

November 29, 2006

The Spire

The Newsletter of the First Parish Church of Norwell, Massachusetts

781-659-7122

November 29, 2006

Vol. V Issue 7

Sunday Services – 10 a.m.

December 3

Rev. Victoria Weinstein

“Joyful and Triumphant In August”

Advent is a season of anticipation. Children anticipate getting presents on Christmas morning, but what do adults anticipate? In this age of instant gratification, what is it that we’re waiting for? Can’t we be happy unless we get it, or can we get started on being joyful even while we’re waiting?

Ushers: Colin and Marianne Schofield

Pulpit Arrangement: David Horton in memory of Howard Horton

Chalice Lighter: open

Coffee Hour: David Horton and Gail Varrasso

December 10

Rev. Victoria Weinstein

“The Prodigal Child”

The Jungian analyst James Hillman writes that “going home for the holidays is always going down the family drain.” The great Bible story of the Prodigal Son provides a mirror for us to look into, to see together the shared image of our needy hearts and dysfunctional families, and to gather strength and clarity from that honest encounter.

Ushers: Marlon Taylor and Jackie Magazu

Pulpit Arrangement: open

Chalice Lighter: open

Coffee Hour: Jen and Tom Anderson & Jen and Derek Sulc

December 17

“Think on These Things”

“Whatever is good, whatever is honorable, whatever is excellent, think on these things”, said the Apostle Paul to the Philippians. The children of the First Parish Church School present a service dedicated to the ideas and values that they have been thinking about every week in Church School. We hope all will join us!

Ushers: open

Pulpit Arrangement: Carrie Brandon

Chalice Lighter: open

Coffee Hour: Netta and Paul Vercollone

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Stuart Twite, 781-837-8791

Director of Youth Programming

Jennifer Anderson 617-763-2799

Music Director: *Gingy Grimes*

Parish Committee:

Chris Silva, Chair

(Home) 781-871-6819

Committee Members:

David Dube, John Meddaugh,

Jim Pickel, Cathy Phillips,

Sally Turner and Derek Sulc

Treasurer: *Marta Reese*

Collector: *Jeannette Mitchell*

Minister Emeritus:

Richard M. Fewkes

The **deadline** for the next issue of THE SPIRE is **Sunday, December 10th, 2006**. Submissions may be emailed as an attachment to: office@firstparishnorwell.org, or dropped off in hard copy or disk at the church office.

In the Spirit*Rev. Victoria Weinstein*

Have you noticed that we have a large group of new church friends who started worshipping at First Parish and have returned again and again? This is a wonderful opportunity for them and for those of you who are not new to the congregation. For new folks, it is a season for exploring your spiritual needs and considering where your heart and soul are leading you. What about Unitarian Universalist life appeals to you? What about our community at First Parish draws you? How is it you would like to know and be known, to minister to and to be ministered unto? Do you feel welcome among us? Do the worship service and religious education offerings minister to you? Are we doing a good enough job overcoming shyness or awkwardness at coffee hour and inviting you into meaningful conversation? Is that impossible to do in a crowded parish hall? Maybe so, which is why **I would like to invite you to an informal Seekers Conversation in the Fogg Parlor during coffee hour on December 10th**. Bring your coffee and snacks and drop in for a chat about how your first weeks or months at First Parish are going. We'd like to know you better.

For those who are not so new to our community, the blessing of many new church seekers among us is an opportunity for us to look at ourselves through fresh eyes. Who are we and what makes us different from other faith communities that might draw new members to our spiritual family? What makes us exactly the same as other faith communities that might remind us of our unity with other religious men, women and children? How do we engage the guests among us in a way that expresses care not so much for where they live or what they do, but for the events of their lives that led them to venture to walk through our doors?

In this season of Advent, we await new birth. May we be courageous and loving to meet new life with open arms (and wearing our nametags!).

People, look east. The time is near of the crowning of the year.

Make your house fair as you are able, trim the hearth and set the table.

People, look east and sing today. Love the Guest is on the way.

In faith, hope and love,
Vicki

Caring Corner

The Caring Committee is considering organizing itself around the following ministries: Friendly Visitors & Callers, Volunteer Drivers, Grief and Bereavement Support, Life Transition Support (e.g., loss of employment, new baby, divorce, moves), and Meals Coordinator. As our congregation ages and the natural crises in life arise, the church must take up the shared ministry of pastoral care with more intentionality and organization. Please see Rev. Vicki if you would like to be involved in training for these various positions, which require nothing more than a willing heart, a generous ear, and a few hours a month.

Thank you to **Jen Anderson and our Youth Group** for leading a lovely worship service on November 26th.

The Compassionate Friends, a support group for parents who have lost children of any age, is hosting their annual candlelight service of remembrance in our meeting house on December 10th at 6:00 p.m. All are welcome.

Doing some holiday shopping in the city? Drop into Old South Church in Copley Square on Saturday, December 16th in the afternoon and treat yourself to **Sweet the Sound's** bluegrass stylings of Christmas music. See **Vicki Weinstein** for details.

Rev. Vicki's sermons are now podcasted!

Some may wonder what on earth is podcasting?! No, it has nothing to do with gardening or dramatics. Podcasting is a word that was created from iPod (those ubiquitous mp3 players made by Apple) and broadcast. It facilitates the downloading of an audio file to one's mp3 player from the Internet. But just as important, it lets you subscribe to a "channel", e.g. sermons at First Parish, so that you can easily obtain future programs. Currently, one sermon – the "Gate of Sorrow", a commentary about that sermon, and the homily on hospitality have been podcasted. These are listed in the iTunes music store under the podcast category of Religion & Spirituality and "Other" subcategory. You need to download the free iTunes program to access the podcasts. Alternatively, if you just want to listen to the podcast at your computer, they can be accessed on the sermons page of the church website - <http://www.firstparishnorwell.org/sermons.htm>. Just look for the speaker icon next to a sermon. It is also listed on the UU audio sermons web page at: www.uuaudiosermons.com/200609.htm. For those familiar with podcasting, the feed file (RSS) is at: www.firstparishnorwell.org/fpnpodcasts.xml. Questions? Ask Dexter Robinson 781-294-8840, dexpcdoc@hotmail.com

The next deadline for the Spire Sunday, December 10th for the **single issue of The Spire that will be published in December. Any information that needs to be shared with the parish before January 6th should be included in this early December issue.** An early January issue will be mailed on January 3rd.

Meetings...

Activities Committee, Sun., Dec. 3, 11:30 a.m. in the Fogg Parlor

Alliance Meeting, Holiday Concert and Tea, Wed., Dec. 6, 10 a.m.

Caregivers' Group, Tues., Dec. 5, 7:30 p.m. in the Church Office

Finance Committee, Tues., Dec. 12, 7:15 p.m. in the Church Office

Organ Committee, Sun., Dec. 10, 11:30 a.m. in the Meetinghouse

Parish Committee, Tues., Dec. 19, 7:00 p.m. in the Fogg Parlor

Service Committee, Sun., Dec. 10, 11:30 in the Fogg Parlor

Women's Group, Mon., Dec. 4, 7:30 p.m. and Christmas Party at Ellen Fulton's home, Dec. 15, 6:30 p.m. (more info on page 7)

Winter Weather Closing Alerts...

First Parish Norwell is registered with several news outlets to provide activities cancellations in the event of inclement weather.

You can get this information on

- ❖ WATD radio in Marshfield (95.9 FM)
- ❖ WCVB Channel 5 television or their website www.thebostonchannel.com
- ❖ WHDH Channel 7 television
- ❖ WRKO Radio (680 AM)

Both Channel 5 and Channel 7 have an option, available on their website, to register with them to receive closing information delivered to you automatically by email or cellphone.

Sign Up Now For Circle Dinners!

Sat., January 27 and Sat., May 5

You're invited to come to our houses and get to know us better!

This is a really fun way to pass a winter night. We each bring a part of the meal and the food is always great! An average of 8 or 10 people gather and there is never a lack of good conversation. Newcomers are especially welcome!

Hosts are also needed! To sign up see Peg Kitchenham at coffee hour or contact her at 781-447-583 or at chrispegk@verizon.net.

Redesigned First Parish website: Church Calendar now online!

Take a look at the redesigned First Parish website, www.firstparishnorwell.org.

Debi Meddaugh has completely revised the look and feel of the website so as to show more of what First Parish is about, provide important information for visitors on the homepage, and be simpler to navigate. Although a number of people provided feedback and suggestions, Debi deserves our thanks and kudos for the great work she has done. Please thank her the next time you see her - a lot of her time was poured into this major project.

Also, the church calendar, which for years has been only in paper form in the church office, can now be viewed on the website. To see it, bring up the homepage of our website, click on the "News" menu dropdown and select "Full calendar of events". You can bookmark this page for future reference. For those of you who registered with Airset while we beta tested the calendar, you can continue viewing the church calendar there along with any other calendar(s) you have created.

Caps for Newborns

Some of you may have seen the article in the last issue of UU World about knitting and crocheting caps to save newborn babies (page 62). Phyllis Cohen, Joanne Howard and Sue Robinson were brainstorming what to do with lots of odds and ends of yarn we all have and thought we'd check out this project. We are gathering on Tuesday mornings at Sue's house in Hanson to create a few caps using, as our guide, the plans listed on the Save the Children website: www.savethechildren.org (click on Caps to the Capital). If you'd like to join us - or knit or crochet on your own - please do. There are patterns right on the web site - check it out! Patterns will also be available on the Service Committee table.

All the caps we make will be mailed on January 2nd and forwarded, through Save the Children, to infants throughout the world. After the caps, we will continue to knit and crochet (perhaps a new item) till the yarn runs out - whenever that might be!!

Field Trip!

The next "meeting" of the **Environmental Committee** will be Sunday, December 3rd at the New England Wildlife Center in Weymouth. Gather after coffee hour (about 11:45) in the foyer for directions/carpool. We'll take a tour of their new LEED-certified facility and see what the Center does. Clayton Handleman will be on hand to talk about his company's unique role at the NEWC.

All interested parties of all ages are encouraged to attend! This is a no-obligation event designed to inspire and enlighten! All it takes is a little of your time and a \$5 suggested donation to the NEWC. Contact Elizabeth Robinson (781) 294-8840 with any questions.

Alliance News

BROAD COVE CHORALE/ ALLIANCE CHRISTMAS TEA

On Wednesday, December 6th, the Alliance will welcome the Christmas season with its annual concert and luncheon. The Broad Cove Chorale under the direction of Margo Euler will present a concert of Christmas music at 10:30 a.m. in the Sanctuary. Everyone in the Church is invited to come and enjoy this annual festive event which is sure to infect you with the Christmas spirit!

The Alliance will have its business meeting promptly at 10 a.m. Christmas cookies for shut-ins must be delivered to the Parish Hall no later than 10 a.m. We invite everyone to contribute homemade cookies but please limit your contribution to just one dozen cookies. Following the concert the Alliance will hold a light luncheon. Please call Barb Meacham, 781 659-2940, to volunteer sandwiches or finger desserts for the luncheon. Also, if you know someone who is homebound and would appreciate a box of cookies be sure to let Barb know.

The Women's Group's Pot Luck Christmas Party

At the home of Ellen Fulton
121 Old Oaken Bucket Road, Norwell
Friday December 15 6:30 p.m.

You make it-we'll eat it pot luck!
Bring a Yankee Swap gift of \$8.00 or less!
All women of First Parish are invited!
RSVP to Ellen- efulton9@comcast.net

SERVICE COMMITTEE

*"...to minister to each others needs
and to those of humanity..."*

The David Jon Louison Center

The David Jon Louison Center is a non-profit, charitable, and educational foundation, which currently operates three residences for 16 homeless families in the Greater Brockton area. The Center was established in 1982 when the foundation's Directors became aware of the plight of young, pregnant women and women with infants and toddlers who were homeless or living in their cars, abandoned buildings and overcrowded apartments. Since that time, homelessness has not gone away.

The mission of the David Jon Louison Center is to assist families through the crisis of homelessness, while providing services that promote a successful transition towards self-sufficiency. The Center was founded on the principle that every human being has dignity. Homeless individuals often lose their own sense of dignity, therefore, the Center strives to recognize, reinforce, and respect the dignity of all people who come to them for assistance.

The Center offers temporary shelter as well as educational opportunities for the personal, social, and economic growth of all members of the homeless families. Once housed and self-sufficient, it is hoped that these individuals and their families will continue to recognize their own unique dignity, value, and self worth as they work towards the fulfillment of their goals and their own personal potential.

Volunteers are always welcome as part of the support group for women at the shelter, to play with and lead craft projects with the children, and to help maintain the three houses, which always need repairs.

As a congregation we have been providing Christmas to the families of Louison Center for several years and have also visited for

tree decorating parties. This year we will again be giving to families that include men, women and children. Look for the signup sheet in the Parish Hall.

As part of our Second Sunday Outreach, our open plate collection on December 10th will be collected for the Louison Center for use in their ongoing programs. Contributions may also be sent directly to the church office. Our support and generosity is greatly appreciated.

In previous years, our generosity for purchasing gifts for Louison Center families has exceeded the number of clients needing assistance. In our abundance we have also helped teens in foster care through a program Betsy Gordon has connected us with. We will continue this tradition this year.

**PC Computer Course
at First Parish**

There are still seats available for the First Parish PC Computer course. As a fundraiser for the Meetinghouse organ project, Dexter Robinson will be offering a two-night course geared to the needs and interests of the participants. However, topics that will be covered include: desktop setup tips, organizing files and folders, email with Outlook Express, basic computer maintenance, and tips for speeding up your computer. Topic discussion will provide something for beginners as well as advanced users. Dexter will use a projector and laptop along with handouts. A CD of useful free utilities will be provided to each participant. The two sessions (Jan. 9 & 23) in the Parish Hall are two weeks apart to allow people time to try out items learned in the first session. Registration deadline is December 1. Forms are on the Parish Hall bulletin board for the Organ project or can be obtained by contacting Dexter Robinson, dexsue@comcast.net, 781-294-8840. Cost of the course is \$50.

Guest at Your Table

In the coming weeks, we extend our hospitality to strangers by having Guest at Your Table boxes at our dinner tables. Through this special tradition, Unitarian Universalist communities celebrate the worth and dignity of all people and learn how to put these values into action. By placing our coins and bills in the box we will be supporting the work of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee and its program partners to strengthen workers' rights; protect the right to safe, affordable water; defend civil liberties and democratic processes; and preserve the rights of vulnerable people after disasters.

Guest at Your Table has been an important part of UUSC, and of UU culture, since 1975. The program made its UUSC debut following then Institutional Advancement Director Warren Salinger's trip to the Netherlands. While there, he was inspired by a similar organization's program, entitled "Gast aan Tafel," to educate its supporters about its work and to raise vital funds. That program used colorful boxes that the whole family could enjoy. Warren immediately began work with UUSC's staff in Massachusetts to adapt the idea for use in Unitarian Universalist homes nationwide — and even worldwide! Each year since 1975, involvement in Guest at Your Table has grown tremendously, strengthening UUs' connections to our shared principles and helping to challenge injustice throughout the world.

Remember, UUSC membership begins at \$40 (\$20 for seniors and \$10 for students and youth) and a donation of \$75 will be doubled through a UUSC matching grant. So, when your box is filled, convert your cash into a check made out to UUSC and continue this most important work to defend justice and basic human rights around the globe. Your Guest at Your Table donation should be returned on Sunday, December 17th.

Super Heifer Committee

We are officially a little over half-way to our goal of \$5,000 for the ark of animals for Heifer International! Thank you to all who have helped!!!

***You can "buy" an animal or a share of an animal as a wonderful holiday gift for anyone—child, relative, friend, teacher—the money goes towards our \$5,000 goal, and you receive an unusual gift card which gives the story of Heifer International for your honoree. Laurie and Stephen's children, LEAH AND CARSON MARSH, "receive" Heifer International animals from their maternal grandfather each Christmas! What a wonderful lesson for a child—being part of a life-saving gift to a needy family somewhere in the world! Chris and Corina's son, CAM SILVA, saved \$25 of his own money for our Heifer International Ark. Again, a heart-warming lesson. Heifer gifts can be purchased at Coffee Hour or by calling Bev Gardner (781) 829-0932.

***At Coffee Hour, you can also buy Heifer International holiday cards, t-shirts and children's books.

***If you haven't already sent in your Heifer bank money, please do so by converting the coins to a check made out to First Parish Church, Norwell, with "Heifer bank" in the memo line. Thank you!

*The Super Heifer Committee,
Bev Gardner (chair), Stuart Twite, Marcia Babcock,
Elizabeth Lewis, John Meddaugh, Jen Anderson
(Youth Group leader!), Audra Shattuck, Elizabeth
Robinson, Barbara Meacham, Lisa Messersmith,
Melody Barlow and Carrie Brandon*

Singing Party Reminder

Gingy Grimes, our Music Director, will continue to host her "Singing Party" through Sunday, December 10. The music fun will continue, while the children learn to use the hand chimes and sing seasonal music. So in the upcoming weeks, please encourage your children to attend the "Singing Party" *each Sunday* at 11:30 in the Skylight Room. The children will perform their musical selections on Sunday, December 17.

Music at First Parish CD is still available!

There are still a few First Parish Music CDs available. Don't miss out on this opportunity to enjoy music performed at First Parish over the past thirty years. The CD which makes a great stocking stuffer includes choir, hand bells, organ, harpsichord, and instrumental music from J.S. Bach to Scott Joplin. Also included are Christmas selections by Alex Bourque and Kelly Fanning, spirituals, and other choir and organ favorites. Some long time Parish members have described the CD as "fabulous, not to be missed" and "inspirational".

You can check out the contents of the CD and listen to excerpts by using the following link:

www.firstparishnorwell.org/fpnmusiccd.html

The CD may be purchased during coffee hour or from the church office. The cost is \$10. Long distance members and friends who wish to purchase a copy should contact Dexter Robinson (781-294-8840, email: dexsue@comcast.net)

James Library & Center for the Arts

Annual Holiday Trunk Sale

Saturday Dec. 2

10 - 4 p.m.

Free admission. Holiday shopping at its best!

All three floors of the James are turned into a holiday bazaar. High quality, handmade items by 16 South Shore artists and craftspeople...including felted handbags, decoupaged trays, jewelry and more. Support local artists and the James. Call 659-7100 for information.

In the Art Gallery

Diane Scott, oil paintings

"All That Is New England"

Opening reception, Friday, Dec 1 7-9 p.m. Free.

Looking Ahead

A concert version of Gilbert & Sullivan's *Pirates of Penzance*, January 28, 2007 at First Parish Church.

Sponsored in part by the Priscilla Spradlin Memorial Fund

Tax savings for those 70 ½ and older for charitable giving to First Parish

In reading the Fall issue of Partner Church News, mention was made of a provision in the Pension Reform legislation passed by Congress and signed by the President this past August. This law allows those 70 ½ and older to make tax-free withdrawals, up to \$100,000, from their IRA, as long as the distribution goes directly to the charitable organization, and does not pass through your checkbook.

You can deduct the contribution, but only if you itemize on your tax return. The IRA administrator is to be directed to mail the distribution directly to First Parish.

Not only is the distribution tax free, but it also counts toward your minimum required distribution for 2006 and for next year, as well.

These "qualified charitable" distributions can not only be made to our church but to other 501C(3) designated charities as well.

I have checked this with several CPA's and a tax attorney who have verified this "tax goody"

Bob Detwiler

Religious Education at First Parish

From the DRE:

As a parent and as an educator, I often worry about the messages that our children receive from the worlds of popular culture and professional sports. Both have a tremendous influence and, from where I sit, much of it is worrisome. One maybe minor but, I think, telling example occurred last night (Sunday) during the Patriots football game.

As the officials were bringing out the chains to measure for a first down, a replay showed a Patriots player trying to shove the football with his feet to get an inch or two of advantage. The commentator allowed that he could get penalized for that but said that it was a good example of the kind of smart players that the Patriots were looking for. The whole thing warranted maybe 8 seconds of interest. Now think about what every young (and not so young) viewer learned from those 8 seconds. First, that it is alright to cheat if it gives you the advantage—in fact it is the “smart” thing to do. Second, the only possible problem with cheating might be that you could get caught, so the sneakier you are the better. Third, it's all so common and blasé' today that cheating warrants no real attention—it is, in fact, humorous. It's no wonder, as two recent polls tell us, that a great majority of people admit to having cheated more than once in college or business yet when asked if they are cheaters, the great majority said no. Apparently, it is not really cheating if it allows you to get ahead or get the advantage.

In a month or so, we celebrate the birth of one who had a very different view of getting the advantage. When his Apostles argued over whom Jesus loved the most, he admonished them saying that the last shall be first and that whosoever wants to be a leader must be a servant. In his words and his actions, Jesus of Nazareth lived the deep and central tenants of a religious life; love to God and love to humanity.

In his sermon Love to Christ, the “Father” of American Unitarianism, William Ellery Channing said, “I call you to love Jesus, that you may bring yourself into contact and communion with perfect virtue and may become what you love.” This love, for Channing, existed outside of your view of Jesus' place or rank and rested solely on his character.

As we celebrate the holiday season, may we, amidst the commerce and business, contemplate this example and seek to become what we love. Then we shall have the advantage.

Blessings, stuart

RE News:

Consider buying your child's Sunday School teachers (and school teachers) an animal from Heifer International. They are for sale after church during coffee hour. Heifer Animals make a meaningful gift and help First Parish in achieving the goal of purchasing an ARK.

Our Church School Holiday presentation is on Sunday, Dec. 17th. Please make every effort to attend the next few weeks as we will be practicing for the service! Many thanks!

Adult Learning at First Parish

Many thanks to Jim Pickel and Bernie Gardner for their very successful and highly informative adult learning series, Science and Religion. Thank you gentlemen!

A Panorama of Life

The First Parish Bible Study discusses the book of: **Galatians**.

Was Paul a repressed, misogynistic tyrant? Or a compassionate, religious genius?

Join us on **Sunday Morning, Dec. 3rd at 9:00am** in the Fogg Parlor.

The First Parish Book Group Presents:

Back by popular demand! **Poetry Night** at the James

Bring your own poetry or your favorites to share..

Wednesday Evening, Dec. 13th at 7:00pm at the

James Library

Refreshments will be served

second Sunday

conversation

our topic for Dec.: **Is pacifism a viable political alternative?**

Sunday, Dec. 10th at 9:00am in the Fogg Parlor.

Blurb

December 17

The First Parish church School

“Think on These Things”

“Whatever is good, whatever is honorable, whatever is excellent, think on these things”, said the Apostle Paul to the Philippians. The children of the First Parish Church School present a service dedicated to the ideas and values that they have been thinking about every week in Church School. We hope all will join us!