

November 2009

First Parish News



Upcoming Events:

- November 1,
Sunday service and
RE 10am, Rev.
Marguerite Sheehan
- November 8,
Chalice Sunday
service and RE
10am
- November 15
Sunday service and
RE 10am, Rev. Bill
Baughm
- November 22
The Hospice
Concept,
Philosophy and
Services, Service
and RE 10am
- November 26
Community
Thanksgiving Meal
- November 28,
Country
Breakfast 8-10am
- November 29
Wreath Making and
Potluck, RE 10am

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First Parish of Northfield Unitarian Monthly Newsletter

Announcements

First Parish announcements:

Community Thanksgiving Meal

I want to let everyone know that the church will once again be sponsoring a Community Thanksgiving meal for anyone who would like to join us in a community get-together.

Needless to say, it requires a lot of work and volunteers to provide the many services required to put on a large meal. This year we hope to feed 70 people and as you can guess, lots of help is needed. We need people to set-up and decorate the Webster Room the night before Thanksgiving and people to work in the kitchen and serve the meal on Thanksgiving Day.

If any of you can help us it would be very much appreciated by the committee and the community we will serve. Even a few hours would be helpful as I know many of you have family plans for Thanksgiving Day.

We need help in the following areas:
Set-up the night before Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving Day:

- People to serve the meal. This means we will have people at the serving table dishing out the food.
- People to bus the dirty dishes to the kitchen.
- People to wash the dishes.
- People to help with the food prep prior to the meal
- People to deliver meals to shut-ins.
- People to keep the chafing dishes full for the servers.
- And any other odd job that comes along.

If you can volunteer to help please call me and let me know when you can

be there and what you would like to do. You can leave a message on our answering machine if we are not home.

The committee has most of the food we planned for, but we will need pies. Anyone who brings any kind of food must let me know ahead of time so we can keep track of what we have.

I urge anyone who can help to please let me know soon so the committee can plan for a well organized and pleasant meal. If you have any friends who would like to help they are welcome also. The key to serving a well planned meal is to know who is doing what ahead of time.

If anyone has any questions please call me.

Thank you.

Walter Anson, Thanksgiving committee

Civic Engagement and Social Change Conference

Friday November 20th 8AM-12PM
U Mass Campus Center

Speaker is Paul Loeb - Author of *Soul of a Citizen: Living with Conviction in a Cynical Time*. The conference will be considering the role of activism in a democracy and in our lives. The fee is \$28 for the day or \$15 for students, seniors, and people with limited income.

One of the major co-sponsors is the Interfaith Council of Franklin County, which First Parish is a member of. Registration is due by Nov 6. If you would like to register, email Rev Marguerite and she will send you a form.

Church News

Paint Job Update

The paint job that began more than a year ago is now "complete". The First Parish Board of Trustees have achieved a goal set in the Summer of 2008 to finance and complete repainting the church. This building project was undertaken when it became clear to the Trustees that waiting longer to repaint would incur even higher costs in the short and long term. In addition to scraping and painting, significant restoration work was required for rotting portions of the church exterior - Arches over the front doors, arch over the large front stain-glassed window, molding on the front doors, trim on the northeast corner, cedar trim and roofing on the steeple, south and east clock faces were replaced or repaired; one foot of brick was removed from the chimney on the southern side of the church. The total bill comes to over \$32,000... gulp. The painting subtotal equals \$25,680, two months of lift rental for elevated work \$3,395, and restoration \$3,216. About \$14,000 of this cost was paid directly from our investments and \$18,000 was made available through a loan taken out with our financial institution, Edward Jones of Greenfield, MA. This loan made it possible for us to protect our investments while the economy and stock market became stronger over the past year. Indeed, since we began this project more than a year ago, our funds have gained \$15,000 after the economic downturn and while spending on the paint job and other repairs.

As with any building project, we had to overcome logistical challenges, complete unanticipated work, and deal with poor summer weather. Therefore, while the church has been improved both aesthetically and structurally, there is more work to be done. The lowest part of the church exterior needs to be painted. It was decided that the church members under the leadership of the Trustees would be responsible for that portion of the job to save money. Two faces of the clock and a cross that was mounted on the church also need to be restored. Ground level brickwork on the north, south, and west sides of the church need re-pointing. Over the next year, the Trustees will work to fund and complete this ongoing work WITHOUT tapping into our vital investments.

Condition of the Church

In general, the condition of the church is good. However, it is clear that a long list of interior and exterior maintenance will be with the Trustees and all church members for quite some time. This is true especially when one considers that our church is resource poor. Grant proposal writing is being undertaken by a joint Trustee and Parish Committee work group with a top priority being finishing the unanticipated restoration of the clock and cross. Sources for this grant funding include the Northfield CPA. Additional sources and application requirements are being tracked down and will be identified within the state and federal historic preservation programs. A very rough estimate for remaining exterior painting and restoration ranges between \$3,000 and \$5,000.

Additional Projects

Other improvements that are already on the Trustees' radar and recently suggested are upgrading the furnace, interior repairs and painting, kitchen updates, and church security. All of these items are on a working list of church improvements that the Trustees use as a guide to achieving their purpose - to manage the building, grounds, and church investments. These items have not been worked on in detail over the past two years as the paint job has demanded much of our attention. However, all are encouraged to contact the president or any board member regarding suggestions for what needs to be worked on and when it needs to be done. We welcome feedback and multiple perspectives that will lead to the best possible decisions.

~Paul Bocko

Church News Continued

Music Notes From Lynne

The colder weather (and perhaps even some snow) leads me to think about the holidays just ahead.

The following holiday services traditionally call for Special Music:

Sunday evening, November 22nd: Northfield Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service. This requires one rehearsal directly before the service, plus one or two times with me on Sunday mornings in November to learn your part. I'll make an announcement when I get the music. It would be wonderful to have some singers from First Parish to join in this local musical event - especially since we will be hosting this service in 2010 (next year!).

Sunday, December 20th, Winter Solstice Celebration at 10:00 service. Perhaps we can again enjoy providing a song together with adults and children.

Thursday, December 24th: Christmas Eve Service. More information coming in the next Newsletter.

Each Sunday morning (except at Congregational Meeting) I am available by 9:10 a.m. to go over the current Sunday's music and delve into the treasury of songs available from our new and old hymnals. We have a great need at First Parish for a more active music program. Several people have offered to play their solo instruments at services; I would love others to do so as well: anyone play the flute? guitar? drums? clarinet? string instruments? Please contact me if you think you have something to offer. What a wonderful gift it would be, to offer a special song or instrumental piece once a month at a regular service either first or third Sunday. All it needs is **YOU!** and . . . Bring a friend!

Hope to hear from you.
Lynne

Parish Committee News

- To save money on oil, beginning November 1st our Sunday services will be held downstairs in the Webster Room.
- Present members of the Committee on the Ministry are Lynne Warrin, Betty Gibson, Tom Adams and Rev. Marguerite. People are encouraged to speak to us with any concerns or suggestions about the ministry of First Parish.
- Our next Parish Committee meeting is Sunday, November 1st following the church service. It will be a joint meeting with the Board of Trustees. As always, this is an open meeting and anyone is welcome to attend.

~Submitted by Betty Gibson, Chair of the Parish Committee

RE News

We are now looking at the Golden Rule and how we can apply it in our day and when we actually can see it happening around us. It's been fun hearing the examples. We are also starting to host monthly coffee hours with Halloween cupcake decorating on the 24th of October with Stephanie. We hope also hope to help decorate the Webster room for the community Thanksgiving. Thank you to Karina and Maureen Spaulding for pinch hitting for me in October. We are still looking for folks to share a craft or an interest with the kids on a Sunday morning sometime this year. Please see Stephanie if you are interested and she will get you on the schedule. Its easy and fun down in the RE room!

~Deb

Thanksgiving in Our Town

As my minister's reflection mentions, this year First Parish will again be participating in the Guest for Your Table program. The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee offers collection boxes so that we can, penny by penny and dollar by dollar, fill to help relieve suffering all around the world. We will be distributing the collection boxes in late November and hope that every household takes one and makes it a spiritual practice to put something in the box at least once a day. This is a great way to involve and educate your dinner guests and children by demonstrating the caring work of our church and our Association.

Closer to town, we are also participating again this year in the Ecumenical Thanksgiving Day service, held this year on Sunday evening November 22nd, at the United Church of Bernardston. I will be offering the sermon and there will be an ecumenical choir singing. All voices are welcomed and wanted! Next year the service will be at First Parish. I hope that many First Parish folk come out this year for the service. As always, the collection will be donated to a charitable cause.

And even closer to home, we are again celebrating Thanksgiving Day with a community dinner in our own Webster Room. "Walter Anson and friends" (that means you!) will be cooking, serving, eating, cleaning and otherwise putting on this wonderful feast. It is a time to celebrate and support our local community by gathering with friends and strangers. Please consider how you can be involved this year.

Let us Give Thanks Together,
Reverend Marguerite

Christmas Fair 2009, Dec 5 from 9AM to 2PM

The Christmas Fair is right around the corner and we need to get psyched up now in order to make it the best ever. Please plan to be there, not just to have lunch and shop, but to work—preside over a table, help cook or serve lunch, sell raffle tickets, etc. This is an all-hands-on-deck, one-day fundraising event for the church and it needs everyone's best efforts to bring in \$\$\$ for our operating budget. Please see Noelle Anson for specific Fair Day assignments - as soon as possible - so we can plan ahead.

Some dates to remember are:

Sunday, Nov 22 Cone wiring, etc. at the church after the service. Prep for wreath making is important and we can talk about decorating options for the following Sunday.

Thursday, Nov 26 Thanksgiving Day – don't forget our Community Thanksgiving Meal.

Sunday, Nov 29 Wreath-making day!! We need everyone to be there to help in creating our signature wreaths for the Christmas Fair. Bring a lunch for after the service and plan to stay for a good part of the afternoon. It's fun!

Friday, Dec 4 Christmas Fair Decorating 6:00-8:00PM. Deck the halls in preparation for the Fair the next day. Come make the pillars in the Webster Room look like candy canes, cover a table or two, lay out sale items, or help set up the "Thrift Shop" with Betty and Marie. This is another all-hands-on-deck occasion – be there or be square!

Saturday, Dec 5 FAIR DAY 9:00 – 2:00

Last, but certainly not least – please plan on contributing something to sell. We already have a quilt coming from Tina Anson Mine - she tells me it will be twin coverlet size at least (and maybe bigger depending on sashing) - so a separate raffle will center on the quilt in addition to our regular raffle.

Anyone can contribute items to the Thrift Shop, so hoe out that basement or your old book area. Also, Lynne Warrin is looking for donations of jewelry items she can clean up in advance for the very successful table she has run for the last 2 years - bring any items you have to church and they will be delivered from there to Lynne. If you're a woodworker, a beader, a painter, a cook, or a crafter of any kind, exercise your talents and contribute the results.

Please!!! Take orders for wreaths – this year we are again charging \$20 - and watch for raffle tickets, which should be ready to pick up at church in early November. We need to sell lots before Fair Day to make a decent profit – they will be \$1 each or 6 for \$5.

Thanks to everyone in advance! Noelle

Minister's Corner

As I am writing this reflection the sun has been peeking out behind the clouds, snow flakes have fallen and the trees are brilliant. In one day, like and unlike every other day, I have witnessed the glories of nature. And for this I am grateful. I was recently reminded of a passage near the end of the Thornton Wilder play "Our Town". In this section, young Emily, has died and wants to return to earth. Another character who is also dead, Simon, tells her that now she knows what it is to be alive, spending and wasting a life as though she (and we) have a million years. And Emily replies "I didn't realize. So all that was going on and we never noticed....Good-bye to clocks ticking...and Mama's sunflowers. And food and coffee. And new ironed dresses, and hot baths...and sleeping and waking up. Oh earth, you're too wonderful for anybody to realize you."

And so it is for us too. We walk through much of our lives not realizing how wonderful and precious it is. Sometimes by the time we do glimpse the miracle of our life on earth, we think it is too late. We did not offer a kiss to those we love. We did not notice the flowers in the garden and now they have frozen. We did not stop to thank a friend for being his own sweet self and now that friend has died. All too often we realize what is most important when that thing, or that person, has gone.

But not always. And maybe not most of the time. One of the functions of a church community is the encouragement to re-call what is most important. In some real ways that is what worship is about; acknowledging what is "worth it." We do this in our Sunday services when we recite our Declaration of Fellowship. We do it when we stop in the middle of the service and light candles for our loved ones and go into a moment of silence so that we can hear the sound of our love beating in the room. We re-call what is most important when we gather as a community to put on a thanksgiving feast for the citizens of our town. And we re-call the preciousness of life when we place our Guest at Your Table boxes on our dining room table at

home and at every meal we look at the faces of the hungry people and we are moved to put in a coin or a bill so that suffering will be reduced. As we approach the holiday season, with all the joys and the stresses, the needs and the gifts, the hopes and the dreams of this time of year let us all consider Emily's statement from Our Town. Imagine for a moment that you have died, and somehow you get to look back on earth to see what it was that filled your life with joy. Emily remembered the clocks, and the flowers, the food and the coffee, the dresses and the baths, sleeping and waking. How about you? What would you try your hardest to grab onto, to hold and to love, to thank and to embrace? What are you even now grateful for in this season of life?

Take the time now. Yes, in so many ways this earthly life is too wonderful for anybody to fully realize. But all of us can stop, look, listen, and count the moments we have every day and recall the beauty of the earth. All of us can notice and celebrate, give and receive, live more deeply in this moment we have.

As our church moves into our most hectic season of the year I wish for you all the chance to look around and see what it is that you are grateful for. "Oh earth, you're too wonderful for anybody to realize you."

Blessings,
Reverend Marguerite