



First Parish in Concord
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
Gathered in 1636

The Meeting House News

REVeries

Dear Friends,

What changes since the last newsletter arrived in your mailbox! There is a full swing transformation of the season, with its glorious and steady rain of leaves. Thanksgiving plans are in the works, stirring up our gratitude and kindling holiday hopes and expectations. With these harbingers of winter as backdrop, this month we witnessed a momentous presidential election. No matter who was going to win, we knew it would be groundbreaking. Today, all eyes are on the future, as we dream and speculate about what will happen next. On a national scale, there is movement and — we hope — improvement under way.

Meanwhile, movement and improvement are happening here at First Parish as well. Momentum is building toward our return to the Sanctuary on Lexington Road, and what a team leading the effort! Despite the continuing reality of small (ha!) surprises, the First Parish staff pushes ahead with optimism and a lot of gusto. I have this image in my mind of everyone running together full speed at the task. Instead of backtracking in the face of shifting expectations, we run right around them, dodging the obstacles as they come. And what a lovely “finish” it will be to finally arrive back in our Sanctuary on November 30. Though other parts of the church will still be in the midst of renovations, we will be glad to be home.

Of course, big changes come with a cost, and I think many of us are feeling a roller coaster of emotions. In worship recently I read a poem by Wislawa Szymborska, that begins, “We have a soul at times.” “Joy and sorrow aren’t two different feelings for it,” she says. “It attends us only when the two are joined.” Well, we’ve got soul. This country has soul. And sometimes our souls need comfort. After **Gary Smith’s** lovely service of poetry on November 9, John Peterson shared the following unusual poem, which I now offer up to you. It’s by Richard Brautigan.

Karma Repair Kit: Items 1-4

1. *Get enough food to eat, and eat it.*
2. *Find a place to sleep where it is quiet, and sleep there.*
3. *Reduce intellectual activity and emotional noise until you arrive at the silence of yourself, and listen to it.*
- 4.

Peace and joy to you and to your loved ones.

In faith,

— *Angela Herrera*

Please see page 7 for information about our new monthly series.

GOING DEEPER SPIRITUALLY: Monthly Thematic and Theological Queries for the People of the First Parish in Concord

Sunday Worship Schedule

December 7

Jenny Rankin, preaching
9:00 – Handbell Choir and Children’s Choirs
11:00 – First Parish Choir and Children’s Choirs

December 14

Gary Smith, preaching
9:00 & 11:00 – First Parish Choir
O Magnum Mysterium

December 21

Gary Smith, preaching
9:00 & 11:00 – Gospel Choir

December 28

One service at 11:00
Margie King Saphier, preaching
Sarah Whitney, violin

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Holiday Office Schedule

There are two inserts with this newsletter:

- **Holiday Events**
- **Wright Tavern courses**

The Meeting House News, the newsletter of First Parish in Concord, is published monthly — in print and online — September to June, to provide parishioners and friends with information about our congregation and our larger community.

Please send address changes to:
First Parish in Concord
20 Lexington Road
Concord, MA 01742

Noon Deadline	Mailing Date
Monday, Dec. 8	Wednesday, Dec. 17
Friday, Jan. 16	Wednesday, Jan. 28
Friday, Feb. 13	Wednesday, Feb. 25

Newsletter items should be limited to 100 words and may be delivered, faxed or e-mailed to the church office.

CHRISTMAS EVE AT FIRST PARISH

The construction project is presenting us with some extreme challenges as we try to plan for our Christmas Eve services. We are working with public safety officials in Concord to develop a plan for services that will keep all of our parishioners and visitors safe. Three of the most important considerations concern temporary occupancy limitations, emergency exit constraints, and open flames. We cannot stress enough how important safety is on an evening when we will be worshipping after dark, with many visitors unfamiliar with our building, in a construction zone. What we know for certain is Christmas Eve services will be different this year than in the past. Because construction is continuing and the situation changes regularly, we will wait to announce our final Christmas Eve services plan until sometime in early-to-mid December. We will notify you about the plan through Sunday Announcements, the *Sunday News*, January's *Meeting House News* (mailed December 17), and FP and RE Announce. We will also be putting a notice in the *Concord Journal*. We know that many of you make plans around our services and our goal is to give you timely and accurate information as soon as possible. And of course, we thank you for your continued patience this year as work on the Meeting House progresses.

Standing Committee Information

The next Standing Committee meeting will be held off-site on Monday evening, December 8. Please look for the monthly minutes online at firstparish.org under Church Life (you must log in).

Sunday Forums

Because of the ongoing renovations, Forums have been suspended. We hope to schedule programs for late fall. Please call **Charles Lowell** or **Robert Hilsinger** about future topics.

Wright Tavern Center

As our Fall 2008 semester draws to a close, we are well into programming for our Winter/Spring 2009 course catalogue. We are pleased to have so many unique and exciting offerings as we deepen into winter and emerge into spring. We are grateful that the transition at First Parish is calling our community to open to a greater degree of cooperation, discovery and reflection.



A few highlights: Wright Tavern and the Diversity Committee bring Shelly Tochluk to First Parish in December for a powerful workshop based on her book *Witnessing Whiteness: First Steps Toward an Antiracist Practice and Culture*. **Mark Richards** is currently facilitating a book group in preparation for the workshop.

Wright Tavern co-sponsored five courses with Kerem Shalom this fall in collaboration with Rosalie Gerut, Director of Cantorial and Adult Programming. We deeply appreciate all those who have worked in partnership with us to fulfill our intention of bringing benefit to both our communities. It has been rewarding to see people from First Parish and Kerem Shalom participating together in spiritual development and renewal.

Wright Tavern, The Concord Festival of Authors, Concord Free Public Library and Kerem Shalom all worked together to sponsor and host Robert Richardson's visit to Concord in October. His lectures and seminar were full of rich learning for the 150-plus people who attended. Rev. **Jenny Rankin's** seven week course "Transcendentalism: The Dreamers and the Dream" has drawn over 30 people.

Our efforts to reach out to the greater community are meeting with success. We are receiving strong support from the *Concord Journal*, and both members and non-members are responding by participating in our offerings. See the listings in the Wright Tavern insert for details.

Our online registration experiment is off to a great start. Over two thirds of our registrations for Intimacy as a Spiritual Path, with Rich and Antra Borofsky, were made online. Please let us hear all feedback on your online registration experience to help us improve our service.

For a preview of coming attractions, please see the back page of our insert in this *Meeting House News*. Also, please visit the Wright Tavern Center website at www.wrighttavern.org and contact us at FPTavern@aol.com.

With gratitude and appreciation,

—*Mary Elizabeth Wheeler*

Director

Parish Notes

CONGRATULATIONS TO BETH!

Congratulations to **Beth Norton** on the composition of a new anthem, *Let All the Beauty We Have Known*, which premiered in worship on Sunday, October 19. The text of the anthem was found in words by a former First Parish minister, Dana McLean Greeley.

THANKS FOR ANOTHER GREAT ARTISANS FAIR!

The Women's Parish Association wishes to thank all First Parish volunteers for helping make this year's Holiday Artisans Fair a great success. Everyone rose beautifully to the challenge of holding the event in a new venue; the weather cooperated; and a good time was had by all! Special thanks go this year to our First Parish teenagers and their friends. Your cheerful and energetic help was greatly appreciated by the artisans and our volunteers!

THE CATS AND THEIR FOLKS ARE HAPPY

The catnip balls that have been created by **Cindy McLean-Greeley** and her many hardworking angels for our Holiday Artisans Fair for the past 40-plus years are always a big hit. The Concord area cats thank you! For future fairs, the WPA would like to do something special for our dog friends as well. Please send suggestions for items that could be crafted for dogs to pekindc@comcast.net.

UUSC HOLIDAY CARDS AVAILABLE ONLINE

We will not be selling Unitarian Universalist Service Committee holiday cards this year, but they are available for purchase at uus.org. Go to the menu "What you can do" and click on "Shop in our store." The available card styles are "Winter Berries" (10 cards for \$15), "Candle Lights" (16 cards in 4 different photos for \$15), "Peace at Christmas" (10 cards of a stylized tree for \$15) and "World of Peace" (10 cards for \$15). New this year are UUSC note cards, 8 cards for \$10, blank inside and featuring photos of program partner locations. By sending your holiday greetings with UUSC cards, you are also helping to support human rights and advance social justice. — **Sue Beck**

BELIEFS QUILT NOTE CARDS FOR SALE

Judy Dembsey has kindly consented to let us put her World Systems of Beliefs quilt on a 4"x 6" note card. The front features a color photo of the quilt the back has an explanation of the symbols. A package of eight cards (blank inside) with envelopes is \$12.00. All proceeds go to the church's operating budget. Contact **Sue Beck**, sbeck345@comcast.net or 978-369-8445, to purchase these handsome cards.

BUDDHIST GROUP CHANGES MEETING PLACE

The Buddhist Group that had been meeting weekly in the Chapel for the last seven years as part of Wright Tavern Center is now meeting at Kerem Shalom on Tuesdays from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. and on Wednesdays from 9:30 to 11:00 a.m. These free weekly talks are open to all who are interested in transforming love, compassion and wisdom into action. No prior experience is necessary.

PARISH NOTES continued on page 4

Money Matters

The holiday season is upon us! I can't wait to put up my Christmas tree. That's one of my favorite seasonal traditions. We also have traditions of homemade eggnog (some of you parishioners have been "victims" of the excellent Gallo nog), Santa hats, scallops on Christmas Eve, and end-of-year charitable giving.

Your mailbox, like mine, is probably overflowing with end-of-year appeals from charitable organizations. There are many worthy causes out there. This year, First Parish has sent you a "Hold On to What Is Good" appeal, asking if you would like to make a contribution in honor or memory of someone you hold close to your heart. We sincerely hope that you will include us in your final gifts this calendar year, and I thank you for giving it consideration. Your financial gifts to First Parish help our community to flourish and truly "go out into the world" to help make this world a better place.

Whatever your holiday traditions may be, I wish, for you and your family, peace. Best wishes for a healthy and happy holiday season!

—Melissa Perdue Gallo

PARISH NOTES

continued from page 3

WON'T YOU HELP TO DECK THE HALLS!

Join the Flower Committee Saturday, December 13, at 2:00 p.m. to decorate the Sanctuary. Sign up at coffee hour to donate memorial poinsettias or to assist with flower deliveries to elderly members December 26.

ATTENTION, EMERSONIANS

The Emerson Forum, is a newly established group at First Parish to discuss the philosophy and ideas of Ralph Waldo Emerson and the transcendentalists. The group's purpose is to provide a continuing presence at First Parish to explore the meaning of the examined life. The Forum is meant to bring together, in an informal, nonacademic setting, a community of participants drawn from members and friends of First Parish. Rev. **Jenny Rankin** will serve as spiritual advisor to the group. The first meeting will be held in the Trustees' conference room of the Concord Public Library from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m., Monday, February 2. **Mel Bernstein** of First Parish will be the Forum facilitator. Mel currently serves on the Executive Board of the Tufts Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, where he has taught courses on British and American humor. Wendell Refior, the cofacilitator, serves on the national Board of the Emerson Society, and is well-known in New England for his living history presentations on Mr. Emerson.

Pastoral Care News

In her meditation book, *Pocketful of Miracles*, Joan Borysenko writes for December 1, "We are entering the season of darkness during which we partake in the most ancient of miracles, giving birth to the Light. We are ready to bear witness to the renewal of the world and the renewal of our souls." We can participate in this renewal by actively reaching out to one another. Albert Schweitzer says, "At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by the light of another person." Last year **Emily Barstow**, who is five, along with her mother **Lynn Barstow**, delivered homemade cookies and a poinsettia plant to longtime member **Sylvia Klinck**. After the visit, I received the most delightful telephone call from Sylvia telling me about the visit. When the Barstows visited, Sylvia's "light" was not out nor was it diminished; but when they left, it was so much brighter. Sylvia's enthusiasm was contagious and spread to me. When I called the Barstows to say how much Sylvia enjoyed their visit, they also were aglow because of the joy they received during the visit. Giving and receiving is a dance of mutuality, during which the receiver becomes the giver and the giver the receiver.

If you would like to be part of the dance of giving and receiving, you too can volunteer to deliver holiday flowers on December 26. Please e-mail mksaphier@comcast.net or call extension 422. On Sunday, November 30, when we return to First Parish, you will see the holiday wreath standing to the left of the pulpit. Because the holiday season is often accompanied by memories of loved ones no longer with us, parishioners started the tradition of tying ribbons (supplied by the Pastoral Care Council) on the wreath in memory of loved ones. During the pastoral prayer, the minister remembers all the families and loved ones who are represented by the ribbons on the wreath. The holiday wreath will remain in the Sanctuary until New Year's.

—Margie King Saphier

WILL YOU JOIN A COVENANT GROUP?

There is still time to sign up to join a Covenant Group. If you are uncertain about what it means to be a participant, read what **Marcia Schloss** writes about why she is a member of a group.

"Toss ten thoughtful, respectful UU's together with topics ranging from fun, forgiveness and freewill to living simply, and the power of prayer. Place them in the serene chapel for 90 minutes every other Thursday afternoon. Add a handful of procedural guidelines, a cup of confidentiality and a dash of humor. Sprinkle it all with spirituality and you create a unique mini-community at First Parish, my small group ministry [now called covenant group]. I've been blessed to be an ingredient in this recipe since its inception, about seven years ago. What have I gained from this experience? I've gained warm relationships with wonderful people, knowledge and new perspectives, and opportunities to share and grow. While we are not a psychology group per se, we care about and support each other. I am very grateful to have this small group of UU's in my life."

**TWO MUSICAL
HOLIDAY PARISH NOTES**

**CAROLING AT NORTHEASTERN
CORRECTIONAL CENTER**

Each year there is a rare opportunity to enter the minimum security prison and join the inmates in carols of the season. Please come on Friday, December 5, from 7 to 9 p.m. for this special evening of sing-along, with music provided by a local group. Contact Lenore James at 978-369-1430 with your name, address and date of birth. A photo ID will be required for entry to the prison. Prison rules do not permit children under eighteen to attend.

CHRISTMAS CONCERT AND TEA

Thanks to our neighbors and friends of the Trinitarian Congregational Church, 54 Walden Street, Concord, we will be able to treat ourselves and friends this year to an afternoon of holiday music and a traditional Christmas tea on Tuesday, December 9. The music program will begin at 3:00 p.m. in the TriCon sanctuary, during which the critically acclaimed Bill and Bo Winiker Jazz Trio will entertain us with delightful jazz renditions of popular holiday tunes. Tea will be served in their parish hall at 4:00 p.m. All men and women of First Parish and their friends are welcome. There is no charge and no reservations are necessary. Since there is no parking in their church lot, please use on-street parking.

“I think I’ll just let the mystery be.” —Iris DeMent

“Silence is the best response to mystery.” —Kathleen Norris

“After silence, that which comes closest to expressing the inexpressible is music.” —Aldous Huxley



During December, as the days grow shorter and we deepen into the dark of winter, it seems we are embraced by mystery. The December holidays from the Christian and Jewish traditions celebrate stories with mystery at their center: the miracle of one day’s oil lasting inexplicably for eight; the lowly, secluded birth of an extraordinary child. These narratives invite us to recognize the mystery we experience in our own lives. How do we respond to this invitation?

Iris DeMent, Kathleen Norris and Aldous Huxley all offer responses that appeal to me. There is serenity in letting the mystery be — not trying to solve it but being led where it leads. And I appreciate Kathleen Norris’s wisdom. Perhaps the best way to “let the mystery be” is to receive it in silence.

Aldous Huxley’s words speak to my heart. I have them framed on the wall of my office — a gift received years ago expressing what is at the center of my work and my ministry. For this, I believe, is the gift of music to humankind. It is an avenue to express what is inexpressible in any other medium. A path to understanding that transcends all others.

O magnum mysterium et admirabile sacramentum; ut animalia viderent Dominum natum jacentem in praesepeio.

O great mystery and wondrous sacrament, that animals should see the new-born Lord lying in a manger.

This ancient Latin text, relating the mystery of Jesus’ nativity in the Christian tradition has inspired composers for centuries. Inevitably, it seems, the musical response to these words has transcended the text, expressing the inexpressible mystery that compels us to return to this scene year after year and contemplate its meaning.

On December 14, the First Parish Choir will offer three settings of *O Magnum Mysterium*; Gregorian chant from as early as the 8th century; a cherished setting by the Spanish Renaissance composer Tomas Luis de Victoria; and the revelatory 20th century setting by American composer Morten Lauridsen. We invite you, on that Sunday, to “let the mystery be” and to enter into it through the medium that, after silence, comes closest to expressing the inexpressible.

Blessings,

—Beth Norton

Social Action Community News and Events

Two years ago, **Mary-Wren vanderWilden** and I developed a plan to build on our existing youth service trip program. Our vision was to create a tradition of service by offering service trip opportunities for all ages here at First Parish.



Current opportunities include El Salvador in April 2009 for 8th & 9th graders, New Orleans rebuilding in April 2009 for high schoolers, the Transylvania service trip for older high schoolers in summer 2009, and ongoing opportunities with Gulf Coast Works and in Transylvania.

Now Ecclesia Ministries offers a 24-hour "mini service trip" in Boston for adults and youth aged 15 and older. Participants arrive on a Friday night, tour Boston with a homeless guest from Common Cathedral, sleep over at a church, and participate in an outreach program on Saturday morning. This amazing opportunity cannot happen without lay volunteers. If you are interested in this program, contact me and we can make it happen at First Parish.

As always, please contact me with your causes and concerns.

—*Faith Bade*

THANKS FOR SUPPORTING EL SALVADOR LUNCHEON

Thank you to all who made the November luncheon with Sister Peggy such a success. We, the First Parish community, create the opportunities for our youth to learn how to become activists and to truly go out into the world and make a difference.

CONCORD PRISON OUTREACH HOLIDAY GIFT PROJECT

It is the time of year to remember our prison neighbors with the Holiday Gift Project.

Each gift bag will have the following items:

One 15 oz. bottle shampoo, one bar of deodorant soap, one stick deodorant (no roll-ons), one pair white socks (no tube socks), one 4-6 oz. tube of toothpaste, one writing pad (no wire) 6 x 9, one pack of envelopes (6 1/2 x 3 5/8), and one pocket calendar (no wire)

Homemade greeting cards signed with first names only are especially appreciated. The

West Concord 5 & 10 has assembled bags available for purchase, or you may donate any of the individual items. Cash donations are welcome also. Tax-deductible checks can be made out to Concord Prison Outreach, Inc., P.O. Box 383, Concord, MA 01742. The bags may be dropped off from Monday, November 24, through Sunday, December 7, at Trinity Episcopal Church, at the River Street entrance between Elm and Main streets. Contact **Linda Reynolds** at 978-371-0562 or lsmithreynolds@aol.com with any questions.

SOCIAL ACTION GRANTS MADE NOVEMBER 2008

Eleven grantees, totaling \$21,950, received grants from First Parish Social Action and include programs and advocacy addressing human rights, homelessness, housing, hunger, disadvantaged children, and inmates in Concord. Also funded were programs for agroforestry in Peru and arts education in El Salvador. Visit the social action Web page (firstparish.org) for more information and procedures for applying for funds.

Amnesty International Concord Group 15: \$250
Camino Verde: \$3,500
Centro Arte Para la Paz: \$1,300
Children's Island: \$1,400
Concord Action Family Homelessness Advocacy Network: \$500
Concord Housing Foundation: \$1,000
Concord Prison Outreach: \$2,000
Friends of the Rafael Hernandez School: \$2,500
Gaining Ground: \$1,200
Open Table Maynard: \$5,000
The Sharing Foundation: \$3,300

Contact **Alane Wallis** at awallis@nutter.com or 978-369-1114 with any questions.

HELPERS NEEDED FOR "TENTS OF HOPE" DARFUR PROJECT THIS SPRING

Violence in Darfur has forced 2.5 million people to flee their homes and live in refugee camps. Tens of thousands have died. The UUSC has led a campaign urging Congress to make ending the genocide a high priority. To raise awareness, we plan to participate in the Tents of Hope campaign. We need helpers of all ages to make this all-church event a success. Please go to the website uusc.org (under "What we do," then Campaigns and Actions) for more about Drumbeat for Darfur and Tents of Hope. Contact **Sue Beck** at 978-369-8445 or sbeck345@comcast.net if you would like to help.

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LEARN MORE ABOUT SOCIAL ACTION AT FIRST PARISH

The First Parish Social Action Community (SAC) helps parishioners connect with a diverse and exciting range of social action projects. To find out more about what is going on, join our e-mail list by sending a blank e-mail to SAC-join@lists.firstparish.org; see our website, www.firstparish.org/cms/content/view/97/70/; or e-mail our Social Action Program Director **Faith Bade** at FBade@firstparish.org.

HELP HOMELESS LOWELL FAMILIES

As the economy continues to sour, please think of the needy in Lowell as you sort out gently used clothes you no longer need. They can be recycled by leaving them on **Bill Seaver's** doorstep at 294 The Valley Road, Concord. He will deliver them to Lowell. Contact **Bill** at billseaver@earthlink.net or 978-369-7318 with questions.

"FEED" YOUR UUSC GUEST AT YOUR TABLE BOX!

We hope you picked up a Guest at Your Table box to support the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee. Through a combination of advocacy, education and partnerships with grassroots organizations, the UUSC promotes economic rights, advances environmental justice, defends civil liberties, and preserves people's rights in times of humanitarian crisis. Your GAYT contribution helps fund these projects and can earn UUSC membership: \$40 for an individual (\$20 senior), \$75 for a family (\$40 senior), \$10 for a student. Before turning it in, please fill out the information on your box to become a member of UUSC for one year. The boxes will be collected on December 7.

HELP WITH THE HOLIDAY SECRET SANTAS

First Parish works with local agencies to match you with adults and children who are experiencing hardship this holiday season. This is a wonderful First Parish tradition. Gifts should be dropped off between Friday, December 5, and Wednesday, December 10 (see the location on your gift tag), for delivery to participating agencies by December 17. Please contact **Allison Aley** at allisonaley@yahoo.com if you would like to help sort or deliver gifts.

HERNANDEZ SCHOOL NEEDS A VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

In these tight times, Hernandez cannot afford to hire a person to coordinate the efforts of volunteers for the school, after school, or their summer program, so we are looking for a volunteer to fill this key position. We want someone who can identify needs and then coordinate volunteers who want to fulfill those needs. This is a great way to get involved in a bilingual (English/Spanish) inner city school in the Egleston Square neighborhood of Roxbury. Contact **Bill Seaver** at 978-369-7318 if you can help.

Going Deeper Spiritually

Monthly Thematic and Theological Queries for the People of the First Parish in Concord

SERIES IV, 2008-2009

Note: *Following the lead of All Souls Unitarian in Tulsa, Unity Church in St. Paul and the First Parish in Weston, we continue this month a series of reflections, each month of the year focusing on a particular theological concept. Worship during that month will include at least one Sunday where this concept is explored. We hope the suggested topic for the month will find its way into our small group gatherings and into our conversations, even at home.*

December 2008: **MIRACLE** — December is a month of miracles. In Christianity, it is the birth of Jesus to Mary. Was she a virgin? Was there a star in the East? Is the birth a fulfillment of the prophet Isaiah? Did the shepherds bow down? Did they see something we wouldn't have seen? In Judaism, it is the oil burning in the lamp beyond all reason. Was it a miracle? Miracle speaks of what is amazing; it is from a Latin word meaning "something wonderful." A miracle is often "an event that cannot be explained by the known laws of nature." Some say miracles are attributed to the supernatural. Others simply say an event cannot be explained.

"Could a greater miracle take place than for us to look through each other's eyes for an instant?" —Henry David Thoreau

"Miracles are not contrary to nature, but only contrary to what we know about nature." —Saint Augustine

"Miracles are a retelling in small letters of the very same story which is written across the whole world in letters too large for some of us to see." —C. S. Lewis

"I am the miracle." —Gautama Siddharta

"A cancer inexplicably cured. A voice in a dream. A statue that weeps... It is possible to look at most miracles and find a rational explanation in terms of natural cause and effect." —Frederick Buechner

Questions:

- What is it that comes to your mind when you think of miracle? Have you ever experienced a miracle in your life?
- Where is the line for you between science and religion, between the natural and the supernatural, between reason and faith?
- When in your life, if ever, have you fallen to your knees? Do you ever wonder, What if?

January 2009: **JUSTICE**

Reflection and RE News

Sometimes you even surprise yourself.

Last year when we were planning the program for our 2nd to 6th graders, there were a lot of unknowns. We were not sure where we would be or what our space would look like. We were planning a series of large group activities and some parents were concerned this might not work well with our kids. Through it all, our RE staff felt that our parent community was always working with us and trusted us to create a program that would be meaningful despite the physical space limitations we were facing.

Liz Davis-Chaffin has worked tirelessly to connect our RE curriculum to our community. We started reaching out to local organizations last spring and through her efforts, our children have been able to support our own Green Sanctuary, the Crop Walk, the Jericho Road Project, Gaining Ground and Open Table. And that was just this fall.

We have worked intentionally to develop a program that would be meaningful and spiritually grounded in story, crafts and physical actions. It has worked out even better than we had hoped. Our kids are truly enjoying the mixed ages, the variety of activities and the shared experience of being in worship with a large group of children.

I would also like to thank our RE teachers. They have been flexible and supportive through this transitional season. We still have two terms to go, but so far all who are involved seem to have more energy, not less, as we move toward the holiday season. Working with kids who are enjoying what they are doing can do this to you.

— Pam Howell

CHILDREN'S HOLIDAY CRAFT WORKSHOP, DECEMBER 7

Due to the construction project, we will not be able to host our traditional Holiday Craft Workshop on December 6. Because of this, we are planning for the December 7 RE program to be a special RE Sunday that will be set up as our traditional Holiday Craft Workshop. We will not have as many choices as our regular craft workshop, but **Susan Ward** and **Liz Davis-Chaffin** are working hard to bring the same gift-making spirit to this special holiday tradition at First Parish.

DECEMBER RE CALENDAR

Sun., Dec. 7	Regular RE for Babies—6th Grade, 9 and 11 a.m. 8th Grade Drama, Parish Hall, 3–5 p.m. 9th Grade Coming of Age, Wright Tavern, 2–5 p.m. <i>with parents!</i>
Thu., Dec. 11	8th Grade Drama, Parish Hall, 7:30–9:30 p.m.
Fri., Dec. 12	8th Grade Play, Parish Hall, 7–8 p.m.
Sat., Dec. 13	8th Grade Play, Parish Hall, 7–8 p.m.
Sun., Dec. 14	Regular RE for Babies—4 years, 9 and 11 a.m. Surprise visitor for K–6th Grade, 9 and 11 a.m. 9th Grade Coming of Age, 11 a.m.–2 p.m.
Sun., Dec. 21	Regular RE for Babies—4 years, 9 and 11 a.m. Angels and Intergenerational Service, 9 and 11 a.m.
Sun., Dec. 28	Child care for Babies—4 years, 11 a.m. only

ALL-RE ORIENTATION SCHEDULE: BABIES TO 9TH GRADE

These orientations are for the teachers of each of the programs.

Orientation Schedule for Babies to 7th Grade Teachers in the Wright Tavern

2nd–6th Grades, Winter Term #3:
Thursday, January 15, 7:30–9:30 p.m.

Babies–1st Grade, Terms #3, #4 and #5:
Thursday, February 5, 7:30–8:30 p.m.

2nd–6th Grades, Spring Term #4:
Thursday, March 12, 7:30–9:30 p.m.

During each orientation, we will cover safety and first-aid information, review classroom rituals, obtain “substitution” lists and allow time for you to meet with your term’s teachers.

Orientation Schedule for 7th Grade Teachers

7th Grade Neighboring Faiths, Spring Term:
Wednesday, December 17, 7:30 p.m.

Orientation Schedule for 8th Grade owl Parents

The orientation for OWL parents is scheduled for December 3 and December 4 at 7:30 p.m. at First Parish.

THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER — DECEMBER 12 AND 13 AT 7 P.M. IN THE PARISH HALL

Please be sure to come to this touching seasonal play that is being performed by our 8th Graders. This one-hour show focuses on helping others, raucous children, and wonderful humor. The play has meaning for all ages. Please come and support the work our 8th Graders have done under the talented leadership of **Sue** and **Tom Beck**. You don’t need tickets; just come and enjoy this spirited play.

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Senior Youth News

Our youth, like adults, look for opportunities to connect and feel the spirit of the holidays amidst the commercialism and craziness of this season. We have planned a December that we hope provides youth with opportunities for connection and peace. I continue to be proud of the youth as they work to provide a patient and welcoming presence with one another.

Look over the December calendar and feel free to come to everything or drop in when it works for you. Please take special note that YRUU alums (college students) are welcome to come to our holiday party in December.

Dec. 7 Holiday Movie Night

Dec. 14 Laser Tag in Danvers

Dec. 21 Holiday Party – Alums welcome!
Bring something you already own, but don't want (wrapped) for Yankee Swap

Dec. 28 No YRUU

Applications for the April Vacation Youth Service Trip to New Orleans are due December 1. This is an amazing opportunity for our youth to work rebuilding homes in the 9th Ward in New Orleans through our association with Gulf Coast Works. If we don't already have your application and you'd like to go, contact me or **Faith Bade**.

The Youth Group sponsors a Transylvanian student's education by earning \$400 for him each year. In the summer of 2007 we got to meet our student, Hunni, whom we all loved. This year we are asking each youth to find a way to earn \$10 and donate it to our fund. It's a small thing for our youth to do that has a huge impact on Hunni.

As always, I welcome calls or e-mails. May your December be full of joy!

—*Mary-Wren vanderWilden*

Partner Church Committee

Now in Transylvania as a UUPCC networker to attend the 440th anniversary celebrations of the founding of Unitarianism, **Rodger Mattlage** sends the following update: "I have spoken with Réka B, Réka G, Lajos, Emese and Sandor and all send their greetings. Jozsef informs me that everyone who visited us in September had an incredible time! Emese will distribute the presents that sponsors gave to me and we hope to have letters from the students to the sponsors that I can bring back with me. Jozsef and I are going to Koloszar (Cluj) on Thursday and will see Attila and Orsi, and hopefully Magdika as well."

As previously reported, Rodger will witness the triennial synod, where (our recent guest) Sándor Lakatos will be ordained and a new bishop elected. He also hopes to have a chance to visit with our sponsored students. For those interested in becoming a sponsor, there are still opportunities. Contact **Sue Beck** at sbeck345@comcast.net.

On other roads, Endre Nagy is the current Francis Balázs Scholar at Starr King, the UU School of the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California. Each year this program brings a Unitarian Transylvanian minister to Starr King. Endre and his wife Éva will be in the Boston area during the week of January 20-27. Endre, who hopes to further incorporate his interest in music with his ministry, is also a member of (our) Sándor Lakatos' folk band. For those who would like to see a YouTube performance, be sure to visit the band's website at <http://fuszal.e-scape.ro/tagok> (click on "Videok"). All are invited to First Parish in Bedford on Friday, January 23, 7:30–9:00 p.m. to meet Endre, Éva and the UUPCC board for dessert and discussions. —**Winslow Pettingell**



WINTER SOLSTICE CELEBRATION



The First Parish Women's Circle invites everyone to a celebration of the Winter Solstice on Sunday, December 21, at 7:30 p.m. at the church. We'll tell stories, sing songs, enjoy the longest night, and observe the magic of the turning season — complete with wonderful music and seasonal treats. This celebration is planned to include all ages, in the tradition of a village gathering. Welcome, Yule!



Community News

RIVER VISIONS 2008

The SuAsCo Watershed Community Council is hosting River Visions 2008 on Saturday morning, December 6, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Clock Tower Place in Maynard. The conference is entitled "Greening the SuAsCo Watershed: LEED, LID and Other Tools for Responding to Climate Change." We have a host of excellent speakers from USGS to MA DEP to UNH Stormwater Center to consultants, to municipal officials, to builders of high efficiency and zero net energy housing.

RE NEWS

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Since this play specifically deals with the problems of poverty and hunger, we would like to encourage you to bring canned goods for our friends at Open Table. The economic problems we are facing today are felt in very real ways for organizations like Open Table. We will have a bin for donations at the door.

OUR SURPRISE VISITOR FOR DECEMBER 14

December will be filled with holiday surprises. So many of you enjoyed the storytelling antics of Elisa Pearmain last spring. We are thrilled to have Elisa Pearmain back for this special holiday Sunday. Elisa is the author of *Doorways to the Soul*, an excellent collection of inspirational tales from around the world. We will begin in the Sanctuary with the Children's Message from Ms. Pearmain, and then our 2nd-6th graders will gather in the Parish Hall for stories and fun.

KIDS IN ACTION

Are your children involved in an interesting Social Action project? We have been inviting our own First Parish children to be leaders in our RE program. Several children have come and shared their experiences with our 2nd-6th graders. We have had 6th graders speak about saving trees, a family talk about their work at Gaining Ground, and some who have helped Open Table. When kids speak to kids, the message is so much more meaningful to our children. We value what you are doing and want you to have a chance to share your story. If you think your child would like to share something of this nature, please contact **Pam Howell** at fpdre_pamhowell@mac.com.

Women's News

WOMEN'S AM/PM BOOK GROUP

The First Parish Women's Book Group will discuss *The Maytrees*, by Annie Dillard, for the November/December meetings. The evening session will be Monday, December 1, 7:30 to 9:00 p.m.; and the morning session, on Tuesday, December 2, 9:30 to 11:00 a.m. *Please note that due to construction at First Parish the discussions will be held at the following homes. Directions will be sent by e-mail.*

Evening Session: December 1, at the home of **Siri Smedvig**,
85 Westford Road, Concord

Morning Session: December 2 at the home of **Darien Smith**,
124 Hill Street, Concord

All women of First Parish are warmly invited to read the current book and join one or both of these discussions. If you would like to be added to the Women's Book Group e-mail list, please contact **Darien Smith** at darien@smithquest.com or 978-369-1471.

Dates and books for 2009 are as follows:

Jan. 26, 27 *Water for Elephants: A Novel*, by Sara Gruen

Feb. 23, 24 *The History of Love: A Novel*, by Nicole Krauss

Mar. 30, 31 *The Witch of Portobello*, by Paulo Coelho

Apr. 27, 28 *Grandmother's Secrets: The Ancient Rituals and Healing Powers of Belly Dancing*,
by Rosina-Fawzia B. Al-Raw

May 18, 19 *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, by Barbara Kingsolver

June (TBD) Potluck and suggestions for next year

WOMEN'S RETREAT WEEKENDS

Please join us for a weekend of introspection and connection to other First Parish women. Give yourself the gift of friendship and contemplation. Get away (but not too far) to Senexet House in Woodstock, Connecticut, on one of two available weekends:

Friday evening, January 23, to Sunday afternoon, January 25, 2009

or Friday evening, January 30, to Sunday afternoon, February 1, 2009

Senexet House is a comfortable old vacation home overlooking Roseland Lake in northeastern Connecticut, about an hour and a half from Concord. The bedrooms sleep one to four guests, and the meals are fresh, delicious, and prepared by someone else! Registration forms will be available in the church office, or find them online by December 15, at firstparish.org/forms.

—**Barb Chase**, for the Women's Retreat Planning Committee



First Parish in Concord

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DECEMBER 2008 NEWSLETTER

The **January Newsletter deadline** is **Monday, December 8**, at noon.

The Newsletter mailing is Wednesday, December 17.

News items should be limited to 100 words.

Don't Miss...

WPA CHRISTMAS CONCERT AND TEA

Tuesday, December 9, 3:00 p.m.

At the Trinitarian Congregational Church

EIGHTH GRADE HOLIDAY PLAY

Friday, December 12 and Saturday,

December 13, 7:00–8:00 p.m.

Parish Hall

STAY TUNED FOR NEWS ABOUT THE

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES!

First Parish in Concord • UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

Staff

Gary E. Smith, Senior Minister

Jenny M. Rankin, Minister

Melissa Perdue Gallo, Business Manager

Margie King Saphier, Associate Minister for Pastoral Care

Rebecca M. Blodgett, Affiliate Minister for Pastoral Care

Angela Herrera, Ministerial Intern

Pam Howell, Director of Religious Education

Jane Barnes, Religious Education Administrator

Liz Davis-Chaffin, Workshop Rotation Coordinator

Carol Duane, Program Coordinator for Young Children

Mary-Wren vanderWilden, Youth Program Director

Elizabeth Norton, Music Director

Eric Huenneke, Organist

Martha Goodman, Handbell Choir Director

Anderson Manuel, Youth Gospel Choir Director

Gail Carey, Children's Choir Director

David Huston, Music Director Emeritus

Mary Elizabeth Wheeler, Wright Tavern Center Director

Dan Holin, Jericho Road Executive Director

Leslie Koplou, Assistant to Executive Director, Jericho Road

A. Bigay, Assistant to the Ministers

Douglas Baker, Sacristan and Curator

Jane Johnson, Office Manager

Peggy Gallo, Financial Secretary and Collector

Faith Bade, Social Action Program Director

Kate Keleher, Newsletter Editor

Kaye Harvie, Jane Johnson, Newsletter Staff



HOLIDAY OFFICE SCHEDULE



The office will be open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Monday and Tuesday, December 22 and 23. The office will be closed on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, December 24, 25 and 26. The office will be open from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, December 29, 30 and 31; and will be closed on Thursday and Friday, January 1 and 2. Regular office hours (9 a.m. to 3 p.m.) will resume on Monday, January 5, 2009.



Church Office Hours: Monday–Friday, 9:00 to 3:00

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