
First Parish of Sudbury News

April 23, 2006

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Making Meanings

Our financial advisor was surprised to see how much of our discretionary income we give away. "Wow," she said, "you're among the few people I know who come close to tithing." [A tithe is 10% of one's income given as a voluntary contribution.] To her credit, she did not suggest that we cut back on our gifts, even though it is clear that we need to plan prudently for the future. Much of that money goes to three congregations: First Parish, St. Elizabeth's (where Jonas worships) and the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Upper Valley (Norwich, Vermont) where I remain a member.

Every year we have the same conversation. There is so much need everywhere. There are so many worthy requests. Does it make sense to make lots of little gifts, or the biggest gifts we can to the handful of places we feel our dollars can make a real difference. Every year we opt for the latter. Think globally, act locally.

I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something. And because I cannot do everything I will not refuse to do the something that I can do.

-Edward Everett Hale

I know our dollars make a difference here. I believe we change lives: our own and others. I know it when a child I first met when she was eight (now, she's a teen) makes an impassioned plea to her (*our*) congregation to help the Haitian people. Or another I met as a pre-teen (now a young adult) taking time out from college to go on a Global Habitat for Humanity project in Honduras. I know it when you say: "I've grown so much spiritually, here." When you say: "I am so glad I found First Parish," or "Now, I dare to live my values out loud everywhere I go." I know it when you say: "Coming here has changed my life," because coming here has changed *my* life, too! I know it when I officiate at a marriage that once would have been illegal. I know it when a young child asks me why we talk about God or whether there's something we can do to help the animals whose barn burned down. I know how important it is that we continue to sustain this living, loving, vibrant community to serve the larger community, each other, and ourselves.

And I know it takes money to do it. That's why we stretch to give as much as we can. It's just that important!

Katie Lee

Why do I make a leadership pledge to First Parish? I work here. I'm not a member; I can't vote. With a child in college and moonlighting as a tutor, there are so many reasons not to pledge, much less at the leadership level. What's going on??

In essence, this place sends forth strong hands and voices on behalf of those who are disempowered and voiceless. The ripple effect is immeasurable... By putting my resources here, I am choosing hope.

What's going on is that this congregation has moved my heart and soul and now...purse. After nearly four years I have come to realize some undeniable truths about First Parish. That I believe in you, in us, and in what we are doing. By putting my money *here* I support global efforts—ministry to the earth, the UU Service Committee, Habitat for Humanity, refugee ministry and so many other causes our Faith in Action champions. And I am acting locally. This congregation nurtures people who go out and do things like prison ministry, feeding the hungry, raising money for juvenile diabetes, working on legislation for the homeless and the working poor. In essence, this place sends forth strong hands and voices on behalf of those who are disempowered and voiceless. The ripple effect is immeasurable.

Speaking of ripple effects, the thing I know the most deeply is that we are helping to raise children who are already and will continue to change the world with their imagination, heart, compassion, passion and gifts. And we support families struggling to raise people of integrity and spiritual strength in a culture that is often antithetical to their values. By putting my resources *here*, I am choosing hope—hope that our young people will carry forth and increase goodness in our beautiful, glorious, hurting world.

I guess last, but not least, is that in the time I've been with you, I have come to trust you. You will use my financial gifts well; they will not be squandered. You are good stewards.

In order to make this pledge, I am giving up some things—little luxuries, mostly. It feels right in my spirit to do so; it's a good trade. I feel richer, actually. Thank you all for giving me such a worthy place to put my treasure.

Tracy

People We Care About



This column seeks to share news (happy, sad, exciting events) of our lives so that we may support each other as we travel this road together. May it be so.

This column is not available on the First Parish website version of the newsletter. If you need information, contact the FPS office.

If you have news for this column, send it via email to the First Parish Office. (office@fpsudbury.org)

Donna

First Parish of Sudbury’s Pastoral Associates

- Annmarie A
- Geneviève D
- Audrey K
- Linda L
- I Susan McK
- Polly M
- Fred P
- I Karen R
- Bev W

I *Pastoral Associates On Call during April*



First Parish Canvass

Did you know that every possible pledge of financial support is needed? The Canvass Committee reports that in general the Canvass is going well, but that for reasons unrelated to First Parish, several major contributions have been decreased. This means that the likely outcome of the canvass is suddenly, unexpectedly below the amount needed to meet the projected expenses. Core services, salaries or programs will have to be cut unless pledges from other members and friends make up the difference.

If you have not already pledged, please contact your canvasser quickly—**by Monday, April 24**--with the most generous pledge you can. If you don't know your canvasser, please send your pledge to Colin A at his email address, or contact him by phone. If you have already pledged, we thank you for your generosity and will let you know shortly what further action may be needed.

First Parish Music Sunday Celebrates Thoreau and the Art of Nature

Sunday, April 30, 10:00 a.m.

Join us for our spring Music Sunday service, when writer/philosopher/naturalist Henry David Thoreau comes to life through a special musical performance. *Acquaintance With Nature*, a nine-part piece for chorus, piano, clarinet and narrator (who plays the role of the young Thoreau), was written by Vermont composer Gwyneth Walker and will feature the First Parish Choir.

Walker, herself, will be present as the First Parish Choir, narrator, and guest musicians, all led by Debra Morris-Bennett, First Parish Music Director, perform the piece. Guest instrumentalists will be Noriko Y on piano and Aline B on clarinet.

The April 30 event will feature more than music. First Parish has invited four Sudbury artists with ties to the congregation to exhibit a sampling of their art during the worship service – both watercolor and photography that explores nature themes. On Saturday afternoon, April 29 at 4 PM (meeting at First Parish to carpool at 4 PM), people of all ages and most abilities will join together in a guided “Spirit Walk,” meandering along a path at Mount Misery Conservation Land in Lincoln, one of the many local walks Thoreau wrote about in his journals.

Gwyneth Walker will be present for the Sunday service with her aunt Mrs. Mary W of Concord, Massachusetts. The composer’s uncle and her aunt’s late husband, Eugene, is the inspiration for this particular composition. “It was Eugene who first took me on a walk to Walden Pond,” the composer explained. It was he, she says, who “introduced me to the writings of Henry David Thoreau.” Her uncle served as President of the Thoreau Society in Concord and she has asked that this worship be dedicated to him.

Auction Results

Thank you to everyone for participating in our very successful Service Auction on April 1. We appreciate those who came and bought many things, those who came and bought only one item, and all those who came and had a fun evening. After expenses, we raised over \$12,000! The monetary success of the Auction is not its only value, it was also a wonderfully festive social occasion. It is impossible to thank everyone in this brief article, so, please look for more of a report in the next E-News Bulletin. Also, if you need to know who donated or won any items, contact Jan H, preferably through email: jch@jch.com, or by phone.

Annual Congregational Meeting

Hold the Date: **Sunday, May 21** at 11:15am

This year's congregational meeting will take place after a quick cup of coffee on May 21. All members of the congregation should plan to come and exercise their vote on matters important to the ongoing ministry of First Parish. Friends are very welcome, too, to join in the conversation.

The warrant will be mailed to FPS members in advance, and copies will be available for anyone who would like one, by Sunday, May 14.

Also available at the Annual Congregational Meeting will be the 2006 First Parish Annual Report, including the reports of elected leaders, staff, committees and groups at FPS.



If you are responsible for writing a report, remember that they need to be turned in to the Administrator, Fran Sharp (office@fpsudbury.org) by **Friday, April 28**.

Bruce L to Receive Jane Coddington Award

Join us on Sunday, April 23 following worship when our own Bruce L will be presented with this year's Jane Coddington Award. The award was inaugurated in 2000 by The Earth Decade Committee to honor the memory of local environmentalist, Jane Coddington, and to celebrate those among us who continue the work she was so passionate about throughout her life.



UUs to March in Pride Parade

Sat. June 10, meeting at Arlington St. Church in Boston at 11am, UUs will march together again in Boston's

Pride Parade. FPS's Welcoming Congregation Committee is organizing a group to join with other marchers. For more information, contact Donna S, Chair of the Welcoming Congregation Comm.

Board of Trustees Report

by Ginny S, Clerk

The Nominating Committee brought the good news that there is a full slate of Board candidates to be voted on at the annual meeting on May 21. Those who have agreed to be on the slate are Steve Zi, Bridget H, (for three years each) and Steve J (for one year).

Lynn L, who is on the Canvass Committee as well as Shared Gifts and Services/Members and Friends, has offered to lead a "strategic visioning" session for the Trustees plus representatives of various other groups in the congregation, including those who are minimally involved. The purpose is to examine the congregation's issues around volunteerism and financial support, generate solutions and decide on actions to address some of the issues.

The church's Human Resources Committee presented their proposals for performance management (how are the members of our staff doing?). One key element will be the development of goals for each person in collaboration with their relevant committees. Some members of the staff have never had such support in goal-setting and are looking forward to the new process. A timetable for goal-setting, assessments and recommendations for the future was discussed and accepted approximately as proposed.

The Trustees approved the composition and mandate for a task force to negotiate a new "cohabitation agreement" with our tenants.

The Trustees thanked the Safe Congregations task force for its detailed work on safety during Sunday morning worship. The draft report will be sent out to all concerned groups, such as ushers and greeters, to get their comments and suggestions toward a final policy.

Did you know that the **Annual Canvass** depends on each person pledging and meeting their pledge for First Parish to maintain funding of core services, programs, and salaries? At this point, the Canvass is going well, but that several major contributions have been decreased due to various circumstances. This means that the likely outcome of the canvass is unexpectedly below the amount needed to meet the projected expenses. Pledges from other members and friends will be needed to make up the difference.

The next Board meeting will be on Monday, May 1, at 7:30 pm. Board meetings are open and anyone is welcome to attend.

Worship at

the Meeting House
(mostly!)
Sunday, April 23, 10am
The Spirituality of Caring

Katie Lee preaches *The 2005 Auction Sermon*. Fourteen women pooled their resources and commissioned Katie Lee to preach on *The Spirituality of Caring*. The word *comfort*, we are told, means *to make strong*. What is required of us individually and as a community to comfort another? Or to be comforted? What is required spiritually to give and receive comfort? And what is *strong* really?

This will be our monthly "Share The Plate" Sunday, with our offering being shared with the UU Ministry For Earth (MFE.) For more information, see page 5.

Saturday, April 29 4:00*pm
Spirit Walk

(April 30--rain date) As part of our weekend focus on Henry David Thoreau, Tracy and other volunteers will accompany people of all ages and most abilities on a *Spirit Walk* in the Lincoln conservation land that the young Mr. Thoreau frequented. This month's *Village Worship* is an outdoor exploration. The walk will be followed by a pot luck supper back at First Parish.

*Meet in the First Parish parking lot at 4 PM. Or join the group by 4:30 PM at the Mt. Misery trail head on Rt. 117.

Sunday, April 30, 10am
Music Sunday, "Acquaintance With Nature"

Join the Music Director, Debra Morris-Bennett, the First Parish choir, and its special guests for a musical worship called *Acquaintance With Nature* taken from Thoreau's journals and from *Walden*. The composer says of the piece: Thoreau is seeking the depths of life's meaning, the truth that comes when one chooses to 'live deliberately, to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life.' See page 2.

Saturday, May 6, 4:30pm
Village Worship: Blessing of the Animals

Tracy and Katie Lee will lead another Village Worship to bless the four-footed ones, the winged ones, the crawling ones, the slithering ones and more. Join us outside on the front lawn (weather permitting) for a special *Blessing of the Animals*. As always, this multi-generational, interactive worship begins at 4:30 PM and is followed by a potluck supper in the Parish Hall.

Sunday, May 7, 10am
Coming of Age

Join us as we celebrate the Coming of Age of five or our 9th graders. These youth have completed their year-long program of workshops, retreats, and worship planning, and this is the day they will share with us their statements of faith, as written word or perhaps expressed in another way. Don't miss this service, an annual favorite for people of all ages.

And, following the service, our annual Maypole dance will take place outdoors. Come dance and join in this celebrate celebration of joy, merriment and thanksgiving for springtime!

Sunday, May 14, 10am
Listening ... to Our Children

According to our Unitarian Universalist Principles and Purposes, the living tradition which we share draws from many sources. One of these sources is "the words and deeds of prophetic women and men". Fran Sharp, who will join Katie Lee in this service, asks "What about the children?" She will share her perspective and experience that some of our greatest prophets are some of our youngest.

During this service, the First Parish Children's Choir will sing "I am a Child" by Dianna L. Jarvis.

Sunday, May 21, 10am
What You See and What You Don't

Katie Lee is joined by member and magician, Rob K, as they explore *What You See and What You Don't*. Is it a science or is it magic? Is it deception or is it a mystery?

Memorial Garden

It's planting time again in the Memorial Garden! Did you know that you can order a plant, ground cover, tree or bush to be planted in memory of a deceased loved one? You can honor your parents, grandparents, children or spouse no matter how long ago they passed away. Or you can remember them with a page in the Memorial Book even if their ashes are not interred in the Garden. Call or speak with Marge L (co-chair of the Landscape Committee) for more details if you are interested.

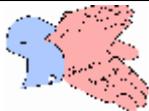
Take a walk in the Memorial Garden each week and watch spring gradually unfold among the memorial plantings. You can also volunteer to help take care of the garden and water it during the dry spells of summer.

Share The Plate Offering UU Ministry for Earth, Sunday April 23



The official launching of the First Parish Green Sanctuary Program took place on March 19 with the worship service "What Does The Earth Require of Us?" led by Katie Lee Crane and Claudia Kern, Chair of the Board for the UU Ministry for Earth (MFE), an independent affiliate organization of the UUA.

The UUMFE (formerly "The Seventh Principle Project") is deeply committed to assisting UU congregations who are working to raise consciousness through congregational and individual action. The urgency of global warming and related environmental justice issues has become overwhelming in many ways, both practical and spiritual and it has become increasingly clear that true justice is no longer possible in the world, or, indeed, in the cities of our nation without a sustainable Earth to live upon. UUMFE is largely alone in responding to the ever-increasing Earth ministry needs of UUs and congregations, and is leading the role of Unitarian Universalism in promoting and creating eco-justice. Your kind donations will be greatly appreciated.



April's Invisible Hands Award Jan (Yon)

"Not invisible" you say? Yes, everyone knew Jan was the Chair of the Service Auction this year (in addition to his role as the Chair of the Board of Trustees). Yes, we heard him asking for items, services, and volunteers to work. But there was much that Jan did behind the scenes to pull the wonderful evening off – an event that earned over \$13,000.00 for First Parish. Many hours of coordination - picking up, dropping off, organizing, setting up, tearing down and computer coordination - went into this year's event with fewer volunteers. Perhaps the most invisible part of it all was 1) though it is well known that our annual service auction is a major component of fundraising revenue for First Parish used for our operating budget, there was no one who would/could commit to taking on this project as the chairperson this year 2) when most others would have let it slide for the year without leadership (and Jan was encouraged to do this too), he was undaunted committing his time, his talent and his efforts to pull it through and put it on. He was there from beginning to end and we all owe him our thanks for a yeoman's effort and great success!



Meet Me in St. Louis?

From June 21-25, the annual General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association will take place, this year in St. Louis. There are already several folks going to GA, including Katie Lee Crane and Tracy Duncan. They would be glad to know who else is planning to attend, so do let them, or Fran Sharp, know if you will be heading west for GA this year. If you are still thinking about it, contact Fran or see the website www.uua.org/ga for more information.

Holly Fair Planning by Cilla R

If spring is here, can the Holly Fair be far behind? Huh? No, really, even though the Fair is scheduled for December 2nd this year, it's not too early for us to start getting organized, particularly since two stalwarts, Sylvia T and Polly M have stepped aside, with our thanks for many years of leadership. Our first order of business is to entice one or two of you folks to share with us the fun and responsibility of chairing this annual fundraiser. We are also soliciting ideas for items for the crafts table to be made at workshops. This year, we would like to start these workshops as soon as possible, at least by summer so that we can avoid a last-minute squeeze on our time. We also welcome crafts you make on your own. Just let us know what you will be making and any way we could lend you a hand.

So, if you are interested in being a craftsperson or in joining Cilla and Sharon as a co-chair, please give them a call.

Human Rights School Partnered by Members

As many of you know, First Parish's own Felisa T and Frank E direct the Human Rights Education Association (HREA) which recently was cited for its partnering of the School for Human Rights in Brooklyn, NY. For more information, see www.hrea.org or www.amnestyusa.org/education/collaboration. Or, of course, speak with Felisa or Frank about their work.



Food&Food for Thought

On Tuesday, April 25 our thoughts will turn to friendship: a friend in need...best friend...an old friend...fair-weather friend...girl-friend or boy-friend...church friend... Come to The Commons at 11:45 for a free lunch and a conversation about friendship. Bring a reading, a thought, or just yourself. You'll be among friends.

Faith in Action News

First Parish Brings a Joyful Noise to Mercy Cross High School in Biloxi Marsha Lyons, the band director at Mercy Cross High School, Biloxi, Mississippi, was happy about the euphonium and percussion instruments purchased from the funds collected by First Parish of Sudbury. She wrote "The whole band is thrilled to have this beautiful new instrument and it sounds terrific. We had been improvising on the percussion with anything that we could find. Our band sends their deep appreciation and your efforts will not be forgotten. Things are far from normal here but are getting better each day. Knowing that people like you are praying for us and doing what you can to help is what keeps our spirits high! "

FPS has completed an extensive fundraising project for Mercy Cross High School. Our Faith in Action committee learned of the school's plight through its friend, Caroline D, whose sister Susan is an art teacher at Mercy Cross. Last fall, monthly support initiatives included filled backpacks, art supplies, and money raised through auction of the 'Hopeful Hearts' quilt, and proceeds from coffee sales. David French Music of Westborough, helped to provide a euphonium and percussion instruments for the band from the funds that were raised. The storm occurred seven months ago, but the rebuilding continues, and will for many months to come.

First Parish Members Visit Norfolk Prison In March, Carolyn L and Judy D made their first visit to the prisoner whom we are mentoring and whose college education First Parish (as a participant in the Partakers program) is helping to support financially. We had found his introductory letter very well written and that when we met him we found that his conversational skills are also very good; that he is very personable; that he works daily in the prison kitchen; that he makes time each day to study, to work out, and to read for pleasure; and time each week to work with a youth group — to help them not make the same mistakes he did. The course he is currently taking is Introduction to Anthropology. Once he's admitted into the college program he will take more courses simultaneously. He expects to get his typewriter (for which he's been saving much of the little money he earns) around the end of April and looks forward to writing to you himself. Annmarie A and Judy expect to visit him on April 25.

Our Next Faith in Action Committee Meeting May 21 at 8:30am. You are very welcome to attend, and to double-check the date and time, see Judy, Beth, or see the FPS calendar at www.fpsudbury.org

Interested in Being Our UUSC Liaison? Judy D has resigned from being First Parish's liaison to the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, and if this position sounds like a good match for your gifts and interests, give Judy a call. She would be glad to tell you more. The tasks include the liaison's choice of: participating in interesting (sometimes exciting) monthly afternoon or evening conference calls, keeping the First Parish congregation aware of UUSC activities to further peace and justice in the United States and throughout the world, and organizing the sale of UUSC holiday cards and the Guest-At Your-Table collection.

A Faith in Action Follow-up Remember HEARTH (Helping Elders at Risk Through Homes)--a recipient of our Share the Plate offering last fall? We recently learned from HEARTH that they were selected by the National Alliance to End Homelessness as the recipient of the *2006 Leadership Award*. Their award for nonprofit leadership will be presented at a ceremony in Washington D.C. this month, before Congresspersons, HUD officials, and other leaders in the movement to end homelessness.

HEARTH is deeply honored to receive this award and is grateful for the national recognition and thankful to contributors like First Parish of Sudbury for the support, which makes this innovative and effective work possible.

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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: Rev. Katie Lee Crane
email: minister@fpsudbury.org

Director of Music: Debra Morris-Bennett
email: music@fpsudbury.org

Director of Religious Education: Tracy Duncan
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Youth Advisor: Greta Stone

Administrator: Fran Sharp

Chair, Bd. of Trustees: Jan H

Treasurer: Jan P