

# The Herald

First Church in Salem Newsletter

First  
Church  
in  
Salem,  
Unitarian  
Universalist

Dear Friends,

We're into the season of Advent now, a season of spiritual introspection, deepening, and preparation. For some of you, it is Advent that you keep, but we are a community of souls that speak different spiritual languages and keep different traditions so for you, it may be Hanukkah lights which speak to you, or the greenery and fire of the Solstice, or other personal or family-grown traditions.

Whatever path calls to you, this season carries the message that light will come, even out of the greatest and deepest darkness, and that surely is good news for us, nourishing for our souls, whatever religious tradition we celebrate, or none.

My hope for each one of us is that in these days of deepening darkness, we each find spiritual touchstones, ways to recenter and ground ourselves, as the pace picks up and the world would beckon us outwards. Here is a blessing I love from the artist and minister Jan Richardson. It is written for the night of the Solstice, but I think these words are good sustenance for any night or day in which you find yourself.

"Blessing for the Longest Night" (Jan Richardson)

All throughout these months  
As the shadows  
Have lengthened,  
This blessing has been  
Gathering itself,  
Making ready,  
Preparing for  
This night.

It has practiced  
Walking in the dark,  
Traveling with  
Its eyes closed,  
Feeling its way  
By memory  
By touch  
By the pull of the moon  
Even as it wanes.

So believe me  
When I tell you  
This blessing will  
Reach you  
Even if you  
Have not light enough  
To read it;  
It will find you  
Even though you  
Cannot see it coming.

You will know  
The moment of its  
Arriving  
By your release  
Of the breath  
You have held  
So long;  
A loosening  
Of the clenching  
In your hands,  
Of the clutch  
Around your heart;  
A thinning  
Of the darkness  
That had drawn itself  
Around you.

This blessing  
Does not mean  
To take the right away  
But it knows  
Its hidden roads,  
Knows the resting spots  
Along the path,  
Knows what it means  
To travel  
In the company  
Of a friend.  
So when  
This blessing comes,  
Take its hand.  
Get up.  
Set out on the road  
You cannot see.

This is the night  
When you can trust  
That any direction  
You go,  
You will be walking  
Toward the dawn.

--Jan Richardson

## LIFESPAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

As we head into the month of December, we gear up for our Religious Education Holiday Season.

Last month, our children and youth began an exploration of UU History. This month, we will pause that unit to focus on Advent, Hanukkah, Christmas, and New Years. It will truly be a month full of celebration!

This month in Lifespan RE, along with our regular monthly events, we will host a few fun multigenerational activities, including our Holiday Makerspace, caroling, and a Winter Solstice celebration. You can get more information about these events below. We aim to make these events truly multigenerational: they will be engaging for people of all ages, and you do not need to have children in order to attend and enjoy the programming.

The RE Christmas Pageant and Party will take place on Dec. 17. This is definitely a service you do not want to miss! The Christmas pageant takes place during our Sunday Worship service, and the Christmas party starts shortly after the service ends. There will be pizza, Christmas music, and a visit from Santa with a small gift for each child. Friends are welcome to join us for this Sunday (they can even jump into the pageant at the last minute if they want!) but it helps a lot if you can let us know how many children of what ages will be attending. [You can RSVP here](#), or talk to me.

Our Christmas Eve service is also open to all ages, and we will have a special Time for All Ages.

In Faith,  
Theo Burbank  
Director of Lifespan Religious Education



## Children's Programming:

Pageant Dress Rehearsals, Sat, 12/16 3-6pm and Sun 12/17, 8:45am:

The pageant is upon us! Along with our regular Sunday afternoon rehearsals, we have two dress rehearsals. The first is the day before, and will take about 3 hours with a snack break. The second is before the service on Sunday, and breakfast will be provided. A "designated adult" must be at the church for both of these rehearsals—that adult can be another child's parent, as long as everyone is aware and on the same page. Younger children and non-speaking roles will be able to leave the Saturday rehearsal early.

Christmas Party, Sun 12/17 after the service: Join us for some festive fun! We will read Twas the Night Before Christmas, sing some Christmas songs, and then get a visit from Santa, who has a small gift for each child. Afterwards we serve a Pizza lunch (donations are taken for pizza). It's helpful for us to know how many children of what ages will be attending, so that we can make sure Santa has them on his list. This applies to youth up through high school! You can RSVP using the link above, or contact me for more info.

New Year's Eve in RE, Sun 12/31: During Sunday School, we will celebrate New Year's by thinking about where we have been and what's ahead. Join us for some fun New Year's games and activities!

## Adult and Intergen Programming:

First Church Caroling, Thurs 12/14, 6pm: Let's get together to spread some holiday cheer! We will meet at the first church and leave at 6 to walk around the neighborhood caroling. You do not need to have the voice of an angel, you just need enthusiasm! After we're done, we will go back to the church to warm up with cookies and cocoa.

Winter Solstice Celebration, Fri 12/22, 6:30-8:30pm: The Winter Solstice is the shortest day of the year, which means that every day after that brings us a little more light. Let's gather together to celebrate this earth-centered tradition. We will hear a story from a teacher and storyteller, usher in the light with a ritual, and make lanterns so that we can take the light home with us. There will also be plenty of hot drinks and baked goods to fuel us through the longest night. Please note: we will start off in relative darkness, and progressively bring up the lights as the evening goes on. It might be helpful for young children to know this ahead of time. If you have any accessibility concerns, please contact Theo so that we can make a plan.

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## SOUL MATTERS

Join us for Soul Matters, a small group ministry that invites participants to share reflections on a specific theme each month. We will meet on Sunday, December 10, 2023, at 12:30pm in the Music Room on the third floor. December's theme is "Mystery." To explore this theme, see this month's packet which is filled with exercises, questions, readings and links to music and videos on generosity. If possible, select one exercise to do during the month, and one question on which to reflect. You will have a chance to share what you discovered with the group. Packets are available online on the church website under the "Soul Matters" tab and in print on the table close to the kitchen in the Barnard Room at church.

## FROM YOUR TRANSITION TEAM

Greetings from the Transition Team! Thanks to everyone who attended our Community Potluck on November 8, 2023. The food was great, the company delightful, and everyone who attended enjoyed a lively evening and the opportunity to share ways in which First Church is important to them. This month we will publish the results of the notes we collected from each table. With x people responding our “Spirituality Snapshot Survey” was a success. This month we will analyze and publish those results. We have no new events planned for this month as we are caught up in the December holiday whirl but hope we will have interesting data to share in the weekly e-Heralds. Happy holidays!

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## PASTORAL CARE TEAM

First Church Elves preparing crafts and goodies for holiday bags. These will be distributed to shut-ins and those who have experienced illness or loss during this past year. From top left clockwise: Penny Bigmore, Hannah Diozzi, Helen Jacoby, Pat Small, Nancy Peluso, Sally Millice, Sharon Corrigan.



Pastoral Care angels have provided rides, meals and other support to our community. We appreciate all our volunteers and encourage those who need assistance to reach out to Sally Millice 978-745-1632 or Sharon Corrigan 802-236-0054 or notify the church office. We wish everyone a happy holiday.

## First Church Communications

### Connect with Members and Friends

To connect with members of committees or leadership at First Church please use our online Directory. This can be accessed through your Breeze account: [firstchurchinsalem.breezechms.com](http://firstchurchinsalem.breezechms.com)

Under 'Tags' you will find "Online Directory". Updated printed Directories will be made available quarterly. Please feel free to contact Catherine at [firstchurchinsalem@gmail.com](mailto:firstchurchinsalem@gmail.com) as well.

First Church in Salem can also be found on social media!

FirstChurchinSalemUnitarian



### Contact the Staff

Rev. Jenny Rankin, Interim Minister: [jrankin@firstchurchinsalem.org](mailto:jrankin@firstchurchinsalem.org)

Catherine Bertrand, Congregational Administrator: [firstchurchinsalem@gmail.com](mailto:firstchurchinsalem@gmail.com)

Theo Burbank, Director of Lifespan Education: [fcreligioused@gmail.com](mailto:fcreligioused@gmail.com)

Michael Kraft, Music Director: [music@firstchurchinsalem.org](mailto:music@firstchurchinsalem.org)

### Get the Word Out!

We want all of our events and meetings at First Church to be well attended and successful. The First Church staff is here to help you get the word out about your ministry event or need! We strive to reflect the heart of your event while maintaining the best practices to ensure effectiveness, clarity, and consistency.

All communications for publication must be submitted via email to [firstchurchcomm@gmail.com](mailto:firstchurchcomm@gmail.com).

Monthly Newsletter: The Herald

We have a monthly newsletter that is sent either on the first of every month or the Friday before the first Sunday of each month.

- Publication Dates: Around the 1st of each month
- Materials Deadline for publication: The 15th of each month

Weekly Newsletter: e-Herald

We have a weekly email newsletter that is sent by 2pm on Fridays.

- Deadline for publication: Every Thursday by 10am.
- Articles about church related items or events are welcome. Photos and other images are welcome, however, those that are blurry, out of focus, or may violate copyrights may be excluded.
- Things to include as necessary:
  - Contact name and info for committee/team or an individual if your article asks readers to take an action. Consider that many people no longer have house phone lines; it's good to indicate if texting is preferred. Phone numbers should also include area codes.
  - Date and time of event.
  - Location.

Order of Service & Sunday Verbal Announcements

- Print Deadline: Every Thursday by 10am
- In-Person Announcement Deadline: Every Friday by 10am
- Announcements submissions are 75 words or less (three brief sentences) - not including the title, and date and time, if needed.

Verbal announcements should follow print guidelines regarding length. If your news is a repeat announcement or something longer than a few sentences, please reach out to discuss the possibility of a pulpit editorial or offertory reflection.

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Interim Minister: Reverend Jenny Rankin  
Director of Music: Michael Kraft  
Congregational Administrator: Catherine Bertrand  
Director of Lifespan Education: Theo Burbank  
Sexton: Billy McCarthy  
Chair of the Standing Committee: Steve Palmer  
Chair of the Deacons: Lynn Taggart  
Director of Henny Penny: Tricia Pini

2023-12-8

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## Winter Holidays at First Church in Salem

Come one, come all! All ages welcome.

**Holiday Makerspace**  
Saturday, Dec. 2  
10:00am-3:00pm

**Christmas Caroling,  
Cookies, & Cocoa**  
Thursday, Dec. 14  
6:00pm-7:30pm

**Pageant Sunday**  
Annual Christmas Pageant  
&  
Holiday Party  
December 17, 10:30am

**Solstice Celebration**  
Friday, December 22  
6:30pm

**Candlelight Christmas Eve**  
Lessons & Carols  
with Brass, Choir, & Organ  
December 24, 7:00pm

First Church in Salem  
316 Essex Street, Salem MA  
[www.firstchurchinsalem.org](http://www.firstchurchinsalem.org)

Advent Services and Religious Education: Sundays at 10:30am

THURSDAY, DEC 14  
6:00PM

Christmas  
CAROLING



Winter Solstice  
Celebration

An evening of  
stories, ritual, and community  
for all ages

Friday, Dec. 22, 6:30pm  
First Church in Salem, UU

Candlelight  
Christmas Eve  
Lessons & Carols  
at  
First Church in Salem

Featuring  
Brass, Choir, & Organ

Join us at 7:00pm.  
All ages welcome!