

December 2008 Newsletter

First Church in Jamaica Plain, Unitarian Universalist

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Rev. Terry Burke, Minister
Rev. Marshall Hawkins, Affiliate Minister
Rev. Peter Connolly, Affiliate Minister
George Wardle, Trustees Chair
Andrée Záleská, RE Director
Jean O'Leary, Church Administrator

Ellen McGuire, Music Director
Janna Frelich, Soloist
Philomena O'Donnell, Head Usher
Monroe Heyman, Building Use
Laurie Corkum, Standing Committee Chair



Thoughts from Terry

The year grows colder and darker during the next few weeks. Many of our Christmas services involve candles, such as Christmas Eve, or fire (the burning of grudges on December 28th). This Fall I read the story of a young woman who, as a child, visited her country relatives at Christmas time in the 1930's. She attended Christmas services at their church, which included a Christmas tree lit by candles.

Even in the 1930's, a candle-lit tree was something of an anachronism. I remember hearing an elderly Unitarian minister describe his childhood experience when a draft of wind from an open door set their tree on fire. All their Christmas presents were destroyed. The visiting young woman commented on the church safety precautions: buckets of water (like us on Christmas Eve!) and water-soaked rags on sticks. The tree candles burnt at different paces - some quickly, some more slowly, some with a lot of smoke. Her little sister revealed that she named all the candles on the tree for their relatives, living and dead.

The image of lit candles representing living and dead loved ones reminds me of an experience of mine last winter in Jerusalem. Visiting Yad Vashem, I found the Children's Memorial far more moving than the extremely well done Holocaust Museum (complete with real boxcars). You enter the Children's Museum in darkness and walk along a metal railing; your footing is uneven and disorienting. Then you come into an open space of darkness that seems to be illuminated by countless lit candles, remembering the children who died in the camps.

As the old year grows colder, I feel a sense of warm new hope as a result of the election. Yet a Black church in Springfield was burned by arson on the evening of the vote, and a swastika recently painted on a synagogue sign in Newton. Persons with chaos, or lies in their hearts (an ancient church description of personal Evil was "the Father of Lies") seem to lash out at hope and light.

One of the ancient titles for Jesus was "Light of Light." When we light each other's candles on Christmas Eve, I feel such hope and joy! Even though the uncertainty, evil, and fear of our world remain, yet we share in the light.

Wishing you Christmas joy, Terry

RE News

Dear RE Friends and Families:

It's sad to be writing my last newsletter piece before I finish my job as DRE for this church. This job gave me a much-needed professional and social venue when my kids were younger, and provided me the flexibility I needed to be home with them as well. I always enjoyed working with Terry, and as time went on I felt more confident contributing to worship for both children and adults.

It was a good three years. It would be a harder transition if I were actually leaving the church, but my boys and I will be around as members, and this gives me the opportunity to contribute and participate in different ways (like going to the service!)

Right now we are in the capable hands of Thalia McMillion, who is running the annual Christmas Pageant. Rehearsals continue through December 7, and the big day--**the Christmas Pageant itself--is December 14!**

On December 21 the children will help wrap presents for Sojourner House, and set up their artwork for a Spirit Play Exhibit, to show you what they have been doing in RE this Fall.

On December 28--my last Sunday--I will hold a special Children's Chapel to say goodbye, and we will have Burning of Grudges for the New Year. A fitting way to go out!

Happy holidays to all...see you in church!

Fondly,

Andree Zaleska
First Church DRE

**10th Annual Holiday Craft Fair-December 6th,
11-5 PM**

Come join are Annual JP Holiday Craft Fair 2008!

Over 35 Crafts Vendors selling jewelry, pottery, fabric art, soap, tin craft, paintings, photography, mittens, card, and more!

We will have Live Entertainment:

Boston City Singers and the JP Training Chorus at 11 AM in the Sanctuary

Live Jazz Band in the Afternoon

Mayor Menino and Santa Claus at 2:30 PM at the Monument

Lots of great homemade food-Lunch and Bake Sale, too!

**How to Help with the December 6th Holiday Fair from 11-5 PM:
The sheet is filling up nicely, but there are a few critical holes, which ONLY YOU can fill -**

This SUNDAY - after Church - moving all the clutter we can into the back of the sanctuary - this includes racks of chairs, cleaning the coat closets, moving the Sunday School Dividers. Whatever we can do to take advantage of all of us being there.

Then, the evening of Friday the 5th - How about a few more setter uppers the night before? This is a fairly simple job, laying tape, hanging signs, moving tables - we'll need you by 6 PM, and you can be done in time to attend the JP forum at 7 PM

~Cooks - we're pretty good on hot foods, but another chili would sell - we need sandwich fillings - anyone want to make a huge Tuna Salad (you can stretch it with chick peas!) - how about cute pre-made PB&J and Cream Cheese and Jelly so that parents can buy a dollar sandwich and prevent melt downs?

~Bakers -we can never have enough baked goods - brownies, cookies, your yummy speciality (single servings sell best)

~Car unloaders - we've got three on Saturday morning (9:00 to 11:00) - one more would be great

~Car loaders - come at the end of the day and help vendors load their cars, you may even get given some leftovers to take home!

~Greeters - we need another morning greeter - Saturday 11 to 2

~Sales clerks - we need another in the afternoon - 2 to 5

~"Transition Sanctuary" - The Boston City Singers finish their concert, and we need to change the Sanctuary from a concert hall to a dining room, come set up tables - a fifteen minute job at 12:00 PM - then you can shop and eat!

~Afternoon cooks - come work in the kitchen 2 to 5

And of course, and always - CLEAN UP - that's when we get to laugh together, and celebrate a good day - join us at 5 PM

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(As always - We need to borrow crock pots, extension cords, and any nice clip-on lights. Please mark CLEARLY with your name, and remember to pick up afterwards.)



Church Book Group

The book group enters our 12th year with renewed vigor after a delicious and delightful 11th anniversary celebration. We continue to meet on the first Tuesday of the month, at 7:30 in the Morse Room. Upcoming selections include Roland Merullo's

Breakfast with Buddha, a "winningly spiritual road-trip novel" (per Publishers' Weekly) on December 2. We follow this light fare by vicariously indulging in the many appetites of Madame Bovary (by Gustave Flaubert), Jan 6.

✦ **Did you have a baby this year?** We have a tradition of listing all of the babies born in '08 in the Christmas Eve order of service. Please email the church office at firstchjp@aol.com with you child's name and date of birth.

✦ **Sign up for a poinsettia on line to decorate the church for the service on the 24th:** Email the church office how many poinsettias you would like to order and if you would like them in celebration or in memory of someone OR sign up for one with Alice Hawley at church.

✦ **We are caroling again at the Shattuck Hospital in JP on December 21st after church.** We will eat some pizza in the parish hall for sustenance and then gather for caroling in the Shattuck lobby at 1PM. All levels of singing ability welcome!
We are also collecting toilet articles and DVDs and videos for the Shattuck to drop off when we go caroling on the 16th.

"Sunday Night aLive"-December 28!

Our alternative evening worship service called "Sunday Night aLive" will be on **December 28 from 6 – 8PM**. The theme this month: **Gratitude!** This service takes place on the last Sunday of each month, beginning at 6:00 pm. **Meeting in the Parish Hall**, the service will be non-traditional, utilizing contemporary music, participation from those who attend, artistic images, prayer and more. Dinner will be served following the service. Childcare will be provided. The service is open to all, and please encourage young adults to come to this new offering from the church. Those who would like to cook some food for the event can contact Cherrisse Haakonsen.

Monthly Potlucks at First Church!

Our first **Second Sunday** potluck gathered over 25 people to eat good food, enjoy one another's company, and learn about the Green House Project from Andree Zaleska and Ken Ward. Come join us for the next potluck on Sunday **December 14th**-topic to be announced!



★ CHRISTMAS AT SOJOURNER HOUSE ★

We provide Christmas gifts to residents of Sojourner House in Roxbury, a "transition house" for families moving out of homelessness and into their own apartments. This year, we will be providing gifts for two families, the Graham family, Susan and her two-year-old daughter Raven; and the Delacruz family, Mencia and her two daughters, ten-year-old Paola and fifteen-year-old Sasha. We hope that you will help to brighten their Christmas by bringing gifts from the lists you will find in the sanctuary. (If you would like a list emailed to you, please call the church office.)

Please bring your unwrapped gifts with names clearly indicating the recipients to the Parish Hall on December 21, when the RE students will wrap them and the Social Justice Committee will deliver them. If you need to bring your donated gifts before December 21, please leave them in the area near the back of the Sanctuary where we store food donations, mark them clearly so they won't be confused with food donations, and include the name of the intended recipient.

Youth Holiday Party and Film Night

Sunday, December 7, 2008, 6 to 10 pm.

hosted by the Jamaica Plain and Brookline UU Churches Youth Groups

**First Parish in Brookline Unitarian-Universalist
382 Walnut Street
Brookline, MA 02445-7563**

All youth **ages 11 and up** are invited to our Youth Holiday Party and Film Night. We will be screening the film "Millions" (2005), directed by Danny Boyle, a film about two little English brothers who find a sack of stolen money--one thinks it's a miracle and wants to give it to charity, the other thinks it's just good fortune, and wants to spend it--and have many adventures as a result.

Bring: \$3 for pizza, a dessert, a friend as well as...

- 1. female/male personal care items for military overseas;**
- 2. holiday cards to make out to the military;**
- 3. a new or gently used book, or \$ to donate to buy a new book for homeless/hospitalized children in the Boston area. Books in both English and Spanish are welcome.**

. We'll begin the festivities with gift-packing, card signing, listening to good music and then watch the film! **Call Janna Frelich for further info**

Jamaica Plain

Forums - December

"Readings and Reflections from Accomplished Local Authors"

Friday, Dec. 5th, 7:00pm

Authors Brendan Halpin, Catherine Sasanov, and Ron MacLean join us for an evening of reading, discussion and celebration of our local literati, storytellers, poets and writers. Our guest authors will read pieces of their work, and will share their experiences of the modern-day "writer's life" amongst the shrinking number of small, independent presses and bookstores.

"The Dhamma Brothers"

Film and Discussion

Thursday, Dec. 11th, 7:00pm

"The Dhamma Brothers" tells a dramatic tale of human potential and transformation as it closely follows and documents the stories of the prison inmates at Donaldson Correction Facility who enter into this arduous and intensive program. This film, with the power to dismantle stereotypes about men behind prison bars also gives you hope for the human race.

FINI !