

April 2009

First Parish News



Upcoming Events:

- April 5, Sunday service and RE 10am, Rev. Sheehan
- April 12, Easter Sunday Service and RE 10am, Rev. Sheehan
- April 19, Service and RE, 10am, Rev. Sheehan
- April 26, Sunday service and RE 10am
- May 3, Sunday service and RE 10am, Rev. Sheehan

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First Parish of Northfield Unitarian Monthly Newsletter

Announcements

Conversation Circle Gathering

Our monthly small group gathering will be on Tuesday April 7th at 7PM in the Webster Room. Please join us for tea and cookies and enjoy having a quiet time to listen deeply to each other as we talk about some of life's questions and experiences. Bring a friend. "No previous experience necessary!"

Music Notes from Lynne

Good News! Our children had their first rehearsal of "Sing and Rejoice" for the Easter Sunday service on April 12th. Enthusiasm was abundant! We'll continue short (5 minute) rehearsals each Sunday morning either during RE time or immediately following the services until Easter. We welcome adult singers to sing along. Adult singers: we plan to sing one of our beautiful "Alleluia's" as well, so please come to practice before the services.

Easter Celebrations

We will be celebrating Easter (April 12th) by returning to our beautiful Sanctuary for spring services. The children will be participating in part of the service. The lilies will be filling the space with luscious perfume and the music will be uplifting. Come, bring a friend, and help us open up our Sanctuary for the season.

For those hardy souls who like to start the day early, you are invited join me and other local people at the Annual Ecumenical Easter Service at 6 AM! The service is a short and joyful event, held this year at Bella Notte at 119 Huckle Hill Road in Bernardston. The service is followed by a Pancake Breakfast at the United Church of Bernardston. And then you can still go home, catch a few winks, and be back for our Sunday service!

Film Festival

We are invited to attend a film festival at All Souls Church (Unitarian) in Greenfield on April 18th.(check their website or the papers for more information.) The films will all focus in one way or another on facing and working toward ending racism in our communities and country. There will be food, discussion groups, and a good time to meet other concerned people in the area.

On Wednesday May 6th (7-9PM) our First Parish will be showing a movie called Beyond Our Differences. This was a PBS broadcast of a Bill Moyers show that really moved me when I saw it. It focuses on the need for all World Religions to see what we have in common and move beyond our differences, in order to bring peace to our world. The film is beautifully done with great interviews with world religious leaders.

We will follow the showing with a short discussion and snacks. We are co-sponsoring this as an inter-church and inter-town event with participation from the Trinitarian Church in Northfield and the Unitarian and United Church in Bernardston. First Parish will supply the popcorn!

Please come and see this film with your neighbors. It is great time to welcome people into our church! We too must move "beyond our differences." For more information, speak to Rev Marguerite

Minister's Corner

We made it! It is April and really spring and we have finally crawled out of our tombs of winter. Most of us are a bit worn out after the hard season but as a friend said when I asked how she was doing - "I'm breathing!" Sometimes breathing is a big deal. And now we are getting to breathe in the warmth of spring and soon the smells of grass being mowed. I am simply in heaven. Every spring I get to think more deeply about Easter (as well as Passover and the Equinox.) I try to make sense of the season; the symbols, the music, and all the stories. This year I have been asked to preach a short meditation on Easter at the Sunrise Service in Bernardston. This is an ecumenical service, held on a hill, overlooking the valley, and hopefully greeting the sun instead of greeting a spring rain. It is an honor to be asked to preach for that service but of course I am nervous. What can I say about this complicated and emotional and controversial day?

Because that is what Easter has always been – complicated, emotional and controversial. Even the 4 Gospel writers tell different stories, lift up different meanings, and contradict each other. When the teacher dies a painful death, and the students run and hide so they won't be associated with him, and then the teacher/prophet/loved one is gone, really gone, and then seems to appear again and again when you don't expect it, how else would you feel but emotional and bewildered?

And so it is for me. I will dig down again into this messy business of making sense, or at least standing in awe, of this wild and crazy story of the Resurrection. Just as I have been making sense, or standing in awe, of how my mother is continuing to live on while my Dad has

died. Every time we visit together, Dad is there between us; sitting in his chair, eating his favorite foods, wearing his outrageous golfer colors, showering us with kisses. And we are startled, and joyful, and sad, and relieved that he is not really gone after all.

Easter lives in our household. What about in yours? Have you too found that life wins over death? Life wins over death when the crocus pushes up in that hard earth. Life wins over death when a church family grows with babies, and toddlers, and big kids filling up the pews and running around the social room. Life wins over death every day when we wake up and realize that yes, again, we are breathing. Someday we won't be breathing. Someday will be our last day. But then, when we are gone we will get to surprise our loved ones again. Coming back, reminding them that we love them and want the best for them. Resurrected, remembered, and pushing back the stone of grief so that gladness will warm the heart.

We made it. Winter is over. Spring is here. Celebrate this crazy, emotional, complicated and controversial time of year by really living. And do step outside and look toward the sunrise, wherever you are at about 6AM on April 19th. It is sure to be a lovely morning. Happy Easter!

In peace and joy,
Reverend Marguerite

This Month in Unitarian Universalist History

This monthly column is dedicated to celebrating some milestones and anniversaries from Unitarian and Universalist History. The information is taken from the book *This Day in Unitarian Universalist History* by Frank Schulman.

April 4, 1802

Dorothea Lynde Dix was born in Hampden, Maine on this day. She became a teacher, worked for prison reform, supervised female nurses in the Civil War and was instrumental in building 32 hospitals in the United States. While not formally a Unitarian she had strong ties to Unitarians and appreciated the Unitarian emphasis on the goodness of God, purity of heart, openness to new knowledge and responsibility for the welfare of all society.

April 19, 1539

Katherine Weigal, an anti-Trinitarian, was burned at the stake in Krakow, Poland, for her rejection of the Trinity. She was 80 years old.

Also on this day in 1882, Charles Darwin, Unitarian naturalist who formulated the theory of evolution died at age 73.

April 21, 1852

Universalists from several states chartered Tufts College in Medford, Massachusetts, for the purpose of preserving Universalist heritage and training Universalist ministers. The theological school at Tufts closed in 1968.

Church News

Notes from the Board of Trustees

"Board on Top of It - Welcomes Input"

The Board of Trustees is always working hard to keep First Parish in top form. Here are some of our current projects:

- The painting of the church exterior will resume shortly, completing the work begun last summer. Excitement!

- Paul Bocko will share the outcomes of the energy conservation training that he, Tammy Pelletier, and Rich Fitzgerald attended. These include short and long term steps to save energy, cut costs, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. When: Tuesday, April 21, 6:30 - 7:30 pm, Webster Room. By following these energy conservation steps, we can be part of a greener community, while saving money now and in the future.

- Paul will also be managing monthly maintenance and energy conservation tasks, in which we set aside an afternoon or so each month and ask everyone for help with simple improvements and light building maintenance. Dates and more details to be announced.

- Communication between the Board and the Parish Committee is better than ever. We're collaborating more on managing the church and smoothing out the budgeting process.

- We're closely monitoring the First Parish endowment and the health of our investments, making sure we weather the current global financial meltdown with our assets intact.

- Most importantly, we welcome everyone's input! Anyone can attend a board meeting and offer ideas or just listen in. For example, we were very happy during our March meeting to have the insights of our guest Maureen Spaulding.

- Our next meeting is to be a joint meeting with the Parish Committee. Date and time to be announced.

- Michael Bird

Interviews for the Church Newsletter

Karina Berenson and I had a chance to chat after church recently. She praised Deb Potee and the religious education program and was modest about her own contribution. We talked a bit about the balance of work and family. When Karina goes to work, upstairs in her house, her youngest waves goodbye. Although her responsibilities are varied, Karina seems quite capable of finding the balance.

~Lynne Warrin

Sunday April 26, 2009

Sacred Harmonies - A different Approach to Interfaith Understanding. Lynne Walker, Val and Paul Luther, and the Congregation of First Parish join together to share music for listening, music for singing and a few simple words to reach out to the gentle and humble spirit in each of us. The theme of this program will be vision or seeing