



The Parish Record

The First Church and Parish in Dedham

www.dedhamuu.org

Volume CXXX, No. 7

March, 2010

Sundays in the Meeting House

March 7, 10:00 AM: When Systems Fail Us

The Rev. Rali Weaver will preach.

Children will begin in worship and be sung to their classes.

A system is basically defined as “a set of interacting but independent entities that create an integrated whole.” On this First Sunday in March we will explore what systems commonly affect us and how we might manage when and if they fail us.

March 14, 10:00 AM: Marriage Past and Present

Seth Carrier, Ministerial Student, will preach

Children will start in worship and be sung to their classes.

Coming of Age students will attend the service in full.

It is human nature to assume that the way we've experienced things is the way things have always been, but this is very often a misconception. Our ministerial student, Seth Carrier, explores how this truth applies to the institution of marriage in exploring its history, how marriage has changed dramatically over time, how it has most often been used for political and economic oppression, and what all of this means for us today.

March 21, 10:00 AM: Displacing Our Privilege

The Rev. Rali Weaver will preach.

Children will begin in worship and be sung to a Cool Deed.

Sean Connery once said: “The most difficult thing to displace is privilege.” This Sunday we will consider what makes us privileged and how that might get in our way.

March 28, 10:00 AM:

The Rev. Rali Weaver will preach.

Children will start in worship and be sung to their classes.

Several philosophers have suggested that the best way to create a new outcome is to release the past ways of doing things. This Sunday we will ponder what might happen if we never knew where we were going? What if there were no road maps?

Calendar

Parish Players Performances of Guys and Dolls: March 19, 20, 21

Parish Committee: March 2, 7:00

Great Thinkers and Thoughts:

March 9, 7:00

March 23, 7:00

Food Pantry Volunteers: March 13

Cakes: March 19, 6:30

Parish Players Practices:

Sundays, 11:30

Mondays, 6:30

All evenings, March 15-18

Prayer Bead Workshop: March 28, Noon

Articulating Your Faith: March 29, 7:00

Youth Group: Sundays at 6:00

Aerobics: Mondays & Wednesdays, 6:30

Meditation: Thursdays, 7:30

Next Parish Record Deadline: March 21

**Please see our website
for the complete and
up-to-date calendar**

If you do not receive our weekly church emails and would like to please contact the church office by phone: 781-326-7463 or by email: firstchurch@dedhamuu.org

From Our Minister

“Penitence: The quality or condition of being penitent; the disposition of a penitent; sorrow for sins or faults; repentance; contrition.” Webster’s Dictionary

As I write this Christian Churches are celebrating the season of Lent, which began with Ash Wednesday on the 17th of February. It has been a long time since this church has officially recognized the start of Lent with an Ash Wednesday Worship Service or the last week of Lent called Holy Week. On Easter Sunday (which falls on April 4th this year) we gather with generally high attendance and follow our worship with a decidedly pagan ritual called an Easter Egg Hunt.

Lent has nothing to do with eggs or bunnies but is the 40 days leading up to Easter. The traditional purpose of Lent is the preparation for the believer through prayer, penitence, charity and sacrifice. These 40 days are meant to represent the 40 days that Jesus spent in the desert being tempted by the devil and strengthening his resolve for his ministry.

In many of the world’s religions there is a tradition calling people to times of reflection and recommitment but it occurs to me that as Unitarian Universalist we do not rely upon yearly corporate rituals to strengthen our resolve and deepen our commitment. I wonder what it might look like if we as Unitarian Universalists were to create a group time of reflection. Would we enter a sweat lodge? Or go on a vision quest? Would we take a resort vacation? Or go on sabbatical? How might we ground our doing in not doing or refresh our intentions by nourishing our spirit?

It seems to me that there are plenty of examples of church leaders who become burnt out and never return to the worship or fellowship. I wonder how we might build into our system a place for respite and renewal.

The Christian season of Lent calls for penitence. While I am not one for thinking we have any reason to dwell on our errors and as Mary Oliver wrote I don’t believe “we need to walk for a thousand miles through the desert repenting.” I do wonder if there might be a place in our Unitarian Universalist consciousness for seeking forgiveness, or atoning for our missteps and for liberating our spirits to start fresh.

We all know that “To err is human” but there are times when it is easier to retreat than to reconcile. Ideally any retreat might be intentional and offer us a path back to where we started.

As we enter this holy season as winter turns to spring I want to encourage each of us to seek ways to liberate ourselves from any past weight anything that has frozen us and open our hearts to the new life opening before us.

Rali

Rev. Rali Weaver is the Senior Minister at First Church and Parish in Dedham.
She can be reached at raliweaver@yahoo.com

From Our Ministerial Student

Appreciating Unitarian Universalism

I recently had the opportunity to represent Unitarian Universalism as part of an interfaith presentation to prospective students at a rabbinical school. The focus of the workshop was a Jewish/Christian/UU text study of prayer, and I had submitted a brief selection from UU minister Rev. Erik Wikstrom's book Simply Pray as the UU text for the evening.

Selecting a text "representative" of the Unitarian Universalist understanding of prayer, when many if not most UUs are uncomfortable with the very word to begin with, was no easy task. As I was honing in on a specific selection, I was further worried that the passages I was looking at were generic and uninspiring. It was to my surprise and delight then, when a couple of the prospective students in our reflection group responded enthusiastically. One excitedly observed that you "can just choose any form of prayer that works for you, do it in the manner that works for you, and no one will tell you otherwise!" A second marveled at the beauty of a passage describing prayer as a relationship with the Mystery we do not understand.

This experience caused me to reflect upon what I take for granted in Unitarian Universalism. I realized that often on Sundays I appreciate the service and the gathered community without explicitly connecting that appreciation to the beliefs and structures of Unitarian Universalism. As someone raised UU, I tend to take for granted the UU principles and understanding of how to live in this world. Interfaith encounters in particular have helped me realize that I lack some of the contrasting experience that helps others, such as the students at the rabbinical school, deeply appreciate the freedom UUism offers.

The question then, is how to shift from "taking for granted" into gratitude. One way to bring the everyday into greater awareness and appreciation is by naming, by putting into words the things we value. For me, the freedom of choice we offer, the call to love each other, and the communal search for meaning are the names I would use to describe what I appreciate most about Unitarian Universalism. I love that we will forever be searching for the answers, instead of offering answers to those who come through our doors.

"Articulating Your UU Faith" is an adult R.E. curriculum designed to help participants with that utmost of difficult tasks, talking about what it means to be Unitarian Universalist. I think the course also accomplishes something else: it can help us name the different parts of Unitarian Universalism for which we are most grateful. If you are interested in learning to better articulate, name and appreciate Unitarian Universalism in a group setting, I hope you will join me at "Articulating Your UU Faith," Monday nights starting Monday, March 29th at 7pm. On your own or together, I encourage us all to think more deeply about naming the parts of Unitarian Universalism that we value most.

Peace and love,
Seth

Seth Carrier is a ministerial student at Andover-Newton Theological School. He is interning here at First Church for the 2009-2010 academic year, and can be reached at sethcarrier@gmail.com.

Focus on Religious Education

Q&A with Jesus

My daughter's preschool distributes a calendar each month which lists any special events coming up. Well, two days in a row in February were set aside for parents to visit with the president of the sanctuary that houses the school, whose first name happens to be Christy. I noticed that on one of the days there was a typo, and the event was listed as "Christ visits". I laughed at this at first, but then I started thinking, *What if Jesus visited a class of preschoolers?*

Anyone who has come in contact with a 3 or 4 year old knows that a child of this age is naturally very inquisitive and, having not yet learned the fine art of tact, terribly blunt. I can only imagine the conversation that might ensue were JC to pop in during circle time.

Q: If you're a boy, how come you have long hair and wear a dress?

A: It is traditional where I come from.

Q: Why do you have those holes in your hands and feet?

A: The rulers of my land were angry at the things I had to say, so they nailed me to a cross.

Q: Did it hurt?

A: Yes, very much. But my father's love helped me to be brave.

Q: Like when my daddy hugs me at the doctor when I get a shot?

A: Yes, just like that.

Q: Were you mad at them for putting nails in you?

A: Mostly it made me sad, but I forgave them.

Q: How come you're a baby at Christmas but you're all grown-up at Easter?

A: Uhhhhhh.... Oh, look! Time for snack! (Watch me make these three Goldfish crackers into a multitude.)

One of our UU sources of faith is "Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life." In other words, Wonder and Awe. As adults it can be hard to reconnect with that sense of wonder when we are constantly dealing with practical realities of life. But one need only look at a small child, too young to be jaded or cynical, who is still experiencing much of the world for the first time; a baby's joy at discovering her own feet, a toddler's fascination with shiny objects, a preschooler's relentless collecting of sticks and rocks. They are fully present in the moment and able to completely engross themselves in each little treasure life gives them.

Let's face it; as adults we are expected to know everything. So it can be a liberating experience to let go of that expectation and just wonder. The next time a child asks you "Why is the sky blue?" (even if you happen to know the scientific answer) try wondering along with them. Hmmmm... *I wonder how it got that way...* As UU's we seek out questions more than answers, and inviting a child to wonder along with us not only encourages active questioning, thinking, and imagining, but also allows us to break out of our answer-driven mentality and revisit the world as a sacred and magical place full of wonder and discovery.

Focus on Religious Education

RE Happenings:

February's Cool Deed was a big success. With the help of our youth and adult volunteers the three classrooms became bakery shops and students became creative entrepreneurs competing for the most sales.

And the winner is... UU Heroes! They will be honored with a pizza party after Sunday School on March 7th. But because all three classes worked very hard, they will all be invited to the party to help celebrate these real UU Heroes. The biggest victory of all is the overflowing box of warm clothes, hat, mittens, and boots that will go to Boston area families in need. Congratulations to the winners, and a huge Thank You to everyone who baked and volunteered!

Movie Night: The Prince of Egypt

Saturday March 27th is a special event in honor of the Passover season. Join us for a pot luck dinner and a sing-along version of this beautiful and moving animated story of Moses and the Exodus. With songs by Stephen Schwartz and an all-star cast of voices, this family favorite is not to be missed.

5:30- Pot Luck

6:00- Movie (We'll teach you the songs)

Aoife

Aoife Barrington-Haber is our Religious Education Director. She can be reached at faeriecool@hotmail.com

All Around the Church Community

The Parish Players Present...

Guys and Dolls

Please come see the Parish Player's production of Guys and Dolls! Great music and fun for all! Performance dates are Friday, March 19 and Saturday, March 20 at 7pm and Sunday March 21 at 2pm. You may call or email the church office to make reservations (781-326-7463, firstchurch@dedhamuu.org), or sign up in the dining room during coffee hour. Tickets are \$5 for those under 12 and over 65, \$10 for all others. Please note that due to the popularity of past matinee performances, all Sunday reservations must be paid for by noon on March 21st. Tickets that have not been purchased at that time will be released if all other seats have been sold.

We look forward to seeing you here!

All Around the Church Community

Helpers wanted for the Dedham Food Pantry

March 13 we will be staffing the Dedham Food Pantry, 8:30am and 11:00am. It is now located in the Dedham Plaza below Plaster Fun Time. We need 4 to 5 volunteers. You need to arrive between 8 and 8:30am to learn the new set up.

The Dedham Food Pantry has served the residents of Dedham since 1990. It is an all volunteer organization. They just moved into this location in mid-January. It is on one floor and has waiting room space and has men and women restrooms. The layout includes only 2 long aisles. The food items are in a new order to make it easier for the clients to pack their bags.

Teens are welcome to come to help the clients with their bags. Though there are no stairs, no one can park right by the door, so help is still needed. Community service credits are available if needed.

On Thursdays between 3 and 5 people can drop off donations and help stock shelves. Children of all ages are welcome at this time. If too many show up, just know you may not be able to stay.

Contact Pam Aist, Lynn Rogal or Janet Hurwitz with any questions about volunteering.

Amnesty International

The following church members wrote letters on behalf of human rights activists in Egypt and Iran during coffee hour in December and January:

Judy Barrington, Sam Bitar, Tyler Carpenter, Seth Carrier, Kia Davey, Steve Davey, Bob Estes, Kerrie Gallagher, Tomoko Graham, Deb Harrison, Virginia Hickey-Ferrentinos, Carol Hutton, Rob Krikorian, Susan Kyte, Nora Sotomayer, Geoff Tegnell and Diane Winchester.

In February we wrote letters in support of a Colombian women's human rights organization that is being threatened by a paramilitary group known as the Black Eagles.

Peter Elefterakis

All Around the Church Community

Prayer Bead Workshop

Sunday, March 28th at Noon, a Prayer Bead Workshop at the Parsonage

Almost every religious tradition has its own form of prayer beads, which have been used throughout history. They can be used for prayer or for meditation.

This intergenerational workshop will be to create your own string of prayer beads. There will be two types discussed in the workshop; one based on the UU Seven Principles, and a 4-bead string for children (or by grownups for a smaller meditation!).

As we create our strings, prayers and meditations will be suggested and discussed. Lunch will be provided.

Cost of materials will be \$10 for the Seven Principles strand, and/or \$5 for the Children's strand. Or, bring your own beads.

Please RSVP by Friday, March 26th to Dale Meyer-Curley, or the Church Office

Great Thinkers and Thoughts in Unitarian Universalism

Continue to join Rev. Weaver in front of the fire at the Parsonage the Second and Fourth Tuesday of each month from through April 20th to discuss central thoughts and thinkers of the Unitarian Universalist Movement. Drawing from such great thinkers as Ralph Waldo Emerson, William Ellery Channing, Theodore Parker, Hosea Ballou, Harriet Martineau, Henry Whitney Bellows, William Lawrence Sullivan, Sophia Lyons Fahs, and Forrest Church we will explore Unitarian and Universalist thought through the decades. Some pre-reading is required please contact Rev. Weaver for details raliweaver@dedhamuu.org.

Adult R.E. Program: *Articulating Your Faith*

Led by our Student Minister Seth Carrier, *Articulating Your Faith* is an Adult Religious Education curriculum written by two UU ministers, Barbara Wells and Jaco B. ten Hove, which is designed to help both new and long-term UUs practice putting their religious beliefs into words. Given that we are part of a non-creedal liberal faith, this can be a daunting task even for the most experienced of us! Come spend five consecutive Monday evenings, starting March 29th and ending April 26th, exploring the richness of our tradition with other members and friends. We will gather promptly at 7pm in the Women's Alliance Room.

**Minutes of the Parish Committee Meeting
January 5, 2009**

Present: Judy Barrington, Audrey Cecil, Carol Dixon, Jeff Hutton, Sharon Lane, Claudia Leone, Kerry Matthews, Grace Pena, Michael Roberts, Eileen Sullivan, Rev. Rali Weaver

Meeting called to order at 7:06 pm

Unison Affirmation. Opening words by Rali Weaver.

Minutes of 12/01/09 – Motion made to approve the minutes of the last meeting. Second, motion carried.

Ministers Report- Rali reports that a meeting will occur with the AA group that is interested in more use of our space. The custodial budget needs to be covered by groups using the space and should be built into the budget for our events. The Boston Globe is starting a Dedham page on-line where news of the church can be published. Rali will be taking a vacation 3/12/10 – 3/18/10. Seth Carrier will preach in her absence.

Work of the Parish Committee –

Chair and committee members:

Finance Committee- will be meeting next week

Membership Committee- has not met yet

Stewardship Committee- meeting planned

Nominating Committee- Judy Barrington will lead. They will meet in February.

Treasurer's Report – Michael Roberts reports a new designated account was added to track contributions to the Parsonage utilities. New changes in unemployment contributions to MA State were noted. UUA health plan has increased its premiums. A motion was made to accept the Treasurers Report. Second, motion carried.

Building and Grounds – Jeff Hutton reported that he and Martha Leonard are working on getting the shutters painted. New carpet was installed on the stairs in the parsonage.

Fund Raising –

1. Church Supper – Feb 6 organized by Jeff Hutton and Carol Dixon. A 50/50 Raffle was suggested.
2. Pizza Night on a Friday night in February and again in April
3. Yard Sale in Spring
4. Goodsearch.com - Rali will explore the benefits of making this your search engine
5. Amazon.com will continue
6. Family Fun Night with Wii and Trivia teams

A meeting will occur at coffee hour on 1/17 to solicit fundraising ideas. Childcare will be arranged.

R.E. Committee –Aoife Barrington-Haber submitted a written report informing us that 31 children are enrolled in classes. The nursery is enjoying their new space upstairs. New classroom curricula was put into place for many of the classes. Two long-term projects include work on Ethics and Safety Guidelines and developing a new Mission Statement.

Old Business –

Draft job descriptions of the church officers, Parish Committee members and Parish Committee function were reviewed. These will be finalized at our next meeting.

A motion was made to approve the job descriptions as well as Special Meeting summary and Annual Meeting summary, with recommended edits. Second, motion carried.

At next month's meeting we will review the Auditors job description.

Goals for the Year include:

Putting together a booklet of job descriptions and workings of the church

Hosting a "Committee Fair"

Finishing the Welcoming Church Process

Working with the Food Pantry on establishing a permanent home

Next meeting will be on February 2, 2010 at 7pm.

Judy Barrington will offer the opening words.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:50pm

Respectfully submitted,

Audrey H. Cecil