



First Parish in Concord
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
Gathered in 1636

The Meeting House News

REVeries

Dear Friends,

Greetings from the other side of winter ... we hope! The church is bustling. By the time you receive this newsletter, we will have held three Marvelous Monday dinners, complete with vespers services. What a warm community we have. If you missed it, consider joining one of the other upcoming events at First Parish. There is a new networking group for folks in job transition. There are covenant groups, classes at Wright Tavern, social action opportunities, and so much more. Look inside this newsletter and keep your eye out for the yellow inserts in the Sunday order of service.

All of these gatherings seem like a big change from when I first began my internship with you back in September. Back then, we were meeting at Kerem Shalom and scrambling to find enough space for our various groups. It can still be tricky sometimes with the RE wing under construction, but each month First Parish is closer to having the space you have planned for and dreamed of for so long.

In our second vespers service in March we reflected on the cracking of the ice: the slow progression to spring in which the ice cracks and refreezes, then cracks again, and refreezes ... until gradually spaces form in between, and then the pieces of ice get smaller and smaller ... and then spring is here. And we know when this happens that all along buds were forming on the trees, flowers pushing up through the earth ... the crocuses, the daffodils, the lilies...

Yes. After the cold and the darkness, new life. Spring comes. A resurrection.

Let me hear you say amen!

Happy Easter!

In faith,

— *Angela Herrera*

Please see page 7 for information about our ongoing monthly series.

GOING DEEPER SPIRITUALLY: Monthly Thematic and Theological Queries for the People of First Parish in Concord

Sunday Worship Schedule

April 5 – Palm Sunday
Jenny Rankin, preaching
9:00 – Gospel Choir
and First Parish Choir
11:00 – Handbell Choir

April 12 – Easter
Gary Smith, preaching
9:00 & 11:00 – First Parish Choir
and Festival Brass

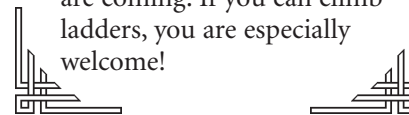
April 19
Angela Herrera, preaching
9:00 Pamela Schweppe, Soprano
11:00 – First Parish Choir

April 26
Margie King Saphier, preaching
9:00 – Larry Gall, bass
11:00 – First Parish Choir



DECORATE THE SANCTUARY FOR EASTER

Your help is needed to decorate the church on Saturday, April 11, at 9:30 a.m. Just come on Saturday morning to help; no need to let us know you are coming. If you can climb ladders, you are especially welcome!



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There is one insert with this newsletter:

- Wright Tavern Courses

The Meeting House News, the newsletter of First Parish in Concord, is published monthly — in print and online — 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
Friday, Apr. 17	Wednesday, Apr. 29
Monday, May 18	Wednesday, May 27

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

PENNIES FROM HEAVEN: MINISTERS' DISCRETIONARY FUND

Thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor, the ministers have access to a discretionary account that is intended to help people of our congregation and of the town when they are in need. We have helped with medical bills, rent and mortgage payments, the purchase of a furnace — the list is impressive. In these uncertain days, I ask of you two things. One, if you or someone you know is in need of some modest financial help, please let me know. And second, if you can help supplement this fund, I would be grateful. A check to the "Ministers' Discretionary Fund" and slipped into my pocket would be gratefully received. I tell people the money is "Pennies from Heaven."

—Gary Smith

Standing Committee Information

The next Standing Committee meeting will be held off-site on Monday evening, April 13. Please look for the monthly minutes online at firstparish.org under Church Life (you must log in), or on the Parish News bulletin board.



ANNUAL APPEAL 2009



Hopefully by the time you read this you will have sent in your pledge card for the Annual Appeal. If for some reason yours got lost at the bottom of a pile somewhere, please call the church office and we will send you another. It is important that you make your pledge now, so that we can put together the budget for the coming year for the Annual Meeting in June.

We realize that family budgets may be especially tight this year, so we are tightening our belts at First Parish. Even though we are facing increasing costs — for example, health insurance — we are not going to increase our budget. Our goal for this year is the same as the amount we raised last year, \$924,000. Pledges support the annual budget of the parish, which provides worship and music, religious education, social justice programs, pastoral care and community events. Pledge income pays the salaries of the ministers and staff, and pays for the operation and maintenance of our beautiful building. An average pledge of \$1680 per family is necessary in order for us to maintain our basic operations and programs.

Please consider what First Parish means to you and your family and pledge an amount that reflects your commitment to our community and our mission. Thank you for helping to keep our doors wide open.

— **George Gagliardi** and **Caroline McCloy**



Membership Corner

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE NEWS

The Membership Committee actively coordinates efforts to support newcomers and also supports existing members of our large congregation. In March, the second New U orientation was completed. This three-session series provides an opportunity to explore our UU faith more closely and hear first-hand about involvement at First Parish.

Approximately thirty people have attended the fall and spring sessions. New members will be recognized later this spring at a Sunday service, followed by a potluck meal.

Membership literature, current newsletters, copies of the photo directory are at the Newcomer's table during Sunday coffee hours. Please stop by! Whether you need a nametag, are looking to sign the membership book, or would like to join a new group, we are happy to help you navigate the way.

Currently, ministerial intern **Angela Herrera** is the Membership Committee's staff liaison; she can be contacted directly with your membership concerns or questions. —**Marilyn Lowitt**

Parish Notes

NETWORKING GROUP MEETING TUESDAY MORNINGS

Friends of First Parish are starting a networking group for people in transition, fearing transition or affected in some way by the changes in our economy. Other faith communities in town are collaborating with us in this endeavor. Meetings are Tuesday mornings at 9 a.m. in the Wright Tavern. Please contact **Tony Gallo** at tony.gallo@hawkpartners.com if you have questions or can offer your expertise in supporting the group.

BRING YOUR FAMILY TO THE MAUNDY THURSDAY SERVICE AND CHOWDER SUPPER—APRIL 9

Please join us for the annual observance of “The Last Supper” on the Thursday prior to Easter Sunday. **Angela Herrera** and other First Parish ministers will lead a service of communion in the Sanctuary at 6:30 p.m., followed by the traditional chowder supper in the Parish Hall. Tickets for the supper are \$14 in advance for adults (\$15 at the door), \$5 for children and will include homemade chowder, salad, fresh bread, wine and fruit pie for dessert. Our antique First Parish communion silver set will be on display in the Sanctuary during the service, with pieces dating back to the earliest days of our church. Purchase tickets at coffee hours at the Newcomer's table or in the church office prior to the dinner. Seating is limited so get your tickets early. **Caroline McCloy** will be preparing the chowder. Please contact her at 978-371-1039 or cmccloy@aol.com to help in the kitchen.

FIRST PARISH ANNUAL PASSOVER SEDER — SATURDAY, APRIL 11 (EASTER WEEKEND)

Your family and friends are welcome. We all participate — shopping on Friday, or meal preparation on Saturday morning or afternoon or setting up, serving one course or helping with clean-up. Tickets are the same price as last year: Children under 6 and adults over 85 — free but must sign up for seating. Children ages 6 to 13, \$5; children ages 13 and older, and adults, \$15.

Tickets and assignment choices are available from Wednesday, April 1, to Thursday, April 9, weekdays in the office and on Sunday, April 5, in the Parish Hall. Questions? Call **Rhoda Miller** at 978-369-6639.

FERRY BEACH REGISTRATION IS COMING!

Mark your calendar now for the annual Ferry Beach Retreat Weekend, May 22-25 (Memorial Day Weekend). Join families from our own congregation and First Parish in Lexington for a relaxed weekend on the beach at the UU Ferry Beach Camp and Conference Center in Saco, Maine. Registrations for the weekend will be taken at coffee hours on April 26 and May 3. Look for the Ferry Beach information table in the Parish Hall beginning Sunday, April 19. For questions before then, contact **Darien Smith** (darien@smithquest.com, 978-369-1471). Also, check out the excellent summer camps and conferences for all ages at Ferry Beach, at www.ferrybeach.org.

WPA LUNCHEON MEETING—APRIL 28

The Women's Parish Association is offering a special event on Tuesday, April 28. Critically acclaimed actor Stephen Collins will perform dramatic monologues from great works of literature, all depicting and celebrating the human condition and spirit. The

PARISH NOTES continued on page 10

Pastoral Care News

In the book *Here If You Need Me*, by Kate Braestrup, she writes: “Why are you here?” my seminary professors asked me. “You don’t really believe in God, do you?” My brother wrote.” Dear professors, dear brother. It is possible that God is the way Annie Payne used to lean her old head against my shoulder, trusting me as I held her on the bed-pan; Drew’s arms holding me in our fertile scent; Ron Dunham walking out of the woods hand-in-hand with a child lost, then found. It is possible that God is my neighbor with her pan of brownies standing on my doorstep. It is entirely possible, that is, that the God I serve and worship with all my body, with all my mind, with all my soul and all my spirit, is love. It’s enough. It’s all I need.”

Several new volunteers have joined Pastoral Care so we can be “here if you need us.”

Pastoral Care Council welcomes **Tracey Hurd** to its membership. Tracey is a developmental psychologist, writer and former UUA staff member, where she was the Children’s and Family Programs Director.

Bridget Neale Paris joins **Louisa Paushter** as New Baby Welcomer. Bridget is a full-time mom with three girls. She is looking forward to welcoming new babies and their parents, helping them to make connections within our community and building networks of support in times of need.

We also have three new Pastoral Care Lay Ministers. **Dana Snyder-Grant** is a writer and a clinical social worker specializing in chronic illness and disability. She values her role as a pastoral care lay minister, learning what it means to be present with others during difficult times.

Bev Bringle has been delivering meals for Caring Connection and realized the visits were as important as the food. Bev wrote, “I find giving support is both healthy and nourishing for the giver as well as for the receiver.”

Tony Rodriguez, who is originally from Puerto Rico, is an Information Technology manager at Fidelity Investments. He looks forward to learning from his interactions with other members of the community through Pastoral Care work.

I thank **Carolyn Shohet** and **Rhoda Miller** who cooked up a storm, replenishing the freezer with delicious meals.

—*Margie King Saphier*

CANCER GROUP MEETING

If you have been diagnosed with cancer, you are invited to the Wright Tavern sunroom on April 14, from 6:00-7:30 p.m. Perhaps on Sunday morning, someone sitting two or three rows away from you is going through something similar. Gathering in a small group offers an opportunity to share common feelings and experiences. Sessions will be held the second Tuesday of each month, led by **Donna Davis** — drop-in; no registration or fee.

Money Matters

SCHOLARSHIPS/FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE POLICY

First Parish has always offered financial assistance for program and retreat participation to those who request it, with no requirement to prove hardship. That policy remains in effect. However, given the current economic climate, we anticipate that requests for financial assistance will increase, and our ability to meet needs will most likely be strained. Therefore, we thought it would be helpful to clarify the policies and guidelines the ministers use when offering financial assistance.

Both adults and youth may ask for financial help.

For activities such as weekend retreats, Ferry Beach, YRUU fall and winter retreats, snow tubing, Coming of Age, etc., First Parish can offer assistance up to 50 percent of the cost of the activity.

For youth service trips, or adult trips like the ones to Transylvania or Italy, assistance might be available above the 50 percent level, but First Parish cannot pay 100 percent of the cost.

Any youth requesting financial assistance will be asked to earn money to make a contribution toward the cost of the retreat, activity or trip.

If you or your family has experienced a significant change in income due to job loss or medical expenses, please, do not hesitate to ask **Gary Smith** or **Jenny Rankin** for financial assistance. Just call or e-mail and make an appointment. Be assured that your request and discussion with a minister is confidential, and that First Parish will always do its best to meet the needs of its pledging members.

Contributions to the scholarship fund are welcomed! The existing funds for scholarships are these:

- Maggie Wolf Fund – for youth social action
- Bird Fund – for 8th grade and younger social action
- New Orleans Service Trip Scholarship Fund
- Youth Mission Trip Fund

If you have any questions about the scholarship policy or the funds, please contact **Melissa Perdue Gallo**, at mpgallo@firstparish.org.

Community News

CONCORD LIBRARY SEEKS USED BOOK DONATIONS

When you donate clean used books, CD’s, and DVD’s, you help fund museum passes, children’s programs, concerts, readings, and new DVD’s and CD’s for the library. You can bring books to the reference desk whenever the Main Library is open. The next book sale is Saturday, June 6, on the library lawn. For more information: friends@concordlibrary.org or 978-318-3347.

Wright Tavern Center

What is happening at Wright Tavern? As spring approaches, we are witnessing the blossoming of an unexpected theme emerging from all the work of the fall and winter terms — the personal story is breaking ground and coming to life at First Parish. And what a generative time it is. The tree of our community with its many strong branches is coming to flower, as we find religious education, social action and spiritual renewal joining together to explore more deeply what it means to be a part of this body.

At Wright Tavern, our explorations into the creative arts, environmental sustainability, diversity, leadership and the spiritual journey have all converged into one common theme — the power of the personal story. We recognize



for *Spiritual Renewal*

the connections between Public Narrative and Authentic Leadership Presence; between Realities of Aging and Write Way to Wellness; between Spiritual Autobiography and Making Art out of Life; between Stories from the Heart and Writing the Sacred;

between Awakening the Dreamer and Intimacy as a Spiritual Path.

SUCCESSES:

Authentic Leadership Presence for Lay Leaders with **Sean Kavanagh** was full to overflowing. We were pleased with the response from the community, and had a waiting list for the first time ever — stay tuned!

Stories from the Heart with solo classical guitarist Louis Arnold and Playback theater troupe True Story Theater was a huge success. We raised over \$1000 at this benefit for Wright Tavern outreach and scholarship programs. Thanks to all who attended for their generous support, and to the artists who donated their time and talent.

Wright Tavern and the Social Action Community collaborated to bring the *Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream Symposium* to First Parish for an inspiring dialogue about environmental sustainability, social justice and spiritual fulfillment.

APRIL HIGHLIGHTS:

Visiting presenter Rev. Jade Angelica and her Healing Moments™ team brings *The Healing Power of "YES": Communicating Effectively with Persons with Alzheimer's* to First Parish on Saturday, April 4, 9:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m. Lunch included.

Merill Comeau offers her hands-on course *Making Art out of Life* beginning Monday, April 6, 7:00–9:30 p.m.

Rich and Antra Borofsky return to Wright Tavern for a one-day version of their popular *Intimacy as a Spiritual Path* workshop on Saturday, April 18, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.

COMING ATTRACTIONS:

The Emerson Forum returns to First Parish for its second meeting on Monday, May 2, from 7:00–8:30 p.m.

WRIGHT TAVERN CENTER

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MUSings

Through this harsh winter and the general anxiety that seems to have prolonged it, I have been looking forward to Easter and the message of renewal, hope and resurrection it brings. A perennial highlight for me is our traditional singing of the *Hallelujah Chorus* from Handel's *Messiah*. I love to look into the congregation during the final hymn on Easter Sunday and see people making their way to the balcony, some clutching well-thumbed *Messiah* scores, to join the choir in the loft.



I also love hearing the voices behind me as well as those in front of me, when we sing that chorus. Ours may not be the most polished performance of this work, but I think it ranks right up there with the most joyous.

The *Hallelujah Chorus* is surrounded by tradition and legend. Most people have learned that the audience should stand for this chorus whenever it is sung. The origins of this tradition are not documented historically. But one story goes that during an early performance of the *Messiah*, King George II stood for the *Hallelujah Chorus*, and since custom dictated that when the king stood, everyone stood, the audience followed suit. The reasons for George II's actions have been variously attributed: he might have been arriving late, as was evidently his custom, and all rose to greet him; he may have been standing to relieve his gout or he may have been so moved that he stood to honor the music. It doesn't matter so much why he stood — or even if he stood. The tradition remains strong.

It is a matter of some debate among conductors whether this tradition is one to be endorsed or discouraged. Some feel it is part of the *Messiah* tradition and that each audience deserves this chance to be part of the tradition. Others feel it is disruptive to the performance. For several seasons, I sang an annual *Messiah* performance in New York with a conductor who would actually turn to the audience as the *Hallelujah Chorus* began and motion them — quite adamantly — to be seated! Hard to say which part of that tradition would be more distracting!

Standing or seated, the *Hallelujah Chorus* is one of the great expressions of joy and triumph in Western music. I am glad that it is part of our Easter celebration and that we are all able to join in the tradition.

Blessings,

— Beth Norton

DUST OFF THOSE MESSIAH SCORES! EASTER IS COMING!

Singers from the congregation are invited to come to the choir loft during the final hymn on Easter Sunday, April 12 and join the choir in our traditional Easter benediction response, G. F. Handel's *Hallelujah Chorus*. If you have a copy of the *Messiah*, please bring it with you. If not, there will be some extra music available, and choir members are always willing to share. Even if you don't wish to make the climb to the balcony, feel free to join in this joyous chorus on Easter morning.

Social Action Community News and Events

When I think of April, I think of service trips! Twelve participants leave for New Orleans and 17 participants leave for El Salvador this month, and the Transylvania trip will happen this summer! Plus **Mary-Wren** and I, inspired by lay leaders **Dave** and **Diane Clapp**, are organizing a Heifer International trip to Honduras in February 2010.



These trips all grow out of a vision of a “tradition” of service and activism in our faith community — a belief that we can model this activism and provide opportunities to raise our youth with an awareness of their connection to the world and to humanity. Youth and chaperones all come back inspired, appreciative and energized for more. Join us! As always, please contact me with your causes and concerns.

— *Faith Bade*

Social Action Program Director

THANKS TO SUE BECK AND LESLIE FISHER

For stepping forward as the UUSC team here at First Parish and bringing an amazing program to our children and congregation. Through their efforts the UUSC Tents for Hope campaign was integrated into our RE curriculum. No one could miss the tent on the stage in the Parish Hall. We all learned more about the crisis in Darfur and recognized the common needs of humanity for safety, a home, and fresh food and water. To learn more about the UUSC's humanitarian aid efforts, please contact **Sue Beck** at sbeck345@comcast.net.

OPEN TABLE'S 20TH ANNIVERSARY

Help us celebrate Open Table's 20th anniversary and support those in need in our community. Join us on April 29, from 12:00-1:30 p.m. at Trinitarian Congregational Church, 54 Walden Street, Concord. Seating will be limited — the cost is \$75/person and \$600 for a table of eight. More details to follow. Contact OT20thanniversary@yahoo.com with questions or to reserve tickets.

GRANTS DEADLINE EXTENDED

The SAC grants deadline to submit requests for consideration at the spring meeting has been moved up to April 15. You may submit requests via e-mail to **Alane Harrington Wallis** at awallis@nutter.com or to the SAC

office at First Parish. Please visit the First Parish website for a more detailed description of the grants process.

CONCORD PRISON OUTREACH ORIENTATION APRIL 21

There will be an orientation at the Medium Security Prison (MCI) for those who wish to become volunteers at the Concord prisons. The orientation will be on April 21 from 1:00–3:30 p.m. MCI is located at the Concord rotary. Park across Commonwealth Avenue and enter through the main door. For more information about the CPO volunteer programs, go to the website, www.concordprisonoutreach.org/ or contact Lenore James, director of CPO, at 978-369-1430, or **Linda Reynolds** (after April 7) at 978-371-0562 or lsmithreynolds@aol.com.

COOPERATIVE METROPOLITAN MINISTRIES INTERFAITH SERVICE DAY SUNDAY, MARCH 29

The afternoon starts at 12:30 p.m. in downtown Boston. Open with brown bag lunch, spread out to assigned community service projects throughout the city, return for closing rally and dinner. For high school, college and graduate students from all faith traditions. Older adult chaperones also encouraged to participate. Register at coopmet.org or e-mail IFYI@coopmet.org, or pick up the registration form from **Faith Bade**.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE ON SATURDAY APRIL 4 – DONATE BLOOD

Donate blood at the 8th annual Nick Ressler Blood Drive. The Mass General bloodmobile will be at the Hunt Recreation Center, 90 Stow Street, Concord, on Saturday, April 4, from 8:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Anyone between the ages of 16 and 65 may be eligible to donate. Appointments are necessary. Contact **Pam Ressler** at pk2@aol.com or 978-369-0869, or **Cindy Tenner** at cyt208@aol.com or 978-371-0306, for an appointment.

VOLLEYBALL TOURNAMENT ON SATURDAY, APRIL 4

This event to benefit the William Ellery Channing Elementary School in Hyde Park will be on Saturday, April 4, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Form a team of 8 to 12 players, collect sponsor support to cover the \$750 registration fee, and benefit the programs at this school that are also supported by a UU grant. Contact **Claudia Nimar** at cnimar@aol.com.

UU LOBBY DAY — WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1

Beginning at 10 a.m. at 25 Beacon Street, with morning training and afternoon visits to your legislators. This year we will continue our work on homelessness prevention as well as global warming. Contact Nancy Banks from UU Mass Action Network at uumassactionnetwork@verizon.net or 617-835-5426 to reserve your space and prepay \$10 for lunch if desired.

PROJECT BREAD'S ANNUAL WALK FOR HUNGER — SUNDAY, MAY 3

Right now more people are struggling to put food on the table. Since 1969, the Walk for Hunger's fundraising dollars have fed people through emergency food programs throughout the state and through many food programs in schools, after-school programs, and pediatrician offices. For more information, visit www.projectbread.org/walk or call 617-723-5000.

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/; visit the Social Action bulletin board; or e-mail our Social Action Program Director, **Faith Bade**, at FBade@firstparish.org.

Going Deeper Spiritually

Monthly Thematic and Theological Queries
for the People of First Parish in Concord

SERIES VIII, 2008-2009

Note: *Following the lead of All Souls Unitarian in Tulsa, Unity Church in St. Paul, and the First Parish in Weston, we continue this month a series of reflections, each focusing on a particular theological concept. Worship during the month will include at least one Sunday where this concept is explored. We hope the suggested topic for the month will find its way into our small group gatherings and into our conversations, even at home.*

April 2009: **SALVATION** — We don't use the word *salvation* very often in UU circles. It's a dusty old word, thrown around for so many hundreds of years. It brings up images of a God who would damn some, save others. Salvation sounds like heaven and hell, hard rules and repentance. Reality feels much more nuanced than that.

But salvation also carries a sense of restoration. And who among us has not felt broken, unfulfilled, hopeless or loveless at one time or another? Our journeys include long and short stretches of "dark woods"; of danger, uncertainty and yearning for wholeness. We get hurt. At times we harm others. We must look beyond ourselves, whether this means entering more deeply into our place in "the interconnected web of all existence," drawing closer to God, or finding the Spirit of Love in relationship with others. The truth is two-fold: we are beautiful and imperfect, strong and dependent, breakable and sometimes broken. We need wholeness. We need restoration. We need salvation.

Once you fully apprehend the vacuity of a life without struggle, you are equipped with the basic means of salvation. —Tennessee Williams

I firmly believe that our salvation depends on the poor.
—Dorothy Day

Human salvation lies in the hands of the creatively mal-adjusted. —Martin Luther King, Jr.

Questions for reflection:

- In what ways do you need salvation? What is required for you to find it? What gets in the way?
- Do you see evidence in your own life of a connection between struggle and wholeness?
- What is the relationship between social justice and salvation in your own life? In the wider world?

CONTRIBUTE THE SUNDAY FLOWERS

If you would like to contribute the flowers on Sunday as a memorial or celebration, please contact **Peg Hedstrom** at 978-888-8133.

Senior Youth News

Youth tell me that of all the things they have done at First Parish, service trips have had the biggest impact on them. Therefore, **Faith Bade** and I have been working hard to plan three service trips this year, and we are beginning to plan another one — to Honduras for February 2010. Over April vacation there are 12 youth/chaperones heading to New Orleans to rebuild houses that are still in disrepair after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Another group of 17 youth/chaperones will be going to El Salvador over April vacation to help rebuild an art center for peace. Then in July another 24 will be going to Transylvania to rebuild a community center. And now we are working with **Dave and Diane Clapp** to plan a February vacation trip to Honduras through the Heifer Project. We are fortunate to have so many wonderful adults chaperoning and planning these trips and a committed group of youth willing to give up precious vacation time to serve others. Over my five years here as Youth Director, I've seen youth come back from these trips forever changed by the experience of helping others. Not only are these experiences personally meaningful, but they help our youth feel connected to each other and the First Parish community.

Beyond service trips, Sunday night Youth Group offers youth a chance to check in, grow spiritually and build community on a weekly basis. There aren't many Sunday nights in April, but the YAC has planned a few fun events:

- Apr. 5 Bowling at Acton Bowladrome
(meet at First Parish at 7:00 p.m.)
- Apr. 12 No YRUU – Happy Easter
- Apr. 19 No YRUU – public school vacation
- Apr. 26 Movie Night – *Religulous*

April can be the calm before the storm for youth. May and June are crazy with concerts, proms, graduation parties, spring sports, etc. It is my hope that First Parish continues to be an oasis of peace and a welcoming place for our youth in these busy times.

—*Mary-Wren vanderWilden*

WRIGHT TAVERN CENTER

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The River Blessing Ceremony will close out our year on Saturday, June 13, at Egg Rock. Join me, **Caroline McCloy** and others at 8:00 a.m. for this simple but profound ceremony.

Visit the Wright Tavern Center website at www.wrighttavern.org for the latest news and events, in-depth descriptions of courses and presenter bios. Contact us at FPTavern@aol.com or 978-369-9602. For short course descriptions, please see the Wright Tavern insert in this *Meeting House News*.

With gratitude and appreciation,

—*Mary Elizabeth Wheeler*

Director

Reflection and RE News

When I received a letter from **Gary Smith**, **Jenny Rankin** and **Pam Howell** last winter inviting me to be the COA leader for this year's program, I was truly honored. Wow, I thought to myself, they are entrusting me with all these 9th graders on their spiritual journey! It felt simultaneously exciting and daunting to think about leading such a time-honored program at First Parish. I was always so impressed with the youth's credos on COA Sunday — could I take on that responsibility? Obviously I said yes, and I'm glad I did, since I was very curious to find out what really went on during the sessions that lead up to credos — to “peak behind the curtain,” so to speak. I had a lot of fun during the entire program, working with these wonderful youth and the dedicated adult mentors. But I do have to admit that there were times when I wondered whether the youth were really “getting it.”

The proof of the pudding came on February 1 at the Coming of Age Sunday — yes, they “got it!” The credos were heartfelt and unique, and each one was truly representative of the person who wrote it. What I learned from “peaking behind the curtain” was that the youth all experience the program very differently — some as silent observers like sponges, just soaking it all up. Others as active participants, jumping in headfirst without hesitation—putting their thoughts and views “out there” for the rest of the group. Their styles and ways of engaging in the program were as varied as their own beliefs and spiritual journeys — all contributing to the richness of the program and to my gratitude for having been part of it. — **Suzie Weaver**, Leader of Coming of Age '09

SURPRISE VISITOR ON MAY 17

In May, we are thrilled to have Cindy Rivka Marshall back with us as our Surprise Visitor. If you recall, Cindy did a marvelous rendition of Queen Esther last year in the Sanctuary for the Message to Children. She is a renowned storyteller who uses song, music and theatrics to provide a delightful time of entertainment for our children. On May 17, we will begin in the Sanctuary with a children's message from Ms. Rivka Marshall, and then our K-6th graders will gather in the Parish Hall for more stories and laughter.

REFLECTION ON THE HOLIDAY WORKSHOP

When I was asked to be the Head Elf this year, I was honored. The First Parish Children's Craft Workshop has a long tradition and is beloved by children, their parents and the larger community of volunteers who once a year don a

APRIL RE CALENDAR

RE IN APRIL AT FIRST PARISH

- Sun., April 5 Regular RE for Babies – 6th Grade, 9 and 11 a.m.
7th Grade Neighboring Faiths, Cult Discussion, TBD
- Sun., April 12 Regular RE for Babies – 4 years, 9 and 11 a.m.
Intergenerational Service for K – 6th Grade
- Sun., April 19 Regular RE for Babies – 4 years, 9 and 11 a.m.
Chapel Sunday for K-6th Grade, 9 and 11 a.m.
- Sun., April 26 Regular RE for Babies – 6th Grade, 9 and 11 a.m.

red apron to become an elf for a day, helping our children make crafts to keep or to give as gifts to family and friends.

So you can only imagine our dilemma of how to continue this great tradition with the church under construction and only one room to use for the event. What disappointment we would face if we did not have the Children's Craft Workshop. It would be like the disappointment the Grinch imagined for Whoville in the classic *The Grinch Who Stole Christmas*. But like the story, Christmas came just the same...

*“It came without ribbons! It came without tags!
It came without packages, boxes or bags!”*

And he (the Grinch) puzzled three hours, 'til his puzzler was sore. We too put on our thinking caps. We threw in some creativity and a large dash of flexibility and . . . the Craft Workshop was *on!* Instead of 16 crafts, we had just 8. Instead of buying new supplies, we used leftover supplies from the attic—making a craft until the supplies were gone. You would think that the kids would be disappointed if there were not enough supplies for everyone to make a favorite craft. But instead they didn't notice. Less is more! Due to space issues we had the workshop during the regular RE classes in the Parlor Hall. You would think that the kids would be disappointed that they did not have a whole day, yet the lively conversation at each craft station told the true story. Less was more!

Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before!

*“Maybe Christmas,” he thought, “doesn't come from a store.
Maybe Christmas . . . perhaps . . . means a little bit more!”*

We learned this too...the important lesson that in times of hardship — Less is really more!

Susan Ward, RE Council Member and Head Elf

SPRING TERM FOR 2ND-6TH GRADERS

For our first two weeks in the Spring Term, children will be looking at their own character, their strengths and weaknesses, and finding animals to describe their inner selves. **CC King**, a local artist and “play” expert, will be leading us in exploring these themes with our children. We will be making small altars out of natural materials for our inner animals and then resting these altars on a wooden raft of all of them to float down the Concord River.

We will also be exploring these inner animals through the art of T'ai Chi. **Andrea Sheffield**, from Wah Lum Kung Fu in West Concord, will be teaching our children various animal poses, physical expressions of our hidden animal nature.

RE NEWS continued on page 9

Partner Church Committee

The PCC is planning a Keresztúr Community House gathering in May. It will be a chance to see a photo presentation of the work that has already been done, meet the youth service project youths and chaperones who will be doing the landscaping this summer, and to “become a part of it all” through naming right sponsorships (major and minor) as this storied project reaches its completion. Stay tuned for a date and time. We hope you’ll join us.

A First Parish contingent is currently forming to attend the September 18–20 Community House dedication in Keresztúr. All are invited and we hope you’ll come too — to celebrate a joyous occasion, to connect with dear friends, and to tour some of this breathtaking country. To learn more, contact either of our PCC cochairs.

2009 is a banner year for destination Transylvania. In addition to the September Community House dedication and the June 12 Commencement ceremony, planning for the July 9–21 youth service pilgrimage is nearly complete. We would like to say *Köszönöm!* (Thank you!) to all who made the recent Rock ’n’ Roll Bingo event such a great evening. Everyone pulled together to create an awesome time and nearly \$1,500 (approximately \$65 per youth service pilgrim) was raised.

In other news, the Reverend Noémi Moldován Seredai stopped by on her way to the International Convocation of Unitarian Universalist Women in Houston. Those who have been to Keresztúr may remember Noémi, who is minister from the neighboring hamlet of Csekefalva, a networker for the Keresztúr district’s PCC partnerships, and a sometime translator for our YSP groups. She stayed for dinner with a group of fellow networkers, PCC members and YSP 2009 chaperones at **Rodger Matlage** and **Pat Brinkman’s**. — **Lillian Anderson** and **Winslow Pettingell**, PCC cochairs

SAVE THE DATE — PHOTO CLUB EXHIBIT

Sunday, May 17, from 3 to 5 p.m., the Photo Club will present the 7th Annual First Parish Fine Art Photography Exhibit and Reception. More information will follow.

Sunday Forums

Because of the ongoing renovations, Forums have been suspended for now. Please call **Charles Lowell** or **Robert Hilsinger** about future topics.

RE NEWS

continued from page 8

Last, we will be working with **Brenda Fingold**, First Parish member and holistic health consultant, for our last formal RE class. This class will be closing our year-long theme of honoring our earth. In this class, we will be celebrating both Mother’s Day and Earth Day, honoring Mother Earth.

April 5, Week 2 of Spring Term, Water: Upstream from Us, Downstream from You

April 12, Intergenerational Easter Sunday Service

April 19, Chapel Sunday for 2nd-6th Graders, Caring for Other—The Caring Connection

April 26, Week 3 of Spring Term, Water: Yin Yang with **Andrea Sheffield**

May 3, Week 4 of Spring Term, Water: T’ai Chi with **Andrea Sheffield**

May 10, Week 5 of Spring Term, Water: Mother’s Day and Mother Earth with **Brenda Fingold**

RE REGISTRATION ON APRIL 5, AT 9:00 AND 11:00

We are about to begin our registration for religious education for next year. We are trying to keep many of the positive elements we have enjoyed so much this year and fold them into a slightly gentler Workshop Rotation model. Instead of five workshops, we will have three. This will allow us to meet as a large group first, in the Chapel, and then divide into three smaller groups for exploring the day’s theme in a deeper way. We will not need to separate the role of leader and guide with this flexible model, just like we did not need to do so during this transitional year. When choosing your teaching assignment, consider the season and the topic to find the best fit for you.

Our program will continue to be one that uses the Cooperative Teaching Parent model. When you register your child in RE, you also register yourself. We know that you count on us to plan for your child’s time in our program. At the same time, we truly count on your commitment to fulfill your teaching obligation.

This year we have had so much success in our RE program. When parents bring their unique talents to our children, we all benefit. It has been wonderful to hear children actively engaged in learning, in community and in spirit. Thank you for this blessing.

REGISTER ONLINE THIS YEAR

If April 5 doesn’t work for you or your family, please feel free to go to our First Parish website to see our calendars and download the registration form. Even if you are coming to register on April 5, many find it helpful to review and complete these forms at home instead of in the din of the Parish Hall. Here is the website address: www.firstparish.org/cms/education-and-spirituality/re-registration.

WOMEN'S AM/PM BOOK GROUP

The April book for the Women's AM/PM Book Group is *Grandmother's Secrets: The Ancient Rituals and Healing Powers of Belly Dancing*, by Rosina-Fawzia B. Al-Raw. The evening session will be held Monday, April 27, 7:30-9:00 p.m.; and the morning session on Tuesday, April 28, 9:30-11:00 a.m. Note that due to construction at First Parish the discussions will be held at the following homes:

Monday, April 27, 7:30 p.m. at **Siri Smedvig's** home, 85 Westford Road, Concord

Tuesday, April 28, 9:30 a.m. at **Darien Smith's** home, 124 Hill Street, Concord

Directions will be sent by e-mail.

All women of First Parish are warmly invited to read the current book and join one or both of these 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 or 978-369-1471.

Dates and the book for May are as follows:

May 18, 19 *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, by Barbara Kingsolver

June (TBD) Potluck and suggestions for next year

UU News

MASS BAY DISTRICT SPRING CONFERENCE— BENTLEY CONFERENCE CENTER, WALTHAM

Theme: Seeking Wholeness in a Fragmented World
Cost: \$50, April 25, 2009, 10:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Much of what we have grown to depend on in our world seems to be crumbling, or at least realigning. You may be asking yourself, How can we respond as religious people? What can we do as individuals to sustain ourselves spiritually? What can we do as committed Unitarian Universalists to sustain our spiritual communities?

The Spring Conference is an opportunity to join in a day of worship, reflection, community and renewal. Rev. Dr. Terasa Cooley, District Executive, will lead us in interactive processes that help us experience and claim our wholeness despite confusion and chaos, step more courageously into our spiritual leadership as people of faith, and identify the practices that can help us connect more intentionally to the sacred, each other and the wider world. Register online: <http://www.mdbuua.org>.

UUA GA — SALT LAKE CITY, JUNE 24-28

The Denominational Affairs Committee (DAC) is looking for First Parish in Concord members who would like to be delegates at General Assembly

performance will begin at 11:30 a.m. sharp followed by a luncheon buffet. All First Parish women and men and their friends are welcome. The charge is eight dollars. Contact the church office at 978-369-9602 or **Dian Pekin** at pekindc@comcast.net by April 24 for reservations, child care or transportation arrangements.

THE EMERSON FORUM QUARTERLY MEETING—MONDAY, MAY 4

The topic will be Harold Bloom's New York *Times* article on how the "financial panic of 1837 helped shape Ralph Waldo Emerson's vision of America." The Bloom op-ed column "Out of panic, self-reliance" can be found in the October 12, 2008, issue of the *Times* and will be discussed in light of the financial crisis of 2008-2009. The meeting is to be held on Monday, May 4, from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. on the Wright Tavern porch. All are welcome; there is no charge.

MAY 30—RECYCLE AND PLANT SALE

Get ready for a popular multi-vendor recycle/flea market sale and plant sale at First Parish on May 30 from 9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Due to the limited space this year, we will not be collecting household item donations from First Parish members. Vendors will be selling from rented tables. If you would like to rent a table for \$35, contact **Pat Kane** at 978-369-8418 or at cstmcloth@yahoo.com. Table rentals sell out fast, so contact her as soon as possible. We will be collecting donations of perennial plants from First Parish members and friends, so start planning which treasures from your gardens you would like to donate. This event is an important fundraiser for capital improvements to our facilities.

(GA). GA is the annual meeting of UUA member congregations. This year's GA is in Salt Lake City, Utah, from June 24 to 28. Housing and meeting registration opened March 2 online at www.uua.org/events/generalassembly/index.shtml.

Note that there are partial scholarship and volunteer applications being accepted online that will help reduce registration and travel costs. If you'd like to be a delegate, please contact **Holli Jones-White** at hjoneswhite@aol.com.

UUA PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS REMINDER

First Parish is entitled to have several delegates attend and vote in plenary sessions and vote in elections at GA. Considering the current economic recession, we will most likely have more absentee delegates than attending delegates. Depending on the number of First Parish delegates at this year's GA, there will be a number of absentee ballot delegates selected, whose role will be to vote in the elections for UUA president and moderator. If you are a signed member, are unable to attend GA this year, are willing to do research on the candidates for office, and want to be considered as an absentee ballot delegate, please contact **Holli Jones-White** at hjoneswhite@aol.com.

There are two UUA presidential candidates, Rev. Dr. Laurel Hallman and Rev. Peter Morales. Rev. Dr. Laurel Hallman is senior minister of First Unitarian Church, Dallas, Texas. Rev. Peter Morales is senior minister at Jefferson Memorial Church, Golden, Colorado. Laurel Hallman's website is www.hallmanforuapresident.com. Peter Morales's website is www.moralesforuapresident.org.

April 2009 Calendar

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

Every Week...

Every Week		
Men's Group	Saturday	7:30 a.m.
Gospel Choir	Sunday	10:00 a.m.
YRUU	Sunday	7:00 p.m. (not 4/12 or 4/19)
<i>Making Art out of Life</i>	Monday	7:00 p.m. (not 4/20)
Networking Group	Tuesday	9:00 a.m.
<i>Kundalini Yoga</i>	Tuesday	9:30 a.m. (First Parish in Weston)
<i>T'ai Chi</i>	Tuesday	7:00 p.m.
Bell Choir	Wednesday	1:00 p.m.
Junior Choir	Wednesday	4:25 p.m. (not 4/22)
Chalice Choir	Wednesday	5:15 p.m. (not 4/22)
Adult Choir	Wednesday	7:45 p.m.

ALL EVENTS TAKE PLACE AT FIRST PARISH UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.

<p>Wed Apr 1 7:00 Youth Advisory Committee</p> <p>Thu Apr 2 7:30 Labyrinth Group</p> <p>Sat Apr 4 9:30 <i>The Healing Power of "Yes"</i></p> <p>Sun Apr 5 12:15 Nominating Committee</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">6:30 <i>Spiritual Autobiography</i></p> <p>Mon Apr 6 6:30 RE Council</p> <p>Wed Apr 8 12:15 <i>Listening for God</i></p> <p>Thu Apr 9 6:30 Maundy Thursday Service</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">7:00 Maundy Thursday Chowder Supper</p> <p>Sat Apr 11 9:00 Photo Club</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">5:30 First Parish Annual Seder</p>	<p>Sun Apr 12 12:15 Green Sanctuary Meeting</p> <p>Mon Apr 13 Standing Committee (off-site)</p> <p>Tue Apr 14 9:30 WPA Board Meeting</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">3:00 <i>Tea and Poetry</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">6:00 Cancer Support Group</p> <p>Fri Apr 17 12:00 Newsletter Deadline</p> <p>Sat Apr 18 9:00 <i>Intimacy as a Spiritual Path</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">2:00 New Orleans Trip Departs</p> <p>Mon Apr 20 Holiday—Office Closed</p> <p>Fri Apr 24 7:30 <i>Rise Up Singing</i></p> <p>Tue Apr 28 11:30 WPA Luncheon</p> <p>Wed Apr 29 9:15 Newsletter Mailing</p>
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First Parish in Concord

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APRIL 2009 NEWSLETTER

The **May Newsletter deadline** is **Friday, April 17**, at noon.
The Newsletter mailing is Wednesday, April 29.
News items should be limited to 100 words.

Don't Miss...

MAUNDY THURSDAY SERVICE
AND CHOWDER SUPPER

April 9

Service at 6:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary
Chowder Supper in the Parish Hall
at 7:00 p.m.

ANNUAL PASSOVER SEDER

Saturday, April 11

**First Parish in Concord • UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
Staff**

Gary E. Smith, Senior Minister
Jenny M. Rankin, Minister
Melissa Perdue Gallo, Business Manager

Margie King Saphier, Associate Minister for Pastoral Care
Rebecca M. Blodgett, Affiliate Minister for Pastoral Care
Angela Herrera, Ministerial Intern

Pam Howell, Director of Religious Education
Jane Barnes, Religious Education Administrator
Liz Davis-Chaffin, Workshop Rotation 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
Anderson Manuel, Youth Gospel Choir Director
Gail Carey, Children's Choir Director
David Huston, Music Director Emeritus

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
Faith Bade, Social Action Program Director
Kate Keleher, Newsletter Editor
Kaye Harvie, Jane Johnson, Newsletter Staff



MAY 1 AND 2 — SAVE THE DATE FOR CASINO NIGHT

Doubling Down, the second First Parish Casino Night and Cabaret, will take place on the evenings of May 1 and 2. Have you always wanted to try blackjack or roulette without worrying about losing the rent money? Would you like to try your luck at the Wheel of Fortune? Do you yearn for some Vegas glamour and swinging live performances of tunes from the American songbook (including a mystery guest performer)? Then this fundraiser was designed with you in mind! You won't want to miss it, so tell your friends and mark your calendar today! Look for more information next month.



Church Office Hours: Monday–Friday, 9:00 to 3:00
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
Angela Herrera: aherrera@hds.harvard.edu