

May 2009

First Parish News



Upcoming Events:

- May 3, Sunday service and RE 10am, Rev. Sheehan
- May 10, Congregational meeting and RE 10am
- May 17, Service and RE, 10am, Rev. Sheehan
- May 24, Sunday service and RE 10am, Johanna Conant
- May 31, "Children's Sunday" service, 10am

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First Parish of Northfield Unitarian Monthly Newsletter

Announcements

Conversation Circle Gives Way to Beyond our Differences!

On **Wednesday May 6th at 7PM** we will not have our monthly Conversation Circle but instead invite everyone in the church and the community to a free showing of the Bill Moyers Journal Film - Beyond our Differences. This film is about how all the major world religions have essential differences and yet the world also needs to go beyond these differences in order to make for peace in our times. We will view the film, eat popcorn and drink lemonade and have a short discussion time to bring it all home! This film is co-sponsored by First Parish, The Trinitarian Church, the United Church of Bernardston and the Unitarian Church of Bernardston. Please come join us for this inter-church community event. Fun, free, inspiring!

Music Notes from Lynne

Voices were raised in joy and praise as our young children, dressed in their Easter Spring Sunday best (with sweaters and tights because of the unseasonably cold weather) led the congregation in "Sing and Rejoice, Sing and Rejoice, Let all things living now Sing and Rejoice!". It was a fine performance and their bright enthusiasm was infectious. Lucky for us, Walter was there with his camera to get this occasion in print. Thanks to all who participated. We now look forward to the possibility of having some guest soloists as we look towards the end of our service season. Let us praise God and Creation with our voices! ~Lynne

THE CONNECTICUT RIVER VALLEY GREAT SPRING WATER EVENT!

A community celebration of water through art, music, education and activism on water issues. Rain or shine!

SATURDAY ~ MAY 30, 2009 ~10AM to 10PM at the 1739 Bernardston Unitarian Meetinghouse

CO-SPONSORS

UU Mass Action - Clean Water Action - Unitarian Universalist Service Committee - Deerfield Valley Art Association - Congregational Unitarian Society of Bernardston - Connecticut River Watershed Council - Greater Northfield Watershed Association - Pioneer Valley Institute - Interfaith Council of Franklin County - Clara Barton District of Unitarian Universalist Congregations

Keynote speaker:

Daniel Esty author of "Green to Gold", Yale Professor and Advisor to Pres. Obama. Dan Esty is the Director of the Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy. He also serves as Director of the Center for Business and Environment at Yale and was formerly a top official with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Children's Service

On May 31st, we invite everyone to come to the Children's Service at 10AM. This past year we talked about the seven principles and the service will feature them. Like last year, there will be some audience participation so be prepared to help make the service fun and memorable. That's all I will say but please come! ~ Deb

Minister's Corner

This has been a big year for First Parish in searching out new ideas for growth and leadership development. Three of us (Rev Marguerite, Betty, and Lynne) attended the District Fall Conference and reported earlier in the year on our gleanings. In the winter we had a combined meeting/retreat with our own Parish Committee and Board of Trustees to work on our communication within the church. And in April, Rev Marguerite returned, this time with Mo, to the Clara Barton District Spring Conference and Annual Meeting. The Conference was entitled "Now Is The Time" and the focus was on church growth with the idea that for just about all of our Unitarian Universalist Churches, now is the time to look closely at how we envision ourselves, how we welcome others into our churches, and what it is we have to offer our communities. What is the "Good News" of Unitarian Universalism and how can we joyfully proclaim and demonstrate this goodness? Mo and I have written up a few words to share some of what we learned in our respective workshops.

We both attended the opening worship, the annual meeting and the keynote speech by a dynamic speaker from Florida – Connie Goodbread, who spoke about the history of Unitarian Universalism, what spiritual disciplines that UU's practice, and how both our history and our life together can help us work toward increasing the numbers in our churches and even more important, increasing the depth of our commitment to our spiritual lives.

I attended an afternoon workshop called "Time To Grow!" This workshop was focused on the work that 7 congregations in our district have been doing in assessing their visions for growth. These churches are small, mid size and larger churches, all wanting to grow in depth and in membership. They talked about how to

ask Bold Questions such as the following. "Are we willing to change?" "Who are we what are we willing to do?" "What are we afraid of?" and "If we were really bold, what would we be bold about?" I thought that these questions in and of themselves might be good for First Parish to consider because we too say that we want to grow but we too are afraid of change, are not sure what we should be doing, and perhaps are not really BOLD in our dreaming. What do you think?

The presenters also talked about church growth being not the goal, but the result, of what you do and who you are. They advised that we "find out who you are and be that well." If we become more confident in talking with others in our community about what it is that we love about our church, and who we really are, then people will come to check us out. They also said that usually it is in the first 10 minutes of someone coming to visit a church – the first ten minutes – that is the deciding factor if they will come back. So, let's look more closely at our first 10 minutes on a Sunday. Imagine being a stranger who had finally dared darken our door. How are they treated? Does someone greet them at the door, give them a program, introduce them to another member who will sit with them and then walk them through the service? That should take about 10 minutes. And how about later? After the service does a member invite them to the coffee hour and then stay with them, getting to know who they are and what is bringing them to church? Do we give them a call later in the week and ask if they have any questions about the church and invite them to come again? If Now Is The Time for our churches to grow, these questions are important for us at First Parish. What do you think?
~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.

May 1, 1933

The Humanist Manifesto was published on this day. The Manifesto was signed by 36 prominent people of the day including Unitarian and Universalist ministers. It affirmed 14 points of religious humanism and became a rallying cry for religious liberals.

May 5, 1751

Judith Sargent Stevens Murray was born in Gloucester, Massachusetts. She was married to one of the founders of Universalism, John Murray and was a noted essayist, playwright, poet and leader in progressive women's education. She was a woman of creative genius who was on the forefront of Universalism.

May 10, 1818

Paul Revere, an American patriot and Unitarian, died at age 83.

May 15, 1961

The American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America consolidated to form the Unitarian Universalist Association. The two denominations had been working jointly on publication of their religious education programs since the 1920's and the youth groups had already joined together before the adults finally consolidated!

May 27, 1819

Julia Ward Howe was born in New York City on this day. She was a Unitarian poet, a lecturer and the first president of the New England Woman Suffrage Association. She is also known as the instigator of Mother's Day – a day that women protested war. From the Women's Proclamation for Peace – "From the voice of a devastated Earth a voice goes up with our own. It says: "Disarm! Disarm! The sword of murder is not the balance of justice."

Church News

And a word from Mo!

Recently I attended the Chalice Lighter workshop at the annual meeting with Rev. Marguerite. This is a fairly new concept to bring monies back to our churches from the district. Chalice Lighters are people like you and me. By pledging to respond with a \$20 gift to two or three "calls" per year throughout the Clara Barton District our church then be eligible to apply for a grant for First Parish! The money granted could be used for all kinds of things like to expand or remodel space for worship, to assist a congregation to become accessible for people with disabilities, or to help a congregation develop leadership capacity to welcome more members and more. It would be up to us to write out our own proposal. This year one congregation received a grant to buy paint. If you want to grow our church find out more by visiting www.cbd.uua.org/chalichelighters.html.

Another idea I heard about would be to set aside one Sunday a month to bring a friend or to bring back a friend to our service. This would help grow our church and it is something that we could all do!

~Mo

Notes from the Parish Committee

•2 Fund Raisers for First Parish:

Saturday, May 23, 2009, 6pm Church Supper – The menu is Ham, Potato Salad, Baked Beans, Coleslaw supper. Please call Ruth for more details or if you would like to help.

Monday, May 25, 2009, 8 to 2pm Tag Sale at the church. If you have gently used items you would like to donate or you would like to help please be in touch with Marie or Betty. Please DO NOT leave items at the church.

•Fund Raiser for Loaves & Fishes and the Northfield Food Pantry:

Saturday, June 20, 2009 Strawberry Festival – More details will follow.

Pledge Letters have gone out: Since we are beginning the budget process for the 2009-10 church year it is helpful to have your response as quickly as possible. If you have any questions, please be in touch with Noelle Anson.

The **Annual Meeting** will be in June. At this meeting we hear reports from the committees, review the proposed budget and elect new officers and members of different committees. We are a very small group and so it is very important that we all do our share. Please seriously consider taking this opportunity to serve in one of the many positions:

Moderator (1-year)
Clerk (1 year)
Auditor (1 year)
Treasurer (1 year)
Parish Committee (3 years)
Board of Trustees (3 years)
RE Committee (1 year)
Ministerial Committee (1 year)
Program Committee (1 year)

If you have any questions, please call a member of the Parish Committee.