



The Shooting Star

October 2025

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, October 26

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

October Soul Matters Theme: *Cultivating Compassion*

October 5

"Taking Care of One Another and Our Congregation" - The Safety Committee (Rev. Ellen off)

October 12

Intergenerational Service: "Compassion as a Practice" - Rev. Ellen Rowse Spero

October 19

"Living in an Age of Moral Injury" - Rev. Ellen Rowse Spero

October 26

"Self-Compassion" - Rev. Ellen Rowse Spero & Brenda Rogers

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,

It has been a joy to be back and to see everyone as we return for another church year. It is a hard and heartbreaking time in our country and our world right now, which makes our time together even more meaningful. Here, we gather to remind one another about what matters most: the spirit, the values, and the practices of living in beloved community. For that is what worship means—to lift up that which we trust is worthy of our deepest commitments.

The fall is always busy as we return fulltime to congregational life, but this year feels particularly so as we added a couple of special events to the schedule. We held a special dinner in honor of Carlene Merrill on September 5th, dedicating our kitchen in her memory and thanking her family for establishing a fund in her name that allows us more flexibility and resources in support of our staff. Last weekend, a team of donut makers led by Sarah Manning and Diana Keohane raised over \$1,500 at Chelmsford's Fall Festival on the Common. And coming up on October 26th, we will ordain Brian Snow into the Unitarian Universalist ministry at a special service at 2pm in our sanctuary, having voted unanimously at our annual meeting last June to confer the act of ordination on him. It is one of the important rights and rites of the membership of UU congregations, an essential part of our congregational polity. It will be a joyful and meaningful event and I hope that you all can attend!

A couple of updates on our First Parish staff. Over the summer, the Standing Committee voted to increase the hours for Erica, our

office and building and events coordinator, from 19 to 30 per week. There were several reasons why I recommended this to Human Resources and the Standing Committees. First, at nineteen hours a week, Erica's time in the office was very limited and she ended up having to react to whatever rose to the top of the list on a particular day—answering emails or taking care of the orders of service and newsletter. She could not sustain focus on longer-term requests from me, staff or other lay leaders in the congregation. She and I rarely crossed paths, which impacted both our jobs. At the same time, we have been asking her to take on more responsibilities in the wake of our changing staff, including supporting our new bookkeeper who works remotely and tracking copyright reporting on behalf of the music program. Finally, Erica was finding it difficult to juggle two less than half-time jobs and needed to find one job, with us or somewhere else. Given that both we and Erica needed the increase in hours, we decided to find a way to make it work. Luckily, we have the Carlene Merrill Legacy Fund to help bridge the financial gap. I am grateful to the Standing Committee for their support of this change.

Second, we continue our search for a new music director. The search team (Tom Coffey, Peggy Stephens-North, Janice Tervo, Cindy Gist, Jessica Volk and I) are committed to finding the right candidate and this has turned out to take longer than we expected. We are blessed to have Brian Snow step in as our interim as we continue our search. I am grateful to Brian, to the Senior Choir and to other musicians in the congregation who are stepping up as we find our way. The music, which has always been an essential part of our worship life, continues to be uplifting and powerful.

In faith,
Rev. Ellen

Standing Around – News and Notes from the SC (Standing Committee)

John Schneider, Standing Committee Chair

Fall is the season for “kickoffs” and we started the year with a great kickoff event. On September 5th, nearly 80 members and friends gathered for a dinner to honor Carlene Merrill and the dedication of our kitchen in her honor. Carlene gave so much to First Parish and was a beloved member of our congregation and the community. She took great pride in working in our kitchen and it just seemed that dedicating the kitchen in her name was the best way to honor her memory. The dinner raised over \$3,000 for the Carlene Merrill Fund, established in her name by a generous \$50,000 donation from her family, who also attended the dinner, to provide bridge funding to help us support our staffing needs. You can donate to the CMF by writing a check to First Parish and indicating in the memo that it is for the CMF.

There are several other events coming up during the next few weeks. On October 19th, our annual State of the Society (SOS) meeting will take place after the service. At the SOS meeting, committee and financial reports are presented and we vote in any new members. **We are looking to expand our pool of moderators so let me know if you are interested in becoming a meeting moderator.** A basic understanding of Roberts Rules of Order is helpful and we will provide guidance and training to help you learn how to moderate an official church business meeting. It's an important way to contribute to First Parish.

On October 26th from 2 - 4pm we are conducting the official Act of Ordination for Brian Snow. All members are invited to attend this very special ceremony. A reception will follow in the



Vestry. Stay tuned for an invitation and information about how you can RSVP and congratulate Brian on his ministerial journey.

And calling all committees! Looking for an opportunity to recruit volunteers and promote the good work of your team or committee? We are bringing back our **Team, Committee, and Volunteer Fair during social hour on November 2nd!** Let me know if you are interested in securing space at the fair and/or are interested in helping with the fair's set-up or clean-up (mostly putting up and taking down tables).

One final bit of news. At the August SC retreat, we set as our goal to develop and execute **an outward facing strategy and organizational support structure for outreach to the world.** It's ambitious, daring, and meets the moment. We will be putting a team together to figure out how we do this, but I am pleased to report, thanks to many of you, that we already do a lot of outreach through our faith in action programming and our steady presence at events like Pride Day in Lowell and the Chelmsford Fall Festival.

I'll end with this. We know these are very trying and fearful times. We ask: When will it end? Where are we going? In moments such as these, I often turn to the words of RFK who said to an audience in Indianapolis soon after the assassination of Martin Luther King in April 1968, *"we can make an effort, as Martin Luther King did, to understand, and to comprehend, and replace that violence, that stain of bloodshed that has spread across our land, with an effort to understand, compassion, and love...But we have to make an effort in the United States. We have to make an effort to understand, to get beyond, or go beyond these rather difficult times."*

Have mercy. You can reach me at 617-620-4758 or at jrs.gateway@gmail.com. Thank you.



Lifespan Faith Formation ~ October 2025

[Lifespan Faith Formation Webpage](#)

Cultivating Compassion

Lifespan Faith Formation Director, Dolores GH. Wood; LFFD dre@uuchelmsford.org;

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...

FPCC Families united by the gift of love, hope and the Practice of our UU faith.

Lifespan Faith Formation Connections-

Connect, Engage, Belong

"Because of the social nature of humans...from birth to adulthood, the need for love and belonging is closely linked to the need for survival"

(so we can all flourish) -Lisbeth K, ref. Abraham Maslow

Small Group Gatherings- are the sacred spaces in between, where we take a moment to reflect, connect with others & ourselves.

There are many ways to engage at FPCC there are Small Groups:

FPCC Women's Groups; Two Men's Groups (one 55+)

Young Adults; REFF Families; Sacred Circle Spiritual Group

All Ages Family Jam Band, 2nd & 4th Sunday at 1pm

Bettered Year-Retirees, 70's Plus Group

One Day Workshop/Retreats...And? For more information, to get

on a groups email list, or if you are interested in volunteering to facilitate/co-facilitate, *or if you know of someone* who might be interested in joining or starting a small group event.





In the Spirit of the Season:
 As part of the new resource Flourishing Congregation. Please let me know if you are interested... in participating or co-facilitating a workshop:
The All Souls and Ancestors Workshop:
October 26, 4pm to 7pm
 This workshop is meant to create a shared space for participants to honor their ancestors and enliven our souls.
 please contact me/Dolores~, LFFD dre@uuchelmsford.org

UU RE YOUTH Faith Formation (REFF): October - Spooky Fun & Safety!

“We Are Unitarian Universalists” <https://vimeo.com/344862790>

This year we will be exploring “all about “UU” It will include Soul Matters, Flourishing Congregation Resources, UU Faith Practices and wherever our Imaginations and our stories may take us... For more program information; be added to REFF family email list, are interested in volunteering, and/or share your story/talent... Please contact

dre@uuchelmsford.org

>>More Information will be sent directly to families

- **October 5; REFF will meet in Chapel for... UU Safety!**
- **October 12; UU Roots...**
- **October 19; UU Pumpkin Carving for...get ready, set, go! Contest Oct. 26th!**
- **October 26; Spooky Parade and Spooky Fun Day! *No Gory or Violent costumes please.***

Everyone (All Ages) are welcome to join in the fun-That means yoUU!



Join Us FPCC!

For the Fall...

**Welcome! Potluck & Games~
 Saturday, October 4th
 6pm to 9pm in Vestry!**

Bring your favorite foods to share-a smile... and ready to have fun.

For more information: dre@uuchelmsford.org on behalf of the Membership- Hospitality Committee



Church Announcements

First Parish Knitting & Etc. Group

First Parish Knitter, Crocheters, (or crafters of any kind, really) - The First Parish Knitting & Etc Group will meet on Monday October 20th at 7pm in the High School Room. All skill levels are welcome! We have no agenda, it's just an excuse to get together chat, and work on some projects. Whether you are looking for help, or just some company while you work, come and hang out with us. If you have any questions, contact Joan Coyne at joan@jcoyne.net.

Social Hour Volunteers Wanted

Isn't it nice to come down from church service to warm coffee, tea, or a refreshing cup of water or juice as well as some healthy snacks? Are you interested in joining the team of volunteers who host social hour? Food and drink supplies are now provided by the church; all you need to do is get the coffees going, put out some healthy snacks, and then clean up afterwards. If you've never done this before we will pair you with a veteran. It's quick, it's fun and it's rewarding to provide this hospitality to our community. Please contact Diana at dianakeohane@comcast.net or catch her at social hour if you want to explore this volunteer opportunity.

October Share the Plate

Our Share the Plate Organization for October 19th is Alternative House of Lowell.

Alternative House has provided comprehensive domestic violence services in the Greater Lowell area for over forty years. Founded in 1978, Alternative House has served thousands of survivors of domestic violence.

The agency provides not only emergency shelter and 24-hour crisis hotline services but access to temporary safe housing, transitional/ permanent housing, legal advocacy, supervised visitation services, community/ housing advocacy, support groups, youth, and teen programming, as well as daily access to case management, safety planning, and support around goal setting, financial empowerment, and job/educational placement.

The agency was founded by a group of women who took part in the “Battered Women’s Movement” of the 70’s – a movement to bring awareness, and an end, to violence against women. This group of women paved the way for the agency to provide services to thousands of survivors of domestic violence.

From the Welcoming Congregation Committee

Thank you to everyone who recently signed up for our email list and/or filled out a survey. We really appreciate your input.

Important LGBTQ+ Calendar Dates Coming up:

- National Coming Out Day – October 11th
- International Pronoun Day – October 15th
- Intersex Awareness Day – October 26th
- Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR) -- November 20th

We are starting to gear up for our Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR) program which will be held at the CCA on Saturday, November 15th . The painting of the butterfly luminaries for this event will begin mid-October during social hour.

Useful Resources:

Greater Boston PFLAG supports LGBTQ+ people by building and strengthening loving families, safe communities, and a diverse and inclusive society. This organization provides many services including support groups and informative literature. Website: www.gbpf.org

GLAD Law (formerly GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders) works to create a just society free of discrimination based on gender identity, sexual orientation, and HIV status through strategic litigation, public policy advocacy, and education. If you have any LGBTQ+ related legal questions this is a good place to start. Website: www.gladlaw.org/about

Journey to a Green Sanctuary

Fall Greetings from your Green Committee!

We have updated our page on the website (www.uuchelmsford.org/green-committee) to include some helpful Green Resources toward the bottom. Consider bookmarking the page to come back to it, as we will be updating it throughout the year!

We are entering our third year focused on the Green Sanctuary 2030 process: an ambitious environmental and climate justice movement that helps us fully live into our 7th Principle:

Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

This year, we are excited to work with YOU to develop and assess opportunities to take actions in 4 key areas:

- Congregational Transformation
- Community Resilience
- Justice
- Mitigation

We'd love to have YOUR feedback on the **Congregational Transformation** questions that we began exploring this month. Please visit this link <http://bit.ly/42jR5j3> or scan the QR Code to share your thoughts with us!



Out of Church Announcements

UU Mass Action Annual Potluck!

Thursday, October 23rd, 6-8pm • 349 Boston Post Rd. Weston, MA 02493

RSVP Here: secure.everyaction.com/4UP6cNs3ikmUQmhj-JK72g2



You're invited to UU Mass Action's annual in-person gathering! We will come together at the First Parish Church in Weston to connect with each other and celebrate our successes. It's been a tough year, but UU Mass Action has had some major victories as UU's across Massachusetts continued to show up for justice and for each other. Join us as we celebrate those accomplishments, and share food, songs, and stories!

Wear a Yellow Side With Love Shirt, or UU Mass Action T-shirt!

We encourage you to wear a yellow side with love shirt to the event, or a yellow UU Mass Action T-shirt! A percentage of the cost of the shirts will go directly towards our work. If you'd like to order one, you can do so here:

www.bonfire.com/uu-mass-action160/.

Please note that the shirts take about two weeks to arrive after placing an order.

We look forward to seeing you in October!
In celebration,

Rev. Jo Murphy, Claire Karl, Tali, and Eust
(UU Mass Action Staff)

Donate to UU Mass Action here:

www.uumassaction.org/donate

