

## **Polly Peterson Speaks at Concord Library's *Thursday Author Series***

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CONCORD, MA Polly Peterson will discuss her book, **Stirring the Nation's Heart: Eighteen Stories of Prophetic Unitarians and Universalists of the Nineteenth Century** at the Concord Free Public Library on Thursday, January 19, 7:30 pm. Peterson appears as part of the library's *Thursday Author Series* and in conjunction with the library's "Collecting Transcendentalism" exhibition, on view at the Main Library through January 31.

Her book **Stirring the Nation's Heart** focuses on the new ideas about religion, education, and human rights that stirred the hearts of New England's nineteenth-century transcendentalists and reformers. The biographical stories in the book feature prominent transcendentalists, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Margaret Fuller, as well as leaders in the anti-slavery and women's rights movements and reformers who were committed to improving the lives of people disadvantaged by poverty, disabilities, and mental illness.

"People often imagine that 'once upon a time' society's problems were easier to understand and easier to solve," writes Peterson. "Yet one has only to reflect upon nineteenth-century American life to know that, whatever our troubles, Americans faced equally daunting challenges in the past."

Those challenges – economic collapse, rancorous debates about slavery and women’s rights, disagreements about immigration policy, and conflicting ideas about education – remain central to our nation’s political discourse today.

Peterson is a professional writer who publishes primarily in the textbook market. In 2007, she wrote several short biographies for the Unitarian Universalist Association. The nineteenth-century issues and personalities she encountered in those assignments, along with her long-standing interest in New England’s transcendentalists, led her to propose a book that would include brief, targeted stories about the people and ideas of that period, along with a substantial selection of primary-source material to give readers a deeper understanding. **Stirring the Nation’s Heart** is the result of that proposal.

Peterson grew up in the Midwest, and has lived in Concord since 1989.

The Friends of the Concord Free Public Library sponsor the *Thursday Authors Series* from September through June annually. Programs are free and open to all. Following each presentation, books are typically available for purchase and guests are welcome to continue conversations with the author. For more information, please call the Library at 978 318 3300 or visit [www.concordlibrary.org](http://www.concordlibrary.org).

Upcoming programs (all in the Main Library – 129 Main Street, Concord, MA:

Thursday, February 9 – Richard Cobb-Steves: **James & Husserl: The Foundation of Meaning**

Thursday, March 1 – Jan Benvenuti: **Don’t Give Up On Me.; Supporting Aging Parents Successfully**

Thursday, April 19 – Margot Livesey: **The Flight of Gemma Hardy**

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