

First Church in Jamaica Plain, Unitarian Universalist

March Newsletter, 2006

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Rev. Terry Burke, Minister
Rev. Marshall Hawkins, Affiliate Minister
Karl Haakonsen, Standing Committee Chair
George Wardle, Trustees Chair
Andrée Záleská, Interim RE Director

Ellen McGuire, Music Director
Janna Frelich, Soloist
Robin Teague, Director of the Children's Choirs
Philomena O'Donnell, Head Usher
Monroe Heyman, Building Use

Thoughts From Terry

Today is our son Willis' 18th birthday. I remember the extraordinary day that this mysterious small person came out into the world after a night of labor (well, not so small, 9lb 10oz). The Olympics were taking place at the time, and Ellen started labor while I was conducting Helen Holmes' memorial service at the church. We survived numerous miscarriages in the course of having our children, so Willis' birth was a special joy. I have a favorite photograph from the day after he was born; we look exhausted but happy, Willis with one eye open just a bit. At church, a sign proclaimed, "It's a baby!" A few days later at our Fellowship Dinner, Bob Culver and MaryAnne Shields played newborn Willis and newborn Alice Laramore McCabe (born March 2nd) having a baby conversation.

Willis' was named for Ellen's uncle who was shot down in World War Two. Now Willis is 6'1", and registering for the draft. He's on that teen schedule where you want to stay up late, so it's hard to wake him up at 6AM for school. He likes physics, history, computer games, scouting, and Pink Floyd. Willis is also a good teacher, brother and clarinetist, who just finished up his Eagle Scout application, and is waiting on colleges.

Our small actions of day to day add up to life, and our children are grown. We're very proud of you Willis - you're a great son! Happy 18th birthday - have a wonderful life!

Love, Dad/Terry

Greetings from Andrée, Interim Director of Religious Education

Dear RE Friends,

This is just a short update, as I am writing you from the middle of February vacation-week! In a few weeks our spring term is starting (March 19), and while we have a great group lined up to teach, there are still a few openings. I would love to have volunteers to teach both the Preschoolers and the Kindergarten-First Grade class. Both groups are sweet and fun, with good, interactive curricula to make your life easier. Please contact me directly if you'd like to volunteer for the RE program.

I received some good news recently: The Woburn Grant application that I wrote in January was accepted and the RE program will receive \$5,000 for the improvement of the stage area. The plan involves building cabinetry to store the KidsArts supplies and the RE supplies

that are currently piled up along the walls in that room. With matching funds from the church we will also clean the stained-glass window, and hopefully refinish the floor and the wood paneling. The result should be a beautiful space for worship for our Children's Chapel services, and for use as a classroom as well.

As always, the RE program welcomes the input of the congregation in the lives of our children. You may always contact me with any ideas or suggestions, or attend an RE Committee meeting—our next one is March 12 at 8:30 am in the Morse room.

Best wishes,
Andree Zaleska, zaleska@aczaleska.com

Coming Up at First Church

Terry Burke will lead a series of Lenten Vespers on Chris Hedges' book Losing Moses on the Freeway. These simple worship services, including a homily and a discussion, will begin Wednesday, **March 15**, at 8:00 pm and run for four weeks. See Terry for more information.

The Next Poetry and Spirituality Group is Sunday, March 19, 4:00 to 5:30. It is open to all. Please bring 6-8 copies of a poem (of your own, or a favorite published poem) to discuss. Our discussion focuses on both the craft of poetry and its universal meaning. The only requirement for participation is a love of reading poetry out loud. (contact Alice Kociemba for questions).

The book group -- which includes whoever would like to join that month -- will discuss Tracy Kidder's Mountains Beyond Mountains about Paul Farmer's adventures in public health in Haiti on Tuesday, April 4, 7:30 in the Morse Room.

Announcements

Fair Trade Coffee Ongoing Success

We are pleased to announce that First Church purchased about \$1,300 of coffee, tea, cocoa, and chocolate in 2005 (and we only began after Thanksgiving!). Here's a quick review of how the Coffee Project works. We purchase products in bulk from the Interfaith Program of Equal Exchange, which sends 20% of every pound (not every bag) of coffee, tea and chocolate to the UU Service Committee. Equal Exchange purchases the products directly from small farmers in Central and South America and Ethiopia, avoiding the "middle man", thereby improving the lives of the farmers who get more for their crops. We charge a small mark-up on the bulk rate to create an inventory. We now stock four kinds of coffee, two kinds of tea, two kinds of cocoa and three types of chocolate bars. Whatever "profit" we make goes to fund coffee for our Coffee Hour. (Haven't you noticed the improvement with "Fellowship Blend"?) The Coffee Project will be open every Sunday after the Worship Service. We hope you make it a "habit" to buy your coffee and tea and cocoa at church. It's for a good cause! Thanks! Alice Kociemba, Joan Ellis, and Gwyn Helie.

Annual Spring First Church UU JP Retreat Once again, Rev Terry Burke and Rev Carl Scovel will co-facilitate the retreat. This year's theme is: Making Time for God.

We'll have our own lovely retreat house, Stonecrest, on the grounds of Glastonbury Abbey in Hingham and an open invitation to join the Benedictine Monks for morning prayer and evening vespers. Arrival is after dinner on Friday March 31st, with the retreat ending after lunch on Sunday, April 2nd. Cost is a little less than at Campion: \$175 per person for all expenses.

Capacity is limited to about 20 people--that's all the house will hold. Please:

1. let me know soon as possible if you plan to attend so I can hold a space for you, then
2. mail your check for \$175 per person to Jean at the church, noting on the check that it's for the retreat.

You may also send your check to me at: Mary Brady, 25 Hopkins Rd., Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

[Social action opportunities-](#) by Nancy Ahmadifar, Social Justice Committee member

Pen Pals Wanted!

There's a rumor out there in Mass. Department of Correction land that First Church JP has a pen pal program for people incarcerated in Massachusetts prisons. Would you like to help turn that rumor into a reality? There is, in fact, some truth to the rumor. Several of us members of the Church Social Justice Committee have been corresponding with inmates over the past year. The word is out, and now several more incarcerated people have written to First Church in hopes of connecting with people who will support their efforts to put their lives on a new path.

I've personally found the experience of corresponding with prisoners to be a challenging and rewarding experience. I've had to share my values and define myself for people I may never meet in person. I've had to dispel a lot of misconceptions I held about people who end up behind bars. I've also learned some appalling truths about life in Massachusetts' prisons. Yet, overall, by befriending people I would not have otherwise known, I've found a way to make a positive difference in the lives of others, and, in turn, these same people have had a positive impact on me.

If you would like to explore the possibility of becoming a pen pal, I would be more than happy to talk with you. I promise not to pressure you. Look for me at Coffee Hour, or drop by at the next Social Justice Committee meeting on Sunday, March 12th, at 12:30 pm (on the Parish Hall stage or in the Morse Room).

Pride Parade liaison

First Church is looking for someone to serve as liaison/marshal to the Gay Pride Parade which happens every year on the 2nd Saturday of June. The "job" entails communications with the Pride Parade organizers, identifying a second person from First Church folks to serve as a marshal, and organizing a contingent from First Church to join the Parade. It may also involve some coordinating with the Mass. Bay District if UU's march as a unified group again. See Nancy Ahmadifar if you want more info about being a liaison or see Rev. Terry Burke to sign up.

Miscellaneous

Alice Kociemba (of our Poetry Group) will be a featured poet at Chapter & Verse, Wednesday, March 8th at 7:30 pm at St. John's Episcopal Church, Revere and Roanoke Streets, Jamaica Plain. She will be reading poems from her collection, "Seizure and Other Disorders." Currently, she is working on "a panic attack," as this is her first public reading!

Boston Gay Men's Chorus Spring Concert – Metamorphosis- SAT March 18, 8 pm;
SUN March 19, 3 pm-Cutler Majestic Theatre, 219 Tremont Street, Boston:

Metamorphosis is a multi-sensory work using the powerful voices of the BGMC plus full orchestra and professional dancers. In this piece, a young man is torn between the expectations of his family and his true identity. The music and dance tell his story of coming out, self-acceptance, reconciliation with his family, and first love. This uplifting concert also features music from Brokeback Mountain, songs by Stephen Foster, and music from the women of Voices Rising. The Chorus is contributing a dollar from each ticket sold for Saturday to the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Educators Network and for Sunday to Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays.

The Jamaica Plain Library next to Curtis Hall, the fourth busiest among the city's 27 branch libraries, is still one of the smallest and under funded. The plan presently advocated by the city does not provide adequate space for what the staff and public need for shelving, computer space, study rooms, meetings, bathrooms, staff work space, circulation and reference service, and simple cleanliness and graciousness. Other branch libraries have been built, expanded or renovated with great effect. Those interested in seeing what can be done should visit the libraries in Hyde Park, West Roxbury, Allston-Brighton and Mattapan. Jamaica Plain deserves a dramatically improved main library, and the city has shown that this can be done. The Friends of the Library are inviting input and support from the community in its attempt to develop a thoughtful, creative and gracious expansion and improvement to our present facilities. If you are interested in supporting their efforts, contact Carl Scovel, a member of the Advisory Committee, at carlscovel@comcast.net.

Reflections on a snowstorm. On Sunday, February 12, we all woke up to a very white world. Travel was very challenging so we cancelled the Fellowship Dinner that night. However, the snow didn't keep everyone from the Sunday service. The following are the reflections of the five members who did come to church that day.

A Snowy Day, by Joan Ellis

***We each came alone through the snow.
At first there was only one.
But we became five and in the sanctuary
We found comfort in each other.***

***We prayed together and alone.
We sang together and alone.
But always together
In the comfort of each other.***

***We each went alone into the snow
On foot and snowshoe
Bundled against the cold
By the warmth of the comfort of each other.***

The next time we have a blizzard on a Sunday morning, consider venturing out into the cold to be embraced by the warmth of friends at First Church. There were five of us all told the morning of February 12th. Under Abby's able leadership we selected hymns and a reading appropriate for the day. As we gathered in a small circle by the altar, Bill Corey centered us with a piano rendition of Pachelbel's Canon. Abby then guided us through the liturgy, which included a luxurious 20 minute prayer and meditation punctuated by the Prayer Group gong. We spoke when the spirit moved us. At times the only sound was the church boiler churning hard to bring warmth to our bodies. When the boiler rested, the silence was deafening. For those few minutes I stopped my inner chatter and one-way dialogue with God. I began to listen--listen reverently to silence, to voices, to music, to God.

Nancy Ahmadifar

I came originally in the hopes of singing some hymns. It was great to be able to belt out Amazing Grace! I was also tickled that I could "tickle the ivories" for the opening prelude and also completely by luck to be able to provide an appropriate blessing by Waitstill Sharp (who was our minister in Petersham, MA so many years) and which has been read at our family's table countless times. I also loved the long leisurely thoughtful prayer. My biggest revelation was the deep gratitude I felt for our old church's walls "secure above our heads" keeping out the wild winter blasts which heightening eerily towards the end of the prayer, prompting me to remember to pray for the trees.

Later at the coffee hour I was so happy to be with friends, reminiscing and talking about all manner of things!

Bill Corey

Why did I come? Not because Terry asked me to, he did, but I would have anyway – I seldom miss a Sunday. And, being with a small group, making something powerful happen is worth doing!

We didn't know what to expect, none of us knew that we'd get a beautiful piece of music to pull us together. None of us knew that we'd find a responsive reading that spoke to the day so well (We chose Winter by Greta Crosby (543) – It includes the lines: Winter dark tends to warm light: fire and candle; Winter cold to hugs and huddles).

But, we all knew that something would connect, and we would be glad to have each other, and it did, and we were.

Abby Krueger

I came because it was an excuse to put on my snowshoes, because I felt that as a church-staff member who could walk to church, I should do that, And because I was wondering who else would show up! What impressed me was the way that the spiritual presence of 5 people could fill up that huge sanctuary. To me this says something about the strength of that tiny "congregation", and also something more intangible about how conducive our vessel, the church building itself, is to spiritual work.

Andree Zaleska

March 2006 Calendar

1 Wednesday	7:00 pm	Prayer Group
2 Thursday	8:00 pm	Choir Rehearsal
4 Saturday	5:00 pm	Medieval Feast
5 Sunday	11:00 am	Feast or Fast (Communion following service)
	3:00 pm	Rev. Boardman Memorial Service
6 Monday	7:30 pm	Building Committee Mtg.
8 Wednesday	7:00 pm	Prayer Group
12 Sunday	9:30 am	George's Talk
	11:00 am	The Preaching of Sermons
	12:45 pm	Social Justice Meeting
15 Wednesday	7:00 pm	Prayer Group
	8:00 pm	Lenten Vespers (<i>Losing Moses on the Freeway</i>) "Honor Thy Mother and Father"
19 Sunday	11:00 am	Jason Lydon, <i>No More Prisons, No More Closets</i>
	4:00 pm	Poetry and Spirituality Group
20-22 Mon to Wed		UU Ministers' Association Retreat
21 Tuesday	7:00 pm	Standing Committee Meeting
22 Wednesday	7:00 pm	Prayer Group
	8:00 pm	Lenten Vespers (<i>Losing Moses on the Freeway</i>) "Envy"
23 Thursday	8:00 pm	Choir Rehearsal
26 Sunday	11:00 am	Mountains Beyond Mountains
29 Wednesday	7:00 pm	Prayer Group
	8:00 pm	Lenten Vespers (<i>Losing Moses on the Freeway</i>) "Adultery"
30 Thursday	8:00 pm	Choir Rehearsal
31-4/2 Sun to Sun		Church Retreat at Glastonbury Abbey in Hingham
2 Sunday	11:00 am	One Family Scholars – issues of homelessness (Communion after service)
	2:00 pm	Council of Christian Churches in UUA Convocation, First Parish, Weston