

BRIDGING



Newsletter of the First Parish Church, Bridgewater, MA, Unitarian Universalist

January 2016

From the Minister...

"But We're Liberals!"

We should not expect individuals to produce good, open-minded, truth-seeking reasoning, particularly when self-interest or reputational concerns are in play. But if you put individuals together in the right way ... you can create a group that ends up producing good reasoning.... This is why it's so important to have intellectual and ideological diversity within any group or institution whose goal is to find truth ... or to produce good public policy.

– Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*

The Unitarian side of our Living Tradition arose out of the Parishes like ours that were established by the Puritan founders of our towns. These churches were tax-supported and were known as "Standing Order" churches. A split developed in the late 1700's among the ministers of these congregations, with some holding fast to their theology exactly as it had been handed down – they called themselves "orthodox" – and others who believed that reason required new ways of understanding Christianity; these took the name "Liberal Christians." Their conservative opponents – particularly one Jedidiah Morse, who was both the minister of the Charleston congregation and a geographer – attacked the Liberal Christians and accused them of heresy. Finally, in 1819, the Liberal Christian ministers under the leadership of William Ellery Channing reluctantly accepted the name their opponents tried to force on them – "Unitarian" – and the Standing Order churches split apart; most of our First and Second Parishes became Unitarian, while the orthodox withdrew and founded Congregational churches.

But while the Unitarians were liberal in religion, they were by no means necessarily liberal in politics. Among the members of their congregations were owners of mills and banks and others whose prosperity was built on the cheap cotton raised with slave labor in the South – and many of them abhorred the Abolitionists. Hence it was said that, "Universalist church bells rang out for freedom, but Unitarian bells were silent, being stuffed up with cotton." At another time in our history, a few of our ministers stood for pacifism in World War I, but Unitarian General Conference – let by Moderator William Howard Taft, the last Unitarian President of the United States – overwhelmingly voted that the 'war must be carried to a successful issue to stamp out militarism in the world, [and] that approval be given to measures of President Wilson and Congress to carry on war, restrictive as they may be."

Since the merger of our two historic denominations in 1961, we have generally been on the liberal side of the most contested political issues, including support for the Civil Rights Movement, opposition to the Vietnam War and Iraq Wars, advocating for the rights of women, persons of color, Equal Marriage, and many other causes. Some have joked that Unitarian Universalism is "The Democratic Party at Prayer."

We are living in a time of intense political polarization, where those who self-identify as liberal can barely understand (or tolerate) those who are conservative, and vice versa. In our religious liberalism, we understand that no particular theological has a lock on the truth; that we need to understand our spiritual lives through multiple lenses to learn how to live faithfully and well.

Is it possible that our political liberalism has become narrow and confining and makes it difficult for us to find common cause with others not in agreement with us? If, as Jonathan Haidt suggests, we need to have "intellectual and ideological diversity within any group or institution whose goal is to find truth," do we make room for such diversity on our congregation? Or do we welcome everyone – except those who don't identify as politically liberal?

Our theme for January is an opportunity to consider whether we can really tolerate political as well as religious diversity.

In Faith,
Rev. Paul

Minister

Rev. Paul Sprecher
PSprecher@uuma.org
781-774-0086

Directory of Religious Ed

Sara Williams
dre.bridgewater@gmail.com
978-257-0240

Parish Committee

President: Sam Baumgarten
sbaumgarten@verizon.net
508-697-6848

Vice President: Eileen Hiney
Fryleen@verizon.net
508-279-3955

Clerk: Stefan Michaud
spmicha@verizon.net
(508) 946-5684

Treasurer: Susan Irish
eirish2@aol.com
508-378-2906

Members at Large: Andrew Harding
Kat Gillespie
Jan Thompson

Church Sexton / Building Rental

Tom St. Thomas: 508-697-8637

Choir Director/Pianist

Denise Haskins
denisehaskins@comcast.net

Tone Chimes Choir Director

Lisa Rue
508-378-8359
lisa_rue80@yahoo.com

Religious Education Committee

Chair: Laurie Lessner
Peter Jacobson
Sonia D'Alarcao

Community Minister

Rev. Rachel Tedesco
revrayted@comcast.com
508-378-3904

Social Justice Committee

Convener: Betty Gilson
gillyflower@verizon.net
774-226-0942

Membership Committee

Chair: Jan Thompson
janicethompson22@comcast.net
508-697-2492

Green Sanctuary Committee

Chair: Janet Dye
dyedye07@gmail.com
508-697-9663

First Principle Project

Convener: Betty Gilson
gillyflower@verizon.net
774-226-0942

Facilities Committee

Chair: Frank Yeatman
Fryleen@verizon.net
508-279-3955

Office Administrator

Jamie Doulette
firstparishbridgewater@hotmail.com
508-697-8229

Worship Committee News

The theme for the month of January is "But We're Liberals!". The hymn of the month is "Turn the World Around," #1074 in *Singing the Journey* hymnal.

Worship Services in January:

January 3 – Worship with Rev. Paul Sprecher. "Beyond Partisan Division" - Unitarian Universalism has been sometimes described as "The Democratic Party at Prayer." Are we truly welcoming to people of every description -- politically? - Lay Worship Leader: Eileen Hiney; Ushers: Louella Mann and Pam Wilson.

January 10 – Worship with Tony Winters. "Everything You Know" Lay Worship Leader: McKayla Hoffman. Ushers: Bob & Karen Messing.

January 17 – Worship with Rev. Paul Sprecher. "Black Lives Matter" - As we consider the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., what have we learned from the Black Lives Matter movement, and what part should we play? - Lay Worship Leader: Stefan Michaud. Ushers: Jack & Pat Hart.

January 24 – Worship led by the Parish Committee. "Who's the Real Unitarian Universalist?" Lay Worship Leader: Sam Baumgarten Ushers: Ginger Irish & Gordon Hatfield.

January 31 – Worship with Rev. Paul Sprecher: "Conservatively Liberal?" - Liberalism as a political tendency has been under brutal assault for decades. Is "Liberal" a dirty word? Or is "Conservative?" Who will admit to being "Reactionary?" - Lay Worship Leader: TBD Ushers: David Page & Quentin Jarvis.

Note to Worship Associates, Lay Worship Leaders & Ushers: If you cannot fulfill your role on your assigned date, please let Rev. Rachel know as soon as possible. (And try to find a substitute if you can.) Phone 508-378-3904 (home) or 508-944-6436 (cell) or email her at revrayted@comcast.net.

Announcement about Announcements: Please remember to submit announcements to Jamie by Wednesday at 5pm so they can be included in the weekly update. Please write out announcements to be made before the service on the lay worship leader's form, and keep them very short. Remember that we now start announcements at **10:25**.

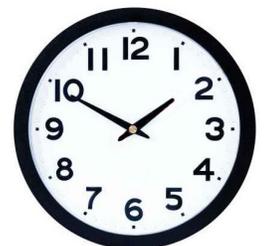
Worship Committee meeting: The next regular meeting of the Worship Committee is Thursday, January 21 at 7:30pm in the church office. Meetings are open. Church members and friends are cordially invited to attend. **Committee members:** Rev. Rachel Tedesco, Chair; Denise Haskins, McKayla Hoffman, Stefan Michaud, Tom St. Thomas, Tony Winters and Rev. Paul Sprecher.

MINISTER'S OFFICE HOURS

Rev. Paul is on site in Bridgewater on the second, third, and fourth Tuesday and Thursday of every month and the first, third (and fifth) Sundays of every month. On the first full week of the month, Rev. Paul is off. Also, staff meetings are held each Tuesday from 12:30 – 2:30pm.

All regular business should be handled before or after the first week. Emergencies of course come up, and he understands that. You can reach Rev. Paul by email (psprecher@uuma.org) phone (781-774-0086).

Your help in protecting his time is appreciated.





LET'S *Grow* TOGETHER

IMPORTANT DATES

January 3	RE Classes Resume
January 10	RE Classes
January 17	RE Classes
January 24	RE Classes
January 31	RE Classes

Hello Everyone,

Last December I felt called to answer an advertisement for a position in a U.U. church to expand upon my progressive teaching and leadership experience. I carted myself, 8.5 months pregnant, to interview with the wonderful RE Committee and Rev. Paul ... and I attended the candlelight service with my partner, Dan. When I entered the sanctuary, I knew I wanted to be a part of this loving community.

I began two journeys in 2015, and they have both been breathtaking. Along with becoming a parent, I also started my journey at First Parish, and everyone here is *amazing*. I feel inspired by each and every person at First Parish. Each time I enter the church I am thankful for this opportunity, and feel excited to grow along with everyone here.

Thank you for everything in 2015. Here's to a fantastic new year.

Sara

DECEMBER RECAP:

The children and youth spent the month preparing for winter events at the church. They worked together to make garlands for the Mitten Tree. The abundant donations of mittens, gloves, and hats that were made this month will go to the Brockton Head Start for the children attending school there.

The children and youth also made wreaths to decorate the church and to give as a gift to some congregation members during the Winter Solstice service.

The rest of the month was spent preparing for the Winter Solstice service. They practiced a chant, accompaniment on Tone Chimes for "Oh Christmas Tree," and the youth sang "Lord of the Dance." The children and youth regularly choose to share their musical gifts with the congregation!

THE HIVE

Have you noticed?! The Hive is just about ready for RE classes! Keep your eyes peeled for a dedication.

I am thrilled that our wonderful children and youth will be able to use this space. I know it's been quite a journey to acquire and prepare this classroom, but we have so many uses for it! Thank you for your patience and support during this journey to grow. Are you ready? Let's Grow Together!

New Class: Just Mercy Discussion after Church - from Rev. Paul

I will be leading a discussion of this year's UUA Common Read, *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* by Bryan Stevenson after church on three Sundays after the service: Jan. 17 & 31 & Feb. 7. I announced this class in December -- but we were too busy! We will have a big pot of soup for lunch (and perhaps a bit more).

Brian Stevenson, founder of the Equal Justice Initiative, has dedicated his legal career to defending those who are trapped by an often capricious, political, and willfully unjust criminal justice system - poor people, people of color, children, and others over whom the system has run roughshod. It speaks to justice, mercy, and compassion, themes of concern to us as Unitarian Universalists and as human beings. We will be using a discussion guide provided by the UUA.

This book is also being read by our sister congregations in Duxbury, Kingston and Plymouth, and also at Messiah Baptist in Brockton; all of our congregations will then gather at Messiah at some date in March to share our responses to the book.

Please sign up at coffee hour on Sunday or just send me an email (minister@firstparishbridgewater.org) OR comment on the Facebook post of this message. The book is available online for \$10.18, you can buy it for Kindle and download it for \$11.99, and it's available from the SAILS library system both as a book and as an audio book. I'd be happy to place an order for the book for anyone who wishes me to.

INTERESTED IN BECOMING A MEMBER OF FIRST PARISH?

We have been fortunate to have seen many new faces at First Parish since the start of the church year this fall. We are happy that you chose First Parish and the Unitarian Universalist faith as part of your spiritual journey. If you are interested in becoming an Active Member of our church (with voting rights), we will be offering classes in Unitarian Universalism in the near future. Led by Reverend Paul, these classes offer instruction in the history of Unitarian Universalism and its principles. This part of the class will be centered around the text "The Unitarian Universalist Pocket Guide" which will be provided to each participant before the classes meet. The classes will also offer insight into how First Parish functions and how you can participate more fully in the work of the church. If you are interested in becoming a member of First Parish or would just like more information about Unitarian Universalism and our church, please contact Jan Thompson of the Membership Committee JaniceThompson22@comcast.net (508)-697-2492.



Off the Common Coffeehouse

*Located in the Upper Parish Hall at First Parish Church
50 School Street, Bridgewater*



Saturday, January 2, 2016 at 8pm

Potluck dinner at 6:30pm

featuring

Low Lily with Robin O'Herin

Coming Attractions

February 6 — The Honey Dewdrops (\$15.00)

March 5 — The Lords of Liechtenstein
and Pesky J Nixon (Split bill - \$15.00)

April 2 — Anni Clark

and Curt Bessette & Jenn Kurtz duo (Split bill)

May 7 — Susie Burke & David Surette with Andy & Judy

Admission: \$13

*Enjoy our homemade
Refreshments*

Sign up for open mike!

Social Justice News

The next meeting of the Social Justice Committee is Thursday, January 7 at 7pm in the Lower Parish Hall.

There are several issues of interest to the Social Justice Committee, but we'll feature only two here.

Divestment Resolution— Sponsored by UUs for Justice in the Middle East. UJME is calling for the help of UUs across the country to get a resolution before the 2016 UUA General Assembly. This is part of a nation-wide, inter-faith campaign urging divestment from corporations complicit in the violation of Palestinian human rights. Similar actions are being taken by UCC churches and Jewish Voices for Peace

The severe and systematic abuse of Palestinian human rights under the Israeli occupation continues unabated. UUs should not support or profit from these abuses through their investments. UJME is therefore gathering signatures on a Business Resolution calling on the UUA for shareholder activism with five corporations that are directly and critically involved in maintaining the occupation and its associated abuses and, most importantly, for divestment if these corporations do not end their involvement. The five corporations are Caterpillar, Motorola Solutions, HP Inc., Hewlett Packard Enterprises, and G4S. The full text may be found online at www.uujme.org.

The Social Justice Committee will have a copy of the GA Business Resolution and a sign-up sheet after church services to collect members' signatures. You may also talk to Rev. Rachel Tedesco to sign if you can't make it to church. The deadline for signature gathering is January 25th

UU Mass Action and The Brockton Interfaith Community (BIC); Adopting the Trust Act for Undocumented Immigrants

For a background on Immigration Rights and Sanctuary Cities, go to testimony given by Laura Wagner, Executive Director, UU Mass Action, before the State Legislature: <http://www.uumassaction.org/sanctuary-cities/>

As we know, Brockton has many residents who have fled civil war and gang violence in their home countries, most recently Guatemala and El Salvador. Some are here on temporary visas or with no proper documentation at all since refuge status from civil strife in these countries is not officially recognized by the U.S. Government. Many refugees have lived in the U.S. for years. They've led law-abiding lives, working hard, establishing businesses and raising families here. But they are at daily risk of being "scooped up" by local police for misdemeanors, even for a minor traffic violation... and then handed over to ICE (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement) . What follows is long term incarceration in ICE detention centers (including one in Plymouth), often under inhumane conditions, long separation from their families and eventual deportation back to the dangerous environments they have fled. Currently, many imprisoned immigrants are going on hunger strikes to protest treatment in the detention centers. Here's more information on-line: <http://www.notonemoredeportation.com/2015/12/10/in-face-of-ice-torture-tactics-three-centers-continue-freedomgiving-hunger-strike/>

One answer is for city councils to pass a Sanctuary City resolution, stating they will not cooperate with ICE and will be sanctuaries of safety for law-abiding immigrants and their families. This from the Boston Herald, August 4, 2015: " A sanctuary city is a non-legal term meant to describe a city or town that does not enforce federal immigration laws.

Sanctuary cities typically do not use municipal funds to enforce federal immigration laws and restrict their police forces from inquiring about a person's immigration status, particularly when it comes to traffic violations. There are six sanctuary cities in Massachusetts: Cambridge, Somerville, Chelsea, Orleans, Northampton and Springfield." BIC leadership is considering this strategy now, but hasn't yet organized a campaign.

Another answer is for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to adopt the MA Trust Act (SD.1698 and HD.3204). Our states reps and senators need to hear from us about this. More information: <http://www.uumassaction.org/uuma/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Please-cosponsor-Trust-Act-2015.pdf>

Other upcoming issues:

"Jobs Not Jails" and the Bail Fund movement in Plymouth County

The Restorative Justice movement in Plymouth County and in Brockton

Standing Up to Islamophobia; How can we help? An Upcoming Forum on January 24.

Watch for future details on all these issues

Article by Rev. Rachel Tedesco

GREEN SANCTUARY COMMITTEE'S Green Tip of the Month



Green Cleaning Tip

There are many products on the market today that make it easier to help the planet while still cleaning well. Think about what products you use and go green when you can.

Chemicals used in traditional cleaning products have shown to not only be harmful to our environment throughout the lifecycle of the product but also to our own health. Using green cleaning practices and products is a safe alternative.

Green chemistry is an innovative science used in developing non-toxic cleaning products. It is based on the precautionary principle, which states that the health of humans, animals, and the environment must be considered before introducing practices or products that may be harmful. As recently as five years ago, many non-toxic cleaning products were less effective and more expensive than their toxic counterparts, thanks to green chemistry, effective, cost-competitive non-toxic cleaning products and practices are widely available today.

TONE CHIMES

Tone chimes will resume rehearsals and playing monthly for service preludes in January. New ringers welcome! No experience necessary. Will train. :) Rehearsals take place one evening per month in East Bridgewater, in addition to the Sunday morning review time prior to playing for the service. Please contact Lisa Rue for more information - lisa_rue80@yahoo.com or 508-378-8359.

SCIENCE AND RELIGION DISCUSSION GROUP

There will be a meeting of the Science and Religion Discussion Group on Wednesday January 20th at 7pm in the upper parish hall. All are welcome. The text is "The Inflationary Universe" by Alan Guth.

FAMILY DANCE

Sam Baumgarten will lead a family dance on Sunday, January 24th, at 2pm at the Bridgewater Senior Center. Come, join hands, and experience the joy of folk, square, and contra dancing. See Sam for more information.

DANCE WITH GLBTA PRIDE CENTER

After our social with the GLBTA students and their advisor, Lee Forest, I spoke with some of the students about involving them in traditional dance—folk, square, contra—with instructions provided in a gender-neutral manner. They seemed interested in this, and after a follow-up meeting a few weeks ago, they decided to host a dance, not only for the GLBT folks, but for the entire campus. The tentative date is Thursday, February 4th, from 5-7pm, in the Campus Center ballroom. We decided to include some ballroom instruction, as well, and my two BSU colleagues who teach the ballroom classes will join the event. I hope that others from our church will attend and show our on-going support for the group. More details will be provided after the new year.



JANUARY SHARE THE PLATE

First Parish has a long standing association with MainSpring House homeless shelter in Brockton. A dedicated group of volunteers has been making 100 lunches for the first Tuesday of each month for many years. However, a recent letter to Rev. Paul from Father Bill's & MainSpring House has alerted us to a very special need at this time. They have joined with the Plymouth Taskforce to end homelessness and several local churches to provide emergency shelter for this winter at two locations in Plymouth. To cover this expense they need to raise \$50,000 immediately. So we will be sharing the plate with them for January. If you wish to make a specific donation, make a check out to Father Bill's & MainSpring House and it can be mailed with the church donation. (See letter attached to this email.)

MAINSRING HOUSE LUNCHESES

Monday, January 4, 2016 at 9am MainSpring house lunches will be prepared in the LPH. Volunteers and donations always welcome. Speak with Betty Gilson to offer help.

FULL SOCIAL JUSTICE MEETING

Thursday, January 7 at 7pm the Full Social Justice Committee will meet at the church. We will be discussing plans for the year for the various branches, as well as introducing some ideas for social action to be considered.

T"UU"RNING LEAVES BOOK CLUB

Friday, January 22 at 7pm, location TBD, the T"UU"rning Leaves Book Club will meet to discuss *White Teeth* by Zadie Smith. Set against London's racial and cultural tapestry, venturing across the former empire and into the past as it barrels toward the future, **White Teeth** revels in the ecstatic hodgepodge of modern life, flirting with disaster, confounding expectations, and embracing the comedy of daily existence. All are welcome to join the group.

CARING COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, January 25 at 7pm the Caring Committee will meet at the church. If you know issues of joys or concerns for the committee to address, speak with a committee member.

Helping the Hungry

Our **Social Justice Committee** collects non-perishable food items for the local food pantry. We invite you to help the hungry in our local area by bringing canned and packaged foods on the first Sunday of each month. A box is placed at the front of the sanctuary, near the piano, to receive the items, which the Social Justice Committee members gather and bring to our local food pantry.



Feeding the Homeless*

Our church volunteers provide lunches for **MainSpring House** shelter for the homeless in Brockton. We gather on the **first Monday* of each month at 9 a.m. in the lower parish hall** to prepare and wrap 100 bag lunches, which are then brought to the shelter by one or two of our volunteers.



You can help in many ways, including joining us at the above gatherings, donating baked goods, other food items, and paper goods as needed, taking home some of the fixings and preparing parts of the lunches (such as tuna or egg salad) at home for the volunteers to assemble at the church, or simply donating money toward the cost of the lunches, which is about \$100 per month for 100 lunches.

Please contact Betty Gilson (774-226-0942) for further information, or just drop by that morning to help.

**The lunches are prepared on Mondays to be eaten on the first Tuesday of each month. If the first Tuesday falls on the first day of the month, the lunches are made on the final Monday of the previous month.*

January 2016 CALENDAR

Friday, January 1

3-8pm Annual New Year's Day Open House at Frank & Eileen's

Saturday, January 2

8pm Off the Common Coffeehouse

Sunday, January 3

9am Choir Rehearsal

10:30am Worship with Rev. Paul Sprecher, "Beyond Partisan Division"

6pm Adult Game Night at First Parish

Monday, January 4

9am MainSpring House lunches prep at FP

7:30pm Facilities Committee meeting

Tuesday, January 5

7:30pm Committee Council Meeting in the UPH of First Parish

Thursday, January 7

7pm The Social Justice Committee will hold their monthly meeting in the LPH at First Parish

7:30pm Committee Council meeting in the UPH of FP

Sunday, January 10

10:30am Worship with Tony Winters, "Everything You Know"

Monday, January 11

7:30pm Green Sanctuary Committee Meeting

Sunday, January 17

9am Choir rehearsal

10:30am Worship with Rev. Paul Sprecher, "Black Lives Matter"

12pm Just Mercy Discussion with Rev. Paul

Wednesday, January 20

7pm Science and Religion Discussion Group at FP

Thursday, January 21

5:30pm RE Committee Meeting

7:30pm Worship Committee meeting

Friday, January 22

7pm T"UU"ring Leaves Book Club—location TBD

Sunday, January 24

9am Choir rehearsal

10:30am Worship led by the Parish Committee, "Who's the Real Unitarian Universalist?"

After service: Informational meeting in Sanctuary regarding Solar Panels for the Church

2pm Family Dance at the Bridgewater Senior Center with Sam Baumgarten

Monday, January 25

7pm Caring Committee will meet at First Parish

Thursday, January 28

7:30pm Parish Committee meeting at First Parish

Sunday, January 31

9am Choir rehearsal

10:30am Worship with Rev. Paul Sprecher, "Conservatively Liberal?"

12pm Just Mercy Discussion with Rev. Paul

First Parish Church Unitarian Universalist

50 School Street

Bridgewater, MA 02324

508-697-2525

www.firstparishbridgewater.org

firstparishbridgewater@hotmail.com

firstparishbridgewater.blogspot.com

Coffee Hour Hosts for January

3rd - The Anderson Family's Pancake breakfast. Bring your Appetite, and get some luck

10th - Eileen and Frank Yeatman

17th - OPEN

24th - OPEN

31st - Soup Potluck Since it's Soup Month, it 's only fitting