The Shooting Star

November 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, November 22

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

November *Soul Matters* Worship Theme: *Healing*

November 1
All Saints Day Circle of Remembrance

November 8
Stories that Heal Us

November 15
Reflections by the Pastoral Care and Service Team

November 22
Intergen. Thanksgiving Service with Collection for Open Pantry and Bread Communion

November 29
Joy as Resistance – Guest Minister Rev. Justine Sullivan

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

My Dear First Parishers,

I am so grateful for your caring, supportive responses to my announcement this past week that I will retire as your minister on June 30, 2027, the end of this church year. I shared at length in my email and in Sunday's sermon the reasons for my decision and how much I will miss being your minister, so I won't repeat it all here. Just know how much I care about this congregation, how hard this decision was, and what an honor it is to serve as your minister. As the UUA Transitions Office told me and Tom Coffey, our Standing Committee Chair, the search for an interim minister will not begin in earnest until spring. So, for now, we can focus on our regular church stuff as I am still your minister through the end of June!

This month's Soul Matters worship theme is "Healing," which struck me. November's themes usually run along the lines of gratitude and hospitality. As I write this, we do not yet know the results of the midterm elections. For many of us, the outcomes carry heavy burdens of hope and fear about the future of our country, as if one day could determine everything. And for the past decade, we have been caught in a cycle of fraught elections every two years, in which our deep divisions surface, conspiracy theories abound, and the threat of violence simmers just beneath the surface. We have barely recovered from one election before the next begins.

Perhaps this is why the Soul Matters editors chose healing: we are in such need of it. Last year, I preached about moral dissonance and moral injury. Moral dissonance is the deep spiritual distress

we feel when our own actions, or what we see happening to us or around us, conflict with our most deeply held values. Moral injury is the harm done to our souls when that dissonance reaches the level of trauma. Both affect not only perpetrators and victims but also witnesses. The violation of the human rights of immigrants, the cultural reinforcement and justification of violence against women, unashamed political corruption and abuse of power, and purposeful degradation of the environment—none of us is untouched by these things.

I am deeply moved by this. For healing to happen, we need more than community. We need communion: community gathered and joined at the level of soul. Communion is not simply shared belief (religious, political, or otherwise), nor friendship, nor comfort. It is the willingness to share, to be vulnerable, to open our hearts and embrace one another's full humanity as we offer our own. We cannot simply leap into this. It requires deep trust, and building that trust is slow and quiet work. It happens in conversations over a meal, in working side by side to serve with and for our neighbors, or in coming together to sing. The election results will be what they will be. Whatever the outcome, we can focus on healing where it is needed: from our own bodies and spirits to the natural world that surrounds us.

So, let us vote, pray/meditate, heal!

In faith,
Rev. Ellen

Church Announcements

Transgender Day of Remembrance Vigil

Saturday Nov. 21, 2026 at 6pm | Chelmsford Center for the Arts, 1A North Rd. Chelmsford

Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR), celebrated annually on or around Nov 20, is a day dedicated to honoring the transgender community and raising awareness of the discrimination and challenges they face. Chelmsford's event will provide a platform for visibility, support, and education, affirming the dignity and humanity of all transgender individuals.

There will be a candle-light procession to and around Chelmsford Town Common, followed by a vigil to remember and honor the individual names of those transgender people who lost their lives to anti-transgender violence in the past year. It is an opportunity for individuals to come together in solidarity and respect.

The first observance of Transgender Day of Remembrance was after the November 28, 1998, murder of Rita Hester, a 34-year-old Black transgender woman in Boston. Gwendolyn Ann Smith organized the first candlelight vigil on November 20, 1999, in San Francisco to memorialize Hester and other victims of anti-transgender violence.

Annual Thanksgiving Walk

In keeping with the season's theme of Gratitude, some First Parishers are once more offering a Walk in the Woods on Thanksgiving morning. If you would like to begin your day of Thanksgiving with a connection to friends and an appreciation of the natural world, join us at 9am at Greenough Conservation land in Carlisle (use GPS address 811 Maple St., it's across the street). This is a tradition among several congregants and their dogs that has evolved over the years. The walk is through lovely – but fairly uneven – terrain and about 2.5 miles long. We share coffee and muffins in the parking lot at the end. If you are interested contact Carla Corey, (978-408-1498, carla@bucklies.com) or just show up if you know the routine. New to First Parish? This is a great opportunity to get to know a few more people and we would love your company!

First Parish Recruiting for Open Position: Lifespan Faith Formation Assistant

Position: Lifespan Faith Formation Assistant (LFFA)

Reports to: Standing Committee, with day-to-day supervision provided by the Lifespan Faith Formation Director (LFFD)

Pay: $23-28 I **Job status:** Part-time, 8 hours per week Sept 1–June 30

Job Summary: Assists in planning and implementing a religious education program under the supervision of the Director of Religious Education Faith Formation. The LFF Assistant will provide support but will have limited program responsibility.

To Apply: Please send a cover letter and résumé with "LFF Assistant" in the subject line to jobs@uuchelmsford.org

FY28 Stewardship Team: Seeking Members

Do you celebrate how we each contribute our time, talent and treasure to this community? We invite anyone interested to join the Stewardship Team for FY28 to bring your ideas. We'll begin planning in January how best to connect with all FPCC members and friends this year. See John Schneider, Susan Woodmansee or Bill Newhard to join the team.

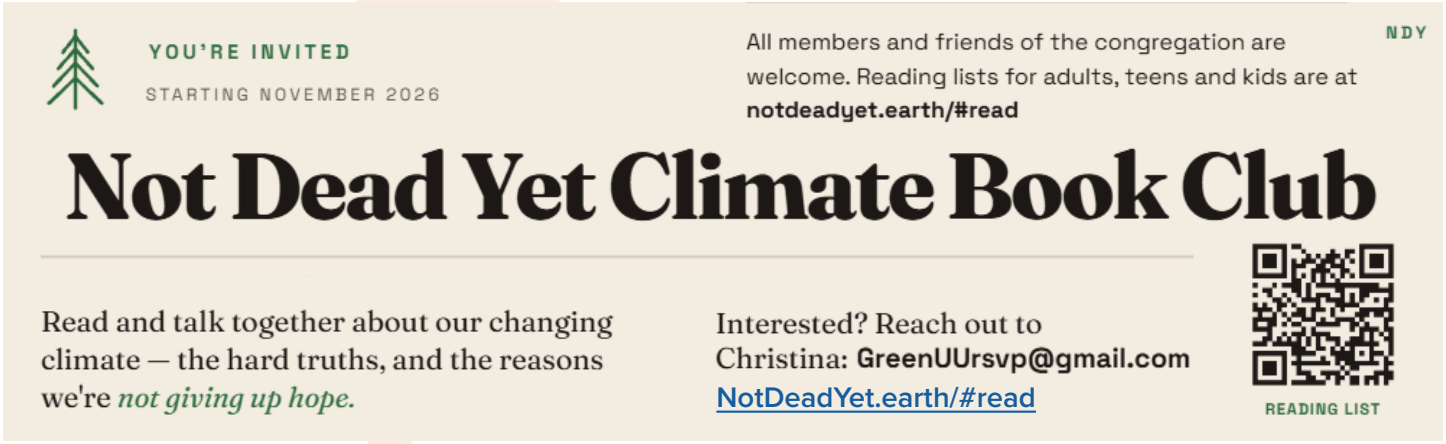
Updates from the Pastoral Care and Service Team

Healing Conversations: We have restarted our bi-monthly meetings that occur on the 2nd and 4th Mondays of the church year from 7 - 8 pm. We are a gathering of church members and friends who meet to discuss all kinds of grief in our lives. We are a supportive and confidential group and we are here for you. If you have any questions please reach out to Kathy Deschenes at springersrus@comcast.net or catch her at coffee hour.

Prayer Shawls: We are getting low on prayer shawls. They are so needed and treasured by our congregation and even folks outside of our church who we know. If you have any shawls that are ready and would like to have them blessed for distribution please reach out to Kathy Deschenes at springersrus@comcast.net or see her at social hour. Thank you to all our beautiful knitters and crocheters for all the love you put into your creations.

Interested in Helping Out at Community Table?

Community Table has been serving 35-50 people at the Salvation Army on a monthly basis. On the third Saturday of each month, a team of 6-8 church members prepare, deliver and serve the lunch in Lowell. For more info or to volunteer, contact co-chairs Frances Killam or Nancy Kaelin.





Lifespan Faith Formation ~ November 2026

'26-'27 Theme: "Our Stories..., Are Our Legacy...

Lifespan Faith Formation Director (LFFD), Dolores GH. Wood
dre@uuchelmsford.org Lifespan Faith Formation Webpage

Lifespan Faith Formation is higher yoUU education 😊 It connects us from childhood to old age, 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-

"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

Lifespan Faith Formation: Inter-Connect, Engage, Belong

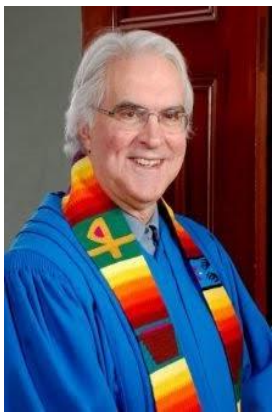
Small Group Gatherings:

These are sacred spaces in between, where we take a moment to reflect and connect with others and ourselves.
They are open to everyone within their context.

Intentional UU Sessions 2026-27
History & yoUU!
November 15th; 2pm to 4

Intentional UU is a series of monthly sessions to explore, discover and yes - learn, and live, being a Unitarian Universalist … Intentionally. Pizza lunch… Attendance at all sessions is optional.
RSVP dre@uuchelmford.org

Knowing our Past, helps us understand our present, and the possibilities of our Future.



Unitarian Universalist History Led by Rev. Mark W. Harris

The Rev. Dr. Mark W. Harris is a prominent UUA historian and author ~
Rev. Dr. Mark W. Harris taught UU history and polity at Andover Newton Theological School, Harvard Divinity School and most recently, Boston University School of Theology. He has published several books and pamphlets on UU history and has a UU minister for over 45 years.

For more information, to get on a groups email list, or if you are interested volunteering to facilitate/co-facilitate, *or if you know of someone* who might be interested in joining or starting a small group… Please contact me/Dolores~, LFFD dre@uuchelmsford.org

Beyond all the ways to engage at FPCC there are:

- FPCC Women's Groups,
  New Women's group, 1st Sunday at 4pm
- Two Men's Groups (one 55+)
- Sacred Circle Spiritual Group:
  4th Tuesday's of the month 6pm;
- Queer/LGBTQ+ Family/ Friends: October 11th 6pm on the 2nd Sunday of the month
- Intentional UU Sessions Series
  - UU Justice and Theology January 31st
  - UU/FPCC Governance (Feb/Mar tbd.)
  - UU Faith, Ethics & Discernment (Apr/May tbd)
- **Bettered Year-Retirees, 70's Plus Group - November 8th, 11:30ish**
  Special Topic!
  Continuing Care Retirement Communities, CCRC's
  Guest Speaker Katherine Canada
- And?

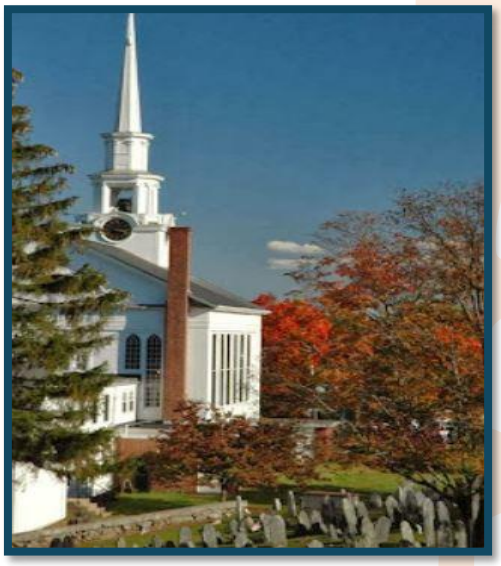


Youth UU 'RE' Faith Formation (REFF)

This year we will be exploring "all about US" (reach out program)
For more program information; to be added to REFF family email list, or are interested in volunteering, and/or share your story/talent…
Please contact dre@uuchelmford.org

- Nov. 1st & 8th: UU Review & Indigenous/Pagan Faiths Timelines;
  - Kinder to Second Grade: start at 9:45ish as a group (room tbd)
  - 3rd to High School Begin in Sanctuary 10am Worship Service
    leave after "For All Ages" together for Group Session
- Nov. 15th: Thanksgiving Favorite Foods Potluck! Chapel Day Youth meet in Chapel, 9:45am
- Nov. 22nd: Thanksgiving Ingathering Youth & Families attend 10am Worship Service
- November 30; Holiday Festivities/Christmas Eve Planning

Nursery Room: 5 years and under. Nursery Care givers are available (please let Dolores know if needed)
- **Or**- Parents/Guardians can stay with children; *Please do not leave the children unattended.*



November 22nd at 11:30am
Newcomer Meet & Greet & FPCC* Tour!

Are you a Newcomer to FPCC? Or just curious about FPCC?
At 11:30am begins in with FPCC tour
>Everyone is welcome on the Tour!
It will be followed by a Q&A, informative conversation.
Light refreshments will be included. We appreciate RSVP's , Yay or Nay?
Contact: dre@uuchelmsford.org

The Hospitality-Membership Team wants to welcome you to First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Chelmsford! We'd love to "Get to Know You" a little better answer, connect, ponder, answer any questions, you may be wondering about this wonderful UU church!
*FPCC/First Parish Unitarian Universalist Church of Chelmsford

November 22nd, 2026
10am Intergenerational Ingathering Worship Service

First Parish will be collecting food, cash and checks *during the worship service for*

The Open Pantry of Greater Lowell

They have been serving hungry people since 1981. First Parish was one of the original initial supporters.
Hunger is always present… It is a blessing to share your blessings!



PLEASE MAKE CHECKS OUT TO OPEN PANTRY -NO ITEM OR AMOUNT IS TOO SMALL.
Nutritious, non-perishable, unexpired, packaged food items are welcome.
Examples include - but are not limited to - canned fruits, vegetables, beef, turkey and chicken, as well as tuna, pasta, soups, stews, cereals, powdered milk, mac n cheese, rice, peanut butter and beans. In addition, they distribute toiletries including: *soap, toilet paper, tissues, paper towels, toothpaste, and shampoo.* They may also provide *diapers, wipes, baby formula, baby food, and cat/dog food* when available. Open Pantry has a very informative website: www.theopenpantry.org.
If you have questions about the collection, please contact Dolores, dre@uuchelmsford.org

November 2026 Green Events

FIRST PARISH CHELMSFORD GREEN COMMITTEE

Join neighbors for seasonal cooking, native plant learning, conservation and practical ways to reduce waste. Everyone is welcome.

Bulb and Battery Drop Off

Nov 4, 9 AM–3 PM; Nov 7, 9 AM–1 PM | Behind Town Offices, 50 Billerica Rd., Chelmsford

Recycle accepted batteries, bulbs, mercury items and printer cartridges. Details

Pollinator Habitat Chat

Wed Nov 4, noon–1 PM | Online

Share garden projects and ideas with the Massachusetts Pollinator Network. Free; sign up for the Zoom link. Sign up

Native Seed Cleaning Workshop

Wed Nov 4, 6–7:30 PM | 7 Harrington Rd., Lexington

Learn seed cleaning with Grow Native MA. Take home native seed samples. $15 members / $25 nonmembers. Register

Electronics and Metal Recycling

Sat Nov 7, 8 AM–noon | 230 North Rd., Chelmsford

Support Center and McCarthy school PTOs while recycling bulky items. Donation fees apply; check accepted items. Details

Tyngsborough Zero Waste Day

Sat Nov 7, 9 AM–noon | DPW, 89 Kendall Rd., Tyngsborough

New location! Reuse and recycling collections for household goods, textiles, bikes, metal and selected electronics. All towns welcome; some fees. Flyer and accepted items

Lowell Hazardous Waste Day

Sat Nov 7, 9 AM–noon | DPW, 1365 Middlesex St., Lowell

Dispose of accepted household hazardous materials. Review eligibility and register through the City website. Register

Eat Well in Winter with Chef Kelcy

Sat Nov 7, 10:30 AM–noon | Mill City Grows, Lowell

Enjoy a winter vegetable cooking demo and samples. Free; registration recommended. Confirm venue: 978-455-2620. Details

Climate Justice Now Standout

Sat Nov 7, noon–3 PM | Taunton Green, 19 Main St., Taunton

Join 350 Mass for a family-friendly climate action standout. Farther afield; all welcome. RSVP

Pumpkin Smash

Sat Nov 7, 1–2 PM | Town Hall, 50 Billerica Rd., Chelmsford

Give your pumpkin a compostable finale! No paint or glitter; remove candles. Details

Bottle and Can Collection

Sat Nov 14, 10 AM–2 PM | McCarthy School, 250 North Rd., Chelmsford

Support Friends of Music. MA-redeemable containers only; separate glass. Back of parking lot. Details

Tyngsborough Holiday Light Recycling

Nov 15–Jan 15 | Outside Town Hall, 25 Bryant Lane, Tyngsborough

Bring unwanted holiday string lights to the outdoor collection for recycling. Details

Chelmsford Leaf and Brush Pickup

Nov 16–20 and Nov 30–Dec 4 | Eligible Chelmsford residences

On your regular service day, set out by 6:30 AM. Follow bag, barrel and brush rules. Collection guidelines

Community Gardens on DCR Property

Tue Nov 17, 7–8:15 PM | Online

Learn how public land partnerships can create native habitat. Grow Native MA and the Pollinator Network. Free. Register

Chelmsford Hazardous Waste Day

Sat Nov 21, 9 AM–1 PM | DPW, 9 Alpha Rd., Chelmsford

Proof of residency required. One trunk load per household; no latex paint. Details

Lowell Conservation Celebration

Sat Nov 21, 10–11:30 AM | Pawtucket Farm, 1413 Varnum Ave., Lowell

LP&CT annual meeting with educator Dr. Tara Goodhue and an award honoring Louisa Varnum. Free; RSVP. RSVP

Frost Moon Circle Gathering

Sun Nov 22, 8 PM | Online

Join UU Ministry for Earth for readings, reflection and small-group sharing to sustain climate justice work. Register

Chelmsford Holiday Light Recycling

Throughout November–Jan 31 | Town Offices, Main Library, Senior Center and DPW

Recycle broken string lights during building hours. Donate working lights. Details

Volunteer with Lowell Litter Krewe

November opportunities | Lowell

Help care for parks and waterways. Confirm cleanup dates and meeting locations on the calendar. Cleanup calendar

Transgender Day of Remembrance



Saturday November 21 6:00 PM

Chelmsford Center for the Arts Chelmsford, MA

Procession 6:00 pm
Vigil 6:30 pm

Remember and honor the individual names of those transgender people who lost their lives to violence in the past year.

As members and allies of the transgender community, we will listen and sing together, mourn and be inspired.

For more information
Please email:
welcoming@uuchelmsford.org

Hosted by:

First Parish in Chelmsford, MA
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
A Welcoming Congregation

In Collaboration with:
The Town of Chelmsford
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
Committee