



Stone Temple News

March 2023

From the Minister's Study

By Rebecca Froom, Lead Minister

This month marks the third anniversary of the Covid-19 pandemic emergency in Massachusetts and the USA. These years have impacted us in ways that we are still discerning. As this anniversary approaches you may be feeling a mix of emotions as you look back at the intensity of spring 2020 and all the experiences that have followed. And you may be filled with a mix of emotions as you look to the future and wonder how Covid-19 will continue to impact your life and our society.

This season at United First Parish Church we are making changes that reflect the changing nature of Covid-19 and the tools we have for treatment and prevention. We are also creating opportunities to acknowledge and process the ways that Covid-19 has impacted - and continues to impact - our lives, communities, and societies. In April, McKayla Hoffman and I will hold a special vespers service to name our losses, fears, and hopes from these pandemic years. Once we have set a date for this special service, we will promote it through our weekly announcements. I know there is much from the early months and years of the pandemic that may remain unnamed or unprocessed in our lives. McKayla and I are available for pastoral care if you would like to meet with one of your ministers to share what is on your heart as you look back at the last three years and forward to what may come. Please reach out to either of us to set up a meeting.

Over the last few years, we created a series of Covid-19 policies and guidelines so that we could use our building and grounds safely while staying connected to one another in caring and creative ways using a mix of technologies. Our policies changed in response to the changes in the Covid-19 virus and our tools for response, prevention, and treatment. We are in another moment of change. At our February Board of Governors meeting, we voted to lift our Covid-19 building use restrictions. Most notably, this means that we will no longer have capacity restrictions on our rooms which had initially been designed to maintain social distancing.

Some of the practices for safety and accessibility that we created in response to Covid-19 will continue since they are important tools for caring for one another's health and wellbeing and being an inclusive community for people of all ages and abilities. These practices include:

- Masks are welcome in our building, though not required. We will continue to provide masks at our doors.
- We will continue to use our high-quality air filters or open windows for ventilation.
- Worship services will continue to be live streamed over zoom.
- We will continue to intentionally design and offer programs for a variety of formats - some programs will meet in-person, others online, and others in a multi-platform format.
- As a faith tradition that honors the wisdom of science, we strongly encourage people to stay up to date with vaccinations and boosters for Covid-19, influenza, measles, and other communicable diseases.
- If you are feeling sick, please stay home or wear a mask.

One of the many things we learned during these covid years is that all institutions need to be able to respond to the unexpected. With that awareness we are creating a Committee for Health and Wellness which will work to prepare for and respond to public health needs impacting our congregation. This committee will meet as needed, and at least once a year. Founding members of this committee include Jim Petosa (Board President), staff members David Bousquin, McKayla Hoffman, and Rev. Rebecca Froom, and Daphnee Souvenir, RN.

As we look backwards at the last three years, I am filled with gratitude for the tremendous work that our congregation did to sustain our community during the pandemic. I'm particularly grateful to the Board of Governors from 2020, our staff, our newly formed livestream team, and the Reopening Committee/Covid Safety Taskforce that began meeting in spring 2021. May the care we have shown our congregation and one another over the last three years continue in new ways in the months and years to come.

Yours in community,
Rev. Rebecca

Spirit Circle

By Nan Moore, Director of Family Ministry
Monthly Theme – Vulnerability

As we approach March the Spring Equinox, which is central to this season of change. It holds a time change, change in increasing light, change in weather and the magical growth of plant life after the stillness of winter. It is a great metaphor that we ourselves rise out of the earth from stillness and prepare for the spring-time of new life and aliveness for all.

This week I finished my second video, Randolph's Leap, which will be posted on the UFPC website in March. It is listed as one of the sacred sites in Scotland. Just being there with my friend Lucy in the belly of the earth was an incredible experience realizing how very special this site is. My hope is you see and hear the essence in the video as well. The videos I make are places within 5 miles of where I live, so you will get a sense of the area near and around Findhorn, which is an ecovillage in the northern highlands of Scotland. Making these videos has opened up a new avenue of creativity for me, which I have enjoyed and appreciate. The videos have provided me with a mutually valued tool - staying connected to UFPC and allowing a creative opportunity of emerging, as I work remotely from Scotland.

March is pretty much straight forward with Spirit Circle offerings. There will be one change this spring. **Elisabeth Moore who teaches the music classes will not be providing adult education music classes going forward.** When Elisabeth started teaching at UFPC she was doing part time work and Spirit Circle fit really well into her life. In January she was hired at the Cotuit Art Center on cape cod as the Manager of the Creative Art Classes, which is now full time. You will continue seeing her once a month from now until June in Spirit Circle.

March 5: Nursery for children up to 3 years old and Mindfulness with Paula Webster. All children will leave the sanctuary following the message for all ages. Paula will also be teaching an adult education class from 12-1. RE HOST: McKayla Hoffman

March 5: YOUTH GROUP will be meeting for a social activity. McKayla will be in contact with the teens, so they are aware of where to meet and what time frame. The COMMUNITY SERVICE project this month will be volunteering at the Prison Book Program (PBP). PBP does not meet on Sundays, so Marie Louise will arrange the best Saturday after talking with the teens. RE ADVISORS: McKayla Hoffman and Peter Kovach

March 12: Jon Belber will be teaching an Earth Care lesson following the message for all ages. Have the children wear appropriate clothing in the case Jon decides to do a lesson outside. HOST: Kendra Dupiton

March 19: Music instruction with Elisabeth following the message for all ages. Elisabeth will be preparing a song for message for all ages on Palm Sunday. Please have your children attend to listen, learn and sing. HOST: Andrew Carleen

March 26: RECOM member Albert Vaughn will be instructing the class on a book that he is excited about sharing with the children: "What Do You See When You Look at a Tree?" There will be a RE helper with Albert and the children will have an art activity following the story.

"Imagination is the greatest friend of possibility" – Jon O'Donahue

Welcome to the Path of Vulnerability

A reflection from Soul Matters theme-based ministry program

“It may be that when we no longer know what to do
we have come to our real work,
and that when we no longer know which way to go
we have come to our real journey.

The mind that is not baffled is not employed.

The impeded stream is the one that sings.

–Wendell Berry

This month is a tricky one for us UUs. Let’s be honest. Berry’s celebration of vulnerability and limits is just not our thing. We are, after all, the religion of human potential, goodness and power! We don’t sing at impeded streams; we break through them. We don’t put up with confused minds; we keep at it until we become un-baffled. When we no longer know what to do, we just turn to each other and figure it out together.

There is something deeply inspiring about viewing ourselves so capable and strong. But there’s a shadow side too. In pursuit of being our best and most powerful selves, we often fear leaning into vulnerability. It becomes a problem. The thing we need to protect ourselves from. But it is a protection that betrays.

The theologian, C.S. Lewis, gets at this in his reflection on the vulnerability of love:

“To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to keep it intact you must give it to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable.”

In other words, there’s a big difference between breaking and being broken open. Yes, leaning into vulnerability is frightening. But often, it also unlocks a door, allowing grace to drift in.

For instance, a loved one dies and to our surprise, our hearts aren’t just crushed, they are cracked open, illuminating beauty just a little more clearly. The absence we thought would haunt us, actually unveils how deeply we loved, and how lucky we are to have loved.

Or what about when we’re finally honest about the fears and burdens we hide? In that leap of courage, we discover that telling our truths doesn’t just make us feel weak or exposed; it opens our eyes. We become able to see that others hide their pain and fear too. And with that, the faceless crowd becomes a sea of fellow travelers. All of us connected. All of us aware how much kindness is needed, even when the other’s pain is not easy to see.

It’s all about understanding that vulnerability isn’t weakness but a softer form of strength.

Remembering that isn’t easy. But it is necessary. It’s maybe our most real work, as our friend Wendell Berry would say.

Getting Involved with UU Mass Action

By the Social Justice Action Committee

The UFPC Social Justice Action Committee asks you to reach out to your Massachusetts Senator and Representative to ask them to Co-Sponsor the following bills listed on the UU Mass Action website, in these 5 categories in the 2023-24 legislative session:

- Climate and Environmental Justice
- Decarceration and End Solitary Confinement
- Economic and Housing Justice
- Immigrant Justice
- Indigenous Justice

You can get further information on all these bills and action steps through the UU Mass Action website: www.uumassaction.org. Our staff contact is Claire Karl Muller at claire@uumassaction.org. They spoke to our congregation in February 2023.

Thank you for your letters and calls to your Massachusetts Senator and Reps to Co-Sponsor the bills that are important to you. UU Mass Action has pre-drafted action letters you can use. Our voices matter! Please take action on these critical issues.

UU Mass Action's mission is to organize and mobilize UUs in Massachusetts to confront oppression. We provide pathways towards justice and identify opportunities in which we can live our shared values.

“All UU Mass Action's work is grounded in racial justice and we both build relationships with *and* center the leadership of those who are most impacted by forms of oppression and injustice. UU Mass Action is also proud to be one of the many UU entities to have adopted the 8th principle. We stand with many of our fellow Unitarian Universalists and congregations to “covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountability dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.” We call on UUs to confront oppression and build power with our coalition partners.”

Join a regional UU Mass Action team today! [Click here to see weekly newsletters full of opportunities for action!](#)

WORSHIP SERVICES

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

[March 5]

“Through It All”

Rev. Rebecca Froom and McKayla Hoffman

Sunday, March 5, 10:30 am, in-person and livestream

Buddhist nun Pema Chodron writes, “Can I sit with suffering, both yours and mine?” As we enter the month where we reflect on themes of vulnerability, this service invites us to be present with ourselves and one another through all the tender trials of life.

[March 12]

“All My Relations: Building Friendships, Nurturing Diversity”

Joe Jencks, Guest Preacher and Musician

Join us for a morning of spoken word and musical reflection led by international touring musician and songwriter, Joe Jencks. Exploring the deeply personal side of efforts to bridge cultural and racial perspectives, Joe Jencks will lead a service mindful of differences and invitational to some often-overlooked ways in which we can be present for and with each other. As we avail ourselves of the beauty and wonder in the relationships that are waiting for us to show up, we may find new in-roads to deeper and more authentic community. Jencks will explore some pragmatic ways in which “the interconnectedness of all beings” was made real for him at different points in his personal and professional life.

[March 19]

Rev. Rebecca Froom and guest

[March 26]

“Loving Our Church”

Rev. Rebecca Froom and McKayla Hoffman

As we begin our annual pledge drive on the theme “Loving Our Church, Loving Our Community,” we reflect on spiritual and ethical practices of generosity and gratitude.

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.

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, March 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 book this month is [Gender Queer: A Memoir](#) by Maia Kobabe. The author, who uses e/em/eir pronouns, wrote an intensely cathartic autobiography which charts eir journey of self-identity, which includes the mortification and confusion of adolescent crushes, grappling with how to come out to family and society, bonding with friends over erotic gay fanfiction, and facing the trauma and fundamental violation of pap smears.

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

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

Writing Group

Sunday, March 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.

UFPC Ministries Evaluation for 2023

The UFPC Committee on Ministry assesses the work of the Minister and the overall ministry of the congregation every 3-5 years. The Committee (Beth Cook, David Fallon and Ann Marie Willer) has worked with Rev. Rebecca to create an online survey as a means to gather information, and we would appreciate your feedback through **Wednesday, March 8**. The survey asks for feedback on the performance of the minister and the performance of the congregation. Thank you very much for participating in this process.

You can answer the survey in the following ways:

1. Online via the [Google Form \(https://forms.gle/QTHpvF9PPtyZgTHE8\)](https://forms.gle/QTHpvF9PPtyZgTHE8), which you can access on your phone, tablet, or computer.
2. At church during Social Hour via either a paper survey or a computer provided by the Committee on Ministry (on Sundays 2/19, 2/26, and 3/5).
3. You can request that a paper survey be mailed to you by contacting office@ufpc.org.

Kindred Spirits Discussion Group for Seniors

Friday, March 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.

“Path to Membership”

Sunday, March 19, 12:15–2:00 pm, in-person

Have been attending UFPC for a few months - or a few years - and are interested in getting more involved in our congregation or becoming a member? Join Rev. Rebecca Froom for a workshop to learn more about UFPC and what it means to be a member of a Unitarian Universalist congregation. Snacks will be provided and childcare is available upon request. Please RSVP at rev.rebecca.froom@gmail.com. If you are interested in becoming a member but not available for the workshop, please let her know.

Spring Fling Silent Auction Donations

The Spring Fling silent auction is coming up on March 25th and we need your help! Please consider what service or item you can donate. We are a community with many talents and treasures to share. Contact Kim Dangora at aimee222@comcast.net or 508-472-9754 with your item and a description by March 19th. Thanks to all!

Spring Fling tickets go on sale this Sunday. Please see Kim and Marie-Louise after the service to get yours.

Save the Date: Spring Fling Fundraiser

Saturday, March 25, 5:00 pm, in-person

UFPC Fans! We hope you are excited to attend Part II of our “Light Our Fire” Fun/Fundraiser on Saturday, March 25 starting at 5:00 pm. We invite you to an evening of music, refreshment and giving of time, talent, and treasure. We will begin the night with appetizers at 5:00 pm and silent bidding on donated items from UFPC members and friends. A catered dinner will be served at 5:30 pm and our very own UFPC band “The Radiators” will perform at 6:30 pm! At 7:00 pm we will enjoy an ice cream bar, followed by more music at 7:30 pm. The evening will close at 8:00-ish as we announce the winning bids. We hope to see you all there!

–The Spring Fling Committee: Kim Dangora, Karl DeBisschop, Peter Kovach, Marie-Louise Jackson-Miller, McKayla Hoffman and Rev. Rebecca Froom.

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

There has been some interest in the history of our Parish Hall, so I tried to find out more about it. In 1996 there was a Historic Structures Report done by the National Park Service about UFPC, which was paid for by the Federal Government. A team of four went through the archives, inspected the church itself, looked at all the blueprints and made recommendations about future restorations of the building. This is a detailed document of close to 400 pages. A good portion of what I found out came from this report. Also, quite a number of these recommendations were followed when we restored the church itself in 2000-2001.

In 1875 a group of church members made a proposal that either rooms for the Sunday School be built in the basement under the sanctuary or a chapel be added to the back of the church to house the Sunday School. This was voted down but a proposal for just the chapel alone was approved in 1883, and of course a committee appointed. Thank goodness there were no such things as task forces back then. Charles Edward Parker, a Boston architect, was hired to draw up plans for a wooden addition to be added to the back of the church. There were three different opinions among the church members about how this addition should be connected to the church building. The back wall had a window on each side of the pulpit and pews at right angles to the wall under the windows. One option was to replace both windows with doors and also take out the pews. A second thought was to only do this to one side of the pulpit because we then would be still collecting the pew rental fees on the other side. The third was to do both sides but move the organ from the balcony to one side of the pulpit and then move the displaced pews up to the balcony so that there still could be some rental fees collected. The first option was finally agreed to and the architect estimated that the chapel would cost about \$13,000.

Charles Francis Adams Jr. objected to the plan because he thought that a wooden addition to a granite building would look terrible, and agreed to pay for the difference if granite was used instead of wood. The church accepted his offer and this added another \$4300 to the cost. Luckily we did accept his offer or we would have had a terrible looking wooden addition to go along with the terrible looking glass addition on City Hall across from us. When Charles Francis Adams was president of the Union Pacific Railroad the church bought stock in Union Pacific and planned to sell this stock to help pay for the chapel. Adams was ousted by Jay Gould, one of the famous “robber barons” and some of his associates in a hostile takeover. The stock went down in value and the church had to pay another \$1316 it hadn’t counted on for the chapel. We did luck out because the next year there was a recession and the stock went down even more in value. At any rate, the chapel was dedicated in 1889 and not only the Sunday School located there but also the newly organized Women’s Alliance. It will be used over the years as a sort of community center as well.

One of the mysteries was why a really professional stage was included in the new chapel or parish hall as it would soon be called. Quite a few parish halls had stages in those days but not of the same professional quality as ours. Before radio or television a lot of local entertainment took place in church parish halls. I think that the best explanation is that just like the Stone Temple itself, everything was top of the line. If there was a societal pecking order in Quincy back then most of the top layer were members of UFPC, and this was reflected in the Parish Hall. Soon the stage became the Ladies Parlor and the Alliance bought all the furniture for it. What is now the upstairs kitchen next to the Ladies Parlor was a library for the Sunday School. In the basement there was a kitchen and pantry under the stage and eventually the upstairs library was later converted to a small kitchen and a dumb

waiter put in to connect to the downstairs kitchen. The large room in the basement was used by both the Sunday School and Women's Alliance. A ladies' room was built against the wall separating the chapel from the church with the mens' room remaining on the church side of the wall.

When the windows were taken out of the sanctuary in order to have entrances to the Parish Hall in 1889, the openings above the windows were replaced by screening, and not plastered over until 1921. It looks like church member Henry M. Faxon actually paid for this plastering job. During World War II the church ran a reading room/canteen in the Parish Hall for the servicemen that were stationed in the South Shore area, and there were quite a few of them. It was open seven days a week and manned by church volunteers. There were pizza ovens in the basement kitchen, so food was served. Also, Bethany Church held church services with us during the war, I think in the Parish Hall. Oil was rationed during World War II and probably because of the canteen we were given an extra allotment of oil, so it made sense for them to worship with us. Food was also rationed so the church probably got a special allotment because we were running the canteen. The current drop ceiling in the Parish Hall was installed in 1946 in order to save heating costs. It probably wasn't done earlier because of building material shortages during World War II. One other mystery is when the current church office was built in the Parish Hall. Work on an office was done in 1973 but there must have been an office before that, but there is no mention of it that I could find. I cannot imagine that the church secretary was located with the minister in his study. Both this report and the report done when we applied for National Historic Landmark status praised us for keeping the same style of architecture in the parish hall as in the main church. I hope that our future technological generations will do the same thing.

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 DeBissschop (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)

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Director of Family Ministry [Nan Moore]: nanmoore5@gmail.com
Office and Property Manager [David Bousquin]: office@ufpc.org

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