



BRIDGING

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

December 2018

From the Minister...

What Does It Mean to Be a People of *Mystery*?

Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?

Mystery, Mystery, life is a riddle and a mystery

Paul Gaugin & Brian Tate (*Singing the Journey* #1003)

Paul Gaugin's words are illustrated by his painting of the same name in the MFA. The composer, Brian Tate, has clarified the fact that these questions – on a personal level, at least – remain a mystery and will always remain a mystery no matter how much else we may learn about our universe and all that is within it. Mystery is related to miracles in some ways – something that happens at an unexpected moment to the benefit of someone who was not expecting and had no right to expect it. Not surprisingly, we Unitarian Universalists are suspicious of mysteries and miracles. Our 4th Principle commits us to "A free and responsible search for truth and meaning," and our history as a religious tradition has been deeply influenced by the use of reason and a firm commitment to the fruits of science and rationality. On the other hand, the first Source of the Living Tradition we share honors "Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces that create and uphold life."

We might say that this source of our faith is more about meaning than about the truths of science. The Transcendentalists in our tradition – Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau and Margaret Fuller among others – were especially drawn to what Emerson referred to as the miracles of everyday life. He said that "[Jesus] spoke of miracles; for he felt that man's life was a miracle, and all that man doth, and he knew that this daily miracle shines, as the character ascends." Mary Oliver in her poem "Wild Geese" offers this meditation on the mystery:

Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting—
over and over announcing your place in the family of things. – Mary Oliver

The season of Christmas and Hanukkah and Chalice and Solstice is also a season of magic and mystery. The story behind Hanukkah refers to a battle for religious freedom that was won by humble people against a mighty empire – a story that its tellers regarded as a great miracle, a victory that should not have been and could only have happened by a mysterious intervention in the affairs of humans and that was sealed by another miracle, another mystery, the oil sufficient only for one day that instead lasted eight days. And Christmas is also steeped in mystery, questions not answered by the accounts in the New Testament (like, where did that star come from?) and celebrated by awe and wonder and astonishment each year. Life is a riddle and a mystery, and this is a season to celebrate the mysteries that we can celebrate but never completely explain away. Sometimes it's best, as one contemporary song puts it, to "Let the Mystery Be."

Studying White Supremacy: We will be continuing this series by reading *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* by Robin DiAngelo together. We will meet after coffee hour for discussions on January 10th & 24th – more details below.

In Faith, Rev. Paul

Minister

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STUDYING WHITE SUPREMACY

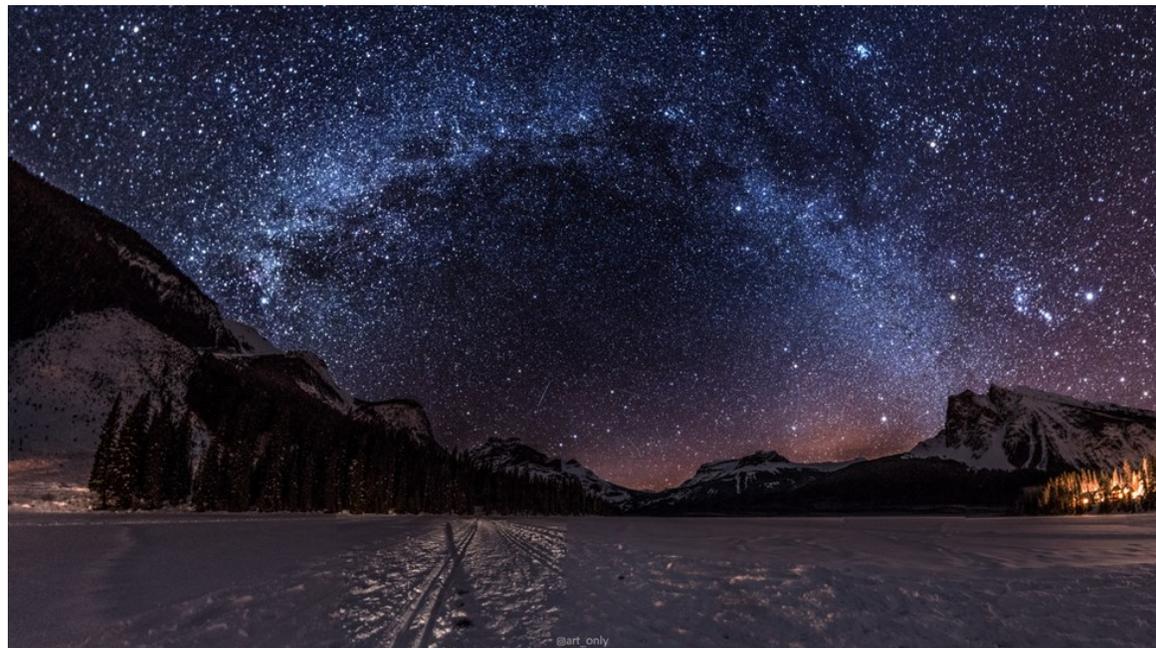
We will be continuing this series in January by reading *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* by Robin DiAngelo together. We will meet after coffee hour for discussions on January 10th (through Chapter 5, which ends on p. 87) & 24th (the rest of the book).

Please sign up during coffee hour this month, or on either of our FaceBook pages for this event, or by letting Rev. Paul know at psprecher@uuma.org.

Also, let Rev. Paul know if you would like to borrow a copy of the book.

WORSHIP COMMITTEE NEWS

December 2018



This month's worship theme is
Mystery.

*I stand upon a wide and sunless plain,
 Nor chart nor steel to guide my steps aright.
 Whene'er, o'ercoming fear, I dare to move,
 I grope without direction and by chance.*

*...Tho' oft thro' silence infinite I list,
 And strain my hearing to supernal sounds;
 Tho' oft thro' fateful darkness do I reach,
 And stretch my hand to find that other hand.*

Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872-1906), "The Mystery"

Worship Services:

December 2: Worship with Rev. Paul Sprecher, "Faith Survives, Hope Remains" - It happens that Hanukkah this year starts on the first Sunday of Advent. Besides lighting candles, what else do these days share?

December 9 – Rev. Rachel: "Mystery Without Miracles" – A skeptic's look at mystery, where a vast unknown inspires not fear but curiosity and wonder. And where science and poetry meet.

December 16: Worship with Rev. Paul Sprecher, "The Mystery of Christmas" - Despite the fact that we all eventually lose faith in Santa Claus (for kids) and (sometimes) end up with "Bah, Humbug" (as adults), Christmas magic happens. Let's agree to let the mystery be.

December 23: Worship with Rev. Paul Sprecher, "Candlelight Service" - All are welcome to join us for our traditional service of stories, carols, and candlelight.



About Worship Associates, Lay Worship Leaders, and 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.

Next Worship Committee meeting: The next regular meeting of the Worship Committee is scheduled for Thursday, December 20 at 7pm in the church office. Members and friends are cordially invited to attend. You may share your ideas with us about worship or simply be present to observe.

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



Off the Common Coffeehouse

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



Saturday, December 1 at 7:30pm

Featuring Greg Greenway

Potluck dinner at 6:30pm

January 5 - Cold Chocolate

February 2 - The Boxcar Lilies with Ric Allendorf opening

March 2 - Emily Mure and The Whispering Tree (split bill)

April 6 - Caroline Cotter and Emilia Dahlin (split bill)

May 4 - Grace Morrison

Admission: \$15

*Enjoy our homemade
Refreshments*

Sign up for open mike!



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Broad Wings
and
Deep Roots

RE CALENDAR

- December 2:** RE Classes
- December 9:** Rehearsal for December 16 playlet, and fun activities!
- December 16:** RE Classes [children's playlet during the Time For All Ages in the service]
- December 23:** NO Religious Education. Candlelight Service in the evening
- December 30:** One Room Schoolhouse

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Each class has been meeting and working on their curriculum. The **preschool-kindergarten** has been focusing on topics within the children's lives (empathy and feelings) and also of world holidays (The Southeast Asian Mid-Autumn Festival "The Birthday of the Moon").

The **elementary group** focused on the theme of *Memory* in their curriculum. A highlight of their curriculum was "Where I'm From" poems!

The **youth group** began exploring short documentaries with a focus on Social Justice. They watched "Explained" -- *The World's Water Crisis* with a lengthy discussion following the episode.

The entire group met together in a Children's Chapel service, and also worked together one Sunday with a focus on service through making homemade pizza! A huge thanks to AJ Derby, Louella Mann, and Beth Manchester-Howell.



TIME FOR ALL AGES ON DECEMBER 16

Lisa Troy from the RE Committee is organizing a magical Time For All Ages based on *The Polar Express*, and we will be going over details and rehearsing on December 9th during Religious Education time. We hope you are familiar with this story, and if not, the RE Committee asks that you preview the book and bring any questions to Sara, Lisa, or any member of the RE Committee.

SARA WILLIAMS, DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION DRE.BRIDGEWATER@GMAIL.COM



MAINSRING HOUSE LUNCHES

Monday, December 3 at 8:30 am 100 MainSpring House lunches will be made in the LPH. Donations and volunteers always welcome. Contact Betty Gilson if interested.

SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, December 6 at 7pm a meeting of the Social Justice Committee will be held at the church. We will be discussing plans for the January 13 Worship Service, among other issues.

BLACK LIVES MATTER FILM

Monday, December 17 at 7pm the December film in the Black Lives Matter series will be presented in the UPH at the church. The film will be *Southside with You*, the story of the first date between Barack Obama and Michelle Robinson on the Southside of Chicago where both were working. All are invited to this free showing with discussion and refreshments. The film is sponsored by First Parish Social Justice Committee and the Bridgewater Citizens for Civility and Respect.

T"UU"RNING LEAVES BOOK CLUB

There is no Book Club meeting in December. The January book selection is *Working* by Studs Terkel. This book is the basis for the musical of the same name being presented by the First Parish Players. It is a 1974 nonfiction book by the noted oral historian and radio broadcaster Studs Terkel. *Working* is a book which investigates the meaning of work for different people under different circumstances, showing it can vary in importance.

MAINSRING HOUSE GIFT CARDS

At the Holly Day Faire December 8 & 9 the Social Justice Committee will be selling special gift cards to support MainSpring House lunches. Purchase a card for that hard to buy for friend or family member. It will say that a donation has been made in that person's name for lunches for the MainSpring House Homeless Shelter in Brockton. A \$10 minimum is requested, but larger amounts are very welcome.

DECEMBER SHARE THE PLATE

For December the Share the Plate charity is WIC (Women, infants & Children) program. This program serves income-eligible families with children under the age of five in Brockton and surrounding communities. This includes free nutritional and breastfeeding counseling and a debit card to purchase healthy food such as milk, whole grains, beans, cereal, fruits and vegetables.



Planned Giving Program to be Established at First Parish Church

The establishment of a Planned Giving Program will be formally announced in January of 2019. The purpose of this Program is to encourage the solicitation and acceptance of gifts to the Church to further our mission. The Program will be administered by a Planned Giving Committee composed of three members: one each from the Stewardship Team, the Trustees, and the Finance Committee.

This Committee will urge prospective donors to seek the assistance of personal legal and financial advice in matters relating to their gifts, including the resulting tax and estate planning consequences. We will also form a Planned Giving Society to honor those who establish gifts to the Church.

From the Planned Giving Committee



RE Mitten Tree and Clothesline

Mittens, mittens everywhere!

Two ways to give:

Bring new mittens and hats to decorate the mitten tree! This year, the mittens will be given to the Early Intervention program in Brockton for their "Warm Hands, Warm Heart" basket.



Check out the clothesline with paper mittens. Each mitten represents a child at Early Intervention. Take a mitten to buy a gift for that child. Return the unwrapped gift with the paper mitten by Dec. 14th.

Early Intervention provides therapeutic support to infants and toddlers who have developmental delays or are at risk for such delays. For donation suggestions visit the EI Amazon Wishlist at: <https://goo.gl/7uEEWz>



Toasty Tushies Diaper Drive



The WIC (Women, Infants & Children) program serves income-eligible families with children under the age of 5 in Brockton and surrounding communities. They provide free nutritional and breastfeeding counseling and a debit card to purchase healthy food, such as milk, whole grains, beans, cereal and fruits and vegetables.

While WIC provides nutritional support, these families are often in need of other supports. The need for diapers is one of the top unmet needs for these families.

The RE Committee is collecting diapers to donate to families served by WIC. If you would like to participate, please leave packages of diapers and/or wipes in the box provided in the Upper Parish Hall. Diapers of all sizes are welcome, but the highest need is for larger sizes. Diapers will be collected through the end of December.



WIC has been selected as the recipient of the December Share the Plate Program

HOLIDAY CAROL-O-GRAMS

*Spread holiday cheer through the gift of music.
Members of the choir will sing carols for your loved ones over the phone.
People love it! All proceeds go to the church.*



Phone Carols: Sunday, December 16th 6-8pm ~\$15
Sign up at church or via email: Mskzigler@aol.com

*Thank you for your support of the music program
at First Parish Unitarian Universalist Church!*

A holiday green tip from the Green Sanctuary Committee



Simple Gifts

Do yourself and the Earth a favor this holiday season by simplifying your gift giving and decorating. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Shop locally—perhaps at First Parish’s Holly Day Artisan Faire!!
- Consider the life of your purchase.
- Donate unwanted gifts.
- Resist the temptation to buy more.
- Give your time, not stuff.
- Donate to the charity of your recipient’s choice.
- Use reusable shopping bags.
- Use wrapping paper that is responsibly made and includes high recycled content.
- Reuse wrapping paper, gift bags, ribbons and bows.
- Use recycled card art and sprigs of live evergreen in place of tags and bows on your gifts.
- Reuse newspapers or magazines to make your own wrap.
- For someone you no longer want to exchange gifts with, send a gift exemption voucher.
- Decorate your home with items from nature.
- Use real dishes and cloth napkins when entertaining.
- Spend time with loved ones doing things that bring you joy—don’t get caught up in the stress of commercialization.

Many of these tips came from <http://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/publiced/holidays/LessWaste.pdf>

Calling all Bakers! It's time again for the Holly Day Faire!

It's time for pulling out your favorite recipes and donating a few batches of cookies for our annual Cookie Walk!! During the Holly Faire, the kitchen will be filled with fabulous cookies from you and other friends of the church. Everyone looks forward to a great variety of homemade goodies they get to pick, and with butter, sugar, & cream, you can't go wrong.

If you'd like to bake a batch or two or three of cookies, you can fill out the cookie form at:

<https://goo.gl/forms/mvkiRVfYRYAvS3JN2> or let Betty Gilson (gillyflower@verizon.net) or Laurie Lessner (laurie@yabroudy.com) know the following:

The Type of Cookie you'll be making
How Many Cookies you'll be making
What Day you will drop them off; Friday (12/7) or Saturday (12/7)

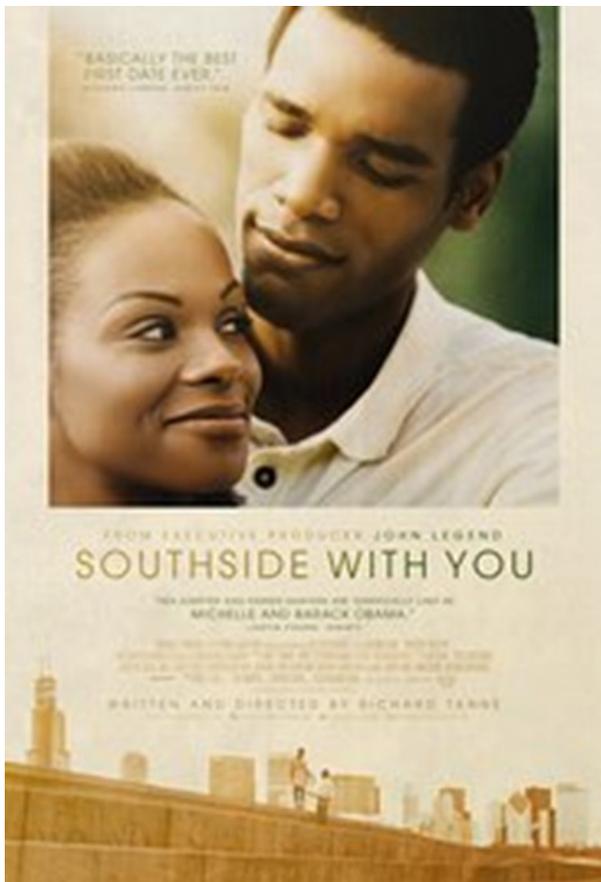
Drop-off your cookies in the kitchen. We will clearly mark the area

Cookies should be in closed containers, labeled with your name and the name of the cookie

Thank you for all your effort! It is always greatly appreciated.



Come to a FREE viewing of the movie
Southside with You
 on Monday, December 17, in Bridgewater.



The film chronicles the summer 1989 afternoon when the future President of the United States, Barack Obama, wooed his future First Lady, Michelle Obama, on a first date across Chicago's South Side.

The public is welcome to join us for the viewing and the discussion to follow.

Monday, December 17, 2018 at 7:00 pm
in the Upper Parish Hall of the
First Parish Unitarian Universalist Church
50 School Street, Bridgewater

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 Co-sponsored by the Social Justice Committee of First Parish Church

and the Bridgewater Citizens for Civility & Respect.  
 Ninth in our Black Lives Matter film series.

### 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 50 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.*



# HOLLY DAY CRAFT FAIRE

**FIRST PARISH CHURCH, 50 SCHOOL ST. BRIDGEWATER, MA**

**Friday, December 7, 2018 6-8p**

**Saturday, December 8, 2018 10a-2p**

## ***Local Artisans & Crafters***

Wrap-up your holiday shopping - buy the perfect gift made locally. Fine jewelry, children's books, warm knitted hats and scarfs, unique holiday decorations, home-made strawberry jam, jalapeno jelly, cranberry sauce, and more.

Vendor raffle – win one of these local creations!

## ***Cookie Walk! Select your favorites...***

More than twenty delicious varieties - pecan shortbread, chocolate peppermint bars, triple ginger, oatmeal crisps – all the favorites plus delicious new flavor creations.

## ***Visits with Santa & Entertainment for the kids***



## **Saturday 11a – 2p Soup Buffet!**

Thirteen delicious varieties - creamy corn chowder, chicken with rice, savory lentil, beef stew, etc. Get a bottomless cup and sample them all. Take out available.

[www.firstparishbridgewater.org/](http://www.firstparishbridgewater.org/) <https://www.facebook.com/FPbwaterUU/>



# DECEMBER 2018 CALENDAR

Saturday, December 1

7:30pm Off the Common Coffeehouse featuring Greg Greenway

**Sunday, December 2**

9am Choir Practice

10:30am Worship with Rev. Paul Sprecher, "Faith Survives, Hope Remains"

Decorate the Church after the service

12noon Christmas on the Common, Bridgewater Center

Monday, December 3

8:30am MainSpring House lunches prep at FP

7:30pm Facilities Committee meeting

Thursday, December 6

7pm Social Justice Committee meeting at First Parish

Friday, December 7

6pm Holly Day Artisan Faire at First Parish

Saturday, December 8

10am Holly Day Artisan Faire at First Parish

**Sunday, December 9**

9am Choir rehearsal

10:30am Worship with Rev. Rachel: "Mystery Without Miracles"

Thursday, December 13

7:30pm Finance Committee meeting

Friday, December 14

Unwrapped Gifts for the RE Mitten Tree and Clothesline are due

7pm Song and Story Hour in the UPH

**Sunday, December 16**

9am Choir rehearsal

10:30am Worship with Rev. Paul Sprecher, "The Mystery of Christmas"

6pm Carol-o-Grams will be delivered by phone

Monday, December 17

7pm Black Lives Matter film series at First Parish will show *Southside with You*

Wednesday, December 19

7pm Science and Religion Discussion Group at FP

Thursday, December 20

7pm Worship Committee meeting, FP office

7pm Parish Committee meeting in the UPH

Friday, December 21

6:30pm Women's Spirit Yule Ritual

**Sunday, December 23**

7:30pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Service at First Parish with Rev. Paul Sprecher

**First Parish Church  
Unitarian Universalist**

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