

First Parish Unitarian Universalist Arlington  
Parish Committee Meeting Minutes  
November 18, 2025  
Online via Zoom  
7:00 - 9:00 pm

**Attendees:** Marie Meteer (chair), Kate Tranquada (vice-chair), Carolyn Hodges (treasurer), Joanna Pushee (clerk), Al Tosti, Susan Moore, Amy Speare

**Ministers:** Rev. Dr. Jonipher Kwong, interim lead minister; Rev. Erica Richmond, parish minister; Rev. Stevie Carmody, minister of religious education

**Guests:** Transition Team representative Julie Garry

7:05 Call to Order (Marie)

7:06 Reading and Chalice Lighting (Joanna)  
Two minutes of silence

7:10 Financial Review (Carolyn)

- Pledges are tracking slightly below plan, but First Parish has received a few contributions in stock. The Treasurer is optimistic that pledges will improve; stock and 401(k) contributions will result in a strong position.
- The Arlington Philharmonic had not paid for 2024-2025. Once received, the payment will go to retained earnings. The First Parish office staff is on track to get this payment.
- One-time gifts in memory of recent losses of beloved members will go to the Trust Funds; these gifts were not designated to the operating budget.
- The Financial Round Table was held on November 5, 2025.
  - The big takeaway was understanding the planned moving parts such as events: First Parish has a full calendar.
  - Recognizing that the Parish Committee needs to focus on the transition, guiding transition activities and information flow.
- Budget topics (Marie/Carolyn)
  - Parish Committee budget 2026-2027
  - Reckoning & Repair Working Group request for 2026-2027
    - The Reckoning & Repair group has requested \$5,000 for the next program year with the purpose of supporting the effort to work with the Roxbury Youth Group. The intent of the request of \$5,000 last year was to have institutional support via the Parish Committee kick-start Reckoning and Repair by funding the initial startup out of operating costs.

- The Parish Committee had unanimously approved a one-time carryover of about \$1,500 from 2024-25 program year to the 2025-26 program year. The line item of the budget was not guaranteed to be carried over again in the future.
- The Parish Committee notes that we do not have a precedent for carrying through funds.
- The Reckoning and Repair group also went to the Trustees. Additionally, R&R committed to a fundraiser in 2025-26, which was kicked off in November 2025 before the Harvest Moon Fair.
- There may be upcoming opportunities for First Parish congregants to do hands-on volunteering or other non-financial ways of partnering with the Roxbury Youth Program. Concrete ways of getting involved came up in the information session presented by the Roxbury Youth Program this fall.
- The Parish Committee will be asked to make a decision on the wishlist item of \$5,000 at the regular December ParCom meeting.

7:25     **Consent agenda items:** Minutes, Financials, and Ministers' monthly reports

**MOTION 1:** I move to adopt the consent agenda. (A/T) Seconded ( Kate / Amy ) 7 of 7 in favor. None opposed.

7:26     **"Start Up" Retreat debrief**

The Parish Committee discussed the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) Startup Leadership Retreat which was led by Hilary Allen and Emily Cherry of the UUA.

The Start Up retreat was attended by members of the Parish Committee, the Transition Team, and ministers: Rev. Jonipher, Rev. Erica, and Rev. Stevie.

The retreat was on Sunday November 16, after the service in the Parlor, for three hours.

7:40     **State of the Parish (ministers)**

Rev. Jonipher provided a report.

- The core staff co-created a covenant, guided by Rev. Jonipher.
- In terms of long-term sustainability, and in accordance with UUA guidance, ministers have two days off per week. Rev. Jonipher spoke about collaboration among the three ministers and presentation of the ministers as a ministerial team.
- A noted change is that previously pastoral care was done approximately 60% by the lead minister and 40% by the parish minister. Rev. Erica is now doing the majority of the pastoral care.

8:10 - Rev. Erica provided a report on the State of the Parish.

- Pastoral Care: Parishoners are still seeking support. In terms of volume, pastoral care has remained the same level.

- Rev. Erica spoke of ministerial portfolios and responsibilities such as the Social Justice Committee with its working groups such as immigration justice, racial justice, and LGBTQIA+ justice: the Trans Day of Remembrance was on Thursday, November 20th.
- First Parish welcomed and hosted a Know Your Rights workshop.
- The Membership Committee is one of First Parish's biggest committees and volunteer support is strong. First Parish has welcomed 85 new members in the last five years since Rev. Erica has joined.

7:55 - Rev. Stevie provided a State of the Parish.

- Rev. Stevie echoed the ministerial responsibilities and highlighted that it is important for the Parish Committee to know to make assessments and decisions as First Parish moves forward towards its next iteration as a congregation.
- In preparation for parental leave, Rev. Stevie reviewed and updated the job description.
- Working with the STAR Adult Education committee this year has been a great conversation. There is shared ownership. Rev. Stevie is the new point minister for STAR.
- The Sunday morning program is strong with six different programs being offered. There are volunteer-run programs in the evening: Coming of Age, OWL, and the Youth Group.

8:01 Break

8:06 **Transition team update (Julie Garry)**

The Transition Team has had some great feedback and some good engagement.

- There is now a Transition Team Table in the vestry before and after Sunday services.
- In addition to regular meetings, the Transition Team had a retreat on a Saturday and attended the UUA Startup Leadership Retreat with the Parish Committee and ministers.
- The Transition Team looks forward to working more closely with the Parish Committee and to hosting another Listening Session with the congregation (in person and online).
- The main topics of the December Listening Sessions are: the change in using honorifics, not just a minister's first name, and to know about the work of the three ministers.
- The Transition Team is looking towards ParCom for direction on lanes.

The Parish Committee supports the Transition Team's efforts in engagement with the congregation. A ParCom member suggested having a key question at coffee hour as a way to interact with members.

Next Listening Session dates: Saturday, Dec. 13th 10-11:15am, (virtual); Sunday, Dec 14, 11:45 am - 1:00 pm (in person). [Updated from 12 - 1:30 pm; clerk's note.]

The Parish Committee recommends advertising the sabbaticals and leaves of the ministers at gatherings and will continue to promote and communicate through the available channels such as *The Spire*.

Liaising with various committees: The Transition Team could go to monthly committee meetings to take vital signs of each committee to gather information such as:

- Does each committee have enough people?
- Is there a covenant?
- Are the committees clear about their charge?

#### 8:29 **Short reports**

- Adjunct Director of Religious Education & Sabbatical minister (Rev. Jonipher, Rev. Stevie, and Rev. Erica)

We celebrate having an adjunct person for Rev. Stevie's parental leave: Rev. Emily Conger.

We celebrate being able to welcome Rev. Carolyn Patierno from April to June for the first part of Rev. Erica's sabbatical. Rev. Erica is checking in with the committees in her portfolio.

The Parish Committee will continue to use the e-bulletin and *The Spire* to send reminders to the congregation on these dates for the ministers' leaves.

- **Changes to the evaluation process** (Rev. Jonipher)

Since First Parish put the Committee On Ministry (COM) on hold during the transition time, Rev. Jonipher will do the evaluation for Rev. Erica. The COM typically evaluates the ministers.

Rev. Jonipher provides feedback and input throughout the year, and will do formal evaluations through one-on-ones with staff.

- **3rd amendment to lease with the preschool** (Carolyn)

The preschool, Adventures in Montessori (AIM), has asked to modify the second floor with a moveable wall. AIM assures the Parish Committee that the sound quality would not change. Rev. Stevie and the Property Committee have the specifications.

Did Property have questions? A way to look at the product and discuss it with the vendor is needed. It would be the nursery school paying. There is a draft amendment proposed, but some open questions remain. It takes two months to order a moveable wall. The school has not responded with a plan yet. Rev. Stevie acknowledges that the wall would be a good solution to enroll a few more students; it would make AIM's school more sustainable.

- [Defending Democracy Update](#)

Defending Democracy organized and hosted a Know Your Rights session on Monday, 11/17, online. It was well-attended by over 50 people and a recording is available to all who registered.

Defending Democracy provided an update in writing to the Parish Committee. The education portion was terrific, and anyone who has questions can email Defending Democracy.



The UUA has good guidance on public and private spaces, and Defending Democracy notes that other community groups in Arlington have discussed public versus private spaces and put up signs in their spaces.

Rev. Jonipher mentioned that First Parish may come up with policies, such as those in response to potential disruption of worship, or to update our disruptive behavior policy to have something about general disruption of services.

#### 8:44 **Policy votes**

- **Display space policy** (Kate T.) - changes to the [Display Space Policy](#)  
The display space policy currently covers display space only inside the meeting house. The proposed update pertains to including outdoor spaces in the policy, particularly for instances when an organization or renter would like to advertise their event.

#### **Outdoor Spaces**

The meetinghouse lawn and grounds are available for publicizing First Parish events and for public witness.

Outside Organizations may place yard signs on the meetinghouse lawn on the day of an event that they are hosting at First Parish.

**MOTION 2:** I move that we adopt the proposed changes to the display space policy (Marie) Seconded (Al). 7 of 7 in favor.

#### 8:48 - **Celebration Event on December 7th**

There will be an event for the First Parish community to help celebrate with a baby shower for Rev. Stevie and his wife.

**MOTION 3:** I move that we contribute the requested funds for the celebration event on December 7th. (Al T.) Seconded (Kate T.) 7 of 7 in favor. None opposed.

The requested funds come from the operating funds.

- Funding for the landscaping plan for the front corner (Al T.)
  - **Vote 4:** Vote to use up to \$30,000 from the Operating Budget Gift with matching funds from the Trustees to pay for a landscaping plan for the front corner  
As was discussed at a previous meeting, Al Tosti volunteered to be a champion for a landscaping project and to do some research into funding and planning.
- There are currently five committee members recruited.

- The group is moving in the direction to make a brief announcement to the congregation about a project on the front lawn area.
- The committee plans to hold meetings in the spring, from March through May.
- As champion of the project, Al has planned a conversation with the chair of the Trustees in January.

**MOTION 4:** We move to use up to \$30,000 from the Operating Budget Gift with matching funds from the Trustees to pay for a landscaping plan for the front corner. (Kate) Seconded (Amy) 7 of 7 in favor.

#### **Executive session: Parish Committee Members + Ministers**

**MOTION 5:** I move that we go into executive session and invite the ministers. (Marie / Carolyn) Seconded (Al / Amy). 7 of 7 in favor. None opposed.

- Changes to the Sexton role
- Attendants at memorial services

9:13 PM **MOTION 6:** I vote that we leave executive session. (Marie/Joanna) Seconded (Kate). 7 of 7 infavor. None opposed.

#### **Vote 7: Member hiring policy**

The Member hiring policy was tabled to later in the meeting. On the agenda, it was vote three originally.

Vote to adopt the changes to the [Member Hiring Policy](#)

**MOTION 7:** I move that we adopt the proposed changes to the Member Hiring Policy. (Carolyn) Seconded (Amy) 7 of 7 in favor.

#### **Original Member Hiring Policy (2016):**

Only candidates who are not First Parish members, and have not been First Parish members for at least three years, will be considered for most positions. Teenagers and young adults who grew up in our congregation, and people who are preparing for Unitarian Universalist ministry may be considered for positions related to religious education, sexton work, and supporting summer services, whether or not they have joined First Parish as associate members or members. (Approved by the Parish Committee, September 13, 2016)

#### **Draft Member Hiring Policy (Update 2025):**

Only candidates who are not First Parish members, and have not been First Parish members for at least three years, will be considered for most positions. Teenagers and young adults who grew up in our congregation may be considered for positions related to childcare, whether or not they have joined First Parish as associate members or members.

**MOTION 8:** I vote we adjourn. (Al) Seconded (Susan) 7 of 7 in favor. None opposed.

We adjourned at 9:15 pm.

**MOTIONS:**

**MOTION 1:** I move to adopt the consent agenda. (Al T) Seconded ( Kate / Amy ) 7 of 7 in favor. None opposed.

**MOTION 2:** I move that we adopt the proposed changes to the display space policy (Marie) Seconded (Al). 7 of 7 in favor.

**MOTION 3:** I move that we contribute the requested funds for the celebration event on December 7th. (Al T.) Seconded (Kate T.) 7 of 7 in favor. None opposed.

**MOTION 4:** We move to use up to \$30,000 from the Operating Budget Gift with matching funds from the Trustees to pay for a landscaping plan for the front corner. (Kate) Seconded (Amy) 7 of 7 in favor.

**MOTION 5:** I move that we go into executive session and invite the ministers. (Marie / Carolyn) Seconded (Al / Amy). 7 of 7 in favor. None opposed.

**MOTION 6:** I vote that we leave executive session. (Marie/Joanna) Seconded (Kate) 7 of 7 in favor. None opposed.

**MOTION 7:** I move that we adopt the proposed changes to the Member Hiring Policy. (Carolyn) Seconded (Amy) 7 of 7 in favor.

**MOTION 8:** I vote we adjourn. (Al) Seconded (Susan) 7 of 7 in favor. None opposed.

## **Interim Lead Minister's Report November 16 - December 12, 2025**

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

We just experienced the longest government shutdown in U.S. history with SNAP benefits and food insecurity being on the forefront of some family's minds. I am grateful we have a robust Minister's Discretionary Fund thanks to the generosity over the years of members of First Parish. We have been distributing grocery gift cards to members and non-members alike as well as covering some utilities to help alleviate the financial burden. Generosity is one of our UU core values and I'm glad we're living that value out loud during these difficult times.

### **Heritage**

- We took a deep dive during the start-up to address key historical events in the life of First Parish. What lessons may we glean and what questions might be asked in order to move forward towards greater health?
- It was helpful to hear the stories/insights from your former Associate Minister Rev. Carlton Elliott Smith and former District Executive Rev. Dr. Terasa Cooley, both of whom were involved towards the last years of Rev. Dr. Barbara Whittaker-Johns' ministry
- One of the core programs at FP is religious education and what an honor it was to hear about Tina Schultz's decades-long experience as DRE.

### **Leadership**

- Met with Kiki to figure out new members for LDC, plan ahead to the next roundtable and how to equip new leaders serving in committees
- 

### **Connection**

- I continue to work closely with UUA Regional Staff and my Accredited Interim Ministry mentor Rev. Joel Miller.

### **Mission**

- The success of the Reckoning and Repair Sunday highlighted the congregation's commitment to racial justice and our core values centering love and living into generosity.

### **Future**

- During the Transition Team retreat, there were big questions that were brought up, including clarity around whether or not the congregation wants to embrace being a large church and the implications of that. This inevitably leads to the question of what kind of staffing/ministerial configuration is needed moving forward, which leads to the question of what kind of Lead Minister is the Settled Minister Search Task Force being asked to look for? We're hoping the start-up with UUA Regional Staff will help provide clarity as well as further conversations with the congregation.

## Conflict & Trust

- Covenants: The Clergy Advisory Group has a draft covenant that we will finalize at our next meeting. The staff finalized one as well and so did the Worship Associates and Transition Team. I would like to add an Appendix to our Workings Manual to highlight them as our congregation continues to build momentum towards a congregation-wide Covenant of Right Relations.
- The Transition Team continues to receive feedback from the congregation. There's a spreadsheet that keeps track of the items the congregation is most concerned about during this transition period. We continue to discuss these items both during the retreat and our regular meetings. We are scheduling more Listening Sessions in the future and hope the listening goes both ways.

Interdependently Yours,  
Rev. Jonipher



## Key upcoming dates:

December 12th	"Embrace the Darkness" service
December 13th&14th	Listening Session II (virtual and in-person)
December 21st	Winter Solstice service
December 24th	Christmas Eve services

## Attendance:

Date	Total	Preacher	Title
11/16	257	Rev. Jonipher	"History vs. Nostalgia"
11/23	228	Rev. Stevie	"Making Stone Soup"
11/39	167	Rev. Erica	"Living on a Prayer"
12/7	282	Dr. Daniel	Music Sunday
12/12		Rev. Erica	"Embracing the Darkness"

## Pastoral care provided:

Office/Zoom: 5

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

*Appointments with lay leaders regarding projects and committee work: 14*

*Committee meetings attended:*

- *Worship Associates/Retreat: 11/11, 10/19*
- *ParCom Exec: 10/28, 11/11*
- *ParCom: 10/21*
- *ParCom Covenanting: 11/15*
- *Transition Team Retreat: 11/1*
- *Transition Team: 10/28*
- *Staff meeting: 11/13*
- *Leadership Development Council Roundtable: 11/2*
- *Financial roundtable: 11/5*

*Weekly individual meetings:*

- *Parish Minister: Rev. Erica Richmond*
- *MRE: Rev. Stevie Carmody*
- *Office Manager: Ebiere Omoregie*
- *Music Director: Dr. Daniel Parsley*

## **Community and Denominational Activities**

- *Individual meeting with UU ministerial colleagues: 5*

Rev. Erica F Richmond  
First Parish in Arlington Massachusetts: Parish Committee Report  
November 18, 2025-December 16, 2025

*Happy Holidays!*

*There is much “muchness” happening this holiday season. We are doing many things at the same time. Many are grieving as well as preparing for the joy of the holidays. Many are busy with the tasks of the interim and many are attending to the daily needs of our congregation. Many are facing loneliness while at the same time finding flickers of connection. Many are distressed about the state of the world and also finding moments of meaning.*

*Given all this, I am especially glad that we have several offerings at First Parish this month: an upcoming Sunday multigenerational service, Embrace the Darkness, a new Solstice Ritual, and not to mention Christmas Eve. Plus a carol sing, the Youth Group alumni party, our annual poetry service, and much more!*

*What we offer and what we provide to one another matters.*

*- Rev. Erica*

### **Worship:**

November 23rd- Rev. Stevie preached on the story Stone Soup, I was off.

November 30th- I preached on prayer

December 7th- Music Sunday

December 12th- Embrace the Darkness, I am leading.

December 14th- Rev. Jonipher preaching

December 21st- Multigenerational Worship! With all three ministers. :)

### **Pastoral Care Provided by Minister:**

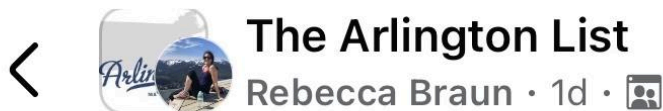
Individual pastoral sessions: 13

Themes: living with loss, spiritual disconnection, heaviness during the holidays

Individual meetings with committee leaders: 10

I officiated a memorial service for a non-member on Saturday, November 29th. Nico Braun was 21 years old and died in a car accident on November 12th. He grew up in Brookline but his parental grandparents live in Arlington so they approached First Parish about hosting a memorial service. Both Ken Seitz and I had never seen the place so packed. Doing such a service, to me, encapsulates what it means to be a community-oriented congregation. Nico's aunt left this comment in the Arlington List group on Facebook:

12:32



Our family would like to publicly thank First Parish Unitarian Universalist Church, and especially Rev. Erica, Allison, and Ebierie for hosting my nephew's celebration of life. Although we are not members, they helped us create a beautiful memorial service that reflected our wishes. We feel fortunate to have this wonderful welcoming church in our community.



 Amy Hall Speare + 131



## **Lay Leadership Support Provided by Parish Minister:**

Defending Democracy: December 9th

Interim/Transition Team: November 15th, November 25th and December 7th

Lay Ministry: December 2nd

Membership: December 9th

Parish Committee: Covenanting Conversations, November 15th

Reckoning and Repair: December 2nd

Social Justice: December 4th

Stewardship: meeting with chair, December 2nd

Worship Asso.: November 19th and December 3rd (for Embrace the Darkness)

Two listening sessions facilitated by the Transition Team will be attended by all three ministers: December 13th and 14th.

Staff meeting and holiday gathering: December 11th.

## **Programming:**

### **Education, Spiritual Deepening, Community Building**

- The Annual Harvest Moon Fair with a record-breaking revenue was on November 22nd. Here is a picture from that fabulous day: the dedicated John Hodges dressed up as a frog!



- Wednesday evening chapel continues. It is a weekly gathering on Zoom. Between 12-20 people attend each time. It is a powerful space of community sharing and contemplation.
- On November 26th, Lay Ministry hosted a pies and community gathering. This was a space for folks to be together the day before Thanksgiving. 28 people attended! It was a warm afternoon of connection, especially important for folks who were anticipating feeling lonely over the holiday weekend.





- I worked with the Religious Education Committee to plan and host Rev. Stevie's baby shower! It was wonderful to celebrate him and Liz. Highlights included a song from Aaron Kitzmiller and a litany from the Youth Group!





## Social Justice / Turning Outward

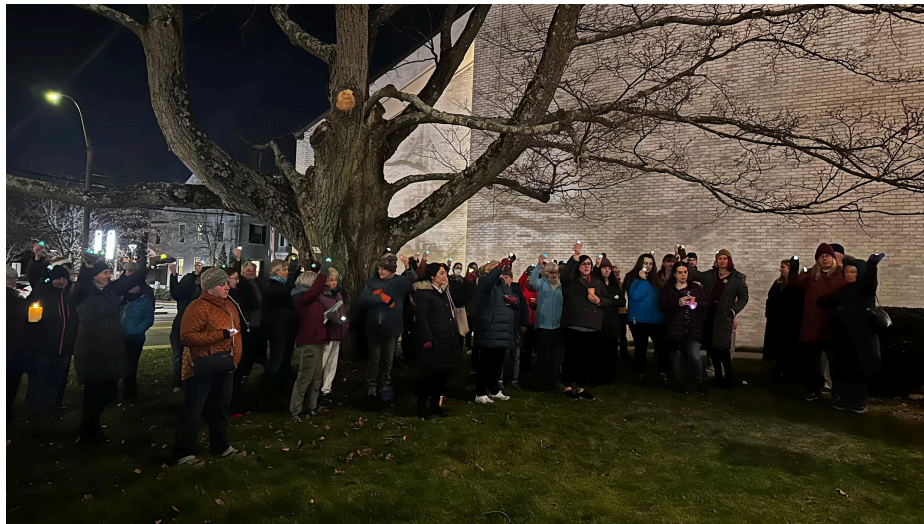
- Defending Democracy hosted MIRA for a training session on responding to ICE in Houses of Worship. 87 people registered and 58 people attended! I am happy to share the materials with anyone who wants to review them. In terms of next steps, Defending Democracy is hoping that the Parish Committee put up signs around the meetinghouse marking what is a private vs. public space. Private spaces require a judicial warrant for ICE to enter. Thank you to those of you who attended the very important and informative training- it was great to see Parish Committee members, Ushers, Worship Associates, and Religious Education folks there!
- Members of the Reckoning and Repair group took a field trip on November 15th to Kings Chapel in downtown Boston. This Unitarian congregation has done extensive work to confront the fact that founders and members of their original congregation were enslavers. They have been doing this work for 9 years which at present includes wonderful tours of their space and their history and a stunning monument (see below). DJ joined us and loved the church's long aisles.







- First Parish's LGBTQIA+ Committee and the Women's Alliance cosponsored the town's annual Trans Day of Remembrance/Resilience on November 20th. About 12 folks attended the affinity dinner beforehand (a space for non-binary and trans individuals to gather). And about 80 folks attended the vigil on the meetinghouse front lawn. Two members from the Rainbow Commission spoke, as well as, three town officials (DEI Director, School Committee member, and Selectboard member), and all three ministers. Here are two pictures from that solemn gathering.





- Reckoning and Repair officially wrapped up their month of fundraising for the Roxbury Youth Program, an initiative of the UU Urban Ministry. We raised approximately \$26,000 from 61 households for the Reckoning and Repair Fund. The next step is for R&R to meet again with the UU Urban Ministry to further cement our partnership and determine the allocation of funds. This is an incredible feat and display of justice-centered generosity from the congregation!!
- On December 7th, the Working Group for Peace and Justice in Israel and Palestine sponsored a Holiday Bazaar in the Vestry. It was a wonderful way to open up our space to two community groups.



### **Professional Development and Continuing Education:**

- I am meeting weekly with an Internal Family Systems therapist/coach.
- I am planning on attending (virtually) the January conference "Institute" put on by the UU Ministers Association.

Rev. Stevie Carmody's Report

# Religious Education Report

*Parish Committee Meeting – December 16th, 2025*

Submitted by Rev. Stevie Carmody, Minister of Religious Education, on December 13th, 2025.

Dear Parish Committee,

On Friday, November 14th, I hosted a **First Parish Young Adult Friendsgiving Potluck**, open to young adults of our community ages 18 through 35(ish). With 14 attendees, this gathering was a lovely, delicious success.



Both alumni of our religious education program living in the area and young adults who have joined First Parish in their adulthood were present. The group didn't need much prodding to be warm and welcoming to one another, and by the end, they agreed to continue having potlucks (with a few young adults stepping up to help host while I'm on parental leave) every other month. It seems like there's **an appetite (har har) for more potlucks and perhaps more young adult ministry moments!**

The shape and character of young adult spiritual lives is unique, and ministry to that group may involve affinity space (like the potluck) to make sure to meet those needs. For example, young adults might be variously navigating: **a time of high transition, a time of low control over schedule, a time to renegotiate our relationship with our spiritual homes, a time of new questions about how to live your values in the world, and a time when the gap between ideals and reality feels most stark.** But for right now, the need for friendship and belonging is most evident and in our capacity to meet.



# Sunday Morning Programs

## Fall Term Updates

**Amy Hadley, Carol Lewis** and youth **Katie Limb** have been ably creating welcome for our youngest kids in **Pre-K**.

In the **K/1 Class**, **Joanne Cullinane** and **Jen Baxter** ended the term with a nice baking class, with the awesome assistance of Julius & Martha Pereli in the kitchen.



The **2/3 Class**, led by **Gail Page** and **Francis O'Donovan**, wrapped up their year with an exploration of nature's life cycles and also exploring their own relationship to growth. In the Winter term, they'll dive into a curriculum centered around *Charlotte's Web* and further connections with nature.

The **4/5 Class**, led by **James Brooks, Sarah Quick**, and **Logan Castrucci**, has continued learning about the life and times of Jesus of Nazareth. The teaching team and RE Staff have partnered to make for more engaging interactive activities that suit both the content, and the

The **6/7 Class** ended their year with a visit to the **Kukukulla Center (Tibetan Buddhist)**, with the support of co-teachers **Jerry and Tina Silberman**. The hosts at the center in Medford were welcoming and accommodating to the questions our middle schoolers had.

# Sunday Evening Programs

## OWL Program

The current OWL program will be wrapping up in mid December, while registration for the next session is now underway. They will launch in March 2026. Gratitude to our outgoing facilitators **Sara Galantowicz, Rowan Wheeler, and Lidia Prunte** for being such a great team in 2025!

## COA Program

Coming of Age will begin in January 2026 for the current eighth graders. The mentors returning this year are: **Carolyn Hodges, Pamela Baldwin, Peter Heller, and Phil Speare**. RE Staff and the mentors met this month to plan out the curriculum arc, collective art project, and various activities that will go into the group's exploration of UU identity, belonging in First Parish, and reflection on personal and communal values.

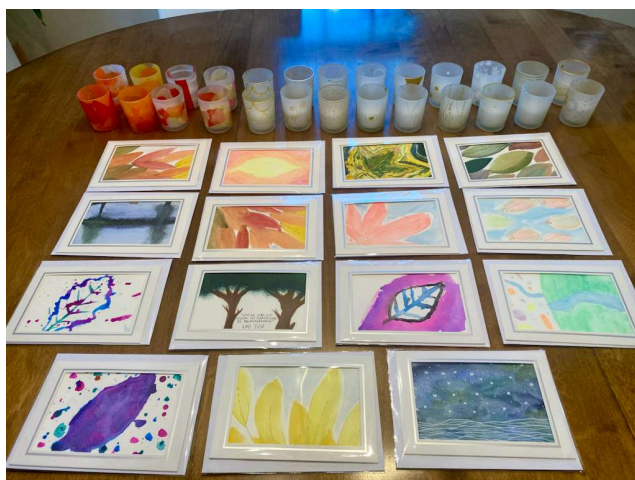
## Youth Program

Our Youth Program is in full swing this fall. The group has bonded, and is navigating welcoming a handful of newcomers while continuing to stretch the group's comfort zone. **Youth Adult Counsel (YAC)** members have begun taking on more responsibilities, supported by youth co-leaders **Lettie Carswell** and **Conard Anderson**, alongside Youth Program Coordinator **K Milano**.

For this year's **Harvest Moon Fair**, Fundraising Coordinator **Sean M**, with guidance from adult advisor **Barbara Dumery**, led the group in making votive candle holders and cards to sell in support of First Parish. Music Coordinator **Calvin Q** organized a

small ensemble into the **Youth Group Band**, which made its debut at the event, sharing their music with the wider community and proving that a little practice can go a long way.

Social Action Coordinator **Lydia R** guided a workshop inviting youth to explore their personal stakes in organizing for justice. That reflection led the group to select **Boston**



**Healthcare for the Homeless** as their Social Action project for the year.

Looking outward, the youth have also been finding ways to **connect with the wider First Parish community**. They created a “mailbox” on their bulletin board where community members can leave invitations for collaboration or shared projects.

## 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 morning	Notes	Nursery	Pre-K	Grades K-7 (comb.)	*Other	K/1	2/3	4/5	6/7	OWL	COA	Youth Group
avg	66	40		0	6							14		14
9/7	69	41	Combined welcome back program	0	6	35	-	-	-	-	-	14	-	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 programming for holiday weekend	1	2	24	-	-	-	-	-	-		10
12/7	62	36		0	2	-	-	7	12	9	6	14		12

# 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 continuing its work in supporting multigenerational engagement in the congregation and enhancing how we support our volunteers in the program. In the past month, this has taken the form of:



- Planning and hosting a lovely multigenerational **Baby Shower for Rev. Stevie & Liz**. Through food, a parade, a special song from Aaron Kitzmiller, a collective art project, and fun in the Vesty, the committee helped not only honor this big transition for Rev. Stevie's family, but also create a chance for the whole community to hang out together.
- **Surveying both volunteer teachers & kids** about what success in the religious education program looks like. The survey of the kids happened during our All-Together program on 11/30, and the survey of the teachers is happening as an end-of-term feedback mechanism that is feeding right back into the teacher onboarding process for the new term.

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 Betsy Carlton Gysan.

## STAR Committee

The **STAR (Spirit, Transformation, Adventure, & Reflection) Committee**—Kate L, Lyn F-J, Steph M, Maureen D, joined by Rev. Stevie—shifts into supporting all the adult offerings coming up this year. There's plans in the works for crafting nights, a dance, game night, grief workshops, and more.

STAR programs this month included Rev Stevie's two-part workshop **Unpacking Our Religious Luggage**. Nineteen participants joined the workshop, engaging deeply in sharing their religious stories, reflecting on what we carry from our journeys, and how we support another here in continuing that lifelong journey.