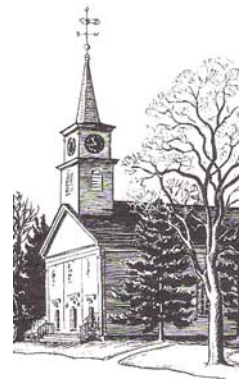


The Spire

The Newsletter of the First Parish Church of Norwell, Massachusetts



781-659-7122

December 10, 2008

Vol. VII Issue 8

Sunday Services – 10 a.m.

December 14:

Rev. Victoria Weinstein

“A Moment With the Skin Horse: Does It Hurt To Be Real?”

Looking at a moment from the beloved children’s classic, *The Velveteen Rabbit*, we will reflect on what it means to be authentic within community. Our Second Sunday Offering will be taken to provide holiday cheer to foster children in the care of the Department of Social Services. Teens are particularly welcome to this service.

Newcomers are welcome to join a brief, informal “New To UU” session in the church office at 11:20.

December 21:

Rev. Victoria Weinstein

“Don’t Let the Light Go Out”

On this first day of winter and day before Hanukkah, we remember the ancient Hanukkah story of the light that did not go out.



Christmas Eve, December 24:

Rev. Victoria Weinstein, preaching

5:00 and 7:30 p.m.

“Making Room In the Inn”

Are lives are so full, but tonight we're invited to make room in our hearts for something bigger than ourselves, bigger than any of our possessions, and bigger than our everyday attitudes. Can we make room in the inn, and in the "in?" Come share the magic of Christmas Eve.

December 28:

Rev. Victoria Weinstein

“God Be With You ‘Till We Meet Again”

In her final sermon before she departs for a five-month sabbatical, our minister speaks from her heart about her hopes and dreams for the congregation and for herself in the coming months.

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 (Home) 508-746-4647

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Melody Barlow, Deane Howard,
Marie Miller, Cathy Phillips,
Derek Sulc and Sally Turner

Treasurer: *Marta Reese*

Minister Emeritus:

Rev. Richard M. Fewkes

The **deadline** for the next issue of THE SPIRE is **Sunday, January 4th**. 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

By now many of you will have seen the Sabbatical Brochure that was distributed in church this morning. If you did, you know that I am leaving in early January on my sabbatical. This sabbatical is a gift of time and renewal whose promise I cannot even begin to fathom, but your enormous generosity and goodwill in granting it sustain me whenever I get nervous contemplating it. I am starting my sabbatical as a Visiting Minister to a UU fellowship in Amarillo, Texas, and then flying to Nicaragua for almost a month of language immersion. This trip marks the longest time I have been away from home in my life. I greet the opportunity with a sense of adventure and trepidation.

When I return after those six plus weeks away, I know it will be my instinct to return home and get back to church. But that six weeks is just the beginning of my sabbatical. In mid-February I will set myself down in my study and work on my dissertation. I will read. I will be a library rat at Harvard Divinity School. I will attend worship services with other churches. I will travel more in the spring (to Turkey, Greece and to our partner church in Kadacs, Transylvania). I will spend quality time looking back over twelve years of parish ministry, assessing its joys and sorrows, strengths and weaknesses, and gathering new wisdom and insight for the future. I am sure that it will be a rich and rewarding period of time that will yield valuable things for me personally and for our ministry together.

While I am away, I ask that you make one major commitment: take care of the church in every way that you can. Support one another in all that comes –especially Stuart – and enjoy the change in institutional “scenery.” Worship together. Communicate frequently and honestly. Be especially welcoming of the newcomer and seeker. Welcome back the members who have not attended frequently in recent years because I’m not their cup of tea. Help them find a ministry in the congregation. Remind them that the church is not the minister, but a beloved community and that their involvement is not just good for the congregation but good for them. Be kind to each other, and be patient. Have fun. Work well and with mutual appreciation together. Know that wherever I am, I am praying for you daily, and that I pray in the hope and the trust that you love one another as I love you.

I am sure that the time will fly by, but oh, what a flight! Church, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for giving me both the roots and the wings I need to embark on this incredible journey. God be with you, and the Spirit of Love guide and guard you until we meet again.

In faith, hope and love,
 Vicki

Caring Corner

The sympathies of the parish are with Dick and Ellie Fewkes after the recent passing of Dick's mother in Springfield.

Jack Wallace's mom is doing well and was pleased to hear that thoughts and prayers were being sent her way.

Pat Bordewick is concerned about her grandnephew, Ken, who is suffering with a brain tumor.

Celebrate the Guest at Your Table!

Our Guest at Your Table program is going strong. So many families and friends have brought human rights home and welcomed Guests to their lives!

Thanks to our support, our Unitarian Universalist Service Committee is working throughout the United States and around the world to advance human rights. Your beautiful Guest at Your Table box and Stories of Hope introduce you to people whose lives have been changed by this work.

Each week, families and friends can focus on a different Story of Hope as we sit down to meals together and consider our many blessings.

This week, meet Serafina, the South African grandmother who partnered with UUSC and others to restore marginalized people's access to water. Consider what water means to you and your family. Consider what even a small gift to your Guest at Your Table will mean to Serafina and her friends.

You can learn more about UUSC's work on protecting our right to water online at www.uusc.org.

If you have not yet picked up your Guest at Your Table box and Stories of Hope, you can do so at church or by talking with Sue Robinson, our UUSC local representative. Remember to return your box at the December 21st service, or as soon after as is convenient.

Your generosity with the Guest at Your Table is tax deductible! Be sure to complete the form on your box and become a member.

And remember ... gifts of \$100 can be matched by the UU Congregation at Shelter Rock!

Order Now! As is our tradition here at First Parish, we plan to decorate the meetinghouse with poinsettia plants for our 2 Christmas Eve services. Beginning December 7 we will have order sheets in the Parish Hall for you to order your plants in red, pink, or white. You may also order through the church office by calling 781-659-7122 or emailing office@firstparishnorwell.org. The plants can be taken home at the end of the Christmas Eve service you plan to attend. Any plants leftover will be delivered to our shut-ins. Thank you for helping make this season festive!!

Call for Mitten Tree Donations!

The time has come once again to decorate our mitten tree with donations for those in need! Our donations of CHILD-SIZED hats, mittens, and gloves will be given again this year to South Shore Head Start, which provides each of the 320 kids it serves with a full set of winter gear.

Donations will be collected by our youth group during service on SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21st. Thank you in advance for your generosity!

A Caroling We Go!

What better way to celebrate the holiday season than by caroling. Please join Gingy and members of the choir on Sunday, December 21st, and raise your voices in all the favorite songs of the season. We will car pool from church at 12:30 to the Doolittle Home in Foxboro where we will serenade the residents of this assisted living facility – including parishioner Erdine Winegar (Sue Robinson's mom), Catharine Miller (Jim Miller's mom), and Jane and Bob Babcock (Joanne Howard's parents). Bring a sandwich for lunch before we leave and stay after for some refreshments with the residents.

Meetinghouse Organ Project Update

Thanks to All of You!!

Our recent Harvest Fair was a great success, raising about \$ 6,824.54 for the church's activities. Special thanks go to all those who chaired a table and helped with planning, set-up and organization. There were: Set-up & Fair Chair – Margy Miola; Handcrafts - Marcia Babcock; Silent Auction - Marina Selby, & Joanne Howard; Books – Sally Turner; Grandma's Attic – Phyllis Buell; Jewelry - Stan & Jean Wilderoter; Balloon Animals – Chris Kitchenham & Larry Baker; Face Painting - Karen Baker, Rae Stevenson and Molly Twite; Gift Baskets – Deanna Riley & Bev Gardner; Holiday Table – Margy Miola; Baked Goods – Helen Keeler; Toy Table – Kathy Bartone; Snack Bar- Jim Miller & Carol Neely; Publicity – Peg Kitchenham; Clean-up - Don Messinger

Thank you also to the many other helping hands, including all who cooked or baked, made handcrafts, donated gift baskets, helped make swags, came to enjoy lunch, donated household items and toys, purchased anything. This is a day to look forward to. Working together is fun and helps to make us a community.

Tax break for those 70 ½ and older for IRA withdrawals up to a total of \$100,000. Taxpayers can withdraw this amount from their IRA directly to a charity (501c3) with no federal tax consequences. This will apply to charitable roll overs for both 2008 and 2009, as it did for 2006 and 2007.

This withdrawal also counts toward one's required minimum distribution and must go directly from the IRA trustee to the charity recipient. You will not get this tax-exempt benefit if the check goes to the account holder and then forwarded to the designated charity.

Should any of this require clarification, please get in touch with me. *Bob Detwiler*

Since the last report in October, we have taken delivery of the new pedal board and adjustable organ bench. Both of these items were crafted completely from scratch using a variety of woods. Dexter was successful in selling the old blower. Other items are still offered for sale.

Dexter met with the organ builder and local electrician to review the electrical needs of the organ. The organ builder is currently working on the keyboards which again are made completely from scratch. He is also finalizing the design of the windchests which support the pipes. Related to that, he sent us an updated list of optional pipes. Our consultant, Barbara Owen, and Jim Brown, organist and former music director at First Parish have reviewed this list and made recommendations of what to add should additional funds become available.

Our thanks to a number of people who completed their pledge since the last report. We were very pleased to raise \$1600 from the Harvest Moon dance. The capital campaign is now in its final year and will end in March 2009. To date \$169,409 has been raised from donations and pledges towards the goal of \$180,000. **It is not too late to make a donation which will be matched 150%.** This means that a \$1000 donation becomes \$2500 with the matching donation from Fogg funds and 50% matching from the Detwilers. Donations of \$500 or more will be permanently recognized on a plaque. We only need to raise a little over \$4000 from donors that, with matching grants, will achieve our goal.

Organ Committee:

Paul Coolidge

Bob Detwiler

Marie Miller

Dexter Robinson, Chair

First Parish Holiday Project Ready for Delivery

Your Helen Fogg Service Committee chose children in foster care as the focus of this year's Holiday Project. For several years parishioner Betsy Gordon has been helping to collect gifts for individuals, specifically teenagers, who are in foster care in the greater Boston area. This year we are making Christmas happen for 27 of these children.

If you selected a child, remember to bring your labeled gifts by Sunday, December 14th. We ask you to provide new items, placed in a gift bag but NOT wrapped.

Missed out on choosing a child? It is not too late to help. Join with a friend to fund a purchase or buy a gift card suitable for a teenager (clothing, videos, movie passes, etc). Also, the "Second Sunday" open plate collection in December will be used for this project.

Contact Sue Robinson for further information. Thank you for your continued generosity.

Looking for that Perfect Holiday Gift?

We will offer Heifer International animals for sale again at Coffee Hours until Christmas. You will receive a unique gift card explaining about Heifer International for your honoree, and your "gifted" 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

Religious Education at First Parish

Deep and heartfelt thanks to:

Our Church school Children who did an amazing job last Sunday in their presentations for our Family Advent Service!

Our Religious Education Committee, lead teachers, and all who have volunteered to teach this year, for their great work in preparing our students, and for their exceptional work so far this year.

I wish all in our Lifespan Religious Education Community (and that is everyone!) a wonderful, blessed, and safe Christmas. Many blessings to all.

Adult Learning!

Take Another Look...

and join us for conversation on the big questions of life. All too rarely in this busy and information packed world is there a chance to sit and talk about **why we are here**, or **what is our purpose**. On the **First and Third** Sundays of each month at 9:00am in the Fogg Parlor, a group meets for such a discussion using the Bible as its springboard. Not a purely academic exercise, this group seeks to **understand** but also to **apply** "time tested and approved" **spiritual principles** in our **daily lives**. Give it a try!

If you would like more information, or need a Bible, please see or contact:
Stuart Twite (DRE), H-781 837 8791, Church- 781 659 7122 , DREStuart@aol.com

Take a Breath(er) Thursdays

Do you wish you could find a way to bring more mindfulness, serenity, and meaning to your daily living? Would you like to gather with others who are looking to do the same thing?

**Join Melody Barlow for basic meditation and discussion on:
Thursday evenings at 6:30 in the Parish Hall!**

**If you have any questions, contact Stuart Twite (DRE), H-781 837 8791,
Church- 781 659 7122 , DREStuart@aol.com**

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