

**Parish Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Arlington**  
**March 17, 2026 7 - 9 pm**

**Via Zoom**

**Attendees:** Marie Meter (chair), Kate Tranquada (vice chair), Joanna Pushee (clerk), Carolyn Hodges (treasurer), John Anderson, Susan Moore, Amy Speare, and Allan Tosti

**Ministers:** Rev. Dr. Jonipher Kwong, Rev. Erica Richmond, and Rev. Stevie Carmody

**Guests:** HR representative Sara Galantowicz and Transition Team co-chair Kay Snowden

7:03 **Call to Order** (Marie)

7:05 **Reading and Chalice Lighting** (Susan)

7:08 **Financial Review** (Carolyn Hodges)

- The month of February trended to expectations, as is standard at First Parish.
- The cleaning service vendor has been re-negotiated to City Wide thanks to Greg Ruccio on the Property Committee and the FP office manager. First Parish should see some reduction in cost compared to the original cleaning vendor.
- The boiler system replacement plan is on track and will be scheduled once the average last frost occurs this spring.
- Rev. Carolyn Patierno, adjunct minister, begins her term in mid-April; her housing allowance letter was submitted to the Parish Committee for review and approval.
- Nursery school lease update:
  - Adventures in Montessori has a lease which will end this summer. First Parish set March 31 as a target date to provide for any amendments submitted in order to meet the effective date of July 1, 2026.
  - First Parish had a Memo of Understanding (MOU) showing the operating cost passing through what the cleaning cost is. The rental agreement of \$1,500 / month is in reality \$1,950.00 with the cleaning service.
  - The Treasurer and the office manager at First Parish have drafted a fourth amendment and exhibit A as part of the lease and will be attending a meeting, along with Greg Ruccio of the Property Committee, with the owner of Adventures in Montessori.

Questions and Comments:

- A Parish Committee member asked for an update on the Town of Arlington having been late with payments. The FP office manager has contacted the Town.
- The Parish Committee is working with the Property Committee to determine some information about the solar panels on the meeting house.
- The Parish Committee chair indicated a salary review along with the Finance Committee chair to determine whether the surplus will be used.

7:21 **Consent agenda items:**  
Minutes, Financials, Ministers' reports

**MOTION 1:** I move to adopt the consent agenda as presented with corrected typos. (Al )  
Seconded (Kate) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

7:20 **Short reports and votes** (Marie M)

- Parish Committee Executive approved a "No Kings" event sponsored by First Parish's Defending Democracy group on March 28th.
  - 10 - 11:30 am at First Parish: Representatives Garballey and Rogers, and Senator Friedman have been scheduled to speak at the event.
- Alliance Sunday: the Parish Committee Executive agreed to allow guest speaker Dr. Alexandria Russell to sell books after the service on April 12. The rationale is that First Parish has allowed for an exception to the guideline in the past, and the book is related to the presentation. There will be no commercial presentation at coffee hour.
- Rev. Carolyn Patierno Housing Allowance (Marie M.)

**MOTION 2:** I move that we accept the Rev. Carolyn Patierno's Housing Allowance as submitted. (Marie) Seconded (Kate) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

Rev. Carolyn Patierno, adjunct minister, starts April 5, 2026.

7:25 PM **Rose of Recognition** (Kate T.)

- The Parish Committee discussed nominees for the Rose of Recognition for April.

7:26 **Front Corner Project** - updates (Al Tosti)

- The Front Corner Project has developed from an idea to a plan, with a full task force: Allan Tosti, Andrew Leonard, Mark Wilke, Phil Speare, John Galantowicz, Peggy Gardiner and Sanjay Newton
- The FCP task force met with the Trustees, who are working on reviewing and voting on their amount. The first portion is expected to be a cost of \$15,000.
- The task force is scheduling Listening Sessions for First Parish congregants.
- There are three proposals that the task force received.
- The purposes of the project include:
  - Connection to the greater community and inviting people to come into the space
  - Remembrance of the long service and ministry of Rev. Marta Flanagan
  - Creating a space for public witness and a public demonstration area so people can assemble
  - Deciding what to do in regards to the unhealthy maple tree

The timeline for the Front Corner Project is such that no ground will be broken this year: There is funding to secure first, and listening sessions will begin in April 2026 to hear from people. A folding board will be presented in the vestry at the end of March so people can view the ideas proposed and give input.

#### Questions/Comments:

- A Parish Committee member asked if the task force could get input on who the people are in terms of the public, the community, and so on: the land is First Parish property. This topic could be part of congregants' feedback.
- Communication and advertisement around the listening sessions to include the e-bulletin, the teaser, and an article in *The Spire*.
- A Parish Committee member asked about the Town of Arlington. The town planner has already visited the meeting house. The task force for the Corner Project wants to know of any other projects in the vicinity in the Town of Arlington.
- The issue of the gas mains and the impact over time will be on the task force's radar.
- Emphasis on accessibility
  - The project will include updates to make the space accessible and bring features into alignment with current legal requirements.
  - The project will include doing what is right in terms of accessibility for people.
- A Parish Committee member suggested the task force contact the tree warden in town.
  - Mark Wilke mentioned that the Property Committee walked the campus of the meeting house with the tree warden about a year ago.
  - ParCom member emphasized contacting the tree warden, The Arlington Tree Committee, and the Open Space Committees
- Public witness is a priority
- The Parish Committee recommended giving First Parish congregants at least from April through mid-May to give feedback on the ideas and project proposed.
- There is a hard deadline of applying to external funding in September 2026.

#### 7:54 **New Boiler System - proposal** (Property Committee, Mark Wilke)

- Funding options and update on cost of the boiler system
  - The Property Committee received estimates from three companies
  - The current vendor for maintenance gave First Parish the middle estimate. The Property Committee has confidence in the current company and its technician.
  - The cost at the time of the estimate was: \$125,000. The updated cost (after the new year) is about \$126,000 for 2026. The cost includes:
    - Upgraded boiler from the current 20-year old system
    - The current system is about 80% productive; the new one would be efficient at 97% which would mean being more responsible for fossil fuel use.
    - The timeline provided: the vendor said it would take about a week to take out the old system and install the new boiler system.
- The new system will consist of two small boilers. They meet the BTU requirement for the building. The new system would allow First Parish to trade off and run on one boiler while the other is being maintained if needed.
- The ministers' offices are run only by the heat pumps.
- The nursery school, Religious Education building, and the vestry have hot water radiators.

- In the future, the Property Committee suggests having the nursery school heated first with heat pumps that are not just cooling but also heating. This change would mean more environmentally responsible.
- Discussion around the cost and funding options:
  - The Property Committee acknowledged that First Parish does not have \$126,000 earmarked for this project. First Parish could potentially use the approach used for the cooling system, which was a “no interest loan” from ourselves over several years.
  - There would be an initial payment. First Parish could take some of the \$15,000 in the Property Committee budget, and then do fundraising next program year. The Property Committee suggested asking for about a \$100,000 loan from ourselves as First Parish and pay it back over several years (five years to ten years would be reasonable).
  - Property has started to discuss items in the Property Committee budget that could possibly be delayed:
    - redoing the vestry ceiling, Tobey Lounge carpet, the bell repair for the clock tower, possible upgrade of the phone system, HVAC system update, grounds, and kitchen updates.
    - And things that cannot be delayed that arise throughout the year, such as: the emergency lighting survey. The Property Committee conducted and replaced or re-installed lighting (this was \$1,000 out of a \$4,000 line item).

Questions:

- A Parish Committee member called attention to the phone system. Is there any issue or difficulty with the phone or office lines? Zoom system?
  - There is no urgent need for the phone system. The Property Committee thought about hard wired things (things that the committee had not looked at yet). It is an exploring phase and not urgent.
- Clock repair: Is the clock functioning? Yes, the clock functions. The repair would be to the bell.
- What is the life expectancy of the new boiler?
- Would the cost of removing the old boiler system be separate?
  - The cost of removal is included in the \$126,000 estimate.
  - There is a separate cost to remove two old copper tanks on the ceiling which were part of the expansion tanks. It would be an additional \$3,000 not included in the \$126,000 estimate. Removal of the copper tanks is something we would not be required to do. It would be optional.
- What is the timing on this project? Late spring or summer

8:07 PM Short break

8:10 PM - **Human Resources Employee Handbook** (Sara Galantowicz)

- The Human Resources Committee completed an overhaul of the First Parish Employee Handbook about two years ago.

- HR Committee met with Rev. Jonipher in the summer and compared the handbook to the UUA employee handbook template. Ultimately, this comparison was an important exercise.
  - Areas of policy and HR guidance, the specific language; see if misaligned or not with UUA template
- Employee posters to bring First Parish into compliance have been posted.
- The HR Committee is working on updating the handbook to stay current. Updates include:
  - The ability of staff to make Roth IRA contributions to retirement plans. We want the handbook to be reflective of the most current policies.
  - Added language of Employment of Members. First Parish does have some guidelines around that: we have a new policy that states we do not hire members.
  - The HR Committee added conflict of interest language
  - The HR Committee added language around employee signatures and receipt of the Employee Handbook: Making sure every employee receives a hard copy and turns in the signature page so the document becomes a legally binding document. The document reads that the employee has received, read, and had any employee questions answered regarding the handbook.

The draft of the updated FP Employee Handbook was sent to the Parish Committee as a shared document. The Treasurer has provided input.

- Areas for the Parish Committee to confirm and approve:
  - Starting July 1, 2026, there is the expectation to consolidate pay to 26 pay periods (biweekly, not bimonthly, so some months would see staff paid three times).
  - Massachusetts Paid Family Medical Leave (MA PFML)
    - The Parish Committee has already voted on a policy to commit to paying the first week's salary of an employee on leave until MA PFML activates.
  - Suggestion to bring the employee handbook up to date with disability and medical considerations
  - Training rollout for staff
    - Currently, there is no standard staff training
    - Basic cybersecurity training
    - Free training on harassment and conduct
    - Payroll training for the Office Manager and Liz McKersie
      - Provided by the vendor Your Part-Time Controller

There is a summary of the vacation, medical, and sick leave

- no changes to sick leave and the language in the FP employee handbook matches that of the UUA handbook and MA state law. The vacation / medical / sick leave is an accrual basis.
- There is carryover for sick leave (5 days) in the handbook
- For vacation leave: until now, First Parish did not have any vacation carryover.

### **The HR Committee proposes and recommends to the Parish Committee:**

For vacation time: allow up to 40 hours of carryover with the distinction that staff are eligible for vacation payout, but carryover would not be part of that payout.

The HR Committee noted that a Parish Committee approval of the updated employee handbook would be an approval of a new policy regarding vacation time carryover.

- Encourage our First Parish staff to take their paid time off.
- The carryover is limited to 40 hours.

Kay Snowden, Transition Team co-chair, entered the meeting.

### Questions and Comments:

- There was a comment about exit interviews and whether there is a policy or requirement around exit interviews or templates to standardize.
- There are voluntary check ins with employees and the HR Committee. These check ins are not exit interviews; they are something that the HR Committee decided to offer to staff members.
- A Parish Committee member suggested making a change from “organist” to “accompanist” in the handbook.
- There was a question around whether performance evaluations were included in a policy or requirement and if a template is included. Any performance evaluation is currently an optional resource that supervisors have.
- There was a question about the “notice of retirement” (see page 37 of the handbook) and whether there needs to be a differentiation between a resignation and a retirement statement. Currently, the handbook is silent on a notice of retirement, but language is included in Letters of Agreement for ministers.

The Parish Committee will review the Employee Handbook and at the April 21st meeting do a vote on whether to approve the proposed updates; ParCom will add comments by April 4th.

### 8:35 PM **Transition Team** (Kay Snowden)

- The Transition Team has been busy with research, documenting, and hosting events.
- There was a lead donor meeting on March 7 with an online version scheduled for March 18 to reach out to lead donors and other invited guests. The event was attended and hosted by some Transition Team members and some Parish Committee members.
- Research and documentation around congregations of a similar size (church size comparisons) were shared with the Parish Committee in advance.
  - An amazing piece of work; very thorough and helpful reporting
  - Shows another, deeper level of analysis to see where First Parish is in relation to similarly sized congregations in the country
- Transition Team highlights from research:
  - There is an overlap regarding a minister and religious education: where First Parish seems to have a bigger chunk of funding on the surface with our structure

having a Director of Religious Education; the title of other second ministers in the chart is often called something else, so the comparison is not clear-cut.

- Many congregations have directors of Community Engagement
- First Parish currently spends a lot less of its budget on operations and administration compared to similar sized congregations; First Parish currently relies on a large chunk of volunteer hours for administrative functions.
- The value of shared ministry is great: Teams and sharing responsibility among a ministry team is a norm.

#### Questions and Comments:

- Someone on the Transition Team is looking into shared staff members and what that looks like for part-time staff members. The TT is aware of some staff who work at two or more congregations.
- What is the process for staffing and where are the decisions made? The Transition Team has questions about the financial factor, how the congregations has input, and what the timeline looks like for the 2027-2028 budget.
- A Parish Committee member asked if the TT is feeling supported regarding the Listening Circles.
  - Marilyn Downs is doing great taking the lead on the Listening Circles.
  - TT is engaged and hard working and continues to do the work.
- How will the Transition Team circulate the information around the congregation? How will the congregation receive the information and analysis around similar sized congregations?

Supporting covenanting process (FP member Tina Schultz to lead in the fall)

Loud and clear: Covenants are really important. We need one for the congregation.

8:52 PM Kay Snowden left the meeting.

8:53 PM      **State of the Parish**

The ministers submitted their written reports prior to the meeting.

- Rev. Jonipher Kwong provided a written report.
- Rev. Stevie Carmody provided a written report and highlighted:
  - Observations coming back from parental leave
    - A collective effort among staff, the Religious Education Committee, and other volunteers: spectacular and invigorating!
    - RE program:
      - Volunteer and staff collaborations
      - Coming of Age has been launched
      - Volunteers and staff recruited teachers for the next session
      - Game night

- Youth group is humming
- Evident that Stewardship Campaign effort is in full swing
- There is still more work that Rev. Stevie can do within RE
  - Tap into FP families, make sure families participate in governance and in commonly sharing the congregation
- 8:56 pm - Rev. Erica Richmond, Parish Minister, provided a report and highlighted:
  - Stewardship Campaign update - we are at 49% of participation goal
  - The Stewardship Committee shows we are at \$540,000 dollars and 64% of our pledge goal
  - 140 households to phone with reminder calls
  - We all need to be singing the same song. Folks can get pulled and distracted.
  - March 30 - the Engage list was utilized! Reaching out via phone banking. ParCom helpers needed! There will be pizza/ RSVP to Megan Rising or Joel Carlton-Gysan.
    - Phase two if we don't make it at the end of March to the goal.
    - There is a wonderful Stewardship video.
      - Stewardship ambassador program. Rev Erica reached out to committee chairs, and they were asked to reach out to committee members.
  - Rev. Erica will be on sabbatical starting April 1st. She is in her sixth year as Parish Minister at First Parish. She will have a two-part sabbatical (April to July first).

#### **Questions and Comments:**

- How did the parents of teenagers event go? Rev. Erica said it was well attended; Joel, Bella, and Rev. Erica presented.
- How well attended was Game Night? About 30 people participated in Game Night.

#### **Rev. Stevie - feedback opportunity**

- Our RE staff is really high quality! Bella stepped up!
  - Supported teachers
  - They really went above and beyond.
- K Milano - youth led support - lift up / structure to strive - K (they have been good about consistency, tone, and approach)
- A number of continuing things
  - A number of issues with the Adventures in Montessori (AIM)
    - The space and sharing rooms among First Parish groups and AIM
    - Unpredictable cleanliness and orderliness
  - First Parish staff who identify as non-binary have shared that not all volunteers and leaders use the correct pronouns as requested. It's about education and a culture change; it does not all happen at once. We can have a common goal of being consistent and a practice of correcting each other each time. We don't put the work of that correction on the person with they/them pronouns.
  - Be more welcoming! A great place to work!

#### **Questions and Comments:**

- The school; the lease amendment and timing; Any more clarity about the wall?

- The Office Manager has an update on the timing with the vendor for the wall.

Rev. Erica left at 9:07 PM. John Anderson left the meeting at 9:07 PM.

9:07 PM      **Executive session:** Contracts

**Motion 3:** I move we go into Executive Session and invite Rev. Stevie Carmody. (Marie) Seconded (Kate) 7 of 7 in favor. None opposed.

Rev. Stevie left the meeting at 9:12 PM.

9:47 PM - **MOTION 4:** I move we leave Executive Session. (Al) Seconded (Kate) 7 of 7 in favor. None opposed.

**MOTION 5:** I move that we push the every three year review of the Director of Religious Education contract out one year and do the review in spring 2027. (Marie) Seconded (Joanna/Kate) 7 of 7 in favor.

9:49 PM **Adjourn - MOTION 6:** I move that we adjourn. (Marie) Seconded (Joanna) 7 of 7 in favor. None opposed.

#### **MOTIONS:**

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**MOTION 6:** I move that we adjourn. (Marie) Seconded (Joanna) 7 of 7 in favor. None opposed.

## **Interim Lead Minister's Report**

### **March 17 - April 17, 2026**

Rev. Dr. Jonipher Kūpono Kwong  
First Parish UU in Arlington, Massachusetts

Easter was a highlight for me for this report. It was the first Sunday when Rev. Carolyn (Adjunct Minister covering for Rev. Erica's sabbatical) joined us for a multigenerational service and the sanctuary was packed and the energy palpable!

Speaking of big crowds, we had 1,000 people attend the "No Kings" rally held at our front lawn with all three ministers involved with the programming. That was also quite a multigenerational event with lots of (resistance) singing woven throughout. It was no doubt the biggest public witnessing event we've hosted.

The next day, there was a panel discussion called "Trans Joy Café" with a group of panelists talking about their experiences providing gender affirming care. It was quite moving and I wished more people from our congregation came to heighten our awareness around how to be more inclusive and welcoming. This was one of the growing edges mentioned in the HR Committee report.

When it comes to staffing issues, April was the wrap up for an over monthlong workshop the UUA held called "Sustainable Staffing Strategizers" that Carolyn Hodges, Marie Meteer, and Kay Snowden and I attended. There were lots of tips and tools offered as we engage in this process of figuring out what staffing structure FP needs moving forward. These conversations are particularly pertinent with the drafting of our budget. The finance committee and Executive Committee met several times to hash out those details, especially as the Stewardship Campaign wraps up.

As I mentioned earlier this church year, I have streamlined the performance evaluation process. I've completed Rev. Erica's before she went on sabbatical and that's been signed and filed. The rest will be completed by the middle of May, with the exception of Rev. Stevie's since he's on parental leave. We have a new form this year that was approved by the HR Committee.

Finally, April 12th was the launch of the Covenanting Task Force. Thank you, Tina Shultz for assembling a team together to guide us along the path to figuring out what our Covenant of Right Relationships is about and how to handle conflict moving forward.

#### **Heritage**

- Listening Circle (3/22+virtual sessions) asking what nourishes people at FP and what challenges they are facing.

#### **Leadership**

- Virtual "Poster Board" session held 3/18

- Volunteer Sunday (3/31) held, with Leadership Development Council and Shared Ministry taking the lead
- Planning for Leadership Sunday (3/29) with Cathy M. & Kiki

**Connection**

- Met with Hilary Allen to talk about UUA recommendations
- UUA hosted “Generative Democracy” gathering on 4/10
- Met with ministers of other large congregations to share ideas and support each other in this work
- Met with Accredited Interim Ministry mentor Rev. Joel Miller

**Mission/Vision**

- Listening Circle (3/22+virtual sessions) asking what nourishes people at FP and what challenges they are facing.

**Future**

- Budget conversations with Lissa

**Conflict & Trust**

- Covenanting Task Force launch April 12th and process/timeline explained April 19th

Interdependently Yours,  
Rev. Jonipher



**Key upcoming dates:**

April 19	Transition Team Spring Debrief
May 3	Annual Meeting
April 1-June 30	Rev. Erica on sabbatical
April 17-May 15	Rev. Stevie on parental leave (part 2)
May 16-May 29	Rev. Jonipher on vacation

**Attendance:**

Date	Total	Preacher	Title
3/22	246	Youth	Youth Sunday

3/29	229	Lay Leaders	Volunteer Sunday, "Leading with Love"
4/5	315	Three Ministers	Multigen, "Planting Trees We'll Never See"
4/12	246	Dr. Alexandria Rusell	Alliance Sunday

### **Pastoral care provided:**

*Office/Home visit: 6*

### **Staff and Lay Leadership support provided:**

*Appointments with lay leaders regarding projects and committee work: 20*

*Committee meetings attended:*

- *ParCom Exec: 3/24, 4/7, 4/14*
- *ParCom: 3/17*
- *Worship Associates: 4/14*
- *Transition Team: 3/24, 4/14*
- *Clergy Advisory Group: 4/6*

*Weekly individual meetings:*

- *(Adjunct) Parish Minister: Rev. Erica Richmond, Rev. Carolyn Patierno*
- *MRE: Rev. Stevie Carmody*
- *Office Manager: Ebiere Omoregie*
- *Music Director: Dr. Daniel Parsley*

### **Community and Denominational Activities**

- *Individual meeting with UU ministerial colleagues (including those in search): 8*
- *Large Congregations Ministers Gathering: 1*

# Religious Education Report

*Parish Committee Meeting – April 21st, 2026*

Submitted by Rev. Stevie Carmody, Minister of Religious Education, on April 21st, 2026.

Dear Parish Committee,

Just like that, I am heading back on the **second (shorter) part of my parental leave**, dedicated the next month (April 15th - May 13th) to caring for Hazel Louise Carmody, who is now three months old! My gratitude continues for this opportunity to focus on her, and supporting my family through this new experience of parenthood.



My appreciation for the Parish Committee's continued attention to the **ongoing needs of parents, children, and families** in our community, as we make our way through the "soup" (as Marc Jacobson's Time for All Ages in the fall put it) of transition.

Warmly, Rev. Stevie

## Sunday Morning Programs

### Winter Term Updates

Our gritudes to Tali A, Melissa N, Katie **L**, **Ellen K**, **Kate G**, **Fae K**, **Marc J**, **Mike R**, **Alan L**, **David Desjardins**, **Genevieve B**, **Erica L**, and **Tara R S** for teaching throughout the Winter term (January - March).

One highlight:: A visit from FP community member **Anne Cross** to the Grade 6/7 **Neighboring Faiths Class** to learn about **Paganism**. Anne shared her wealth of knowledge, in a topic that hasn't been addressed in the class in recent memory.

### Spring Term Updates

On March 29th, we launched the first week of the Spring Term, grade-based classes for our Pre-K through 6th graders (now that the 7th graders start OWL). This meant a whole new group of teachers who are volunteering their efforts to lead week to

week. Rev. Stevie led trainings with the teachers before the launch of term, reviewing safety protocols, resources and supports for teachers, and themes around classroom management. Meet our teams, and what they are helping accompany young people through!

**Francis O'Donovan, Katie Limb, and Cal Robie** will continue the **“Chalice Children”** curriculum with the **Pre-K Class**, which focuses on belonging, friendship, exploring First Parish, and getting comfortable in religious education.



**Francis O.**



**Cal R.**



**Katie L.**

**Madeleine Duke** (new teacher!), and **Lauren Cosgrove** join in teaching the **Grade K/1** class, which is concluding its **“Discovery Year”** curriculum. The themes around this curriculum really focus on wonder, exploration, asking big questions, and starting to make sense of belonging to communities.



**Madeleine D.**



**Lauren C.**

**James Brooks** and **Cale Pennington** return to teach **Grade 2/3** as they finish out their year of **Exploring Connections with the Web of Life**. This latter half of the curriculum has used the story of *Charlotte's Web* as the connective thread to pursue themes of life cycles, birth, death, and our connection with animals and plants in the world.



**James B.**



**Cale P.**

**Megan Shand** (new teacher!) and **Genevieve Baldwin** are embarking together on a term with **Grade 4/5** that puts Unitarian Universalist values at the center of the curriculum. In the play-based curriculum **“Lego UU Values”**, the group will use story, spiritual practices, deep discussions, and interactive play (yes, including Legos!) to learn about the seven UU values of Generosity, Pluralism, Transformation, Justice, Equity, Interdependence, and Love.



**Megan S.**



**Genevieve B.**

Finally, **Ellen Robie** and **David Whitford** team up for a cherished **Grade 6** curriculum exploring themes of grief, dying, care-giving, funerals/memorials, and religious traditions, called **The Lessons of Loss**.



**Ellen R.**



**David W.**

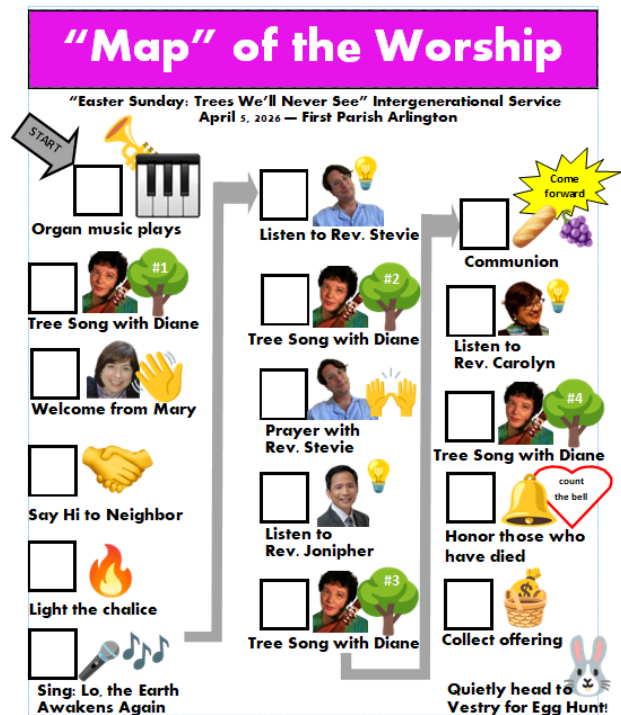
## Easter Multigenerational Sunday Service

For **Easter Sunday**, the religious education programming shifted to be a Multigenerational Sunday Service, with children attending the whole time (before heading out to the **Easter Egg Hunt**). Designed by **Rev. Jonipher, Rev. Carolyn,** and **Rev Stevie**, in collaboration with amazing volunteer musician **Diane Taraz**, and under the support of our **Worship Associates**, the service explored themes related to remembrance, growth, and community—tying in with an Easter message about the new life and legacy we create together in community.

As usual, a few things go into making a multigenerational worship service, differing from other Sunday morning worships.

These enhancements include:

- Multisensory engagement (touch, smell, sound, sight, and taste)
- A “children’s order of service” (the first page of which is pictured to the side) as a worship support
- Fine motor activity bags (called “Soul Work”) to enhance contemplation—truly for all ages, but the kids mostly use them.
- Shorter worship elements that intersperse movement (instead of a long homily or sermon, for example)
- More singing! We sang “Trees We’ll Never See” as the thematic thread throughout the service.



## Sunday Evening Programs

### OWL Program

**OWL 2026** began with three community building sessions in March, before a parent orientation on March 15th. The cohort of twelve participants (both youth from First

Parish, and from the surrounding community), will be facilitated by a team of trained facilitators **Lidia Prunte, Rev. Stevie, Leslie Lewis, and Bella Jaffe.**

The beginning of the program explores an expanded concept of **Sexuality** (encompassing areas of Sensuality, Identity, Intimacy, Sexualization, & Sexual Health/Reproduction), introduces the idea of personal and community **Values**, and explores the use of **Language** when addressing sexuality.

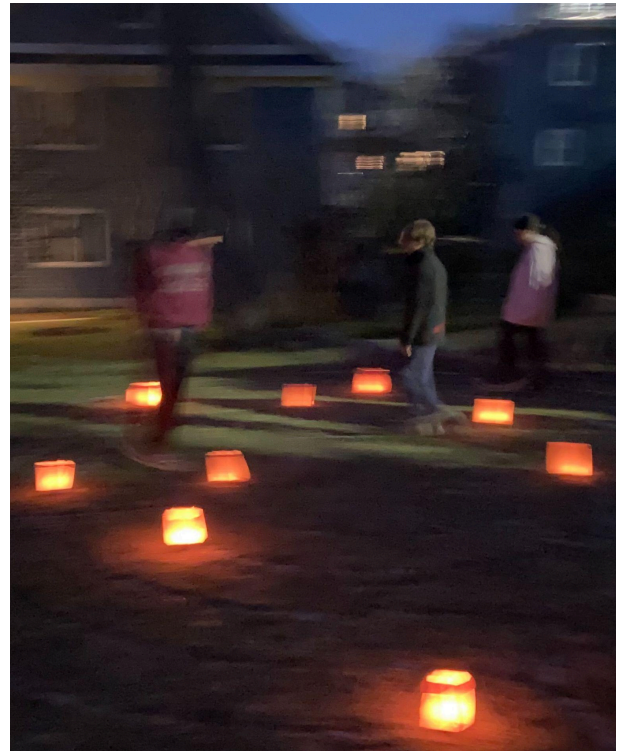
## COA Program

Coming of Age mentors **Peter Heller, Carolyn Hodges, Phil Speare, and Pamela Baldwin** have been ably leading the Coming of Age cohort. March activities continued the exploration of Living our values in the world:

- On March 15th, a panel of First Parish community members joined the cohort to discuss their Social Justice endeavors.
- On March 22nd, the cohort engaged in creative expression, co-lead by Bella, through the medium of gel printing – the output of which will be assembled for Coming of Age Sunday.

Then the program shifted to an exploration of “turning inward” and exploring spirituality, with activities including:

- On March 29th, yoga and Qi Gong ably led by Bella Jaffe
- On April 12th, a Labyrinth walk at Bethany House (pictured here).



## Youth Program

March was a full and meaningful month for the Youth Group, anchored by a worship service the community has been building toward all year.

The month opened with the **Pi Day Youth Con on March 14th**, a regional UU gathering of forty youth at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Nashua. It was a meaningful opportunity to experience traditional youth-style circle worship alongside peers from across the region.

The centerpiece of the month was the **Youth Worship Service** on March 22nd.



Under the guidance of Worship Coordinator Lauren McNeill, the youth played music, performed the Time for All Ages, created art for the sanctuary, and senior members offered personal reflections. The service was a beautiful expression of everything the group has been working toward.

On March 29th, the youth participated in **Adventures for**

**Justice**, a collaboration between UU Mass Action, FPUUA, and three other area youth groups. The youth learned interest-mapping as a tool for community organizing, and connected with peers from across the region both in the workshops and at Boda Borg.

April has brought continued momentum. The group toured **Boston Healthcare for the Homeless** on April 4th and is looking forward to preparing care packages for the organization on April 26th. The **Senior Dinner** on April 8th brought together graduating seniors, including some First Parish youth beyond the regular Youth Group, to reflect on their journeys. All seniors will be honored with a **Senior Blessing** during worship on May 17th.

## Attendance Numbers

In the chart below, “Total served” includes morning and evening programs combined. Averages are drawn from non-holiday weekends. In 2023-24, we averaged 68 children and youth served (including morning programs averaging 37 children) each week, and in 2024-25, we averaged 67 children and youth served (including morning programs averaging 40 children).

	Total served	Sunday A.M	Notes	Nur sery	Pre-K	Grades K-7 (combined)	*O th er	K/1	2/3	4/5	6/7	OWL	COA	YG
avg	56	33		0	3							12	8	11
9/7	68	41	Combined welcome back program, YG picnic	0	6	35						13	-	14
9/14	72	43		0	6			2	11	14	10	13	-	16

9/21	64	37		1	3			3	9	12	9	13	-	14
9/28	70	42		3	1			5	11	14	8	13	-	15
10/5	65	41	All-Together programming; "Other" & YG = Ferry Beach retreat	1	1	15	24	-	-	-	-	14	-	10
10/12	31	31	All-together programming for holiday weekend	0	4	22	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	-
10/19	62	35		1	3	-	-	2	7	15	7	13	-	14
10/26	65	43		0	2	-	-	7	12	15	7	12	-	10
11/2	67	41		0	6	-	-	5	13	9	8	14	-	12
11/9	49	36	All-together programming for holiday weekend	1	1	25	-	-	-	-	9	-	-	13
11/16	72	45		0	5	-	-	5	9	16	10	14	-	13
11/23	55	32		0	3	-	-	4	7	12	6	11	-	12
11/30	37	27	All-together holiday	1	2	24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10
12/7	62	36		0	2	-	-	7	12	9	6	14	-	12
12/14	59	34	All-together	0	2	32	-	-	-	-	-	12	-	13
12/21	-	-	Multigenerational worship	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
12/28	-	-	No RE Program, just childcare	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1/4	41	28		1	2	-	-	6	6	6	7	-	-	13
1/11	44	29		1	1	-		2	6	10	9	-	-	15
1/18	21	21	All-together programming for holiday weekend		2	19	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1/25	23	23	Snow Day for Evening Programs	0	3	-	-	3	6	6	5	-	-	-
2/1	58	40	*Youth Group Lock-in and Multigen dance	0	3	-	-	6	11	11	9	-	9	9
2/8	42	34	Super Bowl Sunday	1	6	-	-	5	11	7	4	-	8	-
2/15	25	19	All-together programming for holiday weekend	1	3	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
2/22	43	26		0	1	-	-	4	9	6	6	-	9	8
3/1	50	24		0	2	-	-	4	6	12	0	12	8	6
3/8	53	29		0	2	-	-	8	8	8	3	10	7	7
3/15	69	38		0	2	-	-	7	13	12	4	11	8	12
3/22	53	22	Youth Sunday (older grades join worship)	0	0	-	-	3	7	5	7	12	9	10

3/29	55	29		0	3	-	-	5	8	9	4	11	8	7
4/5	42	36	<i>Easter Multigen Worship and Egg Hunt</i>	1	5	30	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
4/12	56	27		0	1	-	-	3	10	9	4	11	9	9

## Religious Education Committee

Our **Religious Education Committee**—Betsy Carlton Gysan (chair), Janis Fleishman (treasurer), Sharon Jacobson, Kat Cass, Eric Breck, Lauren Newton, and Cathy Slesnick—has been consistently supporting the program throughout Rev. Stevie’s leave period.

On March 25th, the committee hosted the community **Wednesday Night Potluck** for First Parish, continuing its efforts this year to engage families and promote intergenerational events.

Leading up to April 5th, the committee helped organize the **Easter Egg Hunt**. In preparation for Annual meeting Sunday (May 3rd), committee members are planning the **Kidz Annual Meeting**— concurrent programming for kids while adult members conduct the governance business of the congregation.

To reach the whole Religious Education Committee, you can email [recomittee@firstparish.info](mailto:recomittee@firstparish.info) . To reach the Religious Education Committee Chair, email, [betsycarltongysan@gmail.com](mailto:betsycarltongysan@gmail.com) .

## STAR Committee

The **STAR (Spirit, Transformation, Adventure, & Reflection) Committee**—Kate L, Lyn F-J, Steph M, Maureen D, joined by Rev. Stevie—has done excellent work this year supporting the learning and growth of our wider community. Highlights to note:

- STAR sponsored a great tour of the **Royall House** on March 27th, telling the story of enslavement in the Boston area and its interweaving with the story of Boston’s founding and leadership. Twenty people attended!
- Betsy L Wright lead an excellent book discussion on political themes of democracy with the book **“How We Win: A guide to Nonviolent Direct Action Campaigning** by George Lakey throughout late February and early March. 24 people registered!