



# Meeting House News



June 2006

The Annual Meeting of First Parish will take place at 11:45am on June 4th. Everyone is welcome to attend although only members in good standing can vote on parish and church business.

The meeting will most likely take more than an hour so you are encouraged to park on the street, walk or take public transportation so you can stay for this important meeting and not be rushing out to the parking lot.

Warrant items include: Elections of officers for 2006-2007; Vote on a budget for 2006-2007; Vote on the Ordination of Chris Bell; Vote on the Sponsorship of Shelby Meyerhoff; Vote to grant the title of minister emeritus for Rev. Thomas Mikelson; Vote on whether to amend the parish by-law 4.1 regarding frequency of parish meetings

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## Walking Together

By Thomas Mikelson

Walking Together. As I write those two words, "walking together," my emotions tell me that they have become the symbol of our togetherness and the guiding symbol of my ministry. I have used that heading for this column for seventeen years. For seventeen years, we have walked together in "memory and hope." There is only one way to understand beloved community, and that is to live it, to make the commitment to live it, day by day, for a long, indefinite time. We have done that. We know something about beloved community, its cost, its great rewards, and always its unfinished business. As we have walked together, we have come to know and appreciate each other. Our ties with each other have deepened. We have been in steady dialogue and we have made important choices about the future of First Parish. We have worked hard, side by side, to make real and concrete the plans we have chosen.

I, like you, have been changed by our walking together. For those who know me, First Parish is written all over me. It has been a very big part of my life, I would say a defining part. My career in ministry will always be associated with First Parish, in the minds of others and in my own mind. That makes me happy. I am grateful.

I spoke with Carl Scovel this week. Carl is retired from a long ministry at King's Chapel in Boston. When he retired 6 years ago, colleagues asked him if he would be interested in doing

interim ministries. He said the thought of it made him feel ill. Carl loved ministry as I have loved ministry. But there is a time when it is over. That is different for every minister, I am sure. I have loved being at First Parish. I have savored every year. Ministry never became dull for me. There were always challenges and creative opportunities. But I have come to the end of my time in ministry.

As the time of my leaving First Parish has come closer, I have realized more and more how much our lives are linked and how much I carry this church and so many of you in my heart. Even though I am ready to leave, leaving is hard. I will miss you. I will miss this place—the grand meeting house, Harvard Square, Cambridge, Boston. Thank you for these years. Thank you

for sharing your lives, your joys and sorrows, your journeys. It has been rich.

Work closely and lovingly with your new Interim Minister, Anita Farber-Robertson. She will be a gift to you. She is a wonderful minister and has been one of my closest friends in ministry for nearly twenty

years. I know her very well. She is a deeply caring person with a strong commitment to social justice and a love of Unitarian Universalism. "Walk together now, and don't you get weary," Thomas



# Joys and Concerns

*Our heartfelt sympathy to Howie and David Saxner on the passing of Laura van Dam last April 25. A memorial was held in the Meeting House on April 30.*

*Congratulations to First Parish graduating high school seniors: Julie Sutula, Alexandra Spinks, Liana Woskie, Laura Brown-Lavoie, James Fish and Keith Warren.*

*Congratulations to Steve Gregoire and Stephanie George, First Parish newlyweds.*

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*We would like to share your joys and concerns.*

If you have a Joy or Concern, on Sunday please be sure to fill out a blue card, found in the pews or by the Joys and Concerns box on the candle ledge to the left as you face the pulpit.

The blue cards provide an option to request ministerial support and either to keep your joy / concern private or share it with the church community.

Alternatively you may also submit joys and concerns for sharing and publication via email to fphsq@aol.com (Linda Baker).

## *First Parish Directory to be available in Fall 2006*

When members and friends return in the fall, the First Parish Directory will be waiting for you. The website team is planning an on-line photo directory. This paper directory will be a useful resource while we are waiting for the on-line version. However, the directory is only useful for contacting each other if the information is accurate. If you have moved or changed your phone number, please fill out a yellow update card (available on literature tables at both Mass Ave and Church Street doors) or contact Thom Lissey, Membership Assistant at [Tlissey@yahoo.com](mailto:Tlissey@yahoo.com). If you move over the summer, please make sure we have your new information by August 20th.

## THANK YOU TO:

Mara Dowdall for this year's spring pageant. Be sure not to miss it during the service on June 11, which will be followed by our teacher appreciation ice cream social.

Thank you to all those who made the Auction such a huge success mostly especially those who donated items and purchased items. We raised over \$8,000! Thank you to the planning committee: Nan Waldstein, Alexandra Adams and Jory Agate. Start thinking about your contribution for next year's auction now! Next year's auction will be held in the fall.

Thank you to everyone who pledged and walked to raise money for the Walk For Hunger. First Parish members and friends worked hard and raised money to support programs that alleviate hunger in Massachusetts. Your efforts will go far.

## *The Meeting House News*

The First Parish in Cambridge, The First Church, Unitarian-Universalist

Thomas J.S. Mikelson  
*Parish Minister*

Jory Agate  
*Minister of Religious Education*

Ralph N. Helverson  
*Minister Emeritus*

Herbert F. Vetter  
*Minister at Large Emeritus*

Mara Dowdall  
*Student Intern Minister*

Linda Baker  
*Parish Administrator*

Thomas Lissey  
*Membership Assistant*

### **Editorial Board**

Linda Baker  
Bruce Hoppe  
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Eileen Sullivan  
Mara Vohrees

### **Layout and Design**

Amanda D. Johnson



The church office is open weekdays, 8am to 4pm. That telephone number is 617-876-7772. Our phone answering machine will record your messages at other hours, and the staff will respond as quickly as possible.

# Interim Minister Update

## *Introducing Rev. Dr. Anita Farber-Robertson*

*By Gloria Korsman*

The Interim Minister Search Committee and the Standing Committee are delighted to introduce the Rev. Dr. Anita Farber-Robertson as the new Interim Parish Minister for First Parish.

After an intensive two weeks of reviewing applications and interviewing candidates, the Interim Minister Search Committee unanimously chose to recommend that the Standing Committee call the Rev. Dr. Anita Farber-Robertson to serve as the Interim Parish Minister. Dr. Anita will serve in all the normal ministerial capacities, as well as challenge us to think in new ways and guide us through the process of searching for a new settled parish minister.

The Search Committee stayed late into evening of May 1 to read the ministerial records of five excellent candidates recommended by the UUA, choosing several to consider further by exchanging packets and conducting interviews. Packets are more detailed portfolios, usually containing a candidate's educational credentials, sample sermons, photographs, recordings, references, and newsletter columns. First Parish also has a packet, beautifully designed by Ernie Kirwan. It contains sample orders of service, budgets for the past several years, documentation from the Renewing our Calling initiative, our by-laws, the names of UUA and Mass Bay District staff willing to serve as our references, and a draft contract.

During the following two weeks, the Search Committee interviewed finalists for the Interim Parish Minister position. After the final interview on May 10, we unanimously chose to recommend that the Standing Committee call the Rev. Dr. Anita Farber-Robertson to serve as our Interim Parish Minister.

A special meeting of the Standing Committee was convened on May 11 to vote on the Interim Minister Search Committee recommendation. Members of the Search Committee Marcia Hams and Ernie Kirwan presented the candidate's credentials and answered questions. After a motion, a second and discussion, the motion carried.

Brenda Leahy, Treasurer, and Marcia Hams, member of both committees, were appointed to negotiate the interim minister's contract. Gloria Korsman, Vice Chair of Standing Committee, was appointed to make a verbal offer to Rev. Anita. We were delighted when she enthusiastically accepted our offer!

In a two week time period, Search Committee members spent more than 20 hours on this intensive process! Many thanks to the Interim Search Committee:



Katrina Piehler (Chair)  
Gloria Korsman (Standing Committee Convenor)  
Marcia Hams (Standing Committee)  
Alan Price (Standing Committee)  
Ernie Kirwan  
Janet Burns  
Ethan Field  
Rev. Jory Agate (Ex-Of-ficio)

### **Introducing our interim minister, Rev. Dr. Anita Farber-Robertson**

The Rev. Dr. Anita Farber-Robertson, who is known to most as Rev. Anita, grew up in New York City, eventually making her way to Massachusetts to attend Andover Newton Theological School, where she earned her Masters of Divinity and her Doctor of Ministry degrees. She served as a settled Parish Minister of the First Parish in Canton and then the Unitarian Universalist Church of Greater Lynn. She left settled parish ministry to write (*Learning While Leading, Increasing Your Effectiveness in Ministry, Alban Institute*), and took up the position of adjunct Professor of Communication at Andover Newton. It was during this period that she discovered her love of Interim Ministry - "a privileged opportunity to walk with a congregation at a most creative time, when anything can happen, and great things often do."

*Rev. Anita lives with her husband Edgar Robertson in Swampscott. They have four married children and four grandchildren.*

# Growth and Diversity at First Parish

By Patrick Sullivan

On Sunday April 23rd, the fourth and final ROC meeting was held on the topic of Growth and Diversity at First Parish. About twenty First Parish congregants began the meeting by watching a video from the All Souls UU Church in Washington D.C. about their transition from crisis to community. Their story began with the abrupt firing of their minister, severe divisions among the congregation and significant losses in membership. In the following five years, with assistance from a new Minister and a group of dedicated UU members, they grew the congregation from 160 to 500. The transformation of All Souls consisted of some of the following recommendations:



Change the music to reflect the community

- African American and Gospel
- Hispanic (more use of drums)
- Buddhist Chant
- \* Focus on the Covenant and shared sense of community
- \* Conduct dialogues on race and reconciliation
- \* Engage in social activities (softball, quilting, mixed pot-lucks)
- \* Create a welcoming environment that encourages everyone to have a voice at the table

After viewing the film, a lively discussion began among the attendees. The first observation was that First Parish is in a diverse community but our congregation is not. The key question for the group was, "How do we reach out into the community?" Most people felt that First Parish has done a good job at being welcoming to the gay and lesbian community, and wondered why First Parish could not do the same for people of color. First Parish has reached out sister churches in Roxbury and Thomas has done several sermons on Martin Luther King over the years.

Still the diversity of the First Parish has not grown. This realization caused the group to shift to discussing

how we can better celebrate the diversity we already have. This spirit will naturally help our outreach, growth, and increasing diversity. Among the ideas generated were the following:

- \* Do an exchange of Ministers with a person of color
- \* Change the music and make it more lively (drumming, gospel)
- \* Reach out to the international community (e.g. the Kennedy School)
- \* Make the church more welcoming
  - Have the church open more of the time
  - Offer more tours of the meeting house
  - Improve the signage and use banners to draw attention to First Parish
  - Use cottage parties to talk about who we really are and reach out to people of color to join them
- \* Create a Adult Spirituality Class on Race and Class
- \* Broaden the worship experience to include a more diverse set of spiritual practices
- \* Create a task force to focus on diversity and growth



in order to identify and coordinate activities that help First Parish reach out.

Lastly, the group discussed its desire for First Parish to be a diverse community. We need to have an internal conversation about what kind of church community we want to be. Some of the questions we need to struggle with are: Are we a protestant church or can we change the way we worship? Can we be a community of connection, a ministry of connection? What is our identity? These questions and ideas generated will be an ongoing conversation as First Parish transitions over the next two years into a new settled Ministry.

# Ordination of Chris Bell - June 17th

Get out your party hats and join us in a celebration of love, support and appreciation for Chris Bell, who will be ordained into ministry Saturday, June 17, 2006.

In our UU tradition, only congregations can ordain a minister. The First Parish Standing Committee has voted to ordain Christopher Thomas Bell. This will be confirmed by a vote of the congregation at our June 4th bi-annual meeting. The First Unitarian Society of Newton (FUSN) has voted to join First Parish in ordaining Chris. It is the members of First Parish and FUSN who will actually ordain Chris into his ministry. The ordination will occur at First Parish in Cambridge on Saturday, June 17th at 10am.

Lyn Lidsky is coordinating volunteers to organize refreshments after the service. We are seeking people to volunteer food that they have made or bought that can be eaten without forks or spoons using just a paper plate or napkin. We are looking for fruit or nut breads, cheese platters, fruit platters, dips and vegetables, small sandwiches, small hors d'oeuvres, beverages and, of course, desserts!

If you can donate food or beverages, please contact

Lyn Lidsky at [LHL@DLCA.COM](mailto:LHL@DLCA.COM).

If you need childcare during the service, please contact Rita Butterfield so we make sure we have enough childcare providers available.

Low cost parking will be available at the University Place garage on the corner of JFK and Eliot. If you get your receipt stamped with the First Parish stamp, it will only cost \$6 on June 17th. Parking at the Church Street lot is regular cost on Saturdays.

Chris and his wife, Rita Butterfield, have been members of First Parish since November 2000. Chris has been an active leader of our community in

many ways, including Tuesday Meals, Stewardship, Celebration Sunday, and the creation of our Church Covenant. Chris has been less active at First Parish during the past two years while he completed a part-time internship at FUSN.

Please plan to join the First Parish in Cambridge and the First Unitarian Society of Newton on June 17th at 10am as we have the honor of co-ordaining Chris Bell a Unitarian Universalist minister.

First Parish members serving on the ordination committee include Rita Butterfield, Elizabeth Kline, Lyn and Art Lidsky, Eileen Sullivan, Kate Menard, Erik and Kate Nordahl, Wendy Irvine and Charles Leiserson.



## June Worship Services

**June 4:** Flower Communion, Senior goodbye, transition ritual. Homily by Thomas Mikelson ANNUAL MEETING. Please remember to bring a flower to share for flower communion.

**June 11:** The Quiltmaker's Gift - Join us for our annual spring pageant and teacher recognition worship. This Sunday will also be a special farewell to our intern Mara Dowdall and a good-bye to Thomas from the children of First Parish. Jody Steiner interpreting.

The service will be followed by a celebratory ice cream social in the burial ground.

**June 18,** Thomas Mikelson preaching, "Eyes on the Prize." Thomas's final worship service and Sermon at First Parish. Goodbye Social Hour

### *Summer Worship begins*

**June 25** - Prison Education Project

**July 2** - Matt Meyer

**July 9** -Chris Bell and Rita Butterfield

**July 16** - David Jorgensen

**July 23** - Elizabeth Gish

**July 30** - Gail Berger

**August 6** - Mara Dowdall

*The Religious Education Program will begin on October 15.*

# Gay Marriage Is Not A Done Deal-

## Notes from the field: Quincy, Saturday, April 29

By Tina Gram

A few Saturdays ago a group of UU's from First Parish Cambridge went down to Quincy for the purpose of getting pro-equality postcards signed by constituents where legislators are not supportive of gay marriage. There, across from the T station, we were met by a Mass Equality member, briefly trained-" Get to the point and be sure to make eye contact when approaching someone" and then paired off to go different shopping malls, armed with a clipboard, pen, and a feeling of certainty that "Yes, we were doing the right thing!"



Rob Fleagle and I were whisked away by two friendly Quincy supporters who knew the lay of the land and dumped us at our designated site, a treeless shopping mall in the midst of a forbidding number of empty cars. It took us a few tries before we found a spot near the Boston Market that was the best there was-it had a concrete trash receptacle that could double as a writing table!

You may wonder why we were out there getting signatures on these postcards when, as one exasperated shopper queried, "Don't we have gay marriage already? I mean, isn't that a done deal?" Well, no, I explained what most UU's already know--that marriage equality is again threatened by a new petition that was filed to change the Massachusetts constitution to ban same sex marriage. I wondered to myself how many other Mass residents like this man were uninformed about the push to amend the constitution. This made our task all the more important and urgent.

You can't let the fact that people will shun you or just pass you by when they see you coming with a clipboard in hand deter you. They've got to get their roast chicken at Boston Market and their groceries at Shaw's and most won't take the time out to find out what you've got on your clipboard. You've got to approach them; when someone actually stops to talk to you and signs the postcards, you secretly bless them. It's a godforsaken place and there's a cold wind blowing but you are here nevertheless, making a difference, standing up for what you believe-"striving for justice", giving others an opportunity to express their voice as well-"...serve each other, our community, and our world", your covenant in action.

Some you approach say "no" or turn away quickly when you explain the issue. One man said, "It's against my religion." Well, what'd you expect?" You're not in

Harvard Square anymore. You're here because it's where you're needed. It's a tough question for people in Quincy and in many other places, and you've heard that churches are pressuring their congregations to push for a constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage. But no sooner are you rebuffed by one passer-by when a nice woman comes along and says she'll sign your postcard. She relates that she is very ashamed to say that the pastor at her church has been getting members to sign postcards against gay marriage. And while you're pondering how a church could sanction discrimination, another attractive, elderly woman approaches and offers to sign. "I've got relatives who're gay, I have friends whose children are gay; they should be given a chance like everyone else!" Your heart warms at her smile and you dream of a pile of postcards in support of marriage equality overwhelming the legislators. You imagine that your son will someday be able to walk the aisle and wed his partner should he choose to.

But before you can get more signatures your ride shows up to return you to the T station. There you relinquish your clipboard, returning it to the Mass Equality rep, wishing you could have done more. He reassures you. "No, you all did really well." Marcia Hams, who coordinated the group from our church but had to miss the occasion due to sickness (Susan Sheppard came instead), reported that altogether we got 150 postcards signed-now that's a pile.

**Make Your Mark!**

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## Final Intern Column

By Mara Julia Dowdall

“... to make an end is to make a beginning...” - T.S. Eliot

Last Sunday May 14th marked the first rehearsal of the annual Spring Pageant. But while pageant preparations are just now getting underway, I am mindful that my internship at First Parish will soon reach its end. Since joining the First Parish team last year, I have known that the pageant would be my final project as an intern. And so, as I look forward to the next month of casting, set constructing, and rehearsing - and of course the Big Day on June 11th - I am also aware that the time has come to begin saying farewell.

In some ways, it feels like the end has arrived all too soon. Wasn't it just yesterday that I arrived at First Parish? Wasn't it only recently that we began to get to know each other? Yet, when I look back over the past two years and reflect on all I have learned and all we have accomplished together, I realize that the cup of my internship experience already "runneth over." There have been wonderful worships, a spiritual development course, a rousing Celebration Sunday, a growing ministry to college students, and countless moments of connection. And, more intangible, are the ways in which First Parish has helped me grow in my own calling to the UU ministry. I will always remember First Parish as community in which I really learned what it means to be a minister and developed my own identity as one.

I am deeply appreciative of the support I have received from you, the people of First Parish Cambridge, since I walked through the Church Street doors in September 2004. Though my internship working with the budding campus ministry program was recently added and still developing, I felt welcome here from the very start. And as my work has expanded in the realms of worship, pastoral care, religious education, and administration, I have continued to appreciate your support and feedback. I have also been grateful for your willingness to share your lives with me for these past two years, and for allowing me to walk with you through your times of joy and sorrow. For all of this, I say "thank you"!

I would like to extend a special thanks to Jory and Thomas for their steadfast supervision and invaluable guidance during my internship. The members of my internship committee - Ken Mattsson (chair), Michael Allen, Lisa Dobberteen, Joanna Fink, and Karen Lombard - are also worthy of tremendous thanks. Their feedback and support have been essential to my learning and growth. Also, it has been a joy getting to know and work with the First Parish Staff - Linda Baker, Jonathan Barnhart, Maria Lapid, Thom Lisse, and Scott Maille. To them I extend my thanks for all of their assistance and collegial sustenance.

*continued on pg. 8*



## Halfway Up the Stairs

### JORY'S TOP 10 REASONS TO TEACH RE

By Jory Agate

#10 - Lying in bed, reading the Sunday paper, isn't all it is cracked up to be.

#9 - People would look at you funny if you came to church and started playing with clay and paints WITHOUT the kids.

#8 - Getting up early on Sunday mornings is much easier since Saturday Night Live has gone down hill.

#7 - It is not anything like a committee meeting.

#6 - Teaching Sunday School isn't beneath Jimmy Carter and he was the President.

#5 - You get to read all these terrific stories and picture books you'd never read otherwise.

#4 - Kids know the best jokes!

#3 - Where else do you get to ask the "Big Questions", but you don't have to know all the answers.

#2 - You start to sparkle... after using a certain amount of glitter it becomes permanent.

And the #1 reason for teaching RE: It just feels good to make a difference in someone's life!

Throughout June, the RE committee will be recruiting teachers for next year's program. I hope you will consider joining in this vibrant part of First Parish life. In addition to Sunday morning RE teachers, we will also be looking for Coming of Age mentors for our middle school youth and advisors for our high school group. Volunteers are also needed for the RE committee and specific RE events, like our RE retreat in the fall, Santa's Workshop, Easter Egg Hunt, pageant Sunday and the ice cream social.

In faith,  
Jory

# Accolades for Environmental Group's Ellen Mass and Alewife

## Alewife

The Environmental Group congratulates First Parish member Ellen Mass for receiving a 2006 Individual Environmental Merit Award from the U.S. E.P.A. for her work on behalf of the greater Alewife ecosystem. During the last 6 years, thanks to Ellen's inspiration, many members of First Parish have come to greatly appreciate the Alewife Reservation and its woodlands owned by the Department of Conservation and Recreation. The First Parish Environmental group, with Ellen as former co-chair and chair, has worked with the Religious Education Committee and the children of the church to engage congregants and the public in spiritual and educational activities on the Reservation. Our endeavors have been supported by Friends of Alewife Reservation, an important non-profit stewarding guide and educational organization for our information and leadership. First Parish activities include art displays at our Stebbins Gallery, educational scavenger hunts, a social justice Sunday event, solstice services, and community service initiatives. These activities demonstrate our spiritual commitment to the local commu-

nity, to this unique urban wild, and express our reverence to nature of which we are a part.

The FP Environmental Group has taken a specific stand for protection of the Alewife Reservation and its rare small river flood plain forest which protects animals, both non-human and human, birds, and other phylum in the greater Mystic River watershed. We have written a letter to the Conservation Commission asking that currently threatened adjacent forest land be protected, and we cosponsored a Forum on May 30 at the Temple Beth El of Belmont about the Silver Maple Forest. We invite all who are concerned with the future of this natural treasure to help show support and appreciation for the threatened rare silver maple forest in Belmont and 3 acres in Cambridge. This forest is a rich and essential component of a full ecosystem within an already heavily developed urban environment. Let us maintain the integrity of this ecosystem for its present inhabitants, ourselves, our children, and for the planet. We invite you to join our FP environmental yahoo list to stay informed of upcoming events, send email to [edko@alumni.brown.edu](mailto:edko@alumni.brown.edu) or call 617-661-7678.

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*continued from pg 7*

Many have asked me "what comes next for you?" In the short run, after attending GA in St. Louis, my fiancé Ben and I will spend July and August in central Vermont. We will back to Cambridge in the fall, when I will begin the final year of my MDiv program at Harvard Divinity School. I will also have the privilege of helping lead Coming of Age next year (though my involvement at First Parish will be limited to that program). I am currently planning to see the Ministerial Fellowship Committee next spring, and though not sure where exactly my ministry will take me after graduation, I look forward to the future with excitement.

T.S. Eliot wrote that "... to make an end is to make a beginning..." And so I am reminded that, as my internship and the church year at First Parish draw to a close, we are all embarking on new beginnings. For the journeys that lie ahead, I leave you with an Apache blessing, whose words I have come to love:

*May the sun bring you new energy by day.*

*May the moon softly restore you by night.*

*May the rain wash away your worries.*

*May the breeze blow new strength into your being.*

*May you walk gently through the world*

*and know its beauty all the days of your life.*

In gratitude and faith, Mara Julia Dowdall



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# RE NEWS

*By Jory Agate*

Reminder for all of those participating in the Spring Pageant - the remaining rehearsals are June 4, during the worship service, and Pageant Sunday, June 11, beginning at 9 am!

I would like to thank the RE Committee: Mary Sutula, Amanda Peters, Susan Mello, Leslie DiTrani, Joyce Majewski, Cheyenne McCarter and Brian Geenbaur who made it a fantastic year in RE. If you are interested in serving on the RE committee, please speak with Jory.

I would also like to thank all of our RE teachers this year. It has been a wonderful program and it could not have happened without all of your hard work and commitment. Many thanks to our pre-K -kindergarten teachers: Trish Herr, Elizabeth Baratta, Parmalee Eastman, and Heidi Meyer; first-second grade teachers: Anne-Marie Fitzgerald, Joanna Fink, Susan Shepherd, Cindy Moore, Lynne Molnar, Julie Mottl-Santiago; third-fourth grade teachers: Stephanie George, Julie Sutula, Kathleen Attfield, Carol Walker, and Lucy Rothenberg; fifth-

sixth grade teachers: Cheyenne McCarter, David Case, Renee Kaspar, Arlene Olivero, Ed Koenig and Joey Santos-Lyons; Our Whole Lives leaders; Rita Bell-Butterfield, Ethan Field, and Brian Geenbaur; and youth group advisors: Howie Bauchner and Nicki Brother.

Children's Art Show - Please collect all of your children's artwork before the summer break. It can be picked up in Jory's office after the service on June 11 or 18.

Please join us on June 11 to thank our teachers and celebrate our wonderful year together. The service will be followed by an ice cream social in honor of our year together.

Please note that there is no Religious Education program for children during the summer. Kids are welcome to go to the services, or there is childcare available in the nursery. The RE program will begin after homecoming Sunday on September 17.

## *Greetings!*

*Eileen Sullivan*

Greeters are an important part of First Parish. Each Sunday they welcome visitors and newcomers, provide information and share their enthusiasm about UUism and First Parish. Greeting is a great way to meet new people and build a stronger community. And it is fun!

First Parish Greeters get to have some very interesting conversations with people seeking a spiritual home. A sampling includes:

"There are so many UU churches in this area. What is unique about this church?"

"Does this church really allow gays to get married? Do you really allow people who are openly gay to be leaders in your church?"

"I'm thinking about leaving my current church. My relationship with God is important to me. What do UUs believe?"

"I was raised Catholic/Jewish/Christian/Mormon - are there others here with similar backgrounds?"

"Why do you come here? What do you believe?"

Being a Greeter challenges you to know about your church, the community at First Parish and engage in discussions about faith and community. It is much more than just

saying hello. How would you engage in a dialogue about any of the above questions? Do you love to make others feel welcome and a part of First Parish?

Greeters work at the Church Street and Mass Ave doors prior to worship service as well as after the service. Greeters arrive around 9:50am and welcome people until 10:40 then Greeters can go into the worship service. At the end of the service, greeters are available to answer questions and welcome visitors. Their work ends around noon.

We also need Office Greeters. Each Sunday an Office Greeter arrives around 9am and sits in the office until 10:40. The Office Greeter watches for people who need help with the elevator as well answers the phone. While it gets busier close to 10:30, there is usually time to read a book or newspaper. The phone may only ring once or twice a morning but it is very helpful to people to get a real person on Sunday morning. Calls include people looking for what time church starts and where to find parking.

Greeters usually work about six times a year. If you are interested, contact Eileen at [Membership@Firstparishcambridge.org](mailto:Membership@Firstparishcambridge.org)

# Flower Communion and Norbert Capek

Each year on the first Sunday in June we celebrate the flower communion ritual. This ritual had its beginnings with our Unitarian brothers and sisters in Prague, Czechoslovakia.

During the Austro-Hungarian Empire there was no religious freedom in Czechoslovakia. The whole weight of the government was on the Roman Catholic Church. After WWI a great number of Czechs left the Catholic Church wanting to participate in a different more independent religion.

Before WWI, Norbert Capek, who was born in 1870, was serving as a Baptist minister. He had long been a liberal religious thinker, though, and he left the ministry and became a journalist. He fled to the US after articles, which he wrote on the impending war, angered authorities.

It was during his time in the States that he discovered Unitarianism and upon returning to Czechoslovakia after the war, founded a Unitarian congregation in Prague called the Liberal Religious Fellowship.

Thousands flocked to his new church. It was just the type of religion that so many were looking for. Most had come from the Roman Catholic church and they wanted a religion that looked nothing like it, so the minister wore no robe or vestments, they wanted no elaborate rituals, no singing of hymns, no ornate building, no formal or prescribed prayers.

During the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia, the Gestapo broke into the apartment of Capek, confiscated his books and sermons and arrested him and his youngest daughter. He was charged with treason for the crime of listening to the

radio and taken eventually to the Dachau concentration camp where he was tortured and eventually executed.

When news of his death reached the US, the American Unitarian Assoc. president, Fredrick May Eliot wrote "Another name is added to the list of heroic Unitarian martyrs, by whose death our freedom has been bought, Ours is now the responsibility to see to it that we stand fast in the liberty so gloriously won."

During his ministry, Norbert Capek felt that the Unitarian church in Prague had taken simplicity to the extreme and he wanted to incorporate more religious elements. He gradually introduced the singing of hymns with songs he wrote himself for his congregation.

He also created the flower communion ritual over 80 years ago. He wanted to have symbolic ritual that would help bind people closer together in which former Catholics, Protestants and Jews could all participate without reservations. It was a huge success and became an annual ritual.

After his death, his wife moved to the United States and brought with her the flower communion ritual. It was first celebrated in the US in our very own congregation over 60 years ago.

On June 4th at First Parish we will celebrate the flower communion ritual as Norbert and Maja first did in Prague, as our predecessors did here in Cambridge, and as members of our UU community are doing right now in congregations all across our continent.

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*Thank You for Supporting  
Marriage Equality*

*An Unsigned Note Left at First Parish  
April 28, 2006*

Dear First Parish Church:

**YOU GENUINELY TOUCHED ME.**

The other day as I was going home (I'm a student) I walked past your church. I was so encouraged that you had a great big positive banner proclaiming "Support Marriage Equality - We Do." As a young gay person struggling with my faith because of the attacks I see around me by mainstream Christians your banner made me stop and think twice. Your church is genuine and good, and I am totally encouraged by your action. I don't know if I'm ready to go back to the church right now, but you made me, I think, take a step in that direction. **THANK YOU.**

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## March with UUs in Boston's Gay Pride Parade

The Gay Pride Parade is Saturday, June 10th. All BGLT and straight members and friends are invited! For the second year, UU congregations will join together to march in the Gay Pride Parade. The festivities will begin with a banner parade and worship service at Arlington Street Church in Boston. The gathered congregations will proceed to the parade route and march as a group with their respective congregational banners. Last year over 1,000 UUs marched to show their pride and support of the BGLT community.

First Parish members and friends will meet on the corner of Arlington Street across the street from the Arlington Street church at 12noon so we can march together. First Parish has marched in this parade for many years. This is a wonderful way to demonstrate that we are a welcoming congregation! Wear a First Parish t-shirt - available in the RE office for \$10.

# Paine Social Services

By Elizabeth Aguilo, LICSW

*And if we cannot end now our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity. For, in the final analysis, our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future. And we are all mortal.* John F. Kennedy, 1961

I celebrate our diversity-the differing experiences we have based on culture, ethnicity, gender, age, and life. Our diversity opens up new worlds to us, even when it may lead to conflict, or at the very least, awkward discomfort. Yet even those painful confrontations give us the chance to have honest discussion and in that discussion, we have the opportunity to truly get to know each other.

If I may be bold to say, even as we discover all the things that make us different, at the same time, we discover all of the basic things we have in common. "We all breathe the same air. We cherish our children's future. And we are all mortal."

We are all mortal-all of us. This sobering realization can be a source of anxiety and fear, or it can be a source of inspiration, leading to lives of purpose and vision. What is important to us--really? What do we want for ourselves, for

our spouses, for our families, and for our parents?

If I may be bold yet again, I can imagine that if we have worked hard all of our lives and achieved all that we have set out to achieve, we await our reward-a retirement filled with rest, family, adventure, and new goals. If we have struggled all of our lives with unexpected hardships and disappointments, we, too, expect our later years to be years of reward for our patience and determination for we have struggled and waited so long for peace and contentment. These are our expectations, whether we are aware of them, or not.

We face many obstacles, both anticipated and unanticipated, on our journeys in this world. If we pay attention, we'll find that others have faced these journeys before us and offer guidance and strength. If we are willing, we will find that there are others still who are ready to take the journey with us. Let us take the journey with you-you were not meant to struggle alone.

Paine Social Services strives to help Cambridge seniors live safely in their homes or to help them make the transitions they need to make. Please call Elizabeth Aguilo, Director, for more information, (617) 864-2580. Donations may be mailed to Paine Social Services, 3 Church St., Cambridge, MA, 02138.

## Pictures of First Parish



# Reflections on the Prison Education Project

By Robert Fleagle

I attended my first meeting of the Prison Education Project in December, 2004. Since that time I have begun to learn new things about our criminal justice system and also, more about how political change happens. I chose to write this piece as a way of bearing witness to that experience. Writing helps me to clarify my motivations and, I hope in this case, guide me in a direction that is useful to others. To start out, the reason I belong to First Parish is because I feel imperfect and incomplete and I seek a community in which I can walk toward a sense of fulfillment.

I have to say that it feels unnatural to put these things on paper. I wish I could perform an auto-diagnostic check and fix myself. I don't wish to be perceived as inadequate in any way. Plus, it's easier to pretend that I have nothing to offer to others in the first place. But I know from experience that expressing a sense of incompleteness can result in a bridging between myself and others and that imperfect others can form a community by admitting powerlessness over the world around them. I also know that reaching out to others is most human and necessary.

This is not where I started out. I expressed myself in the kind of self-centered behavior that usually ended very badly. And it's only from hurting that I came to see a need for compassion - for myself - and for others. I belong to a twelve-step program where practicing altruism is a way of escaping self-centeredness and achieving recovery. There, I've seen how sharing my worst experiences can result in a renewal of my strength. I've also learned that practicing altruism as a way of seeking fulfillment is similar to breathing: one cannot breathe every once in a while and expect to survive for very long.

I believe that each of us can express our truest self and reach our own highest potential under the right conditions. I don't believe that everyone is inherently good but I do believe that everyone should have a lot of chances to find out if they are or not. As a society, we are a long way away from this ideal and the way society treats people with visible differences and vulnerabilities makes me angry. But do I that believe change is possible.

Many who live in comfortable circumstances tend to view their surroundings as part of a larger design. But if God (if there is a God) graced my life with goodness, then s/he may have intentionally stranded many others in despair. It's more comforting for me to believe that randomness is the rule and that the achievement of goodness is something we can choose to influence. I joined First Parish to join with other responsible adults who wish to exert a positive influence on other people's lives. That is what compels me to work for reform in criminal justice.

I know that our present system of criminal justice is ill-conceived in many ways. Locking people up for using and selling drugs is the same as locking people up for having mental illness.

I have personal proof of this. There is no need for me to wonder about it. The next step is to ask myself if it is within my power to do something to change and the answer is a resounding 'yes, very much so.' The only question I really need to ask is: 'where do I start?' This is where I require faith.

I don't know if writing to my local representatives is the best way for me to help. I'm reminded of Thomas Mikelson's discussion of the good Samaritan. The good Samaritan didn't ask what would happen to him if he stopped to provide assistance to another. Instead, he asked: 'what will become of me if I don't provide assistance?' I give myself permission to be afraid of what might happen to me if I don't try to help.

To be honest, standing at the post card table collecting signatures doesn't feel meaningful all of the time. I tell myself I shouldn't have to do it. Everyone should simply know to do this already without any prompting whatsoever. But then I remember an important thing about myself: I probably wouldn't lift a finger without the guidance and examples of other thoughtful individuals at First Parish who've been at it longer than I have.

None of these thoughts come to me spontaneously. Taking action on behalf of others does not occur to me during most of my waking hours. In fact, a lot of my energy is spent trying to figure out how to avoid becoming involved with other people. But I know that a decent society results from thoughtful people coming together to take action and be of service. There's no doubt in my mind about this. But I can only have faith that my actions will help.

