

BRIDGING

Newsletter of the First Parish Church, Bridgewater, MA, Unitarian Universalist January 2015

From the Minister...

"One or Two Things I've Learned"

These have been a few difficult and draining months in my personal life. There's a bit of a twist when emergencies occur in the life of a minister, who is often called upon to accompany others when trouble comes. At the same time, I've been discovering the many ways in which Deedee's and my experience have resonances with most of the other people in our lives.

Emergencies test our mettle as individuals, as families, and as congregations. They bring the nature of our relationships into stark relief, and they test our faith. Deedee's condition had gone undiagnosed for almost three months. A variety of diagnoses were suggested, but none of the suggested treatments – including just waiting out flu or the like – gave any relief. The real diagnosis – cancer – emerged on a Sunday morning at 4:30 a.m. in the emergency room. The physician in the ER had advised that I go home around midnight as it would take most of the night to get to a CT scan; so in the event Deedee was alone when she got the diagnosis.

The "C" word evokes a vast web of associations in each of us, but having to absorb such a diagnosis alone is vastly more difficult. Fortunately, I was able to get to the ER fairly soon after, and equally fortunately Rev. Rachel was able to cover that morning's service for me, so I was able to be with Deedee for most of the other critical events in the hospital. But, as Forrest Church notes in *Love and Death*, a diagnosis that may be fatal inevitably brings us face to face with our mortality, a confrontation that is inevitably also a test of faith – faith that we will be cared for, that our lives have mattered, and that we are loved.

For us, this time of crisis served to strengthen our ties to our families. Both our sons and Deedee's sister wanted to be with us during at least part of this time, and my brother was on the phone with me almost every day. Deedee & I were both brought to tears by our sons' faithfulness, strength and willingness to help. We experienced a kind of generational transition as we learned to call on them and trust that they could and would do what was needed. For the first time, they were the helpers and the responsible ones rather than we. Hopefully it will be many years before we will have to call on them in this way again, but we can be certain now that they will be there when we need them. Friends were equally forthcoming and generous in visiting, feeding and caring for us, many from afar.

And of course this congregation has been a huge support for both of us, sharing encouraging words but also the knowledge that these things come to us all, and that they can be survived. We are well aware how fortunate we are to have such a strong web of supportive connections to family, friends, and congregants.

As always, these crises have ironic impacts. They are the kinds of events you would never wish anyone (much less yourself) to have to live through, and yet afterwards they seem to take on a sort of glow. They seem in retrospect to have been valuable, affirming, worthwhile – something like the satisfaction we experience exertion of a hard run or an exceptionally difficult project. It's a bit odd, but I'm grateful that, despite the pain, there is also a certain pride of accomplishment mixed in with the relief of having come through the worst of the experience. And always there is gratitude at a successful outcome and above all in finding strength within ourselves and freely offered by those around us.

In Faith for the Journey,
Rev. Paul

Minister

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Kat Gillespie
Jan Thompson

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Peter Jacobson
Sonia D'Alarcao

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WORSHIP COMMITTEE NEWS

Worship Services:

The Theme of the Month: January's theme is Our Chosen Faith.

January 4 – with Rev. Paul Sprecher; Lay Worship Leader Scott Gillespie; Ushers Cindy Texeira & David Page

January 11 – with the First Principle Project; Lay Worship Leader Betty Gilson; Ushers Stefan Michaud & Bob Messing

January 18 – with Rev. Paul Sprecher; Lay Worship Leader Vernon Domingo; Ushers Mary Maruska & Rev. Rachel Tedesco

January 25 – with the Green Sanctuary Committee; Lay Worship Leader Sam Baumgarten & Janet Dye; Ushers Beth & Keir Manchester-Howell

If you cannot usher on your date, please try to find a substitute and let Mary Hatfield know as soon as possible. Call her at 508-378-3474.

More Notes about Worship:

Notice the new blue ceramic chalice on the altar? It's an 8 inch, classically designed flaming chalice. Certainly a lot more impressive and beautiful than the small glass one we had! It was purchased from UniUni, the on-line store for UU goods. The website describes these chalices as "engineered to be stable and enduring. They are fashioned on a potter's wheel from high fire stoneware ceramics." (www.shopuniuni.com)

Do you know why we generally don't clap during worship services? (Of course, we sometimes can't help but clap for our children!) That's because services are designed to be spiritual, thoughtful and uplifting, not performances. And the sound of clapping will disrupt the mood of worship. However, waving one's hands in the air in appreciation is an acceptable substitute.

One more note: When the children and youth are next door in the RE Program, we plan to stay in the Sanctuary until 11:30 a.m. even if a service ends earlier. If it ends well before 11:30, we may sing another hymn or have a brief discussion around an issue raised in the service.

The next Worship Committee meeting is Thursday, January 15 at 7:30 p.m. in the church office. Members and friends are cordially invited to attend.

MINISTER'S OFFICE HOURS

Rev. Paul is on site in Bridgewater on the second, third, and fourth Tuesday and Thursday of every month and the first, third (and fifth) Sundays of every month. On the first full week of the month, Rev. Paul is off. Also, staff meetings are held each Tuesday from 12:30 – 2:30pm.

All regular business should be handled before or after the first week. Emergencies of course come up, and he understands that. You can reach Rev. Paul by email (psprecher@uuma.org) phone (home: 781-210-2016, cell: 781-774-0086).

Your help in protecting his time is appreciated.



COMMITTEE COUNCIL

The next meeting of the Committee Council will be on

Tuesday, January 6, at 7:30,

in the UPH. A representative of each committee should attend.

Contact Sam Baumgarten with any questions.



The Brockton Interfaith Community December 20th Vigil & Beyond...

by Rev. Rachel Tedesco, Community Minister

On Saturday, December 20, four members of First Parish Bridgewater and friends attended a "Black Lives Matter" Vigil and Demonstration in downtown Brockton. Church members Vernon Domingo, Pete Jacobson, Jan Thompson and myself were among approximately 50 people who gathered at 10 a.m. in front of the Brockton Trial Court on Main Street. Orchestrated by BIC Organizers Isabel Lopez and Stanley Jean-Noel, we heard several speakers from the minority community. Some were from city-based minority churches, others were from a Brockton outreach program to youth. Also present were representatives of the Brockton NAACP, Boston City-Life and the Mass. Community Action Network (MCAN). I led a responsive reading, "Litany" by UU minister Rev. Becky Edmiston. The congregational refrain in this is "We are the light of the world." The crowd shouted back the refrain with enthusiasm.

After the demonstration, many from the group headed to Mt. Moriah Baptist Church on Pleasant Street, near the Brockton Fire Station. We marched up Main Street to Pleasant Street chanting in unison: "Hands Up, Don't Shoot", "Black Lives Matter" and "No justice! No peace! No racist police!" We weren't condemning all city police, just those who act in an unduly aggressive and disrespectful manner toward minorities, particularly young men. In the Mt. Moriah function hall, we introduced ourselves and shared our feelings about the rally. The focus was on our anger about injustice in the city and in American society in general and our hopes for change in the future. Besides police misconduct, much anger was expressed about a country which focuses on incarceration rather than education, social services, health care and employment.

Looking ahead, BIC is asking for several things of the city leaders:

- Regular meetings with top leadership in the Brockton Police Department to discuss the implementation and accountability of policies that lift up the dignity and equality of each individual, regardless of race, gender or nationality.
- A meeting with Mayor Bill Carpenter to discuss specific policies of how he is leading our city towards lifting up the dignity of all of its residents and visitors regardless of race, ethnicity, or economic status.
- That we as a community lift up our brothers and sisters, especially the youth and the next generation, as God calls us to love all our neighbors.
- That we all strive towards building a more blessed community where no member suffers from negative stigma, stereotypes, bigotry, prejudice, or racism due to the color of their skin.

On Thursday, January 8, there will be an organizing meeting at the BIC office to discuss these goals and the best strategies for reaching them. Speak to me if you would like to attend or for more information about BIC.

PLEASE JOIN US AS WE CELEBRATE THE NEW YEAR!



**NEW YEARS DAY OPEN HOUSE
THURSDAY, JANUARY 1, 2015
3-8PM**

**FRANK YEATMAN & EILEEN HINEY
316 SOUTH STREET
BRIDGEWATER
508-279-3955
fryleen@verizon.net**

children welcome

APCMA SHELTER FUNDRAISER

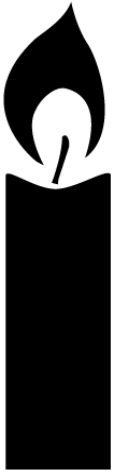
Thank you! From Clara Waterman-Rue, for your support of the APCMA animal shelter in Brockton. \$63 was raised at the Holly Day Faire biscuit/ornament/gift tag/note card table - and was used to purchase items from the shelter's "Wish List". These will be dropped off in January. If you have any BLANKETS to donate for the shelter, please bring them to the church in early January. Lisa Rue will take them for the shelter.

GREEN SANCTUARY COMMITTEE's Green Tip of the Month

Tis the season we enjoy the atmosphere and warmth of a candles. It's important to choose "green" candles.

Paraffin candles are made from Petroleum residue and are not good for your health or for the environmental. Candles made from soy, beeswax or natural vegetable based wax are more Eco friendly because they biodegrade and are smoke free.

Enjoy the ambiance of the season with a "green" candle.



SOCIAL JUSTICE MEETING

Thursday, January 8 at 7pm the full, Social Justice Committee will meet at First parish to exchange brief reports from the branches and to discuss plans for Justice Sunday in March. New members are welcome. Contact Betty Gilson gillyflowerverizon.net.

CARING COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, January 12 at 7pm a Caring Committee Meeting will be held at the home of Mary Hatfield. If you have a joy or concern to be addressed, contact a member of the committee.

Betty Gilson, Andrew Harding, Mary Hatfield, Louella Mann, Jan Thompson, Korin Zigler

WORSHIP SERVICE SUNDAY

Sunday, January 11 the First Principle Project will lead the morning worship service. The topic will be Where We've Been and Where We're Headed.

The Seven Principles are listed in the front of the gray hymnal. The First Principle reads: To affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person.



GUEST AT YOUR TABLE

Have you read all the stories in the GAYT Stories of Hope booklets? Have you read them and set aside money for your GAYT envelope?

Please convert your donation into a check made out to First Parish with UUSC/GAYT in the memo line and bring it to church by January 4. If you don't have an envelope, see Betty Gilson for one or equivalent directions.

Remember these membership levels for another banner church year: individual \$40, Dual \$75. Youth/student \$10, matching donation \$125.

ANGEL TREE SUCCESS

Thank you to everyone who took an ornament off the Angel Tree and purchased an item. You helped to make the holidays happier for so many. Angels in America was able to fulfill the wishes of 18 local families with the generosity of the folks of First Parish! Thank you!

MESSAGE OF SAFETY AND CONCERN

Much as we would like to believe that our beloved church building is safe from harm, it isn't always so. Please use care in leaving valuables around the church where they might be vulnerable and a temptation.

The Caring Committee

MAINSRING HOUSE LUNCHES

Monday, January 5 at 9am MainSpring House lunches will be made at First Parish. Donations and volunteers welcome. Contact Betty Gilson.

SHARE THE PLATE FOR JANUARY & FEBRUARY

Don't Forget Us... Pet Us is run and funded by two working moms. Don't Forget Us helps animals in need, often being an animal's LAST resource.

Description:

Don't Forget Us strives to make our animals second chance at life truly COUNT!!! We find ways to give back to our community and perhaps those places where comfort is needed most. Our animals have travelled to Newtown, CT, Short Term Crisis Shelters, Homeless Shelters, attended Hospice camps, and have reached out to South Coast Neediest Families.....all volunteer of course!!! To help offset the HUGE cost of the animals we provide Pony Rides/Mobile Petting Zoo For Parties and Events. We also have Pet Therapy for Nursing Homes, Hospices and private individuals. In addition, we provide educational programs in preschools and daycares where your students can become a Rescue Ranger! We ARE licensed with the USDA, all our animals are regulated and inspected by them on a regular basis.

Location- Dartmouth, MA

They are truly devoted to rescuing animals. They have animals from horses to goats to hamsters. No animal is too small. Although they are located in Dartmouth they clearly rescue animals from all over. They also provide services all over too...they have brought animals to some of the residential homes for adults with development disabilities operated by BAMSI. I believe their mission clearly aligns with the UU 7th principle and they do the work of "animal ministry."

More information: Their Facebook page is much better than their website. https://www.facebook.com/dontforgetuspetus?fref=pb&hc_location=profile_browser



Off the Common Coffeehouse

*Located in the Upper Parish Hall at First Parish Church
50 School Street, Bridgewater*



January 3, 2015 at 8pm

Potluck dinner at 6:30pm

featuring

David Roth with Rick Gottlieb

Coming Attractions

February 7 — Greg Greenway

March 7 — Les Sampou (tickets \$15.00) with Annalise Emerick

April 4 — Girls Guns and Glory (tickets \$15.00)

May 2 — The Rafters and Lori Diamond & Fred Abatelli (Split bill)

Admission: \$13

*Enjoy our homemade
Refreshments*

Sign up for open mike!

The Solstice Singers



with Ensemble Passacaglia
"A Mid-Winter Wassail"

Directed by Lore Loftfield De Bower



Dorene Sykes Photography

Music, Drama and Dance in the Spirit of the Renaissance

Saturday, January 3rd at 4:00 p.m.

Show followed by Hearty Soups & Desserts

*Suggested donation: \$25
\$40 maximum per family
\$20 seniors and students*

*First Unitarian Universalist Church
25 South Main St., Middleboro
For reservations call 508-923-7757*

solsticesingers.org

facebook.com/solsticesingers

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 4 Stefan Michaud
- 5 Mary Maruska
- 6 Allen Mann, Ty Gavin
- 9 Lisa Rue
- 11 Kelsey Baumgarten
- 14 Beryl Domingo
- 18 David Donahue
- 20 Rob Waterman
- 24 Maya Zigler
- 29 Carlene Moore
- 31 Beth Manchester-Howell

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

- 10 Lynda & Steven Mullen



JANUARY 4
Bobbe Anderson, Sascha Shweire,
Neill Anderson

JANUARY 11
St. Thomas Family

JANUARY 18
David Page, Quentin Jarvis

JANUARY 25
SOUP, SOUP, SOUP
Details TBA

Helping the Hungry

Our **Social Justice Committee** collects non-perishable food items for the local food pantry. We invite you to help the hungry in our local area by bringing canned and packaged foods on the first Sunday of each month. A box is placed at the front of the sanctuary, near the piano, to receive the items, which the Social Justice Committee members gather and bring to our local food pantry.



Feeding the Homeless*

Our church volunteers provide lunches for **MainSpring House** shelter for the homeless in Brockton. We gather on the **first Monday* of each month at 9 a.m. in the lower parish hall** to prepare and wrap 100 bag lunches, which are then brought to the shelter by one or two of our volunteers.



You can help in many ways, including joining us at the above gatherings, donating baked goods, other food items, and paper goods as needed, taking home some of the fixings and preparing parts of the lunches (such as tuna or egg salad) at home for the volunteers to assemble at the church, or simply donating money toward the cost of the lunches, which is about \$100 per month for 100 lunches.

Please contact Betty Gilson (774-226-0942) for further information, or just drop by that morning to help.

**The lunches are prepared on Mondays to be eaten on the first Tuesday of each month. If the first Tuesday falls on the first day of the month, the lunches are made on the final Monday of the previous month.*

JANUARY 2015 CALENDAR

Thursday, January 1

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

3-8PM Open House at Frank & Eileen's

Saturday, January 3

8pm Off the Common CoffeeHouse featuring David Roth with Rick Gottlieb

Sunday, January 4

10:30am Worship with Rev. Paul Sprecher

UUSC/GAYT donations due during today's service

6pm Board Game Night at First Parish

Monday, January 5

9am MainSpring House lunches prep at FP

7pm Caring Committee will meet at the home of Mary Hatfield

7:30pm Facilities Committee meeting

Tuesday, January 6

7:30pm Committee Council Meeting

Thursday, January 8

7pm Meeting of the Full Social Justice Committee at First Parish

Sunday, January 11

9am Choir rehearsal

10:30am Worship with the First Principle Project

Monday, January 12

7:30pm Green Sanctuary Committee Meeting

Tuesday, January 13

5:30pm RE Committee Meeting

7:30pm Adult RE Class

Thursday, January 15

7:30pm Worship Committee Meeting

Sunday, January 18

9am Choir rehearsal

10:30am Worship with Rev. Paul Sprecher

Wednesday, January 21

7pm Science and Religion Discussion Group at FP

Thursday, January 22

7:30pm Parish Committee Meeting

Sunday, January 25

9am Choir rehearsal

10:30am Worship with the Green Sanctuary Committee

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