

First Church in Jamaica Plain, Unitarian Universalist

December Newsletter, 2007

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Rev. Terry Burke, Minister
Rev. Marshall Hawkins, Affiliate Minister
Rev. Patricia Brennan, Affiliate Minister
George Wardle, Trustees Chair
Andrée Záleská, RE Director
Jean O'Leary, Church Administrator

Ellen McGuire, Music Director
Janna Frelich, Soloist
Giulia Norton, Standing Committee Chair
Philomena O'Donnell, Head Usher
Monroe Heyman, Building Use

Thoughts From Rev. Terry Burke

As many of you know, I took a class on stand up comedy this fall at Brookline Adult Ed. I made my comedic debut at the Emerald Isle in Dorchester on November 15th. My teacher, Rich Gustus, had hosted an open comedy mike at the Isle for five years, but our evening was the last call. The bar owners had sold their liquor license rather than install sprinklers.

It was a wild night, with many comics who had performed at the bar coming back for its closing. Brendan Halpin has a very funny description of the scene in his blog for November 15th, "A Night in the Comedy Trenches." I had a great time, and felt wonderfully supported by the church members who attended. My five-minute set may reappear if we have another "Big Show" talent event in the spring.

We are in the season of cosmic jokes. The Hanukah candles that burn without oil.

A God of love, who comes to humanity in a helpless child, a child born to ordinary people, who are more important than the rich, the learned, and the powerful. How WE respond is the punch line to the story. Are we foolish enough to care about our neighbors near and far? As humorist Abner Dean put it, "Remember the word, the word from the manger. It means only this, you can dance with a stranger." Have fun dancing the cosmic joke. Happy Hanukah and Merry Christmas!

Yours, Terry

Greetings from Andrée, Director of Religious Education

Welcome December with all its hassles and joys! We have 2 great events coming up just this weekend:

~**The Christmas Pageant** at 11am in the sanctuary, directed as always by the marvelous Thalia McMillion, and with a cast including just about all our church-school kids.

~**Family Songfest** at 4pm in the Parish Hall is an ongoing benefit for the RE program, happening once a month. All ages are welcome to come and sing—please come and bring friends! (Suggested donation \$3/person.)

The rest of December will be packed for us all, I'm sure, but please don't miss the **5-Senses Sunday, an intergenerational service for the holidays on December 16**. We will present four of these over the course of the year, in an effort to make intergenerational worship more

accessible to all ages by integrating sight, sound, touch and smell (and sometimes taste!) into worship.

After that there will be **no RE classes for Dec.23 and Dec. 30**, although we will provide supervision and crafts on the stage as always. **Regular classes resume January 6.**

I wish you all peace and equilibrium for this month—try not to overdo it! Your children have been a joy this term and I look forward to all we do together.

Best wishes, Andree Zaleska

Zaleska@aczaleska.com

Membership Story of the month:

Who told it: Priscilla Morris, 77 years old, mother of two and a grandmother calls herself a former “army brat”. Priscilla became a member of First Church in JP on November 4th 2007, and has since then, and even a few months before, immersed herself in our church community, volunteering to help with the Holiday Fair, plays an active role in the new to UU discussion group, and completed the spiritual autobiography class led by Terry as part of her spiritual growth. The homeless are a very important cause to her and she hopes that our social justice committee strives to make this project part of their agenda.

Her childhood: As a child Priscilla was always on the go. An only child, she moved to Arlington when her mom went to take care of her ailing father, Priscilla’s grandfather. Here she had her first church experience, attending the Cavalier Methodist Church, your “everyday typical New England Church”. Priscilla calls her childhood a “bad soap opera” because of some of the issues she faced that proved to be major hurdles for her.

As an adult: To get away from her mom she got married at 18 to someone she labeled a “narcissist”. At 22 her children were enrolled in boarding school by her husband and his family and they separated. Priscilla, living on her own in Arlington, worked two jobs, at a coffee shop and as a waitress. After six years she remarried, and after 18 years of marriage, they separated and subsequently divorced! In the 50s she worked 60 hours a week at Harvard University and after they “got rid” of the middle management in her office, she was able to “carry on” with the generous pension allotted her.

The search: At the Cavalier Methodist Church of her childhood, she discovered God and Jesus. In elementary school Priscilla learned something that was to be the rock she clung onto during the trying times of life...that God loves you, He listens, and He is always there for you. He became her “secret pal”, her buddy, and then, and even now, she talks to God in her head. After attending three Protestant churches, and feeling generally unsatisfied with them, she first came to First Church in JP when Terry performed the wedding ceremony of her youngest daughter. Her desire to be part of a church community, based on her belief that there is strength in numbers made her visit, and the warmth and friendliness of the people made her return.

Today: Priscilla’s mom told her when she was a little girl that God is a northeaster, but today, she finds God in nature, the beauty of a tree, walking around Jamaica pond, in her back yard. He is to her a sense of calm, peace and tranquility. She has learned to let go and let God and is today willing to lose control for Him. We are blessed to have Priscilla a part of our church community.

Coming Up at First Church

Are you interested in learning more about our great 1854 pipe organ? Barbara Owen, an expert on historic organs and long-time friend of First Church (a granite Gothic Revival building designed in 1853 by the important Boston architect Nathaniel J. Bradlee), will deliver a lecture on "Great Victorian Era Church Organs in Boston" on **Sunday, Dec. 9** at 2 pm in our sanctuary, sponsored by the local chapter of the Victorian Society in America. Admission will be \$10 for members of the Victorian Society or First Church, and \$15 for others. Barbara is a wonderful and knowledgeable speaker, and her talk will be designed for interested non-experts.

The Victorian Society in America, New England Chapter, is one of 16 regional chapters of the Philadelphia-based national Victorian Society. Headquartered at the Gibson House Museum in the Back Bay, the New England Chapter offers seasonal walking tours and lectures and special events throughout the year. The Chapter's walking tour guide VICTORIAN BOSTON TODAY has a chapter on Jamaica Plain. Copies of VBT will be available for sale (\$20) on Dec. 9th.

Did you have a baby this year? We have a tradition of listing all of the babies born in '07 in the Christmas Eve order of service. Please email the church office at firstchjp@aol.com with you child's name and date of birth.

Sign up for a poinsettia on line to decorate the church for the service on the 23rd: Email the church office how many poinsettias you would like to order and if you would like them in celebration or in memory of someone. Pick up your poinsettia either on Sunday the 23rd or at the Christmas Eve service.

We are caroling again at the Shattuck Hospital in JP on December 16th after church. We will eat some pizza in the parish hall for sustenance and then gather for caroling in the Shattuck lobby at 1PM. All levels of singing ability welcome!

We are also collecting toilet articles and DVDs and videos for the Shattuck to drop off when we go caroling on the 16th.

Our tree expedition to North Sutton, New Hampshire will be on Saturday the 15th. We'll car pool to Stannard Bristol's Muster Field Farm, weed the wood lot in order to decorate the sanctuary, then share a potluck meal with folks from the farm. Call Helen Selle if you are interested in attending.

Please speak to Terry Burke if you can help with coffee hour or ushering on Christmas Eve.

Terry Burke is hosting the Boston Ministers' Club at our church on Thursday January 17th. Anyone willing to help him prepare and serve a meal at 6:45pm for 20 clergy types would receive stars in their crowns, UU sainthood, a plenary indulgence, or some similar reward.

Book group: January 8 we'll be On The Road with Jack Kerouac. You've always wanted to read On The Road! Come slake your wanderlust with us."

Thanks for a Very Successful Holiday Fair

We did it First Church!

Once again, the Holiday Fair showed what a great place this is: A few quotes from vendors:

- “If I wasn’t Jewish, I’d join this church” (I started to explain how UU welcomes all beliefs, but the ghost of her grandfather wouldn’t let her join!)
- “There’s something in the air here that just makes me feel the spirit”
- “When the music starts, the sales perk up”
- “Others fairs say they will have people to help you carry in and out, you actually do!”.
- “Can I rent my table for next year now?”
- “My favorite fair”

How do we make this happen? Quantity, Quality, and Kindness

Quantity - so many people offer of themselves – we had a ratio of more than one volunteer per vendor. Considering the size of the church, this means that everyone who could give time did – but that shouldn’t surprise us, we’re First Church – we like to do things for and with each other!

Quality – everyone approached their task seriously – of all the volunteers, a few who found they couldn’t make it, and let me know in advance, being very responsible. There wasn’t one “No Show” in the lot. There wasn’t one donated dish that didn’t reflect careful work trying to do your best. (and everyone I tasted was yummy!)

Kindness – everyone who came in the building, as a customer or a vendor felt cared for - Vendors could afford a cup of coffee, but to have Karen come up and hand them a token for one makes a touch of hospitality.

The Numbers:

Vendor spots – 36

Number of Visitors – 1,800 (approximate – based on count at door, but that’s a little imprecise!)

Number of items on a Middle Eastern plate – 5

Hours until Judith’s Lasagna sold out – 1

Dollars earned from food operations - \$889

Dollars from vendor rentals - \$2.262

Working together having fun in community – priceless!

Thank you all – Abby

The following is a letter of thanks sent by one of the vendors:

Hi Abby,

I just wanted to let you and everyone involved know what a wonderful, successful event yesterday's fair was for me. It was a beautifully- organized, flawlessly-run event, as always; there seemed to be even more help available during setup and breakdown than I remember last year, and the hot lunch was, if anything, better than ever. Congratulations on these incremental and delightful changes!

What really stood out about this year for me, however, was two-fold: first, I think the fair has crossed a new threshold of vendor quality and variety. You've always had a great group of vendors, but this year, maybe by controlling the ratio of jewelry to other goods, and certainly by encouraging people to put their best foot forward, you've reached an overall high level I haven't seen before. The other thing that impressed me was the huge number of customers you managed to bring in this year: people kept thronging the church throughout the day. These were serious shoppers, too: almost everyone bought something, and many seemed to have brought their holiday shopping lists. Clearly, these folks came expecting to find fine craft items and great gifts. I know you've done a lot to increase publicity for the fair this year, and all I can say is 'Bravo!' It surely paid off.

I hope this event raised a lot of money for the church: that's certainly deserved, given all the hard, smart work members of the congregation put into it, and all the happiness it brings vendors and shoppers alike.

Thank you!

And warm wishes for the holiday season.

Anne

JP Forums

"Turning the Climate Corner" with Ross Gelbspan, Thursday, December 13th. 7:00pm in the Sanctuary

The Global Warming debate has come into the national spotlight in recent years with many politicians and celebrities taking it on as their core issue. We constantly hear about new scientific evidence leading to the same conclusion about the earth's atmosphere: it's getting warmer as a direct result of human activity. Pulitzer Prize winning Boston Globe journalist Ross Gelbspan has been watching and reporting on these climate change issues since 1984, and is considered an international authority on the issue. Ross visits the Jamaica Plain Forum to discuss new research findings, and share his long-sighted perspective.

NOTE: The documentary "Mapping Stem Cell Research" will NOT be screened on December 14th as previously advertised. Please look forward to the re-scheduling of this event in January.

December 2007 Calendar

- 12/1 Saturday** 10th Annual Holiday Craft Fair 11-5pm
12/2 Sunday Sermon: Great Expectations 11:00am
12/3 Monday Building Committee Mtg. 7:30pm
12/4 Tuesday Book Group 7:30pm
12/6 Thursday Choir Rehearsal 8:00pm
12/7 Friday Youth Film Night 7-11:00pm
12/8 Saturday Pageant Rehearsal 10am
12/9 Sunday Christmas Pageant 11:00am
 Social Justice Committee Mtg. 12:30pm
 Organ Lecture by Barbara Owen 2:00pm
 JP Family Songfest 4:00pm
12/11 Tuesday New UU Class 7:00pm
12/12 Wednesday Ministry Committee Mtg. 7:00pm
12/13 Thursday JP Forum: Turning the Climate Corner, Ross Gelbspan 7pm
12/15 Saturday Tree Expedition to New Hampshire
12/16 Sunday Five Senses Sunday 11:00am
 Caroling at the Shattuck 1:00pm
12/18 Tuesday Standing Committee 7:00pm
12/23 Sunday Christmas Sunday Service 11:00pm
 No O.W.L.
12/24 Monday Christmas Eve Service 7:00pm
12/30 Sunday Sermon: Burning of Grudges and Grievances 11:00am
1/6 Sunday Epiphany Service – Carl Scovel preaching

25th Anniversary of Terry Burkes Ministry at First Church



Happy Birthdays!

Are you wondering why your birthday isn't celebrated on this list? It's not that we don't think it's special, it's that we haven't got it in The System - let Abby know that special date (she won't ask the year), and achieve your dream of recognition for just being born. Because, actually, we do think just being born is pretty important - it's the First Principle!

Katrina Koenigs 2	Emma Marshall 16
Louis Barton-Biegelson 3	Nancy Martland 23
Eleanor Barton-Beigelson 3	Alice Kociemba 23
Laura Wardle 14	Jom Michel 24
Abebe Ticktin 14	Karl Haakonsen 31