

The Spire

DECEMBER 5, 2021

THE FIRST SUNDAY RECORD

VOL. 64, No. 4

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

Vivaldi's *Magnificat*

On December 12, our Music Sunday will feature Antonio Vivaldi's setting of the *Magnificat*, Mary's reply to an angel's surprising news that she would bear a child. Vivaldi composed it while working at the Ospedale della Pieta, an orphanage in Venice with an unusual focus on music.

The Pieta was founded in the 1300s and sheltered both boys and girls, many orphaned by the Plague, illegitimate, or simply abandoned. In the 1600s the institution devised a way to attract donations; it began testing girls for musical aptitude and those who showed promise were given a first-rate musical education.

Of the hundreds of girls living in the Pieta, about 50 were in a choir and orchestra that performed for masses, and the people of Venice embraced them. By the 1700s their reputation had spread throughout Europe, attracting visitors and much-needed funding.

In 1701, at age 25, Vivaldi was ordained a priest and joined the staff as a violin teacher. He rose to the position of concert master, and over nearly 40 years wrote a great many compositions for the young musicians to play and sing.

The Ospedale della Pieta still exists as a nonprofit agency that provides early childhood education and helps children and mothers in crisis.

The First Parish Choir will perform *Magnificat* with a string orchestra, uninterrupted. We shall honor the memory of those young musicians from long ago who found a way forward, and take inspiration from Mary's words of acceptance and joy at life's unexpected turns.



Services on Christmas Eve

4 pm and 6 pm

We will gather both incarnate and
via Zoom for our traditional
service of readings, music, and
candlelight.

Giving First

Each month, the Giving First program donates half of our non-pledge offering to a charitable organization nominated by members of the congregation. Chaplains on the Way is our recipient for December, building trusting relationships with those experiencing homelessness, living in poverty, and dealing with mental illness and/or addiction.

The Chaplains offer a ministry of spiritual care, listening, and companionship through life's most challenging struggles. You can hear about their efforts after the service on December 19.

From now until December 31, the Social Justice Committee is seeking nominations for the Giving First Program for 2022. To suggest recipients, please visit <https://firstparish.info/social-justice/giving-first/>

Helping Babies in Our Community

News about the dwindling supply of affordable diapers available to children hit hardest by the pandemic has prompted the Alliance Board to donate \$1,000 to the Cradles to Crayons' Resilience Fund, which provides children living in low-income and homeless situations with the essentials they need to survive and thrive, including diapers and wipes. This gift is in keeping with the Alliance's goal of helping women and families through difficult transitions. For more information about Cradles to Crayons, or to donate to the organization, please visit cradlestocrayons.org.

Thinking about joining the Alliance? Do! You will become part of a tradition in our church that dates to the 19th century, promoting social, spiritual, and philanthropic interests. For more information, check us out on the First Parish website at [firstparish.info/ways-to-get-involved/womens-alliance/Womens Alliance](http://firstparish.info/ways-to-get-involved/womens-alliance/Womens%20Alliance) or join us for one of our upcoming programs. You don't need to be a member to attend.

— Lisa Heisterkamp Davis, Vice President
Sharen Leonard, Alliance Communications

Thanks for the Pie!

The Pie Palace, the main fundraiser for our Social Justice Committee, raised \$1,410 in November by selling 45 delicious pies baked by members of the congregation. Many thanks to all the pie-bakers and pie-lovers who participated!

Grace Notes

Founded in 2014 by Lorraine Cooley and Holly Loring, with encouragement from Rev. Marta Flanagan and Lay Ministry, Grace Notes is a visiting musical ensemble with a repertoire bridging genres and combining choral selections with songs that invite singing along. Performing unaccompanied, members of the group visit First Parish folks who are unable to attend services. Often, if the person we are visiting lives in a group facility, we sing in a community room, and the staff helps residents join us.

In the winter of 2020, Lorraine turned leadership of Grace Notes over to Cheri Minton, who relies on the strong support of many of the group's members. No sooner had we begun working together than all our lives were upended by the pandemic shutdown.

A number of us wanted to keep meeting monthly, and our musical gatherings became a welcome respite.

We tried several approaches to making music on Zoom; its inherent delay means that coordinating a group of singers is impossible. We made individual recordings of our vocal lines and combined them into multi-part recordings that we could sing along with during rehearsals and visits. We also got better acquainted with "pass the mic" songs: we would unmute in turn and sing a line of a familiar song with the rest of us muted and singing along.

We made several visits over Zoom. Each time the person we were visiting could invite guests, and we met parents, siblings, and friends. People could sing along with us. Learning from First Parish services, we displayed our lyrics on slides.



In late summer we began meeting in person, first in the church courtyard, then in the Parlor. We sang for a Council on Aging Halloween party, and a First Parish service on November 28. We will continue to gather monthly and seek opportunities to be of use. We are glad to do more Zoom visits, and, when it is safe, will happily resume in-person visits.

If you are interested in proposing a visit or in joining Grace Notes, contact gracenotes@firstparish.info.

We welcome newcomers and will help you learn our always growing repertoire. Both our monthly fourth Wednesday gatherings/rehearsals and our visits are special times, and we are very glad to expand our circle and our outreach.

— Cheri Minton, Grace Notes



Staff and Contact Information

Rev. Marta Flanagan Lead Minister
marta@firstparish.info

Rev. Erica Richmond Parish Minister
erica@firstparish.info

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

Hours Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday,
 10 am to 4 pm
 Thursday, noon to 7 pm
 Friday, 10 am to 3 pm

Sara Hidalgo Office Manager
officemanager@firstparish.info

Religious Education

Tina Schultz Director of Religious Education
dre@firstparish.info

Rose Sawyer Marsh Youth Coordinator
youthadvisor@firstparish.info

Music

Jonathan Brennand Music Director
musicdirector@firstparish.info

Kenneth Seitz Pianist,
 Music Director Emeritus

Parish Committee *parishexec@firstparish.info*

Marie Meter (chair), Sara Galantowicz (vice chair)
 Tom Estabrook, Jeff Keffer, Steve McMullin,
 Anne Quaadgras, Allan Tosti, Celia Wcislo (clerk)

Finance Committee *finance@firstparish.info*
 Eric Segal

Human Resources *humanresources@firstparish.info*
 Diane Barry

Lay Ministry *layministry@firstparish.info*
 Loren Gomez

The Spire

Diane Shriver, Editor

Next issue: Sunday, January 2
 Submissions due by Sunday, December 26
Items may be edited for space and clarity.

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

The Spire generally deals with the big picture.
 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*
 Susan Moore, Jennifer Davis-Kay

Music *music@firstparish.info*
 Alice Austin

Property *property@firstparish.info*
 John Galantowicz

Religious Education *re@firstparish.info*
 Ellen Robie

Social Justice *socialjustice@firstparish.info*
 Mary Cummings, Maureen Dolan

Stewardship *stewardship@firstparish.info*

The Alliance *alliance@firstparish.info*

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

Worship Associates *worshipassociates@firstparish.info*
 Elizabeth Hunter