

First Church in Jamaica Plain, Unitarian Universalist

June Newsletter, 2006

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Rev. Terry Burke, Minister
Rev. Marshall Hawkins, Affiliate Minister
Karl Haakonsen, Standing Committee Chair
George Wardle, Trustees Chair
Andrée Záleská, Interim RE Director

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

Thoughts From Terry

I had a good friend, John Woodman, who felt strongly that one should do summer things in the summertime. He used to say, "Live in each season as it passes; breath the air, drink the drink, taste the fruit." John died young, at 49, and I only recently learned that his quote was from Unitarian Henry David Thoreau.

In the midst of our June busyness, we can dream of a summer slowdown. This year I'm especially feeling myself part of a frantic sandwich generation: my mother died in December, and our son is heading off to college in September. Running from one thing to another seems to devour my time.

So I look forward to a slower time in Maine this July, at our friend Priscilla Holmes' camp in Brookline. I happily imagine reading, writing, hiking, praying, thinking, and spending time with my family. Doing summer things. "Live in each season as it passes." I hope you have wonderful times of renewal and re-creation this summer. Then come tell us about them!

Yours, Terry

Greetings from Andrée, Director of Religious Education

Last week I attended a training for a new RE model called Spirit Play. Based in Montessori educational theory, Spirit Play involves creating an RE space in which the children explore religious themes through stories and art. I was struck particularly by the beauty of the storytelling method: the teacher lays out a felt mat on the floor and places objects on it such as wooden blocks, figurines, or religious symbols. A simple story is told—often a parable from the Bible or another religious tradition—by manipulating these objects. The tone is meditative and slow. The children are then allowed time to “wonder” about the story--to discuss it at their own level. Later they “respond” to it using a variety of art materials.

It would take some time and effort to really introduce this in our church, but I plan to develop some of the “stories” in the summer and use them during Children’s Chapel next year. On a broader level the workshop made me think about the philosophy of our RE program at First Church. Thanks to the work of Emily Lichtenstein and myself, the program now runs quite smoothly on an administrative level. We have dedicated volunteer teachers, ample materials, good curricula and adequate space. While our program would benefit from growth, the kids we have are wonderful.

This leaves us free to address a bigger issue: What are our spiritual values and how can we convey them to the children? As teachers I think we often stumble over the “non-creedal” aspect of Unitarianism. We know that our friends in the church community have different beliefs, and we don’t want to impose any one idea on the children. But if we don’t discuss the big things—God, death, suffering—in our classrooms we are not doing our jobs. Being Unitarians, the first thing our kids get used to is a variety of opinions and beliefs. They are already adept at handling diversity in school—they can also cope with it at church.

What I loved about Spirit Play was that it was highly structured, and yet allowed for the exploration of any religious theme. It addressed two of my goals for our program: To teach more of the stories of religion, and to directly address spiritual life with the children.

On a more practical note, classes are finishing up this week with field trips and special activities. June 11 is a Family Service in which we will thank and honor our RE teachers. This summer I look forward to devoting some time to larger issues such as publicity for our program, physical improvements to the stage area, and creating effective teaching teams for each of next year’s classes. Now is the time to contact me to volunteer to teach an RE class next year, or work with youth, lead Children’s Chapel, or do a special project with the children. I look forward to hearing from many of you soon.

Best wishes, Andree Zaleska

Honoring our RE Teachers

We are all grateful for the abundance of good teachers in our RE program:

Extra special thanks to Larry Zaborski and Suzanne Demarco for teaching 2 terms each! A medal of courage to Brendan Halpin for teaching the long and arduous OWL class (2 hours a week for 2/3 of the year).

Our other teachers for this year were: Laura McCord, Valerie Marren, Kevin Marren, Will Espanola, Laurie Huber, Alice Hawley, Cherisse Blackman, Robert Amelio, Kip Keith, Chris DeChene, Janet Chumley, Carol Bell, Libba Ingram, Beth Burlingame and Andree Zaleska. Our babysitters and classroom assistants were Amelia Burke, Elizabeth Hawley, and Olivia Wardle.

Thanks to Roisin Foley and Janna Frelich for organizing the youth film nights.

Teaching is good for the soul! Thank you all for a great year, and may we all have a peaceful and sunny summer.

Coming Up at First Church

Annual YARD SALE/CRAFT FAIR/BARBECUE is from 10 am to 4 pm Saturday, June 3rd. Please tell your friends and neighbors to come take advantage of the bargains, shop for crafts, and chow down on the fabulous barbecue!!

You can help the hungry locally: We have hungry people coming to the church, and Sojourner house needs food as well. Please bring donations of **canned** or **bottled** food such as peanut butter, tuna, jam, beans, vegetables, juice, canned meats, nuts, soups, pasta, etc. Leave your donations on any Sunday and put them in the boxes in the back pews. Thank you!

End of the Year Picnic: After the service on June 11th we will have our end-of-the-year picnic. We will have a potluck outdoors let us know if you can bring a grill to set up. All are welcome!

Spend Father's Day reading a "meditation on fathers and children, particularly sons, on faith, and on the imperfectability of man" and come to **book group** on Tuesday, June 27 at 7:30 to discuss Marilynne Robinson's Gilead. On August 1st, we turn to other family relationships, with Jodi Picoult's My Sister's Keeper, a novel about a girl who was conceived in order to be a genetically perfect donor match for her sister.

GBIO

GBIO Assembly June 8: All are welcome to join a delegation from First Church to an assembly of the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization. The meeting will take place on Thursday, June 8 from 7pm to 9pm at Roxbury Presbyterian Church--328 Warren Street in Roxbury. The meeting will be addressing the ongoing healthcare reform campaign. Car pooling is an option if people want to. Contact Earl Egdall and Jan Wiley or Marshall Hawkins.

Canvass note from Cherisse Blackman

The experience of becoming a new member, and being on the Canvass committee was a fun and exciting introduction to the family at First Church in Jamaica Plain. Working with my fellow canvassers as I mailed out invitations to the Fellowship Dinner, where we all had a great time - and the subsequent visits with my canvasees, allowed me the opportunity not only to understand how important each member is in creating the family atmosphere I have come to love at First Church, but how the church needs every member of its family, not only for your time and talent, but for your treasure, for the support and growth of our church.

In meeting and conversing with people, it also helped me to understand that people have needs too from the church – spiritual growth, acceptance, and love being just a few. What an amazing experience. To date there are still some pledges outstanding. We, the members of the canvass committee want to thank you all for your pledges and the opportunities to meet with you, hearing and understanding your needs, and please, if you haven't sent in your pledge as yet, take this moment to do so, then we can close the books to what has been a wonderful canvassing season!

Miscellaneous

Join the BGMC for an evening of pure show tune fun -- and save \$5 per ticket! A Pride Week Tradition for 24 years!

The men of the Boston Gay Men's Chorus become "Jerry's Boys" for a fully staged evening of showstoppers from great Jerry Herman shows including Hello, Dolly! Mame , and La Cage aux Folles. *Songs include* It's Today, Before the Parade Passes By, I Am What I Am, and 20 more! Memorable melodies...scenery-chewing divas in outrageous costumes...fabulous dancing boys...yards of feather boas...Don't miss the fun.

As a friend of the Chorus, enjoy a special discount to our shows on Thursday and Sunday. Save \$5 per ticket on seats regularly priced \$45, \$35, or \$25.

For Friday tickets and all regular prices seats, click here:
http://www.bgmc.org/purch_indivtix_pride.php

The Best of Times: Jerry Herman's Broadway

Thu. June 8 at 8pm, Fri. June 9 at 8pm, and Sun June 11 at 7 pm

Cutler Majestic Theater, 219 Tremont Street

For all tickets, call 800-233-3123.

For discounted tickets for Thu and Sun, visit <http://www.broadwayoffers.com> and use promo code JHNA432.

Earl Egdall Performs!

Our own Earl Edgall will be performing in this recital, playing two jazz pieces. The performance is free and anyone may come to hear the music:

AN ADULT STUDENT RECITAL

PERFORMED BY THE STUDENTS OF EYRAN KATSENELENOGEN

Saturday, June 10, 2006 --7:00 pm

NEW ENGLAND CONSERVATORY

241 St. Botolph Street, Boston, MA 02115

St. Botolph Building-Room 113

LIVING IN THE KINGDOM-Retreat this fall

Carl Scovel invites interested Christians of all sorts, but especially UU's, to a weekend of prayer, study, companionship and enjoyment of Benedictine hospitality and worship at Glastonbury Abbey in Hingham, MA. The retreat begins on Friday, October 13th, at 7 p.m. and ends on Sunday the 15th after lunch. The Abbey is the scene of a simple, restoring life with nature trails and a newly renovated chapel where the brothers chant the offices five times a day.

The work of the retreat will be studying the parables which Jesus taught, describing God's kingdom, and also his teachings about what it means to live in the kingdom here and now. Carl will be assisted by Karl Haakonsen, Linda Stoker and Nan Stone, all of whom were part of last fall's retreat.

The cost of the retreat will be about \$130 plus a contribution (of whatever one chooses to give) to the King's Chapel Minister's Discretionary Fund for the benefit of a parishioner whom Carl has been helping to support over the past few years. Space is limited to twenty. We will try to help retreatants arriving at Logan Airport get to the retreat center in Hingham.

If you would like a registration form, please email Carl with your name, address, telephone number and email address, if you have one. Email him at carlscovel@comcast.net or contact the church office at 617-524-1634 for his home address and/or phone number.

Recovenanting

Dear Friends -

For those of you who were not present on May 21 to hear about recovenanting, we would like to share what is happening:

Because we are a church with a longstanding relationship with our minister, Rev. Terasa Cooley, our Mass. Bay Executive Director, has recommended a process called recovenanting. This will involve taking a profound look into our church and the wider community to note the many changes since Terry joined us in 1983, and to solicit feedback for all of us to consider as we envision the future of First Church. You will shortly receive a letter explaining the process itself, why we are doing it now, and how we will use the results. Rev. Cooley will be working closely with us to provide guidance.

This summer you will receive a questionnaire from the recovenanting committee asking for your opinions on many aspects of church life: the Sunday services, the music, religious education, committee work, volunteer opportunities, etc. The questionnaire will be both computer-based and available on paper for those who prefer that. Unlike other times in our church life when we come to you asking for feedback such as the annual canvass, the ministerial review, etc., recovenanting gives us the chance to take a deeper look at the church, to come together at a retreat to review all the opinions we have gathered, and then to discuss as one congregation how to recovenant with Terry and with each other on the future of First Church.

We will compile the results of the survey for a congregational retreat on Sept. 30. At the retreat, we will examine the covenant we first established with Terry 20 some years ago, what we think and feel about the church, the changes in both the church and the JP/Roslindale communities over the last 25 years, and how all these affect our lives at First Church today. Everyone is invited to the retreat on Sept. 30. The location will be announced at a later date.

If you have any questions, please contact Margaret Suby, Giulia Norton, or Robert Amelio.

Thank you!

June Calendar next page!!

June 2006, Calendar

- 1 **Thursday** 8:00 pm Choir Party
- 3 **Saturday** 10-4:00 pm Spring Fair & Barbecue
- 4 **Sunday** 11:00 am Come and See
- 5 **Monday** 7:30 pm Building Committee Mtg.
This is a Family Sunday honoring RE Teachers
12:00 pm All Church Potluck
- 7 **Wednesday** 7:00 pm Prayer Group
8:00 pm Final Bible Study group w/Karl
- 10 **Saturday** **GAY PRIDE**
- 11 **Sunday** 11:00 am Community Celebration Sunday
12:45 pm Social Justice Meeting
- 13 **Tuesday** 7:00 pm Church Council Meeting
- 13 **Wednesday** 7:00 pm Prayer Group
- 18 **Sunday** 11:00 am Father's Day-"Our unsung fathers"
- 20 **Tuesday** 7:00 pm Standing Committee Mtg.
- 21 **Wednesday** 7:00 pm Prayer Group
- 25 **Sunday** 11:00 am TBA
- 28 **Wednesday** 7:00 pm Prayer Group
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June Birthdays

Philomena O'Donnell, 1	Ciaran Foley, 12
Gabriela Bishop, 1	Sienna DeSantis, 15
Alice Hawley, 2	Beatrice Espanola-Soltysik, 16
Gabriella Williams-Ferreira, 3	Abby Krueger, 20
Molly Costello-Johnson, 11	Catherine Gdula, 21
Louisa Hemr, 12	