

FIRST PARISH OF WESTWOOD, UCC

Growing Faith + Sharing Love + Grounding Lives



February 25, 2021

A Letter from Rev. Jill Edens

Dear Friends,

On Monday the bell of the National Cathedral rang 500 times. That evening President Biden, standing in front of the White House draped in black bunting and lit by 500 candles, reflected on the loss of over 500,000 Americans to Covid-19 by remembering his own:



"I know what it's like to not be there when it happens," he said. "I know what it's like when you are there, holding your hands, looking in their eyes as they slip away."

"That's how you heal, you have to remember. The day will come when the memory of the loved one you lost will bring a smile to your lips before a tear to your eye," he added, saying that "for me the way through sorrow and grief is to find purpose."

No preacher has offered a better sermon. We in the church can learn from his gift of vulnerability, faith and kindness. We will not bury our sorrow and grief but, with God's help, we will find our way through it, finding purpose in a deepening capacity for human compassion.

Sunday Worship, February 28

This Sunday, February 28, is the **Second Sunday in Lent**. Our Lenten journey towards the celebration of *life being made new* on Easter is a time to reflect on *what matters, what creates a consequential life*.

Flannery O'Connor captured the dissonance of Good Friday and Easter when she wrote, "*All human nature vigorously resists grace because grace changes us and the change is painful.*" I don't have to be an oil company (or invested in one) to experience resistance to the change that is being required to move away from the use of fossil fuel contributing to our climate crisis. There is not going to be new life without changing life as we know it. Jesus captured that tension as well in his statement, "*For what will it profit to gain the whole world and forfeit your life?*"



Join First Parish for worship this Sunday, February 28, as we continue gathering virtually on Facebook (at <https://www.facebook.com/First-Parish-of-Westwood-120302557982716>). Invite a friend to join you.

This week in worship **Jesse Aguilar**, assisted by **Fina**, will ring the hour, **Nancy Hyde** and **Bob Deininger** will welcome you, **Richard Edens** will have a children's message based on the book, *The Wonderful Things You Will Be*, **Bob Deininger** will also read the Gospel lesson, **Sarah Tocco** will offer music, and **Richard Edens** will preach.

Grace and peace,
Jill & Richard Edens

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE IN WORSHIP DURING LENT

Revs. Richard and Jill Edens are including a children's component in worship during Lent. As the Hebrew Scriptures in Lent follow various covenants made between God and God's people, our hope is to find a fresh expression of those familiar covenants for each Sunday. For example, last Sunday was the Covenant with Noah and this week will be the Covenant with Abraham and Sarah.

One Great Hour of Sharing



Let Your Love Flow **ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING – March 21, 2021**

The One Great Hour of Sharing offering is an all-church offering within the United Church of Christ, but it is also an offering received in multiple denominations. A portion of the offering is held used to address emergencies (floods, hurricanes, war, famine, etc.) and a portion is used for development that can help break the cycle of poverty and misfortune.

This year's theme is **Let Love Flow** as water projects are stressed. Over the next several weeks stories will be shared, and you are invited to send a offering to First Parish, 252

Blessing the Pastoral Search Committee

Following Zoom Communion on March 7

Join your Moderator, Sharon Hobbs, and the Pastoral Search Committee on March 7 following our monthly Zoom Communion to bless our Pastoral Search and those who have agreed to serve on the Pastoral Search Committee (Nancy Hyde, Bob Deininger, Dave Blomquist, Landon Bayer, Dan Der Marderosian, Pam Kane, Kathy Davis and Amie Colcord).

As previously announced, the church's profile has been posted and profiles from possible pastors are being received. In March the Committee's discernment will begin!

In the literature about Search and Call from the United Church of Christ it is written: *Just as the local church is not "our" church but rather God's, so too the Search Committee is really God's committee. A search for a new pastor is one of the most spiritual ministries in the church. The selection of Search Committee members is a task that is approached with prayer, wisdom, sensitivity, and awareness that God may be calling certain church members to consider serving in this particular capacity.*

Join us on March 7 to bless this search and to check-in with the committee as their discernment begins. For reasons of confidentiality, it is common for Search Committees to go quiet during this discernment. This would be a good time to join in the blessing and ask any general questions that you may have.

Lenten Bible Study Continues at a new time...7:30pm

LENTEN BIBLE STUDY
TUESDAY, March 9, 7:30PM
Zoom Bible Study,
(<https://zoom.us/j/95721703863>)



Join your pastors and other church friends for Bible study on **Tuesday, March 9 at 7:30pm via Zoom** (<https://zoom.us/j/95721703863>). We will look at the lectionary readings for Sundays, Lent 4 and Lent 5

- Lent 4, March 14, John 3:14-21 – John uses a story from the wilderness narrative in which poisonous serpents symbolic of God's wrath are overcome by the lifting of a bronze serpent. The gospel writer uses this image as a parallel to proclaim how the lifting of the Son on the cross was not to condemn but to save.
- Lent 5, March 21, John 12:20-33 – John has Jesus use an agricultural image that life-giving wheat does not grow without first falling into the ground and dying. If Lent (now in week five) is a catechetical or instructional time in the life of disciples, perhaps the question being posed is "Can we trust *dying-in-order-to-live*?"

Prepare for worship by joining us as we converse about these texts for our Lenten worship via **Zoom** (<https://zoom.us/j/95721703863>). As we have learned no time is right for everyone. If you are able, please join us. If you are interested, and this is not a good time, please let us know (jrichardedens@gmail.com) or (jillredens@gmail.com).

Interested Persons' Gathering - Sunday, March 14 @ 10:30

<https://zoom.us/j/91584318770>



If so, please gather with us via **Zoom** (<https://zoom.us/j/91584318770>) on **Sunday morning, March 14, at 10:30am**. We look forward to getting better acquainted with you, listening to your questions, and discovering your interests.

We will have a representative from the Pastoral Search Committee with us to answer your questions about what First Parish has learned about itself, what we believe the future portends for First Parish and who we are seeking to provide pastoral leadership.

The light at the end of this pandemic tunnel is getting brighter. We don't have an exact date but soon we will be able to gather for worship, talk over coffee, circle for prayer, study God's Word, offer a helping hand, and practice our faith together. Even now, a new future is being formed here at First Parish of Westwood.

Questions? Please contact us. Jill Edens, jillredens@gmail.com, 919-357-3914 or Richard Edens, jrichardedens@gmail.com, 919-357-3913

Welcome Videos Requested



We are currently seeking volunteers to do a "Welcome to service at First Parish" video. We encourage you to get creative and have fun.

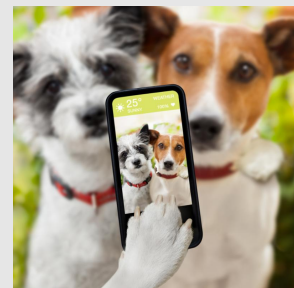
If you have questions, contact Amie Colcord at amiecolcord@gmail.com. Please submit completed videos to Doug Hyde at dkhydema@gmail.com.

Send a Selfie!

During the year, Meg will be working on compiling a "homemade" pictorial directory as a gift for our new settled Pastor.

Pastors Rick and Jill Edens invite you to email Meg a "selfie" of you/your family. Please send all pictures to: office@firstparishwestwood.org.

Feel free to get creative!



To read our Winter 2021 Spire Newsletter, please [click here](#).

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STAY CONNECTED



