

January 2009 Newsletter

First Church in Jamaica Plain, Unitarian Universalist

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Rev. Terry Burke, Minister
Rev. Marshall Hawkins, Affiliate Minister
Rev. Peter Connolly, Affiliate Minister
George Wardle, Trustees Chair
Laurie Corkum, Standing Committee Chair

Ellen McGuire, Music Director
Janna Frelich, Soloist
Philomena O'Donnell, Head Usher
Monroe Heyman, Building Use
Jean O'Leary, Church Administrator



Thoughts from Terry

When I was very young, I lived in north Cambridge and worked in a used bookstore. January seemed like a dreary month after Christmas and New Year's. So I decided to have a party. Mozart's birthday was at the end of the month, so I planned a celebration in his honor. I went to the Harvard Coop and bought a poster of the man and put it up on my living room wall.

My friends gathered for mixed nuts, beer, good company, and the "Jupiter Symphony." I think there was actually a birthday cake. My employer and landlord Herb Hillman was one of the guests. Herb is a long-time committed Quaker. He and his family once sponsored refugees from a war zone who lived in their home; they tried to cook by making a fire on the living room floor. He helped develop affordable housing a few blocks from his house. Out of his pacifist beliefs he hid deserters during the Viet Nam War. Herb was also a good friend of Unitarian minister James Reeb, who was martyred at Selma supporting Dr. King.

This January we have a financial system in turmoil from greed, death in Gaza, and fear about climate change. However, unlike my January so many years ago, we have a January holiday now, one for the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King. We have the inauguration of Barack Obama, building on Dr. King's legacy. Obama's presidency has inspired many people, especially the young, to try to live their values and ideals and to work for justice.

Here at church this January, you can explore your creativity with "The Artists Way"; think about the ideas and issues of our day at the JP Forum; share holy silence with Prayer Group; spiritually groove and feast with Sunday Night aLive; consider what it means to be part of a Common Security Group; teach the young, work for justice; maintain this historic building; comfort a friend; dine on potluck; sing and pray and worship and connect to God and one another.

This January, we truly have much to celebrate!

Yours,

Terry

This Sunday, January 11th, is the Semi-Annual Congregational Meeting. We will be discussing the state of the budget for the current year and the Annual Budget Drive, formerly known as the canvass. We are taking a new approach to fundraising this year based on the principles of stewardship and joyful giving. Join us after the worship service around 12:30. **Please bring a dish to share.** We do not expect to be voting but we might. If you can't attend and want to designate a proxy, please contact Joel Peterson, the clerk, via email to register your proxy.

First Church Food Pantry: The first Sunday of the month, February 1, 2009 is our delivery of food to Sojourner House Family Homeless Shelter, Roxbury. During the month of January, please bring your boxed and canned food items anytime. **On Sunday February 1**, you can also bring in fresh fruits and vegetables, cheese, and meats and poultry. Thank you for your ongoing support of the Food Pantry. *Social Justice Committee*

Joyful Giving – You're going to hear that phrase more but for now, use it to understand why the Holiday Fair was a success. We welcomed people, we saw beautiful products that people had worked hard on, we ate home made food that our friends had made. We treated each other, the customers, and the vendors with the best we have to give, and I hope, we all enjoyed it – I know I did! Saturday night brought exhaustion, but that quickly turns to exhilaration as I think of all the bright particular moments of joy that the day brought.

This joyful giving, which so many people put into the event, is what we are supposed to be experiencing when we give Christmas gifts. We all know that is out of hand, but think of a time you gave a gift that really worked, not because you thought you had to, but because you got joy in doing so. One of my examples are the meals I have cooked for the caring community. I'd love to hear your examples, send them on dear_abby@comcast.net – who knows, there might be a future newsletter article in it.

Membership Announcements:

Greeters this week, Sunday January 11:

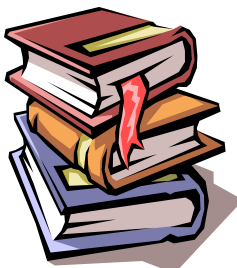
Cherisse Haakonsen (Head)

Kurt Hemr

Gerry Culver

January 25, 9:30 am: Newcomers Breakfast: Everyone who has visited/visits the church, and would like to get to know our church community better, our activities, committees etc, this is a great opportunity to do so, while enjoying a delicious breakfast prepared by the members of our church community. All committee chairs are encouraged to attend! Please RSVP: cherprieve@yahoo.com by January 22nd.

If you would like to become a member of our church community, or have any questions regarding membership, please send an email to Cherisse at cherprieve@yahoo.com, or see her at Church



Church Book Group:

The book group will vicariously wander through many locales, cultures, time periods, and genders this winter. First, we'll go along with a Scottish man who trekked across Afghanistan immediately after the fall of the Taliban ([The Places In Between](#) by Rory Stewart, Feb 3). Then we'll tootle along the Mississippi with Huck Finn (who, if memory serves, learns how to sit "like a girl") and an escaped slave, Jim ([The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn](#) by Mark Twain, March 3). As spring approaches, we read of two girls along another vast cultural divide: a German Jew and a Palestinian meet in nascent Israel ([Wandering Star](#) by Le Clezio, April 7). Perhaps by then the bombs will have ceased falling there. All sessions are at 7:30 pm in the Morse Room, and as always, anyone interested in any given book is welcome to come to that discussion. There are no entrance requirements, membership fees, poll taxes, or other impediments.

We're not going to do a canvass this year. What? Are you crazy? How will we write a budget without knowing pledges? Well, we will need to know what you can contribute, but we're changing style, and hope you will be part of it. The Canvass is now the Annual Budget Drive, and it's part of Stewardship.

Stewardship – what does it mean? The first example for many is the old word for flight attendant, or perhaps the person in charge of your wine cellar, and we've heard that word to talk about our duty to our planet.... These are all related, they are people entrusted to care for something.

And, we are all entrusted, to care for something very significant here – First Church in Jamaica Plain. Something created by our forebears, something we hope to be able to pass to future generations, but for now entrusted to us. So in Stewardship we celebrate and work with that trust.

But, what will it look like? What will it feel like? In some ways, it will look and feel the same as last year. Stewards will be assigned to contact church members, to sit down and talk about stewardship, but we hope that the conversation will be about appreciation and celebration of this amazing project we're part of. Stewards will be charged with obtaining financial commitments, but if the conversation is all about money it's not the point – the point is to have a talk that brings us into appreciation of what we love here.

The team leading this effort consists of: Lyra O'Brien, Laura McCord, Laurie Corkum, Lavid Dorney, and Labby Krueger. We need you to be part of it, and we are confident that this new energy will result in a process that is fun and rewarding for all.

Dates to save: March 7th – Fellowship Dinner

All stewards will be expected to come to one of the following -

February 5th – Steward's Orientation

February 22nd – Steward's Orientation

February 7th – Steward's Orientation

April 15th, commitment forms due (anything else due that day, is it?)



Sunday Night aLive is January 25

All are welcome to join us for our monthly alternative worship service, Sunday Night aLive on January 25, 6:00pm until 8:00pm. It features live music and participation in a relaxed but spiritual atmosphere. Childcare is provided and dinner is served following the service. If you would like to cook a dish for the service, please contact Cherrisse Haakonsen.

Jamaica Plain Forum:

Friday, Jan. 23rd, 7:00pm: *Moving on Up? Updates on the Racial Wealth Divide*

In recognition of the 80th birthday of Dr. King, the historic inauguration of President Obama, and the release of the annual State of the Dream report, the Jamaica Plain forum is holding a panel discussion on the State and Future of the Racial Wealth Divide. Meizhu Lui Director of the Closing the Racial Wealth Gap Initiative of Insight, Amaad Rivera of United For a Fair Economy, and Dedrick Muhammad of the Institute for Policy Studies will address the current reality of the racial wealth divide and the possibilities of bridging this divide. Please join us for this important discussion as to how 2009 can become a year of change we can truly believe in.

Thursday, Jan. 29th, 7:00pm, *"Wage Theft in America"*

Nationally recognized labor activist Kim Bobo, founder and executive director of Interfaith Worker Justice, visits the Jamaica Plain Forum to discuss wage theft, "the crime wave that no one talks about." In her latest book, Bobo shares insight into the billions of dollars worth of wages that are stolen from millions of workers in the United States every year. Examples of this theft include paying employees far less than minimum wage, purposefully misclassifying employees as independent contractors, and illegally denying workers overtime pay.

Karl Haakonsen's band, the Jamaica Plain Jazz Collective will be playing Saturday nite, January 10th. The band plays from 8-11:00pm, probably in three sets at:

Gulu Gulu Café,

247 Essex Street

Salem, Massachusetts

(Venue details with maps and directions can be found here: <http://www.gulu-gulu.com>)

The JP Jazz Collective (as heard in Sunday Night aLive services) is:

Tom Walkey: Flutes, Tenor Sax

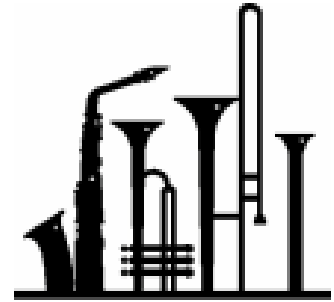
Allan Walkey: Alto Sax

Bob McCloskey: Alto and Tenor Saxes

Jay Geyer: Guitar

Karl Haakonsen: Acoustic and Electric Basses

Tom Goodkind: Drums



Many thanks to Helen Selle for arranging the expedition to New Hampshire to bring back our beautiful forest in the Sanctuary at Christmas, and for directing the take-down crew!