



First Parish in Concord
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
Gathered in 1636

The Meeting House News

REVeries

Dear Friends,

Your presence at our special meeting on December 3 and your vote to support the work and recommendations of our Building Committee will contribute to a once-in-a-generation moment for First Parish and its people. The Building Committee has found a way, in cooperation with our architects and planners, to stay within the approved budget of \$2 million dollars and to do the necessary work to make our buildings welcome and accessible to all, to provide needed additional space, to refurbish our kitchen and the Religious Education wing.

Please support these proposals. Please keep moving forward. Our work in fundraising in the quiet phase of our Capital Campaign has been enormously gratifying. Many of you have been so generous, making your support a vote of confidence in our staff, in our leadership, and, most importantly, in our future. Your own support and generosity, when asked, will likewise be appreciated so.

I am leaving on sabbatical after the holidays, for six months, but I hope you will be one who does not count me indispensable to this campaign or to this congregation. I am proud to be a part of the leadership here, and I am also grateful that you are willing to let me go for a time so that I can recharge for the next phase of our history. Your support during this time, with your energy, your voice and your finances, will be especially vital. I am eager to enter these new chapters with you.

First Parish staff has been preparing for my sabbatical for months. We are ready. Jenny Rankin and I have talked for hours and hours about what will happen, how decisions will be made, how responsibilities will be divided. As she deems necessary, I am glad to step back in during these sabbatical months to cheer-lead and to help. These are exciting times for us. I am imagining what our congregation can do beyond the rebuilding and the fundraising. We are people on the go. First Parish is a transformational place. I am proud to be your minister, and I am enormously grateful that you are willing to let me go, just for a time.

— Gary Smith

Sunday Worship Schedule

December 3

9:00 & 11:00 – wow Worship Service

Gospel Choir

Selections from “Godspell” – Schwartz

December 10

Gary Smith, preaching

9:00 – Adult Choir

The Dawning of Our Dreams – Shelton

Light Everlasting – Christiansen

11:00 – Handbell Choir

Change Ring on “Divinum Mysterium” – Gramann

Advent Carol – arr. Hopson

December 17

Jenny Rankin, preaching

9:00 – Junior Choir

Shalom – Jennings

11:00 – Chalice Choir

Quiet Holy Grace – Morris

9:00 & 11:00 – First Parish Adult Choir

First Parish Festival Orchestra

In Nativitatem Domini/Canticum – Charpentier

Noëls sur les instruments – Charpentier

December 24 – ONE SERVICE ONLY

Gary Smith, worship leader

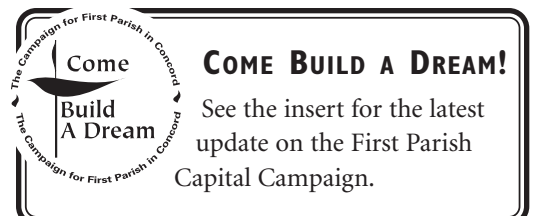
11:00 – Lessons and Carols

December 31 – ONE SERVICE ONLY

Margie King Saphier, preaching

11:00 – Nancy Ackerman, clarinet

Eric Huenneke, organist



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- There are three inserts with this newsletter:
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SPECIAL HOLIDAY OFFICE HOURS

The office at First Parish will be closed on Christmas Day, Monday, December 25. From Tuesday, December 26 through Friday, December 29, the office will be open from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. The office will be closed on Monday, January 1. Regular office hours (9 a.m. to 4 p.m.) will resume on Tuesday, January 2.

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. 11	Wednesday, Dec. 27
Monday, Jan. 22	Wednesday, Jan. 31
Friday, Feb. 16	Wednesday, Feb. 28

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

USHERS WANTED FOR CHRISTMAS EVE!



Christmas Eve at First Parish is 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 at vacurran@comcast.net.

Sunday Forum

Forums are held Sunday morning from 10:10 a.m. to 10:55 a.m. in the Parlor. Note change of location. Everyone is welcome to attend. Please contact **Dian Pekin** if you wish to recommend a topic or speaker.

DECEMBER 3

No Forum

DECEMBER 10

Just Like Life, Only More So
Dana Snyder-Grant

Dana is a writer, psychotherapist and member of First Parish. She will read from her new book, *Just Like Life, Only More So and Other Stories of Illness*, about her twenty-five years with multiple sclerosis. Her stories show how to face illness with wisdom, courage and humor.

DECEMBER 17

A Visit with Santa
The Old Boy Himself

The traditions of kindly and generous gift givers throughout the centuries will be celebrated with gusto! 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. It's not too late to let him know what your heart desires! Small gifts will be distributed to children and parents can take advantage of the photo op!

DECEMBER 24

No Forum

DECEMBER 31

No Forum

CHRISTMAS MEMORIAL FLOWERS

If you would like to contribute to the Christmas Memorial Flower Fund, please sign up at the coffee hours on December 3 or 10. The names of those remembered will be printed in the order of service on Christmas Sunday. The money collected supports the Flower Committee through the fiscal year. You may also send names to be remembered, with a contribution made out to First Parish in Concord, to the collector, **Peggy Gallo**, and noted for the Flower Committee. The Christmas service flowers will be distributed to our shut-ins.

Parish Notes

ARTISANS FAIR — A GREAT SUCCESS

Becky Blodgett, on behalf of the Women's Parish Association, extends heartfelt thanks to all who helped make this year's fair another great success! There are too many people to list here, but special thanks go to the cochairs, **Jen Petersen** and **Dian Pekin**, as well as to **Rhoda Miller**, **Gerrie Madigan**, **Helen Stoddard**, **Lois Suarez**, **Barbara Wheeler**, **Mary McClintock**, **Claire Criffiths**, **Pat Kane**, **Doug Baker** and all the sextons.

BIG SKY A BIG SUCCESS!

Thanks to y'all who donated goods, brandished a hammer to help out or just rode your pony on in for the festivities and fundraising on November 18. The Big Sky Auction brought in over \$40,000! **Eric Read** and **Phyllis Savage** congratulate all the cowboys and cowgirls for a playful yet hard workin' and extremely effective production. Much obliged!

FAIR TRADE BASKETS MAKE A SPECIAL HOLIDAY GIFT

Once again we will be offering Fair Trade gift baskets for Christmas giving. Baskets include the \$20 hostess basket with either coffee or tea, the \$20 chocolate lover's basket, the \$20 children's basket and mixed baskets in the \$30, \$40 and \$50 price range. You can order your baskets at coffee hour, or pick up ready-made baskets on December 3, 10 and 17. All proceeds from the sales will benefit the church's operating budget.

AN A CAPPELLA CHRISTMAS ALBUM AVAILABLE FOR HOLIDAY GIVING

Harmonic Diversions (formerly known as The Church Ladies) has produced a CD of Christmas songs! We have included many well-known classics, as well as some tunes that may be new to you. A wonderful stocking stuffer, it will also make a nice addition to your Fair Trade gift basket! Look for us at coffee hour or contact **Sue Beck** at sbeck345@comcast.net. The CD is \$10, but discounted to \$8 if you include it in a Fair Trade gift basket. All proceeds will benefit the church's operating budget.

STAFF MEMBER NEEDS COMPUTER

First Parish needs a computer for a staff member. The computer should be at least a Pentium 4 1.4Ghz, Windows XP Pro (not Home) and Office XP (any version). A letter of transfer of ownership and all licenses and installation disks need to be included. If you think you have a computer that meets these criteria, send a description to **Jane Johnson** at FPConcord@aol.com.

FIRST PARISH ARTISANS ITEMS FOR SALE

Stop by the WPA table at coffee hours this month. There are photographs, jewelry and holiday cards available for sale, made by First Parish artisans **Doug Baker**, **Mimi Samour**, **Barbara Wheeler**, **Wendy Wolfberg**, **Lois Whitney**, **Kathleen Elcox** and **Bob Andrews**.

DECK THE HALLS

Come one, come all and help decorate the Sanctuary for Christmastide on Saturday, December 16, at 2 p.m. (Please note time, as it is different from previous years.) We will hang swags, arrange poinsettias and decorate wreaths for the great front doors. To volunteer, please call the church office.

CARING CONNECTION FREEZER REPLENISHED

Thanks to a hardy band of First Parish cooks who prepared entrees, hearty soups, cornbread and cookies to refill our Caring Connection freezer at the end of last month. As we all know, "something from the oven says lovin'." Those observed chopping and stirring included **Erica Morrison**, **Bev Bringle**, **Debbie Clark**, **Jean Hill**, **Jane Fisher**, **Carolyn Shohet**, **Lois Suarez**, **Rhoda Miller** and **Diane Bleday**.

Money Matters

It has been a busy month here at First Parish and the financial side of things was no exception. **Rob Richardson** and I met with our auditors to discuss the audit of our FY'06 financials. They will begin the audit soon and it should be completed by early next year. Rob and I were joined by **David Hesel** later in the meeting to discuss some financial issues related to the Capital Campaign. The three of us are working together to establish a financial system to manage the capital campaign finances.

Last month, I mentioned that our subscription income had not increased in September as it usually does when people return from summer activities. Thank you to all of those who responded to this. Our subscription income was up considerably in the month of October. For the first four months of the year, subscription income was \$438K or 46 percent of pledges for the year. This is consistent with pledges received for this period last year. On the expense side, our spending is in line with the budget so far this year. As expected, expenses increased in September and October after the slower summer months. Through October, we have spent \$367K or 29 percent of budgeted expenses.

—*Lisa Cole*

Business Manager

YOU ARE A MOST GENEROUS CONGREGATION! PLEASE MAKE FIRST PARISH YOUR PRIORITY IN JANUARY!

January marks the beginning of Pledge•2007 — the pledge season at First Parish — when we ask you to reflect on your connections to this community and to make your financial commitment to the annual fundraising drive that will support the day-to-day costs of the church, July, 2007–June, 2008.

This year we are working closely with the Capital Campaign to coordinate information and materials that will be mailed to the entire congregation, asking for your generous pledges to both campaigns. The campaign season will run two months, culminating on Celebration Sunday, March 4 (And with two campaigns, boy, will we have a lot to celebrate!)

Last year was an incredible pledge year. We went well over the target of \$940,000. Thanks to your stewardship, we are able to do more, provide more, and care more for the adults, youth and children who love First Parish.

You are an incredibly generous congregation and we thank you!

Pledge•2007

Dave Dawson, co-chair **Cynthia Ellis**, co-chair

Pastoral Care News

The holiday season, which starts with Thanksgiving and ends on New Year's Day, is also the Season of Paradoxes. Because the holiday season brings images of happy families gathering together, it can also be a poignant reminder of the transitions and changes in families. This darkest time of the year can reflect the deep sadness many of us carry as we remember those whom we loved but who are no longer with us — whether through death, divorce, marriage, moving, etc. Recognizing that our loved ones always live in our hearts, a holiday ribbon wreath will be in the Sanctuary so that you may attach a ribbon in memory of your loved one.

But this is also the Season of Hope, Peace, Goodwill and the possibility of new beginnings. Different faith traditions each have their own message. When these messages are viewed as part of a larger whole, their meaning enriches each of our lives. In Buddhism, December 8 is Bodhi Day, which honors the enlightenment of Siddhartha Gautama — the Buddha — and reminds us that each one of us can awaken to the light of our true nature; just as the Christmas story reminds us “to fear not,” as each birth brings hope of new life and new possibilities. The Winter Solstice reminds us that day by day the light of the sun will begin increasing its time warming our part of the earth and once again bringing forth beginnings out of endings. The lights of Christmas, Hanukkah and Kwanzaa, all remind us of the warmth and glow of family, friends and community that grows exponentially when we experience the joy of giving.

One way to extend the warmth of the First Parish community is to give one of the holiday Sanctuary plants to a First Parish member or friend for whom it's hard to get out, or who has recently experienced a loss. So if you can bring one or two plants to someone, please inform **Tom** or **Sandie Kennedy**, the coordinators, or me. Deliveries can be made during the week between Christmas and New Year's. Details will follow as planning progresses, but we need to know who and how many our volunteers will be.

During this season of paradoxes that holds the breath and depth of life, may you embrace the mess, the beauty, and the mystery, and experience the spirit of abundance.

In faith,

—*Margie King Saphier*

I am offering an Emotional/Spiritual Awareness workshop based on *Houses of Healing: A Prisoner's Guide to Inner Power and Freedom*, by Robin Casarjian, written for incarcerated men and women as a path to rehabilitation and reclaiming one's life. This program is a synthesis of contemporary psychological, social and spiritual thinking and practices in an integrated course in emotional literacy. The lessons and exercises are designed to teach and increase self-awareness and understanding. The course explores such topics as “Who am I?,” family relationships, stress management, facing the impact of crime and taking responsibility for offending behavior, forgiveness and self-forgiveness, and spiritual development. Relaxation and meditation techniques are taught and practiced from the start.

January 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 7–9 p.m.

Tuition: \$40 (Includes \$10 for a copy of *Houses of Healing*)

Standing Committee Notes

The Standing Committee (SC) met on November 13, with guest **Don Dembsey** present to provide financial information about the Capital Campaign. The SC is working to improve our communication with and visibility to the congregation at large, and we encourage everyone to seek us out at coffee hour to talk to us about First Parish. Our top priority this week is the congregational meeting on December 3 at 12:30 p.m., when we will vote on the plans presented by the building committee for changes to our parish building. The Capital Campaign has kept to a very tight schedule so that work can begin in 2007. We hope that everyone will consider giving generously to both this year's annual pledge drive and to the five-year Capital Campaign. Your annual pledge helps assure that the programs we have in place will continue to thrive; your five-year pledge assures that First Parish will be a vibrant and welcoming church in the future.

Submitted,

— *Sue Beck*, Clerk

TRANSYLVANIAN PARTNER CHURCH COMMITTEE (PCC) UPDATE

We are still feeling the wonderful afterglow of our visits with József, Anna, Erzsébet and Piroska. They filled our minds with information about their rich and busy lives in Székelykeresztúr, and our hearts with their abundant love and joy and good humor. While their departure has left a physical void in our community, our hearts and minds are so much richer for their having been among us, and our lives have been forever changed in ways both large and small. See pictures on the Web at firstparish.org/photos. Many thanks to all of you who hosted our guests in your homes, helped with all the events, trips, etc., and went out of your way to make them welcome! Please stop by our table at coffee hours between now and Christmas to get information, free partnership buttons and to purchase the crafts our guests brought us to help us raise funds for the programs of the PCC. *Köszönöm szépen mindenk!* (Thank you very much, everyone!) — **Rodger Matlage**

MUSings

When I talk about Unitarian Universalism with music and ministerial colleagues from other denominations, they are often intrigued by the “liturgical year” observed by different UU congregations. We do have a unique liturgical calendar here in Concord, one that lifts up the observances of diverse faiths and spiritual disciplines — the wealth of sources on which we draw for our own Unitarian Universalist tradition. As a UU music leader, I revel in the challenge of finding suitable music from the many traditions that are part of our yearly cycle.



Sometimes we find ourselves honoring multiple religious and spiritual traditions simultaneously. This is particularly true during December, when Advent, Hanukkah, the Solstice and Christmas all call us to kindle lights against the winter darkness and consider the miraculous. Often we blend multiple traditions in one service and music helps us tie it all together.

Sunday, December 17, falls in the midst of the Jewish festival of Hanukkah. It is also a Sunday when we celebrate the Advent season and the coming of Christmas. That Sunday our Children's choirs will sing songs that celebrate that Jewish tradition and the Quiet, Holy Grace in our gathering as a faith community at this time of year.

On that same Sunday, in the spirit of Advent, the Adult Choir and guest musicians will anticipate Christmas with a cantata and several noëls by the French Baroque composer Marc Antoine Charpentier [1645-1704.] Charpentier was renowned during the time of Louis XIV, though he did not do significant composing for that famous royal court. He missed an important audition for a position at court because of illness! Early in his career he wrote music for the Comédie française, collaborating with Molière. He is better known for the many religious works he wrote for the Jesuits' St. Louis church in Paris and for the household of Mademoiselle de Guise. Our cantata *In Nativitatem Domini/Canticum* is one such work, a graceful Christmas pastorelle in which the shepherds report on the miraculous birth they have witnessed and celebrate the promise of this child with Psalms from the Hebrew Bible.

On that Sunday in December, we will kindle the Hanukkah lights and the candles of the Advent wreath. In this darkest time of the year, the music of the season kindles the light of hope and promise in my heart. I hope it will do the same for you.

Blessings,

— *Beth Norton*

SINGING IN THE NEW YEAR: INTERGENERATIONAL GOSPEL CHOIR

On Sunday, January 14, to honor the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr., we will assemble our third annual Intergenerational Gospel Choir to sing at both services. The choir, which will be co-led by **Anderson Manuel** and **Beth Norton**, will sing songs from the African-American tradition. The repertoire is still being decided, but it may include spirituals, gospel and freedom songs.

In addition to the Sunday commitment, there will be one rehearsal on Thursday evening, January 11, at 7:30 p.m. This group is open to singers of all ages and you do not have to read music to join. We ask that singers who decide to join commit to singing both services on January 14.

For more information or to sign up, contact **Beth Norton** by e-mail at music@firstparish.org or by phone at 978-369-9602, ext. 420.

INTRODUCING FAITH BADE

First Parish would like to welcome **Faith Bade** as our new Social Action Associate. Faith began working part-time in November, collaborating with the ministers, staff and the many dedicated Social Action volunteers of First Parish to invigorate our Social Action program. With Faith's help, we hope to improve member awareness and involve-



ment, increase program coordination and organization, and generate an even

stronger Social Action impact as we "go out into the world." Faith and her family have been members of First Parish for 4+ years, and her three children participate in our RE program. Faith brings to this position organizational and leadership skills, professional business and "start-up" experience, and an ability to make connections and get things done. She has volunteered extensively in Concord and looks forward to applying her energy and enthusiasm to our Social Action program. Faith would like to speak with any members about Social Action at First Parish. Please feel free to call her at the church, e-mail her at FBade@firstparish.org, or approach her at coffee hour with ideas and comments. We look forward to enhancing our Social Action program and welcome Faith as an integral part of our vision of excellence.

KNITTING FOR COMMON CATHEDRAL

In Massachusetts, there are approximately 10,500 homeless families and about 60 percent live in Boston. The First Parish knitting project would like to send hand-knit scarves to Common Cathedral. We need 100! This is a wonderful way to warm someone in need. Pick up a pattern at coffee hour today or use your own. Drop-off is in the First Parish coat room. For information, contact **Claudia Nimar** at 978-771-8216 or cnimar@aol.com.

UUSC ASKS YOU TO CONDEMN TORTURE

The UUSC is outraged at the new law approved by Congress and signed by President Bush that will legitimize the use of torture by United States government agents and greatly expand the President's power to authorize its use. The new law will allow certain interrogation techniques for terror suspects that are widely regarded as torture and would continue the secret CIA program for interrogating terrorism suspects. It would allow the President to "interpret the meaning

and application" of international standards for prisoner treatment and would deny detainees the habeas corpus right to challenge their detentions in federal court. Condemn this action by signing the U.S. Citizens' Signing Statement found at the UUSC website, uusc.org.

FIRST PARISH JOINS AREA EFFORT TO COMBAT GLOBAL WARMING

On November 1, nearly fifty people came together at First Parish for an evening program addressing global warming. The event was cosponsored by Green Sanctuary, the Social Action Council and Musketaquid for Arts and the Environment. This reflected a significant attempt to bring environmentally concerned groups and organizations together around this critical global issue. Participants reviewed previous global warming programs and then broke into small groups to brainstorm action lists for future activities. Green Sanctuary is planning follow-up on these ideas and is seeking new people to become involved. If you are interested, please contact **Andy Proulx** at a.proulx@verizon.net.

TICKET SPONSORS NEEDED FOR UU URBAN MINISTRY YOUTH

The UU Urban Ministry youth and the First Parish Gospel Choir will go to the Black Nativity on December 8. This is a first of several joint gatherings with the UU Urban Ministry youth. Their group is large and cannot afford the ticket price of \$30 each. To assure that many are not left at home, we need your help. If you can purchase a ticket for a UUUM youth, please contact **Claudia Nimar** at Cnimar@aol.com or 978-771-8216.

SAC GRANTS APPROVED

The SAC Grants Committee is pleased to announce that the following grants were approved at the October 28 meeting: The Albert Schweitzer Fellowship Program \$5,000 (**Eric Van Loon**); Amnesty International Concord Group 15 \$500 (**Phillip Villers**); Bridge to Biloxi \$10,000 (**Suzanne Lowe**); Children's Island \$1,400 (**Colleen White**); Concord/Acton Family Homelessness Advocacy Network \$700 (**Jane Blumberg**); Concord Area Preschool Association \$1,000 (**Betsy Siebert**); Concord Prison Outreach \$3,000 (**Linda Reynolds**); Concord-San Marcos Sister Cities Committee \$2,000 (**Al Armenti**); Connect Africa Foundation \$1,500 (**Ted Englander**); Domestic Violence Services of Central Middlesex \$2,500 (**Nancy Beeuwkes**); Friends of the Rafael Hernandez School \$2,000 (**Bill Seaver**); Gaining Ground \$1,000 (**Cynthia Ellis**); One Family \$1,500 (**Bill Seaver**); and the Sharing Foundation \$2,400 (**Lee Steppacher**).

CONCERT FOR MASS. DEPARTMENT OF PEACE

The Aardvark Jazz Orchestra has offered its 34th Annual Christmas Concert at Emmanuel Church, 15 Newbury Street, Boston, as a benefit for the Massachusetts Campaign for a U.S. Department of Peace. The concert begins at 7:30 p.m. and the cost is \$15. There will be a pre-concert party at the church from 5:00-7:00 p.m. for "Friends of Peace" as sponsors of the concert for \$25 a person. The Mass. Campaign, an affiliate of the Peace Alliance, is sponsored by First Parish Social Action and the Green Sanctuary committee.

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT SOCIAL ACTION AT FIRST PARISH?

The First Parish 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/cms/content/view/97/70/, or check out information on the SAC bulletin board downstairs in the church.

Membership Corner

It has been a busy fall for me in this new job as Director of Member Services. There is a lot to learn and I want to thank **Stephanie Chiha** for helping me learn it. We had a well-attended New U session this fall. Thank you so much to **Gary Smith, Margie King Saphier, Becky Blodgett, Eric Van Loon, Gene Brown, Val Holt, Sally Hamlin, Rebecca Curzon, Pam Howell, Mary Elizabeth Wheeler, Mary-Wren vanderWilden, Dan Holin and Doug Baker**, who spoke about all things UU and especially about First Parish. Thirteen people attended the Minister's Orientation and are on the path to becoming members. Look in the hallway outside the office for pictures and when you recognize someone, please introduce yourself.

I also want to thank **Lois Suarez** for helping me out with some office work that I was not managing to get done myself. And for all the hours she has put into organizing and maintaining our name tag board. Thank you, Lois!

—*Caroline McCloy*

FALL SEASONAL DINNER PARTIES

The Fall Seasonal Dinner Parties were held on Saturday, October 28. Forty-seven people participated in six dinners hosted by **Bill and Sherry Seaver, Vivienne and Dean Aldrich, Marilyn and Peter Lowitt, Don and Judy Dembsey, Sallie and Bill Satterthwaite, and Carolyn and Barry Copp**. 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 27, 2007.

—**Carolyn and Barry Copp**

AFFINITY GROUPS

Are you interested in going to the movies but can't make plans in advance? Would you like to have a list of people who are willing to be called at the last minute, then join Spur-of-the-Moment Moviegoers. Sign up for Women and Money, a discussion group using ideas from the book *Overcoming Underearning*, by Barbara Stanny. Join a current functioning Affinity Group: Bridge, Dancing, French Conversation, Jewish Awareness, Kayaking, Needleworkers, Photography, Spanish Discussion/Social and Writing Down the Bones (creative writing).

For more information about ongoing or potential Affinity Groups, contact **Judy Dembsey** at 978-263-3272 or dembsey@surf-global.net.

Wright Tavern Center

Please check the Wright Tavern Center website at wrighttavern.org under Course Descriptions for current course details. Courses listed below are under way, but still open for registration — fees have been prorated. Questions? Contact **Mary Elizabeth Wheeler**, the Wright Tavern Director at 978-369-9602, or FPTavern@aol.com. Please check the white board in the lower church entryway for meeting locations. Stay tuned for announcements about the Wright Tavern Center open reception in early January — come meet the presenters and sample classes.

Listening for God *Rev. Gary Smith*

Join Gary Smith for a discussion of short stories taken from *Faith: Stories*, edited by C. Michael Curtis. Bring a bag lunch and beverage. At the fourth meeting of the year, the group will discuss *James Voyage Four: 1661*, by James A. Michener.

Wednesday, 12/6 12:15 p.m. no charge

T'ai Ji *Mae Pagan*

Combines music with Qigong (energy release exercises) and the simple movement of Tai Ji (active relaxation) to release blocked energy, optimize health, and bring your life into balance. Create a sense of joy and well-being in your life. Preregister for \$20; drop-in fee is \$25.

Friday, 12/8 11:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m. and 1:30–3:00 p.m. \$20

Rise Up Singing *Elizabeth Norton and Others*

A monthly musical gathering of adults and children provides participants with an opportunity to sing and share music in special fellowship. Individuals are encouraged to bring instruments if they wish. Singers of all ages and experience are welcome.

Friday, 12/8 7:30 p.m. no charge

Do You Want Bones for Life? *Sherry Seaver (A.M.), Deborah Lotus (P.M.)*

Improve the function of your feet, knees, hips, back, shoulders and neck/head alignment while you stimulate the growth of new bone.

6 Mondays remaining 12/4–1/29 9:30–11:00 a.m. \$90/\$16
(no class 12/5, 1/1, 1/15) 1:15–2:45 p.m. \$90/\$16

T'ai Chi *David Zucker*

The original no-impact aerobics, T'ai Chi promotes mental, emotional, physical and spiritual health by combining physical exercise with relaxation and meditation.

3 Tuesdays remaining 12/5–12/19 6:00–7:30 p.m. \$45

Kundalini Yoga *Dharm Singh*

The yoga of awareness, each class is designed to help you strengthen your body, relax and focus your mind, bring harmony and balance, and lift spirit. Each session includes exercise, postures, mantra, meditation and relaxation. All levels are welcome. You can join this class at any time.

2 Tuesdays remaining 12/5 & 12/12 9:30–11:00 a.m. \$28
2 Thursdays remaining 12/7 & 12/14 9:30–11:00 a.m. \$28

WRIGHT TAVERN CENTER continued on page 10

Reflections and RE News

When my son turned eight, he asked me the dreaded question. You know the one: "Mom, I know you never lie to me and I want to know if Santa Claus is real." Ergh. I was really caught off guard. I wasn't ready for my children not to "believe," not to wonder and not to imagine this little old man doing systematic acts of kindness for children all over the world. My son was searching my face and I knew I had to pony up some kind of response. "Well, I will tell you the truth, but first I want you to consider whether or not you really want to know the truth.

Remember, once you know, you can never go back." This was not the response he expected and he mulled it over in his mind. I saw him weighing the pros and cons of not being a believer. "You're right. I'll ask again when I really want to know the answer." We both knew he now understood the situation. And we were both grasping to hang on to his childhood. This holiday season, I hope we are all believers, if but for a little while, and revisit those mystical and innocent feelings of wonder children have every day.

— Pam Howell

THE ANGELS: OUR YOUNGEST CHILDREN

Thanks to **Sue Beck** and our preschool teachers, our little angels will be singing for us on December 17. Each year, this First Parish tradition brings tears of joy to so many eyes. What is it about the voices of young children singing that melts each and every heart?

If your children are three, four or five (in kindergarten), they will be practicing in their RE classrooms on December 3 and December 10. On December 17, please arrive at the 3's/4's classroom at 8:30 a.m. or 10:30 a.m. in order to prepare for the procession.

WORKSHOP ROTATION

It was terrific having some of our workshops focus for our "Peace" Rotation on our partner church in Transylvania. Our Szekely guests loved seeing the artwork of their children and pictures of their home all over our RE wing. It was such a pleasure preparing for their visit and teaching our children one of the ways our faith community goes out into the world in peace.

Our next rotation will be exploring the Hebrew Scriptures and specifically the story of "Daniel and the Lion's Den." We will be constructing maps, using cloth puppets, "building" a Bible, drawing cartoons and going on a trust walks. This curriculum was largely prepared by **Chris Randall**. Chris's approach toward this curriculum truly helped shape all of the pillars for our workshops this year. Thank you, Chris.

DON'T FORGET THE CHILDREN'S CRAFTS WORKSHOP

When? Saturday, December 2, 1:30 to 4:30 p.m.

Where? First Parish in Concord

Who? First Parish kids age six and up

What? A holiday tradition!

Children make beautiful handcrafted gifts for their family and friends. Old and new favorites include woodworking, candy cottages, porcelain plate painting, holiday cookie baking, the bead bazaar, friendly plastic and more!

Please note, the orientation for the third rotation is on December 7, with refreshments at 7:15 p.m. and the orientation beginning promptly at 7:30. According to our first two rotations of teachers, the orientations have been essential in understanding the curriculum and the logistics of the rotation.

SPECIAL RE EVENT WITH DAVID ZUCKER

Please be sure to attend our Chapel Celebration for K-6th graders on Sunday, December 17, for both the 9:00 and 11:00 a.m. services. After the "angels" sing in service, our kids will be invited down to the Chapel. Thank you, David, for sharing your special talents with us this holiday season.

7TH GRADE YOUNG ACTIVISTS

Our 7th Grade Young Activists have taken responsibility for organizing both the Guest-at-Your-Table program and the Mitten Tree. The funds from Guest-at-Your-Table will go to people in need from all over the world. The mittens, scarves and hats from the Mitten Tree will go to our own guests at Open Table.

The Mitten Tree will be in the Parish Hall on December 3, December 10 and December 17. Please bring in your Guest-at-Your-Table boxes on December 3, 10 or 17. There will be a blue bucket just outside the RE office for these boxes.

8TH GRADE WAYS OF WORSHIP (WOW) PROGRAM

Please join us for our 8th Grade worship service on December 3 at 9:00 and 11:00 a.m. This will be an intergenerational service and we welcome all ages (child care will still be provided for 0- to 4-year-olds). Come and participate in this gift from our wow youth and leaders.

This group has been using the lens of *Godspell* to reflect on the life of Jesus and his Unitarian-Universalist approach to the world.

6TH GRADE YOUTH GROUP & THE JUNIOR HIGH YOUTH GROUP

Thanks to our youth group leaders, both youth groups joined together to prepare turkeys and decorative crafts for Open Table's Thanksgiving feast. Thank you, **Merill Comeau**, for sharing your talents with our youth. And thanks go out to **Mark Howell** for spending a Sunday frying turkeys outside First Parish. What will we think of next?

Mark your calendar! The Annual Snow-tubing event with Tri-Con Church will be Sunday, February 11, from 5 to 7 p.m. Hopefully, there will be snow this year!

RE NEWS continued on page 9

Senior Youth News

The youth, like adults, look for opportunities to connect and feel the spirit of the holidays amongst the commercialism and craziness of this season. We have planned a December that we hope provides youth with opportunities for connection and peace. I continue to be proud of the youth as they work to provide a patient and welcoming presence with one another. Our Sunday night YRUU meetings are truly an oasis of peace and a place for self-discovery away from the hubbub of the world.

Look over the December calendar and feel free to come to everything or drop in when it works for you. Please take special note that YRUU alums (college students) are welcome to come to our holiday party on December 17.

December 3: Agree/Disagree Game

December 10: Movie Night:
"An Inconvenient Truth"

December 17: Holiday Party – Alums welcome!
Bring something you already own,
but don't want (wrapped).

(No YRUU December 24 or 31)

Senior High owl (sowl) is up and running. There is a Lock-in on December 1 and 2 on the Wright Tavern Sun Porch. From 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. we will have dinner and a movie and the class will go from 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 a.m. on Saturday.

Thank you to **Susan Galford**, **Kate Kavanagh** and **Tracey Bird** who helped us with our Council on Aging Workday in November. The seniors in Concord were so happy to have their leaves raked, air conditioners taken out, storm windows put up and mattresses turned.

Mark your calendars now — our Winter Retreat will be January 26 to 28 — right after finals so we'll be ready to blow off some steam!

As always, I welcome calls or e-mails. May your December be full of joy!

—*Mary-Wren vanderWilden*

FINE ART PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY

Please view a new exhibit of "Natural Light Portraits" by **Deborah Bain** in the Sue Altshuler Gallery from December 11 through January 5. Deborah is a fine art portrait photographer who specializes in photographing children and families outdoors using natural light. Please contact her at 978-692-1928 for more information or view her online gallery at deborahbain.com.

WINTER SOLSTICE CELEBRATION!

Come one and all, young and old — join the First Parish Women's Circle in celebration of the shortest day. On Thursday, December 21, at 7:30 p.m. in the Parlor, the Women's Circle will gather to sing, dance and celebrate Yule. Light refreshments will follow in the Parish Hall.

RE NEWS continued from page 8

9TH GRADE COMING OF AGE

Our 9th Grade youth spent a Saturday together raking leaves for First Parish in the spirit of community service. **Doug Baker** was most impressed with the amount of leaves the youth...and the mentors...raked that day. The next COA event will be a potluck dinner and "Lock-In" at First Parish on January 5, beginning at 5:30 p.m.

RE DECEMBER CALENDAR:

- Saturday, December 2 wow Rehearsal in the Sanctuary from 10 a.m.–noon
Holiday Crafts Workshop from 1:30–4:30 p.m.
- Sunday, December 3 Regular RE for 0- to 4-year-olds
Intergenerational wow Service,
No RE for K–7th grade
- Sunday, December 10 Regular RE for 0–6th graders
No Young Activists
No 8th Grade Program
- Sunday, December 17 Regular RE for 0–4-year-olds
Chapel Celebration with our own **David Zucker**
No Young Activists
No 8th Grade Program
- Sunday, December 24 Regular RE for 0- to 4-year-olds
- Sunday, December 31 Regular RE for 0- to 4-year-olds

UPCOMING RE ORIENTATIONS

Because of the new programming next year, we will be doing orientation a bit differently. Orientation is critical to the success of our Workshop Rotation program. For each rotation, all leaders and guides must attend or schedule a time to meet personally with either me or **Liz Davis-Chaffin**, our Workshop Rotation Program Coordinator. If one person doesn't know the expectations, it could really throw the whole program off.

Orientation Schedule for '06-'07 RE

- Workshop Rotation #3: December 7, 7:30–9:30 p.m.
Workshop Rotation #4: February 8, 7:30–9:30 p.m.
Workshop Rotation #5: March 29, 7:30–9:30 p.m.

Additional Holiday Notes

CRAFTS ON SALE DECEMBER 10

The beautiful crafts from Crispaz — Christians for Peace in El Salvador — will be on sale again this year, on Sunday, December 10, after both the 9:00 a.m. and 11 a.m. services, in the Parish Hall. There will be hand-embroidered T-shirts, painted wooden nativity triptychs, holiday ornaments and much more, plus hand-woven textiles from Guatemala. These fair-trade crafts are made by more than 500 people in over 240 cooperatives, helping to promote just employment and a living wage as they foster grassroots development. Come shop for the holidays and support our friends in Central America toward a sustainable income.

HEIFER INTERNATIONAL ALTERNATIVE GIFT CARDS

Buy a gift that “keeps on giving” in the form of a gift card from Heifer International at the Sunday coffee hours December 3–24. **Diane** and **Dave Clapp** will be once again offering you a direct way to purchase these gift cards for relatives and friends, which offer support throughout the world in the form of animals that can sustainably support a family’s need to provide for nutrition, school fees and medical care. You may also call 978-443-4346.

UUSC HOLIDAY CARDS AVAILABLE NOW

Only 11 percent of the members of First Parish also belong to the UUSC. This organization, which is funded separately from the UUA, works to help spread our UU values throughout the world. UUSC representatives work with grassroots organizations that are already established, giving them direct contact with real people on the ground and eliminating the need for an expensive infrastructure in each country. Won’t you consider becoming a member? Individual memberships are \$40 and dual memberships are \$75. Dues can be given as contributions through Guest at-Your-Table, you can join by going to uus.org, or you can contact **Sue Beck**. UUSC holiday cards are available at coffee hour, or contact **Sue Beck** at sbeck345@comcast.net. Cards are \$8 for 10 with envelopes.

WRIGHT TAVERN CENTER continued from page 7

Kripalu Yoga *Edi Pasalis*

Kripalu Yoga, the yoga of compassion, teaches us the ultimate spiritual practice, to view ourselves without judgment. After only one class you will feel like you’ve taken a drink from the deep wellspring of yourself — and stretched and strengthened too! All are welcome.

2 Wed. remaining 12/6 & 12/13 7:30–9:00 p.m. \$28

Play with Purpose! *CC King*

Through structured, playful practices rooted in storytelling, movement, song and stillness, you gently gain access to your own body wisdom.

2 Wed. remaining 12/6 & 12/20 7:30–9:00 p.m. \$30

2 Thur. remaining 11/30 & 12/14 9:30–11:00 a.m. \$30

Women’s News

FIRST PARISH WOMEN’S RETREAT — SAVE THE DATES!

The annual Women’s Retreat will be held at the Senexet House in Woodstock, Connecticut, this January. This is a comfortable old vacation home overlooking Roseland Lake in northeastern Connecticut, about an hour and a half from Concord. The Women’s Retreat has become so popular that we offer you the choice of two weekends: January 19-21 or January 26-28, from Friday dinner through lunch on Sunday. Look for more information about our theme for this year in the next *Meeting House News*. Registration forms will be available in December.

THE WOMEN’S AM/PM BOOK GROUP

The next meetings of the Women’s AM/PM Book Group will be Monday evening, December 4, from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. and Tuesday morning, December 5, from 9:30 to 11:00 a.m. The book is *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, by Annie Dillard. All women of First Parish are warmly invited to read the current book and join one or both discussions. If you would like to be added to the Women’s Book Group e-mail list, please contact **Darien Smith** at darien@smithquest.com. These are the books and dates for 2007:

January 29 (p.m.) and 30 (a.m.)	<i>The Birth of Venus</i> Sarah Dunant
February 26 (p.m.) and 27 (a.m.)	<i>The Spiral Staircase</i> Karen Armstrong
March 26 (p.m.) and 27 (a.m.)	<i>Independent People</i> Halldor Laxness
April 23 (p.m.) and 24 (a.m.)	<i>The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down</i> Anne Fadiman
May 21 (p.m.) and 22 (a.m.)	<i>Snow Flower and the Secret Fan</i> , Lisa Sees

CHRISTMAS CONCERT AND TEA — DECEMBER 12

Treat yourself and friends to a delightful afternoon of holiday music and a traditional Christmas tea on Tuesday, December 12. The music program will begin at 3 p.m. in the Sanctuary. Director **Sue Beck** and The Harmonic Diversion have prepared a variety of offerings that range from familiar Christmas carols to popular rock songs that will bring extra sparkle to your holiday season. Tea will be served in the Parlor and Parish Hall at 4 p.m. All men and women of First Parish and their friends are welcome. No reservations are necessary.

Miscellaneous

FOSTER PARENTS NEEDED

Devereux Therapeutic Foster Care’s Metro-Boston is asking you to consider giving the gift of a lifetime...open your home and make a difference in the life of a child. Devereux offers strong 24-hour support for foster families and children, a \$350 tax-free weekly stipend, eight days paid respite, and a \$1,000 referral bonus. Call toll-free, 866-334-3879, Monday through Friday, 9:00-5:00, to request additional information and an application.

December 2006 Calendar

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

Every Week...

Morning Meditation	Monday-Friday	7:15 a.m.
<i>Bones for Life®</i>	Monday	9:30 a.m. (not 12/25 or 1/1)
<i>Bones for Life®</i>	Monday	1:15 p.m. (not 12/25 or 1/1)
<i>Kundalini Yoga</i>	Tuesday	9:30 a.m. (not 12/19 or 12/26)
<i>T'ai Chi</i>	Tuesday	6:00 p.m. (not 12/26)
<i>Tibetan Buddhism</i>	Wednesday	9:30 a.m.
Bell Choir	Wednesday	1:00 p.m.
Junior Choir	Wednesday	4:30 p.m.
Chalice Choir	Wednesday	5:00 p.m.
<i>Kripalu Yoga</i>	Wednesday	7:30 p.m. (not 12/20 or 12/27)
Adult Choir	Wednesday	7:45 p.m.
<i>Kundalini Yoga</i>	Thursday	9:30 a.m. (not 12/21 or 12/28)
<i>Tibetan Buddhism</i>	Thursday	7:30 p.m.
Gospel Choir	Sunday	10:00 a.m.
YRUU	Sunday	7:00 p.m. (not 12/24 or 12/31)

<p>Fri Dec 1 5:30 Senior High OWL Lock-In</p> <p>Sat Dec 2 10:00 wow Rehearsal</p> <p>1:30 Children's Crafts Workshop</p> <p>Sun Dec 3 12:30 Congregational Vote</p> <p>Mon Dec 4 7:30 Human Rights Day Breakfast</p> <p>7:30 Women's Book Group</p> <p>Tue Dec 5 9:00 WPA Board Meeting</p> <p>9:30 Women's Book Group</p> <p>7:30 Special Events Committee</p> <p>Wed Dec 6 12:15 <i>Listening for God</i></p> <p>7:00 Youth Advisory Committee</p> <p>7:00 RE Council</p> <p>7:30 <i>Play with Purpose</i></p> <p>Thu Dec 7 9:30 <i>Play with Purpose</i></p> <p>7:00 Human Resources Committee</p> <p>7:30 Religious Education Orientation</p> <p>Fri Dec 8 9:30 Pastoral Care</p> <p>11:30 <i>T'ai Ji</i></p> <p>1:30 <i>T'ai Ji</i></p> <p>7:30 <i>Rise Up Caroling</i></p> <p>Sat Dec 9 9:00 Photo Club</p> <p>Sun Dec 10 12:15 Nominating Committee</p> <p>4:00 Needleworkers Affinity Group</p> <p>6:00 Youth Service Project</p>	<p>Mon Dec 11 12:00 Newsletter Deadline</p> <p>7:00 Standing Committee</p> <p>Tue Dec 12 3:00 WPA Christmas Tea</p> <p>7:00 Amnesty Chapter Meeting</p> <p>Wed Dec 13 6:30 Partner Church Committee</p> <p>7:00 <i>Stress Reduction Drop-In</i></p> <p>Thu Dec 14 10:30 Writers Affinity Group</p> <p>Sat Dec 16 9:00 Music Rehearsal</p> <p>2:00 Sanctuary Decorating</p> <p>Tue Dec 19 7:30 Denominational Affairs Committee</p> <p>Wed Dec 20 9:15 Newsletter Mailing Group</p> <p>Thu Dec 21 7:30 Solstice Celebration</p> <p>Sun Dec 24 11:00 Single Worship Service</p> <p>4:00 Christmas Eve with Children's Choirs</p> <p>5:30 Christmas Eve with Gospel Choir</p> <p>7:00 Christmas Eve with Bell Choir</p> <p>9:00 Christmas Eve with Adult Choir</p> <p>Mon Dec 25 Holiday—Office Closed</p> <p>Thu Dec 28 10:30 Writers Affinity Group</p> <p>Sun Dec 31 11:00 Single Worship Service</p> <p>New Year's Eve Celebration</p> <p>Mon Jan 1 Holiday—Office Closed</p>
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First Parish in Concord

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

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DECEMBER 2006 NEWSLETTER

The next **Newsletter deadline** is **Monday, December 11**, at noon.

The Newsletter mailing is Wednesday, December 27.

News items should be limited to 100 words.

Don't Miss...

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN VOTE

Sunday, December 3

12:30 p.m. Congregational Meeting

First Parish in Concord • UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST Staff

Gary E. Smith, Senior Minister (*on sabbatical January–June 2007*)

Jenny M. Rankin, Minister

Margie King Saphier, Associate Minister for Pastoral Care

Rebecca M. Blodgett, Affiliate Minister for Pastoral Care

Sally Hamlin, Ministerial Intern

Pam Howell, Director of Religious Education

Jane Barnes, Religious Education Administrator

Liz Davis-Chaffin, Workshop Rotation Program Coordinator

Carol Duane, Program Coordinator for Young Children

Mary-Wren vanderWilden, Youth Program Director

Elizabeth Norton, Music Director

Eric Huenneke, Organist

Martha Goodman, Handbell Choir Director

Judy Burrows, Children's Choir Director

Anderson Manuel, Music/RE Associate

Mary Elizabeth Wheeler, Wright Tavern Center Director

Dan Holin, Jericho Road Executive Director

Leslie Koplou, Assistant to Executive Director, Jericho Road

A. Bigay, Assistant to the Ministers

Douglas Baker, Sacristan and Curator

Jane Johnson, Office Manager

Peggy Gallo, Financial Secretary and Collector

Lisa Cole, Business Manager

Caroline McCloy, Director of Member Services

Faith Bade, Social Action Associate

Kate Keleher, Newsletter Editor

Kaye Harvie, Jane Johnson, Newsletter Staff

FUN & FABULOUS NEW YEAR'S EVE!

Join the Special Events Committee for a fabulous, fun-filled evening to usher in 2007. Bring your dancing shoes, as we've been able to secure our fantastic DJ from last year. Appetizers will be served, we'll enjoy a Champagne toast, and then enjoy more food after midnight. Tickets will be on sale at all coffee hours for \$25.

Church Office Hours: Monday–Friday, 9:00 to 4:00

Phone: 978-369-9602

Fax: 978-369-8701

E-Mail: fpconcord@aol.com

Website: firstparish.org

Ministers' E-Mail:

Gary E. Smith: garyesmith@firstparish.org

Jenny M. Rankin: revjenny@comcast.net

Margie King Saphier: mksaphier@comcast.net