



Stone Temple News

Winter Turns to Spring
February–April 2022

From the Minister's Study

By Rev. Rebecca Froom

Can you feel it? The midday sunlight is getting brighter and our days are growing longer. I write in mid-February shortly after we have entered what scientists call “Solar Spring” a time period that begins at the half-way point between the Winter Solstice and the Spring Equinox. Throughout the ages communities in Northern Europe celebrated this cross-quarter holiday as the pagan holiday of Imbolc and later as the Catholic holiday of St. Brigid’s Day. In our secular northern hemisphere American Society, we mark this moment as Groundhog Day. Early February is the point at which we end the darkest quarter of the year, and in the six weeks before and after the Spring Equinox daylight increases at a greater rate than at the solstices when the length of days and nights changes just a few minutes a day and time seems to stand still. Between the start of February and the end of April the length of day increases a full four hours. Can you feel it?

Spring is often hailed as a season of hope, renewal, and new beginnings. The increase in light begins to wake up plants and animals and our human bodies and spirits are reminded of the abundance of life. Yet early spring in New England is known as mud season. The ground defrosts and freezes again; old snow melts and new ice forms; temperature can swing wildly from day to day. How do you - how do we - approach this season? Is our gaze drawn upwards to the brightening sun, or downwards to the sticky, messy morass of mud? For me the spiritual beauty of the season of early spring is its unpredictability. The seasonal changes as we move toward the Spring Equinox and on to the Summer Solstice will not be even, consistent, or predictable. Early spring invites and challenges us to pay attention to the present so that we might be prepared to put on hearty boots on a muddy day or take time to eat outside or go on a walk on a warm and sunny day. We know that change is one of the constants in life, and in spring we truly experience those changes day by day.

A change in the life of our congregation is that Joan McDonald will be leaving her position as our Director of Religious Education in March. Joan joined our UFPC staff in August 2018, creating creative programs for our children and youth, connecting with families, and crafting multigenerational worship services and messages for all ages. Joan grounded and strengthened our community when Covid required us to find new ways to gather for worship, religious education, and community. For several years now Joan has been working two jobs - here at UFPC and as the General Manager at College Lights Opera Company in Falmouth. Juggling two jobs is challenging, even before covid made nearly everything harder. In leaving her UFPC position Joan will have more time to take care of herself and return to her pottery, while continuing her full-time position at College Lights Opera.

I know you join me in wishing Joan a springtime of personal renewal at this transition in her professional life. And just as spring is framed by mud as well as sunlight, I know you join me in feelings of loss and sadness as we say goodbye to Joan. Joan’s last Sunday with us will be March 6th. We will honor Joan during our worship service and will celebrate her during social hour that Sunday. I hope that you will join us!

Know that the RE Committee, Board, Joan, and I are creating a transition plan for our Religious Education Program. This spring we will run the RE Program with a mix of lay leaders, our continuing staff, and consulting with a Director of Religious Education to create “lesson plans” for our Sunday morning church school. We will run a job search for a new Director of Religious Education who will join our staff in August or September 2022.

During this unpredictable springtime season, I wish that you may have days of rest, renewal, and rejuvenation. And I wish that you might have good and sturdy boots to make your way through the mud.

Reflections

By Joan McDonald, DRE

I have been asked more than once over the last few weeks—"No children this week?" As winter has taken a hold and religious education class moved indoors, the Omicron variant spreading quickly in schools, at work and holiday gatherings -we all are experiencing close contact quarantines and infections spreading through our families and friends. Our youngest children are not yet able to be vaccinated-which can be a stressful cause for concern for parents. We all have struggled through this pandemic—some of us alone, others sharing space with spouses, partners, children, and extended family. As we enter the beginning of year three – I am amazed at how we have endured and continue to endure—sometimes we are not successful and struggle—sometimes we are able to adapt in ways that truly give me a moment of joy. In a conversation with a member of our congregation, she described how her daughter plays with her friends with the iPad—playing virtual hide and seek with a parent searching through their home directed by a lively group of virtual playmates.

Claire Fitzmaurice instituted a thank you note board to share a note of encouragement and appreciation to members of our congregation, as well as, a letter writing campaign to thank organizations in our community who are doing the hard work of justice. During the month of February, we will continue this note writing campaign to check on members of our community we have not seen recently—including families with children. Just to say we miss you—we understand there are a myriad of reasons for your not being here in person, but we want you to know that you are loved, you are missed-you are important. I will have cards, envelopes, markers, stickers, postage stamps and an address list of our members and friends in the Parish Hall on Sunday, February 13th and 20th.

Opening to Joy: Soul Matters Small Group Ministry

By Ann Marie Willer

The Soul Matters small groups meet monthly to explore a specific theme together. I enjoy the variety of "ways in" to each theme; the Soul Matters packets provide at-home activities, poems, quotations, videos, podcasts, movies, online playlists, and questions to ponder. Regardless of the state of my brain, my schedule, and my ability to focus each month, I can find something in the packet to engage with. When our small group meets over Zoom, we deepen our understanding of the month's theme using a structured format of individual sharing that alternates with periods of quiet reflection.

December's theme was "Opening to Joy," and one resource in particular resonated with me: a 30-minute video titled "My Joy is Heavy!" by The Bengsons <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kMTBaFm5jbc>. With original music and honesty, the Bengsons explore how joy can be present and alive in the midst of chronic pain, depression, loss, and the difficulties of the past two years. Perhaps their video will speak to you, too.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Please check our weekly announcements for the most up to date information about upcoming programs. Weekly announcements are mailed to the congregational email list, printed in the order of service and available as a PDF you can download on our website. Contact David Bousquin at office@ufpc.org to be added to our email list.

Sunday Morning Meditation

Sundays, 9:00 am, in-person

We will have meditation on Sunday mornings at 9:00 am outside in the garden, weather permitting, and in the church parlor (with masks) when it rains or snows. Our practice includes guided, walking, and silent meditation. Feel free to contact Marie-Louise at mariejm1961@yahoo.com or 857-526-2579.

NOTE: Beginning February 13th we will once again be allowing food and beverages at church events. Our social hour will include coffee, tea, juice, and snacks in single-serve containers. Please remember to keep your mask on at all times except for when actively eating. We will have food-free seating available in the parlor for those who would like to stay for social hour in a completely masked environment.

Standout Quincy for Black Lives

Thursdays, 2:30–4:30 pm, in-person

UFPC is partnering with Quincy for Transformative Change for an initiative in support of Black Lives Matter. We meet on the church front steps weekly to bear peaceful witness and to advocate for justice and equity for our fellow citizens of color. You are invited to join our small but dedicated group. Kindly direct your questions to me at my cell 617-272-0274 or artclaire@comcast.net. Thank you, Claire Fitzmaurice.

Fledgling Tales: UFPC Storytime

Thursday, February 24, 7:00 pm, on Zoom

A Zoom story half hour will be on the second and fourth Thursday of the month at 7:00 pm. Cozy up in your jammies, with your favorite stuffed animal, blanket and caring adult and join us for a time of ritual and sharing for preschool and elementary school age children. We will share a chalice lighting, we will read a story, everyone will check in and a family or guest will share a favorite story.

Join by computer: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82507685947>

Join by telephone: 1-646-558-8656, Meeting ID: 825 0768 5947

Kindred Spirits Discussion Group for Seniors

Wednesday, March 2, 10:00–11:30 am, in-person

Join Rev. Rebecca for a monthly discussion group, grounded in our UU values, where we reflect on current events and pressing social issues. This group is open to seniors age 60+ and will meet on the first Wednesday of the month in the parish hall. Please contact Rev. Rebecca at rev.rebecca.froom@gmail.com or 617-803-1159.

Book Group

Thursday, March 3, 7:00 pm, in-person and on Zoom

The UFPC Book Group meets in the parish hall on the first Thursday of every month from 7:00 to 8:30 pm, with a gap in summer and in December. All members and friends of UFPC are welcome to join us. We try to select a balance of styles. You are welcome to come even if you have not finished the book. Over the years we have had some practice at avoiding spoilers and it is always fun to have new voices.

The book this month is *Black Man in a White Coat* by Damon Tweedy, MD. It examines the complex ways in which both black doctors and patients must navigate the difficult and often contradictory terrain of race and medicine. As Tweedy transforms from medical student to practicing physician, he discovers how often race influences his encounters with patients. Through their stories, he illustrates the complex social, cultural, and economic factors at the root of many health problems in the black community. These issues take on greater meaning when Tweedy is himself diagnosed with a chronic disease far more common among black people. In this powerful, moving, and deeply empathic book, Tweedy explores the challenges confronting black doctors, and the disproportionate health burdens faced by black patients, ultimately seeking a way forward to better treatment and more compassionate care.

Join by computer: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89427298331>

Join by telephone: 1-646-558-8656, Meeting ID: 894 2729 8331

Goodbye Celebration for Joan McDonald

Sunday, March 6, 11:45 am, in-person

Join us during Social Hour on Sunday, March 6th to celebrate and say goodbye to Joan McDonald who is leaving her position as Director of Religious Education.

Writing Group

Sunday, March 13, 12:00 pm, in-person

Our UFPC Writing Group will be meeting again this year. We will usually meet the first Sunday of the month in-person in the parlor at 12:00 pm. As in past years, we welcome everyone to join us in a free writing session and optional sharing of our words that pursue thinking on a theme. This is a non-critiqued, open minded, generous group that encourages self-expression in a supportive gathering. You can attend one or more sessions. No advance reservation is required. Groups tend to vary in size between 6 and 14 participants, and the session lasts for 45 minutes to 1 hour. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact facilitator Jim Petosa at jimjamespeto@aol.com or by phone at 301-442-3781.

NOTE: Beginning February 13th we will once again be allowing food and beverages at church events. Our social hour will include coffee, tea, juice, and snacks in single-serve containers. Please remember to keep your mask on at all times except for when actively eating. We will have food-free seating available in the parlor for those who would like to stay for social hour in a completely masked environment.

Collection for Father Bill's and MainSpring

Throughout the winter, the Social Justice Action Committee will be collecting items for [Father Bill's and MainSpring](#). Baskets will be placed on the stage in the parlor and we are asking members and friends to frequently contribute items to help individuals and families in our community. Our neighbors in shelters and temporary housing with Father Bill's and MainSpring are in need of the following *New* items:

- Toiletries (examples: razors, feminine care products, deodorant)
- Clothing and more (examples: warm clothing, boots, backpacks, but no socks at this time)
- Linens (sheets, blankets, towels)
- Kitchen and cleaning supplies (dishes, utensils, pots/pans, paper and cleaning products)
- Baby products (diapers, pull-ups, wipes)
- Gift cards (grocery, gas, T, Walmart, Target – please give to a SJAC member)

Please contribute as often as you can! We are hoping to make MANY deliveries this winter. You may also view /shop FBMS wishlist at tinyurl.com/amazonfbms. Many Thanks!

WORSHIP SERVICES

Please check our weekly announcements for the most up to date information about upcoming worship services. Weekly announcements are mailed to the congregational email list, printed in the order of service and available as a PDF you can download on our website. Contact David Bousquin at office@ufpc.org to be added to our email list. Worship services are on Sundays at 10:30 am in-person and livestream. Join by computer: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82251479714>. Join by telephone: 1-646-558-8656, Meeting ID: 822 5147 9714.

[February 6]

“Books, Bridges and Being Seen”

Rev. Rebecca Froom and the Prison Book Program community

Since 2004 United First Parish Church has been the home for Prison Book Program, a non-profit that sends books to prisoners around the country, believing that “books can open doors.” In this service we reflect on the ways that PBP builds human connections that affirm the worth and dignity of all people. This special Sunday we also celebrate a new era in the partnership between UFPC and PBP as we recognize Prison Book Program as a Social Justice Literacy Program in Residence at UFPC.

The service will include a “Share the Plate” offering to be divided between UFPC and PBP. During the social hour following the service the UFPC community will have the opportunity to sign up for a PBP volunteer shift. 2022 is the 50th anniversary of Prison Book Program and we invite you to bring a book to donate to PBP as a birthday present! Books need to be paperback and be new or lightly used. Learn more about what books are most needed at <https://prisonbookprogram.org/donate-books/>

[February 13]

“LOVE”

Joan McDonald

Children’s book author Matt De La Peña writes, “Love is the melody that follows us through each and every day of our lives.” Where do we experience love--what does it sound like, does it have a taste, a smell? Can we define it through our senses and life experiences? What song of love is interwoven throughout our lives? Join Joan McDonald, in this multi-generational worship service.

[February 20]

“Guides for the Generations”

UFPC History Program Tour Guides

Every year our congregation welcomes thousands of visitors of every age and from all walks of life who come to tour our historic sanctuary and the Adams Presidential Crypt. A group of mostly volunteer tour guides from within and beyond the congregation devote their time and talent to our History and Visitors Program, telling our UFPC story to people from around the country and around the world. This President’s Day weekend our UFPC tour guides will lead our Sunday worship service, reflecting on the lives and legacy of Presidents John Adams and John Quincy Adams throughout the generations. Service leaders include Florence Grose, Marilyn Valencius, Marie-Louise Jackson-Miller, Elizabeth Black, Bill Westland, and Albert Vaughn. Music will be provided by Norman Corey and will include a hymn written by John Quincy Adams.

[February 27]

Rev. Rebecca Froom

[March 6]

“Renewing Faith”

Rev. Rebecca Froom

This service includes a recognition and celebration of Joan McDonald, on her last Sunday as our Director of Religious Education.

[March 13]

Rev. Rebecca Froom

[March 20]

John Flynn, Guest Preacher and Guest Musician

[March 27]

“Sustaining our Shared Ministry”

Rev. Rebecca Froom

As a democratic congregation our community is supported by the members and friends of our congregation who work collaboratively with our staff and ministers to fulfill the covenant and mission of our congregation. As we begin our annual pledge drive, we reflect on why it matters and what it means to sustain our shared ministry.

[April 3]
Rev. Rebecca Froom

[April 10]
Rev. Eric Cherry

[April 17]
Easter Sunday
Rev. Rebecca

[April 24]
Rev. Rebecca

**Visitor Program Vignettes:
Washington's Farewell Address**
By Bill Westland

As we approach Presidents Day of 2022 as a divided country with even a dangerous pandemic becoming politicized, we should remember the wise words of United First Parish Church's own wise John Adams. "There has never been a democracy that has not committed suicide" and "I fear that in every elected office members will obtain an influence by noise and not by sense." Abraham Lincoln also warned that "A divided country against itself cannot stand." Two years ago, I wrote a Vignette about the book that John Avlon had written about George Washington's "Farewell Address", and how we have forgotten the many warnings which Washington tried to convey back in 1796. Seeing as conditions are even worse now than in 2020, I thought that it might be timely to repeat this same Vignette. Let's also remember that our John Adams warned that "The essence of government is the control of rivals." A good question to ask ourselves is "Can we exercise this control now, or is it too late because the rivals have become too entrenched to ever moderate their views?" Here is the 2020 Vignette.

For you history buffs John Avlon's new book, "Washington's Farewell", about the background of George Washington's "Farewell Address" is both timely and thoughtful in our current tumultuous political atmosphere. We have sort of forgotten Washington in recent years. Even Washington's Birthday has become Presidents' Day with the emphasis on automobile and shopping center sales. No longer is his "Farewell Address" emphasized in American History classes, or for the most part even mentioned. At one time school kids had to memorize parts of it. When Washington's first term was coming to a close in 1792, he wanted to retire to Mount Vernon. He asked James Madison to look over a rough draft of a farewell speech that he had written, critique it, and polish it up. Madison complied with this request, but Washington was persuaded to stay on and serve a second term. People like Jefferson, Madison and Hamilton persuaded him that only he could hold the country together, which was becoming more and more politically divided. At the end of the second term in 1796 no amount of persuasion could convince Washington to stay on. He had kept the original "Farewell Address" for four years and now asked Alexander Hamilton to look it over, critique it, and polish it up. Washington's "Farewell Address" thus was polished and edited by two of the authors of the famous and influential "Federalists Papers." Only John Jay was missing, and perhaps he looked it over as well.

By the end of Washington's second term, much to his distress and consternation, the country had become divided into political parties with competing goals and priorities. The Federalists of John Adams and Alexander Hamilton and the Republican-Democrats of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison couldn't agree on much of anything, and sectional and financial disagreements were continual problems. Partisan politics ruled the roost. Even Washington himself was continually attacked in some of the newspapers and political pamphlets. Author, John Avlon, points out: "With his Farewell Address, Washington warned against being unwisely off-center in politics, finance and foreign policy, and risking the real liberty that comes from self-sufficiency. He sought to heal those divides by helping his fellow citizens see that their interdependence was essential to their dependence, urging a wise balance between the extremes. The President called for unity by citizens by birth or choice, advocated moderation, defended religious pluralism, argued that education is essential to democracy and

proposed a foreign policy of independence, not isolation, all while establishing the precedent for the peaceful transfer of power.”

In your spare time I recommend that you read Washington’s “Farewell Address.” I admit that I had never read it through before, but it is a truly amazing document. In my mind this quote from the document itself best sums it up. “But, if I may flatter myself that my counsels may be productive of some partial benefit, some occasional good, that they may now and then recur to moderate the fury of party spirit, to warn against the mischiefs of foreign intrigue, to guard against the impostures of pretended patriotism, this hope will be full recompense for the solicitude for your welfare, by which they have been dictated.”

It is interesting that Washington’s “Farewell Address” was never given as a speech but was given to a newspaper, the “American Daily Advertiser”, of David Claypole in Philadelphia to be printed. Then it was reprinted by other papers from that original edition. This is hard to believe now with our instant communications. It was written like a letter to the American people. This was a different time period without any internet or television, and most people did read newspapers, or gazettes as some of them were called. Even though Washington was trying to bring the country together and stop all the political wrangling, there still were critics. One pamphleteer called the “Farewell Address” “the loathings of a sick mind.” Still, in our modern cynical and selfish age we should go back and refer to it again. There is a lot to learn from it. John Avlon’s book is also well worth reading. In recent years there have been really important biographies written about John Adams, Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton. Hamilton even has a musical named after him. George Washington has been pretty much forgotten. We should remember how important he was. There probably never would have been a successful Constitutional Convention without Washington being the president of it, and probably never a successful United States without Washington being the first president of it. Avlon reminds us of this, and also reminds us how we could learn an awful lot if we once again paid some attention to Washington’s warnings and advice in his “Farewell Address.”

**Visitors Program Vignettes:
Eisenhower’s Farewell Address**
By Bill Westland

Two years ago, I followed the Washington Vignette with this Eisenhower Vignette which seems appropriate to do again this year so here it is.

I recommended before that you read John Avlon’s “Washington’s Farewell Address” in which he described the background of Washington’s final address, and his warning to his fellow citizens about the dangers of excessive partisanship. Also, that you read Washington’s “Farewell Address” itself, written in 1797. By coincidence, an interesting new book has just been published, authored by Bret Baier, and entitled “Three Days in January.” This book describes the background of President Eisenhower’s famous final speech to the nation in 1961, and his warning about excessive partisanship. It is amazing how little that we learned in those 164 years. I recommend that you read the Baier book and Eisenhower’ speech as well. They are just as timely in today’s political turmoil as the Avlon book and Washington’s final address.

This is what Bret Baier had to say about the Eisenhower speech: “Ike looked to the future and warned Americans against the dangers of elevating partisanship above national interest, excessive government spending, the expansion of the military-industrial complex and the creeping political power of special interests.” In today’s political climate these warnings have been pretty much ignored. It is hard to imagine now, but back in the Eisenhower years Congress was usually controlled by the Democrats, but every couple of weeks Republican President Eisenhower, Democratic Majority Leader of the Senate, Lyndon Johnson, and Democratic Speaker of the House, Sam Rayburn would get together over a few drinks and try to work out disagreements. It usually worked. This is what Eisenhower said about the Congress. “The American people expect their President and the Congress to find essential agreement on questions of great moment, the wise resolution of which will better shape the future of the nation. My own relations with Congress have been mutually interdependent during these past eight years.” We haven’t seen this kind of relationship for a long time.

Dwight D. Eisenhower has been very much ignored by a lot of “revisionist historians” and pretty much looked upon as a “filler President” between the scrappy, outspoken Harry S. Truman and the young, dynamic John F. Kennedy. As time goes by, Eisenhower and his policies have been reexamined and historians are starting to realize that he was one of our best Presidents. One example of this is that after he ended the Korean War early in

his first term, in the rest of his years as President there was not a single American life lost in combat. No other President, Republican or Democrat, since then can say that. We forget that it was Eisenhower who desegregated Little Rock High School, built the interstate highway system, actually reduced the military budget, avoided a nuclear war with the Soviet Union at the height of the Cold War and presided over one of the most prosperous and peaceful periods in recent American history. This all happened for the most part with a Democratic Congress.

So, read Baer's book and also the Eisenhower final address. Remember the words of Edward R. Murrow in summing up the Eisenhower speech. "The Eisenhower concern, as I read it, was a fear that we may lose our liberties while preparing to defend them." Something to think about in our present, poisonous political climate.

Church Staff and Lay Leaders

Staff: Rev. Rebecca Froom (Senior Minister), Rev. Dr. Sheldon Bennett (Minister Emeritus), Rev. Dr. Michelle Walsh (Affiliate Community Minister), Nan Moore (Affiliate Lay Community Minister), Joan McDonald (Religious Education Director), David Bousquin (Office and Property Manager), Norman Corey (Music Director).

Board of Governors: Jim Petosa (President), Juan Ramos (Vice-President), Clyde Cortright (Treasurer), Erwin Schaareman (Assistant Treasurer), April Bargout (Clerk), Kim Dangora (Stewardship), Jamie Grassmann (Worship), Sarah Belfort (Social Justice Action), Elizabeth Black (Communications), Brenda Reed (Congregational Life)

Committee on Ministry: David Downs (Chair), Frances Spillane, Ann Marie Willer

Nominating Committee: Jacqueline Rodriguez (Chair), Fiona Sankey, Pat Sullivan

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