

February 3, 2010



WORSHIP SERVICES



Sunday, February 7 ~ 10:30 a.m.

"Making Love as an Act of Grace"
Rev. Arline Conan Sutherland

The theme for the worship services during the month of February is Love. The ancient Greeks had three words for love, eros, agape, and filia, to differentiate among the different kinds of love human beings may experience. We begin this series with a look at the erotic kind of love and how that shapes our spirituality.

*Nursery care provided for infants and toddlers.
Sunday school for preschool through Grade 8.*

Sunday, February 14 ~ 10:30 a.m.

"Re-Imagining Valentine's Day"
Rev. Arline Conan Sutherland

Standing on the Side of Love, (SSL, pronounced "Sizzle") is a public advocacy campaign sponsored by the Unitarian Universalist Association to promote respect for the inherent worth and dignity of every person. UU congregations around the country are participating in thinking of Valentine's Day as a time to demonstrate the side of love the Greeks named "agape." Join us for this fun service when we will show our love and participate in a hands-on project to offer aid to the people of Haiti.

*Nursery care provided for infants and toddlers
Social action Sunday for the Sunday school*

Remember to bring in food items every Sunday for our "Stock the Pantry" initiative, providing food for the Lexington Food Pantry

Search Committee Update

From the 40 ministers who expressed interest in First Parish, the Search Committee selected 11 to interview by phone, and, following that, narrowed the field to four candidates. The committee will now spend a weekend with each candidate, getting to know him or her better and hearing each preach. All of these candidates are very strong, have many gifts for the ministry, and come extremely well recommended.

The Search Committee's next task is to determine if one of these candidates is right for us, and if so, to convince that person to take the job.

If you have comments or questions, you can e-mail the Search Committee at search@fplex.org, or contact any member directly.

The 2009-2010 Ministerial Search Committee:
Chris Hess, Dan Fenn, Elisabeth Jas, Elisabeth Walsh, Janet McKenney, Russ Brami, and Ruth Rose.



Musings

Rev. Arline Conan Sutherland, Interim Minister

One reason liturgical calendars exist is to remind us how connected we are physically and spiritually to the rhythms of seasons, to the earth itself. At the beginning of February we find ourselves half way between the winter solstice and the spring equinox. By the beginning of February, winter can feel interminable. How many more days of highs reaching only into the 20's? How many more inches of snow? Have we not wintered enough?

Moods are changeable. Optimism crosses with despondency. We seem more sensitive to irritations. Tempers flare along with sniffles and coughs. Thoughts turn to getting away to someplace warm and sunny.

Yet, things are changing. There are two more hours of light a day than there were at the solstice. The birds sing more loudly. Christmas decorations are put away, the last evergreens and poinsettias taken out. Plants that evoke early spring find their way into our homes: pussy willows, primroses, and forced bulbs.

Traditions abound to mark the shift. Neo-pagans celebrate the cross quarter day of Imbolc. Roman Catholics and Anglicans celebrate Candlemas, blessing candles for the coming year, and then placing the newly blessed candles at one's throat while prayers for health are offered. Most of these traditions also involve some kind of weather prognostication. Who among us didn't pay at least some attention to [Punxsutawney Phil](#)'s antics this week?

February in the second year of an Interim Ministry is a time when shifts are beginning to come to the fore. The Search Committee has made its short list and is scheduling weekends to meet with each of the final candidates. It's exciting! And just when the congregation was getting used to the interim minister, it's becoming ever clearer that this ministry will be concluding soon. Reactions are mixed.

We each have our ways of dealing with an impending departure. Focusing on one another's more irritating aspects is common, especially if the relationship has been fairly positive. It's often the first step in saying, "Good-bye." Let us be gentle with ourselves as we proceed in this dual movement of both saying, "Farewell!" and preparing to say "Hello!" to a new settled minister.

Canvass Update

At the conclusion of the first three of our canvass dinners we had pledges of \$83,000 from 24 committed members. Last year these same people pledged \$74,950 so this represents a significant increase. With more canvass dinners over the past weekend, we now have a total of \$150,420 from 49 pledgers. We also have a promise from the Board and the Finance Committee for an aggregate increase of 15%.

All of this is a good start but with our target of \$371,640 we still have a long way to go. We ask those who have not yet pledged to please consider that our goal requires an average pledge of over \$1,800 and that last year 70% of our pledges were less than \$2000 and 36% were less than \$1000. This means that a disproportionate amount of the burden of support unfairly falls on a small minority. For the financial health of First Parish it is important that everyone who can give more, does. If possible please consider giving at least enough to raise your pledge to above the next \$1000 level. It would be really nice to report that 60% of our pledges were more than \$2000, insuring the continuing financial health of First Parish. In concrete terms that means living wages for our staff, a warm, safe and well maintained building in which to meet and to worship, and fine music and religious education programs.





Lynne Weygint, Director of Religious Education

January flew through and left my head spinning, there was such a whirlwind of activity at church – whew! And now, here we are on the eve of my very favorite holiday, Groundhog Day. By the time you read this, we will all know how much more winter we have to look forward to. In the next few weeks the red-winged blackbirds return, the pussy willows will begin to bud out, and a few warm days will tease us from “the other side.” In the meantime, as we await the death of winter, I look forward to at least a few more good ski days!

What kept me busy in January, you ask? On January 10, the winter term of programming began for our 5th-8th graders. Teachers volunteered, and have now finished their first month of teaching. Thanks to Marianne DiBlasi, Dom Pedulla, Sarah Springer, Russ Tanner, and Susanna Whitman for their time and energy with our Intermediate and Junior Youth Clusters.

The Neighboring Faiths class (Grade 7/8) has focused on Hinduism this month and has seen a DVD about the faith as well as visited the Sri Lakshmi Temple in Ashland. What a great day *that* was! I was fortunate to be able to join the group and found it fascinating, having never been to a Hindu temple before. We were lucky to witness a busy day at the temple, and it really felt like we had stepped into India for a couple of hours with the offerings of fruit, the physical beauty of the altars and the temple itself, the sounds of priests praying and bells chiming, and the aroma of incense. All were ubiquitous.

The class was very lucky to have a visit from Marcie Griffith, last year's Elementary Cluster teacher, who majored in religious studies at Amherst College. She shared with them her passion for Hinduism from the perspective of a lifelong Unitarian Universalist. She showed slides from her most recent trip to India last summer and wowed us with beautiful images of temples, some profoundly intricate and ancient and some as simple as a tree adorned with bits of cloth. Next week the visitor is a friend of Susanna Whitman's, a Hindu woman from Lexington. Then we're on to Buddhism.



Our Primary and Elementary Clusters continue with their theme of “Our Jewish and Christian Heritage,” with the Primary Cluster finishing two weeks of creation stories, and the Elementary Cluster just beginning a month-long focus on Moses.

In the Nursery, we welcomed back Michelle Grullon, our Nursery Caregiver. Michelle returned to the Nursery on January 24, and we are thrilled to have her back. Welcome home, Michelle!

Youth group news: The junior youth spent Sunday afternoon snow tubing after lunch at church. Many thanks to advisor Megan Ladd and parent Bill Scott for driving and chaperoning the event. The 5/6th grade monthly youth group was launched last month, and they are looking forward to Glow-in-the-Dark bowling on February 27. Also on February 27, the junior youth will go to Quincy for a social action project at Cradles to Crayons, while the senior youth will travel to the Boston Food Bank for their social action project. Big day on the 27th!



Alison Green Will, our Youth Programs Coordinator, has coordinated (appropriately enough, given her job title!), a two-day social action retreat at the end of the February school vacation for the senior high youth. The group will stay at the UUA-owned Eliott and Pickett Houses on Beacon Hill and work during the day at Renewal House on Mission Hill. We're still working toward a larger, more distant trip and project for next year for this group.

I have also been busy in January convening, or re-convening several “advisory groups.” These short-term groups work closely and intentionally with me to design and implement various aspects of the RG&L program. Currently working are the Coming of Age Advisory group, the Social Action for Children and Youth Advisory Group, and the Adult and Youth Advisory Group (which will have a different name once we get rolling!). These short term groups, or task forces, help me launch important and meaningful aspects of the program without burning out volunteer energy. The work is limited and the energy focused, and what fun we have!

The Religious Growth and Learning program, now at mid-year (how on earth did that happen?), is thriving! Many, many thanks and blessings to the legions of you who make it so!

First Parish Family

We extend our loving sympathy to **Eric Neumann** whose father Klaus Neumann died in early January in Ohio.

Our thoughts are with **Candace Leiden** who has been in Mount Auburn Hospital for the past nine days being treated for pneumonia and pleurisy.

We are glad to report that **Molly French** is home from the hospital after having been treated for pneumonia.

Welcome to our newest members who signed the Membership Book on Sunday: **Frederic Boutaud, Mia and Larry Roop, Mary Brinton, Renee and Michael Piazza, Maggie Close and Dave Cannon, and Risa and Brian Lavelle** who signed on Monday.

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Laughter Club

Laughter makes us feel good. When we laugh, our bodies release a cocktail of hormones and chemicals that have been proven to have positive effects on our system, relieving stress, improving blood flow and digestion, and strengthening the immune system. You don't need to be happy, have a sense of humor, or even have a reason in order to laugh. Performing a series of yogic laughter exercises, developed by Dr. Madan Kataria, an Indian doctor and student of yoga, almost always leads to real laughter, especially when practiced in a group. Zoe Perry-Wood, CAGS certified laughter yoga instructor, leads this class on the first Thursday of each month from 5:30-6:30 p.m. Drop-ins are always welcome.

Check out the Standing on the Side of Love web site and read about the care packages for local Haitians that Meg Soens organized and so many of you helped make possible. Here's the link: <http://www.standingonthesideoflove.org/blog/care-bags-for-haitian-neighbors/>

Celebrating Ourselves

It was a wonderful moment on Sunday as we celebrated generations of members at First Parish, from those who have been in the church for one to as many as seventy years! Members and Friends co-chair (and Sunday morning Greeter) Pete Tasker said "... I felt particular pride in welcoming our newest members. As Greeters we meet these people when they first come to the church, and as friends we get to know them over the next couple of months or years. To see them sign the Membership Book was a great recognition of the commitment of First Parish to welcome newcomers and the commitment these new members are making to First Parish." If you would like to be part of greeting the next generation of new members and feel the same pride, contact Mia Roop, Pete Tasker or Jeanne Weikert to sign up for a Greeter Team for one Sunday a month. Even better, if you want to help plan newcomer activities, call Jeanne or Pete to join the Members & Friends Committee which meets monthly.



Meditation Group

The First Parish Meditation Group meets at the church on the second and fourth Thursdays of each month, from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. The next meeting is on February 11. Anyone who is interested is welcome. No long-term commitment is required; just come on the days when your schedule permits. The format includes quiet meditation for 30 minutes, followed by a brief reading and then time for conversation. Meditation begins at 4 p.m. but if you arrive a bit late, please just slip in quietly and find a place to sit. If you are new to meditation and would like to ask questions, come at 3:45 to talk with the facilitator for that day to get a few pointers. The group meets in our newly-refurbished parlor, a quiet spot with beautiful light in the late afternoon.



Film Series

Come see the next film in our film series this Friday, February 5, and enjoy a new experience — a silent film. The next film in our series on "great performances" will be Charlie Chaplin's classic *City Lights*, a typical Chaplin film, co-starring the lovely Virginia Cherrill as the blind flower seller. The movie will begin promptly at 7 p.m., with discussion afterward. Bring your own snack to enjoy during the film. For more information, contact Anne Collins.

Valentine Songs of Love

At its next meeting on Monday, February 8, the Unity Group will welcome soprano Epp Sonin who will present "Songs of Love," a program appropriate to the Valentine month of February. Founder of the Lexington Music School where she teaches piano and theory, Epp has performed in many venues in the Boston area and abroad. She has been a soloist with the Vancouver Symphony, and in 1992 with the Estonian National Symphony in a gala concert celebrating Estonia's independence. Closer to home, she has been a frequent performer in our Friday Noon Concert Series. She will be accompanied by Thomas Stumpf, her long time collaborator and Music Director at Follen Church. Socializing begins at noon, lunch is at 12:30 p.m. and the program begins at 1:30 p.m. Lunch is brown bag with dessert and beverage provided. Guests are always welcome. If you would like to attend please contact Hazel Graham or Elsie Petty.

Valentine Collage Class

Calling all creative souls! Marilyn Campbell and Nancy Earsy will lead a collage workshop this Friday, February 5, from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. at the church. Create a love letter, card, or a Valentine collage for your sweetie, your grandkid, your aunt, your brother, your mother, your best friend, or yourself. Materials will be provided but feel free to bring old photos, fabric scraps, wrapping paper, lace, ribbon, etc. from home to add to the selection. Come and enjoy a fun hands-on and green activity.



Remember to check our online Google calendar in the Members' section of our web site as you plan events or committee meetings. You can see everything that's scheduled on the master calendar, including outside rentals, and you can click on any event and read details about it.



GREEN CORNER



"Water, water everywhere, nor any drop to drink", rued the Ancient Mariner. Elizabeth Royte's book *Bottlemania* talks about some of the consequences of the enormous surge in the use of bottled water globally. Beyond the environmental cost of manufacturing, transporting and then disposing of plastic water bottles, another consequence is that at the very time when the infrastructure for potable public water needs upgrading, tax revenues to support this may decline because of decreased use of tap water in favor of bottled water. As one example, public water fountains have all but disappeared from places like airports, sports stadiums, university food service areas, and parks, replaced by vending machines for bottled water.

Inefficient distribution systems in U.S. cities strain natural water sources. As a local conservation group's 2006 report to the Water Resources Commission says, "Withdrawing water from one location [a watershed or large reservoir], using it in another [cities and their suburbs], and discharging it in a third place [as treated sewage, into rivers and streams] ...is simply not sustainable."

The Metropolitan Planning Council estimates that communities in this region will face serious water shortages by 2030 unless we change the infrastructure to recharge our rivers and streams. Rainwater that drains from impervious surfaces (rooftops, roads and parking lots) should be returned to the ground where it seeps through soil and rock layers which remove oil, road salt, and fertilizer. Wastewater should be captured and returned to the ground. Pharmaceuticals, personal care products (some of which contain endocrine disrupters) and other toxic waste would be removed by first passing the water through granulated charcoal and ozonation systems.

Royte suggests that paying for such changes could take the form of increased taxes from users, tax on bottled water, and a "clean water trust fund" paid into by industries that use a lot of water. ...Let's drink to that!



Calendar

Sunday, February 7

8:30 a.m. Music Committee
10:30 a.m. Worship Service
12 noon First Sunday potluck
12:20 p.m. *The Case for God* book discussion group
7 p.m. Youth groups

Monday, February 8

12 p.m. Unity Group

Tuesday, February 9

6:30 p.m. Grade 8 OWL
7:30 p.m. RG&L Committee
7:30 p.m. The New UU

Thursday, February 11

4 p.m. Meditation Group
7:30 p.m. Choir

Friday, February 12

6 p.m. Friday Night Live!

Sunday, February 14

10:30 a.m. Worship Service

Monday, February 15

Focalpoint deadline

Tuesday, February 16

7 p.m. The New UU potluck

Thursday, February 18

7:30 p.m. Choir

Friday, February 19

6 p.m. Friday Night Live!