

Our Minister

The Reverend Hank Peirce, Interim Minister

Rev. Hank grew up in the Unitarian Universalist Youth movement and Boston Punk scene before going into ministry. He has a BA in the study of religion from UMass-Boston and a Masters of Divinity from Andover-Newton Theological School. Hank has served our movement as both settled and interim positions, most recently he was the interim minister at the First Parish Church United in Westford, MA. He lives in Medford with his wife Rebecca and their two girls.

The minister is available for pastoral counseling and to help in times of worry, crisis, or illness. He is eager to hear your ideas, suggestions, and hopes for our church and to get to know you as a newcomer. Please don't hesitate to reach out.



535 Canton Ave. Milton, MA 02186 617-698-6329
www.fpmilton.org

Welcome to First Parish in Milton!



We Welcome All to Grow Deep Faith and Take Bold Action.

We're glad that you are exploring our church as a possible spiritual home. We look forward to your ideas, enthusiasm, involvement, and support as we work to grow as a meaningful community of faith, hope, love, and service. This packet is designed to serve as a basic introduction to our church in print, but the best way to get to know us is through active participation in worship, events, and spiritual development opportunities.

Our Past

The First Parish in Milton was founded on April 24, 1678, when twelve members of the First Parish in Dorchester gathered and signed a new covenant in Milton. Our church is the oldest religious institution in Milton and one of the oldest Protestant churches in the United States. Before church and state were separated, the First Parish Meetinghouse was also the site of Town Meeting and the center of town government. In the 1830s, a schism within what was then known as the Congregational Church led to First Parish's affiliation with Unitarianism. This carried with it a theological emphasis on the potential for humankind's moral improvement, using reason when interpreting scripture, and seeing Jesus as a human example of divine living. A merger of the two denominations of Unitarianism and Universalism in 1961 led to our current affiliation with the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations. Our present church building was built in 1787 and is the fourth meetinghouse used by the church. The Children's Church was originally a one-room schoolhouse and was transformed into a replica of the main meetinghouse for children's worship in 1937.

Our Covenant

We are a non-creedal church, which means that our members hold a wide variety of theological beliefs. We join to offer community and support to one another in exploring religious and spiritual meaning in life. Our covenant is a bond between us, expressing a sense of direction, and is interpreted by each person according to their own conscience. The following covenant was adopted by the church membership on October 17, 2010:

*In devotion to truth, searching along many spiritual paths,
We honor the living legacy of our faith in the human potential for
goodness and in the God of limitless love, in whom we are one.*

*We unite in faith,
To celebrate the sacred as it reveals itself within and among us;
To promote spiritual growth and to care for those in need;
To honor and protect the natural world, which inspires wonder and
sustains life;
To walk together in peace, committed to justice and compassion in our
world.*

We affirm our Judaic and Christian heritage and traditions while respecting and drawing from traditions and scriptures of other world religions. We seek to strengthen personal faith, stimulate growth, and enrich wisdom through worship, education, and action. Our members are encouraged to examine their own religious convictions in the light of the insights of faith, modern knowledge, and human experience. We encourage all to feel free to hold and express those convictions which they, as individuals, believe to be true. Worship is central to the life of our church, where we gather for inspiration, instruction, and fellowship.

Inclusion

First Parish welcomes people of all races, colors, gender identities, sexual orientations, abilities, classes, and national origins. We are a Welcoming Congregation of the UUA—a sign of our commitment to welcome and include gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer people in all aspects of parish life.

Church Government and Finances

First Parish is a democratic organization run by its members. Our Puritan forebears were determined that they would not be subject to any external religious hierarchy, and that principle continues in our governance today. An annual meeting is held on the third Sunday in May at which members elect the Parish Committee (the governing board), and other committees are elected or appointed. The congregation calls its minister, elects the officers, and adopts the budget at the annual meeting and at special meetings called at other times.

First Parish is supported by voluntary contributions of those who believe in its principles and mission. An annual stewardship drive is conducted in the winter to raise funds for general operations of the church, and members and friends are encouraged to give generously to the thriving of our common cause. You are welcome to make a financial commitment at any time by contacting the church office for a commitment form or by speaking with the chair of the Finance Committee.

We are affiliated with the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations (UUA), which is located at 24 Farnsworth Street in Boston. The UUA is a voluntary association of over one thousand churches and fellowships across the United States and is also run democratically through an annual meeting of delegates from its congregations. The day to day operations of the UUA are conducted by its president and staff, but its membership is each and every member of a Unitarian Universalist congregation. The UUA helps to coordinate sharing of resources and best practices for the health and well-being of our movement, and each local congregation retains the authority to govern itself.

Worship at First Parish

Our worship services are the central gathering place for our practice of growing deep faith and strengthening ourselves to take bold action, in our lives, in our community, and in our world. Sunday worship is the time each week that we set aside to be in religious community, to connect with the ground of our being, with one another, and with our deepest selves. Our community gathers to share prayers for one another and our local and global community; to remember those who have gone before; to celebrate the joys and comfort the sorrows of those present; and to welcome newcomers.

Worship in our church follows a familiar Protestant format, with stories, readings, hymns, a prayer, offering and a sermon. Because we believe that sacred truths can be found in many different sources, our stories and readings come from both ancient and contemporary sources, from sacred scriptures of the world's many religious traditions, as well as from poetry, literature, and current events. The sermon is a reflection on contemporary life, is illuminated by the readings, and is usually offered by our minister.

Joys and Concerns

Our Meetinghouse is made sacred by the lives of the people who gather there and have done so since 1678, so it's important for us to know what's happening with our members and friends. You may light a candle on the candle table at the front of the Meetinghouse during the Prelude or first hymn for your joy or concern, noting it in the book if you wish the minister to mention it in the prayer.

Children in Worship

Children of all ages are always welcome in worship. Nursery care is available for infants and toddlers. Most weeks, there are programs for children ages 3 and up, and you can speak to a greeter or usher to find the right place for your children. Several times throughout the year, we have intergenerational services, in which people of all ages worship together.

Music at First Parish

Music is a central part of our worship experience. The Meetinghouse Choir sings most Sundays during the church year, leading the congregation in hymns and providing weekly anthems and responses. Our Hunsaker vocal soloists also enhance the worship experience and special music under the direction of Joel Hiller is featured periodically during multi-generational services.

The Meetinghouse Choir is a group of committed and enthusiastic volunteers and soloists who enjoy singing a wide variety of music. The choir meets Sunday at 8:45 am to rehearse. Adults and teens are always welcome to join the choir at any time during the year. There are no auditions; just come and enjoy the music-making.

Music Director (organist/pianist and choir director) Timothy Steele is an active vocal coach, recitalist, and conductor. He has played with many local performing groups, including the Handel and Haydn Society, the Commonwealth Shakespeare Company, and Emmanuel Music. He is in his 23rd year on the opera faculty at New England Conservatory and is a former music director for Opera Providence. Tim is a graduate of Drake University and the University of Southern California.

Get involved. Besides singing in the choir there are other musical opportunities that exist to feature the vast array of musical talent among members of the congregation. If you would like to be a part of the music program at First Parish, please contact Tim at eliztim95@gmail.com.

Religious Exploration

If you or your child is new, know that we welcome children and youth of all ages in our services and in our Religious Exploration Program. Our children are a very important part of our community and their religious education is a high priority. We offer a full religious education experience for children ages 3-18 with classes during the service. We also have Youth Group that meets on Sundays after church.

Children in our religious exploration program begin by attending the first 15 minutes of the worship service before leaving for their classes. On the first Sunday of every month, children are invited to take part in their own worship service held in our historic Children's Church.

NURSERY: Childcare is available for infants through age 3.

SPIRIT PLAY: Preschoolers through 2nd grade can join our Spirit Play group, a Montessori-based curriculum designed to help children understand the Unitarian Universalist identity. Children explore, learn and question through story, manipulative objects and interactive participation.

PASSAGES: For 2nd graders in the spring, *Passages* is a special program that demonstrates how to incorporate the seven principles of Unitarian Universalism into each child's everyday life. This wonderful program is rites of passage for children moving on to Small Group ministries. It ends with a ceremony in which children receive necklaces representing the seven principles.

SMALL GROUP MINISTRIES: Grades 3 through 6 are broken down into groups (mixed ages, within a narrow age span) who meet together after attending the beginning of worship in the Meetinghouse. Volunteer adults lead discussions and activities that

enable children to get to know one another and to better "process" the story or theme raised in the worship service.

JUNIOR YOUTH GROUP: 7th and 8th graders focus on social justice issues using a curriculum that encourages them in personal growth that counteracts marginalization in others. They also explore the world's religions in a curriculum that broadens their knowledge of humanity and emboldens their spiritual search.

YOUTH CHAT/ YOUTH GROUP: Youth in grades 9 through 12 gather on Sunday mornings in a covenanted group to discuss current events and the challenges and triumphs of adolescence through an ethical and spiritual lens. Youth Group meets after church on Sundays and the youth continue to learn and explore topics such as community building, social action, and youth – adult relationships.

OWL: *Our Whole Lives* is our sexuality curriculum that is offered to 7th, 8th, and 9th graders. Grounded in a holistic view of sexuality it equips participants with accurate, age-appropriate information in six subject areas: human development, relationships, personal skills, sexual behavior, sexual health, and society and culture.

COMING OF AGE: 9th and 10th graders. *Coming of Age* marks the transition from childhood to adulthood and the important time of discernment for youth in between. By participating in *Coming of Age*, we hope that youth will assume responsibility for their physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing.

Our goal is to create a peaceful atmosphere, child friendly and comfortable for all ages. Please feel free to contact the office for more information at 617-698-6329 or by email office@fpmilton.org.