

An ancient folklore tells of the power of gathering our individual gifts to create community



Stone Soup Newsletter

Spring 2022

First Parish in Portland
A Unitarian Universalist Congregation

Spring Worship Services

3/13 | 10 am | **Coming of Age** | Rev. Elaine Peresluha
3/20 | 10 am | **The Great Turning** | Rev. Elaine Peresluha
3/27 | 10 am | **I Can't Be Quiet** | Rev. Elaine Peresluha
4/3 | 10 am | **Urgent vs. Important** | Rev. Elaine Peresluha
4/10 | 10 am | **Earth Day** | Rev. Elaine Peresluha
4/17 | 10 am | **We Rise** | Rev. Elaine Peresluha
4/24 | 10 am | **Guest Minister**

Recurring Events at First Parish

First Tuesday of the Month | 7 pm | **Book Group** | Online
Thursdays | 7 pm | **Choir Rehearsals** | Meeting House
Fridays | 8 am | **Poetry Hour** | Online
Sundays | 1:30 pm | **7/8 Our Whole Lives** | Community Room

Upcoming Events at First Parish

3/13 | 11 am | **Newcomer Coffee** | Parish Hall
3/20 | 6 pm | **Youth Group Meeting** | Youth Room
5/23 | 7 pm | **Grouper Concert** | Meeting House
5/25 | 2 pm | **Palaver Strings Recital** | Parish Hall

Please check the [First Parish Calendar](#) for more information on these events.

Get Involved at First Parish!

Are you looking for a way to give back to our church? Do you want to be more involved with First Parish? We have many committees listed below that are currently looking for volunteers. Hannah is also looking for a few office volunteers to help with small but important tasks. Please send her an email at office@firstparishportland.org if you are interested.



Worship Committee: If you love our weekly worship services and want to be involved in the collaborative effort to choose meaningful readings, participate in services, and work directly with our wonderful staff, please send Rev. Elaine an email at minister@firstparishportland.org. The Worship Committee meets once a week for an hour to prepare for the weekend service.

Safe Congregation Committee: If you have a passion for keeping your fellow members safe inside our building and on our grounds or have a background in public health, insurance, or safety, this committee may be a great fit for you. Please email Liz Wasilewski, Safe Congregation Chair, at scc@firstparishportland.org for more information. The Safe Congregation Committee meets once a month for an hour.

Audio/Visual Committee: The Audio/Visual Committee is a newly formed group that will be working with our Tech Director, Devon, to explore the new technology installed in our historic Meeting House. For more information on this committee's needs, please email Hannah at office@firstparishportland.org. The Audio/Visual Committee does not have a set meeting time yet.

Communications Team: Our Communications Team handles all internal and external communication including editing and publishing Press Releases, redesigning our website, posting on social media, and assisting with communication between other committees and teams. If you are interested in learning more about this committee, please email Hannah at office@firstparishportland.org.

Emerging from Emergency

Rev. Dr. Elaine Beth Peresluha, Interim Minister

“... This day is merely a step in infinite progress.

It is unfoldment not time.

It brings no belief of delay in success, no disappointment.

It adds no fear, no age, no deterioration, no decay, no sin, no materiality,

No belief in matter.

It only adds wisdom, power, dominion, law, and the presence of well done.

My treatment now establishes the law of this day,

And obliterates the supposition or belief in any other law.

Principle governs me and mine this day.

This day is unfoldment

In which every detail and incident is but an illustration

Of divine presence, power, wisdom and love.”

- Mary Baker Eddy

For me, Mary Baker Eddy was a path maker, laying down the foundations that meaning makers over the decades have built new roads upon. She was a Unitarian, before she grew her own religion. What I take away from her words on unfoldment is that intention and attention matter. They are the stuff of progress, everyday magic, and miracles. Attention and intention can steady our feet when we are on shaky ground, uncertain of our path forward, of what is right or wrong.

When we place our attention on what matters most to us, then fortify it with our hope and intention to fulfill our vision, miracles unfold. I do not mean the magic or miracles as defined by the prophets of old, nor the smoke and mirrors sort of magic with which prestidigitators arouse shock and awe. No. The miraculous perfection Mrs. Eddy and I speak of is an ongoing creation of which we are each a part. When people decide together what is important and, shoulder-to-shoulder, put their hearts, their minds, and their muscle to the task, their best intentions unfold like magic. Voila! A miracle.

Responding to the needs of our hearts and minds as we emerge from a global pandemic, managing our anguish over an immoral and unnecessary war, and re-engaging in this congregation requires attention and intention. We can each follow the lead of Lynn McTaggart by practicing our best relational skills, placing our intention on all people laying down their arms, and deciding together what matters most.

What is it that you want to see unfold during this time of emergence from all the personal, congregational, and global emergencies? Where are you able to put your best attention and intention to foster hope, dismantle fear, and eliminate violence from your heart? Together, we can place our attention and intention on the presence of well done, on perfection unfolding in time- a step in infinite progress towards wisdom and love.

Membership Needs: Ushers and Flowers for Sunday Mornings

Laurie Hasty, Membership Coordinator

Ushers are an important part of our Sunday morning worship, welcoming our congregation into our Meeting House, and collecting the Offertory. If you would like to usher on a Sunday morning, please sign up at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/70a0e44aea829aaf94-sunday>. If you would like to share a floral arrangement for the chancel table during worship, please sign up at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/70a0e44aea829aaf94-opportunities>. Flowers offered in someone's memory or honor may be noted in the weekly enews by emailing the office: office@firstparishportland.org.

The 8th Principle - Why Now?

The 8th Principle came from a feeling that we need something to renew our commitment to this work, to hold ourselves accountable, and to fulfill the potential of our existing principles. The UUA recently went through a crisis related to inclusive hiring practices, especially related to whites being hired over highly qualified Latinx candidates, resulting in the resignation of the UUA President. UU support of the Movement for Black Lives historically has been encouraging. The UUA feels that, going forward, the best way for us to truly support racial justice in a significant way is to purge ourselves and our institutions of the culture and exclusive practices of whiteness and white supremacy. Our existing 7 principles *imply* this 8th principle, but do not

explicitly hold us accountable for addressing these oppressions directly. For more information, visit <https://www.8thprincipleuu.org/background>.

Are You New to First Parish?

Laurie Hasty, Membership Coordinator

We are so glad that you visited us this morning! We hope that you found something which lifted your spirits, touched your heart, or stirred your curiosity. Our mission at First Parish is to nurture the spirit, to grow in community, and to help heal the world. The services we share here, the programming we offer, and the community we cultivate are all in service to this purpose. Our theology draws on a wide variety of spiritual traditions. Our community members and volunteers help to offer an array of programming and community building activities. First Parish rallies around the causes that are meaningful to our Congregation. We believe in acting on our beliefs, rolling up our sleeves and doing the work of social justice. You are invited to join us in all of these endeavors - to offer your own unique gifts to the community, to join us in growth and development, and to give voice to the causes that move you to action. You need not be a member to participate.

Once a month, there is a Newcomer Conversation after the worship service. Newcomers and visitors are invited to chat informally with Rev. Elaine and Laurie Hasty, our Membership Coordinator, to learn more about what makes this church unique and answer your questions about Unitarian Universalism and First Parish. Please join us on Sunday, March 13 from 11am-noon. For more information, please email membership@firstparishportland.org We look forward to meeting you!

What's Happening in Faith Formation?

Toben Cooney-Callnan, Director of Faith Formation

I am very excited to welcome families back to in-person worship and Faith Formation programming in the First Parish building! Since it's been a while, and there have been some changes since we were last together, I thought I'd take this opportunity to remind families what Sunday mornings will look like.

On a typical Sunday, children will start off in the Meeting House with their families. We will light the chalice together and say our Church Covenant. Then, there will be a special Time For Ages Story. After the story, the children will be invited to go to the Community Room on the first floor. For the time being, we will hold one large Children's Faith Formation meeting for everyone. Once a month, we will do what is called a Children's Chapel. This is a theme based service created for the kids that includes Joys and Concerns, music, meditation, passing the basket for collection, and an activity based on the theme. At the end of our meetings, grades 3 and under stay in the Community Room

until their parents come get them. Grades 4 and up will be dismissed to go find their parents upstairs.

The Children's Faith Formation schedule for March is as follows:

3/13: Children's Chapel

3/20: Children's FF Meetings

3/27: Children's FF Meetings

We are currently running the Our Whole Lives Program for Grades 7 and 8 on Sunday afternoons from 1:30 pm - 3:00 pm. Youth Group for Grades 9-12 will meet once a month over Zoom and twice a month in person. Please email Toben at dre@firstparishportland.org if you have any questions about Faith Formation.

Are You Interested in Becoming a Member of First Parish?

Laurie Hasty, Membership Coordinator

First Parish is a welcoming and caring community. We are committed to a free and open search for meaning, guided by the wisdom of ages, reason, intuition, and experience. We work toward a more accepting, peaceful world with respect for all existence. As an independent church, we are self-governed by our membership. There are several steps to joining First Parish. We offer two classes to familiarize people with our faith and our church. The "UU History" class explores the history and theology of Unitarian Universalism, its liberal faith tradition, and First Parish. The "Path to Membership" class looks at the benefits and responsibilities of membership, and opportunities for spiritual development here. New members are also encouraged to meet individually with our minister to explore their own spiritual journey. We will celebrate and recognize this year's new members as they sign our historic Membership Book during the worship service and New Member Ceremony later this Spring. If you are considering joining First Parish, please email our Membership Coordinator, Laurie Hasty, to learn more about the process, at membership@firstparishportland.org.

Join the First Parish Choir!

John Powell, Interim Music Director

After two years of silence due to Covid, the First Parish choir is meeting again on Thursday nights at 7 PM! We have a new accompanist, Matthew Jones, who will be assisting with the rehearsals and playing the piano on Sundays. We have a new soprano section leader as well, who is a pianist and a choral director. So the music program at First Parish is growing and changing, and we invite you to be part of the change. Come join us on Thursday nights and Sunday mornings. If you have any questions, contact me at musicdirector@firstparishportland.org.

A Prayer for Ukraine

Rev. Jenn Gracen

Spirit of Life and Love,
Our hearts are aching today
As we watch fear and terror
Being inflicted on Ukraine.
We pray from afar,
Seeing people flee in fear,
Praying in the streets,
Gripped by an uncertainty
That echoes in our hearts.
We have known uncertainty
And fear these last two years,
And while we are aware
It is nothing like war,
We are reminded of our tie
To the humanity of those
We have never known.
We pray for the parents
Trying to protect their children.
We ache for children
As forces outside their control
Shatter their world.
We ache
For those doing what they can
To flee the movements of nations.
And we pray



For those who cannot flee.
May the world not turn its face
Away from this pain.
Even in those moments
When we, as individuals,
Must rest our spirits,
May our thoughts and prayers
Become actions
That end war
And the threat of war
Forever.
Amen