



**First Church in Jamaica Plain, Unitarian Universalist
Newsletter, December, 2004**

P.O. Box 186, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130 – (617) 524-1634

email: Firstchjp@aol.com

site:www.firstchurchjp.org

*Rev. Terry Burke, Minister
Rev. Marshall Hawkins, Affiliate Minister
Karl Haakonsen, Standing Committee Chair
George Wardle, Trustees Chair
Emily Lichtenstein, Director of RE
Jean O'Leary, Church Administrator*

*Ellen McGuire, Music Director
Janna Frelich, Soloist
Robin Teague, Director of the Children's Choirs
Philomena O'Donnell, Head Usher
Monroe Hyman, Building Use*

Thoughts From Terry

In our family we put shoes outside the bedroom doors for St. Nicholas' Day on December 6th. The candy and small presents found inside are almost as exciting as the surfeit of presents later in the month. Nicholas, as you may know, was a fourth century bishop of Myra, in what is now part of Turkey. Nicholas is supposed to be a special friend of children, young women, and sailors.

Many of the stories about Nicholas have a strong miraculous element, such as raising children from the dead. In one of my more prosaic favorites, Nicholas hears that the imperial governor has been bribed to have an innocent person executed. Nicholas rushes from church in his robes, and puts his hand in front of the executioner's sword to stop the killing.

The most famous story about Nicholas has nothing of the miraculous, and probably contains a remembered kernel of truth about his personality. (I note that Garrison Keillor's UU Fellowship of Lake Wobegon has a Christmas Eve panel discussion on the symbolism of the Christmas stocking, so I'm in good company here!) Before he became a bishop, Nicholas, a wealthy young man, learned of a family of the nobility who had fallen on hard financial times. With no money for dowries, their three daughters couldn't marry; reduced to starvation, the parents were considering selling their daughters as slaves. Nicholas threw three bags of gold in the window, and the family lived happily ever after. In some versions of the story, a bag of gold lands in a stocking hung by the fire to dry.

In the Nicholas story, gifts are given to those in need. This season may we especially share our gifts of time, talent, self, and love. We may be the one person who has the gift that is truly needed.

I wish you joy and light!

Yours, Terry

Religious Education News

Are you as stunned as I am by the speed with which the holiday season has arrived? For those of you who, like me, can't seem to get a grip on the calendar at this time of the year, here is the RE calendar for December, to clip and post on your refrigerator:

- Saturday, December 4, 11:00-5:00: Holiday Fair. The RE Program will host a bake sale and staff the church table.
- Sunday, December 5: Christmas Pageant Rehearsal, directed by the First Church Pageant Queen, Thalia McMillion. Additional activities will be provided for children not directly engaged in rehearsing.
- Saturday, December 11, 10:00-11:30: Christmas Pageant Dress Rehearsal
- Sunday, December 12: Christmas Pageant. All children to attend the service; no additional activities for children.
- Sunday, December 19: Christmas Family Service. Children are invited to attend the beginning of the service, and then may leave to take part in special holiday activities in the parish hall. Christmas caroling at the Shattuck will happen immediately after the service.
- Sunday, December 26: The Burning of Grudges Ceremony. More details to be announced.

Whew! (To everyone's great relief), regular classes will resume on January 2.

My holiday wish is that we all find moments of peace, joy and thanksgiving during this special time of the year. Enjoy your family and friends, try to slow down, and remember to breathe!

- Emily Lichtenstein, Interim Director of Religious Education

Merry Christmas! Happy Hanukkah! First Church members and friends will be celebrating this holiday season by sharing our blessings with those who are in need. The Social Justice Committee has chosen two small families from Sojourner House family shelter and a young girl whose mom is struggling to maintain her family and her family's holiday traditions while working toward self sufficiency in the One Family Campaign's Scholars program.

Learn more about the moms and children we're chosen to support this year by picking up a Christmas wish list for all the recipients as you go to coffee hour on Sunday. Wrapping and delivery day will be Sunday December 19th. For further information or for registering a specifically requested gift contact Judith Garfunkel.

Many thanks to all of you for your generosity in supporting Sojourner House this Thanksgiving. The Sojourner staff, on behalf of residents and needy neighbors, expressed their gratitude on Sunday when a whole van full of turkeys and other holiday goodies was delivered. The Social Justice Committee will post their formal thank you letter when it arrives.

Book Discussion Group: On Monday, January 3, the book group will discuss Pulitzer Prize winning Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*, a description of a multigenerational transition from Calcutta to Cambridge. Take a break over the holidays to read, and join us at 7:30 in the Morse Room.

Successful Recital ! The organ recital by Peter Sykes on Nov. 19 was a fabulous evening in the life of the church, and raised more than \$4500 for the First Church Hook Organ Restoration Fund. Thanks to all those who helped! Check the church website or email organrestoration@yahoo.com or speak to a member of the Music Committee for more information about how to contribute money or enthusiasm to the organ restoration.

New CD coming soon: Our new CD featuring the choir, organ and soloists Janna Frelich and Tim Williamson will be arriving soon. Please speak to Cathy Baisly or email her at organrestoration@yahoo.com for more information. Cost for 1-2 copies is \$15 each; 3-9 copies, \$12 each; 10 and more \$10 each. Please make checks payable to First Church Organ Fund.

The Cookbooks are here! They will be available for sale at the Holiday Fair, and at Coffee Hours thereafter. If you pre-ordered, please look for the elastic band with your name – and pay the charming cashier (if you're writing a check, remember that memo line!!!) If you did not pre-order there are plenty to go around (and if we sell out, they'll make more!!). The books look great thanks to the work of Michael Wilhoitte, Dawn Nelson, and Joanna Zito. They make sense, with good spelling and logical indexing thanks to the work of Gwyn Helie and Laurie Corkum, and they have great content thanks to all of you!!

Attention Pregnant or Nursing Moms: La Leche League of Boston (Janna Frelich, co-Leader) holds its monthly breastfeeding support meetings in the Morse Room. Meetings are open to all women interested in breastfeeding. The next meetings are Tuesday, December 14th, 7:30 p.m.; Wednesday, December 15th, 10:00 a.m. This month's topic is "Whining and Dining: Nutrition and Weaning", but bring all your nursing questions that you need answered! La Leche is also holding a Holiday Usborne Book Fair fundraiser. Please consider buying children's books for holiday presents this year. All proceeds will benefit La Leche League of Boston and its work in the community. We will raffle off four books earned through the Book Fair to purchasers. We'll donate all other "earned" books to a children's reading charity. To order or book fair flyers, see Janna Frelich in church on Sundays at Coffee Hour, or call her at <see church directory for phone number>. To take a look at the available books, go to: [.http://www.ubah.com/cat_ubah/main.asp](http://www.ubah.com/cat_ubah/main.asp)

The UUA Funding Program has awarded First Church in Jamaica Plain a \$10,000 grant and a \$5,000 challenge grant to implement an outreach project to UU congregations in Massachusetts around breast cancer awareness, education, advocacy and social justice issues. The core of the project, (called the One in Eight UU Outreach Campaign) is a series of screenings of the documentary, *One in Eight: Janice's Journey*, followed by panel discussions with members of breast cancer advocacy and environmental organizations at eight UU congregations. Audience members will have the opportunity to get involved with larger campaigns involving breast cancer education, environmental and social justice issues. For more information, please contact Cindy McKeown at camworkz@aol.com.

December 2004, Calendar

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| 1 Wednesday | 7:00 pm Prayer Group |
| 2 Thursday | 8:00 pm Choir Rehearsal |
| 4 Saturday | 8:00 am Tree Expedition
11-5 pm Holiday Fair |
| 5 Sunday | 8:30 am RE Committee Mtg.
11:00 am Rev. Marshall Hawkins Preaching |
| 6 Monday | 7:30 pm Building Committee Mtg. |
| 8 Wednesday | 7:00 pm Prayer Group |
| 11 Saturday | 10-11:30 pm Pageant Rehearsal |
| 12 Sunday | 11:00 am Christmas Pageant
12:30 pm Social Justice Committee Mtg. |
| 15 Wednesday | 7:00 pm Prayer Group
8:00 pm Bible Study-2 Maccabees from Hanukkah |
| 16 Thursday | 7:30 pm Finance Committee
8:00 pm Choir Rehearsal |
| 19 Sunday | 11:00 am Christmas Family Service
12:30 pm Shattuck Caroling |
| 21 Tuesday | 7:00 pm Standing Committee |
| 22 Wednesday | 7:00 pm Prayer Meeting |
| 24 Friday | 7:00 pm Christmas Eve Service
(Happy Birthday Jom Michel!) |
| 25 Saturday | Christmas Day |
| 26 Sunday | 1 1:00 am Burning Grudges |
| 29 Wednesday | 7:00 pm Prayer Group |
| 31 Friday | (Happy Birthday Karl Haakonsen!) |

2 Sunday

11:00 am Epiphany: Candles of Hope and Concern