

**No matter who you are or
where you are on life's journey,
you are welcome here.**



**50 Church St, Waltham MA 02452 | 781.893.6240
office@walthamuu.org | www.walthamuu.org**



Upcoming Services This Season

**"Waiting for the Light"
Dec 10th - 10:30 AM
Rev. Megan Lynes preaching**

Mysteriously, the traditional Advent texts in the Christian scriptures are all about the apocalypse and the rapture. They are some of the most intriguing stories, out of which many movies based their bizarre twists of plot. Advent is a time of "not yet" and "already here." What do all these themes have to do with waiting, hoping, and the promise of good things to come? We will be lighting our second Advent candle for Love.

**When the Holidays Hurt - A "Blue Christmas" Gathering for All
Dec 14th - 9:15 AM in the Sanctuary**

Despite the bright lights and the cheerful (if relentless) music, some of us sometimes end up feeling a little bit blue, or even a lot blue, during the winter holidays. This part of the year is dark and for those who carry hurt or pain in their hearts or minds, it can be a real challenge. The First Parish and Chaplains on the Way communities invite you to join us in a loving and meditative gathering at First Parish on Thursday, December 14, at 9:15 AM. Let us come together and light candles to lift one another in care and support. Co-officiated by Deb Weiner and Chaplains on the Way community members, we will gather in the sanctuary for this service. You can expect a space of respect and kindness, words of support, music that touches the soul, and space to be present and real.

**"No Rehearsal Christmas Pageant"
Dec 17th - 10:30 AM**

This all-ages service, led by the First Parish Staff and lay leaders, will offer some good old time fun. Well organized ahead, but no stress in the moment - we'll tell the Christmas story together! Our choir will sing, we'll have special guest violinists, and perhaps some extra surprise costumes will show up too!

Our Advent candle will be lit for Joy, and there will be opportunities for participation by anyone who'd like to take part. (And no pressure if you'd like to simply watch.) Don't miss out on the fun! Gingerbread house decorating and a festive Coffee Hour will follow the service in Whitcomb Hall.

**"The Longest Night: A Solstice Service"
Dec 21st - 7 PM**

A longstanding tradition at First Parish in Waltham led by members of the Worship Committee, our annual earth-based celebration of the cusp of the seasons honors the longest night of the year. Our Service will be filled with rituals, drumming, readings, poetry and companionship followed by festive food and drinks.

**"Christmas Eve by Candlelight"
Dec 24th - 7:00 PM**

Join us on Christmas Eve for a service of lessons and carols, with a homily by Rev. Megan Lynes, geared for people of all ages. We will light our Advent Candle of Peace, and sing "Silent Night" together in the quiet candle-lit sanctuary. Our offering for this service will support the Minister's Discretionary Fund, which allows the congregation to provide aid and support to those in our community most in need.




**"For This Time" - Thoughts from Deborah Weiner
Transitional Ministry Associate**

Our Shared Traditions

It was a real joy to welcome Reb Ariel Hendelman, spiritual leader of Congregation B'Nai Or, to our worship service last Sunday. "B'Nai Or" means *children of the light*, and indeed, we were thrilled that more than twenty members of the B'Nai Or community brought their light as they joined us for worship and coffee hour afterward. There was great energy in the sanctuary and we agreed that there are many opportunities in front of our two congregations to connect in other ways. After all, we share our space with B'Nai Or and getting to know one another more deeply is an opportunity for making amazing things happen together! Stay tuned to see how this develops!

You may also remember that several weeks ago, Jill Gaulding, who leads Chaplains on the Way (COTW) programs, was a pulpit guest, and Jill's time with us offered the opportunity to further deepen our relationship with this amazing organization which provides support and sustenance to the unhoused community of Waltham. Working with COTW is already a known blessing to many First Parishioners, and through our shared experiences we have the opportunity to learn about one another's lives, to share our stories, to break bread together.

In that spirit, we - First Parish and COTW - will be offering a shared worship service on December 14 in the morning (stay tuned for specifics soon) as we honor the reality that for some in our communities, the winter holidays are not a fun time, but one of cold, darkness and sometimes, depression and anxiety. Whatever you are going through in life, let it be clear that you are not alone, that there are others who care and will support you. Come, if you are so moved, and join in this meditative hour of care and love.



Our holiday traditions and practices are influenced by our culture, by our ancestry, by our whims (sometimes!), and I value this time as one where I can assess the celebrations and practices that continue to be of value. Several years ago, for instance, I had the epiphany that I did not have to put up ALL the stuff that I had for decorations, even though some of them had been in my life for years. (You would have thought I could figure this out decades ago, but something happened that moved me to give myself 'permission' to choose another path for decorating.) And lo and behold, I found out that it made me happier! Similarly, along the path of life's journey I realized that what I really wanted on Christmas was not all the shiny packages, but time to be with family and close friends...maybe over cheese fondue or a time of playing board games. I think that our pandemic lockdown, when almost none of us celebrated the holidays the way we used to, re-adjusted my perspective, and I am glad.

Whatever your view of these winter holidays, I hope that you find ways to get through the rush of days while blessing yourself with time to breathe, to look up into the starry sky at night, to honor both what you and others around you need and value. May ALL the lessons and blessings of this time be yours.

In faith, with love,

Deb

Minister's Discretionary Fund: A little goes a long way.

The First Parish in Waltham Minister's Discretionary Fund Offers financial support to those in our congregation and in the wider Waltham community in times of need.

In the last couple of months (Sept. to Nov.) we've been able to help a number of people put food on the table, pay for rent, pay a phone bill, pay for car repairs, purchase clothing for a child in need, and pay for necessities at the end of an unexpected month without work. This is a life-giving ministry that comes from all of us because it is how First Parish lives its mission of creating justice in the world.

Your generosity sustains this fund. It is replenished only when people donate to it directly, (not by an annual pledge for example). We will invite an offering for this purpose on Christmas Eve, but checks can be made at any time. If you wish to contribute please send a check to First Parish in Waltham, with "Minister's Discretionary Fund" in the memo line, or drop your check in the offering plate during Sunday services.

Thank you for anything you contribute, big or small! Your generosity makes a huge difference.



From Your President - Deb José

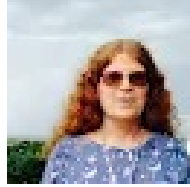
As we prepare for the holidays and the many programs and activities going on at First Parish in Waltham, I want to let you know about a supportive experiment we are trying out. The first goal of our shared Vision statement, which our Board of Managers is continuing to develop, is about growth of the congregation. There is a lot more we can and want to do to be welcoming and intentional about following up with newcomers and building community for current and prospective / future members.

Because of our increased focus on welcome, we've realized that this might be a good time to move to a 'shared leadership' model for welcoming newcomers and deepening our connections which include membership in the congregation. We are fortunate that Brenda Asis has stepped up to help us explore the wider possibilities of expanding our welcome,

and she will be co-leading Membership of this year along with Gary Morrison... an experimental model that we will engage with and evaluate at the end of the church year.

Both Brenda and Gary will be relying on you to help, because being a growing and friendly congregation needs all of us! Please, when they reach out to you, say 'yes' and join in these efforts to welcome in new friends. Enhancing the vitality and the warm welcome of First Parish in Waltham is a joy and an opportunity - let's do this together!

- Deb José



One Thing You Can Do

The Winter Solstice (the shortest day of the year) is celebrated in many different ways around the world. Our annual Solstice Service offered on Dec 21st at 7 is one way we can reflect together. Take some time to learn about how a culture other than your own celebrates the Winter Solstice, either by asking someone you know, using Google to find answers, or looking for books at the library. Notice what celebrations have in common, and how each culture makes it their own.

I found some information about [how Indigenous cultures in what is now the United States celebrated the winter solstice](#). I also read about how [Middle Eastern Jews celebrate Hanukkah](#).

- Elisse Ghitelman, Outreach Commissioner



First Parish Holiday Marketplace continues!

Are you looking for an easy way to shop for holiday gift items, decorations for your home, or baked goods or other food items for your holiday meals? Check out the First Parish Holiday Marketplace this Sunday the 10th and the 17th!

Most items will be on sale during coffee hour in Whitcomb Hall but others may be purchased for later delivery. Items may be added each week so check back frequently!

Special sale this Sunday are two open seating tickets to the dress rehearsal of the Midwinter Revels at Sanders Theater. The cheapest tickets at regular performance go for \$45. We're offering two for \$50. If you arrive as the doors open, you can be right up in the first ten rows. If you've never attended a Revels performance, this is your chance to check it out and make it an annual event!

HATS and SOAPS * TOYS *** HOLIDAY DECORATIONS ***
GIFT CARDS***BAKED GOODS, CHOCOLATES AND HOT FUDGE SAUCE**

Update on The Wish Tree...

The Wish Tree in our Parlor looks beautiful and has tripled in size! What's more, presents are coming in! Stop by to pick up a paper mitten which lists something that you might purchase as a gift, and return it by Dec 17th. Your gift will go directly to someone in need at the Waltham Community Day Center. Gifts should be brought back unwrapped and left in the Parlor, with the mitten label attached to the top. Thank you for helping us give the gifts



that people need this year!

Game Night

Friday December 8th, 2023 6:00pm

Winter is upon us; time for fun and
Comfort Food!

Onion Dip, Mac n' Cheese, Chili, Lasagna, Pot Pie, Quiche,
Meatloaf, Soup, Fruit Cocktail, Layer Cake, Hot Chocolate!

It's a casual, family-friendly potluck meal
We'd love your company even if you just want to eat & chat
Bring your favorite games or play with ones at FP
At the end of the evening, we clean up together

Come at any time, for any part of the evening. Need a ride?
We may be able to help. Special diet? It's best to bring your own food.
Need info? Contact Martha Gallagher!



Annual Holiday Concert! Saturday, Dec 16th at 7 PM

We hope you'll join us in the sanctuary for a holiday tradition that fills our sanctuary with sound and cheer. Singers/ songwriters and instrumentalists Harvey Reid and Joyce Andersen return for their 6th Holiday concert. Advance tickets may be purchased for a discounted price of \$15 [here](#), or by contacting Barry Stearns.

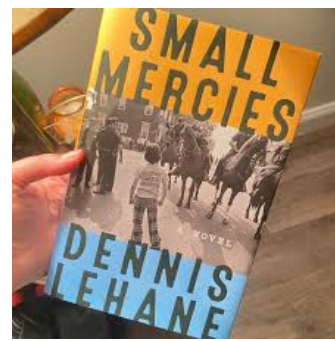
Their razor-sharp harmony vocals will intertwine with Reid's acoustic and slide guitars, mandolins, banjo, and autoharp along with Andersen's violin and viola on a program of traditional and new holiday music.

Tickets on the door will be \$20 each.
Don't miss the fabulous concert!



**Book Group:
Thursday, December 21 - 1 pm
Meets in the Harrington Room and on Zoom**

Our next read is: *Small Mercies* by Dennis Lehane. Would you like to discuss it together? We'd love to have you join in!



In the summer of 1974 a heatwave blankets Boston and Mary Pat Fennessy is trying to stay one step ahead of the bill collectors. Mary Pat has lived her entire life in the housing projects of "Southie," the Irish American enclave that stubbornly adheres to old tradition and stands proudly apart.

One night Mary Pat's teenage daughter Jules stays out late and doesn't come home. That same evening, a young Black man is found dead, struck by a subway train under mysterious circumstances.

The two events seem unconnected. But Mary Pat, propelled by a desperate search for her missing daughter, begins turning over stones best left untouched—asking questions that bother Marty Butler, chieftain of the Irish mob, and the men who work for him, men who don't take kindly to any threat to their business.

Set against the hot, tumultuous months when the city's desegregation of its public schools exploded in violence, *Small Mercies* is a superb thriller, a brutal depiction of criminality and power, and an unflinching portrait of the dark heart of American racism.

**Fifth Friday Dinner:
Friday, December 29, 2023 at 6:30 pm**

In every month that has a Fifth Friday, we meet for a Shabbat potluck dinner. We **include anyone** who wants to come; all, whatever your religious background or lack of it, are welcome.

The potluck supper starts at 6:30 pm in Whitcomb Hall.

Friday is the evening that celebrates Shabbat, the Sabbath, with great food, traditional wine and challah blessings, camaraderie of friends old and new. Please come, bring family members, friends, and something to share either food or beverage.

Let us know if you are coming and what you are able to bring, by emailing Joan Bone at bonehaus207@yahoo.com.

Joan keeps the list and can answer questions you might have.

Whether you've come before and are a 'regular' or it's your first time attending, you are welcome. Happy to see you!!!

Karen Klein & Joan Bone

Chaplains on the Way Breakfast Program is seeking some help. Might that be you?

The wonderful Chaplains on the Way breakfast program is looking for both food donations and volunteers for their winter activity which began in Whitcomb Hall on Monday, November 27th. The program offers breakfast, warmth, friendship and support to Waltham's unhoused community and friends.



Please use the links below if you would like to contribute to this life-giving program - we hope to see you there.

Pam Penton

(1) [Volunteer Sign-Up](#) for COTW Winter Breakfast Program

(2) [Food Donation Sign-Up](#) for COTW Winter Breakfast Program

Coffee Hour Schedule

Thank you to everyone who's brought special snacks to Coffee Hour - let's keep it going!

We are dividing up the weeks by last name. When it's your turn to bring a snack for coffee hour, please bring it either in a container it can be served from, or on your own dish, which you bring home and clean yourself.

No nuts please, to help those with allergies.

Here is the Coffee Hour Schedule:

A - E first Sunday

F - L second Sunday This Sunday, Dec 10, is your week! - Thanks!

M - S third Sunday

T - Z fourth Sunday

Special arrangements will be made for fifth Sundays.

For Coffee Hour on Dec 17th we are having a festive holiday spread, and we hope all will bring a treat to share. We'll be making gingerbread houses too!

Thank you for all you do to make our fellowship time delicious and easy! And a special thanks to those elves who wash the dishes, put away tables, and take out the trash. It takes a village, let's all keep up the good collaboration!



Light the Steeple

Honor
a person, occasion,
event, or idea

Contact the Office

✉ office@walthamuu.org

☎ 781.893.6240



Make an offering plate
donation before, during, or
after the service!



A Welcoming
Unitarian Universalist Congregation

<http://tiny.cc/Donate2FPW>



When's Your Birthday?

.....

The Membership Committee is helping us celebrate birthdays as a congregation! Let us know your birthday so we can all honor you!

Please email the dates to Gary Morrison:

membership.commissioner@walthamuu.org

Happy Birthday this Month to:

Ashley Kamal 11/30
Karen Klein 12/3
Nancy Lawrence 12/13
Joyce Wilbourn 12/17
Sue Genser 12/22
Scott Schur 12/31

Please feel free to send a card or an email to these good people!

Ministry Staff Team

Parish Minister

Rev. Megan Lynes
617.276.7655
revmeganlynes@walthamuu.org

Transitional Ministry Associate

Deborah Weiner
617.513.6614
deb.weiner@walthamuu.org

**Office Administrator /
Music and Choir Director**

Emma Campbell
781.893.6240
office@walthamuu.org
or
musicdirector@walthamuu.org

Board Members

President, Board of Managers

Deb Jose
president@walthamuu.org

Assistant Treasurer

Dan DeHainaut
asst.treasurer@walthamuu.org

Clerk

Peter Duane
clerk@walthamuu.org

**Community Outreach
Commissioner**

Elisse Ghitelman
outreach.commissioner@walthamuu.org

Finance

Donna VanderClock
donna.vanderclock@walthamuu.org

Membership

Gary Morrison
gary.morrison@walthamuu.org

Music and Worship Commissioner

Bethany Templeton Klem
bethany.klem@walthamuu.org

Property

Dan Taylor
property@walthamuu.org

Religious Education Commissioner

Pam Penton
pam.penton@walthamuu.org

Treasurer

Janet Riley
treasurer@walthamuu.org

Our Mission Statement

The mission of First Parish in Waltham is to be a caring, inclusive, spiritual community committed to using free inquiry and the power of love to achieve peace, justice, and a sustainable world.

First Parish in Waltham | 50 Church St., Waltham, MA 02452

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