

# BRIDGING



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

December 2015

## From the Minister...

### "Light"

"It was customary for pagans to celebrate the birth of the sun...when the doctors of the Church perceived that the Christians had a leaning to this festival, they took counsel and resolved that the true Nativity should be solemnized on that day [December 25th]." - A Roman scholar, 354 AD.

Festivals of Light are celebrated in many different parts of the world during this season of the year. We are most familiar with Christmas and Hanukkah, but Diwali from the Hindu traditions is also a Festival of Light, falling on the new moon night between mid-October and mid-November. Like other festivals of light, Diwali celebrates the victory of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance, good over evil, and hope over despair. Hanukkah falls in the same season; the dates on which it is celebrated vary because – like Diwali – it is based on a lunar calendar. The festivals of Solstice and Christmas come closest to the time in the solar calendar when the daylight is least, the point at which the light begins – ever so slowly – to return.

The Romans celebrated Saturnalia on December 25th; another Roman festival, the "birthday of the unconquerable Sun," arose in Syria in the monotheistic cult of Mithras and later traveled to the capital of the Empire. And presumably the Church Fathers thought it fitting to overlay these pagan celebrations with another in honor of the Unconquerable Son.

As Christianity spread around Europe, the celebration picked up elements from pagan celebrations of the solstice include Yule Logs and trees. By the time the Puritans emerged from the Church of England to colonize our Commonwealth, Christmas was seen by them as an occasion of licentiousness; one of them wrote:

More mischief is ... committed [at Christmas] than in all the year besides, what masking and mumming, ... what dicing and carding, what eating and drinking, what banqueting and feasting ... to the great dishonour of God and impoverishing of the realm.

As a result, the founders of our First and Second and Third Parish congregations in these parts forbade the celebration of Christmas in their churches. It wasn't until 1832 that Charles Follen, Harvard professor and Unitarian minister, set up the first decorated Christmas tree in these parts. Gradually, Unitarian hearts softened toward the celebration, helped not a little by the publication of A Christmas Carol in 1843 by the British Unitarian Charles Dickens.

So this is a season to celebrate Light, our theme for December: The light of the Menorah, of Solstice, of Christmas, as well as of Kwanzaa. In all of these celebrations let us remember to be generous to others so that our gifts of mittens and caps can provide warmth to those in need who are cold; bountiful food for those who are hungry; caring gifts under our Giving Tree for mothers and children who have few when we have many. And as the light gradually overcomes the darkness, may we live with a firm confidence that light will return, that love can conquer hate, and that hope can overcome despair.

In Faith,  
Rev. Paul

**Minister**

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# Holly Day Faire

*HO HO HO...*

It's the First Parish Holly Day Faire!

**Friday, December 4, 6pm - 8pm**

Have a piece of Cheesecake or Decadent Chocolate Dessert while listening to live Christmas Jazz.

**Saturday, December 5, 10am - 2pm**

Our Famous Soup Lunch Buffet - try a bottomless bowl!

**\*\*Both days take a Sweet Cookie Walk; buy that special gift from a Local Artisan or find hidden Antique Treasures & Books\*\***

First Parish UU Church 50 School St, Bridgewater



## Let It Snow, Let It Snow...

It's clearly not too early to be thinking about snow—and the possibility of cancelling a Sunday service in the event of having too much of it. First Parish policy for closings in the event of snow or other weather-related emergencies calls for notices to be posted on:

Television: WBZ (Boston CBS network)

Telephone: First Parish answering machine message (508) 697-2525

Internet: [www.firstparishbridgewater.com](http://www.firstparishbridgewater.com), Facebook, or [www.cbsboston.com](http://www.cbsboston.com)

We will also send out an email to everyone on our email list to announce a cancellation.

A decision to cancel a Sunday service, which would be made jointly by the minister, sexton, and Parish Committee president, would be posted no later than 7am on the day of the service.

Cancelling a Sunday service is not something any of us would want to do, but the safety of the congregation, volunteers, and church staff will always come first.

Thanks,

Sam Baumgarten  
Parish Committee President

## Worship Services in December

The theme for the month of December is *Light*. The hymn of the month is "O Brother Sun," #1066 in the *Singing the Journey* hymnal.

**December 6** –Worship with Rev. Paul Sprecher. "Miracles & Martyrs" Hanukkah has borne many meanings over the centuries, from a story of victory over religious intolerance to a story about the miracle of the flame that didn't go out – but always it tells of courage, and faith. Lay Worship Leader: Tony Winters. Ushers: Jack & Pat Hart. Debbie Baumgarten will host coffee hour.

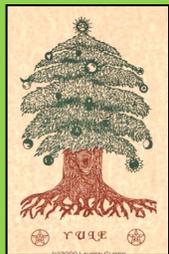
**December 13** – Worship with Rev. Paul Sprecher. "Still Waiting" Advent is a season of waiting – for Peace, for Joy – and, of course, Presents. An old story and new meanings. Lay Worship Leader: Betty Gilson. Ushers: McKayla Hoffman & Tony Winters.

**December 20** – Winter Solstice service– an intergenerational service with the Religious Education Committee. See article below. Lay Worship Leader: Laurie Lessner. Ushers: Shara Yabroudy & Rosalyn D'Alarcao-Lithcfield.

**December 23** –Christmas Candlelight Service with Rev. Paul Sprecher. Lay Worship Leader: Sam Baumgaurten. Ushers: Pam & James Hayes-Bohanan.

**December 27** –An intergenerational Kwanzaa Service with Worship Committee. Even if most of us are not African American, there is a lot that the candles of Kwanzaa have to teach us. Lay Worship Leader: McKayla Hoffman. Ushers: Cindy Weatherby & TBA. Coffee hour today, will be potluck.

**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](mailto:revrayted@comcast.net).



### WINTER SOLSTICE SERVICE – DECEMBER 20

The RE Committee is looking forward to the Winter Solstice service on December 20th. Let's celebrate together, the return of light on this longest day of the year. We'll continue our new tradition of enlisting the participation of the congregation, so if you want to be a part of the service, please contact Sara at [dre.bridgewater@gmail.com](mailto:dre.bridgewater@gmail.com) or any member of the RE Committee by December 4th. In the afternoon the honoring of the solstice will continue with a walk led by Pete Jacobson, *ending with* an outdoor service led by McKayla and Tony. Details will follow.

**Announcement about Announcements:** In order to reduce the time spent on spoken announcements on Sunday mornings and to respect the time devoted to worship, the Worship Committee has come up with these strategies:

For long announcements, please submit these to Jamie for the weekly email (and/or monthly Bridging) no later than 5pm Wednesday.

You may also submit a shorter announcement, 3 lines maximum, to be printed in the Sunday morning bulletin (aka Order of Service). This should be ready-to-print; no edits required... also by Wednesday.

If a verbal announcement is also necessary, it should be extremely brief. Example: Name of event, date and time, and person to follow up with. Refer, if relevant, to printed announcements elsewhere... in bulletin or weekly email.

And, finally, announcements should begin promptly at 10:25 a.m. These should end no later than 10:30am, when the Prelude begins.

**Worship Committee meeting:** The next regular meeting of the Worship Committee is December 10 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.



# LET'S *Grow* TOGETHER

## IMPORTANT DATES

December 6	One Room Schoolhouse
December 13	One Room Schoolhouse
December 20	Winter Solstice Service (All Ages)
December 23	Candlelight Services (All Ages)

Hello Everyone,

The RE year is flying by, as I'm sure you are noticing in many aspects of your lives. Work, school, community events... Wait, did you say *holidays*? We are facing some important moments in the church year during the month of December, and I am reflecting upon how quickly they pass. If you have any ways to help stay "in the moment" during this holiday season, please send them along! Me? I try to step back from the nitty-gritty and embrace the beautiful chaos that is holiday prep work. These are the holiday memories, are they not?

I am looking forward to spending some of my future cherished memories with you! Read on for the memories our children and youth are creating now!

Peace,  
Sara

Pre-K through 2nd grade students have been exploring Unitarian Universalist principles and spirituality through picture books.

This church year, the group has explored the following picture books:

- The Big Orange Splot
- Old Turtle
- Maria's Comet
- Henry Hikes to Fitchburg
- Over the River

4th through 6th grade students have been studying Unitarian Universalist history through famous Unitarians and Universalists. So far this year the group has studied:

- Albert Schweitzer
- Clara Barton
- Fannie Farmer

Jr. / Sr. High Youth have been engrossed in some amazing discussions on Social Justice issues including Civil Rights and Racism through popular music from the 1960s to today!

So far this year, the youth have discussed the issues in the following songs:

- *The Way It Is* by Bruce Hornsby & The Range
- *A Change is Gonna Come* by Sam Cooke
- *Imagine* by John Lennon
- *Black and White* by Three Dog Night
- *People Are People* by Depeche Mode
- *Ebony and Ivory* by Paul McCartney & Stevie Wonder
- *People Got To Be Free* by The Rascals
- *War* by Bob Marley
- *Your Racist Friend* by They Might Be Giants

If you would like to follow the current events of the RE Program, please contact me to be included in the weekly RE Newsletter!

## Mitten Tree

Please help decorate the Religious Education Committee's Mitten Tree with new mittens, gloves and hats to be given to young children in the area this winter. The recipient of the Mitten Tree is the **Brockton Head Start**, serving children between the ages of 3-5 years old (so you'll be able to buy the appropriate size). Head Start serves only very low income children. For example, a family of four must have a total household income of less than \$23,000 in order to qualify...so these are very needy families. More info at [www.selfhelpinc.org/HeadStart.html](http://www.selfhelpinc.org/HeadStart.html)



We all know how it feels to forget a hat or gloves during a busy morning, but imagine having to go to school every day without. Let's fix that problem for those we're able to help.

## Candlelight Service December 23

Our annual "Candlelight Service" takes place each year on December 23 and is traditionally our most attended service. The social hour after the service is a wonderful time full of holiday cheer and special treats on the table. This is a communal effort and we ask that all of you bring a favorite holiday treat for the table. We also need people to help with set up and clean up before and after the service. Please sign-up in the Upper Parish Hall or contact Jan Thompson [JaniceThompson22@comcast.net](mailto:JaniceThompson22@comcast.net) (508) 697-2492 and let her know what you will bring and whether you can help with set up and/or clean up.

## STONE 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](mailto:lisa_rue80@yahoo.com) or 508-378-8359.



## Off the Common Coffeehouse

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

### December 5, 2015 at 8pm

Potluck dinner at 6:30pm

*featuring*

### RiLeY CoYoTe with Cardboard Ox



#### Coming Attractions

January 2 — Low Lily with Robin O'Herin  
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!*

## GREEN SANCTUARY COMMITTEE'S GREEN TIP OF THE MONTH

### 6 Tips for a Green Holiday Season

Real vs. Artificial Trees: Real trees are the preferred option among environmental experts, as long as tree is obtained from sustainable tree farms. Disposing of real cut trees after is safe & easy. Donate to a tree-recycling center, chip them up for mulch or leave whole for a wildlife habitat in your backyard. Some also choose to purchase live potted trees – by far the most environmentally friendly option, to be planted later. Artificial trees can work too. They ensure that fir forests remain intact and are generally used for many seasons. The downside is the manufacturing process produces toxic chemicals and once disposed of, it takes hundreds of years to break down while it leeches toxic substances into the environment.

LED Lights: Trade in your old heat producing incandescent lights for new environmentally friendly LED lights. Not only safer, they use far less energy & last much longer. Estimates indicate if homeowners switched to LED lights for the holidays, the energy savings would provide enough power to service 200,000 homes for an entire year!

Thoughtful Gifts: Rather than mass produced items from multiple stores, purchase unique, handcrafted gifts from local craft shows. You can also purchase one of a kind gifts online. [Ten Thousand Villages](#) is a non-profit organization that sells beautifully crafted handmade items from artists living in impoverished areas around the world, to help feed their family and doing a good thing for the environment.

Cook With Local Ingredients: For your holiday parties, choose dishes that incorporate local, seasonal ingredients. This eliminates carbon emissions from large trucks & boats that ship from far away locations & you usually end up getting products with far fewer pesticides.

Old-Fashioned Gifts: Consider skipping the flashy electronics in favor of old-fashioned toys. Many electronics are quickly broken & discarded. Wooden toys, puzzles & building games are long lasting, entertaining and lack the batteries that cause so much harmful damage when tossed in the garbage.

Creative Wrapping: Make your own wrapping paper to recycle items that might otherwise end up in the trash & your gift stands out as beautiful & unique. Use old newspapers, magazines, paper bags or fabric scraps to sustainably wrap your gifts. Accessorize with ribbon, twine, twigs, holly or buttons.



### 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](mailto:JaniceThompson22@comcast.net) (508)-697-2492.

# SHARED MINISTRY COMMITTEE

2015 / 2016

November 20, 2015

The composition of the Shared Ministry Committee (SMC) has changed. Rev. Paul and the Parish Committee have named Pamela Hayes-Bohanan to replace Eileen Hiney who has moved on to the Parish Committee. David Tedesco and David Wilson remain. The name "Shared Ministry Committee" has become the standard in many UU congregations. It replaces old designations like "Ministerial Relations Committee" and others.

The Shared Ministry Committee's task is to take the pulse of the church: How does FPUU feel? How is it doing? Any Unitarian Universalist church congregation is diverse in belief, opinion and approach and First Parish Bridgewater is no exception. This dynamic is our congregational strength, but it can also be a source of challenge.

The SMC, as we call it, focuses on the personal and spiritual part of our congregation's work. We are an advisory body and the communication channel for the congregation and the minister. We invite members to contact the SMC at church, through email, or phone with your concerns. Our names and contact info is in the directory. You may request that we hold your name in confidence or not.

The Shared Ministry Committee does not solve problems by direct action, but rather through the facilitation of communication and connection. It does not focus on practical concerns that inevitably preoccupy the leadership (Parish Committee at FPUU) of this congregation. We have a supportive role generating communications regarding the minister. The minister is not our sole focus as we represent the whole congregation including the members, staff, and the minister.

Our work is assessing the congregational life including any place where we might not be living up to our shared covenant. Is there a challenge or conflict that is not getting resolved well?

So how do we hope to accomplish our work?

First, by listening to you, the congregation and staff. As many know, there are different kinds of listening. The first kind we employ is reflective. Once again, perhaps you don't want to have your name connected with something, you just want to get it off your chest or get another's take on what your concern might be.

The second kind of listening is communicative. Perhaps you want your concern communicated to someone else, with or without your name being connected. This relates to the confidential aspect of the work of a Shared Ministry Committee. But remember, the more confidential something is, the harder it is to address.

The third kind of listening is connective. You not only want to talk with a member of the Shared Ministry Committee, you are wondering who in the congregation you need to connect with about your concern.

Whether reflective, communicative or connective, we attempt to keep a positive tenor to relationships in the church.

Another way that the Shared Ministry Committee will work is by observation. That might be observation of process, of personal interactions, of effectiveness, conflicts, or accomplishments. Since observation is something that is done personally by the members of the SMC, it will be shared among them and the minister or when meeting with the Parish Committee or others for them to consider.

Shared Ministry Committee observations are for reflection and consideration, they are not judgements. As SMC members, our commitment is to objective observation and communication, suspending our bias in favor of understanding someone's point of view or their sense of an experience.

Another main way that the SMC will work is by meeting with the minister from time to time. We are, or hope to be, one more way that the minister finds out what the congregation thinks and feels, a conduit for both support and concerns from the congregation. We have a sense of what is happening and the feel of the congregation. But we do need and seek your feedback, praise or critique, from as many members as possible if we are to be truly effective.

Along with leadership, we will keep church members reminded of the limitations of a half-time ministry. A reasonable balance between practices and resources is needed for harmony within the congregation. While all concerns can be considered, some requests may not be practical in a half-time situation.

Above all, our goal as your Shared Ministry Committee is to help and work with this congregation to live out its covenant: To live together in peace, Speak the truth in love, And help one another.

## MAINSRING LUNCHES

Monday, November 30 at 9am, the December MainSpring lunches will be made in the LPH. Donations and volunteers welcome. Speak with Betty Gilson.

## T"UU"RNING LEAVES BOOK CLUB

The Book Club will not meet in December which will give you more time to read *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.

## SHARE THE PLATE for DECEMBER

For December our Share the Plate charity will be our Partner Church in Haranglab, Romania. Every Sunday we light a candle to remember our connection to the church in Haranglab which some of our members visited several years ago. We would like to create a more tangible memory by making a donation for the church there.

## SPECIAL HOLIDAY GIFT OPPORTUNITY

Are you looking for a special gift for a hard-to-buy-for friend or relative? The SocialJustice Committee has the perfect solution. We will be accepting donations to help pay for the monthly 100 lunches we make for MainSpring House, the homeless shelter in Brockton. You can receive attractive gift cards to send to each of those particular people, announcing that a donation has been made in each of their names to provide lunches for the homeless.

The monthly cost for the lunches is between \$85 and \$100, so your donations are appreciated. The gift cards will be available at the Holly Day Artisan Faire on December 4 & 5, and at church the following two Sundays, December 13 and 20. See Betty Gilson or Frankie Finnegan for more information.

### 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.*

# December 2015 CALENDAR

Monday, November 30

9am MainSpring House lunches prep at FP

Friday, December 4

6-8pm Holly Day Artisan Faire at First Parish

Saturday, December 5

10-2pm Holly Day Artisan Faire at First Parish

8pm Off the Common Coffee House

**Sunday, December 6**

9am Choir rehearsal

10:30am Worship with Rev. Paul Sprecher, "Miracles & Martyrs"

6pm Adult Game Night at First Parish

Monday, December 7

7:30pm Facilities Committee meeting

Thursday, December 10

7:30pm Worship Committee will meet at First Parish

**Sunday, December 13**

9am Choir rehearsal

10:30am Worship with Rev. Paul Sprecher, "Still Waiting"

Carol-grams

Monday, December 14

7:30pm Green Sanctuary Committee Meeting

Thursday, December 17

5pm RE Committee Meeting

7:30pm Parish Committee will meet in the UPH of First Parish

7:30pm Finance Committee Meeting at the Hatfield's

Friday, December 18

Carol-frams

**Sunday, December 20**

9am Choir rehearsal

10:30am Winter Solstice service— an intergenerational service with the RE Committee

Wednesday, December 23

7pm Candlelight Service at First Parish

Friday, December 25

Merry Christmas!

**Sunday, December 27**

10:30am An Intergenerational Kwanzaa Service with the Worship Committee.

**First Parish Church**  
**Unitarian Universalist**

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[firstparishbridgewater.blogspot.com](http://firstparishbridgewater.blogspot.com)

## 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](mailto:psprecher@uuma.org)) phone (home: 781-210-2016, cell: 781-774-0086).

Your help in protecting his time is appreciated.

