

**Pledge as a Poker Game Billerica**  
**March 3rd 2024**

**PRELUDE**

**WELCOME**

**LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**GREET YOUR NEIGHBOR**

**OPENING WORDS:** Pledge Phrases I can't resist

**CHALICE LIGHTING:** Leslie Pohl-Kosbau

**OPENING HYMN\*:** #347 Gather the Spirit

**STORY FOR ALL AGES:**

Monks learn Heaven & Hell

**SINGING OUT THE CHILDREN**

*"Go Now in Peace, Go Now in Peace, Let the Spirit of Love Surround you, Everywhere, Everywhere, You May Go."*

**AFFIRMATION OF FAITH:**

*Love is the doctrine of this church. The quest for truth its sacrament, and service is its prayer. To dwell together in peace, to seek knowledge in freedom, to serve humanity in fellowship, to the end that all souls shall grow into harmony with the Divine: thus do we covenant with each other and with God.*

**CENTERING HYMN:** #16 Tis A Gift to Be Simple

**PRAYER/MEDITATION:**  
**MOMENT OF SILENCE**

Dreams

**CANDLES OF JOY AND CONCERN**  
**MUSICAL MEDITATION/INTERLUDE**

**READING:** Mark and the Talents

**SERMON:** Pledge as a Poker Game

**OFFERTORY WORDS:** Stolen Eggs

**MUSICAL OFFERTORY**

**DOXOLOGY\***

*From all that dwell below the skies*

*Let songs of love and faith arise*

*Let peace, goodwill on earth be sung*

*Through every land, by every tongue. Amen*

**EXTINGUISHING THE CHALICE\***

*We extinguish this flame, but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment - these we carry in our hearts, until we are together again.*

**CLOSING HYMN\*:** #305 DeColores

(All The Colors)

(the hymn is sung facing the world we are about to enter)

**BENEDICTION:** Opening as Closing Words

**POSTLUDE:**

\*Please stand in body or spirit.

**We invite you join us downstairs for the pledge brunch, immediately after the service.**

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Minister/Worship Leader, Rev. Steve Wilson  
Office Administrator: Teresa English

### **-A Brief History-**

**1653** – The “Shawshin Wilderness” was first settled in 1653 and its inhabitants recognized as the town of Billerica in 1655

**1658-** Samuel Whiting Jr. was called as the first minister. The first meeting house was built in 1659, but the church could not be formally organized and its minister ordained until approval of the “Half Way Covenant” in 1663.

**1797-** A “new and more commodious meeting house” was found necessary. The fourth meeting house was built at that time, Dr. Henry Cummings was pastor.

**1825-** The American Unitarian Association was founded.

**1828-** The “First Church” existed alone in the Town of Billerica for 165 years.

**1844-** The Meeting House was renovated by adding the Greek portico and interior fittings, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson’s pulpit, and the house was turned 90 degrees to face the east (This was done by jacking up the building, setting it gently on 2 large cannonballs, and carefully pivoting until it faced east).

**1967-** First Parish Church was destroyed by fire two days after Christmas. Emerson’s pulpit and other First Parish treasures survived the blaze. Many Billerica and area residents and businesses contributed generously to the rebuilding of our church. On November 22, 1970, the fifth and present Meeting House was dedicated.

**1990-** A Mortgage Burning Ceremony was held to celebrate complete ownership of the fifth meeting house.

**1997-** A Tree Planting Dedication Ceremony was held to commemorate the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the erection of the fourth Meeting House on the current site of the church

**2007-** First Parish is recognized as a Welcoming Congregation

**2008-** The Meeting House becomes accessible to all people with a new elevator. First Parish celebrates its 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in Billerica.

## *The First Parish Church* *The Unitarian Universalist Church*

Pledge as a Poker Game  
**Pledge Sunday March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2024**

