

www.fpcberlin.org  
December 2018



# The Record

Newsletter

First Parish Church in Berlin

*A federated church, gathered 1779*

United Church of Christ and Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations  
24 Central St. Berlin, Massachusetts 01503

## From the Minister Janet Newton

### Invocation

*Holy Anticipation,  
that breathtaking space in-between  
what has been, what is, what is yet-to-come.  
Where winter dreams reveal secret longings  
and winged angels announce the coming of Love.  
You draw us to the edge of Advent possibility  
like the song of angels drawing shepherds —  
eyes wide and breath held —  
waiting, watching.  
Come, settle into our living for awhile  
and do not let us settle for too little.*

*--Pamela C. Hawkins*



My first time driving to First Parish Berlin was in early August. I turned off of I-495, curved through the rolling hills and past the picturesque barns -- trees decked out in verdant leaves, the grasses of late summer just starting to get a little tawny and wispy at their seedheads -- and arrived at the church.

But I did not notice the dead Christmas trees, leaned against greying pallets like forgotten toy soldiers whose kid had grown up. Have you seen them? Just before the final curve when the church emerges? I didn't notice those Christmas trees, in fact, until my most recent trip to town. Now that the leaves have fallen and the grasses are starting to get covered in snow, the dead trees stick out.



I have empathy for those trees, symbols of life and hope, infused with nostalgia of remembered holidays past, when everything was just so because someone else was in charge of the magic.

I have empathy, because sometimes I feel like those trees, life and energy drained out of me, most often when the days grow dark and the scarves come out.

I bring them up to say: that's okay. Because this is a season of hope in the darkness. The waiting. The

wanting. Why else would we nurture amaryllis and paperwhite bulbs, deck our houses in green things, eagerly coaxing a reminder of growth out of a season laid fallow by the tilt of the planet and meteorology?

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Welcome, Advent.  
Season of waiting  
.....and light



- Sun. Dec. 2 Sunday worship 10 am, *First Sunday in Advent*
- Thurs. Dec. 6 Advent Evensong service, 6:30 pm *A time of calm in a crazy season*
- Sun. Dec. 9 Sunday worship 10 am, *Second Sunday in Advent*
- Sun. Dec. 16 Christmas Sunday, 10 am, *Carols and readings*
- Sun. Dec. 23 Sunday worship, 10 am, *Fourth Sunday in Advent*
- Tree Walk/Solstice celebration, 4:30 pm *Gather at Meeting House, dressed for outdoor walking. Wassail to follow*
- Mon. Dec. 24 Christmas Eve Family worship, 5:00 pm, *Candlelight service*
- Email [minister@fpcbberlin.org](mailto:minister@fpcbberlin.org) for more information.

### Many Hands Needs You...Can You Help?

After sending out another town-wide plea for volunteers (specifically asking for Tuesday 12-2 and Thursday 5:30-8:30), I have received only **ONE** response (someone who can do the Thursday shift). We have been unsuccessful thus far filling Edie's shift on Tuesday 12-2. Currently Judy Booman is covering, but she is only temporary.



We need someone who is comfortable up front doing sales and closing (when Lisa is not available). This person needs to be reliable and willing to commit to volunteering weekly. I have no clue where to go from here...

Liane Leahy (978-567-0883)

### CONGREGATIONAL ANNUAL MEETING

United Church of Christ

To the members of the **FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF BERLIN:**

Greetings: You are hereby notified and warned to meet at the Meeting House in Berlin on **SUNDAY**, the **NINTH** day of **DECEMBER 2018** at **ELEVEN** o'clock in the morning, then and there to act on the following articles, or in relation thereto:

Article 1. To hear the reports of the Officers, Trustees, and Delegates, and take action relative thereto.

Article 2. To hear the report of the Nominating Committee and elect officers, a resolutions committee, and a nominating committee for one year, one member of the First Parish Church Council for three years; and two delegates and two alternate delegates to all assemblies of the United Church of Christ for one year; or take action relative thereto.

Article 3. To consider resolutions and hear suggestions for future action.

*Barry W. Eager, Clerk*



Thank YOU! To Everyone Who Helped Make This Year's Fair Wonderful!



Report of 2018 Friendship Village Fair Shoppe

Total Income	\$6782.33
Interest earned	2.43
Expenses:	
SERRV	83.00
Ghamste Gatsal	312.00
Day Guild	500.00
Other expenses	1930.00
BALANCE	\$4,596.62
Deposited to Fair Account	310.00
Turned over to First Parish Church	\$4,906.62

Edith Brewer, Fair treasurer





## St. Joseph's Annual Christmas Shoppe Fair 2018, December 1st & 2nd

Visit our Christmas Café, opening early this year with some delightful breakfast fare and a selection of teas and coffee. For lunch we'll be offering homemade soups and stews, including; corn chowder, venison stew, chili and cabbage soup along with sandwiches, hot and cold beverages and an assortment of delightful desserts. After you've eaten visit our wonderful cookie and bake shop, shop our fine selection of gift baskets, Christmas crafts, raffles, mugs of greens, and our wonderful Christmas Past room. Our special guests; *Santa and Mrs. Claus* will be visiting 10:00 to 1:00 Saturday, a great photo opportunity.

### St. Joseph's Christmas Shoppe Fair

★ Christmas Café ★

Gift Baskets ★ Raffles ★ Cookies ★ Baked Goods

Crafts ★ Christmas Past ★ A visit from Santa

52 West Street/Route 62, Berlin, MA

Saturday, December 1st 9:00 am – 3:00pm

## Notes from the Choir Director

***"The Four Functions of a Church Choir"*** is an article from November, 2016, written by Brian Hehn, Director of music for Arapaho United Methodist Church in Richardson, TX, and who serves on the Executive Board of The Hymn Society of the United States and Canada. I found this on the American Choral Directors Association website, [ChoralNet.org](http://ChoralNet.org), and thought it was worthy to be shared with both our Choir and the Congregation at large here in FPC Berlin.

Mr. Hehn states that *"the four functions are to lead and enliven the congregation's song, to sing music that the congregation cannot, to serve as a small-group within the church for faith formation, and to sing beautiful and challenging music to glorify God and to edify the congregation."*

For this issue of ***"The Record"***, and for the each of the next 3 issues, I will cover one of these 4 functions, beginning with what he believes to be the most important function:

### 1. The church choir leads and enlivens the congregation's song

*"This may come as a surprise to some readers that the first and most important function of the church choir is to lead the congregation's song. It is important, however, that this be the top priority. Let's not forget that without a congregation, there could not be a church choir! The singing group would instead be a community choir. But why is it important that the congregation's song be supported instead of just focusing on the church choir's musical success? Choral musicians inherently know the answer. We become what we sing. When we take words and put them to music, it becomes part of who we are. Therefore, it becomes imperative that we put as much of the Word into the bodies of the congregation as possible. If the congregation can sing it but we don't let them, we miss an opportunity to transform people's lives in the most direct way possible. By giving the congregation new singing skills and confidence, we empower them for the rest of their lives to better embody God's word through music."*

*Therefore, taking our cue from the great church musician John Ferguson, it is important to*

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## Notes continued

*view the congregation as the “big choir,” and the church choir as the “little choir,” or as I like to think of it, my chamber group. I often utilize my choir as “section leaders,” positioning them around the congregation strategically to support the parts that I’m teaching for a congregational hymn or song. I have the choir stand in front of the congregation to lead them in rounds and canons. They become active leaders in building up the congregation’s song. By doing this, the congregation is prepared for discipleship through the soul-embracing power of song.”*

Here at FPC Berlin, although our congregation is small at times, your voices come through strong and clear! Many of you will remember having choir members come down and scatter throughout the pews, or from various sections of the church itself, to join in singing a new piece of music or a round we had just learned. In other words, to help the “big choir” and support our full congregational song. In this way our choir helps to lead, and, we hope, enliven the music that the full congregation sings.

**Seasonal live music:** The following are just a few suggestions of the many live music opportunities near Berlin in the weeks prior to Christmas. Here’s hoping you will be able to attend one or more!!

- All Saints Episcopal, Worcester: Dec 2 @ 5 PM (Advent Carol Service)
- Trinity Lutheran, Worcester: Dec 2 @ 4:00 PM
- College of the Holy Cross, Worcester: Dec 6 @ 7:30 PM in St. Joseph’s Chapel
- First Baptist Church, Worcester: Dec 16 @ 4:00 PM
- Immaculate Conception Church, Marlborough: Dec 16 @ 2:30PM
- First Unitarian, Worcester: Christmas Eve @ 5 PM (Prelude); 5:30 (Lessons & Carols)

### **Other miscellaneous events:**

- Northborough Area Community Chorus Concert: Dec 2<sup>nd</sup>, @ 3:00 PM in Trottier Middle School in Southborough
- Brown Bag Concerts (free!) @ Mechanics Hall at noontime Wed, Dec 5<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday, December 19, 2018
- local colleges: HC / WSU / Assumption / Clark / WPI / Anna Maria / AUC / (check websites)

Robert Specian, choir director

### **Gift to the FPC Kitchen**

First Parish has received the gift of a new refrigerator for the Meeting House. This has been given by our friends at the Boston Satsang Center in Hudson, and arranged by their leader, Vikas Sinha. Dayalbagh Radhasoami Satsang Association of North America is a faith community with origins in India in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Their message of love and peace is quite similar to our own teachings. The Boston Satsang Center has hosted regional prayer meetings in our buildings in Berlin on three occasions, the most recent one in October of this year. We thank Vikas and his members for this generous gift and look forward to a future time that we can share its use with them.



## From the Minister continued from page 1

I had a long conversation this week with some friends on the island. They're searching for a place for their family to do something called church, but they struggled with the elements of traditional church that left them cold, especially within the climate of church people behaving in what they perceived to be un-churchy behaviors.

This is what we are countering as we seek to build and sustain our beautiful little community.

My instinct with people who hold this perspective -- colored so deeply by the loudest voices in our world who sell Christianity as a source of judgment and hate, rather than one of love and hope -- is to remind them of the power of mystery and wonder in their lives. Perhaps this helps to cultivate a sense of spiritual depth that may not be being fed in the secular world.

So as we enter Advent, I want to call on you to remember the mystery -- to allow yourself to be charmed and transported by the season into a position of longing, until your soul is saying "Yes! This! More of this, please!" We need not hold fast to last year's symbols, if they no longer provide us with light: let's remind our friends and neighbors that we're in charge of how much hope and faith we can generate.

Let's build on mystery, build with wonder, and approach the season and one another with divine and holy love.

Blessings to you all, dear ones.

*Janet*



## Not All Christmas Trees are Green

This is for those who would like to take some time for a walk in the woods to visit with a 250 year old pasture oak, and have some moments of peace and meditation as a prelude to Christmas.

We will gather at the Meeting House on Sunday, Dec. 23 at 4:30 pm. Be sure you have boots or walking shoes, and are prepared for a walk through the field at the corner of Pleasant St. and Central St, and into the woods. It takes about 10 minutes from the Meeting House to the oak, and the path is somewhat bumpy in places. There will be a few words and some song around this very special Christmas tree, and then we will walk back to 11 Pleasant St. on a candlelit path. You are invited to stay for a cup of wassail (it is tradition to bring your own cup) or cocoa for the younger set. Thomas Andrew will lead the walk.





## Sox and Sandwiches

The youth group has been putting together bag lunches for several years now for the Sox and Sammies program with Worcester Fellowship. This outdoor church caters to the spiritual needs of the homeless. Working with several churches in the area, they are able to provide approximately 150 lunches during their Sunday services.

First Parish had signed on for another year, but we need your help. We need people willing to provide food (or the funds to purchase food) in order to continue this program. New (still in the package) white socks and white underwear are also welcome, especially as the weather gets colder.

If you can help with donations, please contact Wendy Rogalinski ([wrogalinski@gmail.com](mailto:wrogalinski@gmail.com)).



## News from the Religious Education Committee



We are very excited to announce Shel Frolich Tscherne (photo left) has accepted the position of RE Director at First Parish Church.

Shel comes to us with a vast background of working with children. She was a special education teacher in the Hudson public school system, and currently is homeschooling her 2 daughters, Grace and Emma.

She was raised in the UCC church and has served her current church on the Christian education committee.

Shel will be at the December pizza night to meet church families. Please come to support and meet her. And bring your children! She is looking forward to getting to know everyone.

- RE Committee

"The first fall of snow is not only an event, it is a magical event. You go to bed in one kind of a world and wake up in another quite different, and if this is not enchantment then where is it to be found?"

— J.B. Priestley





## Spiritual Exercises on our Monthly Theme: Mystery

You are invited this month to ponder the question: What does it mean to be a people of mystery?

Here are some spiritual exercise ideas to help you navigate the question. As we dig deeper into this theme, you're encouraged to bring the ideas that emerge from these exercises into our church community through informal conversations throughout the month.

### ***Option A: Return to an Ordinary Moment of Deep Meaning***

We've all experienced it: the mystery of an ordinary moment that suddenly unfolds and offers deep meaning. The everyday becomes luminous. This exercise invites you to remember some of those luminous moments and revisit the gift they gave. To do this, simply make some time to watch and meditate on the following video:

The Moment: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNVPaINZD\\_I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNVPaINZD_I)

As you watch, think of moments you've experienced when life suddenly and mysteriously lit up and reminded you of the marvel and preciousness of being alive. And think about how that lit you up - move you from a feeling of "the same old, same old" to a feeling of dancing with the sacred. Go one from there to imagine images from your own life that you'd include if you were making your own video. Then keep watch during the following hours and days to see if this meditation changes the way you perceive or dance with your "ordinary" days.

### ***Option B: Connect with Mystery on a Clear Night***

Since the beginning of our existence, star-gazing has been a primary way we humans contemplate mystery. For scientist and mystic alike, it is a central way we sort out our mysterious place in the universe and the mystery of who we are. As we connect with the universe we connect more deeply with ourselves. This exercise invites you to lean into this connection between the stars above and deep meaning within.

To do this, make room on a clear night to listen to the following podcast while you gaze at the open sky:

Space - RadioLab: <https://www.wnycstudios.org/story/91520-space>

The podcast tells the stories of numerous people's efforts to connect with and make meaning of the mystery that lies beyond. As you listen, treat each story as an invitation to see something new in the vastness overhead. Simply allow this visual and auditory meditation to soak over you. When the podcast ends, continue to sit or lay in the quiet stillness and listen for the new story that your own voice starts to tell. You're invited to consider what this clear night clarified for you.

Here's some additional inspiration:

- Stargazing In Yosemite National Park: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JuhNNmzHP-c>
- The Soul of the Night by Chet Raymo:  
[https://www.amazon.com/dp/B009D16QVE/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?\\_encoding=UTF8&btkr=1](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B009D16QVE/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?_encoding=UTF8&btkr=1)
- A New View of the Moon: <https://vimeo.com/259818647>

### ***Option C: Embrace the Mystery and Hope of the Season***

Use the month to engage with the Advent Faith Practices calendar included in the newsletter. The calendar provides options for embracing the season through prayer, spiritual practice and service. How might your season change by taking a little time every day to build the holy into your life?



# Advent Faith Practices



SUNDAY MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY SATURDAY

<p>Instead of focusing on material things this Advent, focus on faith! This advent faith practices calendar rotates through three types of practices: prayer [P] service [S] and spiritual practice [SP] Make this calendar work for you and your family by adapting it to suit your needs. If you are unable to complete one of the practices on a specific day, just skip over it and pick it up on the next day. Visit <a href="https://www.facebook.com/TraciMarieSmith">https://www.facebook.com/TraciMarieSmith</a> Author during December for more ideas and daily inspiration.</p>						
2. [S] Who in your community is in special need of a note, call, or visit? Make an effort to check up on that person.	3. [P] Today's prayer word is HOPE. What does it mean to have hope? Draw a picture of something hopeful or pray for a hope you have.	4. [SP] Silence. How long can you sit in silence? Try one minute, two minutes or even five minutes!	5. [S] Write a note of appreciation to someone in a helping or serving profession to tell them how much you value their work.	6. [P] Hope, continued. Today, light one candle for hope.	7. [SP] Imagination. Look at the clouds or the grass or snow outside. What do you see there?	1. [SP] Waiting. Practice waiting today by taking a few extra moments to rest between activities today.
9. [P] Peace. What gives you peace? Thank God for peaceful things.	10. [SP] Gratitude Practice gratitude today by listing the things for which you are thankful.	11. [S] Make a special effort to offer a smile or kind gesture (such as opening the door) for a stranger today.	12. [P] Peace, continued. Light two candles today. One for hope and one for peace.	13. [SP] Play! Play a game together as a family. Did you know play can be a spiritual practice? It can!	14. [S] Pick up trash around your neighborhood or other public place.	8. [S] Donate food or other needed items to an organization that serves those in need.
16. [SP] Beauty. Take a walk outside and notice three beautiful things.	17. [S] Do something kind for a neighbor. Shovel their walk, leave a plant, or write a kind note.	18. [P] Today's prayer word is joy. What brings you joy? Draw a picture of it or say a prayer.	19. [SP] Listening. It is a spiritual discipline to listen well. Ask someone in your family three questions. Listen closely to their answer.	20. [S] Compliment a stranger today.	21. [P] Joy, continued. Light three candles. One for hope, one for peace, and one for joy.	15. [P] Pray for others today. Who do you know who needs an extra word of prayer to God? Write their name down.
23. [S] Give a gift to someone who really needs it today.	24. [P] Love. Today's prayer word is love. Draw a picture of someone you love.	25. [P] Love, continued. Light four candles today. One for hope, one for peace, one for joy, and one for love.	<p>This calendar brought to you by Traci Smith, author of <i>Faithful Families: Creating Sacred Moments at Home</i>. It's a book full of simple and easy to implement faith practices for your family. Find it on Amazon, Barnes and Noble, or at Chalice Press!</p>			
						22. [SP] Hospitality. Invite someone to come to your house today.





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[secretary@fpcberlin.org](mailto:secretary@fpcberlin.org)  
 Minister's Office Hours  
 Tues, 1 - 5  
 or by appointment.  
 Administrator's hours  
 are flexible, so please  
 call ahead. 978-838-  
 2575

## Pizza Friday Dec. 14 ...Joy!

Join us every Second Friday, 5 – 7 pm  
 for Pizza Night at FPC!

**All-you-care-to-eat buffet** [which  
 includes pizza, salad, choice of drink,  
 dessert] \$9 adult/\$5 kid 12 and  
 under/under 3 eat free

**Take-out (baked or unbaked) 14"**  
 rounds

In addition to the two monthly specials  
 (\$15), we always have

- Very Veggie \$14
- Cheese \$13
- Pepperoni \$14

### **Month's Specials \$15**

- ❖ Christmas Veggie
- ❖ Greek Gyro



### Sunday worship



[www.fpcberlin.org](http://www.fpcberlin.org)

First Parish Church  
*United Church of Christ and Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations*  
 24 Central St.  
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Winter Solstice  
 December twenty first

Janet Newton, minister  
 Robert Specian, choir director Robert Cunningham, pianist