

EXPLORING & GROWING
FAITH DEVELOPMENT
2015 - 2016



firstparish^{IN MILTON,}
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

First Parish in Milton, Unitarian Universalist
535 Canton Ave.
Milton, MA 02186
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First Parish Mission Statement

We the members of the First Parish in Milton, Unitarian Universalist, are committed to:

Building a self-governing, mutually supportive, religious community of friendly and caring people; providing a haven for spiritual inquiry and growth; contributing to a universal vision of peace and justice through action; celebrating the diversity and inherent worth of all people; thereby enriching our lives and those of our children.

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MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

RE at Milton

My earliest memory of Sunday School was of the painted toenails of the miniature poodle belonging to Miss Knowles who ran the nursery at 1st Unitarian in New Bedford. But my most important memory from Sunday School was of the morning when each child was told that we would be having breakfast at church and not to eat before arriving. Once at church each child was handed a card with the name of a nation on it and then instructed to sit at the table with the corresponding nation's name on it. Soon we were fed what children in that nation traditionally ate and the amount that they ate. I can't remember what nation's breakfast I ate, what I do remember being shocked at the disparity in the food amounts between the tables. The lesson about justice and equality that I learned that day has never left me.

There is nothing as important as communicating our values to our children and young people, or sharing our beliefs with each other. Religious education is where the teachings of family, community, and faith are strengthened and new ideas introduced. Religious education, helps to reestablish our connection to Unitarian Universalism. The questions raised in religious education classes are both a means to an end and an end in themselves.

Rev. Hank Peirce



MESSAGE FROM THE RE COMMITTEE CHAIR

“Transitions themselves are not the issue, but how well you respond to their challenges.”

— *Jim George**

I think this quote is appropriate as a welcome to the 2014–2015 church year. We bid a fond farewell to Parisa this summer, and we welcome our interim minister, Rev. Hank Peirce, this fall. After three productive years as chair of the Religious Education (RE) Committee, Jen Erbe Leggett stepped down, and I'm getting up to speed as the new chair. Thank goodness we have Miriam Febres not only staying on staff, but taking on an expanded role, including increased responsibility for our wonderful RE program.

For this coming year, much of the RE programming will remain as it's been. Our outstanding Sprit Play program, for our youngest students, will continue to provide a story-based introduction to the UU faith. In the spring, second graders will leave Spirit Play to participate in the rich Passages curriculum, putting our seven UU principles into action. Third through sixth graders will meet in small groups to interact with stories and themes connected to adult worship.

Our first-Sunday-of-the-month Children's Church services will continue as well. Please feel free to join your child in these special services and see why the kids love them so much. (Please also keep in mind that these Sundays provide our hardworking teachers an opportunity to participate in adult worship, so parent chaperones are always appreciated.)

Of course if you'd like to do more than chaperone at Children's Church, we will welcome your involvement at whatever level of commitment you can provide. We are always in need of RE teachers and other volunteers. Teachers generally teach either the fall or spring semester, and not on Children's Church Sundays or when we

have multigenerational services, so it doesn't take as much time as you might have thought! It's a rewarding experience and a great way to connect with our children, whether you're a parent or not.

One big change this year will be thanks to Miriam. She will be creating a monthly RE newsletter, which will be filled with helpful information and will, we hope, improve communication.

As with any transition, we will surely face some challenges this year. How will we respond to them? My hope is that it will be with respect and compassion for each other and our children, fully aware of and embracing our UU principles.

Please, feel free to speak to me or any of the committee members with questions, concerns, or feedback. I hope to see you at church.

Lisa White, Chair
RE Committee members Donna Drewes, Brigitte Miller, Bridget Sitkoff, and Becky Stiles
and RE Assistant, Miriam Febres

*Pastor, seminary professor, and author of *A Man After God's Own Heart.*

ADULT SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT OFFERINGS

SMALL GROUP MINISTRY

Contact: Rev. Hank Peirce

Small Group Ministry at First Parish is a venue for deeper sharing and connection with one another in more intimate gatherings. Small Group Ministry is also a place for you to identify your gifts and to explore your own call to serve in the community and the wider world. This year we will have groups of diverse membership (the traditional small group model) as well as shared interest groups (affinity groups). All groups will have the common goal of creating a space for deep listening and spiritual growth and will contain the elements of prayer/meditation, action, reflection, and service. We encourage each and every First Parish member and friend to deepen your faith and your connections with one another by joining a small group.



SILENT PRAYER AND MEDITATION

Contact: Tracey Robinson

Sundays, 9:00am, Children's Church & Wednesdays, 7:00pm

"I enjoy the silence in a church before the service more than any sermon," wrote Ralph Waldo Emerson. Each week, we offer an opportunity for those for whom this is true to gather in our Children's Church. We offer a brief reading on a spiritual theme, followed by 30 minutes of silence, and then conclude with a time for spoken reflection. Whether you're new to silence or a longtime practitioner, you are welcome to join us for this restoring practice.



YOGA

Contact: Church office 617-698-6329

Mondays, 7:30—8:30 pm, Parish Hall

Yoga classes include stretching exercises, yoga postures, breathing techniques, and relaxation. All participants progress at their own pace. The benefits from yoga include increased flexibility, increased flow of life force through your body, and relief from tension and nervousness. Come and learn this wonderful way to reduce stress and revitalize yourself.

Cost: \$80 for 8 sessions or \$15 per individual session.

CUUPS formally Earth-Centered Spirituality Group

Contact: Pam Dorsey

Earth-Centered Spirituality can be defined as any of several earth-centered spiritual belief systems that acknowledge the presence of divinity within the natural universe and within the elemental forces of nature. The divine is not considered male or female but a balance of both, vital to the very existence of life itself and symbolically represented by God and Goddess. Not a distant and powerful other, God/Goddess is the immediate presence infused into all of life. There are eight major sabbats celebrated within the wheel of the pagan year, based on the solar calendar: equinoxes, solstices, and the halfway points between each, which correspond to harvests, spring plantings, and other seasonal events. At First Parish, we meet to celebrate and honor these events as well as to mark the perpetually changing lunar cycle with monthly esbats. Rites and rituals include prayer, music, readings and meditation, followed by a potluck social hour. All ages are welcome.

WE WELCOME ALL CHILDREN



All children have spiritual needs, and all children have unique needs. Some need more attention, more hugs, or more personal space. Often, children require additional support in order for their religious education experience to be a positive one.

Our goal is to support all of our children as they become confident members of this hospitable, safe, and inclusive church community. In the spirit of good communication, cooperation, and harmony, we ask all parents to consult with the Minister regarding their children's individual needs to ensure that all children have the support they require to have a positive experience in the Religious Exploration Program.

"The great end in religious instruction is not to stamp our minds irresistibly on the young, but to stir up their own; not to make them see with our eyes, but to look inquiringly and steadily with their own"

—William Ellery Channing

GOALS OF THE RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION PROGRAM

The church school program at First Parish in Milton is based on several goals.

First, we want our children to know that they are part of a caring church family and a community of worship. Through a variety of family-oriented worship and social activities throughout the year, our children understand that they are an important part of our church life.

Second, through our classroom programs and carefully chosen curricula, we seek to provide a foundation for the religious development of our children. We want our children to be familiar with the principles and purposes of Unitarian Universalism and to hear stories of great UU men and women who embody our faith, to hear the history of our local church, to become familiar with our Judeo-Christian roots and those of other religions, to develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in faith, race, ability, and culture, and to develop ethical values needed for responsible decision-making and a commitment to social action and social justice.

Third, we seek to guide and direct our children's religious growth without being dictatorial. In short, we believe that the method of teaching is as important as the content. We try to include children at their own level in the process of covenanting rules of behavior for the classroom and encourage the skills of informed decision-making and conflict resolution whenever needed.

Our final goal is to have all of our parents (and non-parents) actively involved in our church school by volunteering to help in some capacity.

WORSHIP

The worship experience is an integral part of a religious education, the place where ideas and ritual come together in a meaningful way. During the year, several all-community worship services will be held in the Meetinghouse. There are no RE classes when everyone attends the main worship service, although babies and toddlers are welcome in the the nursery. See the RE calendar for specific details. Even when children's programming is offered, children of all ages are always welcome to attend worship on Sunday mornings.

Worship in the Children's Church

Our Children's Church services will begin on October 5, and will thereafter be held on the first Sunday of most months in our historic Children's Church. Children's Church will meet for the full hour, and services will begin at 10:30 am.

The Children's Church worship services, co-led by children and youth worship assistants, mirror the liturgy in the Meetinghouse worship. Our children and youth lead the opening words, sing hymns, do responsive readings, hear a story or homily, reflect aloud about the story or homily, participate in the ritual, light our chalice and lead the words, ring the bell, collect the offering, usher, and lead the prayer. We believe that worship should be a participatory, multi-age, dynamic experience, and we endeavor to create meaningful services for all of our congregation's children and youth.

Worship in the Meetinghouse

Please remember that people of all ages are full, important and beloved members of our faith community. Like adults, children learn by experiencing firsthand. It is important for young people to feel valued and welcomed as they participate in worship services. Likewise, it is vital that young people respect adult needs and the Meetinghouse.

The curriculum of our congregation is taught when we worship together. Our goal is to create an atmosphere of joyful reverence, child-friendly and comfortable for all ages. Here are some suggestions for helping children, parents and the gathered congregation in the Meetinghouse during worship:

- Get settled and comfortable before the service begins at 10:30. To help younger children to settle in and sit still, preschool aged books and “fidget” items are available in the church foyer.
- Adults modeling a quiet, calm, respectful attitude have a direct effect on young people’s behavior.
- Review and share the Order of Worship and hymnal to help children understand what will happen.
- Feel free to whisper instructions to help youngsters learn “worship etiquette.” Have positive expectations and encourage appropriate behavior and participation.
- Relax and enjoy the service.



Let us be open to what the generations can learn from each other.

CLASSES AND CURRICULA DESCRIPTIONS

Each class is led by two caring adult volunteers from the congregation at all times. All classes meet simultaneously with adult worship services, unless otherwise noted. See Miriam Febres, RE Assistant, for more information about teaching and volunteering in the Religious Exploration program.

CHILDREN'S CHURCH

All children and youth in grades 1-12 will be invited to participate in an hour-long Children's Church worship on the first Sunday of most months in our historic Children's Church. These lively and energetic worship services are music-filled, interactive, faith-affirming, and seek to include the children in leading various aspects of the service.

NURSERY AND TODDLER AGE

Childcare for infants through age 4 is provided by our Nursery Room Supervisor and several assistants in our nursery (located in the Link). Youth are required to take a childcare class before babysitting in our program. There is no curriculum, but stories will be read, and the room has a variety of interesting toys for play. **We ask parents to bring diapers and a change of clothes for nursery/toddler age children.**



PRESCHOOL, KINDERGARTEN & GRADES ONE AND TWO

Spirit Play

A Montessori-based curriculum designed to help children understand their Unitarian Universalist identities and begin to grapple with existential questions such as “Where do we come from?” and “What happens when we die?” Spirit Play is a Unitarian Universalist adaptation of Jerome Berryman’s Godly Play, and was developed by former Milton DRE Bonita Penfold, former Milton teacher Bev Bruce, and the Rev. Ralph Roberts. Children will explore our Unitarian Universalist heritage through manipulative objects and interactive participation. After an initial story, children will be encouraged to choose their own work for the morning, with the option of responding to the story in art forms.

GRADE TWO - Spring Semester

Passages

Second graders will participate in the Passage program in their second semester. This special program demonstrates how to incorporate the seven principles of Unitarian Universalism into each child’s everyday life, and ends with a ceremony in the Meetinghouse in which the children receive necklaces representing the principles. This program requires a weekly commitment and has weekly homework assignments.

GRADES THREE through SIX

Small Group Ministry for Children’s Religious Education

Rev. Angus MacLean, a well-known Universalist religious educator, often reminded religious educators: “The method is the message!” The RE Committee has chosen to adopt a model of religious education that reflects the message that a sense of connection and belonging should be a primary outcome of an excellent Religious Education program. The Committee has adapted Gail Forsyth-Vail’s “Small Group Ministry for religious education” model for use with third through sixth graders. In the fall, each registered child in this class will become part of a group (mixed ages, within a narrow age span) who will meet together after attending the beginning of worship in the Meetinghouse. Volunteer adults will lead discussions and activities that will enable children to get

to know one another better and to “process” the story or theme raised in the worship service. An example of what would occur might be:

- a) a story from one of the sources of our tradition is told during worship,
- b) a small group gathering with a check-in and sharing, discussion about the story using prepared, age-appropriate questions, and, finally,
- c) an art activity, a service project, or a game that looks at the idea of how to incorporate the learning and themes from the stories into our lives. The stories shared and discussed come from our Judeo-Christian heritage, world religions, and our Unitarian Universalist tradition, and will coincide with the themes in adult worship as much as possible.

GRADE SEVEN

Neighboring Faiths

Neighboring Faiths is a curriculum that reflects and affirms the racial, cultural, and religious pluralism of our world. Students will discuss a variety of religions and plan together how to engage with the traditions that interest them. This may include visits from guest speakers, as well as field trips to various worship services at neighboring congregations to develop a greater understanding about how different faith traditions engage in worship. Students will then participate in facilitated reflection about these experiences.



GRADES EIGHT through TWELVE

Youth Chat

Youth 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. Participants will do community-building, have guest speakers from the congregation, learn about social justice and equity, think about contemporary religious issues, and learn about how to form their own spiritual practice.



Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (Youth Group)

Youth group activities at First Parish Milton will be led by the Youth Advisor, planned by the Youth/Adult Committee, and will focus on the six components of balanced youth programming: worship, leadership, community building, social action, learning, and youth-adult relationships. Youth take part in a variety of field trips, sleepovers, and social action projects. In addition to youth group, youth 14 to 19 will have the opportunity to go to Mass Bay District Young Religious Unitarian Universalist youth conferences.

GRADES EIGHT and NINE

Our Whole Lives

Our Whole Lives (OWL) helps participants make informed and responsible decisions about their sexual health and behavior. 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. Grounded in a holistic view of sexuality, *Our Whole Lives* provides not only facts about anatomy and human development, but helps participants to clarify their values, build interpersonal skills, and understand the spiritual, emotional, and social aspects of sexuality.

The OWL program will meet on Sunday mornings from 10:00am to 11:30am and requires that parents attend a mandatory parent orientation before enrolling their youth.



Coming of Age

Coming of Age marks the transition from childhood to adulthood and the important time of discernment for youth in between. We hope that by participating in Coming of Age youth will assume responsibility for their own physical, mental, and spiritual well-being; expand their visions of the world through encounters with differing views, cultures, and life experiences; understand that they have important roles in their families, their church, and the larger community; and develop personal value systems rooted in ethical and theological principles.

Coming of Age participants will hold a sleepover at the church, go on a Unitarian Universalist historical scavenger hunt of Boston, design a service project, talk about life's "big questions," write faith statements, play games, and



have fun! The program also has a mentor component in which each youth has an adult mentor from the church community. We hope that Coming of Age is a powerful experience for the youth, and parental involvement is essential .

Coming of Age will begin with an opening ceremony, orientation for youth and parents, and ends with a Coming of Age worship service in the Meetinghouse (date TBD) in which participants will present their statements of faith.

PARENT COMPONENT

OWL and Coming of Age are additional programming that requires parent and student commitment. Because the importance of creating a safe community of sharing, and because these programs are a meaningful rite of passage to be taken seriously in our church family, youth are asked to attend all sessions. Parent orientation is mandatory for parents of all students participating in OWL. In the parent orientation our goal is to inform, set expectations and answer all your questions.

First Parish in Milton's RE program is a cooperatively run church school, and we need your involvement as a teacher, committee member, mentor, or volunteer on special projects. We invite your participation when you have become comfortable with the church. New families are not asked to teach in their first year, but are welcome to volunteer for special events. We also believe that all adults in our church community act as religious educators in the way they model their Unitarian Universalist beliefs for the children. Religious education is larger than the actual program and extends to the whole church community and its activities.

To register or if you have questions about any of our programs, please contact Miriam Febres at office@fpmilton.org

TEACHING

Since the Religious Education program is a cooperative venture, we ask parents who have been part of First Parish for at least one year to teach in the program. We ask you to make a commitment to a full semester of teaching. If you are new to First Parish, we do not expect you to teach, but we may ask you to help out by baking for a special event or being an extra pair of hands for a workshop day or for Children's Church. We are also delighted and grateful when those of you who do not have children in the RE program offer to participate or teach.

We seek to make teaching a fun and fulfilling experience by providing the following resources:

- We provide all curricula, books, resources, and materials for each class and a schedule of lessons so that the teacher can really focus on engaging the week's material and developing a rapport with the class.
- We provide teacher training to help you feel comfortable and prepared. This year's training will take place Sunday, **September 14th from 12:00pm until 2:30pm**. lunch and childcare will be included.
- Rev. Hank Peirce is available for personal support and will also facilitate regular opportunities for reflection and conversation during and after some classes.

We ask parents and other congregants to make one of the following commitments to support the RE program during semesters that you are not teaching:

1. Become a member of the RE committee to plan and coordinate events.
2. Volunteer to help out with a Children's Church service.
3. Volunteer to use your skills or interests to lead a workshop for the children on a Workshop Rotation Sunday.
4. Sign up to co-advise the youth group in their regular meetings and/or for trips and special events.

BEHAVIORAL POLICY

Religious Education provides our children and us with a unique opportunity to be in community with others. Accordingly, the development of three basic skills underlies all levels of religious education at First Parish. These are

LISTENING to ourselves and others;

SHARING of ourselves with others; and

CARING for ourselves and others, to the best of our abilities.

Every year, students in RE classes begin their course of study by developing and agreeing on a behavioral covenant. Covenants provide age-appropriate guidelines that are meant to facilitate students' development of listening, sharing, and caring skills. At the start of class each week, the covenants' purpose and guidelines are reviewed. In the interest of creating a safe gathering place, students are expected to follow covenant parameters.

Students who do not follow covenant guidelines in RE class will meet with several levels of intervention, from simple visual or verbal reminders/warnings and provision of peer mentors, to temporary removal from class and counseling with the Minister, to parent conferences and development of individual behavior contracts. For students with significant and prolonged difficulty following agreed-upon rules, suspension from class may result.

Policy on Bullying Behavior and Violence

Bullying behavior will not be tolerated under any circumstances and any student exhibiting subtle or overt bullying behavior will not be able to remain in an RE class. In the event of an incident of bullying, parents will be notified immediately and expected to come and pick up the child. If further disciplinary action is warranted, the Minister and the Committee on Ministry will follow up accordingly. ***Violence of any kind amongst program participants is strictly prohibited. Violation of this policy could result in suspension or expulsion from RE classes.***

SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR THE CHURCH SCHOOL

In order to assure the safety of our children within the church, the Religious Education Committee has formulated the following guidelines. We ask the following of our parents, and teachers, and anyone involved with the children's program:

1. Ask permission of a child or an adult before giving them a hug or a kiss, or holding their hand. This gives them the opportunity to say no if they are uncomfortable, empowering them.
2. Each class (and youth group) will have two adults at all times.
3. When a young child has to use the bathroom during class time, the teacher or teacher's assistant taking the child should ask the child to pick a friend to go along with them. This will reduce the incidence of children being alone with an adult in the bathroom. Older children (2nd grade and up) may use the bathroom alone or with a friend, depending on the teacher's discretion.
4. Parents need to pick up their younger children (2nd grade or under) from classes. Teachers should wait for parents as they clean up. Parents are responsible for the safety of their children when the religious education program time ends. Please keep track of the whereabouts of your children, and educate them on personal safety in the church. *The RE classrooms are off-limits to children during social hour.*
5. Latex gloves will be available in each bin and in the nursery with the first aid kit if anyone has to treat a bleeding wound. There will also be bleach available under the sink in the RE storage room downstairs to clean up blood or urine.
6. Babysitters in our toddler and nursery programs are required to have a basic babysitting course or extensive experience with children. If a child has a bathroom accident, there will be extra clothes available in the toddler room, or a parent will be found.
7. Please address questions and concerns about safety policies to Rev. Hank Peirce, (617) 698-6329.

CHILDREN'S RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND WORSHIP CALENDAR

☐ = Multigenerational Services. All children and youth are invited.
Nursery room is open for children under 4.

☐ = Children's Church (full hour). Children's Church Sundays include children and youth in grades K-7.

2014

September

- ☐ 7 Multigenerational Service: *Ingathering*
Pancake breakfast at 9:00 am; **no RE classes**
- 14 Workshop
- 21 First day of RE classes; Gather in Meetinghouse for first part of worship, then proceed to classrooms;
- 28 RE classes

October

- ☐ 5 Children's Church
- 12 Multigenerational Service: *Blessing of the Animals*
no RE classes
- 19 RE classes
- 26 RE classes

November

- ☐ 2 Multigenerational Service: *Remembrance Sunday*
- 9 RE classes
- 16 RE classes
- ☐ 23 Multigenerational Service: *Thanksgiving*
- 30 Workshop Sunday

December

- ☐ 7 Children's Church
- 14 RE classes
- 21 RE classes, last day of RE classes, Fall semester
- ☐ 24 Christmas Eve Family service (5 pm): **CHRISTMAS PAGEANT**
- ☐ 24 Hunsaker Christmas Eve service (10 pm)
- ☐ 28 Multigenerational Service: *Burning of Grudges*
no RE classes

2015

January

- ☐ 4 Children's Church
- 11 Workshop Sunday
- ☐ 18 Multigenerational Service: *Martin Luther King Jr. Sunday*
- 27 Workshop Sunday semester

February

- ☐ 1 Children's Church
- 8 First day of RE classes, Spring
- ☐ 15 Multigenerational Service—Feb. School Vacation
- 22 Workshop Sunday

March

- ☐ 1 Children's Church
- 8 RE classes
- 15 RE classes
- 22 RE classes
- 29 RE classes

April

- ☐ 5 Multigenerational Service—*Easter*
- 12 RE classes
- 19 Workshop Sunday—*April School Vacation*
- 26 Workshop Sunday—*Union Sunday*

May

- ☐ 3 Children's Church
- 10 Workshop Sunday—*Mother's Day, Peace Walk*
- ☐ 17 RE classes
- ☐ 24 Multigenerational Service: *Memorial Day*
- 31 RE classes—*Passages Ceremony*

June

- 7 RE classes—*Last day of Spring Semester*
- ☐ 14 Multigenerational Service: *Flower Celebration*

Dates are subject to change. Please read church communications for updated calendars.



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Religious Education Committee's Mission Statement

The RE Committee's mission is to foster spiritual inquiry and growth among all First Parish congregants across their life spans, within the context of a dynamic Unitarian Universalist community that strives to be inclusive, accepting, understanding, and loving.

Members

Donna Drewes
Brigitte Miller
Bridget Sitkoff
Becky Stiles
Lisa White, Chair

Interim Minister

The Rev. Hank Peirce— revhank@fpmilton.org

RE Assistant

Miriam Febres—office@fpmilton.org

Youth Advisor

Sara Elizabeth Santa Cruz—youthadvisor@fpmilton.org

All employees of First Parish can be reached at (617) 698-6329.



We welcome all
to grow deep faith
and take bold action.