

Next issue deadline
Sunday, April 28

The Spire

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THE FIRST SUNDAY RECORD

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

Farewell to Sara

A message from Sara Hidalgo:

Dear First Parish community,

I could not be more grateful for the opportunity to work as the office manager for the last 3.7 years. It has been a wonderful experience to serve and work alongside the very active committees and leaders, members, friends, and the staff. Thank you for all that each and every one does for First Parish to further its mission. I have been very touched by everyone who has stopped by, sent e-mails, and left notes with good wishes and words of appreciation. I will miss you all, no doubt!

On April 1, I will become the Director of Operations at Cambridge Insight Meditation Center. I will continue to assist in the transition at First Parish, so you might still see or hear from me from time to time.

I know First Parish will continue to thrive for many years with the leadership and commitment of its members and friends. I especially want to thank Marta, Rev. Erica, Stevie and Joe, Tina and Jonathan, and most recently Daniel. It has been a pleasure working with each one of you. I will miss you.

With gratitude and appreciation, *Sara*



trusting nature. If you receive a request for information that seems unlikely, please contact the First Parish office to determine its validity. Your ministers, staff, and governing board are all available if you have questions or concerns.

Reckoning and Repair

The Reckoning & Repair working group, part of First Parish's Racial Justice Coordinating Committee (RJCC), hopes that the text of the Affirmation of Reckoning and Repair on the next page will become part of the warrant for our Annual Meeting on May 19. Congregants will thus have an opportunity to vote to acknowledge our congregation's past entanglements with slavery and assert our commitment to repair.

The adoption of the Affirmation will be only a first step on the longer journey to right past wrongs, but it is an important, symbolic step that the Reckoning & Repair working group believes will guide and inspire our congregation's racial justice work going forward.

It is important to note that the Affirmation does not seek to answer the big questions we will inevitably have to answer: With which Black-led groups will we build relationships? What will reparations look like? To which groups shall we pay reparations? From what sources should funds for reparations come? Nor does the Affirmation empower any group to make decisions about the above questions for the congregation.

What the Affirmation does seek to do, however, is to positively assert First Parish's congregational commitment to joining a larger movement that is (and has been) wrestling with these very questions. Other Massachusetts Unitarian Universalist congregations — in Boston, Needham, North Andover, Hingham, Brewster, and Gloucester — are ahead of us on this journey, as are UU congregations across the country, from Montclair, New Jersey, to Evanston, Illinois, to Germantown, Pennsylvania.

Be Aware and Take Care

Recently, in an e-mail, someone impersonated a First Parish lay leader and a member fell for this "phishing" scam and shared information from our database, including phone numbers and e-mail addresses for the adults in our system. Please be assured that our Realm database remains secure, and that no financial information or physical addresses were released. The Realm support line recommends that everyone change their password.

Along with the benefits of the internet we must, sadly, deal with those who would take advantage of a

We can't forget, however, that for African American communities, the movement for reparations dates back centuries, beginning perhaps with Belinda Sutton's 1783 petition demanding a pension from the estate of her enslaver, Isaac Royall. In 1865, Rev. Garrison Frazier and 20 African American church leaders told Union General William Sherman, "The way we can best take care of ourselves is to have land, and turn it and till it by our own labor," giving rise to Special Field Order 15 – known as "40 acres and a mule" – the promise of which died at the hands of

Affirmation of Reckoning and Repair

First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Arlington

Acknowledgment

To create beloved community, rooted in justice and inspired by love, we break past silences and name our congregation's entanglement with the institution of slavery, which began with the founding of the congregation in 1739. At least eight of First Parish's sixteen original pew owners enslaved Black people, and our initial congregation was founded in part on the uncompensated labor, resources, skills, and talents of enslaved people.

Commitment

First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Arlington is committed to building relationships with local, Black-led organizations to shape a framework for meaningful reparations. We commit to a process of reparations guided by people of African heritage and the broader reparations movement, and we will work within and beyond our congregation's walls to bring about holistic repair.

In tandem with seeking out and forming relationships with Black-led organizations, the Reckoning & Repair working group will continue gathering congregational feedback about a plan for reparations. All financial decisions will be made either by congregational vote or by a vote of the elected Parish Committee.

Reparations are central to the struggle to build a world based on justice, care, and uplift, and we commit ourselves to this work.
Hand in hand we will find a way.

President Johnson. Named in honor of that broken promise, H.R. 40, the Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act, has died in committee each session since 1989 when Congressman John Conyers first introduced it.

Sixty-one years ago this month, in his Letter from Birmingham Jail, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. reminded us that "the time is always ripe to do right." Please join the Reckoning & Repair working group on April 7 immediately after services on Zoom, and at the May 5 Shinn service (with discussion to follow).

Consider Leading a Summer Service

Take part in the spiritual formation of our shared community by leading a service this summer. Have you thought of a great topic but are too shy to speak in front of a crowd? Would you share your spiritual experiences if only someone asked you?

The Workshop Associates are asking! We want to hear your thoughts, spiritual discoveries, and insights about surviving and thriving in this modern world.

This summer all of the services will be virtual, through Zoom. This means that those hesitant to speak in public can lead a service from their home, or from a space virtually anywhere, as long it has a good internet connection.

Leading a service is a gift to our settled ministers. Their summer break lets Lead Minister Rev. Marta Flanagan and Parish Minister Rev. Erica Richmond rest, study, and reflect, so they can return in the fall renewed in mind, body, and spirit to lead and care for our community. Leading summer worship is also a gift to the leaders themselves as our community lifts and honors the shared insights of each speaker.

Inviting and empowering members to lead services is another way we honor our Unitarian Universalist values. We celebrate the inherent worth and dignity of every person by welcoming members to use their own voices. We build relationships through compassion and acceptance, and create a vibrant congregation when we serve each other.

To help us create thoughtful, enriching, and enlightening services, please fill out an application at <https://tinyurl.com/3tb37cx9>. You also can speak with any Worship Associate about your ideas. The deadline for proposals is April 21.

Some practical details:

- Summer service leaders need to be available for on-line training on Sunday, May 5, 1 to 3 pm.
- A group can work together on a service. They must select one person to coordinate.
- Themes and sermons/reflections must respect people regardless of our differences (income, race, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, class, political affiliation, ways of worshiping, beliefs, educational background, etc.) and offer a message that can speak to people across broad experiences and beliefs.
- Submitting a proposal is not a guarantee to lead a service. The Worship Associates need to balance a variety of topics and a range of voices.
- Those who lead summer services create the entire service and the sermon. Pre-recorded music can be provided. Speakers may also play instruments or arrange for music on their own. Each leader works with a designated Worship Associate to ensure that all the elements of the service work together.

If you have any questions, please contact
WorshipAssociates@firstparish.info.

Our Shared Past

On Sunday, April 28, join the Indigenous Justice Working Group in the Parlor at noon for a forum with Doreen Stevens, a historian and former director of the Arlington Historical Society, to learn about Arlington's connection to Indigenous people. She will explore the life and world of the Massachusetts people, on whose land our church stands.

Last year Indigenous consultants from the Tomaquag Museum led us in a land-acknowledgment development workshop. They taught about the Native Americans who have inhabited these lands for thousands of years.

In 2020, the General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association passed an Action of Immediate Witness, "Address 400 Years of White Supremacist Colonialism," calling on all UU congregations to "research, identify, and acknowledge the Indigenous peoples historically and/or currently connected with the land occupied by our congregations, and find ways to act in solidarity with or even partner with those Indigenous peoples."



The Indigenous Justice Working Group, part of our Social Justice Committee, has taken on this challenge. We plan to offer our Land Acknowledgment for a congregational vote at Annual Meeting in May. This Acknowledgment is a way to counter the erasure of Indigenous people and launch us toward meaningful action. It involves building relationships with and supporting the community whose land we are on, in an ever-evolving process of education, engagement, and action.

For more information about this process and the work of the Indigenous Justice Working Group, please visit our page on the church website, at www.firstparish.info/justice-inclusion/social-justice/indigenous-justice/, which includes our brochure, *Acknowledging This Land*.

As we learn and work toward Indigenous Justice and spiritual wholeness, we must seek truth and understand whom we can acknowledge.

Ellen Leigh, Chair
Indigenous Justice Working Group

Giving First for April

In April, half our Sunday offering goes to the Living Legacy Project, which leads pilgrimages to meet the people, hear the stories, and visit important sites of the Civil Rights Movement. They also offer on-line programs to ensure that this history is not forgotten. Our donation helps ensure that future generations learn about and are inspired by the courage of those who defied all odds to make change happen.

Rose of Recognition

Our April Rose of Recognition goes to Steph Miserlis and Kate Lenox, who coordinate our adult-education program, called STAR – Spirit, Transformation, Reflection and Adventure. Steph and Kate help volunteers host community events that keep us gathering and thriving. *Thank you*, and all the volunteers, for your efforts!

Beloved Songs with the Halalisa Singers

On Saturday, April 27, the Halalisa Singers present classics from the Great American Songbook at First Parish. Tickets for the 7:30 pm concert are \$25, available at www.halalisa.org.



Staff and Contact Information

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and mission of First Parish.

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The Spire

Diane Shriver, Editor

Next issue: Sunday, May 5
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Items may be edited for space and clarity.

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If you do not have e-mail, contact the office.

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