



The Shooting Star

January 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, January 25

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

January Soul Matters Theme: *Practicing Resistance*

January 4

“Ring Out the Old, Ring in the New:” A New Year's Ritual

– Rev. Ellen Rowse Spero

January 11

“Dietrich Bonhoeffer”

– Rev. Ellen Rowse Spero

January 18

Guest Worship Leader:
Matt Meyer

January 25

“Henry David Thoreau and Civil Disobedience”

– Rev. Ellen Rowse Spero

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,

Christmas is generally my favorite time of the year, both in terms of church and family. I love the traditions and special services. Early in December, I began to look through readings for the lessons and carols service. I trawled through cookie recipes and had grand plans for my kitchen to be full of old and new favorites. I bought sprinkles, icing and gift bags. Sam arrived for a two week stay, the longest we have had him home in a long time. He and Henry went out and got a tree which we put up in the living room. I finished my shopping early and had all the gifts in my closet ready to wrap.

Then, just a week before Christmas, I got the flu.

I have not been sick like this for a long time. And certainly not on Christmas. Ministers are not allowed! I am used to relying on a kind of professional adrenaline when I am not at my best and I thought if I stayed in bed for a day or two, then I could power through Christmas Eve. Unfortunately, it knocked me back more than I anticipated.

No one, including the minister, is irreplaceable. One of the gifts of belonging to a community like First Parish is witnessing how people step up and take care of one another and our congregation, ensuring that our ministries continue. Dolores, the Worship Committee and the Pastoral Care Team seamlessly took on my responsibilities for the Solstice Service on December 21. Dolores also stepped in for my responsibilities last minute for the 5pm Christmas Eve service, after taking one look at me and sending me to sit in my office so I could save my energy for the 7pm service.

Meanwhile, Brian Snow, combining his gifts of time and talent with those from the choirs and musicians in our church (with a guest conductor appearance by Kevin Snow, straight from Ireland!) provided lovely music for our services. This year, we chose familiar anthems for Christmas Eve, trusting in what we know to be tried and true rather than reaching for complicated musical extravaganzas. The result was a beautiful Lessons and Carols service that brought out the contemplative character of the ancient Christmas story.

My family's Christmas gathering was also simpler and quieter than planned. While we managed to put the lights on our tree, we never got around to the rest of the ornaments. It was still beautiful—the simplicity of the lights contrasting with the darkness of the night. As we didn't want to share our germs, we delivered a pancake brunch to my parents for their Christmas before returning home to eat our own. A pile of haphazardly wrapped presents appeared under the tree at the last minute, which we opened to each other's delight. Then we watched *A Muppets' Christmas Carol*, a tradition we began when Sam was still a toddler, before Henry was born. Once again, Tiny Tim, who did not die, blessed us all and the true meaning of Christmas was revealed, despite the disappointing lack of cookies.

May 2026 bring more hope, more joy, more peace, more love to our country and our world than we witnessed in 2025.

In faith,
Rev. Ellen

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

I've always liked celebrating the 12 days of Christmas and can never seem to start the holiday until December 25 and never like it to end until January 6, the twelfth day. So, since we are in the middle of the holiday, just a few short announcements to serve as 12 days of Christmas stocking stuffers.

Our Carlene Merrill Fund raising campaign continues through mid-February. We are really doing very well thanks to the many pledges and donations received so far! Joan Coyne and I will be at the CMF table on January 4, 2026 to answer questions and/or take your pledge or donation. The tremendous spirit of giving has been a joyous gift to our community! Thank you!

Jeanette Moreau and Cheryl Wilson are leading a team of First Parishers in imagining new ways for us to Build Bridges and improve communication within First Parish and externally to the greater Lowell community. This project evolved from our 2024/2025 Spirit of Life campaign as a major priority for us. We have a lot of ideas and Jeanette and Cheryl are helping us focus and set priorities for next steps.

Finally, on February 1, 2026, after the service, David Kaffine and I are facilitating a fiscal summit. During the summit, we will discuss:

- Our current and future fiscal stewardship strengths and challenges;
- New revenue opportunities such as a planned giving program; and,
- Investments in our building, new technology, and our incredible staff.

Please note: This will not be a specific discussion about the FY27 budget; that will be coming soon. The Summit is being planned to provide information, discuss big picture “balcony” issues, and our approach to stewardship and fiscal planning. FP committees are strongly encouraged to send a representative to the Summit.

Thank you and Happy New Year! Have mercy,
John Schneider

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



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
- Cook, Eat, Chats-beginning in Jan 2025



Happy New Year!

Thank you to everyone that spread Joy with kindness, time, talent and treasure as gifts of Love, Hope & Peace, especially our wonderful youth in the Christmas Pageant and families & friends...

and those that gave me **JOY!**
Very Much Appreciated!



Epiphany Retreat

Saturday, January 3rd 2pm to 6pm

Blessings by Jan Richardson & the Magic of Chocolate, Candles and YoUU! (vanilla too...)
Food, Arts, Reflection Hope & Joy!
Songstress: Frances Killam

R.S.V.P Appreciated
dre@uuchelmsford.org

Church Announcements

Parking Spaces: Yet Another Way to be Welcoming

Happily we are seeing more new faces in our Sanctuary these past few months. 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. 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 us (see note at end) to leave even more spots open for those who need to park closer to church. And now that it's winter, our parking lot is further shrunk when we get plowable amounts of snow – it's got to go somewhere and unfortunately we lose a few spots.

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.

Join us! First Parish Fiscal Leadership Summit

Sunday, February 1, 11:30am – 1pm. Interested in discussing the Big Picture of the fiscal well-being of First Parish? You are invited to join the Standing Committee chair, John Schneider, and our Treasurer, David Kaffine, at the 2026 Fiscal Summit. At the summit, we will discuss:

- Our current and future fiscal stewardship strengths and challenges;
- New revenue opportunities such as a planned giving program; and,
- Investments in our building, new technology, and our incredible staff.

Please note: **This will not be a specific discussion about the FY27 budget; that will be coming soon.** The Summit is being planned to provide information, discuss big picture “balcony” issues, and our approach to stewardship and fiscal planning.

Please contact John Schneider via email at jrs.gateway@gmail.com, via text @ 617-620-4758, or at church if you are interested in attending or have any questions. **FP committees are strongly encouraged to send a representative to the Summit** (we plan on doing more Leadership Summits on other issues as well as program planning and leadership development in the future to improve communication and collaboration). Light refreshments will be available!

Community Announcements

CPR Training by Chelmsford Health Department

The Chelmsford Health Department invites you to participate in an upcoming American Heart Association Heartsaver® CPR/AED/First Aid training:

Thursday, January 22, 2026, from 9am – 1pm at the Chelmsford Town Hall, 50 Billerica Rd.



This 4-hour, hands-on course is designed to build confidence and provide practical, real-world skills that can be used immediately. Upon successful completion, participants will earn a nationally recognized American Heart Association Heartsaver® certification, valid for two years.

Participants will learn CPR for adults, children, and infants; proper chest compressions and rescue breaths; how to respond to choking emergencies; AED basics; recognition and response to opioid overdoses; and first aid fundamentals for common injuries and medical emergencies.

This training is ideal for community members, parents, caregivers, volunteers, and professionals who want to be prepared to act in an emergency.

These life-saving skills can make a critical difference while waiting for emergency responders to arrive.

Registration is required. Visit this link to register and reserve your spot - space is limited: <https://pridestarttrinity.enrollware.com/enroll?id=12713549>. The cost of the certification card is \$25, payable at registration. Questions? Call the CHD at 978-250-5241.

January 6: Rule of Law?

Tuesday, January 6, 2026 at 7pm, First Parish in Concord, 20 Lexington Road, Concord

On the fifth anniversary of the attack on the US Capitol, First Parish in Concord will host a discussion on the current state of the rule of law in the United States.

The featured speakers are Simon Cataldo, State Representative of the 14th Middlesex District, and Lisa Graves, the author of "Without Precedent: How Chief Justice Roberts and His Accomplices Rewrote the Constitution and Dismantled Our Rights". Following their conversation, there will be a Q&A session. This free event is jointly sponsored by Reclaim Our Democracy, The League of Women Voters Concord-Carlisle, Concord Indivisible, and Kerem Shalom.



Representative
Simon Cataldo



Author
Lisa Graves

Star Island Employment Opportunities for UU Young Adults

Star Island is looking for applicants for seasonal employment opportunities.

If you are not already familiar with Star Island, we run a seasonal religious and educational conference center, rooted in the UU and UCC faiths, off the New Hampshire coast and hire approximately 100 people (18 or older) to work from mid-June to mid-September.

Working on Star Island offers a unique employment opportunity in a beautiful location. Staff enjoy an enriching learning experience that, in many cases, shapes future careers. The words “best job ever” are often used to describe working on Star Island.

The priority deadline to apply is January 26. For more information about working on Star Island, please visit our website: <https://starisland.org/working/seasonal/>

Star Island

Isles of Shoals, NH



JOIN OUR TEAM!

Live on an island for the summer!

*Working on Star Island will be an unforgettable summer job. Gain valuable experience, new skills, make friends, and create lasting memories. **It's a summer you'll remember forever!***



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APPLY HERE:**

