



The Meeting House News

November 29, 2011
Volume 48, No. 4

REVIEWS

Thank you, thank you, thank you, for welcoming me, for trusting me, for so very graciously sharing your lives and the life of First Parish with me. You have demonstrated your concern and love for this historic institution by opening your hearts, your homes, and your minds to our interim relationship. You are a delightful congregation with which to worship and minister. With the support of staff, the Search Committee and the Parish Interim Team, I am beginning to appreciate your priorities, needs, challenges and strengths.



In order to support your moving through the past to discover your future, the Appreciative Inquiry and survey work of the 2010 study team is being integrated into the current work of the Parish Interim Team (PIT) to facilitate group gatherings in the new year.

Over 100 members and friends have participated in initial interim gatherings and individual meetings with me to share hope, concern, confusion and disappointment. The PIT and I will continue planning gatherings into the spring until everyone who wants to participate has had that opportunity.

Your most frequently expressed hopes extend beyond the usual interim needs for improving communication, financial integrity and decision making, to a much more sophisticated vision of renewing congregational polity into good governance. The need for an understanding of the integration of congregational polity and policy governance is emerging as our interim work. The five interim tasks will be aligned with that understanding of your needs.

The PIT and I will gather information through a series of appreciative encounters that will encourage you to share whatever needs to be shared. The content of these gatherings will be used to structure a congregational mission vision gathering, which will inspire the Standing Committee's charge to the Search Committee. By February, based on your participation and feedback, the PIT will offer a more detailed time line and description of this process.

It has been a productive and enlightening fall. I look forward to celebrating a new year, planning appreciative encounters, strengthening good governance, and having fun. Together we will discover the hopes, the vision, and the mission for First Parish that includes and inspire you all. I am grateful for that privilege.

Much metta,

—*Elaine Beth Peresluha*

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Sunday, December 4

Rev. Jenny M. Rankin, preaching

**9:00 – Junior Choir and
First Parish Choir**

Hold Me, Rock Me – Tate

The Twenty-Third Psalm – McFerrin

11:00 – Chalice Choir and Gospel Choir

Quiet Sea – Malvar-Keylock

Sunday, December 11

Rev. Elaine Beth Peresluha, preaching

9:00 – Elizabeth Norton, vocalist

The Christians and the Pagans – Williams

Sweet Holiday Lights – Gerut

11:00 – First Parish Choir

Light Everlasting – Christiansen

Wednesday, December 14

Craig M. Nowak, preaching

7:00 – Alternative Worship

Sunday, December 18

Rev. Elaine Beth Peresluha, preaching

**9:00 & 11:00 First Parish Choir and
Festival Orchestra**

Messe de Minuit Pour Noel – Charpentier

Wednesday, December 21

Rev. Elaine Beth Peresluha

and Craig M. Nowak, preaching

6:30 – Holiday Vespers

Christmas Eve – December 24

4:00 – Children's Choirs

5:30 – Gospel Choir

7:00 – Congregational Carols

9:00 – First Parish Choir

Sunday, December 25

ONE SERVICE in the Chapel

Donna Davis, preaching

10:00 – Siri Smedvig, violin

Sunday, January 1

ONE SERVICE in the Chapel

10:00 – Mark Richards, preaching

First Parish in Concord

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ♦ Gathered in 1636

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- ◆ Celebrate! Holidays at First Parish
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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

Friday, December 16
Friday, January 20
Friday, February 24

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

PARISH NOTES

You Can Sponsor the Flowers Any Sunday

If you would like to provide Sunday flowers for a memorial or celebration, please contact **Peg Hedstrom** at 978-369-1562.

Finding Your Interim Minister

Elaine, AKA **Rev. Dr. Elaine Beth Peresluha**, can be found in her office at 20 Lexington Road, Concord, Mass.; 978-369-9602, extension 411.

Tuesday 9:00 to 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday 9:00 to 5:00 p.m.

Thursday 9:00 to 5:00 p.m.

In addition to these regular office hours, Elaine makes appointments to see people at other times. Please e-mail our ministerial assistant **Christy McKellips** at cmckellips@firstparish.org to schedule an appointment. Monday is Elaine's day off and Friday is her sermon writing day. Elaine will be away December 25, 2011 through January 3, 2012.

NEW: First Parish Holiday Services Update

Christmas Day and New Year's Day fall on Sundays this year. On both Sundays, December 25 and January 1, there will be **One Service Only, at 10:00 a.m. in the Chapel**. The services will be led by lay members of First Parish, and there will be an informal coffee hour following each service. There will be no designated child care or Religious Education programs on these two Sundays. **Note:** This is a change from the notice that appeared in the November *Meeting House News* that stated that there would be no worship service on December 25 or January 1.

Travel Task Force Formed

As a result of a spirited and energetic discussion regarding travel at First Parish, which involved 20 parishioners and staff, a task force was created. The members are **Lillian Anderson, Dana Booth, Rodger Mattlage, Lili Wallis** and **Suzie Weaver**. The mandate for the group is to connect to the congregation, report to the Standing Committee and develop a framework to coordinate our various travel experiences (e.g. spiritual retreats, pilgrimages, service trips, educational trips). We will look at issues surrounding retreats and travel opportunities and will encourage discussion and participation in our process.

Heifer Gift Cards for Sale at Coffee Hour

Heifer International gift cards will be offered for sale at the coffee hours December 4, 11 and 18. This is a wonderful way to gift someone who doesn't need "things" for the holidays. It is the "gift that keeps on giving," as the recipient of various animals in villages around the world must pass on the first female offspring to another person in the village. If you miss the coffee hour, call **Diane** or **David Clapp** at 781-257-5025.

375th Stories

The 375th birthday celebration was a wonderful exploration of some of our past history, and awakened in many of us the desire to know more and to

Parish Notes

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continue to share stories.

The Saturday evening dinner program, “The Way We Were — a First Parish Retrospective, 1940-2000,” is now available in booklet form. The cost is \$5 per copy and will be available during coffee hours on Sunday and during the week in the office.

Transcripts of the conversations with parishioners that were used in the preparation of the program are also available to see. They will be kept in a bound folder in the office.

Both of the documents can be accessed electronically by using the link on the First Parish website under the 375th celebration, after December 1.

Thank You, Prada People!

“No One Wore Prada: An Evening of Living History and Fashion” was one of the many successful events of First Parish’s 375th Celebration due to the outstanding contributions of a very large number of people. Almost 100 people were involved in the historical research and writing, staging, dramatization, commentary, costume preparation, music, photography, video recording, food and beverage offerings, ticket sales, and all the tasks that went into creating a great set of tableaux highlighting the significant elements of First Parish’s wonderful history. The Women’s Parish Association heartily thanks each and every person responsible for all of this. Special thanks go to **Jenny Rankin** for her great vision and careful guidance throughout the event’s development to ensure historical accuracy and presentation of a lively portrayal of our history. Thank you, everyone!

Is It Possible To Be a Transcendentalist Today? Let’s Talk about It!

Save the Date — Tuesday, January 10.

Is Concord’s special relationship to the Transcendentalist thinkers of the 19th century a mere historical footnote? Or can Transcendentalist ideas and ways of thinking still inspire and guide us today? Join us on Tuesday, January 10, at 7:30 p.m., for a conversation with scholar Jason Giannetti. Giannetti holds an M.T.S. from Harvard Divinity School, an M.A. from Brandeis University, and a J.D. from Boston College. He specializes in Comparative Philosophy — East/West, and has recently been concentrating on New England’s Transcendentalists. He will offer some ideas, and lead us in a conversation about Transcendentalism today.

Thanks for Another Great Artisans Fair!

The Women’s Parish Association extends hearty and heartfelt thanks to each and every artisan, volunteer and shopper for helping make this year’s Holiday Artisans Fair a huge success. The fair ran very smoothly due to the large number of volunteers who carried out their tasks with great skill and great generosity of spirit. It was a wonderful community effort and a fun-filled day for all. Special thanks to all those who knitted

Mark Your Calendars...

...for the First Parish Annual Leadership Development Conference, Saturday, January 7, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Breakfast at 8:30 a.m. **Elaine Peresluha** will be facilitating this event. If you are or have been in a leadership role at First Parish or are interested in leadership at First Parish you are encouraged to attend. More information to follow. Hosted by the Nominating Committee.

If you would like to attend please contact Eric Read at eric@theworld.com.

ruffle scarves and other scarves this past fall and to **Judy Dembsey** for contributing a beautiful handmade quilt. Special thanks also to all those who made catnip balls throughout the summer. Our feline friends will be happy to receive them! Proceeds from the scarf project are being given as charitable donations to families of The Haiti Project and to women at Renewal House. Proceeds from the fair itself will be used to support church facilities and program requirements and a variety of charities. Thank you again!

Holiday Concert and Tea — December 13

The Women’s Parish Association cordially invites all members and friends of First Parish and their friends to its annual Holiday Concert and Tea on Tuesday, December 13. Master pianist Eyran Katsenelenbogen, a classically trained pianist with a unique jazz style, has thrilled audiences throughout the world and will perform a variety of solo improvisational works along with seasonal favorites in our Sanctuary at 3 p.m. A formal Christmas tea will be served in our Parlor and Parish Hall following the concert. Take time out of your busy holiday preparations to treat yourself to this lovely traditional celebration. There is no charge for this event. Please bring nicely plated sweets to share if you can. Reservations are not required; but it would be helpful to let the food committee know by December 10 if you plan to attend by either calling the church office or by contacting **Dian Pekin** at pekindc@comcast.net. Also, please contact the church office or Dian at pekindc@comcast.net by December 5 to arrange for child care.

PARTNER CHURCH COMMITTEE

The PCC continues apace with our preparation for next fall's (2012) hosting of 12 members of the Keresztúr congregation, half of them youths, with September as the most likely month for the visit. We continue to look for volunteers for help with planning, fundraising and hosting. For further information, please contact **Ken Estabrook** at kestabrook@verizon.net.

We are pleased to announce that this year's Student Sponsorship Program has been fully subscribed and we plan to transfer these essential funds within a few weeks. To those who are (so generously) sponsoring a student, we thank you. Please contact our coordinator, **Sue Beck** (e-mail, sbeck345@comcast.net) for more information about payments, which are now due. We remind you that **Dana Booth**, as part of our Student Sponsorship team, is pleased to provide advice to anyone who is interested in "making the most" of your sponsorship. He can be reached at dana.a.booth@gmail.com.

We would like to bid a fond farewell to the Reverend Erika Orbán, a familiar face around the Meeting House, who spent her three-month sabbatical here in Concord, staying at the home of **Bill and Sherry Seaver**. She will soon be returning to Transylvania and her position as a hospital chaplain.

As always we invite you to join us for our Partner Church Committee (supper) meetings. The next one will be held on Thursday, December 8, at the home of **Sara and Stoney Ballard**.

For further information, drop us a line; and for our all our latest PCC news and information, see <http://www.firstparish.org/cms/committees/partner-church>. ♦

Minden jót! "Best wishes!"

— **Winslow Pettingell**, PCC chair,
LondonSW11@comcast.net

MEMBERSHIP CORNER



As I write this article, the Membership Committee and I are preparing for the New UU, a half-day orientation program for newcomers to First Parish. This is a time when people who have an interest in our church learn about First Parish and Unitarian

Universalism, and explore how both align with their values and beliefs. Joining us will be representatives from Religious Education, Music and Social Action, who will talk about their programs, and **Rev. Elaine Peresluha**, who will guide a discussion on spiritual journeys and how it is that each participant ended up here, among us.

After the orientation, staff, volunteers and newcomers enjoy a meal together and spend time reflecting on what they learned and where they go from here. Some will be ready to explore further a program or activity that sparks their interest. Others will realize they need a little more time to decide if First Parish is the right place for them. A few will even be ready to sign the Membership Book!

What does signing the book mean? The Membership Policy, created in 2010 by the Standing Committee, states that a Member of First Parish includes one who:

- ♦ Is sixteen years of age or older.
- ♦ Is in general support of the purposes, goals and programs of First Parish.
- ♦ Has signed the Membership Book in the presence of a minister. (Ideally having attended orientation sessions conducted by the Membership Committee in conjunction with the minister.)
- ♦ Makes an annual financial contribution of record (not required of those 16-21 years of age). (Members are welcome to consult with a minister if contributing is a concern).
- ♦ Contributes time and talent toward church functioning.

Yet, membership means so much more than that. As Rev. Dr. Victoria Weinstein, minister of the First Parish Unitarian Church in Norwell, reminds us in her affirmation, "We never really know what combination of fate and friendship and good luck it is that brings certain people together in this world for any purpose. But we believe that membership in the church calls each of us here to celebrate the fate that has drawn us together, and to regard each one a spiritual friend and a potential teacher..." ♦

— *Jane Foley*

Membership Director

PASTORAL CARE NEWS

When you hear the word “holidays,” do you think of stress? Stress and holidays are often closely linked. The holidays are filled with the duality of joy and loss for many of us. They are a time when we feel we “should” be happy, but often feel anything but happy. We may feel regret or sadness when the expectation of perfection during the holidays does not live up to the reality of life. Several years ago I came across a wonderfully liberating expression — “wabi-sabi.” The term *wabi-sabi* describes a Japanese concept of acknowledging and honoring the inherent beauty of imperfection, impermanence and incompleteness — to see exquisite beauty in the transience of handmade objects, of nature, of life. What an amazing concept to embrace during the busyness of the holiday season!

Being human is truly a *wabi-sabi* experience — joy and sadness, isolation and connection, stress and relaxation, always in a state of change. The lesson of *wabi-sabi* has become my daily mantra during the holidays; perfection within impermanence, incompleteness and imperfection. How will you practice the art of *wabi-sabi* this holiday season?

Wishing you holidays filled with *wabi-sabi* moments.

— Pam Ressler, Pastoral Care Advisory Council member

The Pastoral Care Team at First Parish — Walking with One Another through the Changes Life Brings

The Lay Minister for December is **Carol Boris** at 781-259-8038 or cboris312@verizon.net.

Ministers: **Rev. Jenny Rankin** (revjenny@comcast.net) and **Rev. Elaine Peresluha** (uurevdoc@gmail.com) or call 978-369-9602.

Lay Ministers: Contact **Diane Clapp** (dclapp@comcast.net)

Caring Connection: (for meals or rides) Contact **Tracey Hurd** (thurd@aol.com).

Pastoral Care Advisory Council: Contact **Judy Dembsey** (dembsey@verizon.net).

Caring Connection News

The Caring Connection has had a busy fall! Thanks to everyone who creates a network of care and assistance that is here for all who are part of First Parish. **Kitsy Rothermel** continues to write notes on behalf of the Caring Connection to parishioners on the pastoral care list read each Sunday. We have provided rides to those in need, thanks to **Jamie Atkins, Leslie Fisher and Bob Treitman, Andrea Hubbard-Nelson** and her family, **Jonathan Hurd, and Joy Madden**.

With the leadership of RE Director **Pam Howell** and Pastoral Care Lay Minister **Bev Bringle**, we have beautiful new kid-created cards for the pastoral care note card table at coffee hour. We are grateful to the many children who helped with this effort. Thanks also to **Kathleen Elcox** for contributing photographs for note cards as well. **Bev Bringle, Tracey Hurd** and **Pat Kane** have kindly delivered Caring Connection meals. **Rhoda Miller and Carolyn Shohet** planned, shopped, and led a successful cooking workshop that has resulted in a freezer full of food for the Caring Connection. They have been doing so for well over a decade and we are so grateful to them for their hard work and wisdom, and for making the cooking process fun! **Carol Boris, Patrice Belier, Petra Betts, Tracey Hurd, Jane Johnson, Holli Jones-White, Darien Smith, and Toby Smith Ropeik** helped cook. Our thanks to them as well.

—Tracey Hurd, Caring Connection Team Leader

If you would like to help with the pastoral care ministry of First Parish — caring for one another through all life brings — please contact **Rev. Jenny Rankin**, at jrankin@firstparish.org.

STANDING COMMITTEE UPDATE

Standing Committee meetings (held at 33 Bradford Street in West Concord) are open to all (except when in Executive Session); the 2011-2012 schedule is:

- Monday, December 12, 6:30-9:00 p.m.
- Monday, January 9, 2012, 6:30-9:00 p.m.
- Monday, February 13, 6:30-9:00 p.m.
- Monday, March 12, 6:30-9:00 p.m.
- Monday, April 9, 6:30-9:00 p.m.
- Monday, May 14, 6:30-9:00 p.m.
- Monday, June 11, 6:30-9:00 p.m.

Please look for the monthly minutes online at firstparish.org under Church Life (you must log in) or on the church bulletin board. ♦

British conductor Charles Hazlewood has said, “Music is a mirror to the human condition.” His words resonated with me this fall while the choir learned the practice of 17th century New England psalm singing to celebrate our 375th anniversary.

As we rehearsed the psalms that were standard fare for our Puritan ancestors, I was moved by their simple beauty and their clear reflection of our forbears’ austere faith.

Even as we were “lining out” the psalms from Bay Psalm Book, we were also learning French composer Marc-Antoine Charpentier’s *Messe de minuit pour noel* (*Midnight Christmas Mass*) for our December 18 Music Sunday. It was fascinating — almost shocking — to realize that Charpentier’s elegant choral and orchestral music and the Puritan psalms represented liturgical music from precisely the same moment in history.



Charpentier composed the *Messe de Minuit* in the early 1690’s, probably for the Jesuit church of St. Louis in Paris, which was “among the most brilliant posts” in the sophisticated French musical life of the time. Charpentier’s musical resources included a choir and soloists, organ and orchestra. During that same decade in Concord, Edward Bulkeley and Joseph Estabrook were our ministers and musical instruments of any kind were banned from worship. Our hymnbook, the Bay Psalm Book, was being published with written music for the first time.

Charpentier’s *Messe de minuit* reflects the learned Jesuit ecclesiastical tradition and is influenced by the grand French Baroque style of Louis XIV’s court. But it is rooted in the music of the common people. Each movement of the mass is based on well-known French noëls, or Christmas carols. Despite the elegant polyphony and stylized notes inégales of Charpentier’s writing, the familiar melodies give the mass a certain intimacy and accessibility. The folk melodies, the traditional mass text and the colorful instrumental and vocal writing reflect a faith tradition that contrasted starkly to that of our Puritan forbears.

Yet, I believe that both of these musical languages can speak to us as twenty-first century Unitarian Universalists. We draw on diverse sources for our spiritual understanding and if we look and listen closely, we may recognize some aspects of our faith in this multifaceted musical mirror. And so, on Sunday, December 18, we will close this 375th anniversary year with music that is almost as old as we are. May we be inspired by its reflection. ♦

Blessings,

— *Beth Norton*

Music Director

Handbells Return to First Parish

- Are you a former First Parish handbell ringer who’d love to get back “in the swing”? Did you want to ring with the group when it was active, but weren’t able to attend weekday rehearsals? Have you always wanted to try ringing handbells but weren’t sure you could commit to a full season, or felt nervous about joining a fully established ensemble?

- If any of these descriptions applies to you, then we hope you’ll take advantage of a special opportunity. Our former handbell director, **Martha Goodman**, will be returning for a limited engagement, working with a group of ringers for six weeks leading to the presentation of their efforts at both Sunday services on March 4.

- Rehearsals will begin on Sunday, January 22, at 2 p.m., with a one-hour orientation session for those without prior handbell experience. Then, all ringers will rehearse for five consecutive Sunday afternoons (January 29, and February 5, 12, 19 and 26), 1-3 p.m.

- If you can count to four and identify a whole, half and quarter note, and if you can commit to attending most — if not all — rehearsals, then this is the opportunity for you! For more information, and to reserve a place at the handbell tables, call **Martha Goodman** at 508-928-2078 or write to her at mgtrek@earthlink.net.

Introducing *By Your Side Singers* (formerly known as *Threshold Singers*)

- For a variety of reasons, First Parish’s group of pastoral singers has decided to change our name from *Threshold Singers* to *By Your Side Singers*. Our new name describes the pastoral presence of musicians who practice together to deepen our experience of music’s transformative pastoral role. Through our singing, *By Your Side Singers* create a musical presence with people who face challenges such as loss, illness, or approaching death. We are not performers so much as partners.

- *By Your Side Singers* learn songs and chants from our hymnals and other sources. Through singing we support and comfort one another as we share our own challenges and hopes. When invited, we go to parishioners’ homes or hospital rooms in groups of three or four to share soft, soothing song. Our singing sessions may evoke smiles, tears, laughter — even dancing!

- *By Your Side Singers* welcome adults who love to sing and long to serve through music. We meet on the first and third Thursday of each month from 7:30 pm to 9:00 pm. For more information, contact **Beth Norton** at 978-369-9602 or music@firstparish.org. A visit from *By Your Side Singers* can be arranged through a minister, a pastoral care lay minister or by contacting Beth directly.

Parish Interim Team (PIT)

The Parish Interim Team is charged to guide the congregation through the five-step Interim Process, defined as:

1. Coming to terms with our history
2. Discovering a new identity
3. Allowing needed leadership to emerge
4. Renewing denominational linkages
5. Committing to new directions in ministry

This process began in late summer and will continue through the calling of a new minister.

An important result of the Interim Process is to come to a new discovery of who we are as a parish. What makes us unique? How will we relate to wider communities we are a part of? What are the important aspects of our work in the world? How do we educate our children and our adults? How do we care for each other? What do we celebrate and how do we do that? What other questions do we need to ask?

In order to accomplish our work, the PIT and MSC (Ministerial Search Committee) working together will solicit input from all corners of the congregation. There are always those voices that come to parish-wide meetings. We will be seeking to meet with groups where we might find new voices: committees, interest groups, covenant groups, for example. We will meet at different times of the day and various days of the week. If no announced meeting time is good for you, contact us and we will find a way to include your voice.

The Appreciative Inquiry process was used to gather information in 2010. We intend to build on that strong foundation by expanding the forums and digging deeper into the desires and dreams of First Parish in Concord. A congregation-wide

First Parish in Concord — Parish Interim Team

- Rebecca Curzon rebeccacurzon@comcast.net
- Katharine Esty katharinecesty@verizon.net
- Sven Olson sven.a.olson@chase.com
- Mark Richards markr@upriverministries.org
- Susan Ryan susanryan101@comcast.net
- Jim Smith JAS@foleyhoag.com

retreat will be scheduled as a culmination of this work so we can come to a clear mission founded on a consensual understanding of our vision.

Ministerial Search Committee (MSC)

In preparation for the ministerial search, the MSC will conduct a parish-wide survey to gather information for prospective candidates. The data gathered will be evaluated with the 2010 survey to uncover any trends and changes that may be apparent.

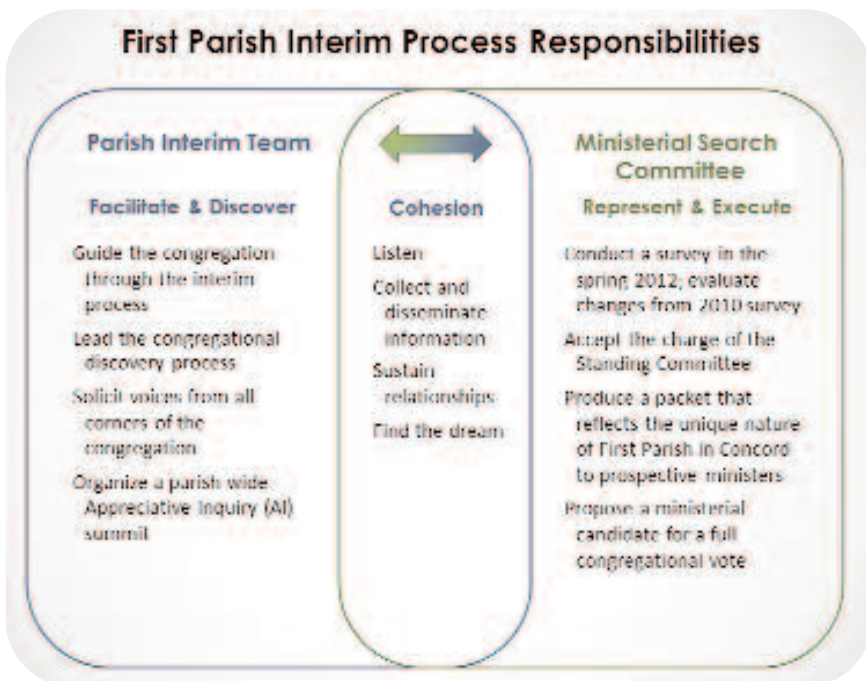
Once the discovery work of the Interim Process is done, the Standing Committee will use it to charge the MSC with identifying appropriate ministerial candidates.

The MSC will produce a packet describing First Parish in Concord. The packet will present a detailed portrait of First Parish and, among other things, will include information about our programs and staff, the history of First Parish and the community, draft compensation agreement, who we are as a congregation, and what we hope for in our next minister. Interested candidates will submit their packets to the MSC. Then the MSC will begin its selection process.

At the conclusion of the selection process, the MSC will propose to the congregation the candidate they feel will best lead us in our vision.

PIT and MSC Together

During the next two years, the PIT and MSC will be working closely together. Our common objective is to listen to what you have to say and to be transparent in all of our communications — with each other and with the Parish. It is important that we build and sustain relationships with as many parishioners as we can because, in the end, our work is dependent upon your thoughts and support. And after all the long, hard work is done, we will have a new minister to walk with us as we pursue our dream into the next generation.



As I write this, it is hard to believe the holidays are falling upon us so rapidly. The weather has been unseasonably beautiful. I am hesitating to say it, but this year November is the new September...

I am a New Englander, through and through. My dad tried to talk me into moving to the West Coast, but I just couldn't imagine leaving the New England weather. This may seem odd, but I love the common experience that weather

gives us: snowstorms, fall colors, heat and sweltering humidity.

I notice the interesting ways New Englanders deal with the weather too: we bundle up, and strip down. We skate and swim. The seasons sweep our bodies into ever-changing ways of squeezing the joy out of every imaginable type of weather there is and every

shape and texture water has of shaping itself.

With all of our technological controls, we notice our bodies less and less. Air conditioning and radiant floors keep our bodies always feeling a "normal" temperature. But the "out-of-doors"? That is where we can still experience our bodies adjusting to the range of temperatures they are designed to feel.

When we gather together in our Sanctuary, we can experience this same range of feelings within our spirits — the good news, the bad news, the ups and downs of people's lives, the array of ages and ailments and accolades. The stories that emerge, each one giving us a deeper understanding of what it means to be connected by enduring relationships, not ones limited by the social constructs of secular institutions. This is a place where people stay rooted to each other over time, no matter what the weather is outside, no matter what season we are experiencing inside.

This holiday season, make some time to listen to another's story and to appreciate the tender connection it allows. After all, a story between two people is nothing if not a heartstring to the soul. ♦

— Pam Howell

Director of Religious Education



December 2011 RE Calendar

- Sun., Dec. 4 Regular RE for Babies—4 years
Regular RE for K-5th Grades (Emerson Room)
6th Grade Youth Group – Wright Tavern
7th Grade Art in Action at 11 a.m. (Brooks Room)
8th Grade Dramatic Arts at 6 p.m. (Wright Tavern)
- Sat., Dec. 10 8th Grade Dramatic Arts Performance at 4 p.m.
- Sun., Dec. 11 Regular RE for Babies—4 years
Regular RE for K-5th Grades (Emerson Room)
6th Grade Youth Group (Wright Tavern)
7th Grade Art in Action at 11 a.m. (Brooks Room)
8th Grade Dramatic Arts performance at 9 and 11 a.m.
- Sun., Dec. 18 Regular RE for Babies—4 years
Regular RE for K-5th Grades (Emerson Room)
6th Grade Youth Group (Wright Tavern)
- Sun., Dec. 25 Christmas, Lay-Led Service – No RE or child care
- Sun., Jan. 1 New Year's Day, Lay-Led Service – No RE or child care

Holiday Craft Workshop on December 3, 1:30 to 4:30

Our Elfin Event is just about here! **Jan Goddard-Taylor** and **Marilyn Lowitt** have done a fantastic job of carrying the workshop torch forward. We are all ready for the fun to begin.

Please have your little elf ready at the door at 1:30 p.m. (oh...I know some will want to sneak in early to get the best snacks!). For \$15, your elf gets to make all of the crafts he or she can possibly do in three busy, fun-filled hours. You get three hours to yourself for your holiday shopping as well! What a great deal.

But the important part is that your child will be creating gifts from the heart, and at the same time, having the heart filled with the love and care of our parish community. Gifts made by the hand and from the heart. If you are looking for a holiday counter-culture event, this is IT!

Are you, a grown-up elf, worried you will miss the fun? Don't all elves enjoy celebrating the holiday spirit together? If you want to help, please be in touch with **Brad Hubbard-Nelson** or **Patty Popov** and let one of them know of your interest: Brad at bradhn@mind-spring.com or Elf-Herder, **Patty Popov** PPopov@nichols-pratt.com.

RE News

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**“The Best Christmas Pageant Ever”
Saturday, December 10 at 4:00 p.m.**

Please be sure to come to this touching seasonal play performed by our own Eighth Graders. This is a one-hour show, filled with humor, about raucous children helping others. It is a play that has meaning for all ages. Please come and support all of the work our Eighth Graders have done under the talented leadership of **Caroline** and **Jimmy McCloy**. You don't need tickets, just come and enjoy this spirited play.

Since this play specifically deals with the problems of poverty and hunger, we would like to encourage you to bring canned goods for our friends at Open Table. The economic problems we are facing today are felt in very real ways by organizations like Open Table. We will have a bin for donations at the door.

Second- to Fifth-Grade Workshop Rotation

Each week, a deeper community unfolds within our RE program. Our Second through Fifth Graders experience a unique religious education program that is filled with the passion and love that grows within our First Parish community. Whether it be from parishioners who love our history, from parishioners who work with prisoners, from parishioners who believe in green living, or from parishioners who work on pastoral care, these people fill our RE program with real stories about real people. Such authenticity makes a difference to kids, and each week their hands-on craft expresses their learning in a very personal way. Since September, we have made cards for prisoners, bags for meals for pastoral care, cards for parishioners experiencing illness or loss. We have made colonial crafts and created a beautiful labyrinth. But most of all, we have experienced the joy of being together each Sunday: We have listened to each other's joys and concerns, and we have gotten to know each other in ways that go much deeper than grades, or looks, or fashion.

December 4 – Week 3 of the Holiday Term: Green Gifting and Holiday Baking – Stories from the New Testament

December 11 – Week 4 of the Holiday Term: “The Best Christmas Pageant Ever” – a play by our 8th Graders

December 18 – Week 5 of the Holiday Term: Green Gifting and Holiday Baking – Stories from the New Testament, and Santa Visits RE.

December 25 – Christmas Day, No RE

January 1 – New Year's Day, No RE

Orientation for Religious Education Teachers and Leaders for 2011-2012

Orientation Schedule for Babies–1st Grade Teachers in the Emerson Room:

Caregiving, Story Play and Spirit Play, Winter and Spring Terms: Wed., Jan. 18, 7:30–9:00 p.m.

SENIOR YOUTH NEWS: THE HEARD

The Heard is rocking and rolling! On November 9, we went on an epic mission to Occupy Boston. We toured the camp, interviewed activists, enjoyed a performance by Chadwick Stokes of Dispatch, and participated in a workshop on civil disobedience. Check out the photographs on The Heard Facebook page: facebook.com/firstparishyouth-group.



Here's what's coming up:

The Heard will be having regular Sunday night meetings except on Christmas Day.

Dec. 4: YAC in the the Wright Tavern – 5:00 p.m.

Join us to help plan the Winter Retreat and future trips and events.

Saturday, Dec. 10: Brazilian Baking for Guatemala Benefit in the First Parish kitchen – 12:00 p.m.

Enjoy fun times baking Brazilian treats together. The fundraiser will benefit nutritional and dental care for Mayan population in Guatemala and support reforestation efforts. E-mail **Jane Blumberg** to RSVP: jane_blumberg@mac.com.

Dec. 18: The Heard Alumni Holiday Party – 6:30 p.m.

All YRUU youth and alumni are invited to come celebrate with our Yankee Swap Party. Bring something wrapped that you already own but do not want anymore, or a joke gift, or something new under \$20.

Happy Solstice! ♦

Yours truly,

— *Avi Salloway*

Youth Program Director

Orientation Schedule for Second–Sixth Grade Teachers in the Emerson Room:

2nd–6th Grade Winter Term #3: Wed., Jan. 25, 7:30–9:30 p.m.

2nd–6th Grade Spring Term #4: Wed., Mar. 28, 7:30–9:30 p.m.

Orientation Schedule for 7th, 8th and 9th Grade Leaders:

7th Grade Neighboring Faiths Spring Term: Jan. 11, 7:30 p.m.

Gratitude seems to be a theme resonating through me these days — and perhaps through First Parish. The crazy October storms reminded us to be grateful for the basic necessities — like electricity. The

375th Anniversary celebration reminded us of those who came before us and paved the way for our church to be what it is today. The Occupy Movement asks us to see the wide divergence between the “haves” and “have-nots.” And **Elaine**

Peresluha’s Appreciative Inquiry process has built into it the concept of appreciation, of gratitude, of taking the time to recognize what we have. I recently attended a meeting of First Parishioners discussing the overall vision for all travel out of First Parish. I learned a lot during the meeting but one particular point Elaine made really hit home. To paraphrase her (with my apologies), she said: “Look around you. See all of the many trips that come from this community ... See how privileged you are.” So, as we enter the holiday season, I hope to continue to look around and see what really is and to be grateful for what I have and what we have as a faith community. We really are very privileged. ♦

— *Faith Bade*

Social Action Program Director

Go to sac.firstparish.org for news and calendar information.

SAC Holiday Programs

Please remember the deadlines for your Secret Santa gifts. They were printed on the card you received when you were “matched” on November 20. Contact **Katharine Roberts** at zirkrod89@comcast.net.

Thank you for participating in the clementine drive for Open Table. The clementines are a welcome treat for all of the guests at the Open Table’s Concord Thanksgiving dinner.

There are UUSC Guest-at-Your-Table boxes still available on the chest opposite the church office. They can be returned to **Faith Bade** any time before January 11.

The mitten tree is up in the Parish Hall and will be there until December 18. Please take the time to purchase or knit hats, scarves, mittens or gloves for adults and children who desperately need them. We also have a special request for warm socks for children and adults. Contact **Joan Wesolowski** at joanwes@mail.com.

The CPO Gift Bag for Prisoners program will end on December 5. There are lists of the items needed

• in the church office, on the SAC bulletin board or online. Please leave items in the box in the church coatroom. Contact **Don Miller** at donaldbmiller@comcast.net.

Guatemala Recovery Project Information

• On Sunday, December 4, during coffee hours, Julio Colchoy will be telling about his vital work for Guatemalan Recovery. The GRP will help sell Maya Skills jewelry that Mayan women in Julio’s village create to support their families. Please come by our table and say “Hello” to Julio. Get inspired by his work. Buy some bling to make your holidays bright! Contact the GRP team with questions: **Steve Cadwell**, **Mark Howell** and **Janet Rothrock**.

Reverence For Life Movie, Discussion and Dinner

• On Tuesday, December 6, 6:30–8:30 p.m. at First Parish, the Reverence for Life (RFL) program will be having a potluck/movie night, showing the film “Eating.” This is an excellent film, about 40 minutes long. We will be offering a free potluck dinner with soup, bread, dessert. Please RSVP to **Kathryn Shane** at kdshanel@verizon.net.

Brazilian Bake-In from The “Road to Chicken Man”

• On Saturday, December 10, and Sunday, December 11, at First Parish, join the next “The Road to Chicken Man” event. All high school youth are invited to meet Ana Paula Nello on December 10, from 12:00 to 2:00 p.m. in the kitchen. We will prepare Brazilian holiday treats and talk about her childhood in Brazil — while we measure, mix and bake. Purchase our confections the next day at both coffee hours, with proceeds going to support the work of Mils Milagros and Camino Verde.

Department of Peace Fundraiser — Make an Evening for Peace

• On Monday, December 12, 7:30 p.m., at the Brattle Theatre in Cambridge, come see the acclaimed film, *The Interrupters*, which portrays heroes who make violence “evitable” in Chicago gang culture. The Massachusetts campaign for a Department of Peace and the Brattle Theatre in Cambridge join hands for this Mass. DoP fundraiser. Tickets are \$10 and \$25 at the Brattle or through **Pat Simon**, psimon@gis.net, or **Alec Walker**, alecwalker@aol.com.

Community of Activists Worship

• On Wednesday, December 14, from 7:00 to 7:30 p.m., join together for alternative worship oriented to social justice and social action. These worship services are open to all in our community who wish to be challenged and raise their awareness. **Craig Nowak** hopes to

SAC News and Events

continued on page 11

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

provoke thought and reflection leading to action. Each worship will highlight one particular social justice issue, with the understanding that all social justice issues and activism are connected and that we are all a community of activists. Our third alternative worship will highlight the challenges faced today by inner city youth. Donations are welcome and will support the youth programs of the UU Urban Ministry. All are welcome!

Amnesty Group 15 Monthly Meeting

On December 20, 7 p.m. at First Parish in the Greeley Room, Group 15, the Concord-area Amnesty International group, will hold its monthly meeting. All are welcome. For more information, visit www.aigroup15.org or e-mail **Lorraine Loviglio** at loviglio@rcn.com.

RFL Thanksgiving Dinner a Huge Success!

The Reverence for Life program held its Second Annual Vegan Thanksgiving Feast on Tuesday, November 8. Almost 90 people attended and enjoyed a totally plant-based feast, from appetizers to homemade pumpkin and apple pies. The evening was perfect, with great food, presentations, and lively conversations. We welcomed our interim minister, **Elaine Peresluha**, and her friend and guest speaker, Rev. Gary Kowalski, the interim minister at the Sudbury UU church and author of many books. He spoke of the global population's reaching seven billion humans, and the need to preserve our environment and feed those who go hungry. He pointed out that by eating a vegan diet one could reduce his or her carbon footprint by 80 percent and make more food available for the world's poor. First Parish's own **Anna Huckabee Tull** debuted the song "Dare to Rise," which she wrote for RFL. We thank all who attended and all who helped — especially our kitchen helpers: **Jane Johnson, Brooks Stevens, Lyell Slade, Kate Kavanagh, Suzanne Hogan, Lora Venesy, Sandra White, Cynthia Ellis, Leslie Fisher, Nancy Harrison, and Heleni Thayre.**

Peace, love, and hope to all beings, turkeys included, at this time of Thanksgiving,

— **Kathryn Shane** and **Marcia Schloss**. (Go to the SAC Web pages to read more about this event.)

Green Notes

Mindful Living Idea: Keep an eye out for our "Green Gifts" insert coming during December.

Mindful Living Statistic: The International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) estimates that the global average sea level will rise between 0.6 and 2 feet in the next century (IPCC, 2007).

FROM THE INTERN MINISTER

Dear Friends,

December is upon us and perhaps you've already begun to feel the all too familiar pressure of the coming holidays and their attendant obligations. If so, I invite you to pause and take a deep breath.



Remember that long before it was a season of stress and commercial excess, December was a time of miracles and hope. The Hanukkah and Christmas stories bear witness to our human longing for meaning, for something to hold onto as we live with the knowledge of our impermanence. This is the work of religion — to find meaning in an often chaotic world.

It is work I, as a candidate for ordained ministry, embrace. And it is work all of you are engaged in whether you attend worship, participate in church programs, teach religious education, serve on committees, or work for social justice.

Simply stated, the miracle of the holiday season is you ... your perseverance, your commitment, your faithfulness in the face of the enormity of the world's grief and your own personal struggles. And the hope of the holiday season is you as well. By returning to and reflecting on the great stories of our Judeo-Christian roots, you reaffirm the hope of ages past, hope desperately needed in our time, that a different way of living is possible and that our salvation rests not in the hands of a distant god, but in your own hands, in the way you respond to this short life you have been given with all its heartache and joy.

"Religion," said the Unitarian humanist minister A. Eustace Haydon, "is a pilgrimage through ages of hard experience in quest of the good society." The December holiday season is an opportunity for us to pause and bear witness to this pilgrimage that we may, in these times of wrenching despair and convenient cynicism, continue to offer to one another a miracle, the gift of hope. ♦

Blessings and peace,

— *Craig Nowak*

2012 First Parish Women's Retreats! Roots (Hold Me Close) and Wings (Set Me Free)

This year's retreats will take place on January 20-22 and January 27-29, at Senexet Retreat House in Woodstock, Connecticut. The theme this year will be "Roots (Hold Me Close) & Wings (Set Me Free)."

Our lives are almost always in some kind of transition. How we manage transition depends on our prior experiences ("Roots") and our hopes, goals and expectations ("Wings"). This year's women's retreats will spend some time together considering where we've been, actually and figuratively, and how we can better manage the inevitable transitions to achieve our highest hopes and dreams.

All First Parish women are warmly invited to participate! Registration forms will be available at coffee hours on December 11 and 18. Watch the *Sunday News* for more details! Questions? Please contact **Darien Smith** at darien@smithquest.com or 978-369-1471. ♦

Women's AM/PM Book Group

As usual, the Women's Book Group will discuss just one book for November and December; and the selection is *Digging to America* by Anne Tyler. The evening session will be Sunday, December 4, 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. and the morning session on Tuesday, December 6, 9:30 to 11:00 a.m., both at First Parish.

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. ♦

Books and Dates for 2012

- Jan. 22, 24 *Barchester Towers*, by Anthony Trollope
- Feb. 26, 28 *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, by Rebecca Skloot
- Mar. 25, 27 *Room: A Novel*, by Emma Donoghue
- Apr. 22, 24 *Mary Todd Lincoln: A Biography*, by Jean H. Baker
- May 20, 22 *Bossypants*, by Tina Fey

Come to the Winter Solstice Revels!

Winter Solstice — the longest night of the year — when darkness descends and moves us to light candles and fires to ward off those lingering ancient fears about whether the light will return. Then, out of the darkness comes the birth of the light and the sun and the days begin their gradual lengthening through a new season. Come join our Solstice Celebration! Stories, a warm fire, lighting of candles, sharing of refreshments — an enjoyable evening for all ages to celebrate this tradition, which is the foundation of so many of our winter holidays. We will celebrate on Tuesday, December 20, in the Parlor and Parish Hall at 7:30 p.m.

"Meeting House on the Green" Reprinted and Available

For many years, members and friends of First Parish in Concord have enjoyed delving into the story of our community through the wonderful book, *The Meeting House on the Green*. Prepared in celebration of our 350th anniversary, it is a treasure trove of stories about the women and men who have lived and worshipped here in Concord for so many years.

Many members received their copy of this book when they became new members, and the book has been so well used and so popular that as of 2011, there were no more printed copies left. As new scholarship has become available, and new students of our history have emerged, we have realized it will soon be time to update the book in a comprehensive way.

It was not possible to make a thorough a revision in time for our 375th anniversary, but the Women's Parish Association and friends have helped to facilitate a reprint of the book that was originally published in 1985, so copies are now available. You will enjoy exploring this book, discovering some of the twists and turns, the lesser known chapters and the thread of courage and endurance that have helped this community survive as a people of faith for 375 years.

The reprinted book is now for sale for \$30.00. You can purchase the book by contacting **Dian Pekin** at pekindc@comcast.net or by calling the church office and requesting that a book be reserved for you. This would be a good holiday gift. It's a great read and good to have in your library for ready reference.

DECEMBER 2011 CALENDAR

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

Every Week...

Men's Group	Saturday	7:30 a.m.
<i>T'ai Chi and Qi Gong</i>	Tuesday	6:30 p.m.
<i>Buddhist Group</i>	Wednesday	9:30 a.m.
Junior Choir	Wednesday	4:30 p.m.
Chalice Choir	Wednesday	5:15 p.m.
Transylvania Troubadours	Wednesday	6:15 p.m.
Adult Choir	Wednesday	7:45 p.m.
<i>Buddhist Group</i>	Thursday	7:30 p.m.
Gospel Choir	Sunday	10:00 a.m. (not 12/25)
YRUU (THE HEARD)	Sunday	6:30 p.m. (not 12/25)

Thu Dec 1	7:15	Parish Interim Team (PIT)	•	Sun Dec 11	9:00	Dramatic Arts Performance
	7:30	By Your Side Singers	•		12:30	Nominating Committee
Fri Dec 2	9:30	<i>Music Together</i>	•		7:00	Transcendentalists in Britain
	12:00	Holiday Craft Workshop Setup	•	Tue Dec 13	9:00	Networking Group
	7:00	"Chicken Man" Rehearsal	•		3:00	WPA Christmas Tea
	7:00	Play Reading	•		7:00	<i>Seeking Circles</i>
Sat Dec 3	1:30	Children's Holiday Craft Workshop	•	Wed Dec 14	1:00	Pastoral Care Lay Ministers
Sun Dec 4	10:15	First Parish Jump Start	•		1:00	Candle Prep
	5:00	YAC	•		7:00	Community of Activists Worship
	5:00	SAC Board Meeting	•	Thu Dec 15	7:15	Parish Interim Team (PIT)
	6:00	Dramatic Arts Pizza and Rehearsal	•		7:30	By Your Side Singers
	7:30	<i>Women's Book Group</i>	•	Fri Dec 16		Newsletter Deadline
Tue Dec 6	9:00	WPA Board Meeting	•		10:00	<i>Jingle Jams</i>
	9:30	<i>Women's Book Group</i>	•		7:30	<i>Rise Up Caroling</i>
	7:00	Film and Potluck	•	Sat Dec 17	9:00	Choir and Orchestra Rehearsal
	7:30	<i>Everyday Enlightenment</i>	•	Sun Dec 18	9:00	Where Did It Come From
Wed Dec 7	10:00	<i>Jingle Jams</i>	•		3:00	Needle Workers Affinity Group
	7:00	Concord Area Humanists	•		6:00	Dramatic Arts Pizza and Rehearsal
	7:30	OWL Mandatory Parent Orientation	•	Tue Dec 20	7:30	Winter Solstice Celebration
Thu Dec 8	10:00	<i>Jingle Jams</i>	•	Wed Dec 21	6:30	Holiday Vespers
	7:30	OWL Mandatory Parent Orientation	•	Sat Dec 24		Christmas Eve
Fri Dec 9	12:30	<i>Tai Ji</i>	•			4:00, 5:30, 7:00 and 9:00 p.m.
	7:00	"Chicken Man" Rehearsal	•	Sun Dec 25		Christmas — ONE service
Sat Dec 10	9:00	Photography Club	•		10:00 a.m.	
	12:00	Brazilian Bake-In	•	Tue Dec 27		Networking Group
	4:00	"Best Christmas Pageant Ever"	•			

DECEMBER 2011 NEWSLETTER

The January Newsletter deadline is Friday, December 16, at noon.
The Newsletter will be published Tuesday, January 3.

Office Hours: Tuesday–Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.*

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E-Mail: FPConcord@firstparish.org

Website: www.firstparish.org

Ministers' E-Mail:
Elaine Beth Peresluha: uurevdoc@gmail.com
Jenny M. Rankin: jrankin@firstparish.org
Craig M. Nowak: cnowak@firstparish.org

* **PLEASE NOTE:** The office is CLOSED on Mondays.

First Parish in Concord • UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

Staff

Elaine Beth Peresluha, Interim Senior Minister

Jenny M. Rankin, Minister

Melissa Perdue Gallo, Business Manager

Gary E. Smith, Minister Emeritus

Christy McKelliips, Assistant to the Ministers

Tina Storey, Assistant to the Business Manager

Faith Bade, Social Action Program Director

Jane Foley, Membership Director

Craig M. Nowak, Ministerial Intern

Becky Blodgett, Affiliate Minister for Pastoral Care

Pam Howell, Director of Religious Education

Avi Salloway, Youth Program Director

Elizabeth Norton, Music Director
Eric Huenneke, Parish Organist
Anderson Manuel, Youth Gospel Choir Director
Gail Carey, Children's Choir Director
David Huston, Music Director Emeritus
Dan Holin, Jericho Road Executive Director
Leslie Koplw, Operations Manager, Jericho Road
Douglas Baker, Sacristan and Curator
Cassy Bosworth, Office Manager
Peggy Gallo, Volunteer Collector
Kate Keleher, Volunteer Newsletter Editor
Kaye Harvie, Volunteer Newsletter Copy Editor



The Women's Parish Association
of First Parish in Concord
cordially invites you to its annual holiday
concert and tea on
Tuesday, December 13, 2011 at three o'clock in the
afternoon.

Master pianist Eyran Katsenelenbogen will perform
solo improvisational works and seasonal favorites.
The concert will be held in the sanctuary followed by
tea in the parlor and parish hall.

Reservations are not required, but would be helpful.
Please contact the church office at 978-369-9602 or
pekindc@comcast.net by December tenth with your
reservation. Please call the church office with childcare
requests by December fifth.

There is no charge for this event. Please bring some
plated sweets to share if you can.

Celebrate!

HOLIDAY EVENTS, PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR 2011 ♦ FIRST PARISH IN CONCORD

See complete details of the holiday events throughout the Meeting House News.

Worship, Advent Sundays — In the Sanctuary

November 27 — Advent I: Worship services, led by Craig Nowak. Special music by cellist Joan Esch

December 4 — Advent II: Children's Choirs; First Parish Choir (9:00); Gospel Choir (11:00 a.m.). Jenny Rankin, preaching.

December 11 — Advent III: Beth Norton, vocalist (9:00 a.m.), and First Parish Choir (11:00 a.m.). Elaine Peresluha preaching.

December 18 — Advent IV: Christmas Sunday, with preschool "Choir of Angels" (preschool through first grade). Charpentier's *Messe de Minuit pour Noel*, sung by the First Parish Choir at both services. Elaine Peresluha, preaching.

Worship: Christmas Eve — In the Sanctuary

Four Services: 4:00, 5:30, 7:00 and 9:00 p.m.

Family-oriented services at 4:00 and 5:30 p.m., with lots of Christmas carols and the Christmas story. Children's Choirs at 4:00, the Gospel Choir at 5:30. The 7:00 o'clock service features congregational carol singing; and at 9:00 o'clock, the First Parish Choir will sing. Each service concludes with candlelighting and "Silent Night."

Worship: Christmas Day and New Year's Day — In the Chapel

There will be lay-led services at 10:00 o'clock on December 25 and January 1. There will be no designated childcare or RE on these two Sundays. Regular worship services will resume in January.

Winter Solstice Revels — In the Parlor and Parish Hall

Come join the celebration of the Winter Solstice on Tuesday, December 20, at 7:30 p.m. in the First Parish Parlor and Parish Hall. We will tell stories, sing songs, honor the longest night, and observe the magic of the turning season — complete with wonderful music and seasonal treats. All ages welcome, in the tradition of a village gathering. Welcome, Yule!

Sing — "Rise Up Caroling"

Friday, December 16, 7:30 p.m. Singers of all ages, please bring voices, instruments and cookies to share. Carol lyrics and sheet music for instrumentalists provided.

Deck the Halls

Join the Flower Committee on Saturday, December 11, at 9:30 a.m. to decorate the Sanctuary for the season. Contact Peggy Brace for details, 978-369-1373.

Christmas Concert and Tea

Join friends at First Parish for holiday music and a traditional Christmas tea on Tuesday, December 13. Music begins at 3:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary, and tea will be served in the Parish Hall at 4:00 p.m. No charge; no reservations necessary.

Holiday Service Opportunities

Mitten Tree: Hats, scarves and mittens for Common Cathedral

and House of Hope guests will be collected from November 20 to December 18.

Concord Prison Outreach: Donations for prisoners are due between Sunday, November 27, and Monday, December 5. Please leave in coat room at First Parish.

Memorial Poinsettias and Flowers: The Pastoral Care Lay Ministers will be conducting the Annual Holiday Flower Delivery to folks at their homes. Deliveries of poinsettias and flowers will take place December 27. Bring good cheer to a Parish member and perhaps meet someone for the first time. Contact Caitlin Selle at selle.caitlin5@gmail.com to sign up to deliver flowers or if you know someone who would appreciate a flower delivery.

Volunteer Opportunities: Volunteer at Open Table Concord or Maynard. Contact info@opentable.org. Or at Household Goods Recycling, Acton. Go to www.hgrm.org. Questions? Contact Faith Bade, Social Action Program Director (fbade@firstparish.org).

Invite a Silent Guest

Guest-at-Your-Table boxes, distributed in November, are "fed" throughout the holidays and returned on January 11. Share in the holiday work of the UU Service Committee.

Children's Holiday Crafts Workshop

On Saturday, December 3, from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m.

First Parish children are invited to spend the afternoon at the church making great gifts for the holidays. Adult and teen "elves" are invited to share the fun! Please e-mail Head Elves, Jan Goddard-Taylor at jangooddard-taylor@comcast.net or Marilyn Lowitt at Marilyn.lowitt@verizon.net with any questions you may have. To help at a craft table, please e-mail head elf herder Patty Popov at ppopov@nichols-pratt.com.

"The Best Christmas Pageant Ever"

On December 10 at 4:00 p.m., and December 11 at the 9:00 and 11:00 a.m. children's service, the eighth graders will present this humorous play for five-year-olds and up. It playfully celebrates the Unitarian Universalist values. Your family is sure to enjoy this heartwarming dramatic event that is part of the First Parish tradition.

Youth Holiday Party

On December 18, 7:00-9:00 p.m. in the Wright Tavern, all YRUU youth and alumni are invited to come celebrate the holidays by baking cookies and participating in a Yankee Swap. Bring something wrapped that you already own but do not want anymore, or a joke gift, or something new under \$20.

Remember...

The Holiday Loss Wreath will be present in the Sanctuary during the month of December; you may want to add a ribbon in honor of someone you love who has died. You can also remember your loved ones by donating flowers for Christmas; sign up at coffee hour with the Flower Committee.



The Wright Tavern Center at First Parish in Concord

An Oasis in Our Busy Lives • December 2011

Welcome to the Wright Tavern Center. Online registration is available for all courses. Check our website at wrighttavern.org for schedules, course descriptions, presenter bios, registration information and policies. Questions? Contact Cassy Bosworth at cbosworth@firstparish.org or 978-369-9602. Please check the board in the lower church entryway for course locations.

Tibetan Buddhism

The Buddhist group will continue to meet in the First Parish Chapel Wednesdays mornings and Thursdays evenings. These weekly sessions are open to all who are interested in transforming love, compassion and wisdom into action. You are welcome to share the spirit of community at these gatherings regardless of your familiarity with Tibetan Buddhism. Donations are gratefully accepted. Contact **Bill Seaver** at 978-369-7318 if you have any questions.

Wednesday: 9:30-11:00 a.m. Thursday: 7:30-9:00 p.m.

T'ai Ji

Being in touch with our own energy creates endless possibilities within ourselves. By combining music with qi gong and the simple movement of t'ai ji, we can release blocked energy, create wellness and bring our lives into balance. This class is geared to people of all ages. It offers gentle low-impact exercise to reduce stress, to enhance optimal health and to simply create a sense of joy in our lives. Instructor: **Mae Pagan**

Mae Pagan has studied t'ai ji and qi gong for 22 years. She follows the teachings of Chungliang Al Huang and his nontraditional style of teaching t'ai ji movement as a joyful approach to life as well as a path to wellness. With a background in Tibetan Qi gong and Reiki, she provides a gentle mix of t'ai ji movement with the healing aspects of qi gong. She also holds degrees in philosophy, psychology and education.

Friday: Dec. 9, Jan. 13 12:30-1:30 p.m. \$25/session

T'ai Chi and Qi Gong

T'ai chi is a gentle flowing exercise that helps build and circulate energy. Based on teachings from China, we will do qi gong movements that help retain flexibility in all your joints. Students will also learn the Hwa Yu t'ai chi form, a series of connected movement that is like a slow-motion dance. Research shows that t'ai chi and qi gong improve stability, improve immune function, and create many of the benefits of meditation. If you've tried meditation, but find it hard to sit still, t'ai chi and qi gong may be the way to give yourself those benefits while gently moving your body. No past experience is necessary. Wear comfortable clothing. Instructor: **Sue Wood**

Sue Wood has been practicing Hwa Yu t'ai chi since 1984. She

- was taught by David Zucker. She currently continues her t'ai chi
- and qi gong study with Dr. Yang Yang of the Center for T'ai Chi
- Studies (<http://www.chentaiji.com/>).

• Tuesday: Nov 29-Jan 24 (no session Dec 27) 6:30-8:00 p.m.
• \$120/8 classes

Concord Area Humanist (CAH) Group

- We are a Concord area group welcoming you usually to two
- evening meetings each month, with a Humanist perspective.
- The Wednesday meetings start with a social at 7:00 p.m., pro-
- gram at 7:30 p.m. We inclusively bring together the various
- nonsupernatural life-stances that have the same emphasis on
- our being responsible for what happens around us, such as
- Buddhist-, Judaic-, Religious-, and Secular-Humanism, Ethical
- Culture, Naturalism, and all the others that have a life-stance
- consistent with Humanism and its Aspirations — Humanist
- Manifesto III. Come and enjoy investigating with us the inter-
- section of science and culture, ethics and social trends, books
- and ideas. Times and place of meetings may change, so please
- always check our latest announcements on www.MeetUp.com,
- and RSVP while you are there. Active links here, and in the pro-
- gram listings, will lead to further information. You may also e-
- mail **Patrick Everett** at pne@aol.com, or **Maria Greene** at
- maria@justmagicdesign.com. CAH is affiliated with the
- American Humanist Association and with the UU-
- HUUmanists.

First Wednesday in December Dialog — Roy Speckhardt

- Roy is the Executive Director for the American Humanist
- Association. He serves on the board of directors of the
- Humanist Institute, the Institute for Humanist Studies, the
- United Coalition of Reason, and the Secular Coalition for
- America. He is also an advisory board member of the Secular
- Student Alliance. He has appeared on CNN Headline News, Fox
- News' Fox and Friends, Good Morning America, and National
- Public Radio. He currently writes a regular column for *The*
- *Huffington Post* and *Patheos*.

• Wednesday: Dec. 7 7:00-9:00 p.m.

- **Tuesday: Dec. 20. Open Discussion Group** 7:30-9:00 p.m. in
- the Trustees Room at the Concord Library. Continuation of
- previous discussion, or new topic TBD.

Rise Up Singing

This informal monthly musical gathering of adults and children provides participants with an opportunity to sing and share traditional and contemporary folk songs, spirituals, hymns, rounds and chants in fellowship. Singers of all ages and experience are welcome. Bring a copy of *Rise Up Singing* if you have one. Individuals are encouraged to bring instruments if they wish. Led by: **Beth Norton and Others**

Beth Norton has been Music Director at First Parish since 1994. Beth believes in the power of music to express what is beyond words, to deepen our spiritual experience and to build community. As a singer, conductor, violinist and folk musician, Beth enjoys making music in a wide variety of styles with people of all ages and abilities.

Friday: Dec. 16, Jan. 27, Feb. 24, Mar. 23, Apr. 27, May 18
7:30 p.m. Free: No registration required

• The First Parish Women's AM/PM Book Group

• Dates given are for Sunday evening, 7:30-9:00 p.m., and
• Tuesday morning, 9:30-11:00 a.m. Sessions will be at First
• Parish.

• Jan. 22, 24 *Barchester Towers*, by Anthony Trollope

• Feb. 26, 28 *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*,
• by Rebecca Skloot

• Mar. 25, 27 *Room: A Novel*, by Emma Donoghue

• Apr. 22, 24 *Mary Todd Lincoln: A Biography*, by Jean H. Baker

• May 20, 22 *Bossypants*, by Tina Fey

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