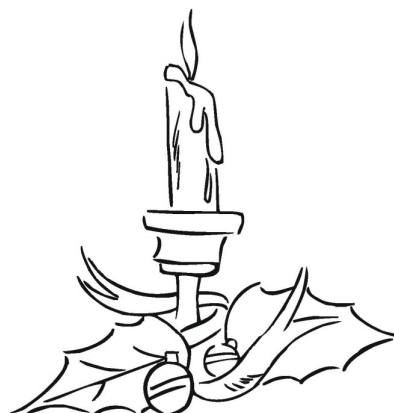
On the third day of Christmas packages usually arrive from Germany, which are given to the old members of our congregation. These packages contain flour, rice, sugar, oil, chocolate, and other things that can be used in their daily life.

Once I asked an old lady from our community what she got for Christmas. She said, "Nothing," and I sensed sadness in her voice. I told her she was wrong because I was sent to deliver her Christmas present. Her face became happy and she started to smile. That was the moment when I understood how meaningful our job is.

This is how we celebrate Christmas, and it is always the most memorable period of the year.

To learn more about how we can deepen our connection with our partner church, including the possibility of a pilgrimage this summer, please stop by the Partner Church table at Coffee Hour.

Alex Aminoff



## Diversity Book Club

The Diversity Book Club generally meets on the third Tuesday of each month from 7 to 9 pm. On January 16 we will discuss James Baldwin's short story "Sonny's Blues" which is available on-line.

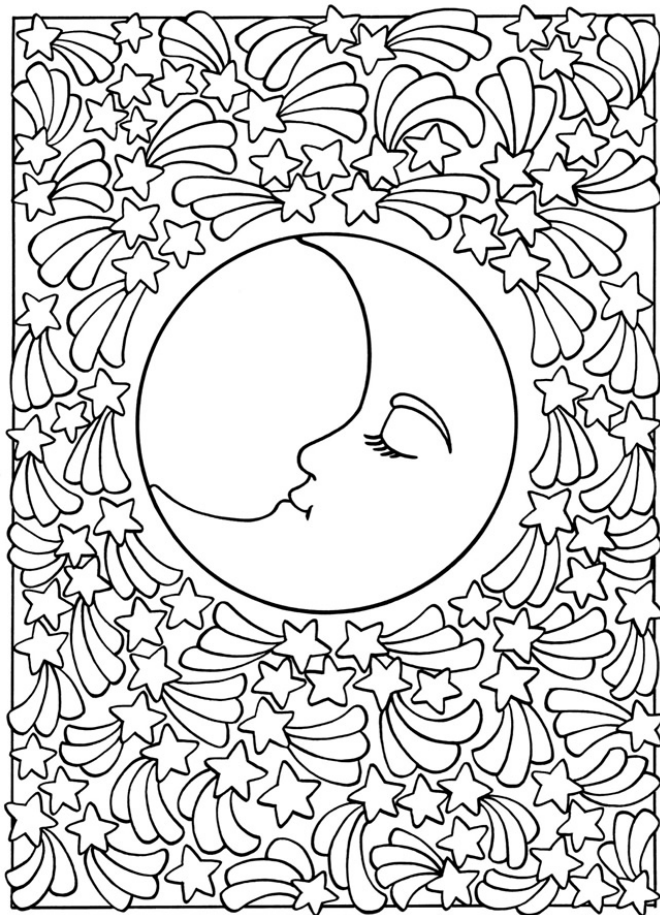
On February 20 the book under discussion will be Barbara Kingsolver's *Demon Copperhead*, which won a Pulitzer Prize. It's over 500 pages long and will probably require a wait at the library, so plan ahead.

All are welcome, please join us! Register at [diversitybookclub@firstparish.info](mailto:diversitybookclub@firstparish.info).

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## Work on Star Island This Summer!

Star Island is hiring staff to spend an unforgettable summer in a beautiful place a dozen miles off the coast of Portsmouth, New Hampshire. There are openings for kitchen workers, wait staff, housekeepers, maintenance crew, and conference services. This is a great opportunity for youths 18 or older, as well as for older folks, especially those who have retired. For more information, and to apply, please visit [www.starisland.org](http://www.starisland.org). The deadline is January 22.



## Community Potluck

We continue our popular community dinners on January 31 from 6 to 7:30 pm in the Vestry. This one will be sponsored by the STAR Adult Education Committee. All are welcome and no sign-up is needed.

For future dinners we need groups or committees to host. If you are part of a group of at least five people – including covenant groups, knitting groups, or dog-walking groups – please consider signing up for February 28, March 27, April 24, or May 29.

For details, contact Lynn Rosenbaum at [STAR@firstparish.info](mailto:STAR@firstparish.info).

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## Parlor Exhibit Coming in February

A goal of the Welcoming Congregation Committee (WCC) is to prioritize our collective and continuing growth in knowledge and understanding of people's lives and experiences, learning especially from people with marginalized sexual and gender identities across different generations. As part of our work, we are happy to sponsor an exhibit by Jess T. Dugan in the Parlor from February 11 to April 11.

Between 2013 and 2018, Jess T. Dugan (they/them) created *To Survive on This Shore: Photographs and Interviews with Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Older Adults* (over 50) in collaboration with Dr. Vanessa Fabbre (she/her), a social work scholar. The project documents life stories from this underrepresented group and offers reflections on what it means to live authentically in the face of difficult challenges. The Parlor exhibit is a selection of 17 of these photographs and interviews from across the United States focused on lives lived within the intersections of gender identity, race, ethnicity, sexuality, socioeconomic class, and geographic location. The WCC has purchased two copies of the book which includes all 65 portraits and interviews from the project. After the exhibit, the books will remain in the FPUU library. For more information on the project, visit [www.tosurviveonthishshore.com](http://www.tosurviveonthishshore.com).

Jess is an internationally known photographer whose work has been widely exhibited and is in the permanent collections of over 45 museums, including the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, and the Library of Congress. We are grateful to Jess for enabling us to exhibit their art in support of our continuing commitment to growth as a Welcoming Congregation.

Jess's desire for their work is that it will be in spaces accessible to all where it is seen and generates dialogue and conversations. Jess says, "My intention is to create work that facilitates intimacy and encourages empathy, understanding, and critical conversations about identity and contemporary social life." Drawing from their experience as a queer, non-binary person, Jess says their work is motivated by an existential need to understand and express themselves, to connect with others, and to "continually explore what it means to live authentically and how visual representation plays a powerful role in that process."

Jess explains that "seeing yourself reflected in others can be lifesaving. It can relieve isolation, negativity, and offer hope and a sense of belonging. Images in portraits and showing up and being seen in your fullness as yourself are political and social actions that resist the status quo; that resist erasure and insist on visibility through authentic representation. Images help us understand ourselves and our world better. They help us broaden our understanding of who is in the world around us that we may not have noticed before." Jess's work pushes back against the fetishizing and negative imagery that often reduces the complexity of trans and gender-diverse people's lives to body parts in order to create more richly human and positive images. The portraits and narratives create an intimacy that draws us in and allows us to identify

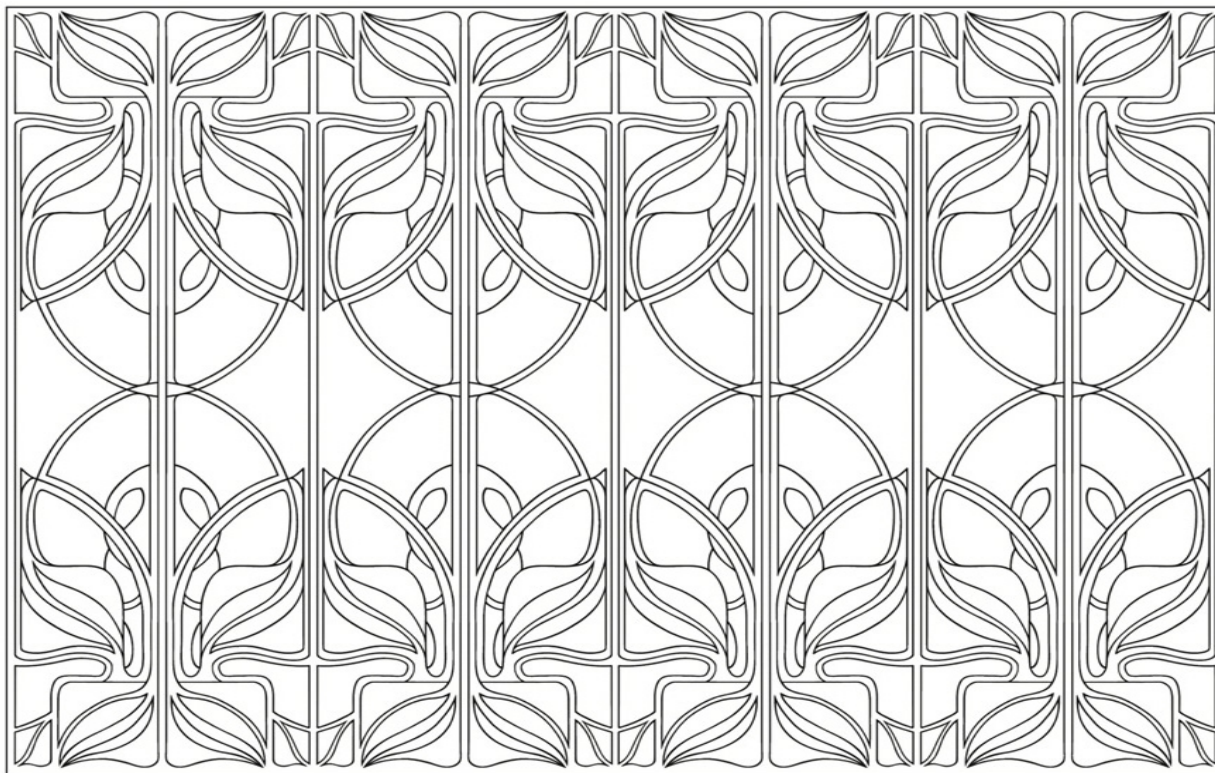
with the person in the image who is making direct eye contact with us. On a fundamental level, Jess says they "want to facilitate an emotional exchange between the viewers of my photographs and the subjects of my photographs. What that is exactly depends on who's viewing the work and what they bring to it." Jess hopes that their work resonates with and inspires people to reflect on their own lives, identities, and ways of being who they are in the world and in relationships.

An opening reception in the Parlor after the February 11 service will have opportunities for people to offer thoughts, reflections, and ideas sparked by the exhibit.

Jess will give a talk in Boston on April 13 from 1 to 3pm, for the Photographic Resource Center at Lesley University. Jess says, "It would be awesome if First Parish members could come!" The WCC plans to buy a block of on-line tickets and organize a watch gathering in the Vestry.

Contact [welcoming@firstparish.info](mailto:welcoming@firstparish.info) to register for the watch gathering, at no cost. Anyone is welcome to purchase a ticket (\$25) to go in person or watch on-line on their own at [www.prcboston.org/jess-t-dugan-april-13-2024](http://www.prcboston.org/jess-t-dugan-april-13-2024). Reduced-cost individual tickets are available by contacting [programs@prcboston.org](mailto:programs@prcboston.org).

Ruben Hopwood  
Welcoming Congregation Committee





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## The Spire

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*Items may be edited for space and clarity.*

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