



The Parish Record

The First Church and Parish in Dedham

www.dedhamuu.org

Volume CXXVI, No. 17

May 31, 2006

Calendar

June

- 6, Tuesday, COM Meeting
- 10, Saturday, 9:00 AM Annual Spring Yard Sale
- 11, Sunday, 10:00: Last service before the summer break
- 11, Sunday, Noon: Annual Church Picnic

Sundays in the Meeting House

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.

June 11, 10:00 AM: A Flower Communion. The sermon will be "A History of the Flower Communion" by Rev. Dr. Robert R. N. Ross.

The church will be closed on Sundays during the Summer, but we will have our first service of the year on September 11, 2006.

The Parish Record is published monthly.
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The deadline for submissions for the summer issue of the Parish Record this year is July 16, and for the first issue of next year will be August 27. Send notices directly by e-mail to:

tylercarpenter@dedhamuu.org or
call me with questions: 617-816-9728.

Focus on Religious Education

When do we meet:

Sunday, June 4th – Dedication Service, no classes (other than OWL), but children are welcome. OWL meets from 10 to 12. This will be the last class of the year for everyone.

Sunday, June 11th – Closing Sunday, Annual Picnic ☺.

Empty Bowls:

We sold all of our bowls and are waiting for the final count from Needham. So far we have raised \$200 for the Dedham Food Pantry. Thanks for your support!

Susan Sennott, Director of Religious Education

All Around the Church Community

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. Please talk to one of the folks on the Membership Committee this Sunday and let them know how you can help out.

Thanks,

The Membership Committee

Amnesty International

A big thank you to all who wrote letters and holiday cards for amnesty this year.

They include the following:

Pam Aist, Judy Barrington, Vicky Berg, Milo Carpenter, Simone Carpenter, Tyler Carpenter, Audrey Cecil, Carrie Cecil, Carol Dixon Hutton, Meg Duncan, Bob Estes, Carol Ewing, Andrea Gilmore, Deb Harrison, Richard Helligers, Tam Helligers, Betsy Hetzler, Virginia Hickey, David Hurwitz, Jeff Hutton, Natalie Jensen, Sam King, Sharon Lane, Della Lawhon Schneider, Natasha Lawhon Schneider, Claudia Leone, Beppy Martin, Fran McBrian, Sarah Persons, Lynn Rogal, Wally Savory, Susan Sennott, Alison Staton, Eileen Sullivan and Diane Winchester

See you in September

Peter Elefterakis

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

An open letter to First Church

To all of the friends I've made in this church community during the past 20 years:

Included in the last issue of the Parish Record was the "Minister's Annual Report". It included an update on Value Analysis Action Items and one in particular caught my eye – Goal M. Action 1--discussed the "model of a Caring Community" and spoke of "broadening the ...'caring acts' needed...within the congregation." It also included this statement: "Many felt that it is important for the Dedham community to come to know First Church and Parish as a place where people care".

These lofty and estimable goals come as something of a surprise to me considering the behavior that Phil and I have been subjected to over the last year. After over twenty years of dedicated service and enthusiastic participation in First Church we have stayed away because it has become quite clear that our presence is unwelcome.

What has made us so unpopular? We disagree with decisions made and actions taken by the Parish Committee. In his role as Deacon, Phil has been persistent in voicing his objections. This has angered some and created ill-will. Phil has been told repeatedly that, he should "go away" if he doesn't agree. He's been subjected to insults and physical intimidation.

I came under attack also at the Cottage meeting that I attended at Eileen Sullivan's house. I was jeered at and also told to "go away", "just leave" and to "stick it in my ear". This behavior was by three individuals, all holding positions of responsibility within our community.

I felt compelled to speak up about my treatment during the Annual Meeting, but I was "cut off" by the moderator before I could complete my statement. Also, as I was attempting to speak, I was again jeered at by one of the individuals who had done so at the Cottage meeting.

I agree with the following statement also found in the "Minister's Annual Report": "The idea is that the spiritual life of First Church and Parish should be seen as addressing 'things that matter'." Do the actions I have described matter? Do they reflect the general feeling of the First Church community that Phil and I are better off just disappearing? Sympathetic voices have counseled me that it is "not worth it" and we should look for a new "church home". Do members of the First Church family become disposable if their presence makes some uncomfortable?

My question is: what is the purpose of existing as a religious community if it is not to protect the welfare of all of its members? It is common to have disagreements and disputes within any group or association. It is my feeling that the way these problems are handled is of utmost importance at First Church because it is a religious community. If we are to claim adherence to principles of tolerance, democratic process, search for truth and respect for the dignity and worth of each individual, then how can we justify both the abusive behavior of a few and the silent acquiescence of the rest.

We didn't attend any of the Value Analysis meetings, but I would like to add one more "action item" to the list. Looking at this statement from the Minister's Report; "A number of people expressed the wish to find ways of distinguishing what is unique about First Church and Parish..." Is it possible for the First Church community to learn from experience, to admit its shortcomings and work to restore a sense of caring among all its members? If we cannot at least strive to live up to our "principles" there is little to distinguish ourselves as a community much less one that is "spiritual" or "religious".

Respectfully,
Mel Chaplin

