

October 2008

First Parish News



Upcoming Events:

- October 5, Sunday service and RE 10am, "Who is Hungry Here"
- October 12, Sunday service and RE 10am, "Harvest, Sukkot and the Wisdom of Kohelet"
- October 19, Sunday service and RE 10am, "We Affirm and Promote" # 2 Principle and Purpose"
- October 25, 6pm Breakfast 8-10am
- October 26, Sunday service and RE 10am

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First Parish of Northfield Unitarian Monthly Newsletter

Announcements

First Parish announcements:

Harvest Home Service

On Oct. 12, Keith Penniman will lead us in a "harvest home" service titled "Harvest, Sukkot and the Wisdom of Kohelet." We will be celebrating the fruits of our labor and giving thanks for all our blessings. Everyone is asked to bring an offering of something you have grown, gathered, made or purchased locally; for example: a vegetable, fruit, flower, autumn leaf, acorn, kindling wood, baked good, or craft. Use your imagination! Children often enjoy gathering interesting objects from nature. We will use our offerings to decorate the sanctuary. At the conclusion of the service, everyone will be invited to take home one of these offerings other than the one they contributed.

Keith Penniman is a freelance video producer and guitarist. He received a Master of Theological Studies degree from Boston University in 1980 and is a frequent guest speaker and musician for Unitarian and Universalist worship services.

Conversation Circles

Here is a reminder and an invitation! Are you interested in talking with other members and friends of First Parish about The Big Questions of Life (and some small ones too?) How about having a time every month to sit quietly, listen deeply, and reflect in a caring group about spiritual and religious ideas? If this appeals to you, come to the Webster Room on the first Wednesday of the month starting on October 1st at 7PM. The Circle groups are intended to help build community and friendship while exploring issues of faith and action in our lives. Join us and bring a friend. – Rev. Marguerite

Music Notes from Lynne

A BIG THANK to those who participated both at rehearsal and at the service on Sunday, October 21st. Members of our vocal ensemble, Betty Gibson, Maureen Interlande, Stephanie Ciccarello, Ruth Potee, and myself (Lynne Walker), 'raised the roof' with beautiful music, singing "What Wondrous Love Is This?", accompanied by the sweet, sweet sounds of Karina Berenson's violin. What a treat for all who heard this.

We hope that special music such as this will enhance many of our services this year and invite anyone who sings or plays an instrument will contact Lynne Walker, or any of the people you have seen participating.

Thinking ahead: In addition to regular services throughout October and November, we will need people for the Winter Solstice and Christmas Eve services and will begin practicing for this seasonal music soon.

I am also looking forward to including the children in a musical offering, perhaps in combination with the adult members as well. There are lots of possibilities for us to grow in the area of service music, and I hope YOU will consider joining in on the fun and joy.

Apples and Pears

Pick Your Own apples and pears. Call Mo Sapulding and let her know you are coming over. Bags will be provided. Pears are cooking only. Apples and pears are sprayed and clean and fresh.

Minister's Corner

When to call the Minister?

As the minister of First Parish I have been asked by a few people what might be a good reason to call me for a conversation. While I could never really answer that for each of you, because it is "your call" I thought that I would share some of these common reasons that people consider worth giving the minister a call. This is a composite list that a few ministers have written. I bet you could add a few yourselves! Truly, there are many reasons to call me. I would love to hear from you so do not be shy! My phone number is listed in our directory.

- When you feel like you don't know me yet, but would like to.
- When you have family, work or other problems you'd like to discuss.
- When you're going in the hospital or know someone else in the congregation who is.
- When someone close to you has died or is critically ill.
- When you have a child to be dedicated.
- When you're pregnant but wish you weren't or are full of joy because you are.
- When you, or a friend or neighbor would like more information about the Unitarian Universalist faith.
- When you're considering joining the congregation.
- When you'd like to show me what a good cook you are!
- When you have suggestions to make about programs for the church. .
- When there are community issues you'd like to discuss or would like the congregation to be involved with.
- When you're mad at me.
- When you appreciate something I've said or done.
- When you'd like to talk about religious or spiritual issues with me.
- When you've had good or bad news and want to share it.

- When you're feeling overwhelmed.
- When you want to tell me your history with the church.
- When you've heard a great joke and want to share it.
- When you have won the lottery and want to make a large donation to the church!

In faith,
Rev. Marguerite

Church Dedication

The Rev. William Sinkford, President of the Unitarian Universalist Association will be preaching the sermon at the Service of Re-Dedication of the Universalist Memorial Church in Winchester New Hampshire on Sunday October 5th at 3PM. There will be a music by a joint choir of area churches. Rev. Marguerite intends to go and would love company. It is only 10 minutes from First Parish. The event is being put on by the Universalist Heritage Foundation

Upcoming Sermons

Oct 5 "Who Is Hungry Here?" – Rev. Sheehan

Oct 12 "Harvest, Sukkot and the Wisdom of Kohelet" – Guest Speaker Keith Penniman

Oct 19 " We Affirm and Promote" #2 Principle and Purpose – Rev. Sheehan

Oct 26 Guest Speaker, Paul Bocko.

Nov 2 "Grumbling in Paradise" – Rev. Sheehan

Nov 16 "We Affirm and Promote" #3 Principle and Purpose – Rev. Sheehan

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.

October 6, 1967

The Emergency Conference on the Black Rebellion began on this day in New York City. Organized by the UUA in response to racial strife in American society this conference marked the beginning of what was then known as the Black Empowerment Controversy within the Association. The controversy focused on the creation and funding of a Black Affairs Council which one year later was not fully funded. The failure of the UUA to fund this council called into question the UUA's commitment to racial justice. Over 1,000 black Unitarian Universalists left the church over the controversy including William Sinkford who is now the president of the UUA.

October 17, 1916

Julia Ward Howe, a Unitarian activist and author of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" died on this day at the age of 96.

October 23, 1850

The first women's suffrage meeting in America opened in Worcester Massachusetts. Most of the organizers and supporters were Unitarians.

October 27, 1553

Michael Servatus was burned at the stake near Geneva Switzerland because of his writings that challenged the doctrine of the Trinity. He went to his death with his books chained to his thigh. He was a learned theologian and his martyrdom gave rise to cries for tolerance in religion.

www.universalistheritage.org

LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE – OUR REFLECTIONS

Betty Gibson as President of the Parish Council, Lynne Warrin as a member of the Board of Trustees and Reverend Marguerite attended the Clara Barton District conference on Unitarian Universalist church leadership. The conference was held at Nichols College in Dudley Massachusetts (South Central Mass.) There were people from many of the congregations in our district, both fellowships without ministers, smaller churches such as ours, mid size and large churches. The commonality was striking even as the church size and locations were different! The morning started with a worship service and then we each went to a different seminar and compared notes on the drive home. Here are some of Betty, Lynne and Reverend Marguerite's reflections.

Reverend Marguerite:

I went to the seminar called Stories of Change: Resistance, Breakthrough, and Transformation. The seminar was lead by Jeanne Crane, a church and business "coach." I was particularly interested in this seminar because I wanted to get more ideas as we continue to pursue our vision and action steps for the church. I entered the seminar believing that First Parish is a thriving faith community and I left feeling the same! One topic was the idea of a church being either "Minister Centered" or "Mission Centered" and the ramifications of both models. I think First Parish is mission centered – with all of us, minister and congregants alike putting our focus mainly on what it is we as a church are called to do in the world.

We also talked about trying to center our attention on "Common Ground" – looking for the positive energy and passions in the church and working to build from these passions rather than spending most of our time focusing on negative or divisive issues. One member of a church in our group raised a good question for us to consider so that we might think "out of the box" when we look at issues about our building, membership and missions.

LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

He asked “If your church building was gone, what would you build?” This fanciful thinking might yield interesting ideas for us at First Parish. Jeanne Crane says that the size of the church is not what is most important but whether the church is thriving or dying. What do you think about First Parish?

We also talked about the different kinds of change – transitional (like crossing a bridge – going from one place to another) and transformational (when everything becomes different like a caterpillar becoming a butterfly.) You cannot plan a transformational change but you can do transformation work by creating a climate where new ideas will come up. Every church these days needs to create such a climate otherwise we will be stuck in our ruts or caught up by the fears that tight economic times bring on. First Parish is full of committed and talented people with a great sense of history and tradition and willingness and a desire to look toward a new future. I left the seminar hopeful that we are not dying but are thriving. Look around you. Look into the eyes of our children and imagine what kind of a church you want to leave for them!

Betty Gibson:

I went to the workshop titled: From “Filling the Slots” to Spiritual Leadership Development. The main focus was how to get people to feel a part of the church and be willing to serve on a committee. The following is a list of suggestions and questions which I bring to First Parish to think about:

1. There is a difference in “filling the slots” as opposed to getting volunteers;
2. When asking individuals if they are willing to share their talents, give them the necessary history, current information and direction, but be willing to give up ownership;
3. Have brochure or information available for different leadership roles;

4. Re-think the work of the church especially if you can't find the people to get it done;
5. Continually ask individuals how they want to be involved;
6. What should we ask of our members? Do churches have the lowest membership standards in town?
7. Is the current committee structure working? Are they all necessary? Do we need more or different?

Some of these issues First Parish has been discussing at our Congregational Meetings dealing with our goals and objectives. As Marguerite said church size does not matter, the issues remain the same. I found it helpful to join other people from all size churches and discuss common issues.

Lynne Warrin:

Getting underway in the mists of early Saturday morning was not my idea of a worthwhile project but by the end of the day I knew it had been well worth it and then some. The main thing, aside from the workshop I attended, was the pleasure of joining in with a huge congregation of like-minded people in the worship service. It was delightful to sing with so many people and to do a responsive reading with many voices filling up the hall.

The workshop I attended, Prophetic Finances, was very interesting. I had gone out of a sense of duty to the board of trustees but I happily learned a lot of things to have our own board consider. There are many more options than we have been able to come up with. I represented the smallest congregation and learned that even the biggest faced the same issues as we do!