

February 2009 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
Laurie Corkum, Standing Committee Chair
Michael Hirsch, Religious Education Director

Ellen McGuire, Music Director
Janna Frelich, Soloist
Philomena O'Donnell, Head Usher
Monroe Heyman, Building Use
Jean O'Leary, Church Administrator

Thoughts from Terry

Recently, my wife Ellen showed me an article on the Plymouth Pilgrims from an old issue of the New England Historical Genealogical Society magazine.. From that piece by scholar Jeremy Dupertuis Bangs, I learned that four hundred years ago, during February of 1609, the Separatist Pilgrim sect sought a haven in the town of Leiden in Holland, prior to their voyage to Massachusetts.

At that time, about a third of Leiden's 35,000 people were refugees, most of them fleeing for religious reasons. The group of about one hundred Pilgrims requested permission to reside in Leiden from the town secretary.

Jan van Hout replied:

(Leiden)... "refused no honest people free entry to come live in the city, as long as they behave honestly and obey all the laws and ordinances, and under those conditions the applicants' arrival here should be pleasing and welcome."

The Pilgrims arrived on May Day of 1609; the Dutch honored the English in their midst by placing a May Pole in front of the town hall, anathema to the Calvinist Pilgrims. The traditional Dutch May Day practice was to ram a sapling through the doorway of your neighbor's house.

The Dutch Reformed (Calvinist) Church was established in Leiden. However, due to the variety of religious refugees, including Lutherans, Mennonites, and Catholics, Leiden provided for civil marriage. As a result, when Pilgrims Edward Winslow and Suzanna White married in 1621 in the new American colony, they followed Dutch practice since the Pilgrim minister had not yet arrived in Plymouth. Theirs was the first civil marriage in the English-speaking world. Bangs sees this as the small first beginning of the separation of church and state in America. Centuries later, Massachusetts would be the first to allow same sex marriages in our country.

The Dutch in Leiden were grateful for the English refugees in their midst who helped protect them from the hostile Spanish empire. The Pilgrims were provided with refuge by the Dutch before their journey to Massachusetts, and learned of innovations like civil marriage. I give thanks for the rich tapestry of immigrants in our midst, many of them fleeing persecution. Like the people of Leiden, may we too welcome the honest men and women who come to our city from all over the world.

Yours in faith,
Terry

Religious Education Director: *Mick Hirsch*

The word on the street: As Barack and Michele Obama took to the stage at the Neighborhood Inaugural Ball to dance a most memorable “first” dance, Hillary Clinton wasn’t the only person feeling a bit jittery about the prospects of her pending confirmation for a leadership position. Indeed, some 425.66 miles northeast of our nation’s capital (according to Mapquest!!) a 30-something man living in Hopedale, MA was gnawing at his fingernails, awaiting the results of the hiring committee’s decision regarding his application for the position of Religious Education Director at First Church UU in Jamaica Plain. Fortunately for both Ms. Clinton and Mr. Hirsch, the results of their respective votes were favorable.

January 20, 2009 was a big day: Not only did the United States inaugurate a new president, but First Church got themselves a new RE director! There was, indeed, pomp and circumstance to celebrate both events – on my first Sunday at First Church, Aretha sadly had to cancel and Ellen supposedly couldn’t get the recording of Yo-Yo and Itzhak to play in the sanctuary, but I did get to feast upon a splendid bread pudding made by Jane at the Newcomer’s breakfast and listen to an emotionally powerful sermon by Rabbi Victor Reinstein. Furthermore, I was able to begin meeting the people who had welcomed me before I was even around to be welcomed – the truly fabulous individuals of the *ekklesia*, ‘the ones who are called out’ to be the church.

I am delighted to take on the role of RE Director. As I get settled into this new position, I give special thanks to Terry Burke for the warmest of welcomes and for already introducing me to both Fiore’s and Doyle’s; Andree Zaleska for her past leadership of the RE program and for getting me up to speed; Janna Frelich for overseeing the youth group activities and for her lovely singing on my inaugural Sunday (you may not be Aretha, but you’re still damn good!!); the members of the RE Committee – Larry Zaborski, Laura McCord and Natalie Eldridge – for believing in a chaplain/philosopher/United Methodist runaway; Carol Bell for convening an interview that was amazingly more fun than stressful; and Jean O’Leary for introducing me to the church building and for pulling together all the loose administrative ends to get me officially working (...and paid!!). I know there are many, many others who deserve my thanksgiving from the outset. Forgive me if I have overlooked you; in time, I shall learn more about your involvement at First Church and recognize you properly for all of your time, energy and thoughtfulness. For those I haven’t met yet, I look forward to meeting you and getting to know you – as I said in my opening congregational address: “I love to talk” and I also drink a lot of coffee, so let’s meet soon! And, most importantly, to the children, youth and families at First Church – please, hunt me down and introduce yourselves; I am most looking forward to working with and learning from you! Whenever you have ideas, share them; whenever you feel like dreaming, dream on; whenever you feel like having fun – if I’m not already there – come find me!

Blessings and thanksgiving,
Mick Hirsch
mchirsch@hotmail.com

"Sunday Night aLive" February 22

All are welcome to join us for our monthly alternative worship service, Sunday Night aLive on February 22, 6:00pm until 8:00pm. It features live music and participation in a relaxed but spiritual atmosphere. Childcare is provided and dinner is served following the service. If you would like to cook a dish for the service, please contact Cherisse Haakonsen.

Denominational Affairs:

How the UUA is Serving You and Your Values:

How do you benefit from your congregation's membership in the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA)? The UUA's mission is to serve congregations and the wider community in many ways. Here are some:

Connecting UUs: The UUA helps Unitarian Universalists (UUs) connect with each other beyond their congregation's walls. And [General Assembly](#) is the annual meeting of the UUA, held each June, with workshops and events for every UU.

Witnessing our faith in the world: Unitarian Universalist values are brought to members of our congregations, their leaders, elected representatives, and the wider world through public witness work conducted by member congregations, districts, and UUA appointed and elected leaders.

UU World, in print and online: [UU World magazine](#) is published four times a year and mailed to members of all UUA member congregations. (If you don't receive a copy and think you should, check with your congregation's office

Financial Services and stewardship of investments: The UUA is able to provide services to our members through the support of our member congregations and donations to the UUA's Annual Program Fund or those that support major programs or initiatives. When the UUA receives monies to support programs, or receives

gifts, trusts, and endowments, those holdings receive careful investment management.

Lay Leaders: The [InterConnections newsletter](#) provides useful articles for the volunteers who run your congregations. Online, you can search the [Leaders' Library](#) to find resources for those who lead our congregations (lay and ordained). The UUA also offers a number of programs to congregations, including fundraising consultations, loans and grants, programs for keeping congregations safe for all, small group ministry (covenant groups) resources, growth programs, marketing and advertising materials, and more.

Social Justice: Action is at the center of our faith for many UUs, and the UUA has many resources and services to promote social action. They include programs that address racism, environmental concerns, freedom to marry, and other issues. The UUA also works with a range of affiliated organizations, including the [Unitarian Universalist Service Committee](#) (UUSC), [UU Ministry for the Earth](#), and many others in seeking to inform and educate around social issues.

Religious Education: Our Lifespan Faith Development staff group offers a list of available UU religious education resources as well as information to support religious educators, both professional and volunteer. The UUA is currently engaged in producing a series of new curricula produced as part of the [Tapestry of Faith](#) program.

If you have any questions please contact your Denominational Affairs chair, Karl Haakonsen, cityhawk1@yahoo.com.

Church Book Group:

The book group will vicariously wander through many locales, cultures, time periods, and genders this winter. First, we'll go along with a Scottish man who trekked across Afghanistan immediately after the fall of the Taliban (The Places In Between by Rory Stewart, Feb 3). Then we'll tootle along the Mississippi with Huck Finn (who, if

memory serves, learns how to sit "like a girl") and an escaped slave, Jim (The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain, March 3).. All sessions are at 7:30 pm in the Morse Room, and as always, anyone interested in any given book is welcome to come to that discussion. There are no entrance requirements, membership fees, poll taxes, or other impediments.

Monthly Potlucks at First Church!

Our first **Second Sunday Monthly Potluck** on **February 8**, will feature a program about the history of our church. There will be a trivia game, a tour of the memorial plaques, and a chance to ask questions of the Church Historian, George Wardle.



Save the DATE:

Please save **Saturday evening, March 7 at 6 pm**, for our annual **Fellowship Dinner**, a **wonderful catered dinner** and **fabulous, Oscar worthy entertainment** (no charge!) for First Church members and friends, which kicks off our **Annual Pledge Drive!**

And, you **want** the opportunity to be a steward, to **enjoy** your fellow church members, and **learn** all about **Appreciative Inquiry** ... Even if you think you can't stand to ask for money, come to an orientation session and see the Laurie and Abby Show - learn about the process that makes us so happy to be doing it...

Our orientation sessions are scheduled for Tuesday, February 3rd - 6:30 to 8:30
Saturday February 7th, 10 AM 10 12 PM and Sunday February 22 12:30 to 2:00

These will be **fun** - and just attending a good time with your friends is a great way to show support. RSVP (optional) dear abby@comcast.net



Church Bulletin Board

☞A church member has a **large jar of small change**, too heavy for her to lift, which she would like to donate to the church. If you

could pick this up (in Jamaica Plain) and convert it to a more usable form (check or

bills) for the collection plate, please speak to Ellen McGuire.

⌘A church member has a **19" TV** which works, but would need a converter box.

Free to a good home! Please speak to Ellen McGuire if interested.