



Stone Temple News

February 2023

From the Minister's Study

By McKayla Hoffman, Ministerial Intern

Perhaps it's true, that old adage: "You never forget your first love."

Love is enduring. That's almost certainly why it plays an integral role in the world's religions—in the tapestry of ways that humanity makes meaning of life. It's central to one of the world's oldest religions—Sanatana Dharma, or Hinduism—which states that the world itself would not exist without love.

In the Nimbarkī Vaisnava tradition of Hinduism, love is named Radha-Krishna (राधा कृष्ण), the combination of Sri Krishna and Radha. The two met when they were young, Radha a simple cow herder of a small village and Sri Krishna a godly prankster prince (yup, couldn't be more different!). So great was their love that when it was time for Sri Krishna to leave his homeland, He and Radha merged to become one person, one spirit, one divine love, so that They would never again be apart.

If it's true that we never forget our first love, then, perhaps it is also true that love is so great that it persists as Radha-Krishna does, even as it shifts and transforms as years go on. Love remains as lessons and in healing after relationships that end. Love continues on in the memory of those loved ones who die and pass on to whatever comes next. Love lies—perhaps dormant, perhaps waiting—at the bottom of those moments when we forget our worthiness. Indeed, love is the great thread of our existence, whether it brings us joy or pain. If we ever forget how to love, or that love exists, we need only remember that in our interconnectedness, we *are* the love we seek.

Let us follow the charge that George de Benneville, the father of Universalism, gave his congregation: to "Honor the ocean of love" among and within us.

Blessings—and love—to you.

Sprit Circle

By Nan Moore, Director of Family Ministry

This month the all-church theme will be LOVE...what the world needs now is love sweet love...a poetic lyrics for a world that is starving for sincerity and kindness. The hope in our community is that we provide a connection with one another and teach the children by example how "loving kindness" can affect the heart of all as a giver and a recipient. May theme of LOVE make space in our lives so we can befriend it spiritual power within us and around us that is palpable.

February 5: Earth Carers with Jon Belber from Holly Hill farm will lead a winter lesson for the children. Weather dependent the children may be going outside or they will be meeting in church. Jon will decide on the day. HOST: McKayla Hoffman.

February 5: Youth Group Activity Sunday. McKayla Hoffman, ministerial intern, and Peter Kovach, will be taking the youth on an activity. McKayla will be in touch with the youth group members and parents to announce the logistic of bowling? or playing pool? During this event the youth group will decide on their next community service project and date TBA.

February 12: RE co-chair Peter Kovach will be leading a multi-generational worship service on February 12th with Rev. Rebecca. The monthly theme of love will be the central focus of the worship. During worship the children will remain in the sanctuary for the entire service and childcare will be provided in the nursery.

February 19: Our guest instructor for this Sunday is Sharon Gamache. She is a longtime member at UFPC and a musician as well as a singer. Sharon will be telling a story and using her gift of music instruction as she provides a fun and engaging Spirit Circle for the children. The Circle will be held in the Spirit Circle Room. HOST: Albert Vaughn.

February 26: Music with Elisabeth Moore will also will be held in the Spirit Circle classroom downstairs. There will also be an adult education class singing Songs from the Heart and TAIZE from Findhorn – please come, listen and learn. The adult class will be held in the sanctuary around the piano from 12-1 pm. HOST: Marie-Louise Jackson-Miller.

I also want to thank Brenda Reed for organizing the pot luck for Community Game Night along with RECOM HELPERS, Marie Louise Jackson Miller, and Albert Vaughn. At the writing time of this newsletter the event has not yet happened and I look forward to hearing about the evening. Also, a special thank you; to our ministerial intern, McKayla Hoffman for her generous helping hands throughout the year; AND the RECOM members Kendra Dupiton, Peter Kovach, Andrew Carleen, Marie Louise Jackson Miller, Albert Vaughn and Erwin Schaareman for working so well together with me, bringing you a Spirit Circle program that is engaging, interesting and most of all meaningful.

In the words of Thich Naht Hahn: May I (we) be peaceful, happy, and light in body and mind, shalom, shanti, salaam, paz, mir, peace to all.

Social Justice Action Committee

By Claire Fitzmaurice, Chair

December 2022: Children's Book Drive for the Interfaith Social Service: The SJAC wishes to thank all the generous Members and Friends who donated 180 new and gently used books for distribution to families at the ISS Food Pantry. Thank you also to the Prison Books Program who added to our drive. The four boxes of books were collected throughout the month of December and were delivered in the first week of January. Our next Donation Drive will be a Winter Accessories Collection. Throughout the month of February the SJAC will gladly receive donations of warm winter hats, gloves, mittens and scarves to be shared with our neighbors who need them. We have two big green collection boxes. One will be in the Foyer of our Sanctuary and one in the Parish Hall.

On Thursday January 19th, the SJAC was proud to partner with the Compassion and Concerns Network to host A Conversation on Medical Aid in Dying led by Melissa Stacy, Regional Advocacy Manager. The first portion of the evening presentation was led by Claire Karl Muller of the UU Mass Action Network who gave an overview of the five areas of their legislative actions for the coming Session at the State House. The five areas include: Immigrant Justice, Decarceration and Solitary, Indigenous Justice, Economic and Housing Justice and Climate and Environmental Justice. As it was “a dark and stormy night”, the number in attendance was modest. We had 19 hardy folks come together for a worthwhile and very informative evening. Thank you to all who helped to make the evening come together. For more information visit www.compassionandchoices.org and www.uumassaction.org.

Welcome to the Path of Love

A reflection from Soul Matters theme-based ministry program

The path of love.
It began from the beginning,
for many of us.
Then sent us on our way with courage,
and a reminder tucked into the pocket
of our heart

which read, “You can always return,
no matter what.”

Its shape then shifted, showing up as friends
who helped us feel seen
and sung our song back to us

when we could not hear it
with our ears alone.

Then somewhere along the way
we stumbled on it again
in the soft touch and sweet stare
of sweethearts.

Through them, love taught us to trust
and helped us discover that who we are
does not end at the barrier of our own skin.

To our surprise, love then expanded
into the fragile gift we call community.
This web of beings bathed us in belonging,
expanded our sense of home,
and called us to see the needs of others
as our own.

And when our family and friends,
lovers and comrades
let us down and broke us to bits,
it was love that put us back together.
Knowing that none of us fully mend,
love also said, It's ok limp.
I will remain beside you just the same.

That's when we first heard the strange whisper.
Came in the form of family.
A bloodline that brought us into being,
and at its best, allowed us to bloom.
In the heartbreak.
Arising from somewhere deeper
than the things we can touch.

It announced itself
as a love that will not let us go,
even in our fear, even in our failure,
even when we are lonely or lost.

And when that comforting love
seemed the perfect end to the path,
the gift we could rest within
and keep as our very own,
this band of religious heretics
showed up in our lives and told us to share it.
Born from a strange God
who loved and saved all,
they now rally around a sacred assignment
of making that larger love real, here on earth.
They talk of that love that will not let us go,
but they also ask,
"Is our loving large enough?"
They ask that of us over and over again.

And in that asking, we learned that love
can also be demanding,
often leading to the opposite of comfort.
And tough. We learned that it is that too.
Or needs to be.
Not something mean,
but something that persists.
Something within that can be beat down,
but gets back up again.
A love that calls us to never let go,
of it.

WORSHIP SERVICES

Worship services are held on Sunday mornings at 10:30 am in-person and via livestream.

[February 5]
Rev. Rebecca Froom

[February 12]
"Lovingkindness"
Rev. Rebecca Froom, Nan Moore, and Peter Kovach

In this multigenerational service we reflect on the ways we give and receive lovingkindness.

[February 19]
Reggie Harris, Guest Preacher and Musician

We're happy to welcome Reggie Harris back to our sanctuary to share his message in word and music. Reggie Harris combines a strong folk and gospel legacy with a solid background in classical, rock, jazz, and pop music.

As a socially conscious acoustic musician and storyteller, he has been “walking the talk” for over 30 years, performing modern and historical songs that explore societal ills and proffer positive social messages.

[February 26]

“Grounded in Love and Guided by Compassion”

McKayla Hoffman and Rev. Rebecca Froom

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.

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. Our practice includes guided, walking, and silent meditation. Feel free to contact Marie-Louise at marieljm1961@yahoo.com or 857-526-2579.

Choir Rehearsal

Sundays, 9:30–10:00 am, in-person

The choir welcomes new members! This year, instead of anthems, we are working on hymns to support congregational singing, particularly hymns that are unfamiliar or less familiar. And rehearsals are half an hour, rather than 45 minutes—from 9:30 to 10:00 am every Sunday. Talk to Norman or a choir member, or just show up. Thank you.

Standout Quincy for Black Lives

Thursdays, 3:00–4:30 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 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. Please check out our Facebook page: StandOutQuincy4BlackLives managed by our co-leader Mimi Balsamo who can be reached at mimibalsamo@gmail.com.

Book Group

Thursday, February 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 conduct our meetings via Zoom. Each year, we choose a variety of genres and forms. This Church Year all our selections are in response to book banning across the United States. You are welcome to come even if you have not finished the book.

The Bluest Eye, published in 1970, is the first novel written by Toni Morrison. The novel takes place in Lorain, Ohio (Morrison’s hometown), and tells the story of a young African-American girl named Pecola who grew up following the Great Depression. Set in 1941, the story is about how she is consistently regarded as “ugly” due to her mannerisms and dark skin. As a result, she develops an inferiority complex, which fuels her desire for the blue eyes she equates with “whiteness”.

The novel is told from Claudia MacTeer's point of view. She is the daughter of Pecola's foster parents at different stages in her life. In addition, there is an omniscient third-person narrative that includes inset narratives in the first person. The book's controversial topics of racism, incest, and child molestation have led to numerous attempts to ban the novel from schools and libraries in the United States.

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

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

Writing Group

Sunday, February 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 or 301-442-3781.

Light Our Fire Luncheon/Chocolate Celebration

Sunday, February 12, 11:45 am, in-person

Come join us for a "Light Our Fire" Luncheon after the service on Sunday, February 12th. The event will feature:

- Pot Luck Lunch: Bring a favorite dish to share with the congregation.
- Chocolate Celebration: Bid on donated chocolate items made by members of the congregation. Bring a favorite chocolate treat of your own for the auction, and help support the church.
- Chili Cookoff: Make a chili dish to be judged against your peers. Win pride of place and the respect of the congregation. Or just come to enjoy a super bowl of hearty food.

"Light Our Fire" combines FUN and FUND-raising. This is a great chance to enjoy some time with other in the congregation, celebrate the love that is at the heart of our faith, and begin to think about how we support the church community that supports us. This program is jointly sponsored by the committees on Congregational Life, Stewardship, and Religious Education.

Contact Marie-Louise Jackson-Miller to sign-up for chili items: mariejm1961@yahoo.com or 857-526-2579.

Contact Kim Dangora to sign-up for chocolate items: aimee222@comcast.net or 508-472-9754.

Kindred Spirits Discussion Group for Seniors

Friday, February 17, 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 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 or 617-803-1159. If you need to enter the building via the handicapped accessible entrance, please contact David Bousquin at 617-842-1706.

Mid-Year Congregational Meeting

Sunday, February 26, 12:00 pm, in-person

The Board of Governors and ministerial staff invite you to attend a congregational meeting in the parish hall immediately following social hour. This meeting will include time for reflection and sharing on our

Congregational Mission and Vision Statements, which were written in 2016 looking ahead to 2023. We will also hear updates about church programs, and initiatives from the Unitarian Universalist Association.

General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association

Wednesday, June 21–Sunday, June 25, in-person or virtual

Every year thousands of Unitarian Universalists from around the world gather for a General Assembly to discuss and vote on the business of the UUA, participate in workshops on a broad range of topics, and attend meaningful worship services with great music and inspirational preaching. General Assemblies are now held in a multi-platform format where participants can attend virtually or in-person. This year GA is meeting in Pittsburgh, PA. For more information and registration go to uua.org/ga. Please let Rev. Rebecca or Jim Petosa know if you are interested in serving as a UFPC Delegate for the business meeting portions of GA. There are also limited scholarships available through the Ministerial Discretionary Fund for UFPC members to attend GA; contact Rev. Rebecca and rev.rebecca.froom@gmail.com for more information.

Visitor Program Vignettes

By Bill Westland, Church Historian

I am in the process of organizing the Vignettes that I have been writing for the church newsletter over the past twenty some odd years. Seeing as some of you readers were not members when I started, I thought that I would recycle some of them as they might have some interest to you. Here is one of the early ones with a couple of corrections.

The town of Plymouth celebrated its 400th anniversary in 2020, the town of Weymouth last year, the City of Quincy will celebrate in 2025 and other towns in the old Massachusetts Bay Colony not too long after that. The Pilgrims of Plymouth were separatists. Their goal was to separate from the Church of England. On the other hand, the Massachusetts Bay Colony was settled by reformers who wanted to purify the Church of England, hence the name Puritans. Therefore, Plymouth was a separatist community and the communities in the Massachusetts Bay Colony were for the most part Puritan reformers. These Puritans also became devout Calvinists and tried to set up the Massachusetts Bay Colony as a theocracy with laws based upon teachings from the Bible. They never were completely successful.

One interesting tenet of this Calvinist religion was that society was based upon predestination and good works. There was a group called the “elect” who were predestined to be saved. If you were convinced that you were part of this group that was predestined to be saved, then it was natural that you would also perform good works. Of course, the problem was that human nature being what it is, even though you knew that you were one of the “elect”, you had to somehow prove this to the rest of us. If you just told us we probably wouldn’t believe you, so one way to do this was to be successful and to also lead a strict, upright, religious life. This would prove to the rest of us that God was smiling on you and you were part of the “elect.” Of course, if you were going to live such a strict, upright religious life, the rest of us should suffer as well. You can see why the “blue laws” came into being in Massachusetts. The Calvinists did not frown at all on being successful and acquiring wealth. R.H. Tawney, a British economist of the late 1800’s and now long forgotten, wrote that there was a strong link between Calvinism and capitalism. A good example of this link would be when a reporter asked John D. Rockefeller how he could explain being so rich and Rockefeller replied that God gave him his money. Of course, Rockefeller was a Baptist not a Puritan, but he reflected the Calvinist attitude toward wealth.

In the 1640’s in the Massachusetts Bay Colony church attendance on Sunday was required by law and “no one could make mince pies, dance, play cards or play any musical instrument except the drum, trumpet or Jew’s harp on Sunday.” I wonder how many actual Jew’s harp players there were. Reverend Hugh Peter of Salem warned: “An hour’s idleness is as bad as an hour’s drunkenness.” In spite of this dire warning most of the towns had a tavern to go along with the meetinghouse and schoolhouse. The grandfather of John Adams, a staunch church goer, was also a brewer. In UFPC’s stone church built in 1666, it was so cold in the winter time that children as well as adults thawed out with hot flip, which was a combination of rum, beer and nutmeg brought to a near boil.

The Puritans were firm supporters of education. People should be able to read the Bible and understand Sunday sermons. In 1647 the General Court passed a law that all settlements with fifty or more families had to have a

schoolhouse and school master. If your children didn't attend a school then the family was responsible for their education. In 1641 Weymouth established the first town meeting and other communities soon followed. You had to be a church member and also a male to attend these meetings and to vote. All the town officials were elected and once again you had to be a church member and male to serve. Also, the Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and General Court were also elected. It was certainly limited to be sure, but it was the start of a democratic system.

For better or worse, Puritanism remained pretty much a Massachusetts institution. Even though many of the Puritans left England because of the restrictions of the Church of England, they wouldn't allow any dissent here in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, and exiled such people as Roger Williams, Anne Hutchinson and our first minister, John Wheelwright. Quakers such as Mary Dyer actually were hanged because they kept coming back after being exiled. H.L. Mencken once wrote: "Puritanism was the haunting fear that someone, somewhere might be happy." T.B. Macaulay said: "I am afraid that Puritans were opposed to bear baiting not because of any concern for the bear, but because somebody might enjoy watching it." These are oversimplifications. Pulitzer Prize historian Samuel Eliot Morison realized the importance of Puritanism and wrote: "Puritanism was the cutting edge which hewed liberty, democracy, and universal education; therefore, it is an American heritage to be grateful for and not to be sneered at because it required everyone to attend divine worship and maintain a code of ethics." Even though the founders of United First Parish Church were basically Puritans, it will be more liberal than most of the other Massachusetts Bay churches.

Church Staff and Lay Leaders

Staff: Rev. Rebecca Froom (Lead Minister), Rev. Dr. Sheldon Bennett (Minister Emeritus), Nan Moore (Affiliate Lay Community Minister), McKayla Hoffman (Ministerial Intern), 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 and Karl DeBisschop (Stewardship), Claire Fitzmaurice (Social Justice Action), Elizabeth Black (Communications), Marie-Louise Jackson-Miller (Congregational Life), Peter Kovach and Kendra Dupiton (Religious Education)

Congregational Committees: Ann Marie Willer (Committee on Ministry), Fiona Sankey (Nominating Committee)

Minister [Rev. Rebecca Froom]: rev.rebecca.froom@gmail.com
Director of Family Ministry [Nan Moore]: nanmoore5@gmail.com
Office and Property Manager [David Bousquin]: office@ufpc.org

United First Parish Church, Unitarian Universalist, 1306 Hancock Street, Quincy, Massachusetts 02169
617-773-1290, www.ufpc.org, www.facebook.com/ufpc/uu