



Stone Temple News

April/May 2024

From the Minister's Study

By Rev. Rebecca Froom, Lead Minister

How do we care for the earth? How does our relationship to the earth change when we approach every-day practices of earth care as not only ethical practices, but also spiritual practices? These are some of the questions we have been sitting with as the seasons have turned from winter to spring. In February, inspired by the Lenten practice of fasting, which sometimes takes the form in our modern society of “giving something up for Lent,” I invited and challenged us to give up an action in our day-to-day lives that harms the earth. I invited us to engage these ethical practices as spiritual practices, using them as an opportunity to notice the ways in which we are part of an interdependent web of life that is affected by our daily actions.

During the week of the spring Equinox in March, when we pondered the theme of transformation, we turned our attention to the wonders of the butterflies. These colorful creatures’ journey through the transformative process of metamorphosis, and monarch butterflies also journey across the continent in annual migrations that span the lifespan of four or more generations of butterflies. In this service we handed out wildflower seeds which increase healthy habitat for butterflies and other pollinators.

Now, on the cusp of Earth Day we can deepen our reflection and actions on the ways in which we are part of the web of life. Now is a great time to plant your wildflower seeds, if you haven’t done so already, and look to see if butterflies or bees find their way to where new flowers grow. In our Earth Day themed service, “Seed of Love” on April 21st we will have the opportunity to share with one another our experience of earth care practices.

Every day we are confronted by massive world challenges, from climate change to escalating wars, to the ways in which we might compassionately respond to global patterns of immigrants and refugees. Our everyday acts of earth care may seem inconsequential in the face of so much fear and suffering. Climate activist Greta Thunberg has said, “once we start to act, hope is everywhere.” This spring, through our small acts of earth care, let us remember that our actions can open the doors of our spirit to hope and the possibilities of further transformative change.

Spirit Circle:

By Nan Moore, Director of Family Ministry

April Spirit Circle continues to be a full-on time with three multi-gen special events; Holi celebration with a Hindu community in Holbrook; an Adult Education class led by our art instructor Max Olson at UFPC; and a Holly Hill Farm service day in Cohasset. There has been a lot of publicity on the Holi celebration trip, and you may still participate if you are able. Email our Ministerial Intern, Shiloh Hoffman at intern.ufpc@gmail.com if you are attending and they can help you with direction.

Holi is a cultural celebration originating in India, and it ushers in the arrival of spring

What: Meet Shiloh outside of temple building at 11:50 pm

Where: Temple Address: 711 South Franklin Street, Holbrook, MA 02343

When: Saturday April 6, from 12:00 - 2:00 pm.

Offering: Suggestion to bring a \$5.00 donation.

Adult Education Caricature Art workshop

When: Sunday, April 7

Time: 1:00 - 3:00 pm (bring a light lunch to coffee hour as it will be a long day)

Where: UFPC dining hall on the lower level

Max Olsen will be teaching how to make caricatures of each other. This would also be a fun activity for members and teens, who are also invited to participate in learning a new artistic skill. The group will be instructed on creating caricatures and a fun opportunity to meet each other while building community through the arts. The class is limited to 12 people and we have 6 signed up. If you are interested, or have any questions Please email Nan at nanmoore5@gmail.com.

Holly Hill Organic Farm Community Service Day

When: Sunday, April 28

Time: 1:00 - 3:00ish pm

What: Preparing seeds and planting for farm and local food pantries

Where: 236 Jerusalem Road, Cohasset, Massachusetts 02025

Lunch: Following the worship service and before the workday

Jon Belber, our Earth Care instructor, will be teaching a class in the morning with the children. Following worship there will be a community lunch. It will be catered so a \$5.00 donation is appreciated, but no one is turned away if they are not able to pay. The work will be springtime preparation as the group will help initiating their growing season. Jon will direct and instructs the group with projects related to physical restriction and abilities. TEEN: this outing is credit for community service hours.

Spirit Circle April Classes

April 7: Max Olson will be teaching ART and the children will make a paper craft based on the water cycle and discuss how rain impacts the nature around us and creates rainbows: RE HELPER will be Albert Vaughn

April 14: Our instructor Paula Webster will be welcoming spring with tai chi movement and more learning related to mindfulness: RE HELPER will be Andrew Carleen

April 21: Will be a multigenerational worship service led by Rev Rebecca and Shiloh Hoffman honoring Earth Care. There will be no Spirit Circle class. ALL children remain in the sanctuary.

April 28: Jon Belber will be attending to our Earth Care Garden with the children and prepare them for our work day at the farm: RE HELPER will be Marie-Louise Jackson-Miller

Welcome to the Gift of Pluralism

A reflection for May from Soul Matters Sharing Circle

I wonder how the moonflower feels
about its sweet sister, the morning glory.
What it must be to know that world longingly awaits another
while you must seek solace hidden under a night sky.

When the world has told you to hide,
it is only the shadows that welcome you in.
And while blooming in the dark has its beauty,
it's also a lonely way to live.

And who can blame this moon-drenched cousin for wanting to hide.
After all, we too know what happens out there in the light of day.
We are parsed and picked over,
told who and what we need to be,
so that we will finally be loved,
finally let in.

And so we shape shift
until our own original curvature is no longer remembered,
until our masks become indistinguishable from our face,
until the pieces of us allowed out in the sun
forget the parts buried deep in the cold earthen layers of time.

Maybe that is what the moonflower
is doing out there in the dark.
Maybe it's not hiding after all
but instead trying to remember
who it once was.
Or maybe it knows who it is
and its blooming is a way of saying
"Come find me. I'm still here."

Which, of course, means that maybe this month
is not just about making it safe for others to come out of the shadows
but also a reminder that we all have pieces and parts buried in the dark.

So friends, what do you say?
Let's go find them.
Let's put ourselves back together again.

WORSHIP SERVICES

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

[April 7]
"Interdependent Web of UFPC"
Rev. Rebecca Froom

Throughout the month of April, we will reflect on "The Gift of Interdependence." On this Sunday, as we welcome new members to our congregation, we reflect on the gifts we give and receive within the congregation.

[April 14]
"The Teachings of Plants"
Rev. Rebecca Froom and Shiloh Hoffman

We live in a world where plants communicate with one another in wondrous ways. What can we learn about ourselves and our place in the interdependent web of life when we listen to the teachings of plants?

[April 21]
"Seeds of Love"
Rev. Rebecca Froom, Shiloh Hoffman, and Nan Moore

On this multigenerational Earth Day Sunday, we reflect on our efforts as Earth Carers who cherish and sustain the web of life.

[April 28]
"An Olive on the Seder Plate"
Shiloh Hoffman

On Passover, our Jewish siblings in faith uplift the liberation of Hebrew slaves from Egypt, as told in Exodus. It is a time to remember the weight of oppression, memory, identity, and self-determination of Jewish people. Today, as conflict continues among Israelis and Palestinians, we as Unitarian Universalists bear witness to the losses and pain of a war long fought, and the ensuing impact for our Jewish and Palestinian siblings in faith. Join us for a service of mourning for those lost in this conflict, as we call in our resilience, empathy, and love in the holy season of Passover.

[May 5]
“The Gift of Pluralism”
Rev. Rebecca Froom

[May 12]
“Faces of the Feminine Divine”
Rev. Rebecca Froom and Shiloh Hoffman

Turning to stories and traditions from Hindu, Christian, and Jewish traditions, your ministers reflect on some of the many ways the divine takes feminine form in world religions. What wisdom do we find in these feminine manifestations of the divine that can ground and inspire us today?

[May 19]
“Evangelists for Love and Compassion”
Rev. Rebecca Froom

[May 26]
Shiloh Hoffman

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.

[The Whys of a Vegetarian or Vegan Diet](#)
[Earth Day Lecture and Potluck](#)
Saturday, April 20, 6:00–8:00 pm, in-person

United First Parish Church is pleased to present a lecture by Sara Sezun, Chair of the Sierra Club Massachusetts Chapter Plant-based Planet Team. “Our mission is to raise awareness of the environmental effects of animal agriculture and encourage people to reduce or eliminate meat consumption.” For starters, a Vegetarian diet consists of no meat, chicken or fish. A Vegan diet does not include food derived from living creatures. Hence, no meat, fish, chicken, eggs, dairy products or honey. We hope to share our love of our precious, life-giving Planet Earth with each other. Our Potluck Dinner will be held in the parish hall. The public is welcome. Please pre-Register by contacting Claire Fitzmaurice, Chair of the UFPC Social Justice Action Committee at artclaire@comcast.net. Please bring a vegetarian or vegan dish (appetizer, entree or dessert) to share with your neighbors. If possible, bring a copy of your recipe to share. Thank you!

[Sunday Morning Meditation](#)
Sundays, 9:00–9:45 am, in-person

Meditation is offered on Sunday mornings from 9:00am to 9:45 am. We meet in the parlor, and when weather permits, we meet outside in the garden. We begin with a poem by Thich Nhat Hahn to center our intentions, followed by a walking meditation, then silent meditation, and ending with sharing our thoughts and insights. Feel free to contact Marie-Louise at 857-526-2579 or marieljm1961@yahoo.com.

Abolition Theologies: Praying for Liberation
Minns Lectures by Rev. Jason Lydon

April 21, 25, and May 9, in-person and online [First Church Boston]

Each year First Church Boston hosts a series of lectures by UU ministers on religious topics. With both violent theological underpinnings and inherent racism upholding the prison system, in this year's lecture series Rev. Jason Lydon will show that prison abolitionism is a theological imperative for Unitarian Universalists. Respondents include Daniel McKanan, Nicole Pressley, and Vincent Lloyd. Lectures are available online and at First Church Boston [66 Marlborough Street, Boston, Massachusetts]. Find out more and RSVP at <https://www.minnslectures.org>.

Stock the Stacks: A Prison Book Program Fundraiser

Saturday, April 27, 5:00–7:00 pm, in-person

New Normal Comedy is excited to partner with the Prison Book Program to present Stock the Stacks, an Indie Bookstore Day Fundraiser! Join us on Indie Bookstore Day to support this nonprofit in its mission to “support people in prison by sending them free books and reading materials that meet their specific needs and interests. [They] do this through a highly engaging volunteer experience that connects people inside and outside of the American prison system.” In their honor, we have assembled a roster of some of Boston’s most bookish comedians for a night of laughs to support their work!

Join us for an evening of stand-up comedy in the parish hall of our church. You can get tickets online here: [buy tickets now](#). Use the code “JOHNQUINCY” to get the volunteer discount price, which is offered to church members and friends as well. Wine, beer, beverages and snacks will be sold at the event to benefit the Prison Book Program and our church.

Puerto Rican Meal

Sunday, April 28, after the service, in-person

Savor mouth-watering, authentic Puerto Rican specialties such as roasted pork, sweet plantains, pink beans, yellow rice and yucca. While you are enjoying this delicious food after the service on Sunday, April 28th, you will also be contributing to the larger community by supporting a minority business called La Lechonera Restaurant. The suggested donation is \$5.00-\$20.00. Everyone has a place at the table and children eat for free. It may be cash or check and placed in a designated box at social hour the week before or on the day of the meal. You can contribute online by going to the UFPC website and clicking on the donate button. If you prefer, you may place your donation in an envelope, mark it Puerto Rican Meal and place it in the collection basket at any service. So, on Sunday, April 28th, chat with folks, contribute to a minority business and enjoy a great meal. Contact Marie-Louise Jackson-Miller at marieljm1961@yahoo.com for more information.

Holly Hill Organic Farm Community Service Day

Sunday, April 28, 1-3ish pm, in-person
236 Jerusalem Road, Cohasset, Massachusetts 02025

Jon Belber, our Earth Care instructor, will be teaching a class in the morning with the children. Following worship there will be a community lunch. It will be catered so a \$5 donation is appreciated, but no one is turned away if they are not able to pay. The work will be springtime preparation as the group will help initiating their growing season. Jon will direct and instruct the group with projects related to physical restriction and abilities. TEENS: this outing is credit for community service hours.

Book Group

Thursday, May 2, 7:00 pm, online

The UFPC Book Group meets 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 meet on Zoom. We try to select a balance of styles. You can come even if you have not finished the book.

The book this month is How to Stand Up to a Dictator by Maria Ressa. The author is one of the most renowned international journalists of our time. Democracy is fragile. This book is an urgent cry for Western readers to recognize and understand the dangers to our freedoms before it is too late. It also the story of how the creep towards authoritarianism around the world, has been aided and abetted by the social media companies. It is a book for anyone who might take democracy for granted, written by someone who never would.

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

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

Wanted: Items for the Service Auction on May 4

Chili Cook Off and Service Auction

Saturday, May 4, 5:00 pm, in-person

Save the date for our annual Chili Cook Off and Service Auction on Saturday, May 4th at 5:00 pm. This is a multi-generational pot-luck affair and the last fundraising event of the church year. We will start the evening off with a pot-lick and chili cook off. You can compete for bragging rights with your favorite chili recipe in either the vegetarian or classic category. If chili is not your thing, bring a different entree, a salad, or a dessert. Our very own in-church band "The Radiators" will perform throughout the evening, interspersed with rounds of bidding for some of the big-ticket items in the service auction. Most items will go by silent auction). Throughout April, there will be a table and signup sheet in social hour so you can make donations for the silent auction. Contact kdebisschop@gmail.com for more details.

Popular items in the past have included:

- A stay at a vacation area second home
- A gardening work party
- Cooking lessons with a shared dinner party
- A beer tasting
- Dessert of the month
- Craft items
- Gift certificates for local businesses

Writing Group

Sunday, May 5, 12:00 pm, in-person and online

Our UFPC Writing Group is meeting again this year. We 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.

Join by computer: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81611281859>

Join by telephone: 1-646-558-8656, Meeting ID: 816 1128 1859

Kindred Spirits Discussion Group for Seniors

Friday, May 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 or 617-803-1159. If you need to enter the building via the handicapped accessible entrance, please call 617-842-1706.

Annual Meeting of the Congregation

Sunday, May 19, 12:15 pm, in-person and online

The Board of Governors invites members and pledging friends to attend United First Parish Church's Annual Meeting on Sunday, May 19th at 12:15 pm. In this meeting we will hear updates on important projects, vote on our budget for the coming year, and elect new members to our Board of Governors, Committee on Ministry, and Nominating Committee. Childcare will be provided.

Annual Pledge Drive Ending

On April 7th we formally wrapped up our annual pledge drive on the theme "Everything Possible: Funding the Future of our Faith." We've had very encouraging responses so far, and there are still outstanding pledges. If you haven't yet turned in your FY2025 Pledge Intention Form (the amount of money you pledge to donate in July 2024 - June 2025), please do so soon. Pledge Intention forms can be turned in on Sundays or mailed to the church at the address below.

We're Hiring!

United First Parish Church is hiring a half-time Director of Religious Education and Family Ministry to begin in August or September 2024. Please spread the word! You can find out more about the position and application process at <https://ufpc.org/job-openings>.

Visitors Program Vignettes

By Bill Westland, Church Historian

As we once again approach another season of tourism, and with the emphasis once again seeming to be on the presidential crypts, we are apt to forget the importance of our church building itself. It is one of the finest examples of Greek Revival architecture, if not the finest, in the whole United States. It has three defining features, the massive, granite Doric columns out front, the domed, plaster, Pantheonic ceiling inside the sanctuary, and the high, mahogany pulpit in the front of the sanctuary. Most significant architectural landmarks only have one defining feature. Our Stone 1828 Temple would be a National Historic Landmark even without the presidential crypts. The architect, Alexander Parris, and the church building committee did a remarkable job, and just think, the project came in 10% under budget. The total cost of the building was about \$30,500.

The building committee endorsed the concept of John Adams of a "stone temple" and decided to have the Doric columns in the front of the church be cut out of one solid piece of granite, not in sections. This required finding a quarry deep enough from which four 25-foot, 25-ton granite columns could be cut. The committee insisted on only one quarry being used so that the stone in each of the columns would be a perfect match. Mr. Torrey agreed to provide the columns for \$1000 each. This amounted to about 13% of the total cost of the building. The committee went to Rattlesnake Quarry to inspect the stone and then agreed to hire Mr. Torrey. Rattlesnake Quarry actually was part of the land that John Adams had given to the town of Quincy in order to help fund the building of the church and the Adams Academy. Mr. Torrey tried to convince the committee that he had not included the cost of doing the column capitals, but the committee was made up of flinty, no-nonsense Yankees, and he was not allowed to amend his agreement. A huge special cart was built to transport these 25-ton columns

from the quarry to the church. It took 80 oxen to pull this cart, and it took three days to get the columns to the building site. This trip was made over a very rough, rutted terrain of about four miles, as there weren't any modern roads back in those days. How do you suppose they hooked up 80 oxen - perhaps 40 teams of two each? Once there, under the supervision of Mr. Holmes, three columns were erected in one day and the fourth the next day. Mr. Holmes apologized that it got dark, and they couldn't erect the fourth column the same day. In erecting the columns, a piece got split off from the bottom of one of the columns and the column had to be patched. This was the only noticeable defect. It was an amazing accomplishment.

Architect Parris convinced the committee to have a coffered domed ceiling in the sanctuary that would measure 130 feet in diameter. It would be in the style of the Pantheon in Rome, but would have lotus blossoms with a passion flower surrounded by a Greek key design in the center. Everything would be done in plaster. Both the lotus blossoms and passion flower had religious meanings but the Greek key was strictly decorative. The ceiling structure followed a design perfected in the 16th century by Philbert Delorme, a French engineer and architect. Parris had used this design before in his Quincy Market, and also when he finished both the ether dome at Massachusetts General Hospital and the restoration of Faneuil Hall for Charles Bulfinch when Bulfinch went to Washington to do the Capitol Building. Of course, these were much smaller ceilings. Our ceiling was supported by vertically set laminated ribs which distributed the weight of the ceiling to the walls of the church. The plaster blossoms were wired up through the ceiling. As you can see, Parris was an excellent engineer as well as an architect. Mr. Edson was paid \$825 to construct the ceiling. When we had it restored in 2001 it cost over \$200,000, quite a difference in price.

The original plan for the pulpit was to have it carved out of curled maple. Parris modeled it after the Pine Street Congregational Church in Boston, long since torn down. For some reason he decided to use Santo Domingo mahogany instead of the curled maple. Perhaps this was because mahogany was easier to carve or perhaps it was either more available or less expensive. Notice the magnificent workmanship, especially the replica Doric columns carved on each side, and the carved surface of the pulpit itself. It is difficult to imagine that the pulpit only cost \$400. Can you imagine what it would cost to duplicate it today? There was a special old forest type of mahogany found in the Dominican Republic, Cuba and Haiti which was completely used up between 1800 and 1850. Our pulpit fits into this time period. A copy of a Chippendale desk, not even an original, made from this valuable wood sold for 3.3 million dollars back in 2007. What if our pulpit was carved out of this old forest mahogany? For insurance purposes it is probably better not to know. At the same time that the pulpit was carved, the name of the cabinet maker is not known, Mr. Briggs was paid \$178 for the sofa located behind the pulpit, the two high backed chairs in the front of the sanctuary plus the communion table in front of the pulpit. He was also paid \$28 for the velvet cushions. Originally the plan was to have a window behind the pulpit but it was decided to have two large windows on each side instead to let in more light. These windows were replaced by the two doors leading into the parish hall when it was built in 1889. A velvet curtain was hung behind the pulpit to cover that wall space, with Mr. William Hancock getting the contract to provide it. Major Lane, who had painted the church interior and pews, was then hired to stain the pulpit. I am not sure what Major Lane charged, but he got paid 6 cents a number when he painted the numbers on the pews.

So, the next time that you come to church, pause a moment and look at those four huge Doric columns out front. Then, inside during the service look up at that magnificent domed plaster ceiling. After the service on the way to coffee, inspect that marvelous high mahogany pulpit. I am sure that you will agree that we have one of the most important and impressive, Greek Revival church buildings in the entire country, perhaps in all North America.

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), Shiloh 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)

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