



## Stone Temple News

November 2023

### **From the Minister's Study**

By Rev. Rebecca Froom, Lead Minister

On a recent Wednesday our church was a hub activity. In the parish hall I was hosting a meeting of the Quincy Interfaith Network with Damion Outar, the new Community Liaison for the City of Quincy. Downstairs the Prison Book Program was having one of their four weekly volunteer sessions. Our dedicated tour guides were giving guided tours of our historic sanctuary and presidential crypt. As my interfaith group was wrapping up, staff from the City of Quincy's "Student Docent Program" arrived to set-up a workshop they were holding in our space the following day for 40 local public high school students. I was reminded of the closing lines from our congregation's vision statement, written in 2016, "Our building, through careful and considered planning, is a hub of activity utilized by the congregation, community partners, and the general public. All are truly welcome."

We are living in times of heartbreaking violence around the world. You might wonder why I write about our vision for our building, rather than other lines from the mission and vision statements we created seven years ago, such as, "Grounded in love and guided by compassion, we are called to raise our voices and take action for truth and justice, equity, and peace."

The ways in which we use our space are not disconnected from our commitments to justice, equity, compassion, peace. When youth from our incredibly diverse city enter our building and experience a safe and welcoming space where they can learn together, we are helping to build a world of equity, understanding, and peace. When people from around the world learn a story about the founding and ongoing promise of our country's democracy, even in times when that democracy feels increasingly fragile, we are raising our voices for truth. Over the last year Prison Book Program (PBP) sent 53,308 books to 15,231 incarcerated people across the country. By providing PBP with a low-cost, stable organizational home, we are demonstrating a deep compassion for some of the most marginalized people in our society, and are supporting their own commitments to lifelong learning and growth. When clergy across faith traditions gather in peace in our parish hall to share their concerns and hopes for justice, equity and inclusion in the City of Quincy, we are supporting the work of transformative change.

Our theme of the month of November is generosity. Many sociologists have noted that acts of generosity have a ripple effect. Often, the more we receive the more we in turn are inspired to give. And sometimes the act of giving, inspires us to give even more. When we generously welcome our community partners into our building, our congregations' generosity has a greater impact than we can fully see or quantify. Our values of love, compassion, equity, and peace ripple out into the wider world.

### **Spirit Circle with Generosity**

By Nan Moore, Director of Family Ministry

Thanksgiving is a time to remember gratitude, it is also a Day of Mourning for our Wampanoag indigenous neighbors. Every year in Plymouth there is a gathering where ALL people come together to support the rights of the Wampanoags. If you would like to participate in the Day of Mourning, which is Thanksgiving day, it will be on November 23<sup>rd</sup> held at noon at Coles Hill in Plymouth. Here is a short video to introduce you to the history of this gathering. DAY OF MORNING video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-okm80fap68> (7 minutes) and another WE ARE STILL HERE <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yzmp383dwjo> (8 minutes).

This is a busy month with many Spirit Circle events happening please mark them on your calendar.

**November 5 - Max Olsen, Art Instructor:** The group will be making Diwali lanterns for the holiday service in December. For those who were not able to work on making a square for the heritage quilt there will be time and space for the children to work on them during class as well. The RE HELPER will be Andrew Carleen.

**November 12 - Field Trip to Interfaith Social Services (ISS):** Our RE HELPERS, Peter Kovach, Andrew Carleen and Nan Moore will be walking to the Quincy ISS with the children following the chalice lighting. The intention is to have the children the place where we bring offerings to individuals and families from Quincy who are in need of special assistance in these challenging times. ISS is where we provide hygiene packets and provide children's books as a need for the community. We will return around the time of social hour. Anyone with children under 5 please bring a stroller for your child as it is a bit of a distance for the youngest children to walk approximately 1/2 mile in all.

**November 19 - Eli Baumgarden, Music Instructor:** The children are learning "This Little Light of Mine" for the December 10<sup>th</sup> multigenerational worship service. Please have your children attend for this last learning music class before our holiday service. RE Helpers will be Mariah and Nan

**November 26 - Paula Webster, Mindfulness and Tai Chi instructor:** As we approach the holiday season this is a great time for the children to have a practice in mindfulness and movement for relaxation. We hope you can join us at the end of your holiday weekend and on the day of the Quincy parade. RE Helper will be Marie Louise Jackson Miller.

### **Coming of Age Schedule**

**November 5 (12:00-1:15 pm):** There will be a COA workshop for the youth group members, which will include an overview of this year's program beginning with "What Matters". LEADERS for this workshop are McKayla Hoffman and Rev. Rebecca Froom and they will meet in the youth room

**November 19 (10:45-11:45 am):** The youth group will be putting together the ISS hygiene packets in the downstairs dining hall, which will be distributed to the clients of our local Quincy care center. The teens will meet downstairs in the dining hall after the message for all ages. RE advisors will be Albert Vaughn and Marie Louise Jackson Miller

### **November 26 - Special Event:**

HEALTH and SAFETY orientation with SHARON GAMACHE: Sharon will be holding another orientation for the RE COMMITTEE. Sharon will meet with RECOM MEMBERS following social hour. The orientation will be held at the same time as the Quincy holiday parade, so families and all generations are encouraged to sit on the side of the church to watch the holiday parade.

As we approach the fall with cooler weather, we also celebrate times when families or friends celebrate coming together in the warmth of our homes. It is significant to remember there are also those who do not have the comfort a warm home, or family or even the necessities of living. May we all remember GENEROSITY to neighbors known or to the unknown who we can randomly provide an act of loving kindness as we approach the winter months and the holiday season. See you in church!

### **The Gift of Generosity**

A reflection from Soul Matters theme-based ministry

It would be easy to see this as a month of niceness. After all, for many, the call of generosity is equated with the call to be kind.

But that's not the spiritual understanding, and certainly not the sort of gift our faith sees in generosity.

First of all, it's transformative. Generosity doesn't just brighten our days; it changes how we relate to life. Let's be honest, life can harden us. And before it does that, it often hurts us. So, we can't be blamed for viewing it as a threat. Like some kind of dangerous obstacle course. Or a giant game of King of the Hill, where the winners take all and the rest of us are thrown to the bottom, bruised and empty-handed. No matter which metaphor fits, it's almost impossible to think our way out of it on our own. But then these seemingly small or sentimental gestures

come our way. A person notices we forgot to bring our bus pass and pays for us before we have to ask. The neighbor shovels our part of the driveway while she does hers. The nurse takes a half hour to sit with us while we wait for the results. It wasn't her job, and she doesn't have the time, but she did it anyway. In those simple moments, the world suddenly feels less cold. A crack sets in. Our obstacle course, winner-take-all view of life gives way to something softer. We may still hurt, but it also feels as though life itself is trying to help. That's what generosity does. It transforms.

It also connects. Deep down we know the difference between giving and giving generously. The former is taken from our "extra." The latter is taken from what is essential. It's the difference between giving our loose change and giving of ourselves. And when you hand over a part of you to someone else, you're tethered. Your vulnerability meets their vulnerability. You haven't just helped; you've shown you care. Both of you feel seen. And less alone.

But make no mistake, generosity doesn't stop there, at care and connection. It also challenges. True generosity doesn't just ask us to care for people, it also asks us to call them out. When you look at life through the lens of generosity, charity loses its sheen and many of those who have much are exposed as hoarding what others need. It's sneaky that way. Generosity undermines our comfortable views and invites justice in. It doesn't just ask us to be kind to others, it also asks us to question why some have so much more than others.

Transform. Connect. Challenge. Not the usual words we pair with generosity. And maybe that's the point. Maybe the invitation this month is not just to be more generous, but to notice how generosity is bigger than we think.

### **Social Justice Action Committee Notes**

The SJAC wishes to thank everyone for donating Personal Care and Hygiene Products to be distributed at the Interfaith Social Services [ISS] Food Pantry. The Fall Donation Drive will continue through Sunday, November 12<sup>th</sup>. Please note that we will soon have details for our December Childrens' Book Drive also for ISS. Families who are clients of the Food Pantry with children 12 and under receive books at every visit. More details to come later.

### **WORSHIP SERVICES**

Worship services are held on Sunday mornings at 10:30 am [unless otherwise stated] in-person and via livestream.

[November 5]

#### **"Generosity Connects Us"**

Rev. Rebecca Froom and McKayla Hoffman

Our newly proposed Unitarian Universalist Values affirm core values of love, justice, interdependence, equity, transformation, pluralism, and generosity. In this service we reflect on the idea that "generosity connects us to one another in relationships of interdependence and mutuality."

[November 12]

#### **"Gratitude Always?"**

Ken Read-Brown, guest preacher

Depending on our personal circumstances and on what is going on in the wider world, we may or may not feel moved to give thanks during this season of Thanksgiving. Yet wisdom traditions east and west, as well as contemporary psychology, suggest that grounding our lives in a practice of gratitude is good for us. How do we muster gratitude during hard times, personal or global? What has been your experience?

Rev. Ken Read-Brown retired in 2022 after 35 years as minister of First Parish in Hingham (Old Ship Church). Ken lives in Hingham with his wife Susan. They have three grown and married children and six grandchildren. Ken earned a BA in philosophy from Haverford College and his Master of Divinity from the Starr King School for the Ministry in Berkeley, CA. He currently serves on the interfaith committee which organizes the “Listening to Other Voices” speaker series at Glastonbury Abbey in Hingham, and on the Communications Committee of Elders Climate Action.

[November 19]

**“Practicing Generosity”**

Rev. Rebecca Froom

Jagan Nath Khalsa, guest musician

In this service we turn to teachings from the Christian and Buddhist traditions as we reflect on how we can practice generosity.

[November 26]

**“Don't Carry It All”**

McKayla Hoffman, Ministerial Intern

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

For our most up-to-date announcements, please see our “Weekly Announcements” which are emailed to the congregation on Thursdays or Fridays, posted on our website and available by print on Sunday mornings.

**Interfaith Social Services Fall Donation Drive:**

**Personal Care and Hygiene Products**

Ongoing through Sunday, November 12

SNAP benefits do not cover the cost of basic toiletries and personal care products. From Sunday October 22<sup>nd</sup> and through Sunday November 12<sup>th</sup>, there will be two large green collection boxes to receive your donations; one will be in the front foyer and the other in the parish hall. Please refer to the list below. The Social Justice Action Committee thank you for your consideration of this appeal.

- Bars of soap
- Toothbrushes and toothpaste
- Dental floss
- Shaving supplies
- Shampoo
- Toilet tissue
- Feminine hygiene products
- Diapers [infant and adult]

**Standout Quincy for Black Lives**

Thursdays, 3:30–5:00 pm, in-person

UFPC partners with Quincy for Transformative Change for an initiative in support of Black Lives Matter. We stand in front of the church [or in back, if it is hot] 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 contact Claire Fitzmaurice at 617-272-0274 or [artclaire@comcast.net](mailto:artclaire@comcast.net) or Mimi Balsamo at [mimibalsamo@gmail.com](mailto:mimibalsamo@gmail.com). Please check out our Facebook page: [StandOutQuincy4BlackLives](https://www.facebook.com/StandOutQuincy4BlackLives).

## **Book Group**

Thursday, November 2, 7:00 pm, on Zoom

The Book Group meets on the first Thursday of the Month from 7:00 to 8:30 pm, with a gap in summer and in December. All members and friends are welcome to join us. We will meet via Zoom. Each year, we choose a variety of genres and forms. You are welcome to come even if you have not finished the book.

The book this month is *And Then There Were None* by Agatha Christie. Ten people, each with something to hide and something to fear, are invited to an isolated mansion on Indian Island by a host who, surprisingly, fails to appear. On the island they are cut off from everything but each other and the inescapable shadows of their own past lives. One by one, the guests share the darkest secrets of their wicked pasts. And one by one, they die by the mysterious killer.

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

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

## **Sunday Morning Meditation**

Sundays, 9:00 am, in-person

Meditation is offered on Sunday mornings at UFPC from 9:00 - 9:45 am. We meet outside in the garden (weather permitting) and inside in the parlor when it is rainy, windy or snowing. We begin with a guided meditation from Thich Nhat Hahn's "Blooming of a Lotus", followed by a walking meditation, then silent meditation, and ending with sharing our thoughts and insights. Feel free to contact Marie-Louise at [marieljm1961@yahoo.com](mailto:marieljm1961@yahoo.com) or 857-526-2579.

## **Writing Group**

Sunday, November 5, 12:00 pm, in-person

Our UFPC Writing Group will be meeting again this year. We will meet the first Sunday of the month in-person in the parlor at 12:00 pm. There are no meetings in January or June. 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 forty-five minutes to one hour. Contact facilitator Jim Petosa at [jimjamespeto@aol.com](mailto:jimjamespeto@aol.com) or 301-442-3781.

## **Kindred Spirits Discussion Group for Seniors**

Friday, November 17, 10:00–11:30 am, in-person

Join us 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 aged 60+ and will meet on the third Friday of the month at our church in the parish hall. Coffee and tea are provided. Please contact Rev. Rebecca with any questions at [rev.rebecca.froom@gmail.com](mailto:rev.rebecca.froom@gmail.com) or 617-803-1159. If you need to enter the building via the handicapped accessible entrance, please contact David Bousquin at 617-842-1706.

## **"Sweetsgiving" Dessert Auction**

Sunday, November 19, 11:45 am, in-person

Please join us for "Sweetsgiving" after the service on Sunday, November 19<sup>th</sup>. We'll share a light lunch and a dessert auction fundraiser to help support the church. If you want to save some dessert prep time for Thanksgiving, we've got you covered. Or, if you're making dessert anyway, double up and donate a dessert to the auction. If you can donate a dessert, signups will be available in the parish hall after the service.



## **Transgender Day of Remembrance Vigil**

Monday, November 20, 7:00 pm, in-person, United First Parish Church

Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR) is annual observance honoring those trans and nonbinary beloveds who lost their lives to transphobic violence in the past year. We hope you will join us in a service of collective mourning on the steps of the church, honoring those lost, and holding those who remain. Afterwards, all are welcome to a reception in the parish hall for connection and resource-sharing. The vigil is co-sponsored by the Quincy Interfaith Network, QPride, Quincy's LGBTQ Commission, and the Quincy PFLAG Chapter.

## **Holiday Decorating Party**

Saturday, December 2, 9:00 am–12:00 pm, in-person

Mark your calendars: Saturday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 9am-noon, Holiday Decorating Party to trim the Sanctuary and the Parish Hall. There are tasks and activities for all ages. Thank you, Claire Fitzmaurice: (617) 272-0274 or [artclaire.fitzmaurice@gmail.com](mailto:artclaire.fitzmaurice@gmail.com).

## **Visitors Program Vignettes**

By Bill Westland, Church Historian

October 30<sup>th</sup> was the 287<sup>th</sup> birthday of John Adams, and we celebrated the annual Presidential Birthday Wreath Laying Ceremony for the 57<sup>th</sup> time. It just so happens that I was rummaging through some old papers and came across the remarks that I made at the ceremony some twenty years ago in 2003. I thought that I would reprint them as they unfortunately seem to be just as applicable now as back then. I also added a few new comments.

John Adam's father served as a Deacon at United First Parish Church, and John Adams was a lifetime member. Reverend John Hancock presided over his baptism on October 26, 1735 and Reverend Peter Whitney presided over his funeral service on July 7, 1826. Both events took place in the Hancock Meeting House. John Adams was a regular attendee at church services for over twenty years once he returned to Quincy from Washington. Church members as well as town residents were in absolute awe of him. Josiah Quincy, "the great mayor of Boston" who built the Quincy Market and later on became one of the most revered presidents of Harvard, was also a member of our church. When he was a boy in Quincy he remembered the atmosphere when John Adams came to church. "An air of respectful deference to John Adams seemed to pervade the building. The ministers preached their best sermons and had a certain consciousness of manner as if officiating before royalty. The medley of string and wind instruments in the gallery seemed to the imagination of a child to make harmony together in honor of the venerable chief who was the center of interest."

William Parsons Lunt, the minister during our 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1839, and who later on conducted the funeral service for John Quincy Adams, had this to say about John Adams: "He stood before kings and princes, the fearless and preserving advocate of his country's rights, who raised himself with the consent of millions to the people's throne, and fell asleep in an honored old age with glad shouts in his ears of a nation he had helped to redeem." Daniel Munroe Wilson, the minister who presided over our 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1889, said this about John Adams: "He was a man as the best traditions and principles of our early New England life tended to make. This church proudly claims him, perceiving his original mental force, his moral independence and fervor, to be consonant with its centuries of teachings."

Reverend Sheldon Bennett wrote in our 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary booklet in 1989 that if John Adams were alive today: "He would no doubt wish to include himself in the larger congregation of all those who hold as basic values, worth and dignity." Louisa Catherine Adams, the wife of church member President John Quincy Adams, said this about her father-in-law, John Adams, in 1831. "Among all the great characters that it has been my lot to meet, I have never met with a mind of such varied powers, such acute discrimination and so intrinsically sound. Everything in his mind was rich and true." When John Adams died on July 4, 1826, John Marston, who was with him, wrote to John Quincy Adams that when his father died "a clap of thunder shook the house and a splendid rainbow arched over the heavens." If this wasn't true it should have been. Reverend Peter Whitney at the funeral service uttered the famous: "He died in a good old age full of days and honors" from First Chronicles, Chapter XXIX, Verse 28.

The wrangling and posturing of today's politicians would have horrified John Adams. He, like George Washington before him and Dwight Eisenhower one hundred and fifty years later, warned about partisanship,

and Adams once wrote: “The essence of a free government consists of effective control of rivalries.” He also warned: “I fear that in every elected office, members will obtain influence by noise not sense, By meanness not greatness, By ignorance not learning. There must be decency and respect.” He had a strong viewpoint about the role of government and commented: “The happiness of society is the end of government. The form of government which communicates ease, comfort, security, or in one word, happiness to the greatest number of persons, and to the greatest degree is the best.” Perhaps the best summation of John Adams’ character is what he said when he signed the Declaration of Independence. “Sink or swim, live or die, survive or perish, to go with the liberties of my country is my fixed ambition.”

We wish John Adams a Happy Birthday, and are proud that he was a member of this church. We, the congregation of United First Parish Church, also have a large reputation to live up to because once again let me remind you that this is how he described our congregation when he was the American representative in London in 1785. “The virtues and talents of the people there (Quincy) are formed by their temperance, patience, fortitude, prudence, and justice, as well as their sagacity, knowledge, judgment, taste, skill, ingenuity, dexterity and industry.” He also gave all Americans a warning and something to think about today when in a letter to John Taylor in 1814 he wrote that “there never was a democracy that did not commit suicide.”

### **Church Staff and Lay Leaders**

Staff: Rev. Rebecca Froom (Lead Minister), Rev. Dr. Sheldon Bennett (Minister Emeritus), Nan Moore (Affiliate Lay Community Minister and Director of Family Ministry), McKayla Hoffman (Ministerial Intern), David Bousquin (Office and Property Manager), Norman Corey (Music Director)

Board of Governors: Fiona Sankey (President), Jacqueline Rodriguez (Vice-President), Clyde Cortright (Treasurer), Erwin Schaareman (Assistant Treasurer), Patricia Sullivan (Clerk), Karl DeBisschop (Stewardship), Claire Fitzmaurice (Social Justice Action), Jamie Grassmann (Communications), Marie-Louise Jackson-Miller (Congregational Life), Peter Kovach and Andrew Carleen (Religious Education), Open (Worship Committee)

Congregational Committees: Ann Marie Willer (Committee on Ministry), Patricia Sullivan (Nominating Committee)

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