
JIM'S JOTTINGS

Dear Ones,

After a busy day on Sunday March 23 at church, I was listening to Christopher Lydon on NPR interview the Ralph Waldo Emerson professor at Harvard Divinity School about the American transcendentalists, while reading an article by Eboo Patel, the liberal Muslim founder and President of the Interfaith Youth Core, about the meaning and purpose of individual religious communities. Yes, I am that kind of geek.

Sociologists have long known that belonging to, and actively participating in, a religious community improves life satisfaction, health outcomes, family dynamics, and overall sense of wellbeing. Why? Patel quotes Harvard sociologist Robert Putnam that religious communities develop social networks, of two particularly beneficial kinds, that lead to these positive outcomes. Putnam writes: "Social capital refers to social networks, norms of reciprocity, mutual assistance, and trustworthiness." One form of social networking is creating a sense of being at home in a particular group, what Putnam calls social bonding. The other, perhaps more important, is social networking which brings us into transformative engagement with those not previously in our social grouping, which Putnam calls social bridging.

Our annual pledge campaign this year is COMMIT TO COMMUNITY, and by the time you read this column I am hoping you have already turned in your pledge form for FY16, so we know what programs we can afford to offer next year. Attending Sunday morning worship regularly, teaching in the religious exploration classes, attending workshops, volunteering as a pastoral associate, or serving on a needed committee here can all be fruitful forms of bonding social capital, as is pledging your annual fair share.

Our growing willingness to envision the anti-racist, anti-oppression, anti-classism beloved community which we know in our hearts is possible, is an example of social bridging to bring us into deeper, more meaningful relationship with people whose life stories are not the same as ours. Our Social Action and Diversity outreach, to communities facing life circumstances quite different than our own, whether in immigration rights, climate change, economic injustice, or prisoners' rights, can often be an even more transformative form of social bridging to help tilt the arc of history towards justice and compassion.

So I have you and your family's health and wellbeing in mind, as well as society's flourishing as a whole, when I encourage you to deepen your roots in this congregation, bonding through activities here in a deep and rewarding fashion, while also reaching out your arms to those quite different than yourself, whether within this community or beyond it, to create social bridging networks that can transform the world. Think of these as green resilient branches growing out of our core commitment which is fed by your deepening roots in this congregation. These are the roots and branches which keep a congregation strong and resilient, while becoming fully engaged in the world around us. You owe such a relationship within this congregation to yourself, your family, and our changing world. For this is a hard journey to travel alone, and we can do so much more together than we ever could do alone, so please commit to our community, and be surprised where the journey takes us together.

Blessings on your journey!
Rev. Dr. Jim Sherblom

WORSHIP SUMMARIES

Friday - April 3 at 7 pm - Tenebrae Service - This evening service of shadows and sorrow prepares the way for Easter through our shared human pain of death and the spiritual power in the remembrance of suffering.

Easter Sunday - April 5 - Love Beyond Belief - Join our UU celebration of Easter to honor the power of spiritual transformation and renewal. We will lift up the resurrection of hope over despair, and the triumph of love, in a multigenerational worship service.

April 12 - Commit to Respond - The UUA has designated the month from March 22 to April 22 as Climate Justice Month! This worship service will explore what we can and what we should do to save the world we love.

April 19 - The Imperfect Love We Live - We all long to receive and give love. Yet, living in loving relationship can be messy and heart-breaking. How can accepting love's imperfections lead us to the love we seek?

April 26 - Our Youngest Adulthoods - Join in meaning-making with our youngest adults whose spiritual development and UU identity is being strengthened and transformed through our emergent campus ministry. Witness their powerful testimonies and join in celebration and hope for emergent new structures that are enabling us to build this bridge to lifespan ministry!

FIRST PARISH VESPERS: A Time of Quiet Reflection

On **April 12th** there will be a lay-led Vespers service in Lyon Chapel, at 7pm. The intent of this service is to welcome a sense of quiet contemplation as a complement to Sunday morning services, closing the week in peaceful communion with each other. Moments will be offered for remembering those deep in our heart. We welcome anyone who would like to add more quiet to their lives. This program is organized by: Anne Copeland and Jamie Redgrave. For more information or questions, please contact Anne Copeland.

FISCAL YEAR 2015-16 FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP COMMITMENT CAMPAIGN

Dear FP family,

Dave and I want to thank you all of those who have pledged so far during our annual canvass. At the end of our pledge month, we have **112 households pledging \$350,000 dollars**. Our goal is that all 160 households pledge \$450,000 total. **We have almost met our goals!!** We thank you so much for your generosity, spirit and commitment to community. If you have not yet made your pledge, there is still time. In the next week or two, Dave and I will be reaching out to all the remaining houses who have not pledged to make sure your commitment is in.

Thank you for responding to our call!

*With love,
Alice Mark and Dave Demerjian*

LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITY

The Leadership Development Committee is accepting self-nominations for the Parish Committee. If you are interested in serving in a leadership capacity during this exciting time of growth and transition, this job is for you! Three members will be rotating off this year and we're looking for a few individuals to step up. In order to apply, you need to be a current member of the church and have served on a committee. If you are interested in exploring what is expected of Parish Committee members, please reach out to Margaret Williams and/or Andrea Willett. The deadline for applications is April 13th. We look forward to hearing from you.

DELEGATES, DELEGATES, DELEGATES

Each spring First Parish in Brookline is asked to nominate delegates for three UU gatherings:

UUA Mass Bay District Annual Meeting Saturday, April 25 from 1 pm to 4 pm at First Parish Church in Weston, MA. This is a combined district and regional meeting that informs and decides what is happening on a local and regional level in our Unitarian Universalist movement.

Unitarian Universalist Urban Ministry Annual Meeting Thursday May 21 at UUUM in Roxbury, MA. As First Parish is a member congregation of the UU Urban Ministry (UUUM), a 150+ year old, Roxbury-based confederation of UU congregations in the Greater Boston area committed to social justice, we can send up to three delegates to hear about and support the work of the UUUM.

UUA General Assembly June 24 to 28 in Portland, Oregon. This is the annual national governing meeting of the Unitarian Universalist Association. Each year our ministers and up to five lay delegates (plus one alternate) may attend and vote at this five day national meeting.

Here is your chance to be involved locally, regionally or nationally. Please tell our Parish Administrator, Sonya Abbott, if you would like to be considered for any of these roles.

APRIL HIGHLIGHTS

Book Club - The FP Book Club normally meets the first Sunday of each month at 7:30 PM in the Peterson Room. There's no obligation or long-term commitment required to participate! If a title strikes your fancy, we'd be delighted to have you join us. If you've been especially impressed by a book and have a burning desire to discuss it with others, let us know about it. To be added to the mailing list, contact Julie Horvath. **Next meeting: April 5** where we will be discussing *The Man who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* by Oliver Sacks.

Meditation Retreat at First Parish - Saturday, April 11, 10 am - 4:30 pm (9:30 am registration) \$40/participant, vegetarian lunch provided. Open to novice as well as experienced meditators. Our Retreat will be led by Michael Grady. The retreat will consist of a brief introduction to meditation, practicing sitting and walking meditation, dharma talks, and reflective discussion. To hold a place, please e-mail Almas Dossa and Ronald Wilkinson **or visit our table during coffee hour.** We would like to get a sense of potential numbers of participants, so please e-mail us as soon as possible, even if you are only tentative.

Circle Supper - April 25 - Spring has come and Circle Suppers are a wonderful way to celebrate the season. Do join us Saturday April 25 in someone's home. It's great fun for all of us, but especially if you are new to First Parish, this is a delightful way to get to know people in a warm, intimate setting. Groups of 6 to 10 gather at the home of a host and enjoy the pleasures of a potluck meal with interesting people.

After our last Circle Supper one new couple said:

"We had a wonderful evening! Our conversation bubbled over... particularly when we asked what drew people to First Parish in Brookline. We learned a lot about our guests and the church. As relative newcomers to FPB, we were grateful for this exchange... [Circle suppers] bring people together who might not otherwise meet during services or coffee hour... We would definitely do this again."

Everyone is welcome as a guest or a host! *Sign-up sheets will circulate at Coffee Hour starting the first week after Easter. Mark your calendar: Saturday, April 25, 2015.*

**Kathryn Kirshner,
for the Welcoming Team**

SOCIAL ACTION UPDATE

First, we would like to share that Ellen Blaney has agreed to step in as the co-chair of Social Action for the remainder of the year. Susan Caplan unfortunately had to step down, and we thank Susan for all her good works this year.

With the arrival of Spring, things get busy here in New England. Social Action is no exception. Here are highlights of upcoming activities:

Apr. 12: Social Action service (Jim). One aspect will be learning about Commit2Respond, the denominational response to the climate crisis. Our special collection will be for the following:

- Alternatives for Community & Environment (ACE - <http://www.ace-ej.org/>): Founded in 1994 in Roxbury, ACE builds the power of communities of color and low-income communities in Massachusetts to eradicate environmental racism and classism, create healthy, sustainable communities, and achieve environmental justice.
- UU Ministry for Earth (UUMFE - <http://uuministryforearth.org>): Connecting and inspiring an active community of UUs for environmental justice, spiritual renewal, and shared reverence for our Earth home. Founded in 2001, UUMFE is one of the 8 UU organizations responsible for creating a new denominational response to the climate crisis, Commit2Respond (<http://www.commit2respond.org>).

Apr. 14: Tuesday, 9:30-4pm: UU Mass. Action Lobby Day. You can go for the morning educational portion or the afternoon lobbying at the State House or hopefully both. See Clint or below for more info. Advance registration is requested for scheduling meetings with our legislators on a wide range of bills of interest to UU's and FPB, including those addressing mass incarceration, immigration justice and the environment. Sign up here: <http://www.uumassaction.org/uuma/10th-annual-uu-advocacy-day/>

Apr. 17: Friday, 6:30 for light dinner 7pm for the film: Environmental Film Night: *Tapped*. This documentary presents the multiple dimensional problems with bottled water. This is part of our environmental activities including the April 12 service, World Water Day and Earth Day. Clint is also co-sponsoring two warrant articles related to access to water for the Brookline Town Meeting in May.

Apr. 19: 2-4pm: Boston New Sanctuary, Suffolk County Jail Vigil. Join us in vigil to bear witness and show support to immigrants held in detention and their families. Plan to meet at the FPB lower parking lot at 1:15pm for ride sharing. We need drivers. Contact Ellen for more information.

May 3: 7:30pm: FP Book Group Co-sponsored by Social Action. Every year we read the UUA Common Read and discuss with the Book Group. This year's title is "Reclaiming Prophetic Witness: Liberal Religion in the Public Square". For more info: <http://growinguu.blogs.uua.org/spiritual-vitality/uua-common-read>. This topic is pertinent as we forge a new mission statement for First Parish Brookline.

*In community and action,
Clint Richmond & Ellen Blaney*

FROM OUR ANIMAL CAREGIVERS MINISTRY



Dear Ones,

Like me, you may be having a crisis of faith around belief in Spring. According to the activity levels at the MSPCA, however, it is coming. After a very quiet winter folks are flocking in looking for kittens, puppies and other adorables. Our impulse to nurture seems to rise and rise in this season of birth, rebirth, and a return of the sun. And that's as nature planned it, I'm sure.

Many of us are sensitive to the need to resist this impulse, especially those who celebrate Easter. The image of a toddling duckling, fuzzy bunny, or peeping live chick as surprise for children becomes a nightmare when the chick grows wattles and a desire to crow at all hours. At the shelter, however, we still encounter folks so enthusiastic about sharing their homes with an animal that they haven't done all their homework. We find ourselves walking the tightrope between grounding the potential adopters in the realities of having an animal companion and nurturing their love and enthusiasm for them.

May we enter this season of renewal in balance - one foot on the ground - the other mid-leap into a blossoming future.

*May warm rays light your way,
Eliza*

COMING SOON ...or the Not So Distant Future

Cape Cod Weekend Retreat - This years' Cape Cod Sea Camps weekend for First Parish will be **May 23-25**. This is an annual event which holds wonderful social time, fun recreational opportunities for deepening our connections with one another all against the backdrop of beautiful Cape Cod Sea Camps in Brewster, MA. The planning committee is hard at work creating what's sure to be another fun weekend. Please direct questions to Matt Etemad-Gilbertson.

Guatemala 2016 - In 2010, 2012 and 2014, THREE hearty groups of about 14 First Parish travelers went to Guatemala as a Common Hope Vision Team. Common Hope's primary mission is to enable children TO GO to SCHOOL who would otherwise be sent to work at an early age. Each team spent a week building a home or room for a family, participating in the life of the NGO, observing local artisans, volunteering in schools, learning about the history of Guatemala and much more. All trip members reported back that the experience was transformative.

We would like to know if there is interest in forming a Vision Team to go in 2016 during April vacation.

Youth need to be 14 years old AND accompanied by an adult. Each Vision Team member also participates in fund raising for Common Hope prior to leaving in April.

If you would like to learn more from FP folks who have gone, feel free to contact one of the following: Susan Larrabee, Jody Leader or Anne Copeland.

Deadline for May Issue of this Newsletter will be Friday April 24th