

First Church in Jamaica Plain, Unitarian Universalist

May 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

May is such a busy, busy time of year. I also find that I'm pretty tired by this point in the calendar. "The depths of May." my friend and colleague Michael Boardman used to call it. Granted, we still have the church Annual Meeting, the Yard Sale and Barbeque, wrapping up the Canvass, and planning for summer to get through. Still, there is summer light at the end of the tunnel.

Soon it will be summer, a time to re-create, a time to dream, a time to remember the heart's desires. Summer is a time to think about how to live our lives more fully, truly, and faithfully. In the midst of one of the college talks I've sat through recently, I heard an administrator quote this wise advice from writer Edith Wharton on living life:

- 1) 'Be open to change.'
- 2) 'Maintain your curiosity about ideas.'
- 3) 'Concern your life with big things.'
- 4) 'Find happiness in small things.'

And, I'd add, in the midst of May madness, stop and smell the flowers!

Cheers, Terry

Greetings from Andrée, Interim Director of Religious Education

As we enter the last months of the church year, I am starting to think about next year. It's easy to focus on what could be improved, and harder to look around and be grateful for what is.

Together with the RE Committee and an excellent group of teachers, we have taken about 45 children and youth through another year of religious exploration. Most of our families come very regularly and participate in many aspects of church life. Our kids have a strong sense of themselves and their values. In fact, I often find myself looking at a curriculum and saying "but they already know that." They know that they stand for peace, against injustice and inequality, for democracy and free speech. They know about the intimate nature of the spiritual quest—how it differs for each person. They stand up for their friends, for plants and animals, for what is right.

What we do is provide a community of other families who share their beliefs and values. Many of the children in our RE program deal daily with the complex world of the Boston public schools, where diversity is both the greatest benefit and the biggest frustration of the classroom. I think that our little program gives our kids a sense of security, of home.

Looking beyond that feeling of comfort from church, one of my main goals is to teach the kids about religion. What do we believe? What do those of other faiths believe? What are the options for a personal spiritual practice in their lives? This is often lacking in the schools—understandably, given the politics surrounding religion in our society—but I feel we need to fill that gap. When someone refers to “the trials of Job”, calls someone a “Doubting Thomas”, or refers to the Buddhist parable of the mustard seed, I would like them to understand, and to remember Sunday school. This is the most basic sense of religious education: the stories of religion are meaningful, they are beautiful, and they knit cultures together.

Many in the church would like to see our program more involved in social justice projects. This too, will be a challenge to take up next year. We hope to send a group of youth to the Common Cathedral, which ministers to the homeless in downtown Boston, to serve lunch after a service. I welcome other ideas for reaching out to the community with our program. Our kids are up to it.

As always, I welcome suggestions and—especially—offers to help! Anyone who has an idea, and is willing to implement it with the young people in our church, should come to me. Likewise the RE Committee is always seeking new member—parents and non-parents are both welcome.

Best wishes, Andree Zaleska

Reflections from a Newcomers Breakfast- By Abby Krueger

Communion and Newcomers Breakfast

*The bread is just bread,
The grape juice is just grape juice.
The bread remains bread, and that's enough
The Divine comes in,
Two people, share bread.*

*The quiche is just quiche,
“Eat this in remembrance” replaced by
“This one has bacon”
The Divine comes in,
Twenty people share a meal*

First Church Welcomes New Members

One of them considered it for 12 years, one for seven months, it's never a quick decision, but eight people elected to officially join First Church in Jamaica Plain on April 30th 2006. In front of the congregation, the following people signed the membership book, adding their names to the list that begins in 1882 (and replaces the much older system). Please congratulate and welcome: Cathy Baisley, Cherisse Blackman, Joan Sully, Dina Sousa, Alex Shimada-Brand, Stephanie Shimada-Brand, David Parke, and Mary Kay Tuohy. Other recent joiners include Sheldon Cheek, Katrina Koenings, Gwen Helie, Margaret Soltysik-Expanola, Wilfrido Soltysik-Expanola, Kurt Hemr, Charlotte Hemr, and Jane Zerby. It's a joy to have new people want to join us.

Coming Up at First Church

Bible study class continues on Wednesday, May 10th. Newcomers are welcome! Karl Haakonsen is exploring Discipleship and is using material from the book *The New Testament: Introducing the Way of Discipleship*, edited by Wes Howard Brook and Sharon H. Ringe.

People are encouraged to get a copy of the book, though some arrangements can be made for folks who can't do so. It is available in paperback, so it shouldn't be too much of an expense. The class will run for 3 more weeks through May 24th and will be after Prayer Group at 8:00pm. Please read chapter 5: "John's Gospel's Call to Be Reborn of God." If you are starting new, please read the first chapter ("The New World Order") as well. Our website for more info is: <http://www.firstchurchjp.org/Participation/bible.asp>.

The annual concert by the children's choirs, Alpha and Omega, will be held in the Parish Hall next Sunday, May 7, during coffee hour. Please join us!

Why the Chalice? When and why did Unitarian and Universalism merge? What's so funny about the Lamborghini joke? Learn these things and more at Terry Burke's talk on the History of Unitarian Universalism. It's a great chance to ask your questions, and meet with a small group. May 10 (WEDNESDAY) at 8 PM. One week later, May 17th also at 8 PM hear George Wardle on the history of First Church, you don't want to miss either one!

Yard Sale/Barbecue/Craft Fair--June 3, 2006

We are accepting items for our yard sale for the entire month of May...so clean out your closets, kitchens, attics, basements and garages! But ask yourself, "Would I give this to a friend?" ANY DOUBT, PLEASE THROW OUT!

Like you, our customers buy items in good condition. Some items, no matter what their condition, do not sell at all, so we will not accept the following:

- clothing
- computers
- phones
- mugs
- health aids (walkers; crutches, etc.)

Books (we love them but these don't sell):

- textbooks
- encyclopedias
- computer manuals
- travel books
- dirty books (the condition, i.e., moldy, not the content!)

Please bring items on:

Sundays—before (10 am) and after church (12:30 to 2:00)

Thursdays—6:30 pm to 9:00 pm.

Leave bagged and tagged items near the basement doors in the Parish hall.

Special talents needed:

Sign up now! See Joan Ellis, Karl Haakonsen on Sundays or call Joan on days or evenings. Call David to become part of his 'posse' for furniture pick-ups and all heavy lifting. Please see the church directory for these phone numbers.

The yard Sale can't work without YOU! Volunteers needed for the following:

Sorting and tagging: Thursdays in May, 6:30 to 9:00 pm

Pre-event set up: Friday, June 2, 6:30 to???? including folks who don't mind some heavy lifting.

BBQ and kitchen crew—Please see Emerson Stamp or Judith Garfinkle

The day of the event--pick you shift or come for the whole day.

We need cashiers, managers for books, toys and sports equipment, house wares, treasures and decorative items. Pick a shift (or any part thereof).

Shift one 7:30 –10:00 am

Shift two 10:00-1:00 pm

Shift three 2:00-4:00 pm

Shift four: Clean-up 3:00--???

We are making lap/baby quilts to sell at the Spring Fair. You can help - no experience necessary! Join us for the four tasks: sewing, ironing, cutting, and tying. Older kids are welcome, too! Or donate 100% cotton fabric - a yard or two would be great. Second session: Thursday, May 11, 7-9 in the Parish Hall. See you there! Ellen McGuire, Anne Brown, Judith Garfinkel.

Book Group: On May 23 (7:30 in the Morse Room), the book group will discuss Graham Greene's The Comedians, to continue the Haiti theme. This book takes place during Papa Doc's regime. Two other books have been selected, but no dates yet: Gilead by Marilynne Robinson and My Sister's Keeper by Jodi Picoult.

Announcements

Committee reports are due for the Annual Meeting (May 21st) by Sunday, May 7th. Please email those to First Church or put them in the church office administrator's blue in-box.

Lights! Water! Action! From Rick Yoder: I will be going with small but dedicated team of local electricians to donate a week of service, May 8-15, 2006, to rewiring flood-damaged homes in New Orleans. We are committed to fixing homes in marginalized neighborhoods. We plan to get three displaced families the electricity they need to reestablish their daily lives. We hope that our efforts will contribute to the rebuilding of a strong New Orleans that is as rich in racial and economic diversity as the old one.

"How can I help?", we hope you are asking yourself. Well, if you're a klutz with a drill or wire stripper, or can't take a week off, please consider making a small contribution to offset the transportation and lodging expenses of Team Toolbelt.

For more information, contact Rick at 617-323-1846 or yoderelectric@yahoo.com

Thanks for your support. Checks may be payable and mailed to: **Rick Yoder**, 180 Mt. Hope St., Roslindale, MA 02131.

May 2006, Calendar

- 1 **Monday** 7:30 pm Building Committee mtg.
- 3 **Wednesday** 7:00 pm Prayer Group
8:00 pm Bible Study w/Karl Haakonsen
- 4 **Thursday** 8:30 pm Choir Rehearsal
- 7 **Sunday** 11:00 am Conserving Energy
12:00 pm Annual concert by Alpha and Omega Choirs
- 10 **Wednesday** 7:00 pm Prayer Group
8:00 pm Terry's UU talk
8:00 pm Bible Study w/Karl Haakonsen
- 14 **Sunday** 11:00 am Mother's Day Poetry –
Alice Kociemba and Terry Burke
12:45 pm Social Justice Meeting
- 16 **Tuesday** 7:00 pm Standing Committee Mtg.
- 17 **Wednesday** 7:00 pm Prayer Group
8:00 pm George Wardle's History talk
8:00 pm Bible Study w/Karl Haakonsen
- 18 **Thursday** 8:00 pm Choir Rehearsal
- 21 **Sunday** 11:00 am Recovenanting –
Karl Haakonsen and Terry Burke
12:00 pm Annual Meeting
- 24 **Wednesday** 7:00 pm Prayer Group
8:00 pm Bible Study w/Karl Haakonsen
- 28 **Sunday** 11:00 am The Long Good Bye
- 29 **Monday** **Memorial Day**
- 31 **Wednesday** 7:00 am Prayer Group

May Church Birthdays!

Roisin Foley 5/6
Gillian Marren 5/9

Amelia Burke 5/15
Amelia Galiga 5/26