

First Church in Jamaica Plain, Unitarian Universalist

September Newsletter, 2006

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

email: Firstchjp@aol.com

web site: www.firstchurchjp.org

Rev. Terry Burke, Minister
Rev. Marshall Hawkins, Affiliate Minister
Giulia Norton, Standing Committee Chair
George Wardle, Trustees Chair
Andrée Záleská, RE Director

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

Jean O'Leary, Church Administrator

Thoughts From Terry

Someone once wrote that a UU theme park would endlessly play "Morning Has Broken" as background music. It IS a very popular hymn among Unitarian Universalists. One line goes, "praise every morning, God's re-creation of the new day."

I've experienced July and August as a time of re-creation. I preached at three summer services and much church work still continues in the summer, but at a slower pace. And there are few evening meetings!

Some of the highlights of my summer have been: getting our son ready for college; Karl and Cherisse's wedding; time at our friend Priscilla's camp in Maine; learning the "killer fruit" Monty Python routine; and walking our new dog. It's also been a wonderful time to think and plan and pray and write. What sort of things have you been up to this summer? Let us know at firstchjp@aol.com and we'll put a list in the newsletter.

One of the things I've been writing has been a piece for our upcoming church recovenanting process between minister and congregation. As most of you know, I originally came to First Church as a Unitarian Universalist Association Extension Minister in 1983. I had a three-year appointment to build up a small, largely elderly, urban neighborhood church. The congregation grew, and I stayed on as the regularly called minister.

One of the best ways to maintain a healthy long-term relationship is to talk. Many thanks to all of you who provided valuable feedback in the recovenanting survey on the ministry of the church. Our Mass. Bay District Executive Terasa Cooley will lead our process. The needs of the congregation, neighborhood, and minister have changed over the past 23 years. Talking about who we have been and who we are now will help us determine how all those needs can best be met in 2006.

Recovenanting gives us an opportunity to go deeper in our relationship as minister and congregation, both serving First Church's ministry. It's something like renewing wedding vows and choosing to recommit. Please join us at the Malotis Center of Hellenic College on September 30th, 10AM-3PM for this important event! I hope you had a re-creating summer - see you in church! Yours, Terry

Greetings from Andrée, Director of Religious Education

I spent much of the summer in Woods Hole, on Cape Cod, where my family has a tiny cottage. Woods Hole has a damp tropical climate—your beach towel never dries from day to day, and salt sticks in the saltshaker—which is somehow very mellowing. My older son had a rough year in first grade, and I knew he needed a break with sea air and lots of exercise. So I enrolled him in a short science class there that mainly involved wading in tide pools and becoming familiar with the local crab species. My younger son is only 4, and very adept at entertaining himself, so he had no “program” at all for the summer. It was going to be challenging to get any work done, but I thought the boys needed some real down time.

As anticipated, they thrived. A lovely routine fell into place. We spent mornings at the playground, afternoons at the beach. In the evenings we wandered home, dripping sand, and had barbecues with friends. My husband revived an old enthusiasm for windsurfing. What I didn’t anticipate about this summer was how rich it was for me. “Not getting anything done” was spiritually productive, and in the end I even managed to do some work.

“Less IS more!” I started telling everyone I knew. (As at other times when I’ve discovered the True Meaning of Life and then gone about preaching it, I found that most people already know that.)

But September is the time of year when MORE comes at us no matter how we feel about it. School starts again, vacations end, we return to church and resume our roles there. As I have been working to put together teaching teams, classes and curricula for the fall, I am facing a lot of options and suggestions for programming. I find myself trying to integrate the less-is-more idea: We have a one-hour program on Sunday mornings, plus a number of special events throughout the year. If we really concentrate on making those times as good as possible, it will be enough.

RE Classes start Sunday, September 10. Have your kids join us on the stage at 11:00AM for our first Children’s Chapel of the year, and they will be sorted into classes after that ceremony. Remember to register your child (registration forms will be emailed to you, and also available at church).

Volunteers are still needed to teach (the Middlers need one more teacher for Fall). The RE Committee needs a few new members—please contact me if you are interested in joining us.

Looking forward to the new year with all of you,

Andree Zaleska

Zaleska@aczaleska.com

Coming Up at First Church

Everyone is welcome to join the book group, which will be meeting on first Tuesdays (at 7:30 in the Morse Room) this fall. On Sept 5, we’ll discuss *Wicked*, Gregory Maguire’s description of the Wicked Witch of the West’s side of the story. He makes explicit the political situation only presented as allegory in the original tale.

(Coming up-cont.)

We'll spend two months on Don DeLillo's *Underworld* (10/3 and 11/7), a satire of the cold war or "a black comedy about the psychic fallout of nuclear terror." Then, on 12/5, we will discuss V.S. Naipul's *Bend in the River*, set in the Belgian Congo in the early days of Zaire's independence.

THE KICK-OFF event for the new church year is [Saturday, September 9th](#) at 6 pm. The **Annual Barbecue and Potluck** for church members and friends will take place rain or shine, at the home of Cherisse and Karl Haakonsen. Bring your kids, houseguests, significants, and a favorite dish. For further info contact Karl or Cherisse.

Courses and Programs at First Church—Rev. Terry Burke

This year we will have an ongoing series of sermons on “UU Saints,” spiritual giants of our tradition. On September 17th Terry Burke will be speaking on Universalist pioneer John Murray; on October 22nd, Ghanda DiFiglia will preach on UU “Righteous Gentiles” and Holocaust rescuers Martha and Waitstill Sharp; and on November 12, Terry Burke will speak on UU ethicist James Luther Adams, “the smiling prophet.”

Terry will be offering an adult education course on reading the Muslim scriptures, the Koran. The group will meet four Sunday evenings, October 29th - November 19, 7-8:30 PM at the church. The course will focus on the background of the Koran and reading excerpts from the work in English. Sign up on line firstchjp@aol.com or at church; speak to Terry with any questions.

My other plans for adult religious education this year include a course on death and dying during Lent, the church retreat at Glastonbury Abbey in March, and a spring session on Building Your Own Theology. I'm also planning a monthly group for people interested in exploring or deepening their spiritual practices - I'm calling this “Grow a Soul.” The acronym will be GAS; some things are too important to always be taken seriously! Several other people in the church may also have adult religious education offerings.

Is there a subject you would love to study as part of a group at church, led by me or someone else? And while we're at it, are there sermon topics you'd particularly like addressed? Speak to me in person, or email the church at firstchjp@aol.com

Interested in being a reader for Sunday services? Please let Terry know at firstchjp@aol.com. Readers have their text in advance, but are required to run through it on Sunday morning with our finicky microphones.

I'm also trying a liturgical practice this year called “Fifth Sunday.” Several times a year, on the Fifth Sunday of the month, the congregation will be encouraged to bring in readings or stories from their spiritual experience to share on the sermon topic. On October 29th, for our All Souls graveyard service, you may choose to bring in a photo or object associated with a loved one who has died.

Yours, Terry

Be like the bird that, pausing in her flight awhile on boughs too slight, feels them give way beneath her, and yet sings, knowing that she hath wings.

-Victor Hugo

Do you love to sing many different kinds of music? Did you sing in your high school chorus, but haven't found time since then for group singing?

This is a great time to join the Church Choir!

We are a group of friendly people who can carry a tune. Most of us can read music, and the rest of us can follow along. We meet every other Thursday, and sing in the service every other Sunday (missing the three-day weekends).

Come check us out! First rehearsal 8-9:30 pm Thursday, Sept. 7 (ring the Eliot Street bell), to learn music for Sunday, Sept. 10. More info: Ellen McGuire, Music Director - ETut53@aol.com.

UU Offerings

Learn More About Universalism: The Rev. Roberta Finkelstein will give the keynote address, "The Great Unfinished Business," at the New MA Universalist Convention's Annual Conference on Saturday, Sept. 30, at First Parish Church in Dorchester, MA.

"When the American Unitarian Association merged with the Universalist Church of America," she writes, "there were so many logistical issues to attend to, theological issues were left behind. Some among us believe that the vexing theological questions of contemporary Unitarian Universalism (diversity, the language of reverence, various anxieties and reactivities) are the result of that unfinished business."

The Rev. Edmund Robinson and members of the First Church in Belmont, MA will lead worship, "The Good Luck Legend," The program will also include a panel of "old-time Universalists" reflecting on how Universalism as they remember it differs from today's UUism, workshops by the Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Strong ("Remember Universalism into Life") and the Rev. Richard Trudeau ("The Tragedy, and the Glory, of Christianity"), and a car-pool to one or more Dorchester Universalist sites led by Phil Lindsay.

The day will run from 8:30 to 4:30 and include continental breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack. YELLOW registration fliers have been sent to all UU churches in New England. For full information please go to www.nmuc.org and click on "Annual Meeting."

"Freedom of Conscience and the Roots of Religious Toleration" is the topic of the Convocation of the Council of Christian Churches in the UUA. Key figures including Roger Williams, William Penn, and Thomas Jefferson will be discussed by a panel of UU thinkers in light of key Unitarian and Universalist events. The gathering will take place at the King's Chapel Parish House, 64 Beacon Street, Sunday October 15th. Registration will be 1-2PM, with the panel beginning at 2PM. The cost is \$10. Rev. Terry Burke will be preaching the homily at the communion service following the panel discussion.

Miscellaneous

Wanted: Small Air Conditioner for First Church office.

Peter Connolly broke his ankle playing basketball this past weekend, and will be recovering for 4-6 weeks. He is very much in need of aid including people to shop for him, cook some meals, and help with light chores or errands. You can contact him at home. Or call Carol Bell at home evenings.

Food Pantry: Please continue to bring in your non-perishable foods for the food pantry. We literally give food to people every week. No food in bags, please--cans and jars and boxes (that are in good condition) are preferable.

This month's birthdays!

Ian Hay	4	William Kondroski	14
Robert Amelio	4	Jane Kenschaft	21
Peter Connolly	6	David Dorney	21
Kay Mathew	7	Jennifer O'Halloran	22
Kevin Foley	9	Carl Martland	22
Cathy Baisly	9	Hilary Carito	23
Alex Shimada-Brand	10	Heather Carito	24
Alex Williams-Ferreira	12	Giulia Norton	26
Chris Clemens	13	Jonathan Campbell	27



September calendar follows!

CALENDAR-September

3	Sunday	11:00 am	Margaret Suby & David Dorney
4	Monday	LABOR DAY HOLIDAY	
5	Tuesday	7:30 pm	Book Group
6	Wednesday	7:00 pm	Prayer Group
7	Thursday	8:00 pm	Choir rehearsal
9	Saturday	6:00 pm	Ingathering Potluck/Barbecue Karl and Cherisse's House
10	Sunday	9:30 am 11:00 am	New Comers Breakfast A Theology of Joy (We welcome new members as part of this service.)
14	Wednesday	7:00 pm	Prayer Group
15-16	Friday/Saturday	STANDING COMMITTEE RETREAT	
17	Sunday	11:00 am	"UU Saints: John Murray" Installation of Church Standing Committee
24	Sunday	11:00 am	"Moses", Rosh Hashanah and Ramadan
30	Saturday	10-3 pm	Recovenanting Process
1	Sunday	11:00 am	"Noah Way" (Yom Kippur & World Communion Sunday)

J.P. Open Studios – Saturday, September 30 & Sunday, October 1

