



The Parish Record

The First Church and Parish in Dedham

www.dedhamuu.org

Volume CXXVI, No. 16

May 17, 2006

Calendar

May

- 19, Friday, 6:30: Cakes
- 21, Sunday, 11:00 (After the service):
Annual Meeting
- 23, Tuesday, 6:30: Alliance Pot Luck
Supper and Annual Meeting

June

- 6, Tuesday, COM Meeting
- 10, Saturday, 9:00 AM Annual Spring
Yard Sale
- 11, Sunday, Noon: Annual Church
Picnic

The Parish Record is published biweekly.
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Susan Sennott
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The deadline for submissions to the final
issue of the Parish Record this year is May
28. Send notices directly by e-mail to:
tylercarpenter@dedhamuu.org or
call me with questions: 617-816-9728.

Sundays in the Meeting House

- May 21, 10:00 AM: Annual Meeting. The Sermon will be
“Passages, 2006” by Dr. Robert R. N. Ross
- May 28, 10:00 AM: Music and Worship Committee Service.
- June 4, 10:00 AM: Dedication Service . The sermon will be
“Celtic Pride: The Religion of the Druids” by Rev. Dr. Robert
R. N. Ross.

Focus on Religious Education

When do we meet:

- Sunday, May 21st** – 10 AM: Teaching Sunday. OWL meets
from 10 to 12. This will be the last class of the
year for everyone.
- Sunday, May 28th** – Memorial Day Weekend, no classes.
- Sunday, June 4th** – Dedication Service, no classes, but
children are welcome.
- Sunday, June 11th** – Closing Sunday, Annual Picnic ☺.

On Sunday, May 7th after the Children’s Service we hosted an
Empty Bowls Lunch. The bowls that the children created
were used to serve a simple meal of couscous. Guests chose a
bowl to use and to keep as a reminder of all the empty bowls
in the world. In exchange for the meal and the bowl, the
guests gave a donation of ten dollars. All the money collected
will go to the Dedham Food Pantry.

We have three bowls remaining if anyone is interested in
buying one, please let me know.

Susan Sennott, Director of Religious Education

All Around the Church Community

Important Reminder

Annual Meeting

Sunday, May 21st, after church

We will approve a budget for the 2006-2007 church year at this meeting.
Please attend this important meeting

Walk For Hunger

A congratulations to all of our walkers who walked the full 20 miles in this year's annual Walk for Hunger. The walk had three first-time walkers from the church youth group, Milo Carpenter and Carrie Cecil, who walked with the youth leader, Bailey Stoler, and we had one 22nd-time walker, Pam Aist, who was walking the Walk before the first timers were born! Congratulations to the three of you, and a reminder to everyone else to pay your Walk for Hunger pledges.

Meditation Group

The Meditation Group will start on Thursday, May 25th, at 7:30. We will meet in the Parish House (probably upstairs in the RE Conference room). Everyone is welcome and no experience is necessary. Any questions, please contact: Carol Dixon Hutton, e-mail carolhdixon@gmail.com or (781) 461-0522.

Safe Church Committee

The Safe Church Committee is pleased that the Parish Committee voted on Tuesday, May 9 to accept a policy regarding a safe church environment and appropriate standards of behavior. To share the information and procedures of the policy, the committee will plan follow up sessions for Fall 2006.

American Red Cross

The American Red Cross would like all of us to know that there is a blood shortage, and that all of us can help them out by donating our blood. They are at 180 Rustcraft Road in Dedham, and are open late on Tuesdays and Thursdays and they welcome walk ins. Please Call Shelly MacDonald at 718-461-2023. Go to www.newenglandblood.org for more information.

All Around the Church Community

Stewardship Campaign Update

The Stewardship Committee is actively working to finish the Stewardship Campaign before the Annual Meeting on Sunday, May 21st, following the service.

As of May 14th, we have received 50 pledges and a pledge total of \$77,847. Thank you to all who have so generously made a financial commitment to First Church. We have not yet reached our goal and are still gathering in some pledges. If you have not yet returned your pledge card please do so before May 21st. We will approve a budget on Sunday, May 21st based on the pledges we have received for next year. Your pledge will make a difference to the financial health of First Church.

The Stewardship Committee

Carol Dixon Hutton, Vicky Berg, Liz Ames, Meg Duncan, Beppy Martin, and Judy Barrington

Save the Dates:

You are invited to an

ALLIANCE MEETING POT LUCK SUPPER

Tuesday, May 23, 2006, at 6:30 PM

At the Parish House

Please RSVP at the First Church Office - 781-326-7463

or Sign up at Coffee Hour

Questions: Janet Hurwitz or Judy Barrington

Our Annual Church Picnic

Sunday, June 11, 2006, Noon - 3pm

Dedham Country Day School

Plan to join us for a fun day including a barbeque, swimming and games.

We need to borrow coolers and we will need volunteers to cook. Sign up sheets will be posted in the dining room in May.

Thanks,

The Membership Committee

From First Church Green

Minister's Annual Report – May 2006

As I near the end of my first year as your Interim Minister, I think back to the earliest days of the fall when I began to get to know this unique congregation. The sense of *intrigue* I had then is still with me, and it will be with excitement and expectation that I begin next year's challenges at First Church and Parish. In its two years of transition, I feel increasingly confident that this congregation can position itself to move into its future with new energy and an emerging self-identity. It has been rewarding to participate in your desire to grow, and I trust there was benefit in the explorations and goal setting exercises we worked on together in the Value Analysis workshops. Reports on the various Value Analysis workshops held to date have already been widely distributed – in the *Parish Record* and through the church office. But an update on the recent progress of significant action items from the last workshop will be useful. They will be included in this report. I have learned a great deal from this congregation – one increasingly able to capitalize on the intergenerational diversity within its membership.

This congregation in its first interim year has developed many strengths. You have solid leadership from the energy and direction of Bob Osborne and Beppy Martin, all the members of the Parish Committee, and your three Church Deacons. The Parish Committee and Deacons have also benefited from the tireless work of your Clerk, Carol Dixon Hutton; your Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer, Henry 'Scotty' Scuoteguazza and Mike Dewar; and from active input from other committees and individuals, including Debbie Harrison, Pam Aist, Judy Barrington, Jeff Hutton, Vicky Berg, Tyler Carpenter, Phil Chaplin, Peter and Kathy Elefterakis, Andrea Gilmore, Eileen Sullivan, and many others. You benefit from the warmth and talents of your Director of Music, Yelena Gridneva, and leader of the choir, Diane Winchester. You have a most creative and resourceful Director of Religious Education, Susan Sennott; an excellent RE Committee. I have very much enjoyed working with Susan and we have some interesting plans for worship services for next year. First Church and Parish can also be grateful for its Church Administrator, Judy Butler. Judy helps ensure that nothing falls through the cracks, and graciously facilitates communication among many various individuals and groups, both within and outside the church.

Betsey Stevens, Minister Emerita, has participated in some of our large worship services, and made sure I have been apprised of First Church and Parish's long-standing traditions. We are indebted to the leadership that resulted in a successful Fall Fair (even with torrents of rain) and Holly Fair. The Stewardship Committee is seeing the growing results of its efforts (and musical encouragement). Vicky Berg, chairing the Church Council, and Debbie Harrison, chairing the Committee on Ministry, have worked hard and provided opportunities to brainstorm new activities for the congregation. Chris Threthewey has led the Community Network and helped Judy and me be aware of members of the congregation needing pastoral attention. Tyler Carpenter continues to work tirelessly as both web master and network guru and producer of the *Parish Record*. Margaret Winchester has given good leadership to the Worship and Music Committee. The ministerial Search Committee is hard at work gathering input from the congregation. Sam King does more than yeoman work in helping to keep our ancient buildings afloat – serving as repairman, answerman, and improviser to find solutions to what seem impossible problems. Peter Elefterakis helps make sure we do not lose our social conscience. This translates not only into letter writing but informs the entire spectrum of ways in which First Church and Parish provides continuing support to the Dedham Food Pantry, the UU Urban Ministry, among others, and all the recipients of the 'Share the Plate' program. The Women's Alliance has always been and continues to be such an important presence in the church, celebrating its 125th year this spring – not only as a financial contributor to the life of the church, but as a contributor to our worship and our spiritual life in a

myriad of ways.

There are many others in the congregation who also volunteer much time and effort. It has been a pleasure to work with everyone this year. Therefore, it is not surprising that the pervading atmosphere is hopeful and expectant as you look forward to next year and your search for a settled minister.

I would first like to briefly capture some of the more significant general accomplishments and events of the year.

Value Analysis workshops were held with both the Parish Committee and Deacons and the congregation as a whole. These workshops provided an opportunity to reflect on a number of areas important to the congregation, to make consensus-based judgments about values and goals, and to begin to develop a strategy for what actions the congregation should take to define its future direction and mission. The workshops resulted in a number of specific action items, many of which have already been achieved.

The Parish Committee and Deacons have approved, in principle, a Safe Church Policy. There will be opportunities for discussion and any needed refinements of this policy before it is voted on for approval at the congregational meeting in the fall.

Parish leadership was given a Guide to Committees developed by the Interim Minister. This guide helped define the general purpose of committees, methods of record keeping, a distribution of tasks and responsibilities within the Parish Committee, purposes and tasks of selected major committees, a checklist for conducting effective meetings, and a process for self-evaluation.

The Interim Minister met with the new ministerial Search Committee to provide general guidance on the process and help the committee review the characteristics, tasks, and skills that the congregation wishes to see in a settled minister.

Under the guidance of Andrea Gilmore, First Church and Parish has developed a plan for needed renovations to the Meeting House that will take place this summer.

The Interim Minister developed a number of worship service themes and sermons in response to specific requests from the congregation. These included worship services on Personal Spirituality, UU History, Spirituality in a Religiously Diverse World, and Celtic Religion.

The Committee on Ministry and the Interim Minister's Cajun and Zydeco Band, **mes amis**, provided an evening of socialization, food, and dance.

The Interim Minister continued the importance of making pastoral visits – especially to older members of the congregation, and those who were ill or restricted to home or assisted living facilities.

The Worship and Music Committee under the leadership of Margaret Winchester has been meeting regularly to provide an opportunity for continuous feedback and improvement of worship services, and to ensure that worship and the music program is meeting the congregation's needs.

The Interim Minister has been meeting regularly with the Membership Committee to develop various strategies for congregational growth and to increase the visibility of First Parish in the community. The Membership Committee put together an excellent proposal to receive a Woburn Grant; a reconsideration of this proposal by the Mass Bay District is being urged.

The Director of Religious Education and the Interim Minister meet frequently to discuss worship services in which the children are involved, other aspects of the RE program, and ways to seek new members with children. Susan has a wealth of good ideas. Stay tuned for next year.

The Interim Minister is working with the Community Network to explore ways to broaden participation in its work by more members of the congregation.

The following is an update on Value Analysis Action Items and work yet to be done.

Goal 3. Action 1. (Develop a working Guide to Committees that describes the major responsibilities of each committee, its officers, term limits, and other needed information about the work of each committee and its interrelationship with other committees.) *Beppy Martin and Sarah Person agreed to drive this effort. Rob has sent them a draft of Guide to Committees to provide descriptions of the nature of committee work and responsibilities in greater detail than currently exists.*

Goal 8. Action 1. (Create a Wayside Pulpit and other signage on the Church Green to advertise events going on at First Church and Parish.) *Natalie Jensen and Eileen Sullivan have accomplished erection of a Wayside Pulpit. Work on an Event Sign is still in progress.*

Goal 8. Action 2. (Develop a Fair Trade project oriented toward youth culture and youth participation, similar to ones that exist in Brockton or in conjunction with the UUSC). *Della Lawhon-Schneider is driving this effort and making good progress.*

Goal 8. Action 3. (Create a meaningful church-wide social action project for the year or for a special day event in which there is wide congregational involvement. Such a project might be done in conjunction with the UU Urban Ministry or possibly involve tutoring or mentoring activities. One or more worship services will be integrated with this project, emphasizing the spiritual dimension of the needs it addresses. There will be a write-up of project activities in the local newspaper as a way of making First Church and Parish activities more visible to the community.) *Carol Hutton is driving this effort, and when her plate is slightly less full, will be able to give it more time.*

Goal 6. Action 1. (Try out a ‘Joys and Sorrows’ segment in the worship service to occur after the Announcements on the first Sunday of the month. A condition of participation will be that this is understood as a time for personal sharing and not political announcements. This will begin when the church has obtained a hand-held wireless mic in the same frequency as one of the lapel mics so that the existing wireless system can be used.) *Rob will begin this on a trial basis one Sunday a month in the fall.*

Goal 6. Action 2. (Try reducing the number of cushions in the pews of the Meeting House to encourage people to sit more closely together.) *Jeff Hutton and Carol Ewing will drive this effort.*

Goal 6. Action 3. (Place a ‘Call Book’ in the vestibule to the Meeting House so the minister or appropriate committee chair can be made aware of someone who would like to receive a call.) *Carol Hutton has this on her list of her many tasks.*

Goal 7. Action 1. (Create an adult discussion group looking to share an opportunity for spiritual exploration.) *Rob will organize such a group after a worship service this spring, and continue this in the fall.*

Goal 7. Action 2. (Start a Meditation Group). *Carol Hutton has begun a Meditation Group that*

meets on Thursdays.

Goal 7. Action 3. (Rework the Pledge Card so that it can include questions directed at determining the spiritual interests of individuals as well as an indication of time-commitments people can make in providing direct services for the needs of the congregation in addition to their financial pledge.) *Eileen Sullivan and Judy Barrington have accomplished this.*

Goal M. Action 1. (The model of a Caring Community described in a newsletter this fall is the basis of a way to widen participation in the caring work of a congregation by broadening the kinds of tasks and ‘caring acts’ needed both within the congregation and in the community,) *Rob has met with Vicky Berg, Doug Howell, and Chris Threthewey to work toward putting this model into effect. The survey created by Vicky Berg will be reissued to help match volunteers with needs.*

Goal 1. Action 1. (Establish a Finance Committee as a standing committee.) *No one has signed up to drive this effort.*

A number of individuals were unable to participate in scheduled Value Analysis workshops but wished to provide input to that process. The following summarizes the thoughts of Doug Howell and several others.

A number of people expressed the wish to find ways of distinguishing what is unique about First Church and Parish – apart from its history. This might be expressed in a statement, a visual symbol, or in terms of the kinds of social outreach programs First Church and Parish makes available to the community.

Recognizing that older members tend to stick together, it will become increasingly important for the health of the congregation to create activities and social events that allow interaction among people of all ages. One thought is that older members might be able to provide a mentoring role for the children who are ‘coming of age.’ Another suggestion was that the church could make a more deliberate effort to reach out to older residents in Dedham and develop programs that would encourage them to become involved in the life of First Church and Parish, and possibly eventually become members.

Many felt that it is important for the Dedham community to come to know First Church and Parish as a place where people *care*. Demonstrating this might involve programs to help troubled families – families with divorce, drug, or behavior problems. The idea is that the spiritual life of First Church and Parish should be seen as addressing ‘things that matter’. One individual pointed out that several members of the First Church and Parish congregation possess mediating skills, and suggested that an appropriate mechanism should be found to use them.

Some notable social highlights of the year include the church festivals and special worship services – Ingathering, the candle-light Christmas Eve service, a dialogue service, and Easter Sunday among them. The performance of Amahl and the Night Visitors under the amazing direction of Diane Winchester was especially a time of excitement and cooperative effort during December.

I have enjoyed the opportunity to bring a little of the music and culture of Southwest Louisiana into the context of worship. A few additional personal highlights include my participation with the Massachusetts Corps of Fire Chaplains and the Bristol-Norfolk County Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Team. I am re-certifying as a Massachusetts EMT and continue to teach a course in the Religious Studies Program at the University of Massachusetts – Boston, where I am also scheduled to teach an experimental course on Intelligent Design, in the area of Science and Religion. Teaching these courses has allowed me to bring new material to topics for worship and preaching at

First Church and Parish. In November, I was invited to present a paper at the American Academy of Religion (AAR) Annual Meeting in Philadelphia entitled *Marriage, State, and Equality*. I have also been invited to present a paper at the AAR Annual Meeting in Washington next November in the Ethics Section entitled *From NOLA to Springfield: Ethics, Race, and Urban Reconstruction in a post-Katrina World*. Finally, in this year's 24th Annual Run of the Charles, I placed 2nd in the 9 mile kayak class race.

There is work that remains to be accomplished for First Church and Parish this year and next. Thoughts on this work are the following:

Church attendance and membership must grow. While a number of new families have been attending this year, this only begins to balance the number of members who have either passed on or moved away to different parts of the country. As the congregation plans for its future with a new settled minister, its growth must expand and the visibility of First Church and Parish in the local community increase.

A 'committee poster board zone' in the Dining Hall during coffee hour would help update current members on the recent work of various committees. This would also give potential new members a feel for the life of the church and make them aware of opportunities for their participation.

The congregation can benefit by exploring additional social events – not simply for the purpose of increasing membership or fund-raising, but because such events help create a more genuine family atmosphere. Combining a more visible family atmosphere with a newly-enhanced Community Network program should set this congregation in good stead for its needed growth.

Considerable work to eliminate ambiguities in the existing Church and Parish by-laws is needed.

UU congregations in the larger towns of Eastern Massachusetts have a special obligation to serve as a locus of inter-cultural, inter-ethnic, inter-racial dialogue and communication in those communities. Festivals of art, music, dance, food, crafts, etc. are one means to initiate such communication and contact of various cultural groups with one another. First Church and Parish should consider events it might sponsor to demonstrate how this congregation is a spiritual resource to the community.

Rites of passage at which I have officiated.

Child Dedications:	1 (in June)
Funerals and Memorial Services:	4

It has truly been a pleasure to serve as your Interim Minister this year. I look forward very much to the future and next year.

Rob

DEDHAM BRANCH ALLIANCE

STAR Island

SUMMER 2006

**THE ALLIANCE WILL CONTRIBUTE TOWARD
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FOR A ONE WEEK PROGRAM**



**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT
Janet Hurwitz or Judy Barrington, Co-Presidents**

**OR OTHER BOARD MEMBERS:
Pam Aist, Jenny Chamberlain, Mel Chaplin
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