



BRIDGING

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

March 2019

From the Minister...

What Does It Mean to Be a People of Journey?

*This World is not my home I'm just a-passing through,
My treasures are laid up, somewhere beyond the blue. – Jim Reeves*

This hymn was quite popular in the church where I grew up and I remember singing it while walking around our farm when I was eight or nine. Many religious traditions share the viewpoint reflected in this song, the idea that this world is a way station on a longer journey of the soul. Hindu traditions speak of reincarnation, Christian and other traditions of resurrection, Buddhism of Nirvana. Our ordinary discussions of those who have died in many traditions speak of being in a "better place," or of "going home" or of meeting loved ones again.

Our own Universalist tradition grew up with a firm belief in an afterlife. Their innovation – or discovery – was that whatever happened after we died, going to hell was not one of the possible outcomes. In an age when the fear of damnation was thought to be critical in ensuring that people behaved morally, the threat of hellfire was liberally used to keep people on the straight and narrow during the journey from birth to eternity. Unitarians argued fear of damnation was a less effective way of keeping people in line than appealing to their better nature. Both of these theologies, then, brought our attention away from some other life in an imagined future to this life and called upon us to live well the life we are given, the only life we can know of for certain. Not some other life, but this life is the focus of our attention.

There can be an element of elitism in our commitment to this life in this world. Our lives have to be satisfying enough in themselves to justify gratitude rather than resentment or a desire for rescue from intolerable circumstances. If one were a Dalit (Untouchable) person in India a thousand years ago, or a slave in the United States two hundred years ago, or a prisoner of ISIS today, it would be much more difficult to give up any hope of a better life than the misery of one's present existence. So it is hardly my place to deny that such a possibility of a different and better life might exist even if I am not myself either inclined to search for it or to believe in its possibility.

What our tradition and all others share is the knowledge that our lives are a journey, certainly from the cradle to the grave and perhaps from a time before and a time after – but of that part of the journey beyond this life none of us can be certain. When we can be certain of is that we are here, in this life, at this time, and that our lives will be more satisfying if we live into the possibilities we find on our own particular journeys. And so we are all pilgrims, finding meaning in the here and now as we can, knowing that we cannot know everything that will happen to us on the road ahead but satisfied that whatever may befall, we will be able to bear it and, as importantly, that we are not alone in our travels.

Meditation Group: One of the ways we can help ourselves find our place in this journey of life is through spiritual practice. Michael Wagner will be leading a meditation group on the 2nd Tuesday of each month starting on March 12th. All are welcome, no experience necessary. Michael will be giving us all a "taste" of meditation during our time of Prayer and Meditation the first two Sundays in March. More details below.

In Faith, Rev. Paul

Minister

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Meditation Group Starting March 12th

Meditation is possibly the best present you could ever give to yourself, a way to delve into your consciousness and to find a greater sense of inner peace. Beginning Tuesday, March 12th at 7:00 p.m., Michael Wagner, a certified meditation instructor, will guide you on a journey of self-discovery, where you will learn various meditation techniques and philosophies to enhance your practice. No experience is necessary, just an open mind and a sense of what is possible. Wear comfortable, loose fitting clothes. Classes will be held the 2nd Tuesday of each month, with a break during the summer. For questions or more information, please contact Michael at 626-221-9503 or e-mail at eyeteachum@msn.com.

- Namaste and have a peaceful day.



Worship Committee News

March 2019



This month's worship theme is

Journey,

"All growth is a leap in the dark, a spontaneous unpremeditated act without benefit of experience,"

Worship Services:

March 3: Worship with Rev. Paul Sprecher, "Journeying Together" - We come from many places and we can't be sure where our lives will lead us. All we know is that we can be together and share this journey we know as our lives.

March 10: Worship with Rev. Chris Jablonski, "Fresh Eyes" - One of the gifts of journey is that we return changed, with fresh eyes. So often we grind through our days, staying stuck in patterns which do not serve our heart's desire. Setting out, taking the first steps, leaving the patterns which have us stuck can help to set us free.

About Rev. Chris Holton Jablonski: *Rev. Christopher Holton Jablonski is the son of Susan Holton and Joe Snyders. First Parish in Bridgewater was his Sponsoring Church when he was in seminary at the Starr King School for the Ministry in San Francisco. For the last eight years, he and his wife, the Rev. Lauren Smith, have been ministers at South Church, Unitarian Universalist, in Portsmouth, NH. Rev. Chris is a lifelong UU who grew up at the Framingham church. In his ministry he has served churches in Berkeley California and Portsmouth New Hampshire. He is very excited to be returning to lead worship at First Parish, where he preached his first sermon twenty four years ago.*

March 17: Worship with Rev. Paul Sprecher, "From Wholeness to Wholeness" - We are born in innocence, we grow into complexity and confusion, and we reach the end as what we have become. How may we find The Way in this pilgrim journey we are on?

March 24: Worship with Jennifer Johnson, "Building Bridges" - Jennifer will discuss an upcoming gathering this summer on Star Island, an opportunity for leaders of area churches to gather on Star Island to -- build bridges between our congregations.

March 31: Worship with Rev. Paul and McKayla Hoffman, "Whaddya Say about the Sacred?" - What words, what languaging, can capture the indescribable, the deep inner response to something awe-inspiring, the spirituality of our hearts and minds? Join us for an exploration into giving dimension to the sacred, whatever that means for us, and honoring its place in each of our journeys.



Looking for Summer Worship Leaders!

We are now searching for volunteers to lead summer worship services! Our summer services are a wonderful opportunity to reconnect and enjoy worship with each other in a more intimate, small-group setting. Please contact Rev. Rachel, Rev. Paul, or McKayla if you are interested in leading a summer service.

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.

Worship Committee meeting: The next regular meeting of the Worship Committee is scheduled for Thursday, March 21 at 7:00 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 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.



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

*Broad Wings
and
Deep Roots*

RE CALENDAR

- March 3:** Religious Education Classes
- March 10:** Religious Education Classes
- March 17:** Religious Education Classes
- March 24:** Religious Education Classes
- March 31:** Religious Education Classes

We're looking for soup donations
Please contact Sara if you'd like to
provide a crock pot of soup for the
soup dinner!

THE EMPTY BOWLS PROJECT



Soup Dinner
March 30th
6 pm

Last month, the RE Committee hosted an Empty Bowls Project pottery painting party. Check out some photos below!

Now we're planning a soup dinner for Saturday, March 30th at 6 pm. We will be selling delicious soup and the bowls which were donated by artists who attended the painting party. Those who already purchased their bowls may pick them up at the soup dinner! Peter Kelleher, the Soupman, will be at the event to talk about his mission.

Proceeds of the bowl sale and soup dinner will be donated to Support The Soupman, a cause which helps the homeless in the direct area.

This project is funded by Arts for Youth, a Bridgewater State Arts Organization that provides arts programming to families on the South Shore (including their 22 year old multi-arts summer camp held each summer at the Bridgewater-Raynham Regional High School!)



FIELD TRIP FUN!

Mark your calendars! The RE Committee will be organizing a field trip for all to the Holi Festival of colors at Sri Radha Bhakti Hindu Temple in Holbrook on Saturday, April 6th!

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

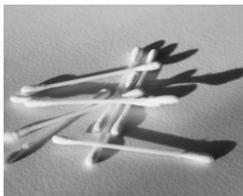


CLASSES IN UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISM

We have been fortunate to have seen several new faces at First Parish since the start of the church year. 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 on Sunday March 3 and Sunday March 17 after the regular church service. Led by Reverend Paul, these classes offer instruction in the history of Unitarian Universalism and its principles. The first class on 3/3 will be centered around the text "The Unitarian Universalist Pocket Guide" which will be provided to each participant before the classes meet. The second class on 3/17 will 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

Green tip of month

Did you know..... the middle part of a cotton swab is known as a ***spindle***. Many types of cotton swabs have a plastic spindle. Next time you purchase cotton swabs make sure the spindle is made of a ***paperboard*** instead of a plastic. If everyone in the US households switched to paperboard spindles, the petroleum energy saved would be equivalent to over **1,500,000 gallons of gasoline**



from Great Eastern Energy



STEWARDSHIP DINNER PARTY

In preparation for our annual budget drive, the Stewardship Team invites all members and friends to a Celebration Dinner **Friday**, March 1 at 6:30 PM in the Upper Parish Hall. The dinner will be prepared by the members of the Stewardship Team. **This is NOT a pot luck.** The purpose of the **dinner** is to celebrate the generosity of the community we have created here and tell some of our stories. We will pass out pledge packets on Friday evening, and request that people return them on Sunday morning.

Thanks, Frank

Off the Common Coffeehouse

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

Saturday, March 2 at 7:30pm

Featuring Emily Mure
& The Whispering Tree (split bill)

Potluck dinner at 6:30pm

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

May 4 - Grace Morrison

Admission: \$15

Refreshments

Sign up for open mike!

MARCH SHARE THE PLATE

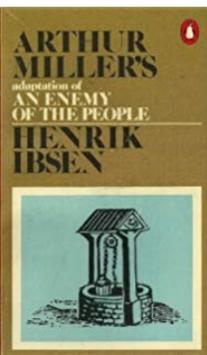
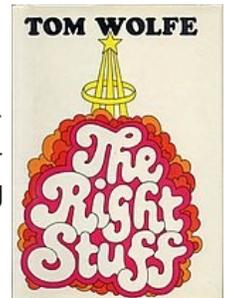
The Share the Plate charity for March is UU Mass Action, our state social action organization. Here is their Mission Statement.

Our mission is to organize and mobilize UUs in Massachusetts to confront oppression. We provide pathways towards justice and identify opportunities in which we can live our values.

Some of their key issues are: Safe Communities, Immigration, Climate Action Justice, Economic Justice in conjunction with Rise Up Massachusetts, and Ending Mass Incarceration.

T"UU"RING LEAVES BOOK CLUB

Friday, March 1 at 7pm the Book Club will meet at First Parish to discuss the February selection *The Right Stuff* by Tom Wolfe. This is a 1979 book about the pilots engaged in U.S. post-war research with experimental rocket-powered, high-speed aircraft as well as documenting the stories of the first Project Mercury astronauts selected for the NASA space program.



Friday, March 29 at 7 pm the Book Club will meet at First Parish to discuss *An Enemy of the People*. This was originally a play by Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen. Ibsen wrote it in response to the public outcry against his previous play, [Ghosts](#), which challenged the hypocrisy of 19th-century morality. American playwright Arthur Miller wrote an adaptation of that play. Miller's adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's classic drama is a classic in itself, a penetrating exploration of what happens when the truth comes up against the will of the majority. The First Parish Players will be presenting the Miller version for their next production.

You may read either the Ibsen or the Miller play or both.

MAINSRING HOUSE LUNCHES

Monday, March 4 at 8:30 am 100 lunches will be prepared in. The LPH for MainSpring House Homeless Shelter in Brockton. Volunteers and donations always welcome. Speak with Betty Gilson for more information.

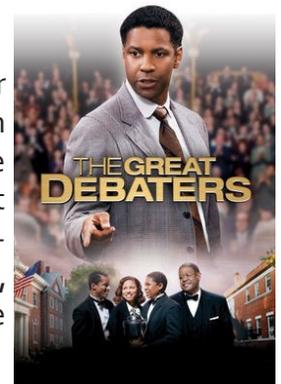
FULL SOCIAL JUSTICE MEETING

Thursday, March 7 at 7pm at First Parish there will be a meeting of all branches of the Social Justice Committee. The branches will share reports on their plans and projects. Visitors and new members are welcome.

BLACK LIVES MATTER FILM

Tuesday, March 26 at 7pm the Social justice Committee and the Bridgewater Citizens for Civility and Resect will present *The Great Debaters*. Poet and professor Melvin B. Tolson (Denzel Washington) teaches at the predominately black Wiley College in 1935 Texas. He decides to start a debate team, something nearly unheard of at a black college. While at first he butts heads with the influential father (Forest Whitaker) of one of his best debaters, eventually he is able to form a team of strong-minded, intelligent young students, and they become the first black debate team to challenge Harvard's prestigious debate champions.

Free with refreshments and discussion



MESSAGE FROM THE PLYMOUTH COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

Here's an update on the programs offered to Plymouth County residents:

1. **Guest speaker programs**, free of charge, on the following issues: a) Protecting yourselves from Identity Theft and Internet Scams; b) Charitable Giving. How to distinguish the good charities from the scams; c) The Dangers of Prescription Drugs and Inhalants in the home.
2. **Safety Assurance Program**, which gives those who live alone the peace of mind knowing that someone is checking on them on a daily basis. Through a telephone calling system, provides a daily wellness check to those enrolled. Should the resident not answer the phone after two attempts at designated times, a person chosen by the resident will be notified to check on their well-being. To enroll, you need to fill out a simple form and chose the time you would like to be called. The program is free to all county residents.
3. **Code Red** is the automated phone calling system that alerts residents of the county of an emergency situation. The incidents may be an evacuation order, a hazardous spill, a missing child/senior, or a storm emergency, etc. With this program, those that have a landline phone with a listed or unlisted number are automatically on the call list. If residents of Plymouth and Bristol Counties utilize mobile phones, they can sign up for the program by contacting Plymouth County Sheriff's Dept. at (508) 830-6200 or register online at www.pcsdma.org/codered. There is no fee to be part of this program.
4. **Photo Identification Cards** are a useful resource for seniors who no longer drive. They are printed onsite and can be worn with a lanyard or kept in a wallet. Free to seniors in Plymouth County.
5. **SafetyNet** is a program which utilizes radio transmitting technology to help find those with cognitive disorders, such as Alzheimer's disease or Autism Spectrum Disorders, who may wander. The individual would wear a radio transmitter bracelet, which resembles a wrist watch. Should the person go missing, the Sheriff's Dept. will immediately dispatch a search and rescue team. SafetyNet Tracking Systems does charge a fee for this program, but financial aid is available to help cover the cost.

Please tell Betty Gilson if you are interested in learning more about these programs and, if there's enough interest, we can arrange for a speaker to come to talk at First Parish. Programs typically last one hour or less.

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 **MAINSRING 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.*

MARCH 2019 CALENDAR

Friday, March 1

6pm Stewardship Team Celebration Dinner in the UPH

Saturday, March 2

7:30pm Off the Common Coffeehouse with Emily Mure and The Whispering Tree (split bill)

Sunday March 3

10:30am Worship with Rev. Paul Sprecher, "Journeying Together"

12noon Classes in Unitarian Universalism

Monday March 4

8:30am MainSpring House lunches prepped and delivered

Thursday, March 7

1pm Green Sanctuary Committee will meet at Janet Dye's

7pm Full Social Justice Committee Meeting at First Parish

Friday, March 8

7pm T"UU"rning Leaves Book Club will meet at First Parish

Sunday, March 10

Daylight Savings Begins — Spring ahead one hour



9am Choir Practice

10:30am Worship with Rev. Chris Jablonski, "Fresh Eyes"

Tuesday, March 12

7pm Facilities Committee Meeting

7pm Meditation Group

Sunday, March 17

9am Choir rehearsal

10:30am Worship with Rev. Paul Sprecher, "From Wholeness to Wholeness"

12noon Classes in Unitarian Universalism

Monday, March 18

6:30pm RE Committee Meeting

Tuesday, March 19

7pm Connections

Wednesday, March 20

7pm Science and Religion Discussion Group at FP

Thursday, March 21

7pm Worship Committee Meeting

Sunday, March 24

9am Choir rehearsal

10:30am Worship with Jennifer Johnson, "Building Bridges"

Tuesday, March 25

7pm Black Lives Matter film series presents *The Great Debaters* at First Parish

Thursday, March 28

7pm Parish Committee meeting

Friday, March 29

7pm T"UU"rning Leaves Book Club will meet at First Parish

Saturday, March 30

6pm Empty Bowls Dinner

Sunday, March 31

9am Choir Practice

10:30am Worship with Rev. Paul and McKayla Hoffman, "Whaddya Say about the Sacred?"

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