

FIRST PARISH OF WESTWOOD, UCC

Growing Faith + Sharing Love + Grounding Lives



February 18, 2021

A Letter from Rev. Jill Edens

Dear Friends,

Susan Beaumont, a congregational consultant with whom Rick and I were fortunate to work over a period of years, writes this about "**Ministry in a Liminal Season**":

We are eager to imagine life beyond COVID. Unfortunately, we are still in a season of not knowing. Will the vaccine be effective and allow a safe return to in person engagement? Which of our constituents will be back and will new online followers stay connected? Anxiety builds as we look toward a year that involves so many unknowns. How can we plan when we don't know what is to come?

Paul Shoemaker from the Wharton School reminds us that we are likely to make one of two fundamental errors when planning in seasons of great unpredictability. We may **underpredict** the amount of change on the horizon. *"As soon as a vaccine is widely available, we will be able to return to life and ministry as we knew it in 2019."* This approach leads to stagnation and the absence of adaptation. Most organizations make this error. Alternatively, we may **overpredict** the amount of change on the horizon. *"Nothing familiar will remain. We are going to have to reinvent everything!"* This approach often



leads to paralysis, or self-fulfilling predictions of contraction.

A solution? Consider scenario planning. Scenario planning is a disciplined method for imagining possible futures. You chart a middle ground between underpredicting and over predicting change. You do not have to identify all future possibilities to do effective scenario planning. You do need to name key uncertainties and imagine plausible, relevant scenarios. Scenario planning acknowledges the existence of three classes of knowledge:

- **Things we know we know.** Traditional planning approaches project these things forward, recognizing that there is continuity and momentum in the world of the Church.
- **Things we know we don't know.** This is the body of knowledge that we know will impact us, we just don't know how—yet.
- **Things we don't know we don't know.** This is the category that presents the biggest challenge in planning. The emergence of pandemic, political upheaval and natural disasters all fall into this category.

Traditional planning approaches invite us to work with the things we know. Scenario planning invites us to engage the last two categories of knowledge. Scenario planning requires intellectual courage to embrace evidence that does not fit our current conceptual maps . . .

First Parish is in a "liminal season." In addition to all the unknowns that Susan Beaumont identifies, we have the additional unknowns of a pastoral search and a newly installed conference staff. Imagining scenarios is a completely reasonable exercise for us, and this interim period gives us an advantage! Because of the structure and schedule imposed by the search process, there is much we have learned about ourselves in the past six months plus more that will be learned as the search committee meets candidates for this ministry. This is a time for prayerful imagination. Let God work in and through us as we imagine possible scenarios for how we might be engaged in ministry with what will certainly be new challenges and new possibilities for First Parish in the years to come.

Onward! Jill Edens

Worship on Sunday ... with a Children's Message

This Sunday is the First Sunday of Lent.

During Lent, we will include a children's component of worship – usually the Hebrew Scriptures designated for the Sunday as this Lent we are journeying through the great covenants in preparation for Easter. On this first Sunday we will hear of God's covenant with Noah.

You will find our worship service on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/First-Parish-of-Westwood-120302557982716>. **Jesse Aguilar**, assisted by **Fina**, will ring the hour, **Kathleen Davis** will read the Gospel lesson, **Sarah Tocco** will offer music and the **First Parish Choir** will sing.

Grace and peace,
Jill & Richard

Lenten Bible Study Continues...

LENTEN BIBLE STUDY
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 5PM
Zoom Bible Study, (<https://zoom.us/j/95721703863>)

Join your pastors and other church friends for Bible study on Tuesday, February 23 at 5pm via Zoom (<https://zoom.us/j/95721703863>).



We will look at the lectionary readings for Sundays, February 28 (Lent 2) and March 7 (Lent 3).

- **Lent 2, February 28, Mark 8:31-38** – This is Jesus' first prediction of his suffering, death and resurrection. Peter challenges that the way of Jesus will be the way of cross. But continues inviting those who will follow to take up their cross for what does it profit a person to gain the whole world and forfeit their life?
- **Lent 3, March 7, John 2:13-22** – Unlike the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) which gradually build the tension between Jesus and those in authority, John's Gospel leads with the story of the cleansing of the Temple. From the beginning of his ministry, Jesus is objecting to the way those in authority are using or desecrating the Temple.

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).

POST-EVENT Conversation with CITY MISSION

February 25, 7pm

Register at <https://citymissionboston.org/>

City Mission Boston and Old South Church invite you to join in a virtual panel discussion and conversation about the history of the Black Church in America. This discussion will follow the PBS Series, **The Black Church: This Is Our Story, This Is Our Song** from executive producer, host and writer Dr. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. The panel and discussion will be led by The Rev. Inez Dover, Minister of Worship and Arts at the Historic Myrtle Baptist Church in Newton and Vice President of the City Mission Board of Directors. The panelists include:

Rev. Darrell Goodwin, Executive Conference Minister, SNEUCC

Rev. Alicia Marie Johnson, Asst. Pastor of the Historic Myrtle Baptist Church of West

Newton **Rev. Mariama White-Hammond**, Founding Pastor, New Roots A.M.E. Church in Dorchester.

The event is free and will take place on **Thursday, February 25th from 7pm – 8:30pm**. Registration is required. A link to the event will be provided in the registration confirmation email.

**THE
BLACK
CHURCH**
THIS IS OUR STORY
THIS IS OUR SONG

A Note from our Faith Community Nurse, Margery Eramo

The following was shared by Elsa Marshall from our SNE area office:

DO YOU WANT TO FAST THIS LENT?

In the words of Pope Francis

- Fast from hurting words and say kind words.
- Fast from sadness and be filled with gratitude.
- Fast from anger and be filled with patience.
- Fast from pessimism and be filled with hope.
- Fast from worries and have trust in God.
- Fast from complaints and contemplate simplicity.
- Fast from pressures and be prayerful.
- Fast from bitterness and fill your hearts with joy.
- Fast from selfishness and be compassionate to others.
- Fast from grudges and be reconciled.
- Fast from words and be silent so you can listen.

pietrafitness.com



Pastoral Search Committee Update



the new First Parish – Westwood web site which went live last weekend! (Here is a **direct link** to the web site.)

The Local Church Profile, which was assembled over the past several weeks by the Transition Committee, has been posted on the national Ministerial Opportunities web site **click here**. Additionally, if you look at the posting you will see the link to

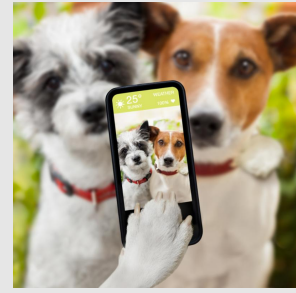
The Search Committee met two weeks ago to start organizing to receive and review profiles from interested candidates. We look forward to this work and welcome prayers of support from the First Parish community.

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!



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.

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

First Parish of Westwood
252 Nahatan Street
Westwood, MA 02090
781-326-5344
office@firstparishwestwood.org
www.firstparishwestwood.org

STAY CONNECTED

