

First Parish in Cambridge - Unitarian Universalist

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CAMBRIDGE FOLKSINGER RETURNS AS MINISTER

To lead Homecoming worship Sept. 7 at historic Harvard Square church

Rev. Fred Small, a former environmental lawyer and folksinger-songwriter, now a Unitarian Universalist minister, returns to his Cambridge roots Sunday, September 7, at the Homecoming service of First Parish in Cambridge. The First Parish congregation, dedicated to justice, compassion, and freedom of conscience, called Rev. Small as Senior Minister by unanimous vote last April.

“I’m excited to be part of this dynamic congregation,” Small says. “First Parish offers a spiritual home for all of us who seek both inner peace and a better world.”

The Homecoming service begins at 10:30 a.m. at the historic First Parish church, 1446 Massachusetts Avenue, in Harvard Square. All are welcome and a potluck will follow the festive service. Childcare will be provided, and parents can register children and youth for regular Sunday school classes. ASL interpretation will be provided by Jody Steiner, and First Parish is wheelchair accessible.

Small lived in Cambridge for two decades before being called to parish ministry in Littleton, Massachusetts, in 1999. Educated at Yale and Michigan Law School, he served as staff attorney for the Conservation Law Foundation, then toured internationally as a folksinger and songwriter. Called “one of America’s best songwriters” by Pete Seeger, he released seven albums on the Rounder, Flying Fish, and Aquifer labels.

During his Cambridge days, he performed at Passim, Sanders Theater, the Nameless Coffeehouse (at First Parish), and the old Back Room at the Idler. He frequently appeared at public events for peace, environmental protection, and gay rights. In 1995, the Cambridge Peace Commission honored Fred Small with its Peace and Justice Award. He earned his divinity degree from Harvard in 1999.

“My life has been a journey toward love,” Small says. “With all the opportunities granted me, I’ve always felt called to serve others, to make a difference in the world—first through law, then music, and now ministry. With each transition I’ve tried to share more power, to diminish self and enlarge other, to be less fuel and more catalyst.”

As a Unitarian Universalist minister, Small has been a leader in interfaith activism. In March, 2007, he was one of the organizers of the Interfaith Walk for Climate Rescue from Northampton

to Boston, Massachusetts. In July, 2007, Grist Magazine named him one of 15 Green Religious Leaders worldwide. He is co-chair of Religious Witness for the Earth, a national interfaith environmental network.

In February, 2003, Small announced from his Littleton pulpit that he would no longer sign marriage licenses for heterosexual couples until same-sex couples enjoyed equal marriage rights. His congregation responded with a standing ovation. In 2006, Rev. Small received the Religious Leadership Award from the Religious Coalition for the Freedom to Marry.

“First Parish in Cambridge is thrilled to welcome such a visionary leader in social justice to its pulpit, and our congregation is eager to begin working with him to deepen and broaden our liberal religious community.” said Gloria Korsman, Chair of the governing board.

On September 28th at 3:00 at First Parish there will be an installation ceremony for Rev. Small with addresses by Rev. Thomas Mikelson, minister emeritus of First Parish; Rev. Kim Crawford Harvie of Arlington Street Church; Unitarian Universalist Association president Rev. William Sinkford; and Rev. Peter Gomes of Harvard University. The Boston Gay Men’s Chorus will perform “Everything Possible,” an anthem of equality composed by Rev. Small.

More on First Parish

The First Parish, Unitarian Universalist, “An Old Church for a New World”, is located at the corner of Church Street and Massachusetts Avenue in the heart of Harvard Square.

First Parish Cambridge seeks to meet the religious needs of people throughout Cambridge and neighboring communities. Unitarian Universalist congregations are bound by common principles, rather than a creed or dogma, and encourage the pursuit of a personal religious vision, a commitment to social justice and to building a “beloved community”. The congregation strives to be a welcoming, inclusive congregation, especially in areas of gender, race, sexual orientation, economic status and ability.

First Parish is also home to the Cambridge Forum, Paine Senior Services, the Tuesday Meals Program, the Nameless Coffeehouse, and the on-line Harvard Square Library of notable Unitarians.

For more information, please visit our website at <http://www.firstparishcambridge.org>.

Rev. Small is available for interviews. Please contact the church office at 617-876-7772.