



First Parish in Concord
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
Gathered in 1636

The Meeting House News

REVeries

WREATH MAKING

*Miles away and years ago
On early dark December days
I'd tumble in from school and find
The backdoor entry room transformed — enveloped by the fragrant balsam fir
And other fresh-cut greens whose Latin names
I tried to learn.
The heaps of boughs spilled over
From the soapstone laundry tubs that lined the wall
And soon, in expert hands, quite magically became
Huge wreaths for church and school
And smaller ones for family and for friends.
I did not watch the work or count the hours
Or hold my mother's pitch-stained hands,
But only breathe the air and knew
That Christmas time was near.*

These lines were written by my aunt who died, quite suddenly, a few years ago. She was remembering the wreaths my grandmother had made each year, a sign that holy days were drawing near. Perhaps there are cookies you will bake this month, decorations you will bring out, or songs you will sing, bringing you close to a beloved one.

December days are upon us, bringing us early dark and the lights of Solstice, Christmas and Hanukkah. This is a time to gather close with loved ones, and, if we feel down or lonely, to seek out the company and community of First Parish. Recently, I was surprised by tears as I was preaching, tears that came when I remembered older ladies in my childhood church. Even as a young child, I felt their caring in a way that still moved me to tears, 40 years later. I hope First Parish can be that connection for you and yours.

I hope you will come to the First Tuesday supper and vespers (December 6). Bring your children to make things with their hands (December 3). Let your soul be moved by the *Magnificat* (December 18). Slip into a Christmas Eve service, light a candle, draw a breath, and know yourself to be connected to a community that stretches back hundreds of years, a place where women and men have come with hopes and fears, and have found here a solace and strength they needed for the living of their days. We need that solace and strength too.

Soon, I will travel to the Berkshires. My cousin will show me how to make a wreath, as her mother showed her. We won't get it just right. We will fumble with wire, evergreens and pine cones. I am so looking forward to it. Because I believe that it is in the fumbling, the ordinary, that we are surprised by love, by tears, by the holy. We are surprised by a Spirit that can touch us and hold us and heal us in a way nothing else can. May that Spirit be with you this month.

Cheers,
—Jenny Rankin

Sunday Worship Schedule

December 4
9:00 & 11:00 – wow service
Ways of Worship led by
the 8th Graders
Gospel Choir and
youth musicians

December 11
Gary Smith, preaching
9:00 – Adult Choir and
Junior Choir
Light Everlasting –
Christiansen
11:00 – Handbell Choir and
Chalice Choir
Sleepers Wake –
Bach/McChesney

December 18
Gary Smith, preaching
9:00 & 11:00 – First Parish
Adult Choir and First Parish
Festival Orchestra
Magnificat – Vivaldi

December 25
Gary Smith, worship leader
11:00 – Readings and Carols
(ONE service only)

CORRECTION NOTE!

The red insert page of
Holiday Programs, Events
and Services incorrectly
lists the presentation of
Vivaldi's *Magnificat* on
Sunday, December 11 —
it is on *December 18*.

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There are four inserts with this newsletter:

Wright Tavern Center
Holiday Events, Programs, Services
Saturday Night Fever
Moral Values Survey

The Meeting House News, the newsletter of First Parish in Concord, is published monthly September to June, to provide parishioners and friends with information about our congregation and our larger community.

Please send address changes to:
First Parish in Concord
20 Lexington Road
Concord, MA 01742

Noon Deadline	Mailing Date
Monday, Dec. 12	Wednesday, Dec. 21
Monday, Jan. 13	Wednesday, Jan. 25
Monday, Feb. 13	Tuesday, Feb. 22

Newsletter items should be limited to 100 words and may be delivered, faxed or e-mailed to the church office.

BE AN USHER ON CHRISTMAS EVE!

Christmas Eve at First Parish means glorious music and the warm glow of candlelight. Help share these treasured holiday traditions with friends and visitors to First Parish by ushering at one of our Christmas Eve services. We need adult ushers for services at 4:00, 5:30, 7:00 and 9:00 p.m. No previous ushering experience is necessary; it's easy to learn and we'll show you everything you need to know. To volunteer, or just to find out what's involved, contact **Victor Curran** at 978-618-1348 or vacurran@comcast.net.

Sunday Forum

Forums are held between 10:10 a.m. and 10:55 a.m. in the Chapel. Everyone is welcome to attend. Please contact **Dian Pekin** if you wish to recommend a topic or speaker.

DECEMBER 4

Help for the Homeless

John Mahoney

Although an incredible number of family members are homeless in Massachusetts, many folks are working hard to provide help. John will speak of his work with Community Teamwork in Lowell. This Forum is one of a series addressing the problem of homelessness and is sponsored by the Social Action Council's Homelessness Advocacy Group.

DECEMBER 11

A Visit with Santa

The Old Boy Himself

Santa will visit First Parish again this year to bring holiday cheer and to listen to the wish lists of big and little folks alike. Small gifts will be distributed to children, and parents can take advantage of the photo op!

DECEMBER 18

No Forum

DECEMBER 25

No Forum

NOTE FROM OPEN TABLE

Open Table greatly appreciates donations of nonperishable unopened groceries, kitchen detergents and personal hygiene items such as soap, shampoo, toilet paper and toiletries. You may deliver these items to the bin at Crosby's Marketplace in Concord on any day, or on Thursdays only to our food pantry at 105 Everett Street from 1:45-3:15 p.m., or small quantities to First Parish Church on Thursdays only from 1:30-4:00 p.m. We do not accept clothing, household items, furniture or paint. If you want to donate at another time, or you wish to donate any other kinds of items, please check with Open Table first at 978-369-2275.

Parish Notes

GREETINGS FROM SZÉKELYKERESZTÚR!

As the cold creeps in, the people of Keresztúr work hard to prepare for winter. The church youth have been very active welcoming a youth group from the nearby city of Marosvásárhely for a weekend of food and fun. They're also participating in a pilgrimage to Deva, where David Ferencz was imprisoned, to honor his life.

In my English class we had a Halloween party because my students were interested in how we celebrate the holiday in America. I gave them plenty of candy in return for their great costumes! While they do not celebrate Halloween, November 1 was a day to remember deceased relatives and drive around at night seeing all the cemeteries on the hills overlooking the villages lit up with hundreds of candles. It was breathtaking!

As my time here in Keresztúr is coming to an end, I am realizing that while I have missed everyone back home, and the ability to actually understand the Sunday services, I do not want to leave. My original intention in coming here was to take some time after college, before entering the real world, to try something new, but as anybody who has been here will tell you, it is nearly impossible to come home from Keresztúr as the same person. I thought this would just be a five-month-long experience, but now I know all my memories and friendships will be with me forever.

—Rachel Holt

Rachel Holt is currently living in Szekelykeresztur, among the parishioners of our partner Unitarian church, in response to Rev. Jozsef Szombatfalvi's request for someone to teach English to his congregation. She is doing that, and more, with grace and good humor. Rachel has represented First Parish in a way that makes us proud. She returns to the United States in early December.

TRANSYLVANIA PARTNER CHURCH UPDATE

Not wanting to wait until 2008, our friends in Keresztúr want to host both youth and choir pilgrimages in 2007. We're also overdue for hosting our partner minister, József Szombatfalvi, and his wife. So we're starting plans to get them and a few other Keresztúr leaders here for Thanksgiving 2006. Our challenge to support all these visits means we'll be putting together some great fundraising events over the next 18 months. All are welcome to join our short Partner Church Committee meetings, the second Wednesday of each month, from 6:30 to 7:45 p.m. —Rodger Matlage

THANKS TO THE CARING CONNECTION COOKS

Our thanks to chefs **Linda Reynolds, Audrey Schreifer, Pat Kane, JoAnne Kelch, Rhoda Miller** and **Diane Bleday**, who filled the Caring Connection freezer with homemade meals and soups on October 24. The Caring Connection provides personally delivered meals (by **Bev Bringle** and **Pat Kane**) to new parents, ill or grieving parishioners, and others who could use a loving gesture that shows "we care about you." If you know of someone who would welcome a warm meal, please contact **Karen Foley** at 978-369-9602.

MANY THANKS, ARTISANS AND FAIR HELPERS!

Another successful Artisans Fair has taken place, thanks to many talented artists and artisans and an "army" of cheerful helpers. The Women's Parish Association is grateful to all who attended and volunteered their services. Special thanks go to **Jon Cappetta** and the Fair Committee: **Jen Petersen, Rhoda Miller, Barbara Wheeler, Mary McClintock, Pat Kane** and **Dian Pekin**. This was a wonderful communal effort. The general feeling among the artisans is that it is their favorite fair.

HERB GARDEN NOTE CARDS

PARISH NOTES continued on page 7

In this darkest time of the year, at the very time when our bodies often want most to rest and renew—even perhaps to hibernate!—the holidays beckon and our cultural impulse is to kindle lights, gather, and feast, sometimes to extremes of extroversion and consumerism. Honoring the darkness, within us and without us, could deepen our grounding and help us see what is most important to us. We could bring that grounding and awareness to our festivals of light in these next weeks before the winter solstice. We could do what we do in our activities and our celebrations from a deeper place and with a calmer and more grateful spirit. May the lights you kindle in this season be lights of wholeness and love, of peace in your heart when there is so little peace on earth, of justice and mercy in your life when there is too little of both in the world.

One way to act from the spirit within, and to kindle a little light, is to bring one of the holiday Sanctuary plants to a First Parish member or friend for whom it's hard to get out, or who has experienced a recent loss. We usually do this on the Sunday between Christmas and New Year — but this year there's a twist in the timing: there is no Sunday between Christmas and New Year because both fall on a Sunday. We will need to be more intentional about planning our holiday plant deliveries this year. So I ask you, if you can bring one or two plants to someone, please inform **Tom** or **Sandie Kennedy**, the coordinators, or me. Details will follow as planning progresses, but we need to know who and how many our volunteers will be.

Coming in January: Mark your calendars now for “The Rest of Your Life and Beyond,” Tuesday evenings, January 10, 17, 24 and 31, and February 7. This series explores living your life intentionally, as well as planning intentionally for what happens at the end of your life and after your death. There are different topics for each session — you may come to one, some or all. They will cover intentional life planning (for living from where you are now, whether healthy or ill, young or old), hospice, end-of-life wishes, how to plan for advance directives and memorial services, and writing an “ethical will.” Presenters are **Jenny Rankin**, **Sue Dobbie**, **David Pohl** and I. See the Wright Tavern offerings for details. I'm very excited that we can make this opportunity available to you and thrilled with the caliber of our presenters (if I do say so myself)!

Blessings of the season,

—*Karen Lewis Foley*

As we enter the holiday season, we are now a third of the way through the fiscal year. Financially, on the income side, we have collected \$405k, which represents 47 percent of the annual pledges. Traditionally, some people prepay their pledges, resulting in cash receipts greater than expenses at this point in the year. Year-to-date expenses of \$361k represent 30 percent of the total expenses budgeted for this year. Expenses were low in the summer months and increased with the greater level of activity in the fall.

Last month, you should have received your quarterly statement of giving which showed your 12-month pledge and your giving to date for July through September 2005. Also, written on your statement is your contribution for the April to June 2005 time period. Please contact **Peg Gallo** or me if you have any questions about your statement.

In late October, **Tim Jacoby**, **Peg Gallo** and I met with members of the auditing firm Alexander, Aronson, Finning & Co. in preparation for our annual audit. They will begin working in November and expect to complete preliminary statements by January. These statements will then be presented to the Standing Committee.

I am entering my fourth month here at First Parish and have gotten to know the staff, many of the volunteers, and the workings of the church. I am impressed with the energy and commitment of the parishioners I have met and appreciate many of you stopping by to introduce yourselves. I look forward to meeting and working with more of you in the coming months.

—*Lisa Cole*, Business Manager

MORE ABOUT THE 2006 ANNUAL CAMPAIGN

I'll be honest. When **Gary Smith** asked me to cochair this year's Annual Campaign, my initial thought was, “I can't possibly find time to do a good job.” Then I reflected on the urgent appeals we all received from the Standing Committee last summer, and the realities of First Parish's pledge level last year:

- We are not paying our ministers and staff to UUA-suggested guidelines.
- We are not paying our fair share to the UUA.
- We do not raise enough money to support the annual maintenance needs of our facilities.

So, I said “yes” to Gary and joined cochair **Cynthia Ellis** and a talented fundraising team. And while I greatly enjoy working with these dedicated people, the main reason I joined, honestly, was guilt. I could and should be doing more to make sure we don't short-change our staff, cut support to our denomination, or let our beautiful building deteriorate.

Fundraising experts say that people give to fund a vision. During the next months of the Annual Campaign season, you'll be hearing about First Parish's vision, and I hope you'll share my excitement about our future.

We'll be encouraging you to give generously, so we can all focus on our vision rather than on our guilt. —**Jonathan Hurd**

MUSings

"My soul magnifies the Lord. And my spirit rejoices in God my savior."

So begins the *Magnificat*, one of the major "canticles," or songs, of the Christian Bible and one that is associated



with the season of Advent. Found in the Gospel of Luke, 1:46-55,

the *Magnificat* is the song sung by Mary after she has learned that she is to be the mother of Jesus. She sings it to her cousin Elizabeth, who has also become pregnant after years of infertility. It is a beautiful song of faith in the Divine; a panegyric on the power of the Holy to work miracles in our lives. Since the Rule of St. Benedict in 525 A.D., the *Magnificat* has been sung daily during Vespers. This text has been set to music by composers for centuries in western musical history.

On Sunday, December 18, the First Parish Adult Choir will present a charming setting of the *Magnificat* by Italian Baroque composer Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741). Vivaldi entered the priesthood as a young man and served as the violin master at the Pio Ospedale della Pietá, an orphanage for girls in Venice that specialized in fine musical training. He was known as "the Red Priest" for his fiery mane of red hair. In his lifetime, he was famous as a teacher and a prolific composer of sonatas, concertos and operas. Today he is best known for the more than 400 concertos he wrote for diverse instruments. Vivaldi's setting of the *Magnificat* was written for the young musicians at the Ospedale, during the same period as his more famous *Gloria*.

The *Magnificat* is a colorful, emotional text with many opportunities for descriptive "word painting" in the music. The choir is enjoying the preparation of this engaging work and looks forward to sharing it with the congregation. They will be joined on December 18 by the "First Parish Festival Orchestra." We hope this musical offering will be an inspiring gift to First Parish in this holiday season.

Blessings,

— Beth Norton

Music Notes

SARASA CONCERT TO PERFORM DECEMBER 4

On Sunday, December 4, at 7 p.m., the Music Events Committee will present a concert by the Cambridge-based, nationally acclaimed chamber music ensemble Sarasa. The performance will feature German cantatas by Schutz, Buxtehude and Bach, with noted tenor Frank Kelley. Ticket prices are \$20, seniors \$16, students \$13, children free. Tickets may be purchased at the door or online at sarasamusic.org. The public is invited. For information call 617-492-4758, 978-369-3779 or 978-369-9602.

SINGING THE JOURNEY — WE'RE HALFWAY THERE!

Many thanks to all who have purchased copies of *Singing the Journey*, our new hymnbook supplement. We're about halfway to our goal of buying enough books for everyone in worship. There is still time to join in this effort before the holidays. A \$14.00 contribution will supply a copy for the Sanctuary, with a dedicatory bookplate in it. Gift cards are available to present to honored persons as a holiday gift. A \$56.00 contribution will buy 4 books — enough for one pew in our Sanctuary. A contribution of \$140.00 will buy 10 copies. Think about how you might supply hymnbooks for your fellow worshippers so that we can all "Sing the Journey" together. Order forms are available at coffee hour and posted on our website, firstparish.org. Thanks for your support!

—The *Singing the Journey* Fundraising Team

AND THE BAND PLAYS ON . . .

Many thanks to those who brought in band instruments for young Katrina evacuees. First Parish added two clarinets, two trumpets, a trombone and an alto sax to a truckload of instruments and other supplies bound for Lacombe, Louisiana. You have helped children keep music in their lives during a time of unimaginable disruption. Thank you!

Dear Members and Friends of First Parish,

With sadness I must tell you that I am leaving First Parish and the Boston area in December, as I have been offered a job in Illinois starting in January. Those of you who have known me for a while know that all my family is in the Midwest and that I have been working on getting certified to teach high school. I have decided to take a high school choral position in Normal, Illinois, which will both get me closer to my family and give me experience at the secondary level. I have given this a lot of thought, and I am certain that this is the best choice for me.

It will be difficult to leave you all, as First Parish has been part of my life out here in Boston ever since I moved to the East Coast in 2001. Ben Sigwarth (who some of you may remember) and I actually found positions at this church before we found an apartment! My last Sunday will be December 11, and I hope to see you all before my long drive "home."

God bless — Paul Grizzard

A FESTIVE HOLIDAY EVENT

Sarah Whitney, daughter of Lois and Alan Whitney, will give a Benefit Violin Recital for the Alzheimer's Association on Thursday, December 15, at 8 p.m. in the Sanctuary, accompanied by pianist Deborah DeWolf Emery. Donations will be accepted. Sarah is completing her Master's degree in violin performance at the Cleveland Institute of Music. This Benefit Recital is sponsored by the First Parish Music Events Committee, with a reception following in the Parish Hall. All are welcome!

CONCORD PRISON OUTREACH HOLIDAY GIFT PROJECT

It is the time of year to remember our incarcerated neighbors at the Concord prisons with the Holiday Gift Project. Each year, Concord Prison Outreach provides 2000 gift bags for the men at Concord MCI and Northeast Correctional Center. You may donate a gift bag with the following items: one white face cloth, one bar of

soap, five disposable shavers, one 4-6 oz. tube of toothpaste, one pair flip-flops size large, one pack

envelopes, one writing pad (no wire) smaller than 8 x 11, ten 37-cent stamps, and a greeting card signed with first names only. Homemade cards are appreciated.

The West Concord 5 & 10 has assembled bags (except for the stamps) available for purchase. Individual items or cash donations are also welcome. Tax-deductible checks can be made out to Concord Prison Outreach, Inc. and sent to P.O. Box 383, Concord, MA 01742.

The bags may be dropped off through Sunday, December 4, at Trinity Episcopal Church, at the River Street entrance, between Elm and Main Streets.

If you have questions, contact **Linda Reynolds** at 978-371-0562 (lsmithreynolds@aol.com), or Joan Kaufman at 978-369-8487, or Joanne Mente at 978-369-4479.

WHERE IS YOUR PLEDGE GOING?

The Social Action Giving Committee reviewed dozens of funding proposals at its November meeting. Interest in funds far exceeded the resources available. We are pleased to announce \$26,000 in grants to the following organizations: Albert Schweitzer Fellowship, Amnesty International, BOSNet, Children's Island, Concord-San Marcos Sister Cities Communities, Concord Area PreSchool Association, Concord Prison Outreach,

Connect Africa Foundation, Domestic Violence Victim Assistance Program, Common Cathedral, Gaining Ground, The Greeley Foundation, and the Sharing Foundation. The committee also voted this year to provide an additional \$10,000 for the victims of hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and to provide \$3,000 to Doctors Without Borders for their efforts to provide medical attention to the survivors of Pakistan's deadly earthquake.

These grants support the work of and commitment made by many First Parish members to programs that address problems of poverty, challenges facing youth, a commitment to international programs that address disparities of health and health care, and the pursuance of peace and justice throughout the world. Please visit the Social Action website for more detailed information. Also look for our note in the weekly news in your order of service, where we will highlight many of our grantees.

COMMON CATHEDRAL NEEDS LUNCH HOSTS

As most of you know, once a month members of First Parish travel to Boston to take part in the weekly service for the homeless on Boston Common. Together with another faith community, we also bring a lunch to serve to approximately 200 homeless people. This is typically one of those transformative experiences where you come away feeling you got more than you gave.

Beth Norton and the Adult Choir will be going to Common Cathedral in December, followed by **Jamie Atkins** and the Youth Group in February, and **Kathy Maher** and her family in March. We still need volunteers for April, May and June. This is a wonderful opportunity for groups such as Small Group Ministry to "go out into the world" together. Interested? Questions? Please contact **Mary Lou Toussaint** at mlou512@yahoo.com.

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT SOCIAL ACTION AT FIRST PARISH?

The Social Action Community (SAC) helps parishioners connect with a diverse and exciting range of social action projects. To find out more about what is going on, join our e-mail list by sending a blank e-mail to SAC-join@lists.firstparish.org, see our website, www.firstparish.org/sac/, <http://sac.firstparish.org/>, or look at the SAC bulletin board downstairs in the church. If you would like to volunteer and don't know where to start, call **Bill Seaver**, 978-369-7318, billseaver@earthlink.net; or **Dave Dunn**, 978-263-2273, dave_dunn@bose.com.

THE NEW U

Thanks once again to the wonderful group of ministers and lay leaders who took the time to share their love and knowledge of First Parish during this past session — especially **Lillian Anderson, Doug Baker, Sara Ballard, Gene Brown, David Dunn, Karen Foley, Doug Hardy, Dan Holin, Pam Howell, Caroline McCloy, Beth Norton, Jenny Rankin and Mary-Wren vanderWilden.**

Our introduction to Unitarian Universalism and to First Parish as a faith community will be held one more time, next spring. This three-session orientation, facilitated by our ministers and lay leaders, will take place on March 12, 19 and 26 (all Sunday afternoons) from 4 to 6 p.m. in the Wright Tavern. See me during coffee hour, e-mail FPSalud@aol.com or call the office if you would like to attend. This will be the last session until next fall, so don't let it slip by. Child care will be available, if requested.

And remember — the New U is for newcomers and old-timers alike. I've been to at least ten of these over the past few years, and I've learned something new each time! —**Stephanie Chiha**

TAKE THE PATH TO MEMBERSHIP

Have you been coming to First Parish for a few months and want to become a member in 2005? Then sign up for our next Minister's Orientation, which will take place in the Wright Tavern on Monday, December 5, from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m., with **Gary Smith**. Space is limited, and Gary doesn't do these every month, so let **Stephanie Chiha** know as soon as possible if you'd like to attend. You can see her at coffee hour, e-mail her at FPSalud@aol.com, or leave a message with the office. Child care will be available, if requested.

PARTY OPPORTUNITY

Do you have a few hours three times a year to arrange fun dinner parties? The Membership Committee is looking for one or two people to take over the organization of the Seasonal Dinners next October. This is an attractive opportunity

This past summer, **Doug Baker** created a beautiful painting of the Deborah Webster Greeley Herb Garden, which is located here on the property of First Parish. He gave the painting to First Parish and it is on permanent display in the Chapel vestibule. The Women's Parish Association had note cards made from the painting that will be on sale during Sunday coffee hours. All proceeds from the cards will go to the WPA funds to help maintain the main building and furnishings of First Parish. Thank you, Doug, for your lovely gift!

PLEASE PARTICIPATE IN THE MORAL VALUES SURVEY

The Denominational Affairs Committee is conducting a survey in conjunction with the UUA Commission on Social Witness. "Moral Values for a Pluralistic Society" has been selected by this year's General Assembly as the number one issue for study and congregational feedback. We are asking you to complete the enclosed survey (one per parishioner, please). The DAC will tally our results and submit them to the UUA, as well as report to the congregation.

—**Nancy James**, Chair

FAIR TRADE HOLIDAY GIFT BASKETS BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND

Do your holiday gift shopping at First Parish! We have holiday gift baskets filled with Fair Trade goodies — coffee, tea, cocoa and chocolate — along with tea towels, mugs and an assortment of holiday surprises. The baskets range in size and price from small hostess gifts to very large corporate gift baskets. If you don't see just the basket you want, we will make one per your order for pickup the next week.

We'll be at coffee hour every Sunday until just before Christmas. For more information or to order, contact **Lillian Anderson** at 978-369-1468 or Lillianand@comcast.net. While you're shopping, don't forget to stock up on supplies of Fair Trade products for holiday entertaining too.

WPA OFFERS HOLIDAY CARDS FOR SALE

Mimi Samour is one of First Parish's very talented artists and has had holiday cards made of a collection of her watercolors. She has donated several to the Women's Parish Association. These will be on sale this month during the Sunday coffee hours. Thank you, Mimi.

CHRISTMAS CONCERT AND TEA — DECEMBER 5

Treat yourself and friends to a delightful afternoon of holiday music and a traditional Christmas tea. The music program will begin at 3 p.m. in the Sanctuary. Director **Sue Beck** and The Harmonic Diversion (a group of singers formerly called The Church Ladies) have prepared a variety of offerings that range from familiar Christmas carols to popular rock songs that will bring an extra bit of cheer to your holiday season. Tea will be served in the Parlor and Parish Hall at 4 p.m. All members of First Parish and their friends are welcome. No reservations are necessary.

ENJOY "SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER" AT FIRST PARISH

Plan now to be at First Parish for New Year's Eve, for the second annual gala kickoff for the New Year! Dance to the beat of everyone's favorite tunes, and enjoy festive party fare and special midnight treats. This is going to be a great party that you won't want to miss, hosted by the Special Events Committee. Tickets are on sale now during coffee hours on Sundays.

CALLING ALL PARISH ARTISTS

We are planning an all-Parish art exhibit in the newly named Suzanne Altshuler Gallery during the month of January. If you would like to display a painting, pastel, drawing or print, please contact **Doug Baker** at the Meeting House. The exhibit will run from January 9 to February 6.

Reflections

The holidays are coming. The holidays are coming. It becomes a mantra in my head. I'm never ready enough and always promise to start in August next year.

August comes and goes.

And no preshopping is done. Even if I do find something great and stash it away for December, I never seem to run into it until January. The truth is, I'm just not a shopper.

I find the holidays in the weather. I find the holidays in our Sanctuary at First Parish. I find the holidays in the feelings of anticipation I see in kids. And I find the holidays with my family. I don't find the holidays at the mall.

How can we slow down the holidays? How can we make them what they are: holy days. Through such programs as Secret Santa and Guest at your Table, we provide our children with opportunities to think beyond their own needs and address the needs of others. Our Holiday Craft Workshop encourages our children to make gifts for loved ones with their own hands. These gifts made by children, with their imperfections and unique quirks, are the gifts that are treasured. "You made this? For me?" By doing for others, by making things with our hands when we can, these are what bring back the sacred to the holidays.

Thank you for your hands and their part in our First Parish Religious Education Program during this holiday season.

— Pam Howell

WINTER TERM TEACHERS ARE STILL NEEDED

9:00 O'clock Winter Term:

One 4th Grade Teacher
Two 5th Grade Teachers
Two 6th Grade Teachers
One Social Action Leader

11:00 O'clock Winter Term:

Two Social Action Leaders

Religious Education Notes

DECEMBER RE EVENTS AND SCHEDULE

- December 3: Children's Holiday Crafts Fair, 1:30–4:30 p.m.
December 4: Intergenerational Service,
8th Grade WOW Group Leading
Winter Term for RE Begins
December 18: Pre-K and Kindergarten angels sing in worship
December 25: No RE Programs. Child care available at the ONE service at 11:00 a.m.

MEMBERSHIP CORNER continued from page 7

to meet interesting people and dine in pleasant informal settings in members' homes. **Dean** and **Vivienne Aldrich** will provide details and work with you during the transition. Please contact them at 978-369-1228.

FALL SEASONAL DINNER PARTIES

The Fall Seasonal Dinner Parties were held on Saturday, October 29. Thirty people participated in three dinners, hosted by **Nancy James** and **Rick Frese**, **Dean** and **Vivienne Aldrich**, and **Debbie Page**. Many thanks to hosts and participants. Look for information in the January *Meeting House News* and the *Sunday News* regarding the winter parties scheduled for January 28, 2006.

—Vivienne and Dean Aldrich, Membership Committee

NEWS ABOUT AFFINITY GROUPS

A new Affinity Group, Planning a Productive and Creative Retirement, proposed by **Tally Forbes** is now forming. This is a discussion group designed to help participants soon to be or newly retired who would like to share ideas about ways they can use this special time to be active in a meaningful way. **Debbie Page** has scheduled a planning meeting for the Cooking Group on December 6 at 5:30 p.m., just before the First Tuesday dinner. **Wendy Wolfberg** has rescheduled Jewelry Making from December 17 to Wednesday, January 18, at 7 p.m. at First Parish. Songwriters Circle meets the second Thursday of the month at the church for those musically inclined. Are you interested in a creative writing group that would meet in the evenings or on the weekends? There are other functioning groups and many others suggested. A contact person for the Theater Affinity Group is needed in order to get started. Are you willing?

For more information, stop by the Affinity Groups table on Sunday, December 4, or contact **Judy Dembsey** at 978-263-3272 or dembsey@surfglobal.net.

Senior Youth News

What a wonderful and diverse November we had as a Youth Group. On Sunday nights we did everything from acting silly on Crazy Improv Night to meditating with a Buddhist monk. We started our first Senior High OWL class with 25 youth and **Susannah Elliot** and **Peter Fischelis** teaching. We delivered 26 buckets of sand, moved a few air conditioners, raked some leaves and showed one senior how to use her DVD player for the Council on Aging workday. Finally, we had a wonderful time organizing and hosting the first Sunday night Community Thanksgiving Service for the whole Concord community.

We have a fun December lined up for YRUU as well:

December 4: Team Games

December 11: Vespers Service

December 18: Holiday Party/Yankee Swap — each youth should bring a gift they already own and would like to get rid of!

I would encourage youth to come to “Time to Talk” on any Sunday from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. It is a great opportunity to talk about things in a more intimate setting with youth facilitators. **Debbie Dunnington** and I are enjoying being the adult advisors to this new and important group.

Sometimes youth need an opportunity to get outside of themselves. So much of their day is focused inwardly on their grades, sports, jobs, social lives, etc. It is a gift to step out of that and care for others. The YSAC (Youth Social Action Council) is working hard to find meaningful ways for youth to do this. It was wonderful to see so many of the youth spiritually fed by offering their service to the seniors in our community during the Council on Aging workday in November. If any youth or adults would like to get involved with this important committee, then please contact me or **Tracey Bird**. The YSAC meets on the third Wednesday night of the month in the Icy Cliff at 7 p.m.

Please check out the new First Parish website for information about youth programming and a youth calendar. Have a wonderful holiday season!

—*Mary-Wren
vanderWilden*

Standing Committee

The Standing Committee (SC) had an informative three-hour meeting on November 14 with the members of Vision 2008. Two hundred and three parishioners attended the 16 meetings held this month, resulting in a good overview of people’s concerns and ideas for the future of First Parish. After analyzing the data, the SC voted to call a special meeting of the Parish on December 4 to ask for authorization to proceed with plans for a capital campaign to raise 4.5 million dollars in five years, with the plans to be presented at the Annual Meeting in June. The funds will go toward deferred maintenance, organ renovation, handicapped accessibility, and a capital reserve fund to provide for future maintenance. The SC and Vision 2008 will present information regarding the organ after both services on November 20, and people are encouraged to become acquainted with the information that has been gathered during the past eight years by three separate committees and the staff concerning options for fixing the organ. You may contact any member of the Standing Committee with questions.

The SC is grateful to the Vision 2008 Task Force for all of their work as we strive to be the best stewards that we can be. We are reminded that we are fortunate to have a church building that is part of the great history of this town and this country. Its character is a part of who we are as a congregation, its history is what has shaped us, its endurance is a symbol of the hope and welcome that we offer to everyone who passes through its doors. We are its stewards, with an obligation to take care of it for future generations. On December 4, we ask each and every member of the congregation to join us, your representatives, in this endeavor.

Submitted,

—*Susan Beck*
Clerk

A RECENT VISITOR TO FIRST PARISH WRITES . . .

“I went to Sunday morning services October 16, at the First Parish Church, Unitarian Universalist, in Concord, Massachusetts and what a busy place! Henry Thoreau was baptized in this church, my church, but it is a more recent building. The coffee hour before and after the service was extremely friendly. The music was the best I ever heard in a Unitarian church. The congregation sang *Spirit of Life*, a song so tender and peaceful I almost broke up. They sent me a photocopy to play on my fiddle. And how is this for contrast in music: the teenage choir sang *Yonder Come Day*, a song originating on the Sea Islands of Georgia, and the postlude was an electrifying organ piece by the Danish composer Dietrich Buxtehude, 1637-1707, a man Sebastian Bach once walked 300 kilometers to hear play! Afterward, the Concord-Carlisle High School Pep Band played on the church steps. As I said, a very busy place!”

—Richard Waller; Albany, Georgia

Women's News

THE WOMEN'S AM/PM BOOK GROUP

The First Parish Women's Book Group's book for December is Anne Lamotte's latest book of essays, *Plan B: Further Thoughts on Faith*. This month the morning group will meet on Tuesday, December 6, from 9:30 to 11 a.m., and the evening group will meet on Monday, December 19, from 7:30 to 9 p.m. All women of First Parish are warmly invited to read the current book and join one or both of these discussions.

Books and dates for the rest of the 2005-2006 year:

January 16 (p.m.) and 31 (a.m.) *The Time Traveler's Wife*, Audrey Niffenegger

February 20 (p.m.) and 28 (a.m.) *Song of the Lark*, by Willa Cather, Extra credit: *O Pioneers!*

March 20 (p.m.) and 28 (a.m.) *American Jezebel*, by Eve LaPlante

April 17 (p.m.) and 25 (a.m.) Poetry: *And Still I Rise*, by Maya Angelou; and *Delights and Shadows*, by Ted Kooser

May 15 (p.m.) and 23 (a.m.) *The Jane Austen Book Club*, by Karen Anne Fowler

WOMEN'S RETREAT DATES

All First Parish women are invited to participate in one of the Women's Retreats in January — this year's retreat weekends are January 20-22 and January 27-29. The retreats are held at Senexet House, a cozy retreat house in northeastern Connecticut, about an hour's drive from Concord. Watch for more details and registration information in the next *Meeting House News*, and be sure to put one of these weekends into your calendar now, so you won't miss this great annual gathering of First Parish women!

WINTER NOTICE! STAFF PARKING FYI

Please be careful not to park in one of the staff-designated parking spaces unless you are *certain* that the staff person will not be needing the space. The staff often keep unconventional hours and appreciate having their space open. Thanks!

Miscellaneous

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Copies of the attractive *The Legendary Sleepy Hollow Cemetery* brochure with map, produced by the Friends of Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, are available at the Concord Town House for \$2.00 apiece.

EXPERIENCE THE PEOPLE AND PLACES OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Some of the places of the civil rights movement are readily accessible: the Edmund Pettus bridge in Selma, 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, the church whose burning drew Chaney, Schwerner and Goodman to Philadelphia, Mississippi. But fewer and fewer of the people who gave such places their meaning survive to talk with us. Both places and people are included in a tour being offered in March of 2006 by Meadville Lombard Theological School.

The March 18-26 tour has been planned and will be led by Rev. Dr. Gordon Gibson, who was involved in the early stages of the 1965 Selma voting rights campaign and was the Unitarian Universalist minister in Mississippi, 1969-84. He led similar tours in 2004 and 2005. The tour, by luxury motor coach, will include all admission charges, overnight accommodations, and most meals in the \$1,000 cost. Visits with 1960's activists and videos on the bus will supplement the site visits. The tour will begin and end in Chicago.

For details and registration information, you can visit the Meadville Lombard website (meadville.edu) or write to the Academic Office, Meadville Lombard Theological School, 5701 S. Woodlawn Avenue, Chicago, IL 60637. Registration is on a first-come basis, with some of the 30 seats reserved for theological students who will be taking this as a credit course.

Community News

BOOK DISCUSSION AT THE LIBRARY, DECEMBER 4

Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria, and Other Conversations is the book to be discussed at the Concord Library (Main Street) on Sunday December 4, from 2 to 4 p.m. The book, written by Beverly Daniel Tatum, president of Spellman College, is a great springboard for community discussions of contemporary racial issues and questions. Everyone is invited!

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY BREAKFAST, DECEMBER 5

The Concord Carlisle Human Rights Commission will host its annual Human Rights Day Breakfast, in commemoration of the International Human Rights Declaration, on Monday, December 5, at 7:30 a.m. at the Trinitarian Congregational Church. This year's guest speaker is Martha Coakley, District Attorney of Middlesex County. Everyone is invited and welcome to this great Concord event.

December 2005 Calendar

*Listings in italics represent classes offered through
the Wright Tavern Center for Spiritual Renewal.*

Every Week...

<i>Morning Meditation</i>	Monday-Friday	7:00 a.m.
<i>Bones in Chairs</i>	Monday	10:00 (not 12/26)
<i>Bones for Life®</i>	Monday	1:15 (not 12/26)
Concord Interfaith Group	Tuesday	8:30
<i>Kundalini Yoga</i>	Tuesday	9:30
<i>Tibetan Buddhism</i>	Wednesday	9:30
Bell Choir	Wednesday	1:00
<i>Kripalu Yoga</i>	Wednesday	7:30 (not 12/28)
Adult Choir	Wednesday	7:45
<i>Kundalini Yoga</i>	Thursday	9:30
<i>Tibetan Buddhism</i>	Thursday	7:30
Men's Group	Saturday	7:30 a.m.
Time to Talk (TTT)	Sunday	5:30 (not 12/25)
YRUU	Sunday	7:00 (not 12/25)

<p>Thu Dec 1 8:00 Katrina Relief Group 7:00 Human Resources Committee</p> <p>Fri Dec 2 9:30 Pastoral Care</p> <p>Sat Dec 3 9:30 wow Rehearsal 1:30 Children's Crafts Workshop</p> <p>Sun Dec 4 12:15 Nominating Committee 2:00 Coming of Age (COA) 12:45 All-Parish Meeting 7:00 Sarasa Concert</p> <p>Mon Dec 5 3:00 WPA Christmas Program/Tea 7:00 Minister's Orientation</p> <p>Tue Dec 6 9:00 WPA Board 9:30 Women's Book Group 10:00 <i>Luminous Lives</i> 6:00 <i>T'ai Chi</i> 6:30 First Tuesday Supper 7:00 Senior OWL 7:30 First Tuesday Vespers</p> <p>Wed Dec 7 7:00 Youth Advisory Committee 7:00 RE Council</p> <p>Thu Dec 8 7:00 <i>Stress Drop-In</i></p> <p>Sat Dec 10 9:00 Standing Committee Retreat 9:00 Photo Club</p> <p>Sun Dec 11 1:00 Common Cathedral (off-site) 7:30 Vegas Night Rehearsal</p>	<p>Mon Dec 12 9:30 Parish Visitors 12:00 Newsletter Deadline 7:00 Standing Committee</p> <p>Wed Dec 14 12:15 <i>Listening for God</i> 6:30 Partner Church Committee 7:00 Youth SAC 7:30 <i>Play with Purpose</i></p> <p>Thu Dec 15 8:00 Violin Recital</p> <p>Fri Dec 16 7:30 Rise Up Singing Carol Sing</p> <p>Sat Dec 17 9:00 Extra Choir Rehearsal</p> <p>Sun Dec 18 4:00 Junior Youth Group 7:00 Vegas Night Rehearsal</p> <p>Mon Dec 19 Pastoral Care Council 7:30 Women's Book Group</p> <p>Wed Dec 21 9:15 Newsletter Mailing 6:30 Solstice Celebration</p> <p>Sat Dec 24 4:00 Christmas Eve Service 5:30 Christmas Eve Service 7:00 Christmas Eve Service 9:00 Christmas Eve Service</p> <p>Sun Dec 25 11:00 Single Christmas Day Service</p> <p>Mon Dec 26 Holiday—Office Closed</p> <p>Wed Dec 28 7:30 <i>Play with Purpose</i></p> <p>Thu Dec 29 9:30 <i>Play with Purpose</i></p> <p>Sat Dec 31 9:00 "Saturday Night Fever" Party</p>
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First Parish in Concord

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

20 Lexington Road
Concord, MA 01742

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DECEMBER 2005 NEWSLETTER

The next Newsletter deadline is Monday, December 12, at noon.

The Newsletter mailing is Tuesday, December 21.

News items should be limited to 100 words.

Don't Miss...

WPA CHRISTMAS TEA

Tuesday, December 6

*3:00 p.m. The Harmonic Diversion
in the Sanctuary*

4:00 p.m. Tea in the Parish Hall

VIVALDI'S MAGNIFICAT

Sunday, December 18

9:00 & 11:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary

First Parish in Concord

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

Staff

Gary E. Smith, Senior Minister

Jenny M. Rankin, Minister

Karen Lewis Foley, Associate Minister for Pastoral Care

Rebecca M. Blodgett, Affiliate Minister for Pastoral Care

Pam Howell, Director of Religious Education

Christine Gay, Religious Education Administrator

Carol Duane, Toddler/Preschool Coordinator

Mary-Wren vanderWilden, Youth Program Director

Elizabeth Norton, Music Director

Eric Huenneke, Organist

David Huston, Bell Choir Director

Paul Grizzard, Children's Choir Director

Anderson Manuel, Music/RE Associate

Caroline McCloy, Wright Tavern Center Director

Dan Holin, Jericho Road Executive Director

Leslie Koplou, Assistant to Executive Director, Jericho Road

Margaret Stewart, Parish Administrator

Douglas Baker, Sacristan and Curator

Jane Johnson, Office Manager

Peggy Gallo, Financial Secretary and Collector

Lisa Cole, Business Manager

Kate Keleher, Newsletter Editor

Kaye Harvie, Jane Johnson, Margaret Stewart,
Newsletter Staff

TAKE NOTE OF SPECIAL HOLIDAY OFFICE HOURS

The office at First Parish will be open regular hours (9 a.m. to 3 p.m.) December 19 through 23. The office will be closed on Monday, December 26. From Tuesday, December 27 through Friday, December 30, the office will be open from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. The office will be closed on Monday, January 2, 2006. Regular hours (9 a.m. to 3 p.m.) will resume beginning Tuesday, January 3.

Church Office Hours: Monday–Friday, 9:00 to 3:00

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