

FIRST PARISH OF WESTWOOD, UCC

Growing Faith + Sharing Love + Grounding Lives



March 11, 2021

This Sunday, March 14

This Sunday, March 14, is the **Fourth Sunday** in Lent. A colleague, Anthony Robinson, wrote this reflection on our text for Sunday, Numbers 21:4-9: . . . *Then the Lord sent poisonous snakes among the people, and they bit the people, so many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned by speaking against the Lord and against you; pray to the Lord to take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said to Moses, "Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live." So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever the serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.*



Sometimes we go to great lengths to avoid actually looking at what is causing pain, even death, in our own lives and communities.

Why? Is it because if we look at the problem head-on, chances are good that we will have to deal with it?

On their wilderness journey, the Hebrew people complained long and loud about their situation. They accused Moses of bringing them out of slavery in Egypt only to kill them in the wilderness. Their lack of faith led to an invasion of poisonous snakes.

Moses received a strange instruction from God. “Make a serpent of bronze and put it on a pole. If people are bitten, they are to look at the bronze serpent and they will be healed.”

They were to look at the source of the pain and death.

Lent is a good time to come clean about the things that are the real sources of pain and death in our lives and relationships, and to ask God’s help to be delivered from them. Grudges we carry and refuse to release, addictions we don’t admit, anger we’ve allowed to eat away at us, sin we have failed to own. We may point to, even treat, the symptoms—fatigue, irritability, deadness in relationships—but avoid looking at the source of the pain.

But when we look directly at the source of pain in our lives and take responsibility for action, a wondrous thing can happen. That source of pain may become a source of healing.

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

This Sunday in worship **Jesse Aguilar**, assisted by **Fina**, will ring the hour, **Richard Edens** will welcome you, **Jill Edens** will have a children’s message based on the book, *Where the Wild Things Are*, **Sharon Hobbs** will read the lessons, **Sarah Tocco** will offer music, and **Jill 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.

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



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

Are you interested in knowing more about First Parish? About the United Church of Christ? About membership?

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, richardedens@gmail.com, 919-357-3913

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 Nahatan St., Westwood, MA 02090 before Sunday, March 21. Please write *OGHS* in the memo line of your check.

In Our Thoughts and Prayers

Please keep Margery Eramo and her family in your thoughts and prayers. Marge's brother, Richard Howe, is in hospice care in Florida.



LAST Lenten Bible Study March 23, 7:30pm



**LENTEN BIBLE STUDY
TUESDAY, March 23, 7:30pm
Zoom Bible Study,
(<https://zoom.us/j/95721703863>)**

Join your pastors and other church friends for Bible study on **Tuesday, March 23**

at 7:30pm via Zoom (<https://zoom.us/j/95721703863>). We will look at the lectionary readings for Palm Sunday and Easter.

- **Palm Sunday, March 28, Mark 11:1-11** – Jerusalem was an occupied city. Its people were oppressed and needy. Jesus humble entry into Jerusalem is a sign that their salvation is coming through one who identifies with those who are oppressed and needy. The solitary individual on a donkey, leafy branches marking the way and shouts of “Hosanna” by the crowds is an intentional contrast to the powerful entrance one would expect from Imperial Rome – a ruler on horseback, a military display of soldiers, the blowing of trumpets and crowds scurrying to get out of the way.
- **Easter Sunday, April 4** – There is only one place we can ‘see’ the Risen Jesus. The angel at the empty tomb told the women (and us), *“He is going before you to Galilee.”* The gospel narrative closes with the women (and us) fleeing from this tomb with the question of whether, in the light of resurrection we will live by our faith or by our fear; we will follow the risen Jesus who is going before us.

Family Service Project Opportunity: Cradles to Crayons

This Lent our family wanted to find a way of practicing our faith through a family service project. We found an opportunity with Cradles to Crayons, a Boston-based organization that provides clothing to children and their families who need it, including families in homeless situations.



On Monday we picked up a large bag of clothing, which had been quarantined. Together, we sorted clothes by type and made sure they were of quality, getting them ready for the next step of creating packages for individual children. We returned the sorted bags for Cradles to Crayons the next Monday for them to quarantine before the next step. We found this to be a small but meaningful way that we could be helping hands for others, and for us to remember that we are all held by hands we do not see. As Ellis and Silas said:

- *"It felt good to think about how they would feel when they received the cloths and to do something for other people." (Ellis)*
- *"It felt like doing a chore for God and I was happy afterwards." (Silas)*

We are hoping to participate again soon. If you are interested in doing so too, please feel free to contact Juliana for more information or for possibly coordinating pickup and dropoff of materials. (Juliana Belding at jvbean27@hotmail.com) Or contact Cradles to Crayons directly by **[clicking here](#)**.

The Belding Rifenburg Family: Juliana, Leanne, Ellis and Silas

Westwood School Committee Community Forum

WESTWOOD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Westwood, Massachusetts

**Learn More About Westwood's Proposed Elementary School
Community Meeting Set for March 18**

The Westwood School Committee is inviting residents to a virtual community meeting on Thursday, March 18, at 7:00pm, to learn all the details of the town's proposed new elementary school and how it's being funded.

"This project not only consolidates two of our five elementary schools, but will also provide a lot of community-wide benefits to the town," said Maya Plotkin, member of the School Committee and chair of the School Building Committee (SBC). "It's really important to be informed about this project because it will impact everyone."

The project, estimated to cost \$87 million, proposes to combine elementary students from the Hanlon and Deerfield districts. It would be located on the site of the current Hanlon School.

In April, the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) will review the town's plans, the final step before voting to approve an \$18 million reimbursement to the town.

With the MSBA's participation, we can provide a new school for two districts in one building project. It's a huge economic opportunity for Westwood."

"Soup to Nuts" Presentation

At the community meeting, the School Committee will make a "soup to nuts" presentation, Plotkin said, examining deteriorating conditions at existing elementary schools, why the School Committee chose to consolidate Hanlon and Deerfield, why the SBC opted to build a new school rather than renovate, what the new building will look like, and how much it will cost.

"We'll also talk about the economic impact on the town," she added. "It will be the most comprehensive community forum we've had." Residents will have an opportunity to ask questions, too.

Hanlon and Deerfield Schools were built in the 1950s and, while they have been well maintained, they both have significant issues due to their aging infrastructure and design, according to Plotkin. In February, a ceiling collapsed inside a Hanlon classroom, requiring the closure of the school for two days to make the necessary repairs. Luckily, it happened before students and teachers arrived for the day.

Town Meeting Votes

In May, Town Meeting will vote on the SBC's request for \$1.46 million in bridge funding to allow the project's architects to move forward with their design work over the spring and summer. A special Town Meeting will be scheduled for the fall, at which time residents will vote on the entire project.

"By keeping the work going through the summer, we can break ground in July 2022, starting the outside site work in the middle of summer when the kids aren't there," Plotkin said. "Those are much better conditions in which to start a construction project."

If all goes as planned, the new school will open in Winter 2024.

To attend, click on <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82024457366?pwd=M1ZkRkoyVEExdEVUci9lWnpUSkFZZz09>.

The Westwood Public Schools has a detailed web page dedicated to the project:
www.westwoodschoolbuilding.com.

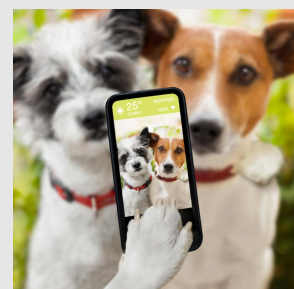
Carol Lewis, Chairperson
Maya Plotkin, Vice Chairperson
Charles Donahue, Clerk
Anthony Mullin
Amanda Phillips

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](#).

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STAY CONNECTED

