**No Strangers Community Gatherings Sunday March 22 10:30 a.m. & 3:00 p.m.**

**Words of Welcome**………………………Tracey Robinson-Harris, Interim Minister

Greetings, friends! Welcome to our second Sunday of worship in this virtual space. Welcome with these words from poet William Stafford

*The Way It Is*

There’s a thread you follow. It goes among

things that change. But it doesn’t change.

People wonder about what you are pursuing.

You have to explain about the thread.

But it is hard for others to see.

While you hold it you can’t get lost.

Tragedies happen; people get hurt

or die; and you suffer and get old.

Nothing you do can stop time’s unfolding.

You don’t ever let go of the thread.

PAUSE

There’s a thread you follow. It goes among

things that change. But it doesn’t change.

Hold on tight.

**Music**  (10:30 a.m. Dean Arvidson, keyboard) (**3:00 p.m. Lisa Kynvi, guitar and voice – Toilet Paper - recorded)**

**Chalice Lighting**……………………**You (light your candle, words provided by Tracey)** Words by Amy Williams Clark

We gather in this time of anxious uncertainty, a time full of unknowns.

We light our many chalices with flames that draw us together.

With our flames, we cut through isolation and are warmed by the fires of our connection.

For this moment we find a certainty within the bonds of love and community.

**Song of Affirmation** (10:30 a.m. only Dean Arvidson, keyboard - **please keep microphone on mute as we hum/sing together.)**

From all that dwell below the skies, Let songs of hope and faith arise; Let peace, good will on earth be sung, Through every land, by every tongue.

**Words of Affirmation** (Please **unmute** your microphone)

Love is the doctrine of this church, The quest of truth is its sacrament, And service is its prayer. To dwell together in peace, To seek knowledge in freedom, To serve all life with compassion, To the end that all souls Shall grow into harmony with the Divine. This is our great covenant, One with another, and with our God.

Please **mute** your microphone

**Moment of Sharing – for those on video screen chat room available for sharing; for those on phone, unmute. . . )**

**Brief closing word**

How we gather and how we serve and how we share – all this is changing. For how long, we don’t know. And how it will be when the new normal emerges we're not sure. Our support of and our caring for one another is so precious – it is the thread we follow.

**Offertory**

As we make our way through this pandemic and all the challenges it brings. . .and If you are able to do so, please support of First Parish with a donation to our virtual offering. Checks may be mailed to the church. Of click on the link to the Giving page on the First Parish website and then on the link to the form you'll need to complete. https://fpframingham.breezechms.com/give/online

**Reading/Reflection No Stranger**

To escape the confines of my house, I go for a drive every day. Sometimes I end up at the drive through in the Starbucks closest to my house. Sometimes I just drive a back road, sometimes I end up in Willard Brook State Forest just down the road from my house. When I pass another car or when the barista at Starbucks greets me. . .I realize that being isolated. . . staying home. . . . limiting my presence in this big old world beyond the walls of my home. . . it is too easy to encounter others as strangers – strangers who might be dangerous to me.

A few days ago I went to my mechanic for a necessary car repair. I greeted the one other customer in the waiting area – from 6 feet away with a smile and a now seriously intended question – how ya doin'?

Yesterday I went to get groceries. I smiled at everyone whose eyes met mine. Everyone smiled back. I said hello to some of my fellow customers with whom I shared an aisle and a safe distance. When I passed an employee I sometimes acknowledged them with a "witty one liner", always hello, always "thanks"

Yesterday, there was a man standing at a busy intersection holding a handmade sign: "homeless everything helps thank you.". He's been there every day for days. As I wait at the light – no one in any vehicle acknowledges him. Strangers all – they stare ahead. When I got close, I put my window down. . .asked him how he was. . . We exchanged a few words. We were never face to face. . more side by side. I held a little cash on its end by my fingertips and reached out the car window. He took the cash by the other end with his finger tips. "Thank you" he said, "remember to wash your hands." Once the window closed, I reached for the hand sanitizer and washed as instructed.

It is too easy to be, to become, strangers. . . . and in becoming strangers the necessary distance – though it may never actually grow beyond six feet – grows in other ways.

I find I am better at not strangering others when I intend to do something else. . .

When all the ordinary divides and patterns are shattered, writes Rebecca Solnit, people step up to become one another's keepers. . . the purposefulness and connectedness brings joy amidst. . . chaos and fear and loss."

This is the time, says Valerie Kaur, to love without limit. This is a time to see no stranger. In doing so we gather information for the kind of world we want.

**Introduce Julian of Norwich:**

We don't know much about Julian of Norwich. She lived somewhere around 1342-1416. We know is that Julian is not her given name but a reference to the Church of St. Julian in Norwich to which she attached herself — literally — cloistering herself forever inside a small stone anchorage built against the outer wall of the sanctuary. By the time Julian entered her cell she had witnessed three rounds of Plague, had likely experienced the death of many of those she loved, and had nearly died herself.

In the depths of her deadly illness, Julian had revelations – 15 of them. In the 13th revelation she received words of assurance "all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well." Our closing song is inspired by Julian's words. It was written by and is sung by UU minister, Rev. Meg Barnhouse.

**Closing** "All Will Be Well" written and sung by Rev. Meg Barnhouse

**Last words today**

There’s a thread you follow. It goes among

things that change. But it doesn’t change.

Hold on tight, friends...to the connections we've made.

**BRIEF VIRTUAL COFFEE HOUR – I'll be hosting two weekday virtual gatherings – coffee hours - this coming week – invitations out tomorrow.**