



The Parish Record

The First Church and Parish in Dedham

www.dedhamuu.org

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December, 2008

Sundays in the Meeting House

Calendar

Holly Fair: December 6, 9:00

Christmas Eve: December 24
6:00: Carol Singing on the
Meeting House Steps
6:30: Candlelight Service

Also in December...

Parish Committee: December 2, 7:00
Parents' Night Out: December 11, 5:30
CAKES: December 19, 6:30
Youth Group: Sundays: 6:00
Skeptics' Christmas: Mondays: 6:30
Meditation: Thursdays: 7:30

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

December 7, 10:00 AM

The Rev. Earl K. Holt III will preach.

This is the Hanging of the Greens Sunday. Children will start in the Meeting House and be sung to Pageant Rehearsal.

The Rev. Earl Holt and the Rev. Rali Weaver will be exchanging pulpits this Sunday. The Rev. Earl Holt is the 15th Minister of King's chapel. Prior to his call to King's Chapel Earl Holt served 27 years as Minister of the First Unitarian Church of St. Louis. A native of New England and life-long Unitarian, he grew up in Concord, New Hampshire, and graduated from Brown University in 1967. Among many denominational responsibilities, he served as Chairman of the Board of Starr King School for the Ministry, Berkeley, California, where he received his M. Div. in 1972 and which awarded him an honorary doctorate during the School's centennial in 2004. He recently completed a term as Chair of the UUA Commission on Appraisal, which presented its latest quadrennial Report, Engaging our Theological Diversity, at the 2005 General Assembly in Fort Worth. The Rev. Holt broadcasts a weekly radio commentary Sunday mornings at 8 o'clock on WCRB 99.5 FM.

The Rev. Rali Weaver will preach at Morning Prayer at King's Chapel.

December 14, 10:00:

Christmas Pageant: "Would You Like to Hold the Baby"

The pageant is an inter-generational experience. Everyone has a little part. It has all the elements of a regular pageant: a story, singing, costumes, a little chaos, and sweet moments. Please note we will have a rehearsal Saturday, December 13th at 9:00 AM.

December 21, 10:00 AM: "Midwinter"

The Rev. Rali Weaver will preach.

Children are invited to bring their parents and stay for the entire worship.

This Winter Solstice begins on at 7:04 am on this day. To usher in this new season we will explore various cultural interpretations of this season of shortening days and lengthening nights and usher it in with intention. Joys and Concerns will be offered during worship.

December 28, 10:00 AM: "Blue Christmas"

The Rev. Rali Weaver will preach.

Children will start in the Meeting House and be sung to a special activity in the Parish House.

The time between Christmas and New Year's is often a poignant time of year. Remembering where we were in years before and where we wish we were today can sometimes leave us feeling blue. This Sunday we will take time to acknowledge Christmas past and our wishes for future Christmases in the hope of opening our hearts to our Christmas present.

From Our Minister:

Spirit (spir'it) *n.* **1.** The animating or life giving principle within a living being; soul. **2.** The part of a human being associated with the mind and feelings as distinguished from the physical body. **3.** The real sense or significance of something. **4.** A person. **5.** A prevailing mood or attitude: *a spirit of rebellion.* (The American Heritage Dictionary, p. 658)

I don't know how to say this delicately so I will just get right to the point. I have a rash. It is on my neck and I find it rather annoying. The rash is caused by a food allergy and while most of the time I can avoid the foods that I am allergic to, during the Thanksgiving Holiday I completely blew it. I didn't just eat foods I am not supposed to I also stayed up later and did not take good care of my spirit. This is bad news for me because stress can aggravate a rash as easily as food can. The red welts and bumps on my neck act as though they were a great big thermometer reminding me how connected my mind is to my body and my body to my spirit. In the case of my food allergy the things I eat play a direct part in the pain and suffering I experience. As some of you know I am also allergic to pine and when I encounter it my eyes swell up and I have trouble breathing. My mental attitude and reaction to the rash and breathing troubles can make me feel much worse and exacerbate my symptoms. I know most diagnoses are not this cut and dry. Still, how we feel emotionally and spiritually definitely affects our physical bodies because our bodies and our spirits are intricately intertwined. I figure if I can't make this darn rash go away over night I can at least learn to embrace the message that it is trying to teach me.

I deeply appreciate the efforts of this parish to help me avoid the things I am allergic to by excluding pine from flower arrangements and by hanging alternative greens in the Meeting House. I know there are other people with allergies in our parish as well. In a Parish this size it may seem both complicated and nearly impossible to meet the special needs of every eater and breather. Yet because our minds and bodies and spirits are intricately intertwined it is essential as a religious community that we strive to meet our collective needs. To this end I hope that we will all try to avoid not only Pine in arrangements and decorations but peanuts and tree nuts and sesame seeds in all of our Social Hour and Event food. Thank you so much for your care and consideration of both your own and your neighbor's spirit. If you have an allergy that others can be sensitive to we ask that you notify the office.

Here is wishing us all a happy and HEALTHY and Happy Holiday Season and New Year ahead.

Rali

Focus on Religious Education

We have had a great month in church school. It is a pleasure to welcome new families to our church school program. Thanks to everyone who helped with Cool Deeds in October and November. The children raised \$81.51 for UNICEF in October. In November we did Cool Deeds that help the church (bulb planting, card making and improving our recycling system). A special thank you to Emma Lane who helped me move and reorganize our RE supplies. During the next few weeks our schedule will be a little different as we prepare for the Holiday Season. Even though we will be doing more large group activities, we will start always begin our mornings in the Meeting House. We will also provide the opportunity for the pre-school children to play in their classroom.

On **Sunday, November 23rd** we will have our Family Thanksgiving Service. There will be no church school but nursery care will be available.

On **Sunday, November 30th**, we will have an Advent Crafts morning. During this time we will make crafts that can be sold at the Holly Fair and something to bring home. This is always an exciting morning however many volunteers are needed to make it a fun time for all.

On **Sunday, December 7th**, we will prepare for our Christmas pageant. The pageant will be “Do You Want To Hold the Baby?”. It is an intergenerational pageant with minimal costuming and opportunities for adults to participate.

There will be a one hour rehearsal for the pageant on **Saturday, December 13th at 9 am**. *The pageant will be performed as part of the service on Sunday, December 14th.*

On **Sunday, December 21st**, there will be an Intergenerational Winter Solstice Celebration. This will be a family service, no church school but nursery care will be available.

There will be no church school on **December 28th** and we will be back to our curriculum on **January 4th**.

If you haven't had a chance to help with Religious Education this year this is a great time to volunteer. We need lots of helpers on November 30th and December 7th. Please sign up to help on the yellow poster on the Religious Education Bulletin Board in the hallway, or contact the church office, Rali or me.

We will be offering a ***Parent's Night Out*** on **Thursday, December 11th from 5:30 to 7:30 pm**. We will provide some relaxed activities for the children. It would be best if your child could eat dinner before they arrive. There will be a sign-up sheet on the table for Parent's Night Out. Please sign up so we have enough adult helpers.

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Focus on Religious Education

There will be opportunities to give back to the community during the holidays. We have a **Gift Tree** which allows us to provide Christmas gifts for children and moms at the Renewal House Women's Shelter. Information will be available at coffee hour on November 30th. You are also invited to bring mittens, hats, or scarves for the Mitten Tree on Sunday, December 21st. These items will be donated to Renewal House.

This is a lot of information and I am a little tired from writing it all down. The holidays are a wonderful time at First Church. Over the years, these activities have provided my family with wonderful memories and a deepened meaning of the Christmas season. I wish the same to your family.

Help Needed:

- Sign up at coffee hour to be a nursery volunteer. Help our nursery director, Adeline Farrell with our littlest First Church friends.
- Volunteers needed to help with November 30th. Advent Crafts Day and December 7th. Pageant Preparation.

Looking Ahead:

November 23rd Thanksgiving Family Service – No church school
November 30th Advent Crafts Day
December 7th Pageant Prep
December 11th Parent's Night Out, Thursday, 5:30-7:30 pm
December 13th Pageant Rehearsal, Saturday 9 am
December 14th Pageant
December 21st Intergenerational Winter Solstice Celebration
December 28th No Church School

Carol Dixon
Chair, Religious Education Committee

All Around the Church Community

Dedham Food Pantry Volunteers

There is a change in the dates for First church to staff the pantry for 2009. Normally we have done a volunteering four Saturdays in March. The Pantry volunteer coordinator is new and had some of the slots filled. Our new dates are:

January 17
January 24
March 21
May 16

The Dedham Food pantry relies on volunteers to help with the clients shopping on Saturday mornings 8:30 to 11:00 am. With the need going up we are looking for 5 volunteers. Older students are welcome to come and help with the clients bags and other jobs as needed. This good if you need Community Service credits.

The Pantry is located at St John's Methodist Church in Oakdale Center. See Pam Aist or Janet Hurwitz for more information.

Look for signup sheets for the January dates. We love to have your help.

Pam Aist

Coming to a Church Near You: The Service Auction!

On February 7, 2009, First Church will be holding one of our most popular fund raisers: the Service Auction.

For those unfamiliar with this event, it's quite simple. Everyone in the church community is encouraged to donate a service that is then auctioned off to the highest bidder with the proceeds going to benefit the work of the church. Services range from the use of a vacation home, doing yard work, babysitting, cooking gourmet meals or hosting a boat cruise. Items such as gift certificates to movies or spas, airline miles or gift baskets are also welcomed as donations.

The evening of the auction is a fun filled gathering centered on a delicious dinner cooked by Andrea Gilmore and entertainment from our high-energy auctioneers.

So mark it on your calendar—Saturday., February 7. You won't want to miss it!

All Around the Church Community

Meditation Group

The Meditation Group will begin again in January. The group will focus on a book written by Pema Chodron, called *When Things Fall Apart*. The book has short chapters, 5 to 6 pages, which could be the focus of each meditation session. The book can be purchased through Amazon or through Shambala Press. Please let me know if you are interested or call the church office. We will meet on Thursdays at 7pm beginning January 8th.

Carol Dixon

Volunteers Needed for Parent's Night Out

Calling "Empty Nesters" and "Those Who Yearn to Be Grandparents"! We will be having a Parent's Night Out on December 11th, from 5:30 to 7:30 pm. We need adult helpers to read stories, bake cookies, and hang out with the kids. Please sign up at coffee hour.

Thanks,

Carol Dixon

Winter Walk Through the Frozen Wilds of Dedham

I'm planning a walk through the frozen wilds of Dedham. The walk will take us from the church to Wilson Mountain traveling on the fewest roads possible and returning by a different route. The key to this walk is cold cold weather as we will be walking over several marshes that need to be frozen for successful traverse.

If your feeling hale and hearty this winter plan to join me for a three hour walk in the woods. Ideally we could make this small trek in late December or early January when the ponds have frozen but before any big snow. It all depends on the weather. It might be that the weather won't cooperate and the plan will bust for this year. But we could be lucky and have a great walk. You could see parts of Dedham you never knew were there.

So if your ready for a winter walk, be prepared to decide on a few days notice cause when everything starts to freeze we will only have a few days notice for the winter walk.

If your interested or want to know more send me your e-mail address. It just might be a way to simplify your life for a few hours.

Jeff Hutton
jhutton@bu.edu

All Around the Church Community: Parish Players News

The Parish Players are pleased to announce their 2009 production, "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown!". The performances will take place on March 13,14 and 15. Auditions will be held on Sunday, January 4th and as always everyone is invited to join us.

Also, I would like to give a big thank you to everyone who took the time to fill out a Parish Players survey last spring! Here is a sampling of the results. A more complete report will soon be available on the Parish Players web page at www.dedhamuu.org, and paper copies can be provided upon request.

36 of our 40 respondents were members of First Church. 72.5% were involved in "The Wizard of Oz" as performers or off-stage support, 20% attended the show and 7.5% (3 people) did not participate in any way. Their answers to some of the survey questions:

Was this year's Parish Player's production positive for you?

Agree strongly	65%
Agree	20%
Undecided or did not respond	12.5%
Disagree	0%
Disagree Strongly	2.5%

Was this year's Parish Player's production positive for First Church?

Agree strongly	57.5%
Agree	32.5%
Undecided or did not respond	7.5%
Disagree	0%
Disagree Strongly	2.5%

Do you think the work of the Parish Players supports the unison affirmation of the church?

Agree strongly	42.5%
Agree	37.5%
Undecided or did not respond	12.5%
Disagree	2.5%
Disagree Strongly	5%

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All Around the Church Community: Parish Players News

The answers to the open-response questions were uniformly positive. All comments will be posted on the web page, but the following sample is a good example of the kind of responses we received:

“I think the Parish Players is a way to engage the entire church in one way or another and help people meet one another.”

“I Love the productions that involve all generations and whole families.”

“I was incredibly impressed with the level of production and participation with the Wizard of Oz, as was everyone that I know who attended...both family and friends. It was very enjoyable and I will definitely participate again in a Parish Players production.”

“I love that it involves folks of ALL ages. In doing so, it creates a very cool, multi-generations community that I believe is at the core of what First Church offers its members. Parish Players also encourages people to take risks, to put themselves out there a bit; and it provides a context that is safe and fun in which to take these risks. Lastly, my sense was that there was positive energy in the air from the start of auditions through the last show. I helped with the show in only a very small way (not big enough to warrant a check mark above), but as someone who was attending church regularly throughout the Oz season, I can report that the show seemed to energize the place in a very positive way. ”

There were several thoughtful recommendations for improvement. Several people requested better ticketing procedures, which has been at the top of our list since the last Sunday matinee! We will also look at ways to raise the visibility of First Church and it's programs for the visitors who attend our productions.

There were some questions about Parish Players financial contributions to First Church. Over the years the Parish Players program has made many improvements to First Church's facilities. These include electrical upgrades, new stage drapes and lights. In the past year Parish Players funds have purchased a piano dolly for the grand piano in the dining room, a second rolling rack for the new chairs purchased by the Alliance, and a set of the latest UUA hymnal “Singing the Journey” for the choir. We will continue to examine all the ways in which we can support First Church.

Although the survey has concluded we still welcome comments and constructive suggestions about ways to improve the Parish Players. If you would prefer to remain anonymous you can leave a note in the Parish Players mailbox.

Natalie Jensen

From the First Church Greening Committee

Living Simply For The Holidays

As some of you know my sister has eight children. As they have been growing older and begun getting married Christmas has become increasingly more complicated, expensive and chaotic. Part of the problem as I see it, has been that my sisters and I grew up believing that Christmas was all about the presents. As children and youth my sisters and I would play games of trying to open the last present or argue over who had the largest present. With that in mind just imagine the chaos of trying to fit gifts for 8 children and 8 or more adults under the Christmas tree each year and then trying to pay full attention while they are opened.

To solve this problem of excess and chaos we began with trying all the usual methods of simplifying. We reduced the number of gifts we were each giving by exchanging names. Then we limited the fiscal amounts we were allowed to spend. We tried giving only to 'families' and then only to 'children'. Last year we finally landed upon a solution I thought we could all live with. We agreed to give to charity in the name of anyone 18 and older and only continued giving gifts to the children under 18.

Because my younger sister and her family are Fundamentalist Christians this solution to give to charity for the more adult members of our family seemed to fit her family well because it reflects her priority to have our Christmas celebration mirror in some way the generosity of birth of Jesus.

Unfortunately, because we do not all have the same theological reasons for celebrating at this time of year and because my older sister is in graduate school, she expressed that she would prefer it if do not exchange gifts at all this year.

This started me wondering what Christmas might be like with no gifts at all. Certainly that would simplify things completely. And yet, in my mind Christmas without gifts would be, well it would be - Thanksgiving. Since this season of year has always been about giving and about laying up stores for the winter celebrating with no gifts of any kind seems to miss the mark.

In the end I am pretty sure that living simply for the holidays has absolutely nothing to do with what we give or how much we give or who we give to. Instead, living simply for the holidays has everything to do with giving from the heart.

Now you can wrap your packages in brown paper, or give something recycled that you picked up at the Trading Post at the Holly Fair or bring nothing but the gift our your presence-- but what will make it the most special Holiday Season of all time is if it does not come from your head but comes from your heart. Let us all strive to turn our heads away from the hype and the excessive expectations of the holidays and live more simply amidst the true generosity that comes from listening to the simple directives that come from our own heart.

A Simply Happy Holiday to you!

Minutes of the Parish Committee Meeting October 7, 2008

Present: Judy Barrington, Audrey Cecil, Carol Dixon, Dan Ewing, Claudia Leone, Jeff Hutton, Kerry Matthews, Alison Staton, Eileen Sullivan, Rev. Rali Weaver

Meeting called to order at 7:06pm

Opening words by Dan Ewing

Minutes of September 9, 2008 – Motion made to approve the minutes of our last meeting. Second, motion carried.

Ministers Report

Rali Weaver submitted the minister's report both orally and in writing. In September, church attendance averaged 45-50 people. Positive comments have been received about having the children join the congregation at the start of each service. We have begun using Constant Contact as an email service. We will be considering the idea of working on becoming a Welcoming Congregation. Rali attended the Dedham Clergy Meeting and reports the clergy are working on finding further ways to work together in the coming year. Two new members signed the membership book. **The Parish Committee would like to welcome Jennifer Greaney and Michael Roberts to the congregation.**

Role and Function of the Parish Committee

We discussed the pros and cons of having a Parish Committee retreat this Fall to clarify the role and function of our work. A decision was made to schedule a retreat on November 22, 2008 from 10 – 4pm. The facilitator and space will be provided for free by the UUA because we are a Fair Share Congregation.

Treasurers Report

Dan Ewing presented the final reconciliation of last year's budget as well as the 2008-2009 projected budget.

The date of the Congregational Meeting has been set for 10/26/08. The Treasurer's Report, the Deacon's Report, and the Auditor's Report will be presented. A Warrant for the meeting will be posted one week in advance of the meeting. Also included in the warrant will be a statement inquiring about the level of Parish support for proceeding with the Welcoming Congregation process.

Religious Education

Carol Dixon reports that Sunday School has started and is going well. The classrooms are all set up and it is nice to have permanent space for classes. R.E. is still looking for one more teacher in the pre-school class and the nursery can always use more volunteers. Child participation in the church service has been positive. It seems to be generating a stronger sense of community. A thank you was extended to Carol Dixon for coordinating the R.E. program as we continue to search for an R.E. Director.

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Building Use Committee

Sam King was not present but his committee notes were read by Alison Staton. A Building and Grounds meeting will be held on 10/16/08 at 7:30pm. All are welcome.

- Electrician, John Gallagher, reports that we do have circuits on the green.
- An application will be made for a Woburn Grant through the UUA to fund building needs.
- There will be a discussion about concert readiness of the Meeting House.

Alison Staton presented draft documents regarding building usage including: 1) Application for Use of Space, 2) Fee Schedule, and 3) Guidelines for Use. These were reviewed and discussed. Final drafts will be presented at the next meeting. We will also address issues of how to advertise the availability of the space.

Fund Raising

- The Yard Sale in September earned \$649.
- Fall Fair will take place this coming weekend.
- February is the tentative date for a Service Auction.

We need to keep in mind that our goal is to raise \$10,000 over the course of the church year. Divided into 10 increments, that means that we are targeting raising approximately \$1,000 per month.

New Business

Jeff Hutton spoke about a new foundation in Dedham having to do with music. (Lessons, concerts, etc.) As this organization grows, perhaps they will become interested in renting space from First Church for their activities.

Next meeting will be November 11,, 2008

Meeting was adjourned at 8:45pm

Respectfully submitted,

Audrey H. Cecil