



The Meeting House News

IN THIS ISSUE

REVERIES

Dear Friends,

It is November and now that the leaves have fallen, the light plays in a different way across the land. I know November is not everyone's favorite but my grandmother was born in this month, as well as several dear friends, and one daughter, so I look forward to its stark beauty, looking for glimpses of mystery in the fading of the light at the end of day.

It is hard for me to believe that I am writing my last newsletter column. I so appreciate the opportunity I am having in these days to meet with some of you in my office or your homes. To visit, to talk, to reminisce. For me to try to say "thank you" to you for the gift of these years we have walked together in ministry. To express some of my appreciation for gifts I feel you have helped me to recognize in myself or for us to talk through an event in church life where we had different opinions, try to understand another point of view, come to a greater clarity or understanding.

As I said in my October 28 sermon, I have loved being your minister and it has been hard for me to let go. I am not very good at saying "goodbye," I imagine few of us are. It's hard to say goodbye to chapters of our lives, to people we love, to a place that was special. But it is what life asks of us again and again, to let go of one reality and make way for another new reality, waiting to be born.



Emerson talked about it in the last paragraph of his essay "Compensation," how losing something or someone — a friend, brother, wife (he had lost all three when he wrote this) — which at first "seemed nothing but privation" could actually be ushering in a new and life-giving chapter. Change like this creates a kind of "revolution," he wrote, breaking up the old way of living but making way for a new way and deepening the person who is going through this so that they do not remain a "sunny garden flower" but rather deepen into a "banyan tree," wise, rooted, ready to offer shelter to others.

Despite all the changes he endured, he continued to believe in what he called "the deep remedial force" that underlies all things. I find that comforting. But you already know that I find comfort in Emerson, who encountered so many obstacles, lost so many people he loved and yet somehow developed the resilience he needed to survive, and to do more than that, to thrive. He had periods of inaction, illness,

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There are **FOUR** inserts at the end of this newsletter:

- ◆ Play Information
- ◆ Holiday Celebration Schedule
- ◆ Humanists Speaker Information
- ◆ Wright Tavern Center Programs

First Parish in Concord

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
Gathered in 1636

First Parish in Concord is a welcoming Unitarian Universalist congregation that seeks ways to deepen spiritually, build community, and make a positive difference in the world.

REVeries

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grief, sickness but in the end, he never lost his enthusiasm for ideas or for life or for loving people.

I am grateful to my husband for pointing out these words from “Compensation” to me again for they are helpful companions for me as I walk through these last days with you.

As some of you know, we ministers are expected to abide by a professional code of ethics and conduct. This includes how we interact with a former congregation once we have left. In order to allow the new minister or ministers the ability to form a deep attachment with his or her new congregation, it is expected that the former ministers are not at all present in the life of the church. It is best if the former ministers essentially “disappear” for a time so that the new minister can get started and settled and attached and that you can attach to him or her. This seems harsh or strange to some people at first, and I understand that. But it is important that we be clear with one another about what the guidelines expect both of you and of me. **Gary Smith** moved to a different town when he left and in some ways, that may have made it easier. My family and I will be remaining in Concord at least for the time being. I have a child in school, and I know I will see you on the street, at the library, on the playing field. That is fine. We can chat about things other than First Parish. I am not allowed to perform weddings or memorial services or other rites of passage, to meet with you for dinner or lunch or other prearranged meetings. Once First Parish has called a new minister, I will be in touch with that person, as will Gary, to work out a Letter of Agreement to govern any interactions we former ministers have with First Parish in the future.

As hard as it is to say goodbye, I know that although in one way I must leave you, in another way, you have become part of me. I carry with me all the stories and memories all you have shared with me. What I have shared with you, it is still there, now made part of us in some mysterious spiritual way that can never be lost. The caring, the courage, the affection, the vulnerability, the power — all still there, just transmuted now into another form. I believe that. I am grateful for that. And I am deeply grateful to have had this time with you and with this community, with this staff, with these ministers. You have given me gifts beyond measure.

Thank you and Godspeed.

Jenny Rankin

Sunday, December 2

***The Economy: As If Money Really Mattered* — Rev. Elaine Beth Peresluha**

The 2012 election process is over and newly elected and returning officials must deal with the realities of the “fiscal cliff” we are approaching. As we step to the edge, what should we be considering? What would the US economy look like if the needs of all people, the environment, communities and global relationships really mattered? Today, we reflect on the place money holds in our lives, in our nation, on this earth.

9:00 – First Parish Choir

11:00 – Gospel Choir

Sunday, December 9

***Don’t Miss the Miracles* — Rev. Elaine Beth Peresluha**

Hanukkah celebrates the courage of Jews to resist the loss of their identity — the power of human strength — as well as making a place for “miracles” in our lives. Today we affirm magic, miracles and the indomitable human spirit.

9:00 – First Parish Choir

11:00 – Rosalie Gerut, Cantor, Kerem Shalom

Sunday, December 16

Rev. Jenny M. Rankin

Join us for worship as we mark Jenny’s last Sunday in the pulpit with us at First Parish. Special music, choirs, and Jenny preaching!

9:00 & 11:00 – First Parish Choir and Children’s Choirs

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

- Friday, December 14
- Friday, January 18
- Friday, February 15

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

Tuesday, December 18

A Blue Christmas — Rev. Elaine Peresluha, Tony Fisher and Rachel Baker

This vespers service will be at 7 p.m. in the Chapel. The By Your Side Singers, candles and quiet will hold all who are less than merry this Christmas. Together we will reach beyond the laughter and the merriment to touch the solace and hope that Christmas carries to every heart.

Sunday, December 23

Fear Not — Rev. Elaine Beth Peresluha

Once again we will be charmed by the presence of our wee angels in this Sunday service. Angels, small and large, loom big in the Christmas story. “Fear not.” The voices of angels have calmed the fear for Mary, for shepherds, for wise men, for so much uncertainty that has unfolded throughout human history. Today we reach for the hope and reassurance the coming of Christmas assures.

9:00 & 11:00 – First Parish Choir and Festival Strings

Das Neugeborne Kindelein – Buxtehude

Monday, December 24

Christmas Eve

Four Services: 4:00, 5:30, 7:00, 9:00 p.m.

We will offer our family-oriented services at 4:00 and 5:30, with lots of Christmas carols and the Christmas story. (Children’s Choirs at 4:00, the Gospel Choir at 5:30.) The 7:00 o’clock service features congregational carol singing; and at 9:00 o’clock, the First Parish Choir will sing. Each service concludes with candlelighting and “Silent Night.” This year, we will celebrate a Traditional Candlelight Service, which was first offered to First Parish by Dana Greeley. Be sure to see the Traditional UU Candlelight Service description on this page (the second Parish Note).

Sunday, December 30: One service in the Sanctuary at 10:00 a.m.

Resolutions!? — Tony Fisher

Resolutions!? We all have things we don’t like about ourselves (well, most of us do anyway!), yet few people are able to effect lasting change in their lives. This service will explore why this is so, and what we might be able to do about it.

PARISH NOTES

Finding Your Interim Minister

Elaine Peresluha’s hours are

Tuesday 9:00 to 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday 9:00 to 5:00 p.m.

Thursday 9:00 to 5:00 p.m.

You may contact Elaine at uurevdoc@gmail.com, or at 20 Lexington Road, Concord, 978-369-9602, ext. 411.

In addition to regular office hours, Elaine makes appointments to meet with people at other times. Please e-mail our ministerial assistant, **Christy McKellips**, cmckellips@firstparish.org, to schedule an appointment.

Elaine is unavailable except for emergencies on Monday, her day off, and Friday, her sermon-writing day.

Traditional Unitarian Universalist Christmas Eve Candlelighting Service

The origins of this traditional Unitarian Universalist candlelighting service can be traced to the early 1900’s in New England, and to much earlier antecedents in Europe. Dana McLean Greeley started this tradition at First Parish in Concord.

“The Light of the Ages,” our lit chalice, represents divine light, The Spirit of Love, which animates all of life and the universe. The Universal Spirit of Life is an understanding foundational to our Universalist heritage.

The light from the chalice is passed to the first candle representing the baby Jesus. The youngest child in the congregation traditionally lights it. The light of Love shone brightly in the life of Jesus, inspiring people everywhere to allow this same light to shine brightly in their lives. The understanding of Jesus as a human being who demonstrated the fullness of human potential is at the heart of our Unitarian heritage.

From the Jesus candle, the light is passed to a row of candles representing his disciples and followers. Individuals committed to the calling of the ministry traditionally light these candles. The light is then passed to a row of candles representing teachers and parents, who continue to pass the light of wisdom and compassion to succeeding generations. These candles are traditionally lit by parents and volunteers in our Religious Education program.

The light is then passed to a row of candles representing the children of the world. Our youth will be the keepers of the sacred flame. These candles are lit by the children and youth of this congregation, our hope for the future. They carry light to the four corners of the congregation where it is spread candle by candle, hand by hand, and heart by heart throughout the Sanctuary. When the entire church is filled with Light, the candles are raised, illuminating the Sanctuary with our faith and commitment to this Eternal Flame, The Light of Love.

Parish Notes

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Holiday Concert and Tea — December 11

The Women’s Parish Association cordially invites you to its annual Holiday Concert and Tea on Tuesday, December 11. Critically acclaimed soprano Connell Benn will give a special concert of popular holiday songs in the Sanctuary at 3 p.m., followed by a traditional Christmas Tea in the Parlor and Parish Hall at 4 p.m. All women, men and youth of First Parish and their friends are warmly invited. There is no charge for this event and no reservations are necessary. It’s not required, but if possible, please bring along some nicely plated cookies, brownies, bars, etc., to share with others.

Winter Solstice Celebration

Come one, come all to celebrate the Winter Solstice with readings, song, blazing Yule log, spiral dance, seasonal refreshments, and more! The Women’s Circle invites the entire First Parish community with families and friends to join us at this festive gathering on Thursday, December 20, at 7:30 p.m. in the Parlor.

Many Thanks for a Great Artisans Fair!

The Women’s Parish Association extends heartfelt thanks to each and every volunteer who gave generously of their time and talents to make this year’s annual Holiday Artisans Fair a great success! This was a great community effort, and the artisans and the attendees were delighted with the results. We had a nice variety of high quality gift items. People enjoyed the food throughout the day, and the music put people in a festive mood. Thank you, all!

WPA Gift Items for Sale at Coffee Hours

The Women’s Parish Association will be selling items left over from the recent Holiday Artisans Fair. Handmade ruffle scarves, aprons for children and adults, and fabric all-purpose bags will be sold at both coffee hours on Sunday, December 2. These are great gift items for people on your holiday shopping list!

Rise Up Caroling — Friday, December 21, at 7:30 p.m.

Each December we have a “special edition” of our monthly Rise Up Singing session to celebrate the Christmas season. Here is your chance to sing all of those carols you love, and to teach them to your children! Singers and instrumentalists of all ages are invited to the Parish Hall. Word sheets will be provided for singers and music for instrumentalists. We have parts for just about any instrument! Bring a plate of cookies to share and get into the Christmas spirit!

You Can Sponsor the Sunday Flowers

If you would like to provide Sunday flowers for a memorial or a life celebration, please contact **Barbara Wheeler** at 978-369-9518.

First Parish Arts Corner — Fostering Community through the Arts

Each month in this “corner,” the First Parish Arts Council highlights events in the upcoming month that offer opportunities to participate in the ministry of the arts at First Parish. Unless otherwise noted, questions may be directed to bnorton@firstparish.org.

December – All-Parish Art Exhibit – Suzanne H. Altshuler Gallery

December 1 at 7:30 p.m. – Showtunes Auction Party. Contact katesvrcek@hotmail.com for details and ticket availability.

December 7 at 7:30 p.m. and December 9 at 7:00 p.m. – Auditions for “The Family Way”

December 8 at 9:00 a.m. – Photo Club

December 15 at 5:00 p.m. – “The Best Christmas Pageant Ever” performance by 8th graders.

December 21 at 7:30 p.m. – Rise Up Caroling – First Parish’s monthly song circle open to singers and instrumentalists of all ages, with a special Christmas theme.

For up-to-date information on these events, watch FP Announce and the *Sunday News*.

The purpose of the First Parish Arts Council is to further the mission of First Parish through facilitating, promoting and coordinating a diverse arts ministry that inspires and celebrates creativity and connection.

Women’s Retreats 2013

Connect, relax, renew, have fun with other First Parish women at one of our several winter retreats. The two traditional “away” retreats will be offered Friday evening through Sunday lunch on January 25-27 and February 1-3 (your choice of weekend) at cozy Senexet House in Connecticut. New this year: a shorter retreat here at First Parish on Friday evening, March 1, and all day Saturday, March 2, if there is sufficient interest. More information and registration at coffee hours starting on December 9. Questions? Contact **Bozena Smith** at bozenasmith@mindspring.com.

Also new this year: Please take our brief Women’s Retreat Survey, which you can complete online at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/LHSHW6P>. Paper surveys will also be at the Women’s Retreat registration table at coffee hour. We would love to hear what you’ve enjoyed most about previous retreats, as well as what you’d like us to change. Intrigued by the retreat, but unable to attend? Please fill out a survey so that we can gain your perspective as well.

A Post-Service Reflection Time after the 11:00 a.m. Service on the Wright Tavern Sunporch.

Come and take a minute to reflect on your experience of the service, before the rush of coffee hour or the rest of your day takes over.

After any 11:00 a.m. service, walk over to the Wright Tavern sunroom. We'll have snacks, coffee and water. We start with each person taking up to a minute to answer, "What stood out for you at the service today?" We end in 20 minutes or by 12:30 p.m., whichever comes first. If there is time, we have a discussion after the go-round. We close with a short silence. For more information, contact **Jim Snyder-Grant** at 508-572-2985 or jimsg@newview.org.

Reprinted Copies of *Meeting House on the Green* Available for Sale

For many years, members and friends of First Parish in Concord have enjoyed delving into the story of our community through the wonderful book *Meeting House on the Green*. Prepared in celebration of our 350th anniversary, it is a treasure trove of stories about the women and men who have lived and worshipped here in Concord for so many years. A reprint of this wonderful book was made for our 375th anniversary. Copies are still available for sale for \$30. Contact the office or **Dian Pekin** at pekindc@comcast.net if you would like to purchase a copy. This makes a great gift for young people as they venture off into adulthood and for newcomers to First Parish.

Play Rehearsals to Begin

Come to the Parish Hall on Friday, December 7, at 7:30 p.m., or Sunday, December 9, at 7 p.m., for the first rehearsal of *The Family Way*, a collection of Broadway songs with a family theme. Production dates are March 15 and 16. Rehearsals are Friday and Sunday evenings. We are looking for singers as young as 9th grade and as old as 99 (7th and 8th graders will be invited at a later date). Questions? Please call **Sue Beck** at 978-369-8445 or e-mail at sbeck345@comcast.net.

MINISTERIAL SEARCH COMMITTEE

- Beginning in December and continuing through mid-March, the Ministerial Search Committee will be operating in confidential mode. During this period we will be reviewing candidate materials, interviewing candidates and spending weekends with our top choices, including visits to neutral pulpits where candidates will conduct services.
- During this period, we will communicate as much generic information as we can. Confidentiality is a commitment that requires the participation of our entire congregation. If you should happen to find out information about a candidate we are considering, please keep that information to yourself. The following is information from the UUA on why confidentiality is so critical during this phase of the search process.

UUA's guiding points regarding confidentiality during the Ministerial Search process. (Excerpted from the UUA Settlement Handbook for Ministers and Congregations)

Confidentiality is not secrecy. The committee must publicize the process it is following and how far along it is at every point. At the same time, the committee must keep confidential both the names and the locations of the ministers under consideration and the details of committee business.

There are several reasons for the rule of confidentiality:

Ministers settled in a congregation may not have told their present parishioners that they are contemplating a move. These parishioners are entitled to hear the news from their own minister at the appropriate time. To "leak" a minister's name can undermine his or her ability to serve the present congregation, and will almost certainly damage a committee's chances of attracting that potential candidate.

When the identities of unsuccessful applicants are known, it heightens the competitive aspect of the search process. This hurts collegial feeling among ministers and (when neighboring congregations compete for the same minister) also can create hard feelings among congregations.

It is harder to resolve differences among the members of a search committee when factions of the congregation are looking over its shoulders. It is better to resolve differences in private. ♦

John Boynton (jb@firehousecapital.com)

Terry Rothermel (terroth@verizon.net)

Caroline McCloy (cmccloy51@aol.com)

Mary-Wren vanderWilden (vanderwilden@verizon.net)

Rhoda Miller (rhodamill@aol.com)

Fred Van Deusen (fredvandeus@aol.com)

Toby Smith Ropeik (tsr@tobyasmith.com)

Alec Walker (alecwalker@aol.com)

“Grief Touches Grief”

These words from my Chaplaincy supervisor keep coming back to me months after I completed my clinical pastoral education (CPE) unit this past summer. When we’re dealing with loss or change, the pain we feel is often not simply isolated to our current situation, but recalls and blends with pain from other past losses or difficult times. Sometimes this is conscious, sometimes not. If we wonder why we can’t stop the flood of tears over a seemingly trivial event, or why we have a hard time getting up the courage to visit a dying friend, it may be that it’s time to stop and look deeper to try and find that experience or long-held fear to which our emotions may have already connected.

Some of the best sharing we had during the Cider and Conversation sessions that the Pastoral Care Lay Ministers sponsored in October evolved out of some simple questions — Was there any other time in your life when you felt this way? What was it like then? Is that experience still there under the surface or have you been able to find healing?

Not all our journeys to this time and place have been pleasant. Each of us holds sorrow as well as happiness. Many are facing this holiday season with new realities that can make it difficult to leap into the light and joy of the seasonal celebrations. It is a time, then, for us to be together in community. To walk with and be present for each other in both joy and sorrow. For while it may be true that one person’s grief will touch our own, it’s just as likely that our light will touch and rekindle theirs.

The Pastoral Care Team at First Parish Walking with One Another through the Changes Life Brings

The Lay Minister for December is **Bev Bringle** at bevbringle@yahoo.com or 978-369-4793.

Ministers: **Rev. Jenny Rankin** (jrankin@first-parish.org), **Rev. Elaine Beth Peresluha** (uurevdoc@gmail.com) and ministerial intern **Tony Fisher** (tfisher@firstparish.org). Or call 978-369-9602.

Lay Ministers:
Contact **Diane Clapp** (d.clapp@comcast.net)

Caring Connection: Contact **Tracey Hurd** (thurd@aol.com) for meals or rides.

Pastoral Care Advisory Council:
Contact **Judy Dembsey** (dembsey@verizon.net).

The responsive reading by George E. Odell that we used in the ceremony recognizing the gifts of the Pastoral Care Lay Ministers, the Caring Connection, and all the people who take part in the Pastoral Care program at First Parish speaks to what it means to be in community and the need we have to take care of one another:

- We need one another when we mourn and would be comforted.*
- We need one another when we are in trouble and afraid.*
- We need one another when we are in despair.*
- We need one another when we are in temptation and need to be called to our best selves again.*
- We need one another when we would accomplish some great purpose and cannot do it alone.*
- We need one another in the hour of success, when we look for someone to share our triumphs.*
- We need one another in the hour of defeat, when with encouragement we might endure and stand again.*
- We need one another when we come to die, and would have gentle hands prepare us for the journey.*
- All our lives we are in need, and others are in need of us.*

As I work with **Elaine Peresluha** to take on a greater ministerial role within the Pastoral Care Program, it is comforting to know that so many dedicated and talented people are already working hard to respond to the needs of others in the congregation who can use a little help and comfort in their need. What I hope is that you too will look around you to see what you can do within these walls to strengthen the faint-hearted, support the weak, help the suffering, and honor all beings.

Blessings,

Tony Fisher,

Ministerial Intern

Message from the Lay Ministers

The whirlwind of the holidays is fast approaching. With turkeys roasting, parties, gifts and glittering lights, also may come feelings of sadness. The Pastoral Care Ministers are available to take a walk, come for a visit or share memories of happier holidays. The ribbons on the memorial wreath are a helpful reminder of the people we wish were now in our lives. Perhaps you feel sad, are dealing with a life crisis or are feeling the pressure to make the holidays perfect. This is a time to take good care of yourself and your spirit. If we can support you during this holiday season, let us know.

— **Diane Clapp**, Team Leader, Lay Ministry Group

Caring Connection Cooks!

Did you smell that jambalaya, onion-cheese bread, and quinoa and vegetable casserole cooking? Thanks so much to cooks **Vivian Walworth, Donna Peterson, Darien Smith, Carol Boris, Petra Betts, Kristen Haddad, Lois Suarez, Joyce Biggs, Priscilla Parrott, Linda Reynolds, Jini McCoubrey,**

Pastoral Care News

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The Spirit of Giving

“Oh my gosh, another request for money!”

I was complaining about the second phone call I’d picked up in a half an hour from a charitable organization (I wasn’t near the phone that displays the caller’s ID). I had also just recycled a handful of mail asking for donations to this cause or that fund, some of which pulled on my heart-strings, some of which didn’t. None of the organizations were on the shortened list of charities that my partner Ann and I have agreed to support since I’ve been in school.

I admit to having mixed feelings about the holidays and the combined unhappiness and guilt of cutting back on giving doesn’t help. I’m not a big fan of the hustle and bustle, of being overscheduled, of feeling the pressure of last minute shopping (OK, that’s my own fault), and I still have a little social anxiety left over from being a shy youth and that tends to surface in anticipation of all the social gatherings that pop up between Thanksgiving and the New Year. Truth be told, I tend to be really ready for the holidays somewhere around the middle of January when everyone else is winding down.

What has helped me get over my woes and into the spirit over the last few years is a commitment to random and spontaneous acts of holiday kindness. Simple things that I can do to help others the moment I see or sense a need. This isn’t an original idea. I’m simply passing it forward. But it’s amazing what giving of yourself will do to advance the spirit of the season.

And now I have just the thing to get you started. Simply offer one of our elderly church members a ride to one Sunday service during the holidays. They really love coming but can’t always get themselves here. Heck, I’d even be happy to pair you up! Drop me an email or give me a call. Look for the invitation to be an angel in the attached Holiday Insert to this Newsletter or in your Order of Service on Sunday. Your own random act of holiday kindness could be the start of a the best holiday season yet!

Blessings,

Tony



Suzanne Hogan, Patty King, Leslie Fisher, Lois Whitney, and leaders **Carolyn Shohet** and **Rhoda Miller** for wonderful cooking to fill our Caring Connection freezer. We now have vegan, vegetarian, gluten-free and omnivore meals ready for parishioners in need. It was a fun, efficient, and busy morning, thanks to this excellent group. Thanks to Carolyn and Rhoda for leading the cooking efforts that make this possible, and to **Petra Betts, Pat Kane,** and **Bev Bringle** for leading food deliveries. — **Tracey Hurd**

More Thanks...

Sometimes being part of the Caring Connection means simply being “on call” as needed. Thank you to everyone who is part of a possible-drivers list. When a congregation member calls for help with a ride, it is so important to have a list of people willing to drive. Just being on the list is a gift to our community. Thanks to **Petra Betts, David and Beth Dawson, Leslie Fisher, Lillian Braden,** and others who gave rides this month. Thanks, too, to **Kitsy Rothermel** who continues to write notes on behalf of the Caring Connection to parishioners undergoing change or illness, and to all who write “thinking of you” notes at coffee hour.

Can you help with the Caring Connection? We have a few specific tasks that require one or two hours a month, done from home. If you would like to find out more or might possibly be interested, please contact **Tracey Hurd, thurd@aol.com** or 978-369-2366.



Donna Peterson is just one of the many Caring Connection cooks.

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

The congregation-wide potluck in November was a fabulous success! The food was delicious, the conversation nurturing, and the planned activities were casual and fun. There were 145 people of all ages who celebrated First Parish and all that this community is in our lives. It was a great joy and honor to witness! Very special thanks go to **Kate Svrcek** and **Jiffy Read** for organizing and the fabulous team of people who stepped forward to help in the kitchen and beyond. **Stoney Ballard** took some beautiful photographs; check them out here:

<http://gallery.firstparish.org/gallery3/index.php/Parties/Pot-Luck-Nov>.

I'd like to share with you the news that a Congregational Life Council has been formed! The plan for this Council evolved out of the Springing Forward retreat last spring and various meetings held by the many people interested and passionate about helping to build a greater sense of belonging at First Parish.

The council will be the fluid go-to group for community building. The council will act as a sounding board for ideas to build community, assist project and event planning and facilitation as needed, and maintain a wide view of congregational life at First Parish. The council will help with event scheduling. The council is open to anyone who wishes to help build Beloved Community at First Parish.

I will work closely with the council and with other task forces, teams and groups working on different aspects of congregational life. Currently, a group is meeting to look into best practices for creating welcoming and inviting coffee hours. Eventually, this group will help to implement some of the plans.

I have been meeting with a group of people interested in communications at First Parish. This group has been meeting monthly since the spring. We have been collecting information on how the congregation uses the newsletter, website, e-mail announcements, bulletin boards, signage, and other means of both explicit and implicit communication. As a result of these observations, the FP-Announcement e-mails have been reduced to one per day as needed; I rearranged the bulletin boards in the hallway to reflect the mission of the congregation better; and regular maintenance of the website will become staff responsibility.

If you are interested in or have questions about the Congregational Life Council or any other aspect of congregational life, please do not hesitate to contact me. ♦

Blessings,
— *Rachel Baker*

Director of Congregational Life

WOMEN'S NEWS

The Women's AM/PM Book Group

As usual, the Women's Book Group will discuss just one book for November and December, and the selection is *The Art of Racing in the Rain: A Novel*, by Garth Stein. The evening session will be Monday, December 3, 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. at the home of **Steph Chiha** (472 Bedford Street, Concord). The morning session will be Tuesday, December 4, 9:30 to 11:00 a.m. in the Brooks Room at First Parish.

All women of First Parish are warmly invited to read the current book and join one or both 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.

Books and dates for 2013 are as follows:

Jan. 28, 29 *The Unlikely Disciple: A Sinner's Semester at America's Holiest University*, by Kevin Roose

Feb. 25, 26 *State of Wonder: A Novel*, by Ann Patchett

Mar. 25, 26 *Parallel Lives: Five Victorian Marriages*, by Phyllis Rose

Apr. 22, 23 *Denial: A Memoir*, by Jessica Stern

May 20, 21 *Caleb's Crossing*, by Geraldine Brooks

SENIOR YOUTH NEWS: THE HEARD

Good tidings to you good people. We will be celebrating the season in good fashion with the Heard Holiday

Party and Lock-In on December 21! All YRUU youth and alumni are invited

to participate in the annual Yankee Swap Party. We will ring in the Winter Solstice together with merriment, Chinese food and good times! Bring something wrapped that you already own and want to give away, or a joke gift, or something new under \$20.

The Heard will have a Lock-In sleep-over party in the church following the Yankee Swap. Bring your instruments!

Wishing you all the best as we wrap up 2012 and move toward the new year. ♦

Yours truly,

— *Avi Salloway*

Youth Program Director



MUSINGS

“Each night a child is born is a holy night.” We sing these words by Sophia Lyon Fahs at our child dedications and sometimes at Christmas time. They remind us, as we stand in awe, of the marvelous potential in each new life. As we sing those words, we affirm that, in the words of Rev. Rob Eller Isaacs, “Every child is born one more redeemer ... we acknowledge the divine spark within every child.”

These words echo in my soul at Christmas time. I am a Unitarian Universalist with spiritual roots in Christianity.



The nativity tableau that is enacted at our early services on Christmas Eve brings the story of Jesus' birth to life with familiar and beloved faces in the iconic roles of Mary, Joseph, the shepherds and magi, and the angels. In the years when the baby Jesus has been embodied by one of our own infants, that child's divine spark has warmed us and inspired us. I especially remember the year that Jesus was portrayed by a baby who flirted charmingly with her father in his Joseph robes, and beamed a radiant smile at the congregation. That's an image of the holy child that I joyfully carry with me!

This year, on Sunday, December 23, at both services, the First Parish Choir will offer a beautiful cantata by the prolific early Baroque composer, Dietrich Buxtehude. *Das Neugeborne Kindelein* (the Newborn Child) is a short, graceful and grace-filled bit of Christmas music that expresses the hope and redemption for humankind embodied in the infant Jesus, a child whose birth brings the promise of a new era, a chance for humanity to realize its full potential. And it is a birth for which “the little angels rejoice and surround us with gladness.” The ancient German poetry, written by the 16th century poet Cyriacus Schneegass, conveys the wonder and hope that our Christian ancestors found in the story of the nativity; a wonder that we echo in our modern interpretation of the crèche.

As has been our tradition on the Sunday before Christmas, our own littlest angels will open the service and surround us with their glad song. And we will welcome Christmas with ancient music that reminds us “every child is born one more redeemer.” ♦

Blessings,

— *Beth Norton*

Music Director

PARTNER CONGREGATION COMMITTEE

July 2013 Family Pilgrimage to Székelykeresztúr. Details about next summer's Family Pilgrimage to Transylvania are beginning to solidify. This ten-day visit is intended for middle- and high school- age youth and their parents, and will provide an unprecedented opportunity for First Parishioners to get to know our Keresztúri brothers and sisters, see cultural and historical sites, and cement further our partnership with the Unitarian congregation in Székelykeresztúr. We expect the trip to take place from July 18 to July 29 (approximately) and cost about \$1800-\$2000 per traveler (including airfare, ground transportation, lodging, and most meals). We continue to finalize other details, but the initial deadline to register for the trip (extended to December 2) is coming up soon! Interested families should provide a deposit of \$100 per person. To register or get answers to questions, please contact **Suzie Weaver** at skate-suzie@aol.com.

We're on Facebook! Please visit the “Concord Székelykeresztúr Partnership” page on Facebook. You can view pictures and news about our partnership (or post your own!).

Student Sponsorship Program. For many years, First Parishioners have provided support to our partner congregation by sponsoring students of financial need at the Unitarian high school in Székelykeresztúr. A few hundred dollars makes a big difference in the education of a Keresztúri youth, and we have 15 new students beginning this year! For more information, please contact **Dana Booth**, our Student Sponsorship program coordinator, at dana.a.booth@gmail.com, or by phone at 978-369-5702.

Wanted: Laptops! If you (or someone you know) has a laptop that is no longer being used, please consider donating it to the PCC so that we can pass it on to the Unitarian high school in Székelykeresztúr. These laptops are refurbished by Ed Sterling (ed@edsterling.com), so the laptops can be outdated or even no longer working!

Join the PCC effort! For some of you, the visit by our friends from Székelykeresztúr (or perhaps other PCC activities) may have encouraged you to consider supporting the partnership more actively. If so, please consider joining us ... there are ways both big and small to support this important relationship! The PCC meets on a Thursday evening each month over dinner in member homes, and I invite you to upcoming meetings on December 20 and January 10. ♦

Minden jót! “Best wishes!”

— **Ken Estabrook**, PCC Chair

ken.estabrook@gmail.com

Jenny Rankin is leaving. We are changing. And real change is change you don't choose.

We have been through a lot together. This can be said of every true family. It is true because all families, both nuclear and parish families, experience the stress of change. I recall when Mark and I welcomed



our son into our small family. We stared at this tiny sentient being: how will he change us? Our family grew again when my daughter was born and came home to make her presence known in our sudden four-some. Or, sadly, when my own brother unexpectedly died two years ago. My family continues to change as our kids

move off to college, as nieces are born, as elders die, as spouses are chosen. Families adjust; expanding and contracting. Changes wanted and unwanted. Breathing through time.

Jenny's departure is a significant change for our parish family. Her ministry has touched us with her poetic wisdom. She has shaped us for fifteen years while we have listened to her sermons and watched her lead us through both joyful and difficult times. Jenny has come to a decision about her next steps, and I want to honor her ministry by celebrating the quilt that she has so carefully woven together, the quilt that has been made from all of us within this congregation.

Jenny will be missed, but her ministry will live on within the character of our congregation. As a parish family, we will learn to accept her decision and slowly begin to move forward again. And why will we do that? Because ... families do. It is in the nature of families to accept changes in size and shape, even changes we don't get to choose. Families have a sacred resilience that reminds us of their joyful, and sometimes crusty, necessity in our lives. Let us all breathe through time together and celebrate Jenny's ministry here on December 14 as we wish her well in the next chapter of her ministry. ♦

— Pam Howell

Director of Religious Education

Little Angels — Sunday, December 23

Don't miss this yearly tradition of joy. Imagine all of the wonder that is sparked by marching our little Angels out to sing their song of hope, "This Little Light of Mine." This year our angels will be led in song by **Kim Brainerd** and **Matteo Paris**. Thank you for making the donning of robes and halos possible!

December 2012 RE Calendar

- Sun., Dec. 2 Little RE – Regular RE for Babies – 4 years
Spirit Play RE – K-1st Grades
Middle RE – 2nd-5th Grades
6th/7th Grades Neighboring Activists (Brooks Room)
8th Grade Dramatic Arts at 4 p.m. (Parish Hall)
9th Grade Coming of Age at 5 p.m.
- Fri., Dec. 7-8 9th Grade Coming of Age Social Justice Retreat
- Sun., Dec. 9 Little RE – Regular RE for Babies – 4 years
Spirit Play RE – K-1st Grades
Middle RE – 2nd-5th Grades
6th/7th Grades Neighboring Activists (Brooks Room)
8th Grade Dramatic Arts at 4 p.m. (Parish Hall)
9th Grade Coming of Age at 5 p.m.
- Sun., Dec. 16 Little RE – Regular RE for Babies – 4 years
Spirit Play RE – K-1st Grades
Middle RE – 2nd-5th Grades
6th/7th Grades Neighboring Activists (Brooks Room)
8th Grade Dramatic Arts at 4 p.m. (Parish Hall)
- Sun., Dec. 23 Little RE – Regular RE for Babies – 4 years
Spirit Play RE – K-1st Grades
Middle RE – 2nd-5th Grades
6th/7th Grades Neighboring Activists (Brooks Room)
8th Grade Dramatic Arts at 4 p.m. (Parish Hall)

Need More Christmas Cheer? Join the Tableau Christmas Eve at 4:00 and 5:30 p.m.

Last year **Kristin Parlman** and I had so much fun with your children dressing up as cows, angels, sheep, shepherds and all the other characters that make the ancient Christmas story come alive for our Christmas Eve services. Please e-mail me (fpdre_pamhowell@mac.com) if you want to be part of this joyful experience on Christmas Eve. Cider, eggnog and holiday cookies will be provided. It is simple. Come at 3:30 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. to dress up and have fun.



8th Grade Drama — The Best Christmas Pageant Ever

What to do? We just didn't have enough girls in the play this year. Come and see what this group decided to do to make this the *best* Christmas Pageant Ever. This story is fun for ages K to

RE News

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99. Show times are Saturday, December 15, at 5 p.m., and Sunday, December 16, at 9 and 11 a.m. during regular RE for Second through Seventh Grades.

**Middle RE (Second to Fifth Grades)
Holiday Term: Earth-Centered Spiritual Practices**

- December 2 – Week 2 of the Holiday Term: St. Lucia
- December 9 – Week 3 of the Holiday Term: Hanukkah
- December 16 – Week 4 of the Holiday Term: “The Best Christmas Pageant Ever”
- December 23 – Week 5 of the Holiday Term: The Lighting of the Yule

Sixth and Seventh Grade Neighboring Activists — Reflection from a Young Activist

We made a difference! Thanks to our leaders **Stuart Johnstone, Marcia Spivey, Lindsay Kafka** and **Roberto Rodriguez**, our 6th and 7th graders walked in the CROP Walk, picked pounds and pounds of food from our First Parish Garden, worked at Gaining Ground and helped decorate our Parish Hall for the Bounty of the Harvest. Thanks to their leaders, this group is showing up each week and getting dirty in



our community. Here is a reflection by 6th Grader, **Carly Neale Paris**, and a Neighboring Activist:

The Neighboring Activists have done many great things to help our community. The neighboring activists are the sixth and seventh grade RE

program. One memorable thing that our group did was that we went to the Community garden to harvest food for Open Table. The whole group walked over, carrying shovels, a pitchfork and a wheelbarrow for all the food that we would collect. At the garden, we set to work harvesting carrots, lettuce, tomatoes, peas, and many more delicious foods. As I gathered lettuce, I admired the beauty of nature surrounding us, all around. After the wheelbarrow was almost overflowing, we made our way back to First Parish. It was a great experience.

Another exciting thing that the Neighboring Activists did was making a banner for the CROP Walk. I’m in the 9:00 a.m. group, and we made a banner that said “CROP.” The 11:00 a.m. group made one that said “Walk.” In the 9:00 a.m. RE we made each letter in the word *crop* be a vegetable. *C* was a hot pepper, *R* was a peeling ear of corn, *O* was a Concord grape vine, and *P* was an eggplant. Below our writing, we painted a



field of grass, mixing different colors to make different shades of green. We splattered blue paint all along the top, making a very unique sky. Birds were added to the sky, as well as a big, bright yellow sun in the top right corner. At the bottom we wrote 2012 “Neighboring” and the 11:00 a.m. wrote “Activists” on their banner, so the two banners fit together. This fantastic activity was not only helping our community with the CROP walk, but it was also a good way for us to work together.

The third major activity the Neighboring Activists did was going to Gaining Ground for three hours and helping with the garden. At the garden there were different stations the groups were split into. My first station was to roll up the deer fence around a garden patch. It took a lot of effort, but when we finished, we felt accomplished. There were a lot of other stations, such as collecting corn and putting it in a wheelbarrow, and many others. After I finished my second station, we got to have a turn with a really cool slingshot that flung rotten vegetables across a long field. I had a great time at Gaining Ground, and I hope we get to do more field trips like that one. Those activities are some of the main things the Neighboring Activists did in RE this year.

Orientation for Religious Education Teachers for 2012–2013

Orientations for Little Folks’ RE Teachers (0 years–1st Grade) in the Emerson Room:

Caregiving, Story Time and Spirit Play, Winter and Spring Terms: Saturday, January 12, 9:30–11:00 a.m.

Orientation Schedule for Middle RE (2nd–5th Grades) Teachers in the Emerson Room:

Winter Term #3: Wednesday, January 23, 7:30–9:00 p.m.

Spring Term #4: Wednesday, April 3, 7:30–9:00 p.m.

Orientation Schedule for Teen RE — 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th Grade Leaders:

6th Grades Winter Term, Race to Justice: Wednesday, January 16, 7:30–9:00 p.m.

6th Grades Spring Term, First Parish Garden: Wednesday, April 3, 7:30–9:00 p.m.

7th Grade Neighboring Faiths Winter Term: January 9, 7:30–9:00 p.m.

7th Grade Neighboring Faiths Spring Term: March 20, 7:30–9:00 p.m.

8th Grade Our Whole Lives (OWL) Leader Orientation: Wednesday, November 28, 7:30–9:00 p.m.

My grandfather passed away 17 years ago last month, but he gave me the best gift I've ever received: the message that December is the season of giving. He was a quiet, usually crabby man, but his heart was in the right place. He could not pass a charity collection box without giving a dollar, or whatever coins were in his pocket.

Now, whenever I pass by a charity collecting, especially around the holiday season, my hands fly into the pockets of my winter coat, or into my purse for my wallet. I cannot pass that kettle without giving. I cannot slip my donation into that bucket without my grandfather's face flashing before my eyes. Giving is a practice that I try to embody all days, but the red kettles that resurface between Thanksgiving and Christmas serve as a reminder. A reminder to give. A reminder that my grandfather taught me that December is the season of giving. The best gift I've ever received.



As we enter into this holiday season, I invite you to remember the best gift you ever received. Who gave you the gift? Was it material, or immaterial? What have you done to return that great gift? Where is that gift now?

This year, I will again submerge myself in the act of giving. I hope you will join me. We have many opportunities to give to those in need: Secret Santa, Holiday Gift Bags for Inmates, Mitten Tree. Please feel free to be in touch to discuss or imagine other ways we can give to ourselves and our larger community this holiday season. ♦

In faith,

— *Bethany Lowe*

blowe@firstparish.org

Secret Santa Gift Collection

Have you found gifts for your Secret Santa folks yet? Volunteers will be available to collect your gifts at coffee hours on December 2 and 9. If possible, please bring your unwrapped gifts in large gifts bags for easier transportation. Questions? Contact **Mira Greenland** at mira-greenland@gmail.com.

Concord Prison Outreach's Holiday Gift Bag Project

The Holiday Gift Bag Project of Concord Prison Outreach (CPO) is a way to bring hope and holiday cheer to the inmates of Concord's two prisons. This year nearly 1700 gift bags are needed to provide one for each man. A list of the approved items can be found at: <http://sac.firstparish.org/cms/news/cpos-holiday-gift-bag-project.html> or the SAC bulletin board. Unwrapped

gift items can be placed in a carton marked "Prison Gifts" in the coatroom at First Parish through December 3. Contact **Don Miller** for more information, donaldbmiller@comcast.net.

Heifer Gift Cards for Sale During Coffee Hour

Heifer gift cards will be for sale during coffee hour on the four Sundays of December, starting on December 2. A meaningful gift for those who have enough "things." A gift that keeps on giving in villages around the world as offspring of various animals are "passed on" to others in the village to provide viable income for families to send their kids to school, and provide basic nutrition, etc. You can also call **Dave or Diane Clapp** at 781-257-5025 if you miss coffee hour.

Save the Date: February 1, 2013 — Why Fracking for Natural Gas Must Be Stopped

Sociologist and organic farmer Dr. Stephen Cleghorn will speak at First Parish in Concord on Friday, February 1, from 7 to 9 p.m. Cleghorn runs a certified organic farm and goat dairy in Jefferson County, Pennsylvania, that sits above the huge Marcellus Shale formation targeted for drilling for natural gas. Because his farm might be directly impacted by hydraulic fracking, he has researched the topic extensively. Cleghorn is a dynamic speaker and a well-informed critic of the industry. Come hear about what fracking is, how it affects the surrounding area and communities, and the arguments for and against it. A discussion and reception will follow the talk. This event is hosted by the Environmental Leadership Team at First Parish and cosponsored by ConcordCAN! and other local organizations. Save the date now, and stay tuned for further details.

Call for Social Action Community Candlelighters

Interested in lighting the SAC candle? Please contact **Bethany Lowe** (BLowe@firstparish.org) with your name and some information about what calls you to be involved in social action!

What Is Reproductive Justice?

Delegates at the 2012 General Assembly in Phoenix, Arizona, selected "Reproductive Justice: Expanding Our Social Justice Calling" to be the 2012-2016 Congregational Study/Action Issue (CSAI) of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA)

SAC News

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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, sac.firstparish.org/cms/sacemaillist; or visit the Social Action bulletin board.



STANDING COMMITTEE NEWS AND NOTES

It is an understatement to say that this fall has been a lively, engaging time at First Parish, and a very active period for the Standing Committee (SC). We respect the deep commitment shown by parishioners of many opinions to the well-being and future of our church. And we appreciate all the gifts of time and energy, by so many, to keep us moving through a challenging transition.

We especially want to express our appreciation and affection for our departing minister **Jenny Rankin**, who has accompanied us for more than 15 years. She will be winding down her ministry with us during December, so be sure to mark your calendar for an evening of celebration of her ministry on Friday, December 14, from 5 to 7 p.m. You'll be hearing more about this event as planning unfolds.

Please know that if you missed our Standing Committee-sponsored Fall Listening Sessions, the First Parish website contains the information that was presented by the SC and **Rev. Elaine Peresluha**: the Strategic Ends statements from the SC, the Organizational Structure Review Team's data, and Rev. Elaine's recommendations based on that data. You will also find recorded feedback from those attending. Since those presentations, we have continued the conversation with many of you personally. We have also met several times with representatives of the ad hoc interest group "Our Whole Congregation," seeking to build bridges of common purpose to discuss governance, communication, decision making, transparency and structure. Stefan Jonasson, UUA Director of Large Congregations, helped us address questions and concerns related to these themes in a well-attended conversational gathering on November 4.

At Standing Committee meetings, we continue to identify essential policy themes for review each month. We also regularly hear from and respond to our staff. And we discuss issues of interest to the congregation and governance matters. Here are some specifics from our November meeting:

Policy review: We looked at our existing policies related to "means" (as opposed to "ends") to familiarize ourselves so we can begin to evaluate current and future usefulness.

First Parish's future: The SC is in the process of moving forward on **Rev. Elaine Peresluha's** recommendations for our future. Here are her recommendations and the SC's decisions so far about implementation.

1. *Pay a competitive salary and assure the optimal structural freedom to attract the best and the brightest visionary leadership for the position of senior minister.* This recommendation has been incorporated into the Ministerial Search Committee's work.
2. *Staff for optimal freedom and flexibility for the success of the new senior minister, as head of staff.* How best to

implement this recommendation is still under discussion with several groups, including those interested in governance, such as the SC and Spring Forward Retreat governance groups.

3. *Establish budget guidelines that align the First Parish Mission and resources.* This recommendation has six specific parts. The SC has authorized Rev. Elaine to proceed toward implementation; in some cases this will involve further study. The first three parts are to increase income through events, programs, and new contributions, to establish timely conversations about satisfaction with members, and to analyze pledges and develop ways to increase both the amounts and numbers pledging. The fourth part authorizes clarification of the distinction between operations and maintenance, and involves the Trustees. The fifth charges Rev. Elaine to facilitate a process related to the Social Action 7.5 percent, and the final part asks her to begin to plan toward paying our fair share to the UUA.

All parishioners are welcome to attend our meetings, held on the second Sunday of every month at 6:30 p.m. We always encourage you to pass along to us your concerns or hopes for First Parish. And we will continue to keep you regularly informed about our work through this newsletter, the website, and FP Announce.

— **Laurie Van Loon**, Vice Chair, Standing Committee

SAC News and Events

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of Congregations. The Congregational Study/Action Issue is an invitation for congregations and districts to take a topic of concern and engage it, reflect on it, learn about it, respond to it, comment on it take action — each in their own way. A CSAI is *not* a statement — it is a question.

We are very excited for this opportunity, and would like to invite everyone interested in or questioning this topic to join us in exploration and planning for the upcoming year, as well as establishing long-term goals. This small group ministry will lead education among ourselves, network with other congregations, and ultimately lead action.

A December meeting is being planned and will be announced in the *Sunday News*. Please contact **Lora Venesy** at venesy@comcast.net, or **Bethany Lowe** at Blowe@first-parish.org, for more information.

Remembering Jack Mendelsohn

Jack Mendelsohn was a towering Unitarian Universalist figure, whose memorial service was held on November 12 at the First Parish in Bedford. The church was full a half hour before the service started with a remark from the pulpit that it was more like a reunion, as the sanctuary rang with hymns. Jack was a noble spirit with immense integrity, most notably during the Civil Rights movement, marching with Martin Luther King, Jr. and protesting the Viet Nam War by burning draft cards. On the cover of his order of service was a tear in the eye of William Ellery Channing.



“Climate for Freedom Award” Breakfast December 3

The Concord-Carlisle Human Rights Council has chosen Communities for Restorative Justice (C4RJ) as the winner of this year’s Climate for Freedom Award. The award will be presented at the annual Human Rights Council Breakfast on Monday morning, December 3, at 7:30 at the Trinitarian Congregational Church. It is open to the public and without charge; all are welcome. First Parishioners **Mary Clarke** and **Nancy James** serve on the CCHRC Board.

DECEMBER 2012 NEWSLETTER
 The January Newsletter deadline is Friday, December 14, at noon.
 The Newsletter will be published Wednesday, January 3.

Office Hours: Tuesday–Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.*
 Phone: 978-369-9602
 Fax: 978-369-8701
 E-Mail: FPConcord@firstparish.org
 Website: www.firstparish.org

* **PLEASE NOTE:** The office is CLOSED on Mondays.

Ministers’ E-Mail:
 Elaine Beth Peresluha: uurevdoc@gmail.com
 Jenny M. Rankin: jrankin@firstparish.org
 Tony Fisher: tfisher@firstparish.org

First Parish in Concord • UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST Staff

Elaine Beth Peresluha, Interim Senior Minister
 Jenny M. Rankin, Minister
 Melissa Perdue Gallo, Business Manager
 Tony Fisher, Intern Minister
 Rachel Baker, Director of Congregational Life
 Bethany Lowe, Director of Social Action
 Gary E. Smith, Minister Emeritus
 Christy McKellips, Assistant to the Ministers
 Tina Storey, Assistant to the Business Manager
 Becky Blodgett, Affiliate Minister for Pastoral Care

Pam Howell, Director of Religious Education
 Emily Wheeler, RE Administrator
 Avi Salloway, Youth Program Director
 Elizabeth Norton, Music Director
 Eric Huenneke, Parish Organist
 Anderson Manuel, Youth Gospel Choir Director
 Gail Carey, Children’s Choir Director
 David Huston, Music Director Emeritus
 Dan Holin, Jericho Road Executive Director
 Douglas Baker, Sacristan and Curator
 Cassy Bosworth, Office Manager
 Peggy Gallo, Volunteer Collector
 Kate Keleher, Volunteer Newsletter Editor
 Kaye Harvie, Volunteer Copy Editor



**Let the show begin!
Come to our first rehearsal on either**

Friday, December 7, 7:30

or

Sunday, December 9, 7:00

In the Parish Hall

We are looking for men and women singers, high school age kids and adults of all ages (we'll invite 7th and 8th graders to come at a later date). No experience is necessary! Everyone who wants to participate will be in the show.

Rehearsals will be held on Friday and Sunday nights. Production dates are March 15 and 16.

Questions? Call Sue Beck at 978-369-8445 or email sbeck345@comcast.net.

CELEBRATE!

HOLIDAY EVENTS, PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR 2012
FIRST PARISH IN CONCORD

SEE COMPLETE DETAILS OF THE HOLIDAY EVENTS THROUGHOUT THE *MEETING HOUSE NEWS*.

WORSHIP, ADVENT SUNDAYS

In the First Parish Sanctuary:

December 2: Advent I. First Parish Choir (9:00); Gospel Choir (11:00). Elaine Peresluha, preaching.

December 9: Advent II. Hanukkah. First Parish Choir (9:00); Rosalie Gerut (11:00). Elaine Peresluha, preaching.

December 16: Advent III. Children's Choirs and First Parish Choir (9:00 & 11:00). Jenny Rankin, preaching.

December 23: Advent IV. Christmas Sunday, with preschool choir of Angels (preschool through first grade). Buxtehude's *Das Neugeborne Kindelein*, sung by the First Parish Choir at both services. Elaine Peresluha preaching.

WORSHIP, CHRISTMAS EVE

Four Services: 4:00, 5:30, 7:00, 9:00 Family-oriented services at 4:00 and 5:30, with lots of Christmas carols and the Christmas story. Children's Choirs at 4:00, the Gospel Choir at 5:30. The 7:00 o'clock service features congregational carol singing; and at 9:00 o'clock, the First Parish Choir will sing. Each service concludes with candlelighting and "Silent Night." This year, we will celebrate a Traditional Candlelight Service first offered to First Parish by Dana McLean Greeley*

BLUE CHRISTMAS

Tuesday, December 18, 2012, 7:00 p.m. For some, Christmas does not bring joy. It can amplify financial concerns, loneliness, loss or sorrow, leaving people on the outside, looking in. Rev. Elaine, assisted by Tony Fisher, Bethany Lowe and Rachel Baker, offers this evening worship to remember the other side of the holidays. This service is a special time to be together in loving kindness and gentle community to share reflective words of remembrance, solace and comfort. All are welcome.

DECEMBER 30th

One service in the Sanctuary at 10:00 a.m., Tony Fisher preaching

YOU AND YOUR FAMILY ARE INVITED TO BE AN ANGEL THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

Individuals or families are warmly invited to extend their holiday spirit to the wider First Parish community during the upcoming holiday season. We have several wonderful, caring parishioners who have difficulty getting to church and who would love ONE RIDE to ONE SERVICE during the month of December. This is a great way to continue to build our caring community. Most parishioners live locally and they would be so grateful to be able to attend a service during the holidays. Would you or your family be willing to provide *one ride to one parishioner on one Sunday?*

- Please let our ministerial intern Tony Fisher know. He will gratefully receive e-mails (tfisher@firstparish.org) or phone messages (617-823-5904) letting him know when you are available; and he will make the connection for you. Please join Tony in welcoming our seniors back to church. It's a small act that could mean so much during the holidays. Thanks for caring.

SING

- "Rise Up Caroling," Friday, December 21, 7:30 p.m. Singers of all ages, please bring voices, instruments and cookies to share. Carol lyrics and sheet music for instrumentalists provided.

DECK THE HALLS – AND THE SANCTUARY!

- There are two opportunities to decorate First Parish for Christmas with the Flower Committee: Fridays at 9 a.m. on November 30 and December 14. We'd love your help! Contact Ellen Whitney for details, 978-369-7434 or ellewhitney@verizon.net or see us at the Poinsettia table during coffee hour.

WPA CHRISTMAS CONCERT AND TEA

- Join friends at First Parish for holiday music and a traditional Christmas tea on Tuesday, December 11. Music begins at 3:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary and tea will be served in the Parish Hall at 4:00 p.m. There is no charge and no reservations are necessary. All are welcome!

HOLIDAY SERVICE PROJECTS

- **Mitten Tree:** Hats, scarves and mittens for friends at local nonprofits will be collected from November 27 to December 16. Please put items to be donated on the tree in the Parish Hall.

- **Concord Prison Outreach:** Donations for prisoners are due between Sunday, November 25, and Tuesday, December 3. Please leave in the coatroom at First Parish Church.

Memorial Poinsettias and Flowers

- Come to the poinsettia table if you wish to donate a plant in memory of a loved one. Their name's and yours will be included in the memorial listing in the December 23 order of service. The plants decorate the Sanctuary during the Christmas holidays. Also at the poinsettia table will be information and sign-up for the Annual Holiday Flower Delivery. Deliveries of poinsettias and flowers will take place following the 11:00 o'clock service on December 23. Bring good cheer to a parish member and perhaps meet someone for the first time. Contact Caitlin Selle at selle.caitlin5@gmail.com, 978-371-3915 or visit the poinsettia

table to sign up to deliver flowers or if you know someone who would appreciate a flower delivery.

INVITE A SILENT GUEST

Our 6th/7th Grade Neighboring Activists will be organizing and collecting the Guest at Your Table program this year. The boxes will be distributed on December 2 and are “fed” throughout the holidays and returned on January 13. Share in the holiday work of the UU Service Committee and the important work they do to provide clean water to people around the world.

CHILDREN’S HOLIDAY CRAFTS

On Saturday, December 1, from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m., First Parish children are invited to spend the afternoon at the church, making great gifts for the holidays. Adult and teen “elves” are invited to share the fun! Please e-mail Head Elves, Jan Goddard-Taylor at jangooddard-taylor@comcast.net or Marilyn Lowitt at Marilyn.lowitt@verizon.net with any questions you may have. To help at a craft table, please e-mail head elf herder Patty Popov at ppopov@nichols-pratt.com.

“THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER”

On December 15 at 5:00 p.m., and December 16 at the 9:00 and 11:00 a.m. children’s service, the eighth graders will present this humorous play for five-year-olds and up. It playfully celebrates the Unitarian Universalist values. Your family is sure to enjoy this heartwarming dramatic event that is part of the First Parish tradition.

- **THE HEARD HOLIDAY PARTY & LOCK-IN!**

- On December 21, 7:00-9:00 p.m. all YRUU youth and alumni are invited to celebrate the season and participate in the annual Yankee Swap Party. We will ring in the Winter Solstice together with merriment, Chinese food and good times! Bring something wrapped that you already own and want to give away, or a joke gift, or something new under \$20. The Heard will have a Lock-In sleepover party in the church following the Yankee Swap. Bring your instruments!

- **WINTER SOLSTICE REVELS**

- Come join the celebration of the Winter Solstice on Thursday, December 20, at 7:30 p.m. in the First Parish Parlor and Parish Hall. We will tell stories, sing songs, honor the longest night, and observe the magic of the turning season — complete with wonderful music and seasonal treats. All ages welcome, in the tradition of a village gathering. Welcome, Yule!

- **REMEMBER**

- The Holiday Loss Wreath will be present in the Sanctuary during the month of December; you may want to add a ribbon in honor of someone you love who has died. You can also remember your loved ones by donating flowers for Christmas; sign up at coffee hour with the Flower Committee.

Concord Area Humanists (CAH)

This is part of the First Parish Wright Tavern Program

Professor Eric. J. Chaisson, " *Cosmic Evolution and Arrow of Time*"

Thursday, December 5, 2012. 7:15 to 8:45 PM in Parish Hall

Meeting will start at 7:00 PM with socializing and a few announcements.

Professor Eric J. Chaisson, of Harvard University, will present this talk, followed by discussion. Evolution—ascend with change of Nature's many varied systems—has become a powerful unifying concept throughout the sciences. In its broadest sense, cosmic evolution comprises a holistic explanatory narrative of countless changes within and among organized systems extending from the big bang to humankind. The talk will be illustrated with powerful visuals from astronomy, biology, and complexity science.



Eric is an astrophysicist at Harvard University. His major interests are twofold: His scientific research addresses an interdisciplinary, thermodynamic study of physical, biological, and cultural phenomena, seeking to understand the origin and evolution of galaxies, stars, planets, life, and society. His educational work engages master teachers and computer animators to create better methods, technological aids, and novel curricula to enthuse teachers and instruct students in all aspects of natural science.

All are welcome - Inquiries to pne@aol.com.

As well as a monthly featured speaker meeting, followed by discussion, Concord Area Humanists (CAH) also hold a monthly small discussion group at the Concord Public Library. For all meeting details see web site: www.ConcordAreaHumanists.org. Then, on the opening page click the blue "Events" button.



for **Spiritual** Renewal

The Wright Tavern Center at First Parish in Concord

An Oasis in Our Busy Lives • December 2012

The Wright Tavern Center is pleased to offer a variety of meaningful, thought-provoking and creative courses that provide for our infinite spiritual curiosity and development. Brief course descriptions are listed by day of the week. Please see the WTC website (www.wrighttavern.org/cms/courses) for full course details and facilitator bios. To register, contact Christy McKellips at 978-369-9602, ext.412, unless a different registration contact is listed with the course description..

Calling All Teachers!

The Wright Tavern Center for Spiritual Renewal is now accepting applications from teachers who want to lead a class in the Winter/Spring term (Jan 15-June 1, 2013). The deadline for submitting your application is December 1, 2012, and the class schedule will be finalized by December 15, 2012. Please e-mail **Christy McKellips**, Assistant to the Ministers, to request an application form. Questions? e-mail **Jenny Rankin** at jrankin@firstparish.org.

NEW COURSE OFFERINGS

Rise Up and Call Her Name — RSVP Now!

Rise Up and Call Her Name presents a textured spiritual inquiry focused on the Sacred Feminine. Join in this woman-honoring journey into global Earth-based spirituality to learn about goddesses from a variety of traditions, hear and tell personal stories, create sacred art, participate in rituals, discuss questions in feminist spirituality, and engage in personal discovery together. Needs 14 participants, so please express an interest ASAP to twinklemanning@gmail.com or bozenasmith@mindspring.com.

Wednesday: Jan. 9–April 17 (includes a snow date) 9:30–12:00
\$40 fee for materials

Holiday Fun! — Jingle Jam

Jingle Jams are one-time classes perfect for making holiday memories with young children and their siblings, parents, grandparents and/or a caregiver. We'll sing holiday favorites, play instruments and dance together. These classes are a great, no-commitment way to share music with your friends and are also a great opportunity to have older "graduates" visit too! Friends who are unfamiliar with Footnotes Music and/or Music Together may be able to visit this as a "demo" class.

Friday: Dec. 7 10:00–10:45 a.m.
Tues: Dec. 11 10:00–10:45 a.m.
Thur: Dec. 20 10:00–10:45 a.m.

CONTINUING OR REPEATING COURSES

Tibetan Buddhism

- The Buddhist group meets in the First Parish Chapel
- Wednesdays mornings and Thursdays evenings to accommodate various schedules. These weekly sessions are open to all
- who are interested in transforming love, compassion and wisdom into action, regardless of familiarity with Tibetan Buddhism. Contact: **Bill Seaver**
- Wednesday: 9:30–11:00 a.m. Thursday: 7:30-9:00 p.m.
- Donations gratefully accepted

Rise Up Singing

- This informal monthly musical gathering of adults and children
- is an opportunity to sing and share traditional and contemporary folk songs, spirituals, hymns, rounds and chants in fellowship. Singers of all ages and experience are welcome; bring instruments if you wish. Leader: **Beth Norton** and **Others**
- Friday: Nov. 16, Dec. 21, Jan. 25 7:30 p.m.
- No fee required — just come and sing!

T'ai Ji and Qi Gong

- By combining music with Qi Gong and the simple movement of T'ai Ji, blocked energy is released to create wellness and bring
- life into balance. This class is geared to people of all ages. It
- offers gentle low-impact exercise to reduce stress, enhance optimal health and simply create a sense of joy in our lives.
- Instructor: **Mae Pagan**

Friday: Nov. 9, Dec. 14 12:30–1:30 p.m. Fee: \$25 per class

The First Parish Women's AM/PM Book Group

- Once again the Women's Book Group selections are diverse, ambitious and thought-provoking, and provide opportunity to
- reflect upon the meaning of life. Share discussion, responses and insights to this year's readings. See below for the next two
- months' selections and find the entire book list at www.wrighttavern.org/cms/courses. Choose either the Monday evening or
- Tuesday morning group session (there is no fee).

- Dec. 3, 4: *The Art of Racing in the Rain: A Novel*, by Garth Stein
- Jan. 28, 29: *The Unlikely Disciple: A Sinner's Semester at America's Holiest University*, by Kevin Roose
- Monday: 7:30-9:00 p.m. (offsite: contact First Parish for directions to this session) Tuesday: 9:30-11:00 a.m. (at First Parish)

Concord Area Humanists (CAH)

Harvard Astrophysicist Dr. Eric J. Chaisson will speak on “Cosmic Evolution and the Arrow of Time” in the Parish Hall.

Wednesday: Dec. 5 Social 7:00 p.m. Program 7:15 p.m.

Evolution — ascent with change of Nature’s many varied systems — has become a powerful unifying concept throughout the sciences. In its broadest sense, cosmic evolution comprises a holistic explanatory narrative of countless changes within and among organized systems, extending from the big bang to humankind. This interdisciplinary scenario has the potential to unite the physical, biological and social sciences, thereby creating for people of all cultures at the start of the new millennium a consistent, objective and comprehensive worldview of material reality. The talk will be illustrated with powerful visuals from astronomy, biology and complexity science.

Speaker: **Dr. Eric J. Chaisson** is an American astrophysicist at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he has multiple appointments, most notably at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics. His major interests are currently twofold: His scientific research addresses an interdisciplinary, thermodynamic study of physical, biological and cultural phenomena, seeking to understand the origin and evolution of galaxies, stars, planets, life and society. His major goal is to help devise a unifying cosmic-evolutionary worldview of the Universe and our sense of place within it. His educational work engages master teachers and computer animators to create better methods, technological aids and novel curricula to enthuse

- teachers and instruct students in all aspects of natural science.
- He teaches an annual undergraduate course at Harvard on the subject of cosmic evolution, which combines both of these research and educational programs. Nearer the time, please click on the CAH website and then on the blue “events” button for more information.
- Future “Speaker Meetings” at First Parish in Concord:
 - Wed. Jan. 2, 2013, Arlene Germaine, “Nursing Home Reform”
 - Wed. Feb. 6, 2013, Movie Night – “Creation” (tentative)
- Future “Discussion” Meetings at Free Concord Library:
 - Tue. Dec. 18, 2012; Tue. Jan. 15, 2013; Tue. Feb. 19, 2013
- Meet at 7:00 p.m. in Trustees Room. Hosted by Paul Jameson and Maria Greene. Enquiries please to pne@aol.com.
- **ABC Music Together (Ages 0-4 years)**
 - Mixed-age classes offer an opportunity for children to participate at their own level, while the adults (no matter what their level of musical ability) and older children provide models for ways of music making. Everyone in a mixed-age class benefits by experiencing the music making of those around them — children who have a special originality and spontaneity in their approach to music. Instructors: **Deb** and **Tom Foote**. To register, go to www.abcmusictogether.com. Visit Tom’s site at <http://www.rhythmkids.com/>.
 - Tuesday, Thursday, Friday 9:30-10:30 a.m. 10:30-11:30 a.m.