



The Shooting Star

June 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: On summer break! The Shooting Star will return September 2026

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

June Soul Matters Worship Theme: *Flourishing Together*

June 7

"Flourishing Together"
– Rev. Ellen Rowse Spero

June 14

Intergenerational Religious
Education and Faith
Formation Sunday

June 21

Intergenerational Flower
Communion

June 28

Summer services begin,
9am in the chapel.

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,

Our Soul Matters worship theme for June is “Flourishing Together” which is a fitting way to reflect on this last church year as well as to look toward the future.

On the one hand, it has been very difficult. Our country continues to fray and fracture. The ICE raids continue, using violent and often illegal tactics. People have been killed, imprisoned and deported without due process, taken from their families without any communication of where they have been sent. Civil rights and voting rights, especially for people of color, are being curtailed as sixty years of progress has been erased in a matter of months. Due to wars and hurtful economic policies, we are facing rising costs and rising unemployment. I am aware that my capacity to do anything about any of these and several other issues is limited—because many of the people elected to hold the checks and balances in our federal government have abdicated their responsibilities in the name of greed and power.

On the other hand, as we wrap up the regular church year and transition into our summer schedule, I have been inspired and comforted by much of what I have witnessed at First Parish. This is the first year since the COVID-19 pandemic that I have felt we are well and truly back. Of course, some things have changed for good and will never return to the way they were. But the influx of newcomers and new members, new leaders stepping up to plan events or serve on committees, increasing opportunities in faith formation programs for all ages, and initiatives from the

Standing Committee and other lay leaders to envision our future are all positive signs that we have turned a corner toward flourishing rather than just surviving. I enjoy the energy and buzz I feel whenever I walk into the building.

June is a month of important decisions and celebrations. On June 14th, we will hold our annual congregational meeting after church to elect our church leadership and approve the FY 27 budgets, as well as any other important business brought before the congregation by the Standing Committee (our governing board). Engaging in the democratic process is a deeply held value of our Unitarian Universalist tradition, going all the way back to the founding of our congregation by the Puritans in 1655. While Unitarian Universalism has evolved and widened theologically over the years, transcending our Christian Puritan roots, our congregational polity remains a cornerstone of both our faith and our practice. Everyone is welcome to attend the annual meeting although you must be an official member (i.e., have signed our membership book) to vote. If you have questions about this, please feel free to reach out to me, Dolores or the Membership and Hospitality Committee (membership-hospitality@uuchelmsford.org).

On June 21st, we will close the regular worship year in the sanctuary with our annual flower communion. I invite everyone who wishes to bring a flower to add to our common vases as we create a colorful bouquet, reflective of our flourishing community. This service is also an opportunity for us to say thank you and farewell to people who are moving on or away from First Parish.

Beginning June 28th, we move to our summer schedule with worship services meeting at 9am in the chapel (which is air conditioned!). Our summer services are lay-led. If you are interested in leading a summer service, please reach out to me or to the Worship Committee (worship@uuchelmsford.org). It is a fun and supportive way to share about your own spiritual journey or a spiritual topic that is meaningful to you before a smaller and more informal group. I will be away July 25th through August 9th but the rest of the time, I am on summer study leave to prepare for next year. I am available for pastoral care and church related meetings as needed.

We will open our new church year on Sunday, September 13th with our traditional water communion. At that service, we will formally welcome our new music director, David Morochnick. David, a life-long UU, brings his experience as a church music director as well as a music educator and choral director. I would like to thank Brian Snow once again for remaining our interim music director through this long search. In addition to giving us time to find a good match for our needs, Brian also gave us a greater sense of what we wanted and needed in a director. He will continue to be part of First Parish and our music program, so we will be losing his presence totally. However, stepping back will allow him to return to his real job as a chaplain and shift to working with us as an affiliated community minister rather than a music director!

I suspect that next fall, things in our country will be even more fraught and frightening than we have already experienced, as the midterm elections approach. Our best defense and our most faithful response are not to turn inward and shield ourselves from the hard things. Instead, it is to risk flourishing in our faith—living it out loud so people know we are here to provide a compassionate and joyful alternative to hate and fear. A place where we nurture spiritual resilience and embody why the practice of Love matters.

Have a great summer!

In faith,
Rev. Ellen

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

Our Annual Meeting takes place on **June 14, 2026**, after the service. Democratic governance is one of the unique foundations of our faith community. As a member of First Parish, the Annual Meeting provides an opportunity to act on your faith by voting at the meeting. Be on the lookout for the warrant for the Annual Meeting which will be circulated via email, posted on our website, and displayed in various locations at church.

We will vote on the FY27 annual operating budget during the meeting. Our treasurer, Dave Kaffine, with the support of the Standing Committee, has worked hard to prepare a budget that invests in our staff and is aligned with our values. The proposed budget provides a three percent COLA increase for staff, continues to fund extended hours for our office assistant & building coordinator, Erica Clifford, and funds the part-time music director position. **You can learn more about the budget at a briefing on May 31 in the Chapel where Dave and I will share details about the budget and be available to answer your questions.** We hope you will join us.

Looking ahead, the SC voted to create a “ways and means” taskforce to take a hard look at our various sources of revenue and our expenses to ensure our current practices are in alignment with our values and the needs of a modern liberal church. As we approach our 375th anniversary in 2030 it’s a good time to assess our fiscal condition and future plans. You will hear more about the task force at the briefing and the annual meeting.

June marks the end of my term on the SC and serving as its chair. I really enjoy being part of our governance ministry and am leaving with tremendous gratitude for my colleagues on the SC – Tom, Dave, Gail, Ami, Ron, Rebecca, Doug, and Colleen our clerk. Together, we got a lot done and we didn’t let “church time” slow us down! It’s also been an honor to work closely with Dolores and Erica on multiple projects this year to make First Parish stronger and more present in the community and to work with many of you as well on the Carlene Merrill Fund, the Building Bridges project, and relaunching the Church Council and CFAM. Finally, I can’t thank Ellen enough for her counsel, support, wisdom, and integrity in helping me and the SC navigate these very challenging times. She is brilliant in the pulpit, at our meetings, and during coffee time at Euphoria where we would often connect to share ideas and make plans.

I love you all very much!

Have mercy,
John

Church Announcements

A Note from your Collector

Pledge Statements will be emailed on or about 5/28/26 showing payment activity through 5/24/26 and pledge status for FY26. Please review and notify me promptly (at collector@uuchelmsford.org) of any discrepancies so they can be corrected before we close out the church year.

Also if you are making payments towards your FY27 Pledge before June 30th PLEASE indicate that information in the memo. Otherwise checks received through 6/30/26 will go towards FY26.

Your generosity to our Beloved Community is deeply appreciated! - Carla Corey

Lifespan Faith Formation
Shooting Star June 2026
Connect, Engage, Belong
Soul Matter Theme
Flourishing Together!



New Small Group
Meet & Greet
June 21st at 11:30
Queer/LGBTQ+ Family & Friends Small Group

At this gathering
we will set the date
for regular monthly meetings.
Q/A/Ideas...

We are looking to provide a
sacred space where
participants in group can
express themselves
and support one another within
the context of our
UU Values & Beliefs.
For more information,
please contact
Dolores, LFFD at dre@uuchelmsford.org

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... Thank you

All Small Groups are Open and Welcome yoUU!
For more information, questions or your ideas:

Contact: Dolores GHeredia Wood, LFFD
dre@uuchelmsford.org; 978-690-8333

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



Small Groups
Meeting through Summer:

- **There are Two Groups for Men:**
For Updates or to Join
Contact Tom Coffey: thomascoffey@comcast.net
 - **Friday Night Families Game Night**
7pm
 - All Other Small Groups
resume September 2026
- ♥ **Including New Women's Group!**

☞ REFF Youth Faith Formation:

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



YAY! Summertime!
Play! Play! Play! Read Books!
REFF Youth Faith Formation Resumes
September 20th, 2026
2026-27 All About US & yoUU!

Isn't It Wonderful? by Rev. Sara LaWall

Once upon a time there was a tiny flower. She grew up out of the ground in a small patch of dirt between the sidewalk and the street. She didn't know what she was because she didn't have any family around her that looked like her. She was bright red with tiny yellow stems growing out of her center.

One day just after she had fully bloomed the wind kicked up and as she was being blown around she caught a glimpse of the area around her. It was amazing! She saw so many different flowers blooming. She gasped in wonder and awe. The wise old sunflower growing in the yard nearby leaned his big stalk over to her and said, isn't it wonderful that we get to be part of all of this beauty?

Every year, around this time of year something amazing happens here, even right in our own yards.
The flowers bloom!

Beautiful purple tulips, crocuses, Wild lilac, delicate Apricot mallow, sweet smelling jasmine and honeysuckle like the ones that cover my backyard fence. Even the cottonwood trees bloom and rain down little white, puffs. I know, we don't love them when they get in our eyes, and nose, and cause the crazy sneezing . . .but they are still a unique and beautiful part of the beauty of spring.

Well... one Sunday morning, a young girl was on her way to church. Her family was rushing because they wanted to try and be early for once. Mom was carrying a big bunch of flowers for their annual flower communion ritual and dad was wrangling her little brother who just wanted to bring all his trains.

The little girl was wandering down the sidewalk and stopped right in front of the beautiful red flower.

Though, Before we're off for Summer Fun ...

- ❖ May 31st: 10am Church Year Chapel Day Wrap Up
9:40am REFF Sunday Worship Service Practice
- ❖ June 7th: 10am REFF Field Day!
9:40am REFF Sunday Worship Service Practice
6:00pm REFF Families Gathering
-not a potluck-please RSVP
- ❖ June 14th: 10am REFF/LFF Sunday Worship Service
☞ Nursery Care for Ages 5 and under is available, please contact Dolores, LFFD

She knelt down to look at it more closely and smell it.
Right then a breeze kicked up and it was as if the flower turned right toward her. She knew right then she had to bring the flower to church so she plucked it up very gently and skipped to the car.

Now this flower, was overwhelmed by this adventure seeing things it had never seen before, different, trees, and birds and cars and people. And so many geese!

When the little girl arrived at church, she was so excited she could hardly sit still, she wiggled and jumped, and tried to wait patiently for the moment meant for her flower. And it felt like it took forever to get there—you know, sometimes her minister talked a lot and it was a little boring.

Finally the moment came when they were invited to bring their flowers up to the altar and she carefully and tenderly carried her flower forward and placed it in a vase. And she leaned in a whispered, "You're here to help us remember to make the world more beautiful."

The flower thought about that tall sunflower from earlier in the day and she thought to herself, "Isn't it wonderful to be a part of all of this beauty?" Even among the gorgeous roses and the funny looking milkweed, and the carnations, she felt special and at the same time she knew that being part of this moment meant they all were special. And the little sidewalk flower straightened up and opened her petals as wide as she could.

Now that spring has finally arrived in full force, it is hard not to notice flowers everywhere. And what is even more amazing is that every flower is different. Each has its own unique beauty and color and smell and look. Just like us, we are a lot like the flowers. Each of us different, and unique, but each of us beautiful and each of us a necessary part of the beauty of this world.

An Update from the Fiscal Year 2027 Stewardship Campaign

As we close out our Fiscal Year 2027 stewardship campaign, we want to thank everyone for your generosity and support. We were inspired to **Light the lantern, Be the signal light** to our community by investing in First Parish's outreach, ministry, worship and staff. We shared some of the reasons we give, and we are practicing the spiritual discipline of generosity by increasing our congregation's pledging to \$275,195, an increase of 5% over last year. While we didn't meet our original goals of adding 10 new pledging families and reaching \$311,300 total pledges,

we continue to increase our overall giving and are excited that six new families have pledged their financial support to First Parish. You can hear more about our budget at the 5/31 meeting after church, or at our Annual Meeting on June 14. Thank you! - The Stewardship Team



Circle Dinners Return! Hosted by Membership-Hospitality Committee



Circle Dinners to return! The Membership-Hospitality Committee will be organizing a few circle dinners over the summer. We'll have sign-up sheets at Social Hour through the end of the church year along with someone to answer questions. Stay tuned, more details to come. The dinners are meant to foster community and connection while also being fun!

For those of you new to Circle Dinners... they are informal social gatherings for a small group, usually 6-10 people, dinners. The host generally provides the main dish and guests supplement it. The assigned Host will contact guests the week prior to the dinner.

Prayer Shawls

As we head into spring and the end of our church year in June we would love to stock up on prayer shawls before we break. We're hoping to bless enough to get us through the summer. Thank you to all the wonderful knitters and crocheters who put their love and care into their beautiful creations. If you have any questions about the prayer shawl ministry please see Kathy Deschenes at social hour or email her at springersrus@comcast.net

Local Gardeners: do you have surplus veggies? Donate to Chelmsford Grow!

To all local gardeners – do you ever have too many tomatoes, cucumbers? Ahhh, how about Zucchini? Summer squash? Hate to see them go to waste? Just want them gone?? Contact <https://www.chelmsfordgrow.org/>. They have regular drop off hours at the town hall all summer to accept your donations, be they large or small, it all adds up.

They provide produce to Table of Plenty (a weekly meal for all interested provided at the senior center in N. Chelmsford), the Chelmsford food pantry and several senior housing facilities in town. They are always looking for people to volunteer to grow one or a few extra plants to donate the produce from, as well as folks to help out in their community garden plots. They also, as I have experienced first-hand, will come pick your produce if you are going to be gone for any length of time – or you can volunteer to just do that! Check out the website. Good people, important mission.

Community Announcements

A Weekend for Democracy, June 12–13

First Parish in Concord, 20 Lexington Rd. Concord, MA

"The Future of Democracy"

Friday Night June 12, 7pm in the Parish Hall

A live, interview-style conversation with **Danielle Allen**, Harvard professor and director of the Allen Lab for Democratic Renovation. Kick off the weekend with big ideas and a thoughtful discussion of what we can do to shape the future of democracy.



"Democracy & Freedom Fair"

Saturday June 13, 11am – 2pm on the green (will move inside with rain)

All ages! Bring your curiosity and be open to inspiration.

- Connect with local action groups who will share info, action steps, and fun activities
- Kids' games and hands-on learning
- Food trucks serving local favorites
- Live music: Anna Huckabee Tull & Eric Kilburn; Middlesex Activist Band
- Wright Tavern tours + beer garden (open during and after the festival)



Celebrate community. Celebrate participation. Celebrate democracy.

An Invitation from FCU Littleton

FCU (First Church Unitarian) Littleton will stream the UUA GA (General Assembly) Sunday worship on Sunday, 6/21/2026. Please join us in the Sanctuary at 11am.

We cordially invite neighboring UU congregation members and friends to join us. It is always vibrant and inspiring. Viewing it together adds to the experience.

FCU is located at 19 Foster St, Littleton, MA. There is handicapped parking directly in front of the church. There is general parking across the street, in front of and behind the fire station, as well as nearby street parking. You may enter the church from the front entrance or the side entrance at the end of the adjacent driveway.

Please feel free to reach out to annafadden@gmail.com if you have additional questions. Your generosity to our Beloved Community is deeply appreciated! - Carla Corey

Sanctuary Boston Hiring Admin & Communications Specialist

Sanctuary Boston is looking to hire an Admin & Communications Specialist this summer.

Full job posting and application info available at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QW4Y5uuT65vJALeGwEGLoFr5DGGQs0Blo/view>

Hours/Schedule: 10 hrs/week. Must be able to work at least 3 days per week. **Compensation:** \$22-\$24 per hour. **Location:** Boston area or fully remote. **Application Deadline:** June 19, 2026