



Embracing the Darkness

A Service Acknowledging the Season's Shadows

Friday, December 13, 2024

The sun set at 4:12 today and will rise at 7:06 tomorrow.

The moon is waxing toward a full moon on Sunday.

On Saturday, December 21, at 4:22 am
the sun reaches its farthest point south of the equator,
marking the precise moment of
the winter solstice and the beginning of our winter.

Sounding of the Chime

Prelude

*Morning Prayer from
Children's Album Op. 39 No. 1
Pyotr Tchaikovsky
Anna Arazi, piano*

Welcome and Opening Words

Rev. Marta Morris Flanagan, Lead Minister

Hymn 101

Abide with Me

Lighting of the Candles and Sabbath Blessing

Bonnie Zimmer

Anthem

Mi Shebeirach

text by Debbie Friedman and Drotah Setel

music by Debbie Friedman

sung by Diane Taraz

Lights in the Darkness

Rev. Marta Morris Flanagan

- The First Candle for the Death of a Loved One

“When Great Trees Fall”

by Maya Angelou

read by Steve Pillemer

First Bell for Comfort and for Perseverance

- The Second Candle for Illness and Diminishment

“Everyday”

by Nikita Gill

read by Bill Licea-Kane

Second Bell for Acceptance and for Love

Anthem

In the Bleak Midwinter

music by Gustav Holst

verse 1 by Christina Rossetti

verses 2-4 by Diane Taraz

Diane Taraz, voice & dulcimer

- The Third Candle for Violence in and to Our World

“If We Will Have the Wisdom to Survive”

by Wendell Berry

read by Dorothy Anger

Third Bell for Justice and Peace

- The Fourth Candle for Concern for our Country

“Let America Be America Again”

by Langston Hughes

read by Lillian Povey

Fourth Bell for Faith and Wisdom

Candles of Love and Loss

Jeanne Feeley

Lay Minister

If moved to do so, you may light a candle in silence for a sorrow you are holding in your heart this season. If you wish to speak to your sorrow, please assemble on either side of the Sanctuary after lighting your candle. Please tell us your name and speak into the microphone. Speak from your own experience.

Interlude for the Lighting of Candles

Warum? Op. 12 No. 3

Robert Schumann

Anna Arazi, piano

Prayer and Silent Meditation

Rev. Erica Richmond

Parish Minister

Anthem

By Candlelight
music traditional; words by Diane Taraz
Diane Taraz, voice and dulcimer

Sharing of Oblaten

Carolyn Hodges and James Ptacek
First Parish Members

In Poland, Lithuania, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic, the traditional Christmas Eve meal begins with Oplatki, Oblatky, or Plotkele. The eldest member of the family takes an Oplatek wafer, breaks it, and shares it with the family member next to him or her. Each then shares pieces of the wafer with everyone present at the table. The sharing ritual is accompanied by embracing and the exchange of good wishes, symbolizing giving and sharing in our lives.

Hymn 15

The Lone, Wild Bird

Benediction

Rev. Marta Morris Flanagan

Postlude

Still I Will Love
words and music by Shaina Taub
sung by Diane Taraz

Claude Debussy Arabesque No. 1 in E Major
Anna Arazi, piano

Our thanks to

Worship Associates
Mary Breen, Lillian Povey,
Loren Gomez and Bill Licea Kane

and First Parish members
Jim Ptacek
Bonnie Zimmer
Carolyn Hodges
who coordinated tonight's service;

and our lay ministers

Carolyn Carlson
Julie Garry
Robbie Rinearson

Jeanne Feeley
Christa Kelleher
Greg Ruccio

We are especially grateful to our musicians

Anna Azari, pianist
Diane Taraz, musician

An Excerpt from
**Expect The Holidays
To Re-Trigger The Grief Of Loss**

Stacey Colino
U.S. News & World Report 11/29/2015

Have you noticed that your mood changes in a similar way at a particular time of year for reasons you can't quite pinpoint? Maybe you feel on edge or blue during the week of Thanksgiving. Or you tend to feel anxious, irritable or ill at ease when fall turns to winter, which happens to be when your parents split up or your best friend moved away.

Each of us has emotional hotspots in time that are "irreversibly tied to our past," according to Dr. John Sharp, a psychiatrist on the faculty of Harvard Medical School and the UCLA School of Medicine. "What's happening is your mind is making sense of your experiences without your really thinking about it; it's a form of pattern recognition." In other words, it's as if your subconscious is making a note to self, based on environmental factors or sensory conditions that trigger an association from the past.

Research refers to this phenomenon as "anniversary reactions," "holiday effects" or "birthday blues"—and studies have found that the emotional impact is particularly strong for parents who have lost a child and for older, bereaved spouses. "When you lose someone, there is no such thing as closure—there's a hole in the fabric and it's never totally repaired," says Ann Rosen Spector, a clinical psychologist in Philadelphia.

Your senses can stir up memories and certain emotions when you notice a chill in the air, the smell of chestnuts or a certain cast of light through the trees. Cultural expectations and family traditions can set the stage for old emotions to rise up. "All these patterns have probably intensified

in recent years because of Facebook and social media because you see how everybody else celebrates these holidays,” notes Deborah Carr, a professor of sociology at Rutgers University.

Becoming aware of this phenomenon and understanding why you may feel out of sorts allows you to do something about it. To do that, ask yourself: What smells, sounds or other environmental factors might be triggering these feelings? What cultural expectations may be fueling my angst or agitation? When have I felt similarly in the past?

Once you know what you’re dealing with, it can help to tell yourself that the feelings you’re experiencing belong more in the past than the present. Besides helping to modify your reaction, “untangling those threads and recognizing that something has to do with the past can be enormously freeing,” Sharp says. Otherwise, it can help to label it as “poignancy—a mixture of good feelings and pain,” says Richard Tedeschi, a professor of psychology at the University of North Carolina–Charlotte, and to acknowledge that this “is part of the human experience, the price you pay for loving someone.”

But if you feel overwhelmed during a holiday get-together, have an exit strategy or a contingency plan so that you don’t feel trapped. You might excuse yourself to take a walk or a rest or to call an old friend. “Give yourself boundaries on the time spent with others,” Tedeschi advises.

In the future, be aware that a relapse of an emotional hangover could occur, and take steps to head it off at the pass. “Figure out what it means to take extra good care of yourself and be proactive,” Sharp says. This may mean planning to go on a special outing to a favorite place, watching movies or doing something that boosts your spirits.

Indeed, finding that personal spot of serenity may be the best cure for any seasonal or emotional hangover that ails you.

First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Arlington

www.firstparish.info

First Parish is a liberal religious community working toward another way to be and act in our time. As a Unitarian Universalist congregation (www.uua.org), we are not bound to any statement of belief or creed but to an aspiration to act in love. We believe personal experience, conscience and reason are final authorities in religion.

A religious education program for children meets during Sunday worship. Children are given the tools with which to answer their religious questions of the world.

To learn more, visit the information table after worship. You can sign up for the weekly E-Bulletin there or by emailing churchoffice@firstparish.info

First Parish is self-governing and supported by members and friends who contribute their time, talent and treasure. The elected Parish Committee (“ParCom”) is the governing board. ParCom can be reached at Parishexec@firstparish.info.

Anne Quaadgras, Chair	John Anderson, Vice-Chair	
Joanna Pushee, Clerk	Carolyn Hodges, Treasurer	
Jeff Keffer	Steve McMullin	Susan Moore
Allan Tosti	Kate Tranquada	

Staff serve the members, leaders and mission of First Parish.

Rev. Marta Morris Flanagan, *Lead Minister*

Rev. Erica Federspiel Richmond, *Parish Minister*

Rev. Stevie Carmody, *Minister of Religious Education*

Daniel Parsley, *Music Director*

Kenneth Seitz, *Director of Music, Emeritus*

Rose Sawyer Marsh, *Youth Program Coordinator*

Bella Jaffe, *Religious Education Assistant*

Ebiere Omoregie, *Office Manager*

Allison Sillers, *Office & Communications Associate*

Jaqueline De Jesus, *Sexton*

Rev. Wendy Page, *Affiliate Minister*

A Unitarian Universalist Welcoming Congregation, First Parish warmly and intentionally welcomes gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer and transgender people.