

FIRST PARISH OF SUDBURY CONNECTOR

Issue: December 14, 2008

Connector Deadline: each Wednesday at 5:00pm for the next week's issue

Editor: Fran Sharp
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MAKING MEANINGS

As I write, I have the details of seven services coming in the next 13 days swirling around in my head. Festive ones, a deep, meditative one, one to honor a life well-lived and today's Village Worship to consider the real value of simple gifts.

I love our Simple Gift Swap which follows the Village Worship service. By now, it has become an annual tradition here at First Parish thanks to Geneviève Dionne whose gift was the idea itself. I love its messages: things don't have to be big or expensive to be special; beautiful, useful, fanciful gifts, used again, are gifts to the people we love *and* to our earth, too. I love watching the children "shop" and the shenanigans that go on to suggest that you might like to *receive* a particular gift! (You see, it's all free, but there is one rule: you must choose something to give to someone else, not for yourself.) It is such fun to watch folks leave with their (recycled) shopping bags, filled with new and nearly new gifts festively wrapped in (recycled) paper and (recycled) ribbon. It is a blessing to know that all that fun didn't cost anyone a dime.

I am reminded of a story I heard on the radio years ago. It was told by Carmen Deedy, a professional storyteller who had gone to a very small town in the hills of Kentucky in early December to share the gift of story. She went to the schools and met with the children. She told stories and got them telling stories. Here's how I remember it.

After nearly a week, she had become quite fond of the children and they of her: one young boy in particular. He was very poor. All the children were. But he had such a bright spirit. When she told her stories, he lit up. And when he told his, she lit up.

The day before she was to leave this little Kentucky town, the boy – we'll call him Joey – came to Carmen Deedy holding something behind his back. "Carmen Deedy, Carmen Deedy," he said excitedly.

[She pointed out that all the children called her Carmen Deedy, not Carmen or Miss Deedy, but Carmen Deedy.] "Carmen Deedy," he said again, almost hopping with excitement, "I brought you a gift."

Carmen Deedy looked at the child. He had no shoes (and it was cold). He was scruffy and scrawny and looked as if he needed both a hot meal and a hot bath. His clothes were neat, but patched and worn. If it hadn't been for those exceptionally bright eyes, Joey looked like almost all the other children she'd met.

She knelt to receive his gift. He shoved a smooth stone – about the size of her palm – into her hand. "Why Joey," Carmen Deedy said sincerely, "this is beautiful. I've never seen anything like it."

"I know," he said, "I walked all the way to the boulders to get it for you."

"Oh Joey," she said, knowing the walk was dangerous and at least a mile and a half one-way, "you didn't have to do that! You didn't have to walk all that way. A simple 'Merry Christmas' would do!"

"But Carmen Deedy," he shot back, "Don't you know? The walk was part of the gift!"

*Don't you know?
The walk was part of the gift!*

As you plan your season with its swirling demands punctuated by meditative and festive, consider what simple gifts you may have to offer: to yourself, to the precious ones on your personal list, and – maybe most important of all – to the ones in the world who need to give and receive a gift more than anything.

And while you're considering what those gifts may be – please remember to make the walk part of the gift.

~ Katie Lee


R.E.FLECTIONS BY A CHALICE D.R.E. AMER

Roberta Altamari, Director of Religious Exploration
and Youth Ministry

My how the months are just flying by. I can not believe that the winter holidays are already here, but I'm having a wonderful time celebrating them with you! We started the holiday season with Thanksgiving and I saved a poem that one of our Breakfast Club youth wrote for the families receiving our care-packages. I thought it was a perfect sentiment for the entire season.

Give thanks! This is a time to give thanks. For family, for friendship, for the food on your table and for a sparkle of hope inside us all. Spend time with your family and give thanks!

Amazing! I'm often so pleasantly surprised and inspired when our children share. They speak directly from the heart in a true and beautiful way. I feel so grateful every time they open their spirits.

I recently took the Religious Education module on teacher development. The highlight of the training was the idea that teaching in RE is a spiritual practice for adults and that children have as much to give us as we give to them. I already knew this, but it was nice to be reminded.

I am reminded most often by our own children. When I gathered with them for the special Social Justice Sunday two weeks ago, I was worried about how to explain to them why we make care packages for prisoners. I had already gotten questions from a few adults prior to doing it and I was nervous about how the kids would respond. I guessed that I would just use our principles to illustrate my answers.

When the time arrived, I started out by asking instead of telling the kids why we would reach out to the prisoners. Their answers were stunning! So great that I must share them with you ... "They're lonely, lonely people. They're misguided. They're already excluded from the social world because they made a mistake and this helps connect them to society. They can't afford their own stuff because they're not working. The holiday is already stressful on their families, so every little bit helps." Wow. These are a perfect example of our Faith-In-Action in their words and deeds!

As our holiday season continues, I look forward to seeing how the children and youth transform the holidays. What gifts will they share with us? Our pageant at the Christmas Eve family service will highlight the ways our Unitarian and Universalist ancestors have contributed to the Christmas holiday. They are like peace angels. And so are our children!!

~ Loving blessings, Roberta ♥

UU KIDS IN ACTION

From November to January, we hope that all of you will participate in the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee's Guest at Your Table project. Imagine there is a guest at your dinner table every day for this holiday season and donate the equivalent cost of your meals to the important work of UUSC to bring clean water and human rights to our international neighbors who are far less fortunate than we are. If you didn't get a box yet, be sure to pick one up next time you are at First Parish!

Stay tuned to the Connector as January arrives for great Faith-In-Action projects for kids, adults, and families to participate in!

... in the words of Mother Teresa, "God does not call us to do great things but to do small things with great love."

COMING UP IN OUR CHILDREN'S & YOUTH MINISTRY

For the next two Sundays, we will be celebrating the winter holidays in our Religious Education program. On Sunday, December 21st, all children and youth will meet together to celebrate this season of "light" with a variety of inspiring and festive activities. And then on Sunday, December 28th, all children and youth will meet together for a very special New Year's celebration with our guests from Wayland and Framingham.



Our Youth Group at First Parish is transforming a downstairs space into its "Mushroom" (a.k.a. Multi Use Spiritual Habitat Room). If you receive a holiday gift this year and have a gently used item that is on their wish list, please consider donating. The list includes a couch, beanbag chairs, a clock, a CD player, and an iPod player.

Check out the website for news about what our youth are doing. December is turning into a fun month for connecting with each other and other Youth Groups. January will bring some worthwhile Faith-In-Action projects!

FIRST PARISH OF SUDBURY'S PASTORAL ASSOCIATES

Annmarie	Fred P
Audrey	Paul R
Polly	Dawn S
Bruce	

In the event of a pastoral need, please call our minister or any of these Pastoral Associates.



WORSHIP AT THE MEETING HOUSE

Sunday, December 21, 10 am
First Light
 Rev. Katie Lee Crane

Hanukkah begins at sundown this Sunday, Dec. 21. As Jewish families around the world prepare to light the first candle, we will pause to ask what this beautiful tradition has to teach us. Katie Lee writes “This is also the season of the Winter Solstice and other midwinter festivals of light, such as the holy days of Christmas and the holidays of Kwanzaa. How do we Unitarian Universalists honor this season in our own authentic ways?”

There will be a Hearthside Chat at 11:45 to have a conversation about the day’s topic and the issues it raises.

For a description of our Holiday Services on Christmas Eve and Christmas morning, see page 4.

Sunday, December 28, 10 am (at FPS)
Watch Night
 Ms. Michelle LaGrave

It is our annual holiday tradition to share this last service of the calendar year with our neighbors. This year we will host the good folks from First Parish in Wayland and First Parish in Framingham.

Michelle LaGrave is a student at Andover Newton Theological School, working toward her Master of Divinity degree. She is a candidate for the Unitarian Universalist ministry and is serving as the intern minister at First Parish in Framingham.

Ms. LaGrave writes of the service on Dec. 28, “When we think about celebrating the New Year, images of Father Time and late-night parties in Times Square may be the first to appear. However, New Year’s Eve is also known as “Watch Night” in some religious contexts and is a time of renewing covenants and self-consecration. As Unitarian Universalists, how can we find a deeper meaning to our New Year celebrations?”

NURTURE Your Spirit.
Help HEAL Our World.



Sunday, January 4, 10 am
Endings & Beginnings
 Rev. Katie Lee Crane

We begin the new year with the annual ritual of noting those who have died and those who were born during 2008. It is a profound experience to learn how many of us have been touched personally by death and by birth. We invite people to submit names in advance (though they will be accepted on the day of the service); please send only the name (pronunciation, if necessary) and whether the person died or was born. This year, we encourage you to bring a photo of those whom you want to honor in this service. All photos will be placed on the altar table at the beginning of the service.

There will be a Hearthside Chat at 11:45 to have a conversation about the day’s topic and the issues it raises.

Sunday, January 11, 10 am
Remember Piglet?
 Rev. Katie Lee Crane

We are calling today *Covenant Sunday* because we are celebrating several anniversaries of our ministry together. This marks the 20th anniversary of Debra Morris-Bennett joining First Parish as its Music Director, and 10 years since we installed our settled minister, the Rev. Katie Lee Crane. This will be a time to look back and look ahead. Where were we then? And where are we going now? It will also be a time to celebrate all aspects of our ministry and the many people – both volunteers and staff – who give life and meaning and purpose to the ministry of this congregation. We are stewards of a 369-year-old ministry and *we are all in this together.*

There will be a celebration in the Parish Hall following this service.

TUESDAY LUNCH AND DISCUSSION
 DECEMBER 23, 12 NOON

On the 4th Tuesdays of the month, we offer a variation on our bring-your-own Tuesday lunch. It’s still BYO, but in addition we engage in a focused conversation on a particular topic.

On Tuesday, December 23, we will gather at noon to each our lunches and to have a little discussion about winter and the holidays.

Come and “just bring you”, or if you wish, bring a favorite poem, or a story or memory to share.

All are very welcome. We meet in The Commons at noon, and end by 1:00.

HOLIDAY WORSHIP SERVICES**Christmas Eve, December 24, 5 pm****Family Holiday Service**

Ms. Roberta Altamari, Rev. Katie Lee Crane, and guest Stars

Join us in a festive and worshipful celebration of the gifts our Unitarian and Universalist ancestors have contributed to the Christmas holiday. Enjoy the magic of tradition and community coming together for a wonderful service. Get inspired by these amazing people to become a peace angel this Christmas!

This service will be interpreted in ASL (American Sign Language.)

Christmas Eve, December 24, 7 pm**Candlelight Service**

Rev. Katie Lee Crane

Join us for carols and candlelight, readings and reflections on this season of layered traditions celebrating midwinter, the birth of Jesus, new light/new life, joy and hope. This service is a quiet, meditative service to help us center ourselves, make ready, and focus on the reasons for the season. People of all ages are welcome to worship at this service. There are no children's programs nor is childcare provided.

Christmas Day, December 25, 10 am

Rev. Katie Lee Crane & friends

Join our minister and friends by the fire for an informal time of carols and stories and sharing on Christmas Morning.

JOIN KATIE LEE ON CHRISTMAS DAY

Katie Lee reports that she loves all three of the different and wonderful services we offer to celebrate Christmas but, she admits, the informal service on Christmas morning is something quite special. It's usually small and informal. There's singing and stories and a fire in the Brackett Room fireplace. There are single folks and extended families. There are little ones who've already been up for hours and, well, the rest of us.

If your plans can include joining Katie Lee on Christmas morning for this lovely service, she would welcome some help: a fire builder, a caroler or two (doesn't matter if we're off key, so is the piano!) and, perhaps someone to put on a pot of coffee and bring a few cookies that Santa didn't eat the night before.

Please call Katie Lee if you would like to assist on Christmas morning. Just your being there would be a gift in itself.

PS: there are still a few opportunities for readers and candle lighting individuals or families on Christmas Eve at the 7 pm service.

HOLLY FAIR WRAP UP

YOU DID IT!!! The emphasis is on YOU--you being each and every single one of you who contributed in ways large and small to making the Holly Fair such a success, monetarily as well as spiritually. The Holly Fair is truly a congregation-wide event and makes us feel like an extended family all coming together for the holidays to achieve a common goal. It is especially heartening when you come forth and volunteer, saying you have a few hours available, or ask how you can help, or being responsive to our sign-up sheets on Sunday mornings.

Every year when we start to schedule craft workshops in the late fall, we realize that we should have started them earlier. We'd like to set up a series of once-a-month workshops starting in late winter. We'll probably start with some Wednesday nights when the quilting/sewing group is meeting to get some participants who are already at First Parish. We'd be delighted to schedule workshops at other times--just let us know when you want to come! We'd also love to hear about YOUR craft ideas. Have you always wanted to learn how to do a particular craft? Let's try it together!

We wish everyone the happiest of holidays, and a wonderful New Year and abundant good health!

Dawn S and Cilla R

**FRUITFUL DARKNESS:****HALF-DAY RETREAT AT FIRST PARISH**

JANUARY 24, 2009

First Parish is sponsoring a half-day retreat on Saturday, January 24 from 1:00-4:30 pm in The Commons.

Drawing on two intuitive processes - InterPlay and SoulCollage - participants will explore the place of fruitful darkness within each of us. Leaders C.C. King and Pam Swing suggest that the retreat will help us ask: "When there is a deep quietness in nature, what does our spirit/body/soul crave? Can we get a peek at what be already incubating within, waiting for the return of the light to grow?"

Advanced registration is required and the fee for the retreat is \$45; scholarship money is available. To learn more about InterPlay and SoulCollage, call or email Rev. Katie Lee Crane. To register, call or email the First Parish Office.

FAITH IN ACTION NEWS

Your Faith in Action Committee is asking you to support several of its programs this winter:

Partakers We are mentoring Nate, a 33 year old prisoner at MCI Norfolk, in his effort to earn a college degree. He has relatively few family members and really enjoys receiving mail and especially pretty cards. If you would like to brighten his day this holiday season, please email or call Carolyn L and she will give you his address.

When you send a card, please sign only your first name inside the card, add "a First Parish member or friend" after your name, and for the return address use:
Partaker, First Parish of Sudbury, 327 Concord Rd, Sudbury, MA 01776

Are Your Guest-at-Your-Table Boxes Bulging? About a month has gone by since these boxes were distributed for your family to act as though it had an imaginary guest at the table at each meal, and to put in the box what it would have cost you to feed that guest. The amount of money you amass will be collected on January 11 in the form of a check made out to the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC). This money will help our Service Committee help people throughout the world get clean, affordable and sufficient water; living wages; and disaster relief.

One day when you have time, you might choose a "guest" from a developing nation that you know little or nothing about, and research on the internet the living conditions of most of the people in that nation. You might be astonished to find out how little some have.

If you have not yet picked up a box, you can find one on the bench in the upstairs foyer by the elevator, or in the office.

They're due back on January 11, with the information requested on the top filled in, and with a check inside made out to the UUSC for the money you will have collected.

Sudbury Food Pantry Closer to home, the Sudbury Food Pantry distributes over 10,000 pounds of free food **each month** to needy families in Sudbury and adjacent towns. The Pantry uses paper bags to package the food. You can support the Pantry by bringing paper bags to the church building each Sunday and leaving them in the box in the Parish Hall. Volunteers are also needed to help with stocking the Pantry. For more info, call Tom Arnold.

The offering at our worship service on Sunday, Dec. 21 will be donated in its entirety to the Sudbury Food Pantry. Please give as generously as you can.

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY SUDBURY PROJECT

By the time you read this, the two families who will help build and live in the Habitat For Humanity homes will be selected by lottery on December 11, 2008. These families will have an incredible opportunity to become homeowners provided by the unique Habitat model and supported by a Family Partnership Committee. The local team is just starting, and there is room for one or two more people - if you are interested in helping the families in this way, please contact Beth R.

We are happy to donate the collection plate from both our Christmas Eve services to the Habitat project. This year's donation joins our financial contribution of \$1,300 last year to the project which our Landscape Committee collected for the project through their annual Mums sale. This will help fund the landscape materials and plantings for the property. Look for more information in the spring.

If you have driven by the site recently at the corner of Pratts Mill Rd. and Dutton Rd. in Sudbury, you will see the house taking shape. There is a second floor and you can tell the volunteers have been working hard. There are great pictures at the website: <http://www.gwhfh.org/>

First Parish has reserved a build day, MARCH 14, 2009. Mark it on your calendar. This is a congregational-wide opportunity - all ages all abilities and all interests. We will build, carry supplies, prepare and feed the workers. Maybe we can hang our First Parish banners up and create signs for the passers by? There are still some spots available. Let Beth R know if you are interested.

The *Fundraising Committee* has also been busy creating other ways to support the building, and have launched a raffle of 2009 Volvo. Support the Sudbury Habitat house and get a chance to win a 2009 Volvo S40 provided by Lee Volvo of Wellesley. Car raffle tickets can be purchased by calling 508.799.9259. Buy one for yourself and one as a holiday gift for those hard-to-buy-for people on your list. Tickets are \$100 each or 6 tickets for \$500 - only 1000 tickets will be sold!

Secret Santa Thanks to all who participated in the Secret Santa gift-giving program this year. All 54 children will receive gifts thanks to the generosity of the members and friends of our congregation.



TEMPO TIME

First Parish of Sudbury is pleased to offer **TempoTime**, a free and very popular "music and movement" program for children ages 2 to 6 and their parents/care-givers.

TempoTime will take place from 10am to 11:30am on the following Saturdays:

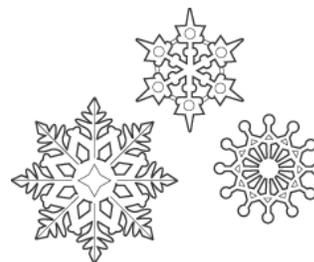
December 20, January 11, January 24, February 14, February 28, March 14, and March 28.

Come sing, dance, and have fun with your child!! Then stay for a snack and simple craft. Everyone is welcome and you do not have to be a member of First Parish to attend. Please help spread the word to folks you know with young children.

For more information, contact Roberta at dre@fpsudbury.org

WOMEN'S ALLIANCE RETREAT: APRIL 3-5, 2009

All women are warmly invited to a weekend of solitude and companionship, fun and laughter, while building community with other women of the parish. Are you in need of introspection, reflection, and spiritual renewal? Then come to the Women's Alliance 22nd Annual Retreat April 3-5, 2009. No previous participation in any Women's Alliance event required. For more details, contact Donna Scalcione at office@fpsudbury.org or speak with Susan C, Fran Sharp, Annmarie A or Dusty R at coffee hour and watch for the Alliance Retreat flyer in the entrance lobby in January.



EMERGENCY CLOSING INFORMATION

If worship services and other events at First Parish need to be cancelled due to severe weather or other emergency situations, here's how you can find out:

By phone—check the recorded message at the First Parish number, 978/443-2043. If events for Sunday have been cancelled, the message will state that.

First Parish website—go to www.fpsudbury.org. The front page will show information about the emergency closing.

WBZ Radio website—If for any reason you can't access our First Parish website, you can go to www.wbz.com, click on "School Closings from the WBZ Storm Center" button, click on "Religious" and scroll down to look for "First Parish of Sudbury."

By radio—listen to the WBZ Storm Center (news radio 1030-AM) for the cancellation of our Sunday worship service only. Other events cannot be listed. If the weather is bad enough that you think a meeting or event might be cancelled, please contact the meeting leader.

First Parish of Sudbury Unitarian Universalist
327 Concord Road, Sudbury, MA 01776
978 443-2043, fax: 978 443-4391
Website: www.fpsudbury.org
Office hours: Monday - Friday 9:00-11:30am

We embrace diversity and, as a Welcoming Congregation, are intentional about welcoming the presence and participation of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender persons in all aspects of congregational life.

Minister: <i>Rev. Katie Lee Crane</i>	email: minister@fpsudbury.org
Director of Music: <i>Debra Morris-Bennett</i>	email: musicdir@fpsudbury.org
Director of Rel. Exploration & Youth Advisor: <i>Roberta Altamari</i>	email: dre@fpsudbury.org
Community Life & Communications Coordinator: <i>Fran Sharp</i>	email: connect@fpsudbury.org
Administrator: <i>Donna Scalcione</i>	email: office@fpsudbury.org
Chair, Board of Trustees: <i>Annmarie Allen</i>	

First Parish of Sudbury Events Calendar Dec 14, 2008 to Jan 17, 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Dec 14 8:30a Newcomer Breakfast 10:00a Sunday Worship Service 11:45a Simple Gift Swap II 11:45a Hearthside Chat	Dec 15 7:30p Finance Committee	Dec 16 12:00p Tuesday BYO Lunch 7:30p Worship Associates Group: Cancelled	Dec 17 7:00p Quilters	Dec 18 1:00p Meditation 2:00p HRC 7:30p Choir	Dec 19	Dec 20 10:00a TempoTime 1:00p Hughes Memorial
Dec 21 10:00a Sunday Worship Service 11:45a Landscape Committee 11:45a Hearthside Chat	Dec 22 7:00p Spirit Play Task Force 7:00p RE Committee	Dec 23 12:00p Fourth Tuesday Lunch and Discussion 7:30p Pastoral Associates Group	Dec 24 5:00p Christmas Eve Service 7:00p Christmas Eve Service	Dec 25 10:00a Christmas morning	Dec 26	Dec 27
Dec 28 10:00a Sunday Worship Service with Wayland & Framingham	Dec 29	Dec 30	Dec 31	Jan 1	Jan 2 7:00p Our Whole Lives Parent orientation	Jan 3 11:00a Chalice Circle Conveners
Jan 4 10:00a Sunday Worship Service 11:45a Hearthside Chat 7:30p Green Sanc. Committee	Jan 5 6:30p Habitat for Humanity 7:30p Board of Trustees	Jan 6 12:00p Tuesday BYO Lunch 7:30p Committee on Ministry	Jan 7 7:00p Quilters	Jan 8 1:00p Meditation 7:30p Choir	Jan 9 7:00p Chalice Circle	Jan 10 10:00a TempoTime program: music & movement fun\, craft\, and snack
Jan 11 10:00a Sunday Worship Service 11:45a Hearthside Chat 11:45a FIA meeting 2:30p Coming of Age Workshop	Jan 12	Jan 13 12:00p Tuesday BYO Lunch 7:30p Program Council	Jan 14 7:00p Quilters 7:30p Bible Conversation	Jan 15 1:00p Meditation 7:30p Choir	Jan 16	Jan 17

The up-to-date First Parish calendar can be seen online at: www.fpsudbury.org.

Please remember that all events and meetings must be scheduled by the Administrator, Donna Scalcione.