

December 12, 2007

The Spire

The Newsletter of the First Parish Church of Norwell, Massachusetts

781-659-7122

December 12, 2007

Vol. VI Issue 8

Sunday Services – 10 a.m.

December 16

Misty-Dawn Shelly, Student Minister

"Gifts, Gifts and more GIFTS!"

A gift is defined as something voluntarily given without compensation. This holiday season let us explore the gifts that are given and discovered right here in each other. The gifts of compassion, wisdom and leadership, among others are given voluntarily here at First Parish. "Your gifts, whatever you discover them to be, can be used to bless or curse the world." Let us discover our gifts and let us choose to bless the world.

December 23:

"What Are We Waiting For? Peace, Faith, Hope and Joy"

Holiday Family Service, Fourth Sunday in Advent

The Church School will lead our worship service this morning. Our theme is based on the advent time of anticipation. The church school will illuminate four (one for each week of Advent) ways in which to imagine a better world.

Christmas Eve, December 24

Rev. Victoria Weinstein, preaching

5:00 and 7:30 p.m.

"What Do You Want To Be For Christmas?"

Join us, one and all, for our traditional candlelighting services on Christmas Eve. There will be lots of special music, readings, and a message for all ages.

December 30

Rev. Victoria Weinstein

"The News of The Year In Religion"

As we bid farewell to 2007 and ring in 2008, we will invite everyone to ritually let go of the burdens and cares of the old year in the Burning Bowl. The minister will reflect on some of the big news stories in religion and is pretty sure that the names Mitt, Hillary, Barak and Huckabee may come up.

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Director of Youth Programming

Jennifer Anderson 617-763-2799

Music Director: *Gingy Grimes*

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John Meddaugh, Chair

(Home) 781-659-2901

Committee Members:

Melody Barlow, David Dube,

John Meddaugh, Cathy Phillips,

Jim Pickel, Derek Sulc

and Sally Turner

Treasurer: *Marta Reese*

Collector: *Jeannette Mitchell*

Minister Emeritus:

Richard M. Fewkes

The **deadline** for the next issue of THE SPIRE is **Sunday, January 6th**. 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

[I wrote this for a church newsletter column in 2000. It's still one of my favorites. Enjoy - VW]

A Mouse On A Cat On A Dog

After a lunch appointment one day last year in downtown Washington, DC, I walked around a corner and smack into this little street tableau:

A slightly grimy but very kindly man with a handsome black dog.

On top of the black dog, a brown striped tabby cat, imperious in expression and languorous in repose.

On top of the brown striped tabby cat, a white mouse, as dignified as a white mouse can manage to be.

All of the critters seemed a tiny bit uncomfortable but mostly gentle and self-respecting. If they minded being the center of attention they certainly didn't show it, except for a brief moment when the cat leaped off the dog's back to the pavement, groomed one paw, and then jumped back up to her furry perch (the mouse had to be helped back up).

"What's going on here?" asked passersby, including a TV cameraman.

"I'm just trying to show that everyone can get along," said the man. The dog, the cat and the mouse seemed to nod in agreement.

People stopped to stare, suspicious, waiting for the punch line, the gimmick, the appeal for money.

Their silence challenged the man, who shifted his feet and bit and said well yes, he would also like to encourage people to adopt animals from their local shelter.

A cranky young businessman appeared on the scene next to me. "What is THIS?" he scowled. "I think it's something about world peace," I replied. "What's the catch?" he asked. "I don't think there is one," I answered, surprised by a lump in my throat. He rolled his eyes at me and hurried off.

But I stayed for a long while, just plain happy to be in the company of the three gentle animals and the gentle man. It worked. It worked as a metaphor, it worked as street theatre, it worked as worship, it worked as non-violent protest. A mouse on a cat on a dog. Simple; not at all easy. Just like world peace.

In faith, hope for a beautiful holiday season, and love,

Vicki

SWEET THE SOUND CONCERT

Rev. Vicki will be singing with her ensemble Sweet the Sound at their second annual Christmas concert on Saturday, December 15 at 2pm at historic Old South Church in Boston. Come and be part of their second CD, which they will be recording that day!

CARING CORNER

Happy Birthday to **Myrtle Donohue**! Longtime member Myrtle, mother of **Pearl Jayko**, will be celebrating her 99th birthday on December 27th!

Rev. Vicki will be with the Unitarian Universalist Church of Medford on December 16, preaching and officiating at the dedication of **Bethiah Averil Peirce**.

Congratulations to **Bob and Betsey Detwiler** on the birth of their ninth grandchild, **William**!

Congratulations to **Mary Mercier** on the birth of her first grandchild, **Brandon Francis**!

Our thoughts are with **Eleanor Gaudette**, who is recovering nicely from pneumonia at Baypath Nursing Home in Duxbury.

Holiday reminders from your Service Committee:

Sunday, December 18th is the day to bring your wrapped gifts for the Louison Center in Brockton. Remember to label your gift for the family member you selected to assist this Christmas.

Sunday, December 23rd **Family Christmas Service**

- Return your Guest at Your Table boxes. Please substitute a check (made out to UUSC) for your change - it makes for easier forwarding to the UU Service Committee. Remember, if you send in \$40 or more (\$20 for seniors and \$10 for students and youth), you automatically will become a member of the UUSC. Gifts of \$75 or more from a family or individual will be doubled through a matching grant. Contact Sue Robinson for further information.
- Decorate our **Mitten Tree** with hats, gloves, mittens, and scarves to be donated to Carolina Hill, a homeless shelter in Marshfield. Our youth group is again coordinating this project and will deliver our donations. Contact Jen Anderson, youth director, for further information.

Do you have any dishtowels that are well-loved, but past their prime? Recycle them for use in the church kitchen...we run through many during our church events. Drop them off anytime!

From the Collector:

A friendly reminder to parishioners: please submit your pledge donations by Sunday, January 7, 2008 to receive credit for tax year 2007. Letters will be issued in later January. Thank you. Jeannette Mitchell (781) 659-2316 or jmitch02061@comcast.net

Alliance News

The January meeting of the Alliance will take place on Wednesday, January 16th at 10 a.m. in the Parish Hall. We are pleased to be welcoming John Laukkanen who will be sharing stories about and showing many of the dolls from the extensive collection of his late wife, Dot. The title of his program is "Chasing Blondes, Brunettes and Redheads after 65." Barbara Hickey, Vivian Perry and Carol Marsh will be the hostesses.

Kind of makes you go hmmm! from Denominational Affairs

"It appears to me, one gradually formulates one's religion, be it what it may. A person has no religion who has not slowly and painfully gathered one together, adding to it, shaping it; and one's religion is never complete and final, but must always be undergoing modification."

D. H. Lawrence

Do the Principles and Purposes still serve us well or do we need to modify them? Mark your calendars for Sunday evening, January 13, 7:00 to 9:00 to examine and discuss them. Dessert and coffee will be served and babysitting will be provided.

Holiday Gifts

Remember how good it felt last year to give gifts of Heifer International animals? We are offering you the opportunity to do the same thing this year. Animals (from \$10-\$500) will be sold at Coffee Hours between now and Christmas. You can also call Bev Gardner (781-829-0932) to put in your order. You will receive a gift card to give to your honoree-and the animal will go to a needy family somewhere in the world.

Prices-

Heifer	\$500
Share of a Heifer	\$50
Water Buffalo	\$250
Share of a Water Buffalo	\$25
Llama	\$150
Share of a llama	\$20
Goat, Sheep or Pig	\$120
Share of a Goat, Sheep or Pig	\$10
Tree Seedlings	\$60
Share of Tree Seedlings	\$10
Trio of Rabbits	\$60
Share of Rabbits	\$10
Honeybees	\$30
Starter Flock of Chicks, Ducks or Geese	\$20

Church Hill United Methodist Church is again hosting a Christmas Dinner on Christmas Day.

Any individual, couple or family who would otherwise be alone on this special holiday is cordially invited. A complete Turkey Dinner with all the fixings will be served! Dinner is free and there are no income limitations. Refreshments and entertainment are at noon, with dinner being served at 12:30. To make a reservation, call Gail at 781-545-1666 or Lori at the church office 781-826-4763. Transportation can be provided if necessary.

December Second Sunday

Raises \$1054

Our Second Sunday outreach project this month benefits **The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention** - the leading not-for-profit organization exclusively dedicated to understanding and preventing suicide. Through your generosity over \$1000 will be donated to the work of the AFSP. Their mission is to reach out to people with mood disorders and those impacted by suicide. The foundation supports research that is improving our understanding of suicide and its prevention; it provides education and information to professionals, the media and the public; it advocates for policies and legislation that can help prevent suicide; and it offers programs for survivors of suicide loss.

Many of the original founders of the Foundation were concerned with the alarming rise in youth suicide over the previous four decades. During this period, the suicide of young men had tripled; that of young women had doubled. Suicide is now the second major cause of death among high school and college students. Suicide is even more frequent among older people, the highest rates being found in men over 50. Before the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention was formed in 1987, there was no national not-for-profit organization dedicated to funding this research or creating the education and treatment programs necessary to prevent suicide.

Many of us can speak to personal stories of loss. This church family has been touched by the tragedy of suicide on more than one occasion. Our outreach to continue the work of **The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention** is a way for us to honor these losses, to speak to our hope of preventing future tragedies, and to support those among us touched by suicide. If you would like to contribute, please forward your check, made out to First Parish and marked as "Outreach," to the church office.

For further information, visit AFSP's website at www.afsp.org or contact the greater Boston chapter of AFSP at 56 Broad Street, Boston, MA 02109, phone (617) 439-0940.

The First Parish Holiday Family Service is here!
What Are We Waiting For?

On Christmas Eve, eve (Sunday December 23rd) the Church School will lead our worship service. Our theme is based on the advent time of anticipation. The church school will illuminate four (one for each week of Advent) ways in which to imagine a better world. You can help with your:

Attendance: We will be practicing and working on our service on the 16th and, of course "performing" on the 23rd. The more people that can attend both Sundays, the better (but please know that your participation is valued even if you have to miss the 16th!)

Help at Home: Most children will have small speaking parts and it is important that you work with your child at home on projecting, looking at the congregation, speaking clearly, etc...

Help at Church: As we do every Sunday, we will be relying on parental assistance so if you can help out on the 16th, it would be most appreciated!

Come to Lunch: Following worship on the 16th, we will have a short rehearsal in the church. Following that, the Religious Education Committee is sponsoring a casual family lunch. Please come for some holiday food and fellowship! Bring the whole family.

Church Family Banner Squares! If you picked up a square to add to our Banners,, please return it on Sunday the 16th. We ran out on Sunday (which is very exciting) so if you would like to make a square, pick up a 8 to 10 by 10 white felt square, decorated it with your family name and return it by the 23rd (at the very latest) and we will display them during our Christmas Eve Service. You can also pick up a square Sunday the 16th at the Religious Education table.

Sunday Service Volunteers

Sunday, December 16:

Ushers: Bruce and Kathy Bartone

Pulpit Arrangement: Kerrilee Pietroski

Chalice Lighter: The Goodwins

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

Sunday, December 23:

Ushers: Bob and Mary Lou Sutter

Pulpit Arrangement: open

Chalice Lighter: open

Sunday, December 30:

Ushers: open

Pulpit Arrangement: open

Chalice Lighter: open

Coffee Hour: Stan and Jean Wilderoter, Pearl Jayko

A New Web Feature! Log on to the First Parish website at <http://www.firstparishnorwell.org/>, click on the Religious Education pages and go to RE EVERYDAY. There you will find information on how to reinforce and practice at home the lessons that we learn each Sunday in Church School. Resources to deepen our adult learning experience will also be available on this page.

Adult Learning: Join us for the following programs

Bible Study: We will continue Bible Study on the **First and Third Sunday mornings of December with** the study of the book of James. Written by the brother of Jesus, this short but powerful letter makes for powerful study. Join us in the Fogg Parlor at 9am.

Third Thursday Poetry Night at the James Library. Join us at **7pm on each third Thursday (including December)** to read your own poetry, your favorites, or just come and listen (note: this group meets at the James Library)

Join us for one of our
traditional candle-lighting services
with special music, carols and the warmth of community.
The service will conclude with our candles burning,
singing “Silent Night”.

Christmas Eve
December 24th
5 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. in the Meetinghouse