



The Shooting Star

February 2026

the monthly newsletter of

First Parish Chelmsford
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

2 Westford St. Chelmsford, MA 01824

Uuchelmsford.org

Office Info & Deadlines

Sunday Announcements:

Weekly, Wed. by 7pm

Newsletter: Fourth Sunday of the month, February 22

To receive the newsletter via email, please contact the church office at (978) 256-5133 or office@uuchelmsford.org

Worship Service: Every Sunday at 10am

YouTube: www.youtube.com/c/UuchelmsfordOrg

LiveStream: www.uuchelmsford.org/worship-service

From Rev. Ellen Rowse Spero

Minister • (978) 256-5555 • minister@uuchelmsford.org

Dear First Parishers,

This past week has felt heavier in a month already weighed down by grief. News from Minneapolis, including the death of another peaceful protestor over the weekend, by overzealous armed and masked federal agents. A round of winter weather. A country that seems caught in cycles of outrage, heartbreak, and fear, and in danger of disintegrating all together. Many of us are carrying an underlying sense of overwhelm, an exhaustion that comes not just from one event, but from the steady accumulation of them.

I believe it is accurate to say that we are living in traumatic times, Trauma is a word we hear often, and it matters that we understand its meaning. According to the American Psychological Association's *Dictionary of Psychology*, trauma is "...any disturbing experience that results in significant fear, helplessness, dissociation, confusion, or other disruptive feelings intense enough to have a long-lasting negative effect on a person's attitudes, behavior, and other aspects of functioning. Traumatic events include those caused by human behavior (and) nature...and often challenge an individual's view of the world as a just, safe, and predictable place."

I think that describes the current climate in our country pretty well. We witness trauma through our screens, in our conversations, and sometimes in our own bodies. Even when events are far away, our nervous systems don't always know the difference. The result can be numbness, anxiety, irritability, or a quiet sense of despair. If you've been feeling any of that, you are not failing. You are just being human.

Worship Theme for February: *Embodying Resilience*

February 1

"Faithful Disobedience"

– Rev. Ellen Rowse Spero

February 8

Intergenerational Service: "30 Days of Love" followed by the ice cream social!

– Dolores and Rev. Ellen

February 15

"Polyamory"

– The Welcoming

Congregation Committee

(Rev. Ellen off)

February 22

"Revisiting Frances Ellen Watkins Harper"

– Rev. Ellen Rowse Spero

As Unitarian Universalists, we tend to be problem-solvers, fix-it now or at least *do something* kinds of people. In the spirit of our Universalist ancestors we are not waiting on heaven but working to bring something akin to it to life on this earth in this time: *“Love is the doctrine of this church, the quest for truth is its sacrament, and service is its prayer. To dwell together in peace, to seek knowledge in freedom, to serve human need, to the end that all souls shall grow into harmony with the Divine.”* (L. Griswold Williams) Our ancestors knew that service is not only what we do, but how we remain grounded enough to do it.

In times like these, the question is not “How do we fix everything?” The question is “How do we stay human?” How do we remain compassionate without breaking, engaged without burning out, hopeful without denying reality?

Which brings me to the importance of our beloved Unitarian Universalist faith community. We can help one another stay human. And we can do our darndest to bring that out into our larger community. This is more than political or social engagement, although it may call some of us to this kind of work. It is theological—wrestling with what is sacred and holy across time and worthy of our deepest commitment and responding from the place of the soul. That kind of soul work is practiced here—in worship, in faith formation small groups, in conversation, in care for one another, and in the slow, imperfect work of embodying love in the world.

In faith,
Rev. Ellen

Standing Around – News and Notes from the SC (Standing Committee) **John Schneider, Standing Committee Chair**

First Parish will celebrate its 375th anniversary in 2030. It will be our Jubilee year—a time for forgiveness, liberation, celebration, and renewal.

This Congregation has witnessed a revolution and civil war, a declaration of independence, the adoption of the state constitution (“The body politic is formed by a voluntary association of individuals: it is a social compact, by which the whole people covenants with each citizen...”) and a national constitution (“We the people of these United States in order to form a more perfect union...”). We have witnessed way too many wars, and too much oppression, poverty, and suffering.

Bending the arc of the moral universe toward justice has always mattered to this Congregation and that work, grounded in our UU theology and heritage, must continue, especially during these troubling times.

I believe that remaining strong and relevant to meet this moment asks us to face two challenges as we approach 2030.

The first is reforming how we organize and finance the liberal church. The nature of church is changing. Committees are becoming teams; leadership is more ad hoc; we ask more of our professional staff for support and services to the Congregation. Our building requires continuous investment and upgrades to keep pace with technology. Financing the new liberal church means exploring new and expanding sources of revenue with appropriate cost controls like asking what we can do without, and all of this needs to be aligned with our values, mission, and covenant.

The second is to keep our faith in the theology of love and beloved community and, importantly, to practice that faith within these walls and beyond. To me, that starts with restoring the norms

of our beloved community. My list includes decency, respect, tolerance, inclusion, compassion, justice, and love. You may have other norms to add, and please do; let's create a long list!

A couple of quick updates –

- **Canvass Sunday is March 15th.** We welcome anyone who would like to be part of **FPCT (First Parish Canvass Team)** to help with our canvass activities and festivities—the fun things we do to bring joy & celebration to support our stewardship. Please contact Susan Woodmansee, Tom Coffey, or me if you are interested. **You can help for an hour, a day, a week, or more—all are welcomed!**
- **There is still time to contribute to the Carlene Merrill Fund!** We are very close to meeting the match of \$20,000. Will your contribution put us over the top? The campaign winds down on Feb. 15th. See Joan Coyne or me for more information.
- **A big thank you to Carla Corey, our collector, who keeps us informed of our pledges and contributions, especially during tax season.**
- And a personal note. I have been asked to serve as a Peer Facilitator for the UU New England Region and will help congregations address leadership and organizational challenges. The role offers me an opportunity to learn about best practices in other churches and to help strengthen UU churches.

Have mercy,
John Schneider

Church Announcements

Parking Spaces: Winter Reminder

Happily we are seeing more new faces in our Sanctuary in recent months – though these are the lucky ones who find First Parish and ALSO find a space in the lot. But some folks haven't quite made it into the Sanctuary because they could not find a place to park and didn't know about the alternative options. And this winter, our parking lot has further shrunk thanks to the recent snowstorm (our plow had to put it somewhere!). Hence a request that we leave the two spots we have reserved for newcomers and visitors in the lot available. And, if it is not a hardship for you, please park in the other places available to leave even more spots open for those who need to park closer to church. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation!

Alternative Parking Areas: Please do NOT park at the Grace Point church on the corner of Academy Street and Westford Street; and please only park in the designated spaces on the Common side of Westford Street – do NOT park on the sidewalk/church side, even at the top of the street by the crosswalk. Double parking presents safety and access issues for emergency vehicles. Overflow parking is available in any of the town public lots (including behind the CCA, as long as they have no events taking place), and the folks at the Eliopoulos building at 9 North Rd. have graciously allowed us to use their parking lot on Sundays as well.

Prayer Shawls Needed!

We're almost out of prayer shawls and the need seems even greater than normal. We regularly hear from folks who give or receive one that they are treasured comfort items that help during difficult times. They don't need to be fancy or artistic. It's just about knowing that people care. Contact Kathy Deschenes at springersrus@comcast.net if you're interested in helping out in this way. And thank you to all the beautiful knitters and crocheters for your handwork and heart.

Lifespan Faith Formation Shooting Star February 2026 Connect, Engage, Belong



ICE CREAM SOCIAL!
February 8th,
During Social Hour. Hosted by
RECouncil, REFF Families....

For more information, questions or your ideas:
Contact: Dolores GHeredia Wood, LFFD
dre@uuchelmsford.org; 978-690-8333

<https://www.uuchelmsford.org/faith-formation/>

Some UU Faith Formation...

Lifespan Faith Formation is higher yoUU education



It connects us from childhood to old age, to understand how & why & what & whom and where? To strengthen, to nourish, to communicate, to support, to serve, to treasure, to flourish ~ to worship, to pray. And even tackle those mysterious k-nots... Looking forward to seeing everyone during the holidays! Thank you!

FPCC offers a variety of Small Groups:

- Women's Groups
- Two Men's Groups (one 55+)
- Sacred Circle Spiritual Group
- *Retirees, 70's plus Group*
- Friday Night Families Game Night 7pm
- All Ages Family Jam Band, 2nd & 4th Sundays 1pm.
- Families Small Group Potluck Gatherings

**WE
Practice
RESILIENCE
with LOVE:**

Love is the power that holds us together and is at the center of our shared values. We are accountable to one another for doing the work of living our shared values with the spiritual discipline of Love.

UU's have
the opportunity
to lift our
UU Value of LOVE
and its call to choose
compassion and inclusion
over division and status.

👉 REFF Youth Faith Formation:

For more information or to get on REFF family email list contact dre@uuchelmsford.org

- ❖ February 1st: UU Amazing Generation 2
 - OWL 2-5:30 in Acton/Stow
- ❖ February 8th
 - Intergenerational Service LOVE
 - OWL 2-5:30
- ❖ February 15: Chapel Day-UU Principles
- ❖ February 22: Chapel Day UU Values/Beliefs
 - OWL 2-6:30 in Acton/Stow



Retirees, 70's Group Meet & Greet - February at 11:30ish
(note earlier time)

Topic:

activities and pursuits enjoyed in retirement.

RETIRING, 70'S, 80'S BEYOND... (OR YOU FEEL LIKE YOU ARE?)

Let's Chat About It...The purpose of the group is to connect, participate, engage, support each other and others with the gifts, *that we are*. Tell your story...Meet & Greets will be monthly at noon, Knitters welcome too! An email to share group related events will be distributed per request to

dre@uuchelmsford.org

Save the Date: Annual Auction and All-Church Celebration

Mark your calendars! The All Church Celebration & Auction is happening on **Saturday, March 28th 2026 at 5:30pm!** We're shaking things up this year with some fun and exciting changes—more details coming soon!

In the meantime, save the date and start dreaming up items, experiences, or contributions you can donate to help make this year's auction extra amazing. If you have any questions or would like to volunteer, please contact Gail Burati at gmdburati@gmail.com



**ALL CHURCH
CELEBRATION**
SATURDAY, MARCH 28, 2026

POTLUCK AT 5:30PM 
LIVE AUCTION AFTERWARDS



There are lots of ways
to participate!

***START THINKING OF ITEMS OR
EXPERIENCES YOU MIGHT DONATE...***

**Receive a gift that you
already have?
Want to host an event at
your place?**



**Family
Friendly
Event!**



Community Announcements

Emma's Revolution: Songs of Hope & Resistance

A Benefit for Immigrant and Refugee Justice at First Church Unitarian, Littleton

Friday, 2/6/26 at 7pm | 19 Foster St. Littleton, MA

Tickets: \$25 in advance, \$30 at the door. Can't make it in person? Attend by live stream: \$25

Purchase online: <https://tinyurl.com/LittletonFeb6>.

Get recharged, inspired and energized in community, justice and song to benefit the International Institute of New England and its work supporting immigrants and refugees for more than half a century. Known for fearless, truth-telling lyrics and melodies you can't resist singing, and well known to Unitarian Universalist audiences, Emma's Revolution is the California-based, award-winning activist singer/songwriting duo of Pat Humphries and Sandy O. As independent artists and queer and non-conforming women, Emma's Revolution has a national presence among communities, organizations and venues that share the duo's vision of valuing people over profit, choosing compassion over violence, demanding accountability and building a more just and sustainable world. Performances feature the duo's signature soaring harmonies and lush acoustic instruments, in songs that span folk to jazz and funk to rock.

"In this intense and unprecedented time, when our rights, norms and democracy are on the line, all of our voices are needed to create the country and the world we want to live in," said musician Pat Humphries of Emma's Revolution. They carry on in the spirit of their mentor, Pete Seeger. "Activist musicians inherit a legacy of the indivisibility of truth-telling and soul-stirring. We sing stories steeped in the rich legacy of freedom, the triumph of overcoming, the grief of injustice, weaving stories, melodies and harmonies in a rich alchemy of vintage genres and emerging sounds to create an experience full of heart, hope and motivation, especially now."

Attendees are invited to participate in an informal protest poster contest on Reclaiming Our Democracy, with the audience voting for the winners. Bring your favorite family-friendly protest poster to express outrage, hope, irony, democracy, patriotism, and more. Sponsored by First Church Unitarian's Reclaiming Our Democracy task force, The task force meets monthly to strategize how best to protect our civil rights and the separation of power guaranteed in the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights.

EMMA'S REVOLUTION

SONGS OF HOPE & RESISTANCE
A BENEFIT FOR IMMIGRANT & REFUGEE JUSTICE

FRI FEB 6TH
7PM ET/4PM PT

FIRST CHURCH UNITARIAN
19 FOSTER ST LITTLETON & ONLINE

TIX: FCU &
TINYURL.COM/LITTLETONFEB6

PROTEST POSTER CONTEST!
@IRENE YOUNG

"PAT'S SONGS WILL BE SUNG WELL INTO THE 22ND CENTURY" ~ PETE SEEGER