

First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Medfield

**26 North Street,
Medfield, MA
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www.firstparishmedfield.org



January Newsletter 2024

Ministerial Musings

A colleague told me that he had created a “word cloud” out of his 2023 sermons. I had never done this before, so I googled “word cloud generator” and found out that if you insert a large amount of text into their program, the 75 most frequently used words will create a cloud, the size of each word dependent on how frequently it is used. So I did it. I copied all of the sermons I preached during 2023 into their program and voila, within seconds a cloud appeared on my screen with “LIFE” the most prominent. Other words jumped out as well: People, World, Know, Time, Love, One, Many, Way, Found, Think, Well, Years, Religious, Like, Just. These, of course, are all perfectly good words to find in a sermon and create themes that I know I’ve been preaching for years now.

However, I was surprised to find that the second most prominent word in my “cloud” was “God.” Those who are traditionally religious wouldn’t find it odd that a preacher would talk about God, but most of us Unitarian Universalist ministers use the G word with a bit of fear and trepidation. Years ago, I had a parishioner who actually counted the number of times I used the word and complained if it popped up too often in any given

sermon series. You see, a lot of us still seem to image that old man sitting on a cloud watching us, eager to judge and punish. Don't believe in God, these folks say. And so, when I want to talk about the holy or that which transcends our understanding or the mystery in life, I stay away from using God language.

At least I thought I did until my word cloud revealed the truth. I talk about God. Apparently a lot. Often it's within the context of talking about the history of religious belief (and doubt) about one God, or many Gods, or no God. However, sometimes it just seems right to replace "The Holy" or "The Mystery" or "That Which is of Ultimate Concern" with the word "God."

I just hope you will know that when I do so, I'm not talking about the big guy in the sky but something which transcends our understanding, something that is beyond words and images. God is a shorthand way of talking about all of that. Which means, of course, that when I create a word cloud out of my 2024 sermons, God will probably pop out as one of my most frequently used words.

And yes, for those of you counting: I know that I've just used "God" twelve times in this column!

See you on Sunday,
Rev. Dave

Upcoming Worship Services

January 7	Roadmap for the Future	Barry Finkelstein & Rev. Dave Egan
On this Sunday, Barry Finkelstein from <i>Stewardship For Us</i> will join us. We will be exploring who we are as a congregation, where we would like to go, and how we plan to get there. Come join us for this important worship service.		

January 14	Our U.U. Heroes	Rev. Dave Egan
During this intergenerational service, the children will highlight several influential African-American Unitarian Universalists, and the impact they had on our faith. Come join us for this educational and inspiring worship service.		

January 21	Poetry Sunday	Thea Iberall
Poetry Sunday, an annual tradition, spirit nourishing.		

Come join us for a soulful and thought-provoking service filled with poetry and music.

January 28	What's Really Real?	Rev. Dave Egan
Some of us are natural born skeptics, firmly entrenched in the rational, in the material world. But what if there really is a lot more to life?		

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service Donation



We are pleased to announce that a total of \$879.00 was donated to be split between FPUU and Dignity Matters following the Christmas Eve Candlelight Service.

Thank you to all those who contributed!

Opportunities for Inclusion Rental Began December 26th.

The Executive Board is very pleased to welcome Opportunities for Inclusion (OFI) to First Parish!



**OPPORTUNITIES
for INCLUSION**

Where Everybody is Somebody

Formerly GWArc

Celebrating 65 Years!

OFI provides programs to adults with intellectual, developmental and physical disabilities and will be renting our vestry and kitchen from 8 AM to 3:30 PM Monday through Friday. **Please plan your visits to First Parish outside of those hours to allow them full use of their rental space.** Thank you.

Religious Exploration



Our Whole Lives (OWL) for 8th & 9th graders

You've asked, and We. Are. Doing. It!!! This comprehensive sexuality program is in its 20th year at First Parish. Developed by the UUA and the UCC, the curriculum reinforces our values as well as educating in topics including Anatomy and Physiology, Relationships, Communication, options for safe sex, and Social Media awareness through role playing, discussions, and guest speakers.

A mandatory parent/guardian meeting will be held on Sunday, 1/7, at 7p in the UHouse. The curriculum and visuals will be reviewed as well as a Q&A. Permission forms will be distributed and must be on file by the start of our program! The sessions will meet most Sundays from 7-9pm, and is open to members of First Parish and the larger community (a \$100 materials fee applies for non-FP friends with scholarships available). OWL will be a 6-month long adventure, ending with a celebration in June. This year the facilitators are John Kornet and Cissy Hull-Allen with Jen Bartle as back up.

IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM FPUU EXECUTIVE BOARD

*****PLEASE COMPLETE BRIEF SURVEY BY JANUARY 4 -- see link below*****

UU Consultant to Conduct Next Steps Weekend Visit January 5-7, 2024.

As we strive to strengthen our stewardship and prepare for a possible capital campaign, we have invited Barry Finkelstein of *Stewardship for Us* to spend Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, January 5-7, with us to conduct a Next Steps Process program. Barry has been a Unitarian Universalist Congregational Stewardship Consultant since the Fall of 2007, and has worked with over 120 UU congregations in all aspects of stewardship, governance, and planning. In addition, he is a professional management consultant with 35 years of experience supporting non-profits, US government agencies, and commercial firms.

Barry is also an experienced and energetic UU church lay leader, having served on the board and as board chair of a large church, and in leadership positions in social justice, finance, youth programming, and music. He is passionate about Unitarian Universalism and dedicated to helping UU congregations achieve their grandest dreams. Barry is married to retired UU minister Rev. Roberta Finkelstein, and they currently live in Alexandria, VA where they attend the Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington (UUCA).

Barry hopes to accomplish three goals during the visit: 1) gather enough information to gain a clear sense of who we are and where we would like to go; 2) generate specific observations and recommendations to help us on our journey; and 3) explain how the Stewardship for Us Team can offer guidance and coaching as we move into the future.

Barry will meet with congregational leaders and committee chairs on Friday evening and Saturday morning. On Saturday afternoon, January 6, he will conduct an open, in-person workshop for everyone from 2:10 to 3:30 pm. Please plan to attend this session.

Barry will also participate in our worship service on Sunday morning, January 7. At 11:30 am, following the service and coffee hour, he will hold an open forum to share his observations and recommendations. The Sunday session will be hybrid, on Zoom at the Sunday worship link. We encourage all to attend.

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS SURVEY by JANUARY 4:

Please complete the brief survey at this link in preparation for the visit by consultant Barry Finkelstein:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RDCXNP8>

Please note the following:

- The survey is anonymous

- It should take only a few minutes
- Each member of a couple can complete it individually, and should be able to access the survey with the same link from the same or a different device
- Please respond by Thursday, January 4
- If you have any problems accessing or completing the survey, you can contact Barry directly by email (barrypf@gmail.com) or by text (703-407-5457)

Thank you!

Message and Invitation from the Executive Board

Get involved.



At the December 17 Semi-annual Parish Meeting, members of the congregation approved a board motion to create a task force to review the Black Lives Matter sign in light of some BLM chapters' support of Hamas. The Board is looking for 6-8 volunteers (including at least one Anti-Racism Team member) who will begin working together in January 2024 and will provide a recommendation to the Board by May 1, 2024, in time for the annual vote at our June Annual Meeting. (According to the Policy Governing Public Statements adopted by the Board in May 2021 and presented to the congregation at the June 6, 2021 Annual Meeting, approval of such public displays must be given by the congregation every year.)

Task force members should be willing to research and facilitate an open and respectful conversation about how First Parish displays its social justice values.

The task force is being asked to make a recommendation about the Black Lives Matter sign and is also empowered to make additional recommendations on how we display our values.

Task force meetings will be open to attendance by all.

Please contact Kay Bennett (Kay8941@gmail.com) by January 12, 2024 to express your interest in volunteering or with any questions.



Met Opera Livefeed

On December 10, several folks from FPUU attended the livestream of the Metropolitan Opera's *Florencia en el Amazonas* at the Showcase Cinema de Lux Patriot Place. It was a wonderful performance, and afterwards the group gathered at the home of Louise and Duncan for a fantastic potluck. Join us next time if you can!



Green Sanctuary Committee News



Our next meeting is Jan. 16, 2024, at 7pm via Zoom. All are welcome! Email [Jeanette Ruyle](#) for link and more info.

In greeting 2024, we of the Green Sanctuary Committee encourage you to attend this event, either in person or on Zoom. It addresses the important and necessary challenge of building our electric grid so that renewable energy can be utilized everywhere by everyone.

Hosted by the MA EJ Table
C O M M U N I T Y F O R U M

Environmental Justice

Where should it all go?
Building our new electric grid.

Saturday, January 20th

2:00 PM - 3:30 PM

In person at First Parish Concord

And on zoom webinar

RSVP: <https://bit.ly/EJTableForumRSVP>

"Join the MA Environmental Justice Legislative Table to discuss the elephant in the room- how do we build the renewable distributed electric grid we need fast, while not repeating the mistakes of the past? Learn more about our vision for infrastructure, energy democracy, and centering frontline communities in the process- as well as the current policy proposal from the EJ Table to greenlight good projects fast and nip bad projects in the bud."

The MA Environmental Justice Legislative Table members include **GreenRoots, Alternatives for Community & Environment, Coalition for Social Justice, Arise for Social Justice, Groundwork Lawrence, and the North American Indian Center of Boston** with allied support from Conservation Law Foundation, Union of Concerned Scientists, Massachusetts

Public Health Association, **Unitarian Universalist Mass Action**, Clean Water Action, MA Climate Action Network, and Environmental League of MA. [RSVP Here.](#) [Facebook Event here.](#)

**YOUR FIRST PARISH MEDFIELD
ANNUAL FUND DRIVE COMMITTEE
INVITES YOU TO A
PIZZA & GAME NIGHT!!!
ALL AGES WELCOME!!**



WHEN: SATURDAY, JANUARY 27TH FROM 6:00 PM - ?

WHERE: First Parish Vestry

Bring your favorite games

Annual Fund Drive committee will provide

Pizza and soft drinks

Adults: BYOB

Please RSVP to duncanglover@comcast.net

“The Healing Power of a Generous Community”

2024-2025 Fund Drive Theme

Notes from the Church Office

Please remember the following deadlines:



Church Newsletter: Third Sunday of the month. This month it's on **January 21st**.

Order of Service: Wednesdays by 5:00 pm.

Church Office Hours: Mondays & Thursdays from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm.

Email: admin@firstparishmedfield.org Sandra Andreassi-Administrator

Small Suppers: Hold the dates!

The Annual Fund Drive Committee is holding small supper events in February 2024. Six to eight people have supper at a member's home. This is one of the more popular social activities of the church.



The dates are as follows: Saturday evening, Feb. 3, 2024, and Saturday evening, Feb. 10, 2024. The time and details will be set by the host.

We will be sending a church wide invitation in mid-January. We hope you will consider attending one of the suppers.

Volunteers needed to be Annual Fund Drive Canvassing Leads

Each year we make a canvass of the entire congregation as part of the annual fund drive.



The Annual Fund Drive Committee is looking for volunteers to help with this canvassing effort.

You will be asked to contact about 5 pledge units in the congregation to canvass them for the annual fund drive.

If interested, please contact: Don Rolph at don.rolph@gmail.com

Monthly Mediation & Reflection

Shirley Riga, Spiritual Director

Member of the Pastoral Care Committee

We are living in unusual times. The world is amidst transcendent change, and like a fish, we cannot yet see beyond the water we reside in because we are still surviving the storm. Long buried roots of complacency are shaken loose. People are dying. People are surviving. Hearts are breaking open in a global movement with awakenings of massive proportions.

The world is dismal, and yet when one looks, there is beauty in nature, miracles of resilience, and wonder witnessed in kindness extended from one to another.

It is exciting and terrifying. One moment I feel helpless and the next I feel such power in presence. Thankfully my breath continues automatically without a reminder.

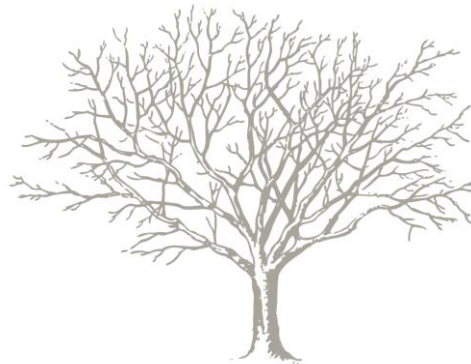
It has been ten weeks since I broke my leg. This broken leg, subsequent surgery and weeks of rehab has forced me into a place of deep surrender, and I have not done so gracefully. I have kicked and screamed my way through recovery, resisting and resenting, refusing to give in. To me,

giving in is giving up. Surprisingly, I have found the opposite is true.

Giving in to what life has offered, allows me to flow with my days instead of fighting them. I have more inner comfort with surrendering than I do with resisting. Acceptance in the moment makes for smoother days instead of days riddled with emotional ups and downs. A day is full of moments.

Like the ocean, we ebb and flow with love and fear. We either stand steady as love and fear moves through us, or we choose to fixate on fear. The secret for me is to remember not to fixate on fear, but find light in my multiple moments.

So, when you become aware in a moment, remember the importance of gratitude for every small miracle, the blessing of community, love in any form, gentle kindness for yourself, knowing this power of belief can hold a positive or negative charge. We each hold the power to change our mind.



From the Social Justice Incubator – Dignity Matters



FPUU supports Dignity Matters, a local non-profit that provides menstrual supplies and undergarments to 15,000 women and girls in Massachusetts living in poverty and/or experiencing homelessness.



They are having a fall drive and are collecting donations of tampons, pads (including Depends type pads/underwear), new underwear, and new/gently used bras. Donations can be left in the bin located on the porch of the U House.

If you prefer, shop their [Amazon Wish List](https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/2AoBMFSCYN4W/refnav_wishlist_lists_1?) for shipment directly to the Dignity Matters warehouse. https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/2AoBMFSCYN4W/refnav_wishlist_lists_1?

If you have any questions, email becca_kornet@yahoo.com. Thank you!

Medfield Food Cupboard

Please place non-perishables in the container in the narthex. Most needed items:



- Boost/Ensure (chocolate or vanilla)
- Tuna (solid white, in water)
- Creamy peanut butter
- Jelly/jam (12 or 18 oz)
- Individually portioned snacks

Any questions, email becca_kornet@yahoo.com

Collection for Chaplains on the Way



hope is found in hearts connected

The following items would be gratefully received by the unhoused community of Waltham: **\$5.00 Dunkin Donuts Gift Certificates, Cans of caffeinated coffee for the winter breakfast program, Men's sweatpants & hooded sweatshirts, sizes large & extra large, Winter hats & gloves, sizes medium – extra large,**

Warm socks, Long underwear, sizes large & extra large, Warm blankets, Sleeping bags, Masks



If you would like to donate items, they can be placed in the donation box in the Vestry. Your generous, ongoing support for Chaplains on the Way is greatly appreciated. Feel free to contact Louise Rachin at 617-429-7319 or lrachin@comcast.net with any questions.

FPUU Calendar of Events

Monday, January 1	New Year's Day – Office Closed
Thursday, January 4	Pastoral Care Committee Meeting/7:00 pm/Zoom The Larger Circle Band Practice/7:00 pm/Vestry
Sunday, January 7	OWL/7:00 pm/U-House
Monday, January 8	Staff Meeting/10:30 am/Zoom
Wednesday, January 10	Membership Outreach Committee Meeting/7:00 pm/Zoom
Thursday, January 11	Worship & Music Committee Meeting/7:00 pm/Zoom The Larger Circle Band Practice/7:00 pm/Vestry
Sunday, January 14	Men's Group Lunch/11:30 am/U-House ART Meeting/7:00 pm/Zoom OWL/7:00 pm/Vestry
Monday, January 15	MLK Jr. Day/Office Closed
Tuesday, January 16	Green Sanctuary Committee Meeting/7:00 pm/Zoom
Wednesday, January 17	Right Relations Team Meeting/7:00 pm/Zoom Annual Fund Drive Committee Meeting/7:15 pm/Zoom
Thursday, January 18	Executive Board Meeting/7:00 pm/Zoom The Larger Circle Band Practice/7:00 pm/Vestry
Sunday, January 21	Newsletter Deadline OWL/7:00 pm/Vestry
Thursday, January 25	Larger Circle Band Practice/7:00 pm/Vestry RE Committee Meeting/7:30 pm/Zoom
Saturday, January 27	AFD Pizza & Game Night/Vestry
Sunday, January 28	Men's Group Lunch/U-House/11:30 am OWL/7:00 pm/Vestry

