

March 2009

First Parish News



Upcoming Events:

- March 1, Sunday service and RE 10am, Rev. Sheehan
- March 8, Congregational Meeting and RE 10am
- March 15, Service and RE, 10am, Rev. Sheehan
- March 22, Johanna Conant, Sunday service and RE 10am
- March 29, Sunday service and RE 10am

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First Parish of Northfield Unitarian Monthly Newsletter

Announcements

Conversation Circle Gathering

March 4th our Conversation Circle will gather again in the Webster Room at 7PM. Let's gather for conversation, a time of quiet reflection and tea and cookies. Please come and join us, whether you have attended a circle meeting in the past or not! It is a fun way to spend time together. Bring a friend!

Music Notes from Lynne:

Spring is in the air (I hope).

It would be lovely to have some special music for the season, and specifically for Easter time (April 12th). I'd love to have enough voices for Easter Sunday to sing one of the "Alleluia's" from the supplementary hymnal. Also, wouldn't it be fun to include the children with the adults in singing something special for sometime in May?

Please contact me if you'd like to be part of any of these musical opportunities, or if you have further ideas for our musical life at First Parish.

To prepare for a Sunday service, all you need to do is come on Sundays by 9:15. We learn a piece right then and sing it for the service. Couldn't be easier! Hope to see you.

Two Local Events Coming In March

On Thursday March 19th at 5:30 PM First Parish will be hosting the monthly meeting of the **Franklin County Interfaith Council**. This is a potluck (always enough food if you want to come but don't have time to cook!) and is open to the public. We are members of the Council and support their activities.

Please come to hear what interfaith activities are happening in Franklin County this spring, meet folks from other faith communities and share a meal and conversation.

If anyone is able to help Rev Marguerite set up for the potluck and/or clean up after, that would also be VERY helpful. Please get in touch with me asap! The meeting usually runs until about 7:30.

Free and Local Talk on the Middle East

Everyone is welcomed to attend a presentation by Northfield Mount Hermon professor Ted Thornton. Ted will be speaking at the Trinitarian church in Northfield on March 8th on 7PM. He will be speaking about his perspective on the Middle East.

Minister's Corner

Is it March Madness that has me smelling spring in the air or is the manure being spread on the fields? Or maybe it is the 5 days at the end of the month when Dorrie and I are going to Florida? Is it the returning light? Whatever it is, I am happy to be sliding into the season (mud and all.) March is a turn in the corner in our church year as well as in the celestial year. We celebrated Valentines Day last month and now we get to look toward Spring Equinox, Easter and the Annual Pledge Drive. I know; the connection may seem weak to you, especially if you do not really celebrate Easter. But for me, it is crystal clear. It takes quite a bit of nurturance (the last supper?) and likely a good amount of suffering (financial for most of us) to end up with another rebirth of our church; because every year the church is born again, with our help.

In the pledge drive we do the hard thinking of what our church means to us and how we can continue to support it. We get to talk with each other about whether the church is a life saving community or something that we can live without. Is it essential to our lives or do we think that supporting it means that we do so only when we have "disposable" income? We think long and hard about how we can save on energy costs, printing, and anything that is inessential so that the heart of our church stays healthy and well nourished.

What do you see as the heart of the church? Is it the Sunday worship services where you get a chance to sit in quiet, listen to Lynne's remarkable playing, join in singing and reflect on some of life's questions? Is it our Religious Education program with Deb at the helm making a strong program for our little ones? Did you know that the children have their own Joys and

Concerns, talk about UU principles on their level, and create all kinds of arts? Maybe the heart of the church is our social outreach – the Christmas fair, the breakfasts (thank you breakfast cooks and helpers!) and the dinners, the AA meetings we support, the lovely space we offer for interfaith gatherings, and the weekly collections of food for Katie's Kitchen. Or is the heart of our church the beautiful historic church building that is now taking on a coat of paint. Did you know that one member described the color of the church as "a warm cup of coffee – just like the warmth in our church!"

Day after day, Sunday after Sunday, year after year, First Parish is reborn because the members and friends promise to fund it and put their bodies on the line to care for it. Nothing happens here without you and this is your chance to decide again what is essential and what we might choose to let go. When you get your letter from the Parish Council and the Board of Trustees, talking in straight talk about the cost of keeping our church open and growing, take the time to read it. Take the time to talk with your friends and family about it. Take the time to assess – is this church a life saving community or something you could do without? And then, do what your own heart commands. On Easter Sunday we will be singing Alleluias again. Meanwhile, in the month of March, start getting ready for what we all hope will be a season of renewal in hard times. Thank you!

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.

March 6, 1888

The beloved American writer Louisa May Alcott died at age 55 in Boston. Although she did not formally join a Unitarian church, her beliefs were certainly Unitarian.

March 7, 1965

600 civil rights marchers who set out from Selma Alabama on their way to Montgomery, to urge the passage of the Voting Rights Act were attacked by local law enforcement officials at the Edmund Pettus Bridge.

This day was to be called "Bloody Sunday" and led Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to call on clergy of all faiths to join him in Selma. More than 125 Unitarian Universalist ministers were among the many who answered the call. On March 11, 1965 James Reeb, Unitarian minister and on 25th of the same year Unitarian Viola Fauver Gregg Liuzzo were both murdered while participating in the freedom march.

March 15, 1566

The Synod of Torda, Transylvania, published a confession of faith denying the doctrine of the Trinity. The Act of Religious Freedom and Conscience (The Edict of Torda) was issued by Prince John Sigismund of Transylvania two years later on March 18, 1568, thereby assuring religious freedom in his principality.

Church News

Notes from the Treasurer

On Sunday, March 8, 2009, a congregational meeting is scheduled and the subject to be discussed is the budget for the upcoming fiscal year for First Parish (July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2010). Betty Gibson, chair of the Parish Committee, asked me to lead the meeting and I hope that all of you who are members and/or friends of First Parish will attend.

The agenda, which I will send out closer to the date of the meeting, will include the following and other items for discussion that you send me in advance:

1. A discussion of the needs of First Parish and who is responsible for meeting them - either the Parish Committee or the Trustees. A budget report sheet with actual expenses for FY2009 to date will be provided to help you.

2. A report of the Energy Committee, led by Paul Bocko, on what they learned from the energy audit process, in which they participated at several local churches.

3. A free-form discussion, based on opinion and speculation only, about what could happen to First Parish in the future under different (best case and worst case) scenarios. Please think about the effect that reduced pledges, unanticipated bequests, gifts or grants might have. Please also think about the effect that the sluggish economy has already had on our endowment (Helen and Paul will be able to shed some light on this one).

All this will happen in less than one hour, so please come and let's get the FY2010 budget season going with a bang! It won't be deadly (I promise) and nothing is cast in concrete!

Cheers,

Noelle (the Treasurer lady who'd dearly love to give her job away - any takers?).

Dedication Anyone?

This is a reminder that if you would like to have your child or children dedicated into the church family here at First Parish that we would love to do this in a simple ceremony in one of our church services this spring. We can do this for a single family or if you would like to have a "group dedication" for a number of children that would be lovely also. Contact Reverend Marguerite to

talk about the details. Child dedications are a special way for the church and your friends and family to honor your children as individuals and to pledge our support to you and yours! All of us are "originally blessed." This is a public acknowledgment of that blessing.

Interviews for the Church Newsletter

Deb Potee: Deb and I sat down for a couple of minutes at the end of coffee hour. I wanted to know a little about the RE program-not a report, just an idea of what they do besides crafts and stories. It was good to realize that the children have their own Joys and Concerns time and I hope if they come up with some particularly insightful things that Deb will share that with the rest of us. I knew Deb is a stay at home Mother and I was interested to learn that not only has Deb been a social worker with teenagers, she's also a children's librarian. Her delightful article in the Recorder said she is a free lance writer- in addition to all of her other talents!

~Lynne Warrin