



# The Shooting Star

March 2026

the monthly newsletter of

## First Parish Chelmsford UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

2 Westford St. Chelmsford, MA 01824

[Uuchelmsford.org](http://Uuchelmsford.org)

### Office Info & Deadlines

#### Sunday Announcements:

Weekly, Wed. by 7pm

**Newsletter:** Fourth Sunday of the month, March 22

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

### Worship Service: Every Sunday at 10am

YouTube: [www.youtube.com/c/UuchelmsfordOrg](http://www.youtube.com/c/UuchelmsfordOrg)

LiveStream: [www.uuchelmsford.org/worship-service](http://www.uuchelmsford.org/worship-service)

### From Rev. Ellen Rowse Spero

Minister • (978) 256-5555 • [minister@uuchelmsford.org](mailto:minister@uuchelmsford.org)

Dear First Parishers,

Our *Soul Matters* theme for March, “*The Practice of Paying Attention*” speaks to the moment as well as the season. We are living in a time when countless forces compete for our attention—some life-giving, many depleting. With so much coming at us, it becomes easy to lose sight of what truly sustains us, what grounds us, what we hold sacred.

This past week, many of our Christian neighbors entered the season of Lent, while our Muslim neighbors entered the month of Ramadan. Both traditions invite people into prayer and fasting practices that help refocus attention on what matters most: gratitude, humility, and care for those most vulnerable. Intentionally setting aside time to attend to one’s soul in rhythm with nature as well as with the larger Spirit of Life draws our attention back to what gives life meaning. And offers us a needed reminder that the headlines—urgent and relentless as they are—are not the whole story.

This is why I find myself so heartened by what I see unfolding at First Parish.

There is a wonderful energy moving through this community. New people are finding their way into worship and into the life of the congregation. We have welcomed new members, Matt Zimmerman and Ron Peacetree. Leadership is emerging in vital ways as experienced leaders with wisdom to share are being joined by new leaders who bring fresh ideas: a creative and energized auction team; a growing Green Committee preparing for an April service; a strengthened Pastoral Care and Service

### March Soul Matters Worship Theme:

*The Practice of  
Paying Attention*

#### March 1

“The Reality of Evil”

– Rev. Ellen Rowse Spero

#### March 8

“Wonder”

– Rev. Ellen Rowse Spero

#### March 15

Stewardship Sunday

– Canvass Team & Rev. Ellen

#### March 22

Intergen. Spring Service

– Dolores Heredia-Wood,  
LFFD (*Rev. Ellen off*)

#### March 29

“Sacrifice: A Palm

Sunday Reflection”

– Rev. Ellen Rowse Spero

Team; and renewed momentum in Building Bridges, now guided by Cheryl Wilson and Jeanette Moreau.

Our youth are connecting across congregations through OWL. The Membership Committee is preparing to welcome and orient newcomers. The Council on Faith in Action Ministries (CFAM) is connecting us with possibilities to support our immigrant neighbors. Our interim music director Brian Snow, our choirs and musicians from within our congregation continue to create joyful music for our worship services as we continue the search for a permanent director.

And there is generosity—remarkable generosity. We met the \$20,000 Carlene Merrill Fund match, while an anonymous \$50,000 gift to the endowment, given in memory of Bill Drury. These gifts remind us that this community inspires deep trust and commitment, something to keep in mind as we begin our annual stewardship drive.

At a time when the wider world can feel unstable, even disorienting, the ground under our feet here is steady. Not because everything is resolved, but because we are choosing—again and again—to invest in care, connection, and shared purpose.

This month, I invite you to choose one small practice of paying attention—whether that is stepping back from the noise, showing up more fully to this community, or reaching toward someone who needs care. Paying attention is not passive; it is how we decide what to nurture. What we give our attention to here will shape the kind of community we become.

Who knows how the larger uncertainties of our time will unfold. Change on that scale does not resolve quickly; it stretches across years, even generations. We are still in the middle of the story. But that does not leave us powerless.

It clarifies our task. To pay attention to what runs deeper beneath the surface. And to tend this community. To strengthen the bonds that hold us. To offer one another—and those beyond our walls—a place of steadiness, compassion, and purpose.

This is how we embody, however imperfectly, the beloved community we long for.  
In faith,  
Rev. Ellen

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

Here is one thing I know for sure: spring begins on March 20 at 9:46 am! It's been a long winter, just ask our treasurer Dave Kaffine who is trying to balance the snow removal budget. Maybe we need to adopt the snow removal policy of former DC mayor Marrison Berry who once said, "The Lord bright the snow, the Lord will take it away." We all wish it would be that easy!

But in many ways, spring has already sprung at First Parish. With so much going on, First Parish is springing into action, and March will be a busy month. The Membership/Hospitality team is hosting a new UU workshop retreat on March 7 and March 14. If you are new to Universalist Unitarianism or First Parish, this is a great opportunity to learn more about our congregation and meet other friends and members. March 15 is the kickoff of our annual canvass campaign. Canvass is more than just an annual fund drive. It's a time to pause and consider what matters to each of us about First Parish and our community. This year, we will be asking you to "light the lantern, be the signal light" for First Parish and our place in the world, a world that needs our presence and our religious and spiritual roots. Finally, March 28 is our All Church Celebration! This family friendly event includes a potluck and auction. Thank you to Aggie, Diana, Gail, Gwen, Julie, Meg, and Molly for putting a new twist on our annual auction.

Finally, a thank you. Walter Cole is our volunteer building manager. He keeps a sharp eye on our needs for repair and upgrades to our building both inside and out (and making sure our snow and ice is promptly removed). I am grateful for his diligence and honesty about what we need to do to keep our worship and community space in good condition now and into the future.

Have mercy,  
John Schneider

## Church Announcements

### Annual Mother's Day Walk for Peace: May 10, 2026

**Save the Date:** The Louis D. Brown Peace Institute's 30th Annual Mother's Day Walk for Peace will be held on **Sunday, May 10, 2025** at Town Field Park in Dorchester, MA 02122. If you would like to register to walk with the First Parish team, you can do so at <https://www.mothersdaywalk4peace.org/Team/View/223566/First-Parish-of-Chelmsford>

We will provide more details on donating to the Peace Institute, walking, and carpooling to the event in the next newsletter. Contact Susan Woodmansee at [susan.woodmansee@gmail.com](mailto:susan.woodmansee@gmail.com) for more information.

### Social Hour Volunteers Wanted!

Do you enjoy coming downstairs after Sunday services to enjoy a warm cup of coffee or tea and a snack as you mingle with fellow parishioners? Do you wish you could express your appreciation by taking your turn at hosting social hour but feel intimidated by the thought of it? The volunteers who have been hosting social hour are ready to help you. Everything is provided and we will pair you with a veteran. If you're ready to give it a try, email Diana at [dianakeohane@comcast.net](mailto:dianakeohane@comcast.net).

### 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 5pm!** We're shaking things up this year with some fun and exciting changes—start dreaming up items, experiences, or contributions you can donate to help make this year's auction extra amazing. For questions or to volunteer, please contact [auction@uuchelmsford.org](mailto:auction@uuchelmsford.org), or Gail Burati at [gmdburati@gmail.com](mailto:gmdburati@gmail.com)



**ALL CHURCH CELEBRATION** Saturday, March 28, 2026  
**POTLUCK AT 5PM** followed by  
**LIVE & SILENT AUCTION**

**Family Friendly Event!**

**WHAT MIGHT YOU DONATE?  
WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BID ON?** Receive a gift that you already have?  
Want to host an event at your place?

There are lots of ways to join in!

Questions? Ideas? Reach out to [auction@uuchelmsford.org](mailto:auction@uuchelmsford.org)



Lifespan Faith Formation  
 Shooting Star March 2026  
 Connect, Engage, Belong  
**Your Invited....to (explore & discover)  
 who are yoUU?**

❖ UU Common Read Workshop ❖

March 15th, 3pm to 6,

Refreshments and Eat & Chat Dinner (pizza) optional 6pm-7

Books can be provided as needed; Please RSVP [dre@uuchelmsford.org](mailto:dre@uuchelmsford.org)

Rev. Ellen and Dolores, LFFD invite you to this workshop where we explore/discover:

- **Meaning Making - as Unitarian Universalist**
- **Agency- in ourselves, exploring our roles as individuals and UU's**  
 The ability to exert control over thoughts, actions, and the environment to achieve goals.  
 Empowering us through efficacy, optimism, and proactive choices,  
 fostering resilience and a sense of responsibility for our life.
- **Key components include self-initiated actions, mindful decision-making, and action.**  
**Community Making... Building Bridges within ourselves, FPCC, and Beyond**

2025-2026

UU Common Read:  
**Social Change Now!**

Social Change Now:

A Guide for Reflection and Connection  
 by Deepa Iyer.

This book provides a framework for individuals and organizations to engage in exploring/discovering their role in their community by introducing the "social change ecosystem" with ten roles (like builder, storyteller, disrupter) to help people find their place and strengthen their efforts.

Deepening commitment offering practical tools for reflection and action.



**Key Concepts: Social Change Ecosystem:** A framework that maps out various roles within social movements, showing there isn't one "right" way to contribute.

**Ten Roles:** Includes roles such as builder, storyteller, disrupter, and experimenter, helping people identify their strengths and how they fit in.

**Reflection and Connection:** The book emphasizes self-reflection on values and building connections



For more information, questions or your ideas:  
 Contact: Dolores GHeredia Wood, LFFD  
[dre@uuchelmsford.org](mailto: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... Thank you!

**FPCC offers a variety of Small Groups:**

- Women's Groups
- Two Men's Groups (one 55+)
- Sacred Circle Spiritual Group
  - 4th Tuesday at 6pm
- *Retirees, 70's plus Group*
  - 2nd/3rd Sunday at 11:30ish
- Friday Night Families Game Night 7pm
- All Ages Family Jam Band, 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4th Sundays 1pm.
- Families Small Group Potluck Gatherings



**Psst....  
 April 5th  
 EGG HUNT!  
 after 10am  
 Easter Service**

**👉 REFF Youth Faith Formation:**

For more information or to get on REFF family email list contact [dre@uuchelmsford.org](mailto:dre@uuchelmsford.org)

- ❖ **March 1st: We Are Builders Series 2**
  - OWL 2-6:30 in Acton/Stow
- ❖ **March 8th: UU's 3rd Principal Practices**
  - OWL 2-4:00 in Acton/Stow
  - 6pm REFF Families Potluck Dinner
- ❖ **March 15th: UU's 3rd Principal Practices- Stewardship**
  - OWL 2-4:00 in Acton/Stow
- ❖ **March 22: Intergenerational Spring!**
  - OWL 2-5:30 in TBD
- ❖ **March 29: UU Rituals: Chocolate Bunny/Seder**
  - OWL 2-5:30 in Acton/Stow



**Retirees, 70's + Group  
 Meet & Greet - March 15  
 11:30ish (note earlier time)**

Topic: Our future pursuits...

**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](mailto:dre@uuchelmsford.org)

**NOTICE: Church Council-**

The Standing Committee approved on Feb. 17th, 2026, the relaunching of the Church Council to establish Connection and Communication at FPCC. We look forward to having all committees/teams/groups participate. The Church Council will meet regularly and establish best communication formats to meet the needs of Council, Committee/Teams/Congregation. Meetings TBD at the discretion of Church Council once it is established. Oversight: will be provided by Dolores~, LFFD as staff to provide organizational continuity. For more information: [dre@uuchelmsford.org](mailto:dre@uuchelmsford.org)

## Community Announcements

### **Spring Retreat from UU Church of Billerica: Co-Creating Hope**

Register at [www.uubillerica.org/hope](http://www.uubillerica.org/hope) | Saturday, March 21, 2026 | 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Free • Open to All • Childcare Provided • Gluten-Free Vegan Lunch & Snacks Included

Our world is heavy right now. How do we navigate these emotions while working to build a better future for ourselves, our loved ones, and our neighbors - human and more-than-human alike?

Join us for an all-day retreat inviting you into the *Work That Reconnects*- a powerful, community-centered practice through gratitude, grief, seeing with new and ancient eyes, and grounding ourselves in wise, life-giving action.

Throughout the day, we'll explore practices that help us align our values with our actions, tend to our personal and communal resilience, and rediscover real, embodied hope for our world. We'll ask and explore how we keep moving forward toward kindness, courage, and love.

This retreat is especially for:

- Social activists and community organizers
- Ministers, chaplains, and pastoral caregivers
- Social workers and frontline mutual aid volunteers
- Environmental and climate justice advocates
- Anyone wondering *what comes next?*
- Anyone feeling stuck in the story of the Great Unraveling

Guided by long-time *Work That Reconnects* facilitators Aravinda Ananda, Anne Goodwin, and Joseph Rotunda, we'll gather to learn from one another, practice gratitude and compassion, and strengthen our capacity for the work ahead.

If you have questions or would like more information, please contact our retreat directors, Teresa English ([teresa.n.english@gmail.com](mailto:teresa.n.english@gmail.com)) or Trek Reef ([trek.reef@wildawe.org](mailto:trek.reef@wildawe.org)). Feel free to pass this invitation along to anyone who may be interested.

### **Film Screening: *Plastic People - The Hidden Crisis of Microplastics***

Sunday, March 22, 2026 | 1:30 - 4:30pm | Chelmsford Public Library McCarthy Meeting Room

Register at <https://chelmsfordlibrary.libcal.com/event/15898867>

The Chelmsford Public Library is hosting a free public screening of the film, *Plastic People: The Hidden Crisis of Microplastics*, sponsored by First Parish Chelmsford and the Chelmsford Recycling Committee. We hope that you will join us for this informational screening.

**Film Synopsis:** The ground-breaking feature documentary *Plastic People* investigates our addiction to plastic and the growing threat of microplastics on human health. Almost every bit of plastic ever made breaks down into “microplastics.” These microscopic particles drift in the air, float in all bodies of water, and mix into the soil, becoming a permanent part of the environment.

Now, leading scientists are finding these particles in our bodies: organs, blood, brain tissue, and even the placentas of new mothers. What is the impact of these invisible invaders on our health? And can anything be done about it?

Acclaimed author and science journalist Ziya Tong takes a personal approach by visiting leading scientists around the world and undergoing experiments in her home, on her food, and her body while collaborating with award-winning director Ben Addelman in an urgent call to action for all of us to rethink our relationship with plastic

First Parish in Billerica Presents

# Co-Creating HOPE

Join us for a day retreat inviting you into the Work That Reconnects - a powerful, community-centered journey through gratitude, grief, seeing with new and ancient eyes, and grounding ourselves in wise, life-giving action.



**SAT., MARCH 21, 2026**

10:00 AM - 4:00 PM



**FIRST PARISH IN BILLERICA**

7 Concord Road, Billerica, MA



**COST: FREE**

Gluten-Free Vegan Lunch, Snacks,  
and Childcare Provided

Guided by long-time Work That Reconnects facilitators Aravinda Ananda, Anne Goodwin, and Joseph Rotella.

To Register or Learn More visit:  
**[uubillerica.org/hope](http://uubillerica.org/hope)**



**Aravinda Ananda**



**Anne Goodwin**



**Joseph Rotella**

# FILM

scan the QR code  
to register and  
learn more



# SCREENING

exploring documentary films that take on social challenges

Sunday  
March 22  
1:30 pm



2025 Winner  
Best Documentary



## PLASTIC PEOPLE

The Hidden Crisis of Microplastics

*“One of those essential state-of-our-world documentaries.”*

Owen Gleiberman,  
*VARIETY*



@PlasticPeopleDoc



Image © Plastic Soup Foundation

The ground-breaking feature documentary Plastic People investigates our addiction to plastic and the growing threat of microplastics on human health. Almost every bit of plastic ever made breaks down into “microplastics.” These microscopic particles drift in the air, float in all bodies of water, and mix into the soil, becoming a permanent part of the environment. Now, leading scientists are finding these particles in our bodies: organs, blood, brain tissue, and even the placentas of new mothers. What is the impact of these invisible invaders on our health? And can anything be done about it?

