



*January Worship Theme:
Spiritual Growth and Lifelong Learning*

Sunday, January 1, 2017

Worship at 4pm in the Meetinghouse

I TRIED NOT TRYING

Rev. Dr. Ken Reeves, preaching

"Try not to try," Zen Buddhism advises its practitioners. When that does not work, Zen suggests: "Quit trying not to try." When all else fails: "Quit quitting." But how does 'not trying' square with the will which declares: "I am the master of my fate. I am the captain of my soul"? This service will explore the relationship between spirit and will, and the nature of the spiritual experience.

The Rev. Dr. Ken Reeves is a graduate of the Starr King School for the Ministry in Berkeley, CA, and has served congregations in Ohio and Delaware. He has also earned a Masters in Pastoral Counseling and a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology. He is currently a clinical psychologist with a therapy practice, and a consulting psychologist with the Center for Career Development and Ministry.

Children attend the full service. No childcare available.

No Youth Groups.

Sunday, January 8, 2017

Needham Lyceum at 9:15am in the Parlor

A LYCEUM ON THE SECOND AMENDMENT

Ed Lane, speaking

"A well regulated militia, being necessary for the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed."

We'll begin with its English history and the American debate between the Federalists and Anti-Federalists over the proposed Second Amendment, which became part of the Constitution in 1791. We'll look at the six Supreme Court decisions—1876, 1886, 1929, 1939, 2008, 2010—on the Second Amendment.

We'll look at the current issues and options in the continuing debate on the right to bear arms. You will be surprised at some of these!

Our UUA Beacon Press has published a book; *Guns Don't Kill People, People Kill People, And Other Myths About Guns and Gun Control*, by Dennis A. Henigan.

Ed received the UUA Skinner Award in 1967 for "The Most Significant Sermon of Social Concern," a sermon on the need for gun controls that he wrote fifty years ago.

A Green Sanctuary and a Welcoming Congregation

Worship at 10:30am in the Meetinghouse**A THOUSAND WAYS TO KNEEL AND
KISS THE GROUND****Led by recent youth alumni**

The Muslim poet and scholar Jalal-ad-Din Rumi wrote, "Today, like every other day, //we wake up empty and frightened. //Don't open the door to the study and begin reading. //Take down a musical instrument. //Let the beauty we love be what we do. // There are hundreds of ways to kneel and kiss the ground." To kick off our month on spiritual growth and lifelong learning, Rev. Catie and our youth group alum celebrate this theme with personal stories and hands-on experience. We'll also remember the names of all those who have died or been born in 2016, as is our tradition in early January each year.

Children attend the first 15 minutes followed by Religious Exploration classes. Childcare available for infants and toddlers.

Junior Youth Group meets at 5pm in the Parlor.

Senior Youth Group meets at 7pm in the Parlor.

Sunday, January 15, 2017**Worship at 10:30am in the Meetinghouse****THE SPIRITUALS AND THE BLUES****Rev. Catie Scudera, preaching**

For our multigenerational Martin Luther King Sunday, we will be singing! Come to worship to sing and hear protest songs of the Civil Rights Movement, to learn the history of the individual pieces, and to consider how music from the African-American community has preserved comfort, hope, and resistance for generations.

Children attend the full service. Childcare available for infants and toddlers.

No youth groups.

Sunday, January 22, 2017**Needham Lyceum at 9:15am in the Parlor****MASS INCARCERATION: THE NEW JIM CROW
IS STILL WITH US****John Beardsley, Cassandra Bensahih, John
Bowman**

Massachusetts has more than 90,000 individuals enmeshed in its criminal justice system, including prisoners and parolees, many of them doing time for non-violent crimes. Many of us at First Parish have read the book, *The New Jim Crow* by Michele Alexander, who challenges readers to see how the highly disproportionate number of black people, mostly men, have been locked up for years, many at root because they are black. Black crimes such as drug possession have drawn much harsher penalties for which whites have received much lighter sentences or no jail time at all. Ms. Alexander describes this stark difference as in line with treatment of blacks in earlier periods of U.S. history.

The lyceum on January 22nd will be led by three people. Josh Beardsley is a volunteer with Jobs Not Justice and EPOCA (Ex-prisoners and Prisoners Organizing for Community Advancement). Cassandra Bensahih is Executive Director of EPOCA. John Bowman is a volunteer with Jobs NOT Justice.

They will note that the 90,000 number for Massachusetts people locked up or on parole is well below the figures for most other U.S. states. On that basis some have argued that our state doesn't have a problem. But when we compare ourselves with other developed nations, Massachusetts figures of imprisoned people are much higher. For example, while Massachusetts imprisons 315 per 100,000, the figure in the UK is 147 and that in Germany is 79. And even though our state's number has been dropping slightly in recent years it would take us, at the current rate of decline, some 90 years to catch up. The presentation will conclude with ways in which we can take action to address the issues presented.

**Worship at 10:30am in the Meetinghouse
RESISTING WHITE SUPREMACY –
WHAT’S IN IT FOR WHITE PEOPLE**

Ken Wagner, preaching

(Note that Ken will be leading a seven-part work-
shop series in February, March and April.)

How can I live with courage and integrity when the culture provides unearned benefits to me in my identities as white, male, heterosexual, able-bodied and middle class? How do I navigate the moral ambiguity if I live with some dominant identities and some targeted identities? Is it possible to find spiritual wholeness when those with those advantaged identities have perpetrated so much pain and suffering? How does one navigate the denial and guilt that attaches to those identities in order to stand in solidarity with those targeted for oppression? Explore these questions as Ken Wagner shares part of his journey in grappling with these questions. You may be surprised at the potential for spiritual wholeness and liberation on a very personal level.

Ken Wagner is former president of the Clara Barton District of the UUA, the District Presidents Association, and of First Parish Church of Stow & Acton. He is currently a member of the Northborough congregation. Ken's anti-racism journey began in his congregation a number of years ago in what was called a "white-privilege" group. Since that time, he and his wife Laura, the current executive director of UUMASS Action, have facilitated a number of groups, workshops and film series across New England focused on the examination of race and the impact of white supremacy on our lives. As president of the Clara Barton district, he made identity awareness and training a top priority for the district board, and has facilitated a number of such trainings and workshops at General Assembly and at District gatherings.

He currently serves on the UUA's Nominating Committee and was one of the founding members of the New England Region's Antiracism/Anti-oppression/Multicultural Transformation team called GRACE. He has also served for the last nine years on the Executive Steering Committee of the Allies for Racial Equity and is currently the President of that organization.

Ken has a law degree from the University of Wisconsin and lives with Laura in Marlborough. They have

four children and three grandchildren and he has lots of pictures to share if you absolutely insist on seeing them.

Children attend the first 15 minutes followed by Religious Exploration classes. Childcare available for infants and toddlers.

Senior Youth Group meets at 7 in the Parlor

Sunday, January 29, 2017

**Needham Lyceum at 9:15am in the Parlor
ELECTRIC VEHICLES**

A Lyceum about electric vehicles, with a panel of First Parish congregants who have all-electric or plug-in hybrid vehicles. Also participating will be Maura O’Gara, Energy Programs Coordinator for Mass Energy. She will explain Mass Energy’s Drive Green program, which offers deep discounts that Mass Energy has negotiated on several electric vehicles, including the Nissan Leaf, Chevy Volt, Ford C-Max Energi and Ford Fusion Energi. Deals on the all-electric Chevy Bolt are coming soon. Green Congregation will also have a table at Social Hour on January 29 with information about the Mass Energy program.

**Worship at 10:30am in the Meetinghouse
THE CENTER CANNOT HOLD
Rev. Catie Scudera, preaching**

As we look ahead into 2017, we consider how strong, values-centered leadership is essential for any well-functioning organization, country, and house of worship. We’ll consider how our spiritual practices can help us become more capable, non-anxious, and centered leaders within our families, our congregation, and our wider communities.

Children attend the first 15 minutes followed by Religious Exploration classes. Childcare available for infants and toddlers.

Junior Youth Group meets at 5pm in the Parlor.

Senior Youth Group meets at 7pm in the Parlor.



Reminder about Theme-Based Ministry Trial

2016-17 is the second year of a 2-year trial of “themed ministry”. The approach weaves together

worship, education, small group ministry, spiritual practices and other aspects of community life around common monthly themes. Themed church, we hope, will deepen our experience together and illuminate the shared values in our faith tradition. Themes for the year include:

- January's theme will be *Spiritual Growth & Lifelong Learning*
- February's theme will be *Risk*

More info can be found by searching the website (www.uuneedham.org) for "theme-based ministry". If you have questions or feedback on this approach, please don't hesitate to share them with Reverend Catie or a member of the Worship Committee.

Rev. Catie's Column Alleviating our Election Anxiety



Two months ago, our DLRE Mark LaPointe helped our congregation cope with "election stress": together, he and I led an evening election anxiety workshop; he led us in a Time for All Ages about different stress-relief techniques; and, he published a [blog article](#) with his top tips. As time marches on toward the inauguration of Donald Trump as the United States' president — a man who has advocated for an assortment of policies outside our UU values, including an uncompassionate mass deportation of undocumented immigrants, an anti-pluralistic Muslim immigration ban or resident registry, an unscientific and dangerous denial of climate change, and changes to healthcare access and Social Security that would lessen support for already-vulnerable Americans — I thought we might want to be reminded of the ways we can de-stress, rest in our core selves, and stay courageous and committed to justice.

First, of course, we have to acknowledge and accept that we have feelings of anxiety, stress, and fear. Though I've read many arguments that a stress response to November's election is an "overreaction," I absolutely disagree. The folks I know (myself included!) who have felt concerned and afraid after the election are having understandable emotional responses to a sudden and unpleasant change in our realities. As [The Atlantic explains](#), "Women and people of color have good reason to be anxious, given the sexist and racist things Trump said during the campaign, given his threats against the women who accused him of sexual assault, given how he has painted Mexicans as criminals, given that he was endorsed by the Ku Klux Klan, given so, so many things. People have very real fears rooted in policies Trump has promised to enact in office." This is not even to mention that the Southern Poverty Law Center has tracked over [one thousand hateful incidents](#) since Election Day, many of which were directly attributed by perpetrators to Trump's election. Fifty-three of those incidents took place in Massachusetts. In the *New York Times*, the combined shocks of the election results and its aftermath of hateful incidents and hate crimes was deemed a "[collective trauma](#)." I encourage anyone who is feeling upset about the election to talk about it with their loved ones, the church's Pastoral Care team members, or a professional therapist.

So, for those of us who have been experiencing heightened levels of distress since Election Day, how can we take good care of ourselves leading up to and then on Inauguration Day?

Much of what Mark shared with us in November is still very good advice: limiting our media intake so we're not in constant "consumer" mode, making time for things we enjoy (like art, music, and the outdoors), and attending to worship and other church events (our common, communal spiritual practices). We want to stay dedicated any of our other spiritual practices — dialogue with friends, meditation and prayer, yoga and dance, art and singing, etc. — as centering activities help us stay calm and focused even in the midst of chaos and despair. We can consider which of our Unitarian Universalist [Six Sources](#) will help each of us the most this month, and in the coming months and years. We ought to remember to include some time at least once a week

with the Source that most feeds our souls. Committing ourselves to ongoing healthy routines of exercise, eating and hydrating, and socializing will give us great benefit in the short- and long-term.

As for Inauguration Weekend itself, we can opt not to watch the ceremony itself live. Especially in the internet age, we can choose to watch a highlight reel or short clips later on, if we feel committed to seeing it. And, for those of us who do plan to watch, we can give ourselves permission to turn it off if our anxiety levels are rising and take brief breaks to do something that rejuvenates our spirits. There are also great local events happening that weekend, if we feel soothed by being with community: a small group in the town of Needham is developing an interfaith vigil the evening of the Inauguration (more details to come); the Women's March has a branch event in downtown Boston on Saturday the 21st and many First Parishioners plan to commute and attend together; and, that Sunday the 22nd (while I'm recovering from participating in the Women's March down in D.C.), guest preacher Ken Wagner will share his journey with the spiritual practice of anti-racism and how that can sustain us in the coming years.

And, instead of despairing about the incoming administration's policy plans, we can make a New Year's resolution to uphold the mission, vision, covenant, and Principles of our church and faith; protect the vulnerable through charitable work and legislative pressure; and continue to advocate for progressive values in our families, neighborhoods, and larger society. 2017 is a new beginning for us all, and we needn't resign ourselves to hopelessness before it's even begun. With the support of our beloved community at First Parish, our loving family members and friends, and our deeper connection to our values and a Larger Love, we will continue to influence and build a better America for everyone.

- *Rev. Catie*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Conversations About Race

The Racial Justice Task Force invites you to conversations from January to June to deepen our understanding and our commitment to help 'bend the arc of the moral universe toward justice' in our own time.

Whether what works for you is a movie night, a Lyceum, an in-depth workshop series, or holing up with a book, please join in! Now more than ever, it's clear that we are all in this together – how can we live into our UU values in an unjust world? Here's the line-up for January and early February — look for more detailed info on each event elsewhere in *The Bellman*:

- Our **Common Read book** will be announced in January – stay tuned!
- Monday, January 9, 7-9 pm: Black Lives of UU Conversation with Kenny Wiley (Parlor). See p. 7.
- Monday, January 16: Town-wide celebration of Martin Luther King's birthday, Needham High School
- Sunday, January 22: Lyceum: Mass Incarceration: The New Jim Crow is Still With Us. See p. 2.
- Sunday, January 22: Sermon by Ken Wagner. See p. 3.
- Sunday, January 29, 4:30 – 7 pm: Screening of "13th" followed by pizza and discussion. See p. 9.
- Thursday, February 9, 16, March 2, 9, 16, 30, and April 6 - Workshop Series with Ken Wagner.

Please Note: The Icons art exhibition scheduled for March 4-5 has been postponed, but will be rescheduled.

New Year's Needham at First Parish

As usual, First Parish will be a hub of activity for the New Year's Needham celebration. All events in Parish Hall. This year's schedule includes:

- **3pm — The Great Plain Squares.** Have fun with fast-paced energizing square dancing. No experience needed.
- **5:30pm — West Newton Ceili Band.** The West Newton Ceili Band delights you with jigs, reels, and other dance tunes, as well as soulful singing of Irish ballads. Come experience the sound of a fine traditional Irish session!
- **8—9pm — Meeting Across the Water.** Exploring gospel and American roots music from the 1850s to the present, including black gospel street tunes from the mid-1900s and post-World War II music, along with band members' original folk and gospel tunes. The band's music springs from

the band 's deeply-held belief that African-American and white spiritual traditions can inspire and connect with each other. MATW concerts are joyful , uplifting, audience-involving celebrations and explorations of the human condition.

- **9—10pm — Carolyn Waters.** A Homegrown favorite, Carolyn fuses blues, jazz, roots and other musical genres as she performs from her catalog of beautifully crafted original songs and carefully selected covers. Her voice and stage presence have been described as powerful, soulful, rare, head turning, captivating and compelling. Come hear why Carolyn is the performer music lovers look forward to every year.
- **10—?? — Chris Pahud and the Rounders.** Eclectic evening of folk music, poetry, and a touch of indie. Chris Pahud, Tom Smith, Cheryl Perreault, and Steve Rapson are back with guest poet Bill Thibodeau. Bill, a founding member of the Carpenter Poets of Jamaica Plain, performs his poetry throughout Greater Boston, and has appeared on PBS and The Hallmark Channel. He joins one of NYN's longest-running shows—Chris Pahud and the Rounders—ever popular for their fun, home-spun, original folk sound. Come smile, nod along, and welcome in the new year with music that stands the test of time and spoken word performances that enchant.

\$5 NYN button are required for admission and can be bought at the venue or at several local stores. For more info, visit www.newyearsneedham.org/

What Are We Called To Do?

In these dark days for environmental protection, can we make progress on our Commit2Respond pledge to reduce carbon emissions and work for eco justice? Yes, we can -- and at this time it is more crucial than ever to do so. During the month of January, watch for creative Actions of the Week from the Green Congregation Committee. Our efforts will culminate in a community showing of the climate change film *A Time to Choose* on Sunday, February 12 at 3pm in the Sanctuary. The 90-minute film by Oscar-winning documentary director Charles Ferguson is a hard-hitting yet hopeful film. It will be followed by a discussion of concrete steps to address climate change as well as informational tables from

local groups.

Not Too Late to Sign Up for Friendly Feasts!

There is still time to sign up to participate in a **Friendly Feast**, returning this month and happening through June, as **Pot Luck** dinners! Meet new people and greet old friends. There is an opportunity for you to host if you wish. Contact Helen Lane at helen-blane@gmail.com, or Lyn Jekowsky at lynjekowsky@comcast.net for more information or to sign up.

Help Decorate First Parish with Your Photos

One of the tasks of the Interior Arrangement Committee is to display interesting, engaging artifacts and pictures in the church. To showcase the vibrant life at First Parish, we would like to display rotating photos that feature the many activities that people are involved in. If you are involved in such an event, please email us your photos at maryann.oldfield@gmail.com or amycicala293@gmail.com. We will be enlarging and putting up changing photos in the hallway outside Parish Hall. If you don't want to have your photo shown, please let us know.

Lincoln Street Elevator on the Fritz

The Lincoln Street entry elevator is out of service until we receive a new motor in the New Year. If you are unable to use the stairs please use the front entrance ramp to the church until the elevator has been repaired. We regret this inconvenience and are glad that we have this alternative access.

Office Holiday Hours

Please note that the office is closed for the holidays Friday, December 23rd – Monday, January 2nd.

FIRST PARISH PROGRAMMING

Worship at North Hill

Wednesday, January 4, 10-11am

Event Center, 4th floor of Pines Edge at North Hill

North Hill residents and friends are invited to an intimate Unitarian Universalist worship service led by Rev. Catie. All are welcome!

Meditation Group

The Meditation Group will meet every Wednesday evening in January from 7:30 to 8:30 in the Youth Room. We welcome all to an informal hour of mindfulness, of calm, in your busy week. Contact [Lyn Jekowsky](#) or [Lynne Rachlis](#) for more information.

Homegrown Presents Hatrack Gallagher and Friends

Saturday, January 7, 8pm; doors open at 7:30

Everything that Patrick “Hatrack” Gallagher plays — the feeling and heart of every performance he gives — is shaped and informed by the blues. (He also boasts one of the best nicknames in music.) He learned his craft at the knees of Peg Leg Sam Jackson, Sonny Terry, Hammie Nixon, Furry Lewis, Bukka White, Roosevelt Sykes, Robert Pete Williams and others. He *knows* how it’s supposed to be done, and he brings it all with him when he plays. The “it” is blues harmonica – blues harp to be precise – and we haven’t heard anyone better since Paul Butterfield was around to pound out Chicago-style blues. For this show, Hatrack brings along his three friends — jazz pianist and regular side man Ric Mauré, with his fabulous blues chops, Jim Guttman, founder of Bessarabian Breakdown, on bass, and Mike Avery on percussion. Tickets and details available online at uuneedham.org/homegrown-coffeehouse. Contact Jim Sargent to volunteer.

Upcoming Grief and Loss Support Group

Sunday, January 8, 12-1:30pm in Classroom 3

Loss is a universally shared aspect of our lives. Research tells us that the support of others can lighten the burden of grief when we’ve suffered the loss of a loved one, a job, a relationship, or one’s health, as examples. This group is for those seeking mutual support in their loss, and is facilitated by Andrea Goldberg, licensed social worker and First Parish member, who brings both professional and personal perspective to this topic.

Caregivers’ Support Group

The **Caregivers’ Support Group**, which usually meets the 1st and 3rd Sundays of each month, will meet the 2nd and 4th Sundays in January due to holidays. We will meet in January, on Sundays, January 8th and

22nd, at 12 pm following social hour, downstairs in the Youth Room. If you are caring for a loved one, from nearby or afar, please come to a meeting, we welcome you. Come to listen or to share, in a safe and supportive atmosphere.

Our meetings are confidential.

Facilitator: Lyn Jekowsky lynjekowsky@comcast.net

Black Lives of UU

Conversation with Kenny Wiley

Monday, January 9th, 7-9 pm in the Parlor

Join the Racial Justice Task Force for a conversation with *UU World* senior editor Kenny Wiley about Black Lives Matter from a Unitarian Universalist perspective. Wiley is a leader in Black Lives Matter: 5280 of Colorado and the national Black Lives of UU movement; he also serves as the Director of Faith Formation at Prairie UU Church outside of Denver.

Positively Aging

Positively Aging will meet Tuesday, January 10 at 4pm in the parlor with a special speaker focused on the economy. He will be sharing observations on the current state of the economy, changes that we might anticipate with the new administration, and the ways that economic changes affect people our ages. More details will come later.

Please bring your questions.

Rather than have supper afterwards, we will have drinks and snacks, with opportunity to have the wonderful conversations we all enjoy.

The Positively Aging Planning Team: Helen Lane, Fred Kresse, Phyllis Beck and Kay Taylor

Parish Committee

Wednesday, January 11, at 7pm in the Parlor.



First Parishioners at the Women's Marches in Boston & DC

January 21, 2017, 10 am, Boston Common and Washington, D.C.

Members of First Parish in Needham plan to attend the Women's Marches taking place in Boston (<https://www.facebook.com/events/1907531039490905/>) and Washington, D.C. (www.womensmarch.com), on January 21st. There is more info on page 11 and additional links on uneedham.org.

The First Parish in Wayland has arranged for a bus and hotel rooms to go to the march, as advertised in the *Bell Notes*. If you're interested in participating in the local march in Boston, please be in touch with Rev. Catie and Susan McGarvey (susanbmcgarvey@gmail.com). If you're traveling to Washington, please be in touch with Rev. Catie.

Homegrown Presents Jacqueline Schwab with special guest Willie Sordillo

Saturday, January 21, 8pm; doors open at 7:30

"Jacqueline Schwab is one of the most immediately recognizable pianists in America, although very few people actually know who she is."

Scott Alarik, *The Boston Globe*

Jacqueline Schwab is a folk and classical improvisational pianist, familiar to many through her work on Ken Burns' *The Civil War* and other documentaries. Her style defies easy categorization, fitting somewhere in the crossover between folk, traditional, classical and new age music. Although many connect improvisation with jazz, her inspirations include traditional music of Great Britain and America, blues, vintage tangos, Bach's dance suites, 19-century parlor piano, and the turn-of-the-20th-century sounds of Satie, Debussy and Bartok for starters. Tickets and details available at uneedham.org/homegrown-coffeehouse. Contact Jim Sargent to volunteer.

Bellman Target Date

The target date for submitting items to the **February Bellman** is Sunday, January 22.

Green Congregation Committee

Sunday, January 22 at noon in the Parlor

The Big Questions Forum

Tuesday, January 24, 7:30pm in the Parlor

Join fellow First Parishioners for some in-depth exploration of some of life's most vexing questions. Watch the *Bell Notes* and website for more info on this month's topic.

Join Rev. Catie and the Lunch Bunch

Wednesday, January 25th, 12:30pm in Parish Hall

Rev. Catie is hosting members and friends of First Parish for a monthly brown-bag lunch date. In the past, this gathering has been primarily for "elders and friends" of First Parish, but the attendees have requested for the lunch to be advertised as open to people of all ages! Catie will provide a sweet treat for dessert. RSVP to Catie and Buffy Duhig, particularly if you need assistance with a ride to the church.

Social Action Committee

Wednesday, January 25, 7pm in the Youth Room

RE Teacher Soiree!

Friday, January 27 from 7-9 pm, in the parlor

To All RE Teachers for the 2016-2017 Year: You are invited to the Teacher Soiree where the RE Committee will be serving appetizers and drinks. This soiree is meant as a fun, informal "thank you" for your efforts this year. It will also give you a chance to meet your co-teacher (if you haven't already), and the other teachers leading your grade this year as we prepare for cross-over Sunday on January 29. We're looking forward to seeing you there!

Becoming a Sexually Safer Congregation

Saturday, January 28th, 10am – 2pm in Parish Hall

Our congregation is hosting the [New England Region of the UUA](#) for a practical workshop on Safe Congregations policies and best practices. First Parish members who volunteer to assist at this event can attend at no cost. Please be in touch with Rev. Catie or [register online](#) if you're interested.

Screening of “13th” followed by pizza

Sunday, Jan 29, 4:30-7 pm

View the outstanding new film, “13th”, followed by pizza and discussion. Critic Ty Burr wrote that “13th” is “among the very best movies of 2016...and probably the most important.” The film illuminates the crucially important and little-known history of the 13th Amendment to our Constitution, passed in 1865 and intended to abolish slavery. A crucial loophole in its language is playing out in our lives today in the form of mass incarceration. Directed by Ava DuVernay, who also directed “Selma.”

Sunday Night Book Club

The next meeting will be Jan. 29th at the home of Nancy Temple, 341 West St., 7:30pm. The book for discussion is **Stoner** by John Williams. Everyone is welcome.

FROM THE FIRST PARISH BLOG

Cuba and Fidel Castro

By Ed Lane

I'm not an apologist for Fidel Castro. He committed many atrocities after he came to power in 1959 having lead the revolution against Fulgencio Batista. One of my major concerns about U.S. foreign policy is that decisions are too often made in the absence of the historical context of issue in question. That is at the heart of the 57-year-relationship between Castro's Cuba and the U.S. and remains so today in spite of diplomatic recognition and reopening of embassies. (The trade embargo, created by an act of congress is still in effect.)

To get an historical perspective on Cuba we need to go back 83 years to March 1933 when FDR said in his inaugural address: “... I would dedicate this nation to the policy of the good neighbor—the neighbor who resolutely respects himself and, because he does so, respects the rights of others.”

A month later U.S. Ambassador Sumner Welles went to Cuba to mediate differences between political factions there. He met Fulgencio Batista, a recently self-appointed Chief of the Military. “You're the only individual in Cuba today who represents authority,” he said to Batista. Batista asked what the U.S.

“wanted done for recognition,” Welles replied, “... the matter of your government is a Cuban matter and it is for you to decide what you will do about it.” Batista took that as an invitation to take over. Five months later in a coup d'état he overthrew the liberal government of Gerardo Machado and took over the Cuban government.

Four months later in January 1934 he forced the resignation of the president, a liberal on social and economic issues. Five days after that the U.S. recognized Cuba's new government.

Batista ruled through a series of puppet presidents, but in 1940 was elected to that office, defeating the liberal president he had forced out six years earlier. But in Cuba the rich were getting richer and the poor were getting poorer and in 1944 that same liberal defeated Batista. He went to Florida, lived in luxury, and ran for and won a seat in the Cuban senate, then ran again for president. Polls showed he would suffer a severe loss and on March 10, 1952—three months before the election—he regained power through a second coup. Seventeen days later President Eisenhower again recognized Batista's new government.

Batista had many close friends in the mafia, and gambling and drugs thrived. He was blatantly corrupt. His political opponents were sometimes assassinated or just mysteriously disappeared. U.S. corporations, in return for “sweetheart” business deals, amply rewarded him. Gangster Meyer Lansky was running the gambling operation and the drug business.

On July 26, 1953 a small group of rebels led by Fidel Castro attacked an army barracks. It failed. Some were killed. Castro and others were jailed. Still the revolution continued. Batista was so convinced of his power that he even released Castro and others who had attacked the army barracks—a move he soon regretted. They fled to Mexico to plan the continued revolution.

In December of 1956 the Castro brothers and Che Guevara returned from Mexico to Cuba and that was the beginning of the real armed conflict. The U.S. dropped its support of Batista but did not support the rebels. Two years later it was over. On January 1, 1959, Batista formally resigned and that night several flights out of Camp Colombia took major

figures in his government to Miami, New York, New Orleans and Jacksonville. Batista—taking a fortune of over \$300,000,000—his family and closest associates went to the Dominican Republic. He and his family eventually went on to Portugal where he died fourteen years later.

I can vividly remember the mood of the country over the Cuban conflict. Batista was such a corrupt tyrant that there was open discussion about whether we should have not only dropped our support of Batista but also supported the rebels. But they were Communists so we didn't. This was the era of McCarthyism and the cold war and Communism was monolithic—Soviet Union style.

Instead, on October 1960 President Eisenhower placed an economic embargo on Cuba and diplomatic relations were severed the following year. (Over the years several acts of congress perpetuated the embargo.) We even launched the Bay of Pigs fiasco in an attempt to overthrow the Castro government. We were doing all that we could to make the Castro government fail. With our economic clout in the Western Hemisphere other Latin American nations felt they had to support the embargo lest they lose their trade with the U.S.

There is no question that the economic embargo has hurt Cuba, but some questions need to be raised:

Did it give the Castros an alibi to cover their own mistakes? They have blamed the U.S. for almost everything that has gone wrong in Cuba—not all of them caused by the embargo.

Being blocked from much trade in this hemisphere surely forced Cuba to look elsewhere for commercial exchange. Did our embargo and non-recognition push Cuba toward the Soviet Union?

My speculations: What if once it was clear that the Castro government was clearly the de facto government of Cuba, we had (1) diplomatically recognized it? (2) Engaged in commercial trade and helped to rebuild Cuba after it's disastrous years of the tyrant and corrupt Batista? After all, we were a large factor in putting him in power and keeping him there until almost the end. (3) Had we done that I wonder if the Cuban missile crisis would have happened? (4) Would it have improved our relationships with Latin American countries, as well as the rest of the world? Most of them carried on diplomatic relations and trade with Cuba years ago.

First Parish in Needham, Unitarian Universalist

Find the most complete and up-to-date information about worship, events, and programs at First Parish on our website, www.uuneedham.org.

Minister: Rev. Catie Scudera; 781-514-5464; Minister@uuneedham.org

Director of Lifespan Religious Education: Mark LaPointe; 781-444-0823; dre@uuneedham.org

Lifespan Religious Education Assistant: Jennifer Duhamel; 781-444-0823; reassistant@gmail.com

Youth Programs Coordinator: Kate Loftus-Campe, youth@uuneedham.org

Music Director: Irina Georgieva; 585-319-1196; Music@uuneedham.com

Asst Music Director for Youth & Intergenerational Programs: Kate Loftus-Campe, Kidsmusic@uuneedham.com

Administrator: Susanna Whitman; 781-444-0823; office@uuneedham.org

The Parish Committee: Gail Hedges (President), Beth Sargent, (Vice President), Erik Bailey (Treasurer), Marguerite Robbins (Clerk),
Members-at-large: Eliot Jekowsky, Geoff Austrian, Katie Edwards, Kristen Neff, Joan Mecasas, Suzanne Smart.

Bellman Information: The deadline for the **January Bellman** will be **Sunday, January 22**. Please send all website, *Bellman* and *Bell Note* items to bellman@uuneedham.org.

This issue compiled, edited and produced by David Mecasas.

To receive **The Bellman** call or email Susanna Whitman at 781-444-0823 or office@uuneedham.org.

Info for UUs

About the January 21 Events in Washington, DC

Links available at www.uuneedham.org/womens-march

HOUSING

All Souls Church still has many spaces available in their B&B and Couch-Surfing program! [Click here](#) and scroll down to "Women's March on Washington". Other DC-area congregations may have space as well; [click here](#) for the combined list of homestay offerings.

EVENTS

10:00 AM - 5:00 PM [Women's March on Washington](#)



As of December 20, March organizers had set a starting point (the intersection of Independence Ave and Third Street SW, near the U.S. Capitol) but had not yet provided info about where people will line up. Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice (UUSJ) will identify a meeting place as soon as it possible to do so. [Join this facebook group](#) or [check the UUSJ website](#) to link up with the UU contingent.

2:00 PM - 8:30 PM [J21 Teach-In at All Souls Church](#)



The teach-ins--led by Public Citizen and many other groups, including the All Souls Church Reeb Voting Rights Project--will be focused on the challenges facing our democracy and the basic rights of women, immigrants, Muslims, racial and economic justice, and the environment that we all need to survive. This event is planned as a complement to the Women's March with the full support of the March organizers. Registration is required. More info and registration at <http://pubcit.co/j21teachin/>.

5:00 PM - 6:45 PM **Post-March Welcome Gathering at All Souls for UU Marchers**



Unitarian Universalists from the DC area and across the country are invited to warm up and meet each other at [All Souls Church](#), located near the Columbia Heights Metro and numerous bus routes. Light snacks and warm beverages and will be provided, and there will be food trucks serving simple hot meals for anyone who wants dinner.

6:45 PM - 7:45 PM **Solidarity Sing**



A unique singing event that reflects our commitment to sanctuary and solidarity. We will learn and sing Leonard Cohen's "[Anthem](#)" by candlelight in the All Souls Sanctuary. It will be recorded and made into a shareable video. Open to everyone--families are especially welcome! A joint event between All Souls and the J21 Teach-In.

7:45 PM - 8:30 PM **Closing Session**



All are invited to the closing session of the J21 conference. A joint event between All Souls and the J21 Teach-In. Speakers TBA.