



First Parish in Concord
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
Gathered in 1636

The Meeting House News

REVeries

Dear Friends,

Happy Holidays to all of you and your loved ones as we move into the heart of the season. We have returned to our Sanctuary (ta dah!), some staff have resettled into offices, old and new, and we await further construction as our new religious education wing will begin to be framed in and take shape. It has been a year of great challenge for us all, and I thank you for your patience and forbearance as programs and events have been changed, modified or cancelled.

The Really Big Change this month is on Christmas Eve. As of early December, we have no assurances that an adequate second exit can be constructed in time for to have these services inside. We have far too many people, too many children, too many guests, to imagine that we could ever evacuate the building in case of an emergency. And, under the best of circumstances, we could not have lit our candles.

So, we are moving outside! We will have choirs and a loudspeaker on the front steps. We will light candles. We will hear the familiar story! We will sing carols! Please come! This is a Christmas when we need one another, when we need the light of the other to illumine our path, when we recovenant to hold our community together.

The offering we take this night is divided equally among the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, the Unitarian Universalist Urban Ministry, and our partner congregation in Transylvania. In recent years, the total offering for the evening has exceeded \$7000, and the share we send to each recipient has been something on which they count. We invite your donation early if you cannot come that night. Rest assured, we'll pass baskets among you if you're here.

So — Happy Hanukkah! Blessed Solstice! Merry Christmas! Happy New Year! Thanks to the staff here who work so hard on your behalf! Thanks to all of you who support First Parish in so many meaningful ways.

— Gary

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

January 4

One Service at 11:00

Gary Smith, readings and reflections on the New Year

Music by Silver Bass Trio

January 11

Jenny Rankin, preaching

9:00 – First Parish Choir

11:00 – Gospel Choir

January 18

Intergenerational Service

Angela Herrera, preaching

9:00 & 11:00 – Intergenerational Gospel Choir

(Choir is open to all: See page 5 for more information.)

January 25

Gary Smith, preaching

9:00 – Handbell Choir

11:00 – First Parish Choir

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There is one insert with this newsletter:

- Wright Tavern Center 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
Friday, Jan. 16	Wednesday, Jan. 28
Friday, Feb. 13	Wednesday, Feb. 25
Monday, Mar. 16	Wednesday, Mar. 25

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

SPECIAL WOMEN'S PARISH ASSOCIATION LUNCHEON AND PROGRAM — TUESDAY, JANUARY 27

Join new and old friends for a special lunch and program at noon on Tuesday, January 27. Due to our current construction, we will meet at the Trinitarian Congregational Church Parish Hall, Walden Street, which is handicapped accessible. To support our friends at Verrill Farm after their recent fire, we will include food items from their farm stand at a delicious buffet. Professor Catherine L. Mann from Brandeis University will give a talk entitled "How Did We Get into This Economic Mess? How Can We Clean It Up?" Prior to Brandeis, Dr. Mann served as assistant director of the board of governors of the Federal Reserve. Charge for the luncheon is \$10.00. Make reservations with **Dian Pekin** by January 21, at pekindc@comcast.net or 978-263-0426. All First Parish men and women and their friends are welcome.

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.

Standing Committee Information

The next Standing Committee meeting will be held off-site on Monday evening, January 12. Please look for the monthly minutes online at firstparish.org under Church Life (you must log in).

From the Intern Minister

Every year at least one of my children asks me if I am Santa. I try not to take it personally. I eat a lot of cookies, and I do already inhabit a role once reserved for men. What's more, it's natural that I seem old to them. I've been around as long as they can remember. So every year I answer the same way:

"Are you sure you want to know the answer? What if I was Santa? I mean, I'm not saying I am—how would I get down the chimney? But if somehow, strangely, I was, would you be disappointed?" And then, so far, one of them always says, "Actually, never mind. I don't want to know yet. I'll ask next year." And with that, they have chosen to enjoy not knowing just a little longer.

The older they get, of course, the harder it will be to choose what to know, because all kinds of information will come at them from all angles: television, radio, internet, conversation, ads. How can they screen it out? Even if they could, who are we — and I'm speaking of the "we" who for the most part live in radical comfort and luxury compared to most of the world — to not look at the hard truths around us? (There is another "we," of course, and that one includes our brothers and sisters right here in Massachusetts who are desperately trying to scrape by.)

On the one hand, it is important for us to keep our perspective in check — to wonder, "Why me?" about good things as well as bad; and furthermore, to turn toward others and ask ourselves, "Since I am who and where I am, now what?" But on the other hand, when it comes to superfluous bad news — the kind that winds along the bottom of your television screen in a continuous loop late at night, particularly when there is nothing you can do about it — not knowing is needed respite for the soul. And it's okay to turn it off. In fact, I recommend that you do. Then go read about some good news — the sort that doesn't get into the media often. Better yet, make some yourself:

Be inexplicably kind. Love the most difficult person you know, and the easiest. Be more curious about people than news. And remember that all around the world and even around the corner, people have found — even in suffering — opportunities for human nature to shine.

And that's always worth knowing about.

In faith,

—Angela Herrera

Sunday Forums

Because of the ongoing renovations, Forums have been suspended for now. Please call **Charles Lowell** or **Robert Hilsinger** about future topics.

Parish Notes

THANK YOU TO THE BUILDERS OF OUR NEW RAMP

In order for First Parish to open December 1, the church needed an occupancy permit. The occupancy permit required the church to provide handicap access. A temporary ramp rental would have cost the Parish \$17,000. Instead, Hands-On Construction, owned by building committee member **Richard Warren**, built a ramp from a combination of recycled and new materials with labor at cost, bringing the total cost of the ramp to less than half the rental. Parishioners **Hank** and **Luke Reisner** both worked on this project through the weekend, often in the pouring rain, to "get you to the church on time."

FIRST PARISH BOUILLON VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Would you like the tasty bouillon at church again this winter, starting in mid-January? What it takes is someone to get the ingredients and make it before the 9:00 o'clock service (so it brews during the service), and to serve it at the first coffee hour. And a second person to serve at the second coffee hour and clean up afterward. We have a few volunteers from last year, but need more help. If you are interested in helping out, please e-mail **Kel Keleher** at kel@rkeleher.com.

THANKS FOR THE ARTISANS FAIR SUCCESS

The Women's Parish Association wishes to thank all First Parish volunteers for helping make this year's Holiday Artisans Fair another great success! We netted about six thousand dollars even with additional costs for an outside venue this year. Proceeds from the fair and other fundraising activities are used for charitable contributions and to pay for various building maintenance and construction costs. The WPA has contributed more than \$25,000 to date to the capital campaign for building and landscaping projects. Hearty thanks, everyone!

THE EMERSON FORUM

The Emerson Forum will hold its first meeting on February 2, from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. at the Concord Public Library. The purpose of the Forum is to provide a continuing presence at First Parish in Concord for dialogue on the essays and thinking of Ralph Waldo Emerson, and how they speak to us today. The Emerson Forum is meant to bring together, in an informal, nonacademic atmosphere, a community of participants drawn from the members and friends of First Parish. Due to limited space, please register in advance with **Mel Bernstein** at 781-259-9926.

PARISH NOTES continued on page 5

TRIVIA AGAIN — JANUARY 31!

Our first Trivial Pursuit evening was so much fun and such an outstanding success that we're doing it all over again this year. So save the date for the Second Annual Trivial Pursuit Contest on Saturday, January 31.

Pastoral Care News

Traditionally winter has been the time to sit by the fire listening to stories: the Christmas story, Hanukkah story, the story of Kwanzaa. It is also a time to share our own stories. When my mother was a young girl, she lived in Manchester, England, in a home without central heating, which was very common in the early 1900's. She remembered how special it was to be sick because it was the only time she was allowed to have a fire in the fireplace in her bedroom. When she was healthy, which was most of the time, she had a warm brick put under the bedcovers to warm her bed.

Here at First Parish, there is a tradition, that warms the heart and fills the tummy when events disrupt life. The tradition is receiving wonderful meals prepared by Caring Connection and delivered in a bag decorated by children in Religious Education. Two to three times a year, volunteers from Caring Connection gather to prepare meals and freeze them. The advantage of having a frozen meal delivered is that you decide when is the best day to have it.

Because the First Parish kitchen is under reconstruction, Caring Connection recently held an off-site cooking workshop. Thanks to Caring Connection's four chefs — **Bev Bringle, Janet Rothrock, Rhoda Miller** and **Carolyn Shohet**, the First Parish freezer is stocked again.

SHARING OUR HOLIDAY FLOWERS

Another holiday tradition is delivering poinsettias to parishioners. This year poinsettias will be delivered on Friday, December 26 and Sunday, December 28 after the 11:00 o'clock service. Please e-mail or call me if you would like to deliver flowers, and tell me which day is convenient for you.

SEATING AT THE CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

If you would like to attend the outdoor Christmas Eve service but need to sit down, please contact me or call the church office so we can arrange to have a chair for you.

RESPECTFUL SUNDAY MORNING PARKING

On Sunday mornings, please keep the front semicircle available for those who have difficulty walking distances.

—*Margie King Saphier*

Money Matters

The Standing Committee, the Trustees and the Executive Team (**Gary, Jenny and Melissa**) have reached an agreement regarding a credit line for financing construction costs while pledges are being paid during the next several years. During the past year, **Rob Richardson** (Treasurer), **Jim Tenner** (Standing Committee member), and I worked with Cambridge Trust to secure a credit line, using the endowment as collateral. Over the course of developing loan agreements it became apparent that the smartest solution was for the Trustees to loan directly to the church. Once all the parties agreed to this in principle, a Memorandum of Understanding was drafted by outside counsel and reviewed by the Standing Committee, the Trustees and the Executive Team. The parameters of the loan are that it will be paid back to the Trustees by 2013. The interest rate is fixed at 4 percent. Interest is due monthly, and if there are any excess funds in the capital campaign accounts at the end of the month, they will be used to service the principal. The expense of this loan is directly related to pledges and pledge payments. We are so close to our goal! If you have not yet pledged to the capital campaign, please consider doing so today. And if you have pledged, we thank you, and ask that you make timely payments.

Thank you and Happy New Year!

—*Melissa Perdue Gallo*

FROM THE COLLECTOR

We are very grateful for the year-end special gifts that we have received, and we want to thank everyone — but we have received some generous gifts that we can't identify. One person promised a check in February 2009, but there is no name or address on the card or the envelope. Another authorized us to use a credit card, but unfortunately we can't read the signature, and again we have no name or address. Can you help? We want to express our gratitude! Thank you.



**SINGING IN THE NEW YEAR:
INTERGENERATIONAL GOSPEL CHOIR!**

On Sunday, January 18, to honor Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday, we will assemble our annual Intergenerational Gospel Choir to sing at both services. The choir, which will be co-led by **Anderson Manuel**, **Gail Carey** and **Beth Norton**, will sing two powerful, easy-to-learn gospel songs, *The Storm is Passing Over*, by Charles A. Tindley, and the beautiful *Total Praise*, by Richard Smallwood.

In addition to the Sunday commitment, there will be one rehearsal on Wednesday evening, January 14, from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. This group is open to singers of all ages, and you do not have to read music to join. We ask that singers who decide to join commit to singing both services on January 18.

For more information or to sign up, contact **Beth Norton** by e-mail, music@firstparish.org or phone at 978-369-9602, ext. 420.



PARISH NOTES

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RE COMING OF AGE SERVICE, FEBRUARY 1

This year's Coming of Age RE program has been filled with discovery. Our teens explore what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist, while at the same time beginning the process of understanding themselves as spiritual beings. What moves us to do the things we do? This is a question we all struggle with at one time or another. In this program, our youth will present personal credos to share with all of us. These credos are statements that reflect who each teen is and what it is that defines his or her own belief system. Each year this service is held up as one of the best of the year. It takes courage to stand up there and publicly define what moves you.

We are lucky to have **Suzie Weaver** leading the program this year. She also has support from terrific mentors: **Shawna Reid**, **Mark Howell**, **Claudia Nimar**, **Peter Siebert**, **Sandy Crawford** and **Chris Randall**. Each adult brings so much to our program: music, teaching, social action and humor. Please be sure to attend this important and moving service on February 1.

MUSings

"The past and future ever meet in the eternal now; to make each day a thing complete shall be our New Year vow."

—John Andrew Storey [1935–]
British Unitarian Minister.

New Year's is such a complex celebration. I think Rev. Story catches the spirit beautifully in this line from the hymn, *The Ceaseless Flow of Endless Time* (No. 350). This time when past and future meet presents a complicated mixture of nostalgia, anticipation, sadness, joy, hope and dread.

We could vow to make each day "a thing complete" on any day. But this turning of the year inspires us to new resolutions. "...we stand at a threshold," Kathleen McTigue, minister of the Unitarian Society of New Haven, reminds us, "the New Year something truly new, still unformed, leaving a stunning power in our hands: What shall we do with this great gift of Time, this year?"



I sometimes hear of your dreams to make music more a part of your lives. You would return to a neglected instrument, or join the choir when time allows. You would have your children join a choir; or just expand your musical horizons.

I hope, with this "gift of Time" you'll consider one of these options:

Join the ad hoc Intergenerational Gospel Choir in January!

Join any of the choirs — the First Parish Choir will begin working on new repertoire in January, including the exciting *Missa Gaia* that we are preparing for our Music Sunday in May.

The Children's Choirs and Gospel Choir are always open to new young members. The Handbell Choir is also a great way for adults to experience ensemble music making.

Come to "Rise Up Singing" on January 23. We make music together in an informal and relaxed way.

Do you have dreams for musical events at First Parish? Perhaps you could join the Music Events Committee.

Are there songs or pieces of music that are especially meaningful to you? Send me an e-mail or a note. Very often, your ideas inspire me and get me thinking of new ways we can bring music into our parish life.

If you are longing to share your musical skill with the larger Parish, please let me know!

Above all, in this new year, I hope you will find a way to sing and play and talk about what you love in music.

Please feel free to contact me by phone (ext. 420) or by e-mail (music@firstparish.org) if you have musical ideas you'd like to share or explore. Let us work together to "make each day a thing complete" and include some music!

Blessings,

—Beth Norton

Social Action Community News and Events

I would like to start the New Year by celebrating what we as a collective community do. How hard we work at acting upon our benediction; how much of a difference we make in the world. On November 23, **Pam Howell's** children's message spoke to us all. During the holiday season, and really during any



time of the year, we can become overwhelmed by requests for donations or for our time to support causes we believe in. And what we can do is to choose to do something — not everything. And if we all do something, we will make a huge difference in the world. First Parish did choose to do something during this holiday season. We created joy through Secret Santa, we helped replenished the Open Table pantry, we provided warm mittens, clothing and other items for the needy at Common Cathedral, UUUM's Renewal House, and in Lowell, and we supported worldwide efforts of the UUSC. Thanks to everyone.

— *Faith Bade*

TOGETHER WE CAN END HOMELESSNESS IN MASSACHUSETTS

The 5th Annual Forum on Family Homelessness in Massachusetts will be held on Sunday evening, January 25, from 7:00-8:45 p.m. at the Trinity Episcopal Church in Concord. Representative Byron Rushing will be the keynote speaker. Rep. Rushing is the Assistant Majority Whip and a cochair of the Mass. Commission to End Homelessness. He will discuss the findings and recommendations of the commission as well as shed light on what concerned citizens can do. The forum is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served. Contact **Jane Blumberg** with questions at jane_blumberg@post.harvard.edu.

THANK YOU FROM THE SECRET SANTA TEAM

Thanks to all who made our First Parish Secret Santa Program a success. Even without our coffee hour tables, you came through and “adopted” 65 individuals all on one November day. Because of your efforts we brightened the holidays for these individuals. A big thank-you from **Allison Aley, Nicole Hammond, Pamela Hathaway and Kate Svrcek**.

UUSC BOXES ARE DUE!

Guest at Your Table Boxes were collected on December 7, but if there are any left out there, please turn them in to the church office as soon as possible. Don't forget to complete the membership information on the side of the box. Please contact **Sue Beck** at Sbeck345@comcast.net with any questions.

CONTINUE TO HELP THE NEEDY IN LOWELL

The holidays may be over, but the needs of Lowell community members continue. **Bill Seaver** will continue to collect gently used clothing throughout the year. Simply drop the items off on Bill's front porch at 294 The Valley Road, Concord. Contact Bill with any questions at billseaver@earthlink.net.

MITTEN TREE A SUCCESS

Thanks to all who contributed to the First Parish Mitten Tree program. Donations far exceeded last year, and our warm hats, scarves and mittens given to the guests of Common Cathedral and House of Hope in Lowell were greatly appreciated.

UU MASS ACTION NETWORK NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT

UU Mass Action is a statewide network representing Massachusetts Unitarian Universalist churches and fellowships. Its mission is to mobilize our voices in support of legislation that meets our UU values. Recent activities include promoting the defeat of Question 1, passage of the Global Warming Solutions Act, promotion of the Homeless Prevention program, and the institution of an annual lobbying day. UU Mass Action received seed money from the UUSC, but now needs your financial support. We are also looking for a First Parish representative to bring these issues to our church. Check out uumassaction.org, or contact **Sue Beck** for more information.

SAVE THE DATES FOR THESE EL SALVADOR SERVICE TRIP MEETINGS

The last three meetings for those participating in the El Salvador trip in April will be Monday, January 5; Monday, February 9; and Sunday, March 29. A parent should attend the final meeting on March 29, as it involves packing and logistics. Contact **Faith Bade** with any questions at FBade@firstparish.org.

DON'T MISS THE FUNDERBURG SCHOLARS DINNER

Join us on Saturday, February 7, for the Funderburg Scholars dinner at church. Help Roxbury youth apply to and graduate from college — while you enjoy a nice meal with great company! Meet some Roxbury students and learn more about the program. No fixed “price” — donate what feels right to you at the dinner. Reserve your place at dinner at coffee hour, by leaving a message for **Loretta Ho Sherblom**, 978-369-4325, or e-mailing her at Loretta@LHSBenefits.com. Join us for wine and cheese at 6:30 p.m., dinner (by **Caroline McCloy**) at 7:15!

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.

Wright Tavern Center

Happy New Year, Everyone! Our Winter/Spring 2009 catalog has a new design and will be arriving momentarily, with an enticing array of offerings for the new year. Gratefully, most courses will be held at First Parish. Our appreciation once again goes to Kerem Shalom for giving our Fall 2008 programs a home away from home.

We closed out our Fall 2008 schedule with the Global Sufficiency Summit in November and Witnessing Whiteness in December. Both events were invitations to participate in important conversations about sustainability and diversity — issues that profoundly affect how we live in relationship with our community and our world.

A few highlights of wonderful offerings from within our community: in January, **Rev. Margie King Saphier**, **Rev. Becky Blodgett** and **Bernie Jenkins** team up to offer Realities of Aging: The Courage to Act, Love and Be; **Rev. Jenny Rankin** will offer a Margaret Fuller seminar and Emerson in Italy in preparation for the Tracing the Transcendentalists in Italy trip; **Mary Elizabeth Wheeler** and Edi Pasalis will launch Spirit in Practice at First Parish in Weston. February brings the first meeting of the Emerson Forum at the Concord Public Library. Ministerial Intern **Angela Herrera** will facilitate Spiritual Autobiography in March. **Merill Comeau** will offer her long-awaited course Making Art Out of Life in April.

A few of the many fine courses with visiting presenters: Carol Hohle comes from First Parish in Weston for a three-part Living Green series in January, author Ray McGinnis comes from Vancouver, Wash., to offer Write Way to Wellness and Writing the Sacred in February; Rev. Carl Scovel returns to First Parish to teach Parables: Christian Koans during Lent; March also brings the Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream Symposium, and Stories from the Heart, a Wright Tavern benefit featuring local musician Louis Arnold and PlayBack troupe True Story Theater. In April, Rev. Jade Angelica will present The Healing Power of Yes: Communicating Effectively with Persons with Alzheimer's; and Rich and Antra Borofsky will offer their Intimacy as a Spiritual Path, a workshop. More to come! For short course descriptions, please see the Wright Tavern insert in this *Meeting House News*.

Visit the Wright Tavern Center website at www.wrighttavern.org and contact us at FPTavern@aol.com. Please check out our online registration and let us hear your feedback.

In Celebration,

— *Mary Elizabeth Wheeler*

Director

Going Deeper Spiritually

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

SERIES V, 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 the 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.*

January 2009: **JUSTICE** — With the turning of the year, we consider the theme of justice. We say in our child dedication that we will tell our children “why we call one thing right and another wrong.” These foundational teachings about justice have been part of the world’s religions since the very beginning. And we don’t just talk about it. We try to go out into the world and work for justice in practical ways, both big and small. It might mean joining a candle-light vigil, volunteering at Open Table, going on a service trip to New Orleans, being part of Green Sanctuary. Is there a specific way you feel called to act for justice in this New Year?

“On the one hand, we are called to play the Good Samaritan on life’s roadside; but that will be only an initial act. One day we must come to see that the whole Jericho Road must be transformed so that men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed as they make their journey on life’s highway. True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it is not haphazard and superficial. It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring.”

— Martin Luther King Jr.

“A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.” — Martin Luther King Jr.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed it’s the only thing that ever has.”

— Margaret Mead

“Many would like the poor to keep on saying that it is God’s will for them to live that way. But it is not God’s will for some to have everything and others to have nothing. That cannot be of God. God’s will is that all of God’s children be happy.”

“I have the audacity to believe that people everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits.”

— Martin Luther King Jr.

Questions:

- Ask your child to tell you about something that happened on the bus or at school that they didn’t think was fair. Why?
- Is there a time in your life you can remember when you felt hard hit by the “world’s unfairness?” Tell the story.
- Given the many injustices that exist in the world, how do we take meaningful action without feeling discouraged or getting cynical?

Reflection and RE News

My I.Q.

When I was four years old

They tried to test my I.Q.

*They showed me a picture of 3 oranges
and a pear*

They said, which one is different?

It does not belong

They taught me different is wrong.

— Ani DiFranco

So often in our world we see those who are different become marginalized in one way or another. Imagine being a kid in this world, a world that works toward conformity in school, in sports, and in social groups. It is a lot of pressure to be a kid, wanting to “fit in” and be liked by peers, teachers and parents. But what about those who do not fit in so easily? We might say they march to a drummer few can hear.

I love that so many of our UU kids have unique personalities. They are insightful in ways that I treasure and I look forward to seeing how each child unfolds on Sunday morning. What little gift did someone bring? What new idea might someone have? How will this child react to this project? Who yearns to light the chalice?

We try to create a program where our differences are celebrated as assets, where each child’s strengths are discovered through taking small risks and finding intrinsic satisfaction in these risks. Watching your child’s face light up with a suggestion or idea is what keeps our programs fresh. When our children see their ideas become real, they feel a sense of being part of something bigger than themselves.

— Pam Howell

CRAFT WORKSHOP A BIG SUCCESS

Due to the construction project, we needed to do the Craft Workshop differently. Instead of holding the event on a Saturday afternoon, we ran it during our regular RE meeting time. It was slightly scaled back, but over 70 children attended and were happily engaged in making beautiful crafts for holiday gifts. A very special thanks goes to our Head Elf, **Susan Ward**. Despite all the upheaval in the attic, she was able to work closely with us to deliver a beautiful and meaningful workshop.

NEEDED FOR OUR BABIES—4-YEAR PROGRAM

Wooden Blocks, small table and chair set, and simple puzzles — Please call **Jane Barnes** at 978-369-9602 if you can donate any of these items.

JANUARY RE CALENDAR

Sun. Jan. 4	Child care for Babies – 4 years, 11 a.m. only
Sun., Jan. 11	Regular RE for Babies – 4 years, 9 and 11 a.m. Surprise Visitor for K-6th, 9 and 11 a.m. 7th Grade Neighboring Faiths, Wright Tavern, 11 a.m. 8th Grade OWL, Parlor and Wright Tavern, 4 – 7:00 p.m.
Sun., Jan. 18	Regular RE for Babies – 4 years, 9 and 11 a.m. Martin Luther King, Jr. Intergenerational Service, 9 and 11 a.m. No RE for 7th and 8th Grades
Sun., Jan. 25	Regular RE for Babies – 6th Grade, 9 and 11 a.m. 7th Grade Neighboring Faiths, Wright Tavern, 10:30 a.m. 8th Grade OWL, Parlor and Wright Tavern, 4 – 7:00 p.m.

UPCOMING ORIENTATION DATES

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.

DON’T MISS OUR SURPRISE VISITOR FOR JANUARY 11

We were thrilled to have Elisa Pearmain back as our surprise visitor in December. She is an amazing storyteller, and it was the perfect gift to our children during the holiday season.

On January 11, we will be honored to have Cindy Rivka Marshall back with us as our surprise visitor. If you recall, Cindy did a marvelous rendition of Queen Esther last year. She is a reknowned storyteller who uses song, music and theatrics to provide delightful entertainment for our children. On January 11, we will begin in the Sanctuary with a Children’s Message from Ms. Rivka Marshall, and then our K-6th graders will gather in the Parish Hall for more stores and laughter.

7TH GRADE ART IN ACTION

This year we tried a new program in RE for our 7th graders. We recognized the need for our 7th graders to be both socially active and engaged in a group effort. As a result, we developed a “home-grown” program that mixed art and social action. Our 7th graders created banners and T-shirts for the Crop Walk and walked together to support this cause. They made origami peace cranes to symbolize those lost to the Iraq War. They created a beautiful portrait as a gift to our minister, **Gary Smith**. And they worked together at Gaining Ground. Programs like these cannot happen without dedicated leaders. Thanks to **Margot Kimball, Libby Kurten** and **Betsy Siebert**, this program was fun and meaningful to our 7th graders.

RE NEWS continued on page 10

Partner Church Committee

Next summer's Youth Service Pilgrimage (YSP) group is meeting regularly for its journey to Székelykeresztúr (July 9–21). For updates, please refer to the Senior Youth News.

Rodger Matlage returned recently from his three-week visit to Keresztúr, staying with Rev. József and Anna Szombatfalvi. He brought gifts from many of our sponsors to their Keresztúri high school students and returned with gifts from the students to their sponsors. While there he met with many of these students, attended a number of school functions and assisted with Emese-Timea Nagy's senior English class. He also made presentations about the history of our partnership and sponsorship programs to the high school teachers and to the church's Women's Association, as the first of their winter lecture series.

Our good friend, and one of our September visitors, Rev. Sándor Lakatos was ordained at the triennial Transylvanian Unitarian Synod on December 6. The newly elected bishop, Ferenc Benczédi Bálint (minister in Kolozsvár, whom many of us have met), performed the Laying on of Hands for Sándor. Sándor's wife Emese-Timea Nagy attended, as did both of their parents. Also during the Synod, József Csáka (István's father) was elected to one of the two Lay President posts.

Work has progressed slowly on the Keresztúr Unitarian Community House. The exterior walls have been restored and the custom windows are built and ready for installation. József hopes for completion in late summer or early fall and will invite a delegation from Concord to come for the opening ceremony, so stay tuned.

We are seeking a volunteer or volunteers to represent us at the June high school graduation. If you currently sponsor a student and would like to learn more, please contact either of our PCC cochairs.

Minden jót mindenkinek! (Best wishes to everyone!)
— **Lillian Anderson** and
Winslow Pettingell, cochairs

Senior Youth News

Each year our youth group goes on retreat in the middle of winter — no matter what the weather — to a summer cottage (no insulation), with no heat or running water. The youth have to keep the fires going all day and night including constantly chopping and stacking wood. I won't even mention what cooking and going to the bathroom are like without running water! Several of us will even summit Mount Chocorua with crampons. Now this may not sound "fun" to many adults, but for the youth (and some crazy chaperones) not only is it a great time, but also they learn so much about themselves. This year we'll be heading up to New Hampshire the last weekend in January and we'll be home in time for the Super Bowl!

The YAC (Youth Advisory Committee) has planned a terrific January with something for everyone!

Sun., Jan. 4: 2008 Reflections and 2009 Predictions

Sun., Jan. 11: Snow Tubing at Nashoba Ski Area

Mon., Jan. 19: Movie Night

Sun., Jan. 25: Stress Reduction

Fri., Jan. 30 – Sun., Feb. 1: Winter Retreat – forms on website

For the past three years, the Youth Group has sponsored a student from Transylvania. The YAC decided that this year we'd ask each youth to donate \$10 that he/she would personally earn to fund our student. Our youth can feel proud that they are making it possible for Hunor Zsigmond to attend school.

Our Transylvania Youth Pilgrimage team is already preparing for their trip in July 2009. We have a great group of chaperones who are busy preparing our group and planning the trip: **Jeanine Calabria**, **Peter Fischelis**, **Candace Nelson**, **Nancy Reilly** and **Bob Treitman**. Our New Orleans Service Trip group is coming together, and we are hoping to send about 12 youth and chaperones down to the Ninth Ward over April vacation to help rebuild that area.

For most of our youth final exams are at the end of January. It is a stressful time as they try to remember/relearn/cram in everything they have learned since fall. Our seniors are in the dark, never-ending days of January/February, waiting to hear back from colleges. It is our hope that the Youth Group can be an oasis of peace, a refuge of good friends and a place to let loose during these stressful times.

May you have a wonderful 2009!

— *Mary-Wren vanderWilden*

NEIGHBORING FAITHS TO BEGIN

Our 7th graders will begin a journey through one of our foundational RE programs: Neighboring Faiths. In the program, our children will visit and then discuss different religious traditions. We will attend a Baptist service, a Jewish Temple and a Quaker meeting. By visiting others in worship and witnessing their traditions in action, we are building bridges of understanding and knowledge. This program is just one of the ways we “Go out into the world in peace” and connect with others.

PLAY: “THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER”

Thanks to our expert directors, **Sue** and **Tom Beck**, this play was a huge success. Not only did it bring our 8th graders closer together; it also brought an important message to our RE community through a humorous and insightful story — we “Honor All Beings,” not just those who think as we do. This play focused on this important message and brought joy to the hearts of those who watched it unfold.

We would like to make this play a First Parish tradition. This experience was such a delight for all involved that we are looking at handing the scripts and materials over to next year’s 8th graders. Shows like this have their own way of building excitement and commitment in our younger children. Kids watch the play each year thinking, What part would I like? We are looking for ways for our kids to mark their personal and spiritual growth at First Parish, and this play is a gift that can help us move toward this important goal.

8TH GRADE OUR WHOLE LIVES PROGRAM (OWL)

I would like to thank, in advance, these dedicated and thoughtful leaders who will teach our OWL program: **Melissa Perdue Gallo**, **Mark Russell Prior**, **Alane Wallis** and **Peter Nobile**.

At the two-day mandatory parent orientation for OWL, the OWL leaders and I explain the goals of the program and why we teach a sexuality course in our religious education program. The parents asked insightful and important questions, and when parents ask these questions, we have an opportunity to discuss why we are here and what it is we want for our children.

During this orientation, I often hear the comment that we are a “liberal faith with conservative values.” We want our children to make safe decisions for their physical and mental health, and to be able to recognize healthy relationships and avoid those that break our spirit. We want them to use factual knowledge and their own moral compass when it comes to making choices about their bodies. The OWL program is a gift our congregation offers to our 8th graders. Our deepest hope is that they use this gift to help them form positive and affirming relationships in the future.

Women’s News**WOMEN’S AM/PM BOOK GROUP**

The January book for the Women’s AM/PM Book Group is *Water for Elephants*, by Sara Gruen. The evening session will be held Monday, January 26, from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m.; and the morning session, Tuesday, January 27, from 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:

Evening Session: January 26, 7:30 p.m., at the home of **Siri Smedvig**, 85 Westford Road, Concord

Morning Session: January 27, 9:30 a.m. 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:

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

FIRST PARISH WOMEN’S RETREATS 2009

January 23 to January 25, or January 30 to February 1

Framing Our Futures — Evaluate what joys and challenges you currently have in your life. Rethink your vision, resilience and attachments. Consider how you might reshape your future and what you might have to share with your community. Come join other women of First Parish for a retreat weekend of talking, companionable silence, singing, eating, walking and having fun together as they share stories and insights.

The Women’s Retreats are held at Senexet House, senexet-house.org, 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! Both retreats will include writing, contemplation, relaxation; they will be as similar as possible, and as unique as any group can be.

Registrations are available online at firstparish.org/forms or in the First Parish office. The cost of the weekend is \$175, which covers two nights and six meals, plus a donation to cover materials and a gratuity for the staff at Senexet House. If you have questions about the retreats or would like to inquire about funding assistance, please contact **Barbara Chase** (978-369-5123 or e-mail bbc0117@aol.com) or **Martha Kilcoyne** (978-443-2686 or mkilcoyne@comcast.net).

January 2009 Calendar

*Listings in italics represent classes offered through
the Wright Tavern Center for Spiritual Renewal.*

Every Week...

Men's Group	Saturday	7:30 a.m.
Gospel Choir	Sunday	10:00 a.m.
YRUU	Sunday	7:00 p.m. (not 1/18)
<i>Realities of Aging</i>	Monday	2:00 p.m.
<i>Kundalini Yoga</i>	Tuesday	9:30 a.m. (First Parish in Weston)
<i>T'ai Chi</i>	Tuesday	7:00 p.m.
Bell Choir	Wednesday	1:00 p.m.
Junior Choir	Wednesday	4:25 p.m.
Chalice Choir	Wednesday	5:15 p.m.
Adult Choir	Wednesday	7:45 p.m.
<i>Margaret Fuller Seminar</i>	Thursday	12:15 p.m. (not 1/8)

ALL EVENTS TAKE PLACE AT FIRST PARISH UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.

<p>Thu Jan 1 Holiday—Office Closed</p> <p>Fri Jan 2 Holiday—Office Closed</p> <p>Wed Jan 7 7:00 Youth Advisory Committee</p> <p>Fri Jan 9 12:30 <i>T'ai Ji</i></p> <p>Sun Jan 11 11:00 Neighboring Faiths 4:00 Our Whole Lives</p> <p>Tue Jan 13 3:00 <i>Tea and Poetry</i></p> <p>Wed Jan 14 12:00 <i>Listening for God</i></p> <p>Fri Jan 16 12:00 Newsletter Deadline</p> <p>Sun Jan 18 10:00 Calvin College Visitors</p> <p>Mon Jan 19 Holiday—Office Closed 7:00 YRUU</p> <p>Wed Jan 21 7:00 <i>Spirit in Practice</i> (First Parish in Weston)</p>	<p>Fri Jan 23 5:30 Coming of Age Lock-In 7:30 <i>Rise Up Singing</i></p> <p>Sun Jan 25 11:00 Neighboring Faiths 4:00 Our Whole Lives</p> <p>Mon Jan 26 7:00 <i>Emerson in Italy</i> 7:30 <i>Women's AM/PM Book Group</i> (off-site)</p> <p>Tue Jan 27 9:30 <i>Women's AM/PM Book Group</i> (off-site)</p> <p>Wed Jan 28 9:15 Newsletter Mailing</p> <p>Fri Jan 30 5:30 YRUU Start of 3-day Retreat (off-site)</p> <p>Sat Jan 31 3:00 Coming of Age Rehearsal 2nd Annual Trivial Pursuit Contest</p>
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First Parish in Concord

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JANUARY 2009 NEWSLETTER

The February Newsletter deadline is **Friday, January 16**, at noon.
The Newsletter mailing is Wednesday, January 28.
News items should be limited to 100 words.

Don't Miss...

ONE CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE
Outside on the front steps
Wednesday, December 24, 5:30 p.m.

**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

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.



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

Phone: 978-369-9602

Fax: 978-369-8701

E-Mail: fpconcord@aol.com

Website: firstparish.org

Ministers' E-Mail:

Gary E. Smith: garyesmith@firstparish.org

Jenny M. Rankin: revjenny@comcast.net

Margie King Saphier: mksaphier@comcast.net

Angela Herrera: aherrera@hds.harvard.edu