

BRIDGING



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

September 2016

From the Minister...

“A Community of Covenant”

Love is the spirit of this church
and service its gift.

This is our great covenant:
To dwell together in peace,
to speak the truth in love,
and to help one another.

Each Sunday we affirm our First Parish Covenant in our worship service. The beginning of this new church year is a good time to reflect on what our covenant means and what it demands of us, and it is the theme of our September services this year. “Covenant” can sometimes seem like an outdated term, maybe a little academic and definitely ancient. The idea of covenant is first spoken of in the Jewish Bible, where it appears as an agreement between God and Abraham, and later between God and the Children of Israel. A covenant lays out a set of mutual obligations between the two parties and defines how they will behave toward each other.

A covenant is not a contract. It can't be litigated in the courts. It can be broken, but more importantly it can be constantly renewed. It defines a relationship in which we agree to hold each other and ourselves accountable for our behavior to one another, to the congregation as a whole, and to the world around us. Covenants are commitments of our whole selves, promises we exchange about how we will live together.

It's not easy to “dwell together in peace” some of the time. Let's face it: people are irritating sometimes – even members and friends of First Parish (difficult though that may be to believe!). And it isn't easy to “speak the truth in love” some of the time, particularly when we anticipate that the other person may take offense. The thing is, living in covenant says we can start over when we miss the mark. No matter how offended we may be with one another, we have made a commitment to stay at the table, to tough it out, and together to repair wounds we may have caused or that others may have caused us.

Living together into the love we want to have in our lives and in our congregation is not easy. We could almost say that “to help one another” is the easiest part. It's the living together that's tougher, but it's also more important; it is in living together in this way that we mature emotionally and spiritually, finding our blind spots, our hidden aspirations and our growing edges from our interaction with each other – especially when something goes wrong.

Rev. Gretchen Haley, Senior minister of our Soul Matters partner congregation, Foothills Unitarian, Fort Collins, Colorado, says this about why and how we live in covenant with each other:

Let me tell you right now, sometime in the next year, maybe in the next few minutes, the people you most believe in and care about are going to disappoint you. Your church is going to disappoint you. This world is surely going to disappoint you. Like, all the time. We all are walking wounded and weary from the way this world can – and does – break our hearts.

And what our faith asks of us, what our faith imagines for us, is that somehow, right at that moment when our hearts break, we will find our way to see through that heartbreak. We will stay put – not close off, not run away, not hurt back – but keep on being in relationship, doing what we can to repair the world and each other, keep on opening our hearts with greater love. And, right then, our covenantal faith says – we will feel not only most human, but also most whole and most at home.

Let's each recommit ourselves to dwelling together this way in the coming year. Our September 11 Homecoming service symbolizes this commitment as we share the waters of our journeys together – so make sure to bring some water to share to our September 11 service.

In Faith,
Rev. Paul

Minister

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Worship Services in September 2016

Worship Committee News

The theme for the month of September is Covenant. At the beginning of our worship services, we repeat our church covenant – our pledge of how we are to be together in community. During the month, we will look more deeply into what this means and how we may better live by this pledge.

Worship Services:

September 11 – Water Communion Service with Revs. Paul Sprecher and Richard Fewkes. REMEMBER TO BRING YOUR WATER!

If you have collected water from your journey over the summer, please don't forget to bring a small container of the water to pour into our communal bowl. This ceremony symbolizes the places... far or near... we've been to over the summer. It also symbolizes the joy of gathering together again. Note that this is an intergenerational service so our children and youth are invited to come up with their families and share something of their summer as their water is poured into the bowl.

September 18 – Peace Sunday Worship with the Peace Committee.

September 25 – Worship with Rev. Richard Fewkes.

About Worship Associates, Lay Worship Leaders & Ushers. We hope all members who are physically-able can fulfill at least one of these tasks twice a year. If you have a particular date you'd like to volunteer, please tell us in advance and you'll likely get your choice. Otherwise, if you are a church member and can do this, but haven't volunteered, expect to be asked to fill a couple of dates.

A worship committee member will be calling people during the week to remind them of their assigned dates. But if you cannot fulfill the role on this date, please try to find a substitute and let Rev. Rachel know as soon as possible. You may phone her at: 508-378-3904 (home phone) or 508-944-6436 (cell) or email rev-rayted@comcast.net.

Next Worship Committee meeting: The next regular meeting of the Worship Committee is scheduled for Thursday, September 15 at 7:30 p.m. in the church office. *Members and friends are cordially invited to attend. You may share your ideas with us about worship... or simply sit and observe the meeting.*

Committee members: Rev. Rachel Tedesco, Chair; Denise Haskins, McKayla Hoffman, Stefan Michaud, Tom St. Thomas, Tony Winters and Rev. Paul Sprecher.

SHARE THE PLATE

Usually our monthly Share the Plate donations go to a local charity. However, in the event of a catastrophe, we make exceptions. The terrible flooding in Baton Rouge and some other parts of Louisiana qualifies. So our September Share the Plate collection will be for the Baton Rouge Area Foundation (BRAf). Below is some information about what they are doing. If you would like to make a specific donation to BRAf, write your check to First parish and put BRAf in the memo line.

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation is providing assistance across South Louisiana where it can. Our history shows we get money quickly to where it's needed the most. We have several ways you can help people. One is the Louisiana Relief Fund. The other are employee assistance funds, where employers can assist their own employees and receive tax deductions for contributions.

The Foundation is also working with nonprofits that are responding to the flood and with sheltering organizations.



LET'S *Grow* TOGETHER

IMPORTANT DATES

September 11	Intergen - Water Communion
September 18	First RE Classes! Peace Sunday
September 25	RE Classes

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN RE THIS YEAR

There are a lot of exciting things happening this year in the Religious Education Program! The **grade K-4 and 5-8 curriculum** will revolve around the year's worship themes.

2016-2017 Themes

What does it mean to be a community of ...

September: Covenant	February: Identity
October: Healing	March: Risk
November: Story	April: Transformation
December: Presence	May: Embodiment
January: Prophecy	June: Zest

The theme-based learning is part of the Soul Matters Sharing Circle, a group of UU congregations who follow the same monthly worship themes. By participating in this curriculum we are able to foster deep conversations on many ideas as a multi-generational congregation.

The **Sr. High Youth** (Grades 9 through 12) will be exploring their faith formation through a year-long Coming of Age curriculum to learn more about Unitarian Universalism and articulate their own beliefs.

We will be celebrating with them in the spring as they present their statements of personal belief (credo statements) to the congregation.

YOUTH GROUP

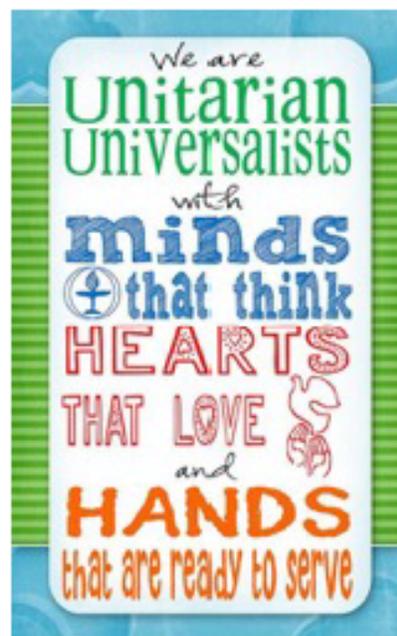
First Parish Bridgewater Youth Group will continue to meet on Sunday evenings this fall! We will be starting back up in October — Stay tuned!

YOUNG FAMILIES PLAYGROUP



Families with infants, toddlers, or preschoolers ... get ready! The young families playgroup will be resuming in October!

Dates TBD. Check the First Parish website for updates!



On Pledges – Part 1

Message from the Stewardship Committee

As we begin our 2016-17 church year celebrating 300 years, there is excitement in the air. How fortunate are we to have such a vibrant community here at First Parish.



Just how important is First Parish in your life? This is our church. We need to support that which is of value to us. We pledge to fund the daily operations and to ensure First Parish and its resources are here for us and others now and in the future.

Many of you made your annual pledge last March for the year. If you wish to pledge for the first time or change your pledge amount your contribution will be welcomed with open arms for the continued support of this wonderful place.

Your Stewardship Team

GREEN SANCTUARY COMMITTEE'S Green Tip of the Month

**As a Green Sanctuary accredited congregation,
First Parish has made a commitment to respect and care for our planet Earth.**

At First Parish coffee hours and events, we use

- *cloth napkins*
- *chlorine-free, plant-based dish detergents*
- *eco-friendly hand soap*

In our kitchen, we use

- *non-toxic, responsibly sourced cleaning products*
- *chlorine-free, plant-based dish detergents*
- *eco-friendly hand soap*
- *fairly traded organic coffee and tea*

In our rest rooms, we use

- *essential oil-based air freshener*
- *reusable cloth towels*
- *eco-friendly hand soap*
- *paper products made from 100% recycled paper*

In our sanctuary, we use

- *programmable thermostat*
- *projection of service components (music, readings, graphics) to reduce paper and printing*

Throughout the church, we use

- *green (solar) electricity*
- *CFL light bulbs*
- *eco-friendly cleaning products*
- *practices that reduce waste of resources (natural light, use of both sides of paper, water conservation)*



First Parish recycles paper, cardboard, and Styrofoam and hosts a community-wide metal recycling drive annually.

**We encourage individual members to support these practices in church
and to strive to incorporate them into daily life.**

A Social Justice Committee program – Special “sneak peek” Webinar for PBS film Tuesday, September 13 at 4pm in the Upper Parish Hall

Please join the UU Service Committee for a special “sneak peek” webinar to help us all make the most of the upcoming PBS documentary “Defying the Nazis: The Sharps’ War.” Hear remarks from UUSC President & CEO Tom Andrews about the current situation. Learn about the national “Defy Hate” preach-in, along with advocacy and supportive actions we (as individuals and a congregation) can take to support Syrian and Central American refugees. Participate in a Q&A session with UUSC’s experts.

“Defying the Nazis” is about two UUSC founders, Martha and Waitstill Sharp. For more information, we invite you to go to the website: <http://www.uusc.org/this-fall-pbs-documentary-about-uuscs-founders/>
Questions? Contact Rev. Rachel Tedesco.

HISTORY DISCOVERED AND AVAILABLE:

Our dealings with the Archival Department at Maxwell Library of Bridgewater State University have taken an important and wonderful step forward. I recently found and purchased a soft cover copy of a work called "A Semi-Centennial Discourse before the First Congregational Society in Bridgewater, Delivered on Lord's Day 17th September 1871" by the Rev. Richard Manning Hodges. What a mouth full, but the bottom line is that Rev. Hodges, who was the 4th minister of our church (1821 to 1833) returned on the 50th anniversary of his ministry and delivered a discourse covering much of the early history of our church. BSU agreed to digitize the work and host it on their servers for scholars and historians to see. This is much the same as they did for the Mann/Bates book. A Google search will lead one to this work, but it is easier to take the short cut of simply using the following link: vc.bridgew.edu/local_histories Call me, David Tedesco, if you have any problems.



The end of year **Financial Reports** for 2015-2016 have now been posted on the **Members Only Content** section of our web site. You can find the reports on the "Member Content Main Page" under "Annual Meeting Reports." Go to www.firstparishbridgewater.org.

Womensphere, a Sacred Circle Gathering for Women through the New England region of The Unitarian Universalist Association invite you to join us for the Fall Retreat.

Build your Chi for True Wellness

Shift your body and your life in a healthier, happier direction by mastering key skills and practices that allow you to sustainably overcome the stresses of everyday life.

*Friday Sept 30th - Sunday Oct 2nd 2016
Senexet House, 276 Senexet Road, Woodstock CT 06281*

Combining functional wisdom and self-care strategies, learn how to eat, rest, and manage your chi energy for optimal vitality and satisfaction. With guest presenter Peg Doyle: a nationally certified holistic nutrition coach, speaker and author of “Food Becomes You - Simple Steps for Lifelong Wellness”.

For details and registration go to www.uuwomensphere.com

MAINSRING HOUSE LUNCHES

Monday, September 5 (yes, Labor Day) at 8:45 am MainSpring House lunches will be made in the LPH. Volunteers and donations are always welcome. Speak with Betty Gilson to offer help.

FULL SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE MEETING (For all branches)

Thursday, September 1 at 7pm the Full Social Justice Committee will meet at the church to work on plans for the coming church year. New members and suggestions are always welcome. Besides the SJC itself, the branches are: First Principle Project, Green Sanctuary, Peace Committee and UU Animal Ministry. See Rev. Rachel Tedesco or Betty Gilson for more information.

MUSIC ALLEY

Our venture into Music Alley was such a success we are going to do it over again (with less confusion) on Thursday, September 8 when the Male Bonding Band is appearing. We realize that we don't need quite as many of you as helped before, especially for cookies. So the first five bakers that volunteer will be accepted.

We will need the following:

3 people to help prepare the quesadillas starting at 3:30

a cashier and 2 others at the Bake Table by 4:45

a cashier plus someone else to take orders at the grille and a couple of people to assist the chef at **Tom's grille**

3-4 people to transport 2 tables, 6 chairs, coolers, sodas, cookies and rest of the food starting at 4:00

2-3 people to move everything back at 8:00

Contact Betty Gilson to offer help at gillyflower@verizon.net or 774-226-0942



PEACE SUNDAY

Sunday, September 18 the Annual Peace Worship Service will be held at First Parish. Plans now are for a gathering at the Peace Pole at 10:00 am to start the proceedings, followed by a short procession with the Peace Dove right in the neighborhood of the church. During morning worship there will be special music and readings. In RE the children will do Peace related crafts as part of their program.

Watch the weekly messages for more details.

CARING COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, September 26 at 7pm the Caring Committee will meet at First Parish. If you have an issue for the committee to address, please contact a member.

Betty Gilson, Andrew Harding, Mary Hatfield, Louella Mann, Jan Thompson, Korin Zigler

T"UU"RNING LEAVES BOOK CLUB

Friday, September 23 at 7pm, location TBD, the Book Club will meet. The Sept selection is *The Stranger* by Albert Camus. *L'Étranger* is a French novel by Albert Camus published in 1942. Its theme and outlook are often cited as examples of Camus's philosophy of the absurd and existentialism, though Camus personally rejected the latter label. Through the story of an ordinary man unwittingly drawn into a senseless murder on an Algerian beach, Camus explored what he termed "the nakedness of man faced with the absurd."



DON'T FORGET TO BRING YOUR SUMMER'S COLLECTION OF WATER TO THE SEPTEMBER 11TH WATER CEREMONY.





Off the Common Coffeehouse

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



October 1, 2016 at 7:30pm

Potluck dinner at 6:30pm

Featuring

Kerri Powers with Carrie Ferguson

Coming Attractions

- November 5 - Greg Greenway
- December 3 - Atwater-Donnelly with The Vox Hunters
- January 7 - The Kennedys with Quentin Callewaert
- February 4 - Don White
- March 4 - The Boxcar Lilies with Sparrow Blue
- April 1 - Bill Staines
- May 6 - The Heather Pierson Acoustic Trio with Emily Mure

Admission: \$15

*Enjoy our homemade
Refreshments*

Sign up for open mike!

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 9am 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.*

September 2016 CALENDAR

Thursday, September 1

7pm Full Social Justice Committee will meet at the church

Monday, September 5

8:45am MainSpring House lunches prep at FP

7:30pm Facilities Committee meeting

Wednesday, September 7

9am-noon Fall Semester Parking Passes will be on sale in the Lower Parish Hall

Thursday, September 8

9am-noon Fall Semester Parking Passes will be on sale in the Lower Parish Hall

5pm The Male Bonding Band is scheduled to play at Music Alley

Saturday, September 10

9am-noon All-Church Clean-Up

Sunday, September 11

9am Choir rehearsal

10:30am Water Communion Service with Revs. Sprecher & Fewkes

Monday, September 12

7:30pm Green Sanctuary Committee Meeting

Tuesday, September 13

4pm Sneak peak webinar of PBS documentary, "Defying the Nazis: The Sharps' War."

Thursday, September 15

7:30pm Worship Committee Meeting

Sunday, September 18

10am Peace Sunday Commences with a gathering at the Peace Pole

Wednesday, September 21

7pm Science and Religion Discussion Group at FP

Friday, September 23

9:30am-5pm Dr. Trulear Workshop

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

Saturday, September 24

Autumfest Celebration

Sunday, September 25

9am Choir rehearsal

10:30am Worship with Rev. Richard Fewkes

Monday, September 26

7pm Caring Committee will meet at First Parish

Thursday, September 29

7:30pm Parish Committee will meet at First Parish

Saturday, October 1

7:30pm Off the Common Coffeehouse featuring Kerri Powers with Carrie Ferguson

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