



news @ first . u . providence

The Monthly Newsletter for
The First Unitarian Church of Providence
Corner of Benefit and Benevolent Streets
Providence, Rhode Island

A P R I L 2 0 0 9

All-Parish Supper—Friday, April 3

Welcoming Congregation Information Meeting
Sunday, April 19

Annual Meeting — Sunday, April 26

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S T A F F

- Rev. James Ishmael Ford, Minister
- Cathy Seggel, Director of Religious Education
- Frederick Jodry, Music Director
- Rev. Christana Wille McKnight, Community Minister
- Posey Kooris, Administrator
- Walter O. Sotelo, Administrative Assistant
- Katy Killilea, Membership Coordinator
- Jaime Durango, Building Manager
- Paul Webber, Evening Security
- Tadesse Tsega, Sunday Building Manager

N E W S L E T T E R

- Posey Kooris, Managing Editor
- Susan Fisher, Editor
- Nancy Green, Contributing Editor
- Carol Pentleton, Designer

Services in April...

Sunday, April 5 Annual Senior High School Youth Group Service – Intergenerational

10:30a

Our high school youth have been pondering the many ways that people find meaning in music. In their exploration, they have surveyed the congregation to discover their feelings and thoughts on the spiritual, emotional, and other messages found in music. There will also be our traditional recognition of graduating seniors. Come support our youth and celebrate the joy of music.

Nursery and Toddler Rooms open.

Thursday, April 9 Maundy Thursday Communion Service

7:00p

Rev. James Ishmael Ford

One of the strange delights in coming here was learning of our tradition of communion services. For complicated reasons, I had closely studied Christian liturgics while in seminary but, frankly, never thought I'd ever use that expertise. While no creedal Christian would count me as one, and my theology is a liberal Buddhism, still, I'm a happy heir to the Christian tradition and consider myself a cultural Christian in much the same way many of my Jewish-identified friends consider themselves cultural Jews. As such, I'm very, very excited to announce our Maundy Thursday Communion. In the Christian tradition, this is when Jesus gathered with his disciples for a Passover dinner, which would become the prototype of the Christian Communion service.

The Deacons and I will preside at this event (I'm currently trying to lure a couple of other ministers to "con-celebrate"). It will be a UU service, no doubt. But it also will deeply respect the Christian tradition. So, whatever your UU identity, whatever hyphens you have, please know you are invited to this ancient tradition that has been ours specifically for approaching three hundred years.

Sunday, April 12 Passover, Easter, and the Rites of Eternal Return

10:30a

Rev. James Ishmael Ford

The historian of religion Mircea Eliade wrote of a "sacred time" that informs the rest of our lives. And James thinks the Western holidays of Passover and Easter are grand examples of something powerful and true and worth noting.

Today's Special Offering will benefit Community MusicWorks. Through the permanent residency of the Providence String Quartet, Community MusicWorks provides free after-school education and performance programs that build meaningful long-term relationships between professional musicians, children, and families in urban neighborhoods of Providence.

Young people in preschool and older begin in the Meeting House, then go to their classes.

Sunday, April 19 Born in Blood

10:30a

Rev. James Ishmael Ford

Today marks the two hundred thirty-fourth anniversary of the Battle of Lexington and Concord, which many count as the beginning of the American Revolution. James thinks there are spiritual lessons to learn.

Young people begin in classrooms and worship in Chapel.

Sunday, April 26 Confessing a Unitarian Universalist Faith

10:30a

Rev. James Ishmael Ford

Today is our congregation's annual meeting. James feels it is a time to speak of liberal faith and what it can mean for us in trying times.

Young people begin in classrooms and worship in Chapel.

DEACONS' CORNER

What Is the Role of the Deacon?

Robert O. Jones, one of the ten deacons who serve at First Unitarian says, "The deacon is the conscience of the church." The most rewarding part for him is meeting the new members and co-hosting a Path to Membership class.

Deacons are members who are experienced in the organization of our church. They are nominated and elected; two new deacons rotate in yearly, and they serve for five years. They assist the minister in the spiritual and community life of the church, helping to welcome newcomers, and identify opportunities for outreach and service. They call members to check in and work with the minister to address special needs in the church. It's a vital service, and one that helps to connect us as a community.

— Nancy Green

NEWS AND NOTES

Lay Ministry Ready to Serve

First Unitarian's Lay Ministry is open for business and ready to take your calls and requests for a card, someone to listen with a phone call or a friendly visit, and emergency meals, transportation, or child care. We now have an amazing list of 44 Care Crew volunteers who are ready and willing to serve. Most of last year's Care Crew volunteers have graciously signed up again this year.

If you have a need, or know of someone who could benefit from our service, please leave a message with Posey Kooris in the church office at 401.421.7970, or any one of the Lay Ministers. We will get back to you promptly.

— Lay Ministers: Stewart Armstrong, Mary Frappier, Mary Frey, Martha Manno, Kate Menard, Janet Noble

Spring Path to Membership Class

Saturday, April 18, 9:00a - 12:00p

Thinking of becoming a member? The Path to Membership class is for anyone interested in learning about membership, Unitarian Universalism, and our congregation. At the end of the class, you'll have the opportunity to become a member.

Contact: Katy Killilea at 401.421.7970 or mem@firstunitarianprov.org



MONKEY MIND

I thought I'd ruminate a bit on God and god talk among us. It is a popular subject at Coffee Hour and in general at UU gatherings.

I believe it a fair observation to say for most of the twentieth century, normative Unitarian Universalism was agnostic with a heavy salting of atheism. Today, Unitarian Universalism is in flux. It is my anecdotal observation that the majority, the larger majority, of those attracted into UU congregations are theist. Now, it is real hard to define what they mean when they use the word *God*. Most, I think, of *that* most have some intuition of an essentially loving presence, a benign entity at the heart of things. A few posit the watchmaker's God. And, some find a pantheistic God a reasonable way to describe the way things are. This is a naturalistic theism, and a position I can embrace at least three days out of a given week. (The other four, well, they're all over the map, although almost always washed through my general critical disposition...)

Personally, I like this variety of opinion among us about the traditional placeholder for meaning in our lives. I think the word *God* – and I would also include *soul* – can be very useful.

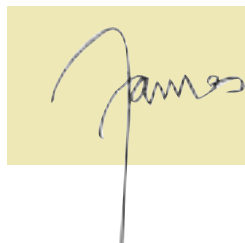
I disagree with those who think the word *God* has caused so much of the suffering in the world that we would be better off without it. You bet adherents of various theologies certainly have done a lot of damage. But, I would add, the two great atheist experiments of the twentieth century haven't proven to be any improvement. My personal take-away is that, God or no God, the good or ill of human relations finds another source.

And, I admit, I am deeply interested in that other source. I agree seeing a God outside the universe is almost certainly a projection of our humanity on the cosmos. But I argue a God that is the universe is the way things are and, as something experienceable within our lived lives, is that source.

I would also suggest that in my experience the more dangerous delusion is not that projection of the divine outside the world, but the projection of our individual reality outside our bodies. The soul I have trouble with is the one that rides inside our bodies like a passenger on a bus. That soul is a very dangerous story, leading to a denial of the world, and our own existence and the importance of what it is we do...

And yet I find *soul* a very useful term, and am in no way suggesting we don't use it. Like knives, theological language has multiple uses. Some very nasty. Some very good. And I think our task in this spiritual cooperative is to engage them and find what is useful and run with it. (Back to that knife image, apparently...) Anyway, I think there is no better place to explore what these uses are and to differentiate them than within our liberal religious congregations.

Two cents...



Rev. James Ishmael Ford, Minister
Office Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, 9:00a–12:00p
Appointments are recommended.
min@firstunitarianprov.org





SPIRITUAL PATHWAYS

“Just-spring”

The Unitarian poet e.e. cummings writes of “Just-spring, when the world is mud-luscious” and “puddle-wonderful.” In his “Chanson Innocent, I”, boys run around playing marbles, girls jump rope, and “the goat-footed balloon man whistles” somewhere, the song of Just-spring wending its way through everyone’s heart.

I know that it’s spring when a delicate dance happens in my world of UU faith development. The movement is between careful review of curricula, staff, budget, and goals, followed by stepping ahead to renew and enhance vision and programming. As reported last month, a mindful consideration of foundational elements of the religious education program took place. Now, the Religious Education Committee for Children and Youth and I assess resources and seek valuable teacher team feedback. Volunteer teacher teams have been invited to two special events this spring. Since it is important to build connections and community, we will share camaraderie and recommendations along with bagels at a teacher breakfast. Next, a luncheon program will feature Rhode Island religious educator Renee Pierre recounting her experiences on a cross-country family journey of radical hospitality along the UU trail. I am looking forward to sharing gratitude and these learning moments with our volunteers.

According to the plan, we will be ready to present the 2009–2010 course descriptions to the congregation in May. I am glad that the returning daylight and warmth help us stay inspired in the annual process of review and renewal. All is going well.

In his reflection about e.e. cummings’ “Just-spring,” Brian Nelson writes, “There is a kind of panic in these early days when all the pent-up energy of winter suddenly bursts forth and runs riot. Take note of it. Don’t discourage it. It is the birthright of April.”

I hope that we can all enjoy a peaceful spring of work and play and begin to quench our thirst for balance.

Take good care,

Cathy Seggel, Director of Religious Education
401.421.7970
dre@firstunitarianprov.org
Office Hours: Monday–Friday and Sunday



NEWS AND NOTES

April Is “Interest in Teaching” Month

I am pleased to report that there are some team-teaching opportunities next fall for interested adults in the congregation. Our Sunday school is a cooperative venture, with parents and non-parents sharing their time with our children and youth.

Current volunteers have first choice to remain on teams. Spring planning for next fall allows time for teacher teams to meet and be supported by the staff. Each grade has a minimum of four teachers who agree to help on about half of the Sundays. Teachers stay connected to the adult worship community by attending services on their weeks off and by attending chapel services and appreciation events with other teachers. Our safety policies include having at least two adults in each classroom at all times, signing a Code of Ethics, and requiring background checks.

April is the month when we actively seek interest from those who might like to teach. Of course, the RE Committee and I are happy to hear of your interest at any time of year. We look forward to your involvement. Please look for committee members during coffee hour in the atrium or see Cathy in the church office.

Contact: Cathy Seggel, DRE, at 401-421-7970
or dre@firstunitarianprov.org

News from Chapel

Children, youth, and their teachers shared music, meditation, and messages in March chapel worship services. Themes ranged from finding hope in anxious times to gratitude for the earth, generosity, and stewardship. We reflected on the many gifts of time, ideas, caring, and financial resources that people bring to this faith community, making it possible for our church and our Unitarian Universalist Association, our religion to be a sacred presence in the world. Young people were connected to congregational fund-raising practices with an invitation to bring donations to chapel service offerings to be added to our annual canvass. Lo! and behold, many brought quarters, dimes, and dollars. The total is \$43.80 and rising.

We will be further exploring UU principles and sources, finding the common threads of spring celebrations in our interactive chapel services in April.

NEWS AND NOTES

Meeting and Greeting Newcomers

There's a happy buzz of energy around membership headquarters. We're gearing up for the next Path to Membership class, getting newcomers and new members involved in the congregation, and continuing to hold the Newcomers Café during Coffee Hour.

Weekly volunteers from the Deacons, Prudential, and Membership Committees have been coming into church early, donning purple scarves, and welcoming everyone into the Meeting House. Greeters stay purple through Coffee Hour, attending Newcomers Café or keeping a keen eye out for purple mugs.

More greeters are needed and wanted, so if you're interested, please volunteer. It has become clear that more than a handful of official greeters are needed, so please feel welcome to join the effort, even without a purple scarf! Simple things, like noticing someone who might be new and having the courage to start a conversation, make a big difference in a newcomer's Sunday morning experience.

Contact: Katy Killilea, Membership Coordinator
401.421.7970 or mem@firstunitarianprov.org.

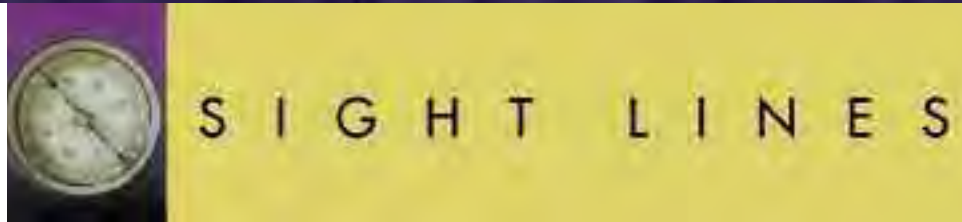
Supporting Our Financial Health

Strong financial support and lower expenses are great news at any time, particularly today. Support from pledges, donations, Sunday cash offerings, and similar sources rose to \$235,034 by the end of February, an increase of 12% over the same period last year. Two-thirds through our current fiscal year, income from pledges and collections was at 71% of the amount budgeted, almost \$13,000 higher than expected. Rentals are also ahead of last year and, at \$45,360, stand at 84% of the budgeted \$54,000.

Meanwhile, expenses stand at 65% of our budget, about \$12,000 less than expected. Meeting House and Parish House expenses are at 61%, and programs are at 49% of the budget.

Although we have a small financial cushion, we face a sharp decline in endowment support in the fiscal year beginning in July. Even if that cushion holds, it probably won't be enough to make up for endowment decline. Still, it's hard not to be hopeful. Church members and friends have increased their financial support, and we are trying hard to keep our church financially healthy.

—Tony Allen, Treasurer



The notion of a congregational covenant is on my mind lately.

I guess this line of thinking started back in February, when we were planning our installation service to formalize James Ford as our new settled minister. It is customary for the minister and the congregation to commit themselves to some sort of covenant as part of that ceremony.

The only explicit covenants for our congregation that I've ever seen are inscribed into what we generally refer to as "The Book." If you're new to our congregation, let me tell you something about The Book.

It's an old, leather-bound volume, of modest size, considering what is within. The first entry in The Book is a covenant, voted on and unanimously approved by the congregation, dated October 27, 1821. Though the words are faint and fading, they are recorded in an elegant flowing hand: "...solemnly devote ourselves to the service of God, in Jesus Christ, through the Holy Ghost..."

What follows then are signatures; page after yellowed and frayed page of the signatures of every person who has become a member of our congregation since 1821. In our congregation, you haven't officially joined until you've put your name in The Book. Leafing through those pages, you get the faintest whispers of all those who have come before.

About a quarter of the way through the book, another covenant is recorded: "...In the love of truth and in the spirit of Jesus Christ, we join for the worship of God and the service of man..." It's dated March 30, 1882. It is the last recorded covenant in the book. A hundred and seventeen years of signatures follow.

While a few in our congregation might embrace either or both of these covenants, many of us, I think, would find these statements to be narrow in some important respects. In a way, it seems the very notion of a congregational covenant is slipping into the mists of our past.

These days, we tend to talk in terms of mission statements – an idea borrowed from the world of corporations and corporate planning. I don't mean to knock the concept of a mission statement. At their best, they capture an organization's core values and purpose. It seems to me that a covenant should do as much. But I think a covenant does something more. At its heart, a covenant is a statement of commitment, a statement of dedication, to a commonly held faith and to a commonly affirmed larger purpose.

The question is: what has our shared covenant evolved into since 1882? Certainly our understanding of the profound interconnectedness of all life has become more evident over the past century. And in our congregation, we've come to recognize the value of welcoming all faith traditions that embrace core values of love and mercy, generosity and reason. But these are more shared values than an articulated shared commitment.

I can't help but note that there aren't all that many pages left in the current volume of The Book. One day, and it won't be long, we will start a new volume. When it is our turn to make the first entry in that new volume, what will it say? What will we affirm, to all of those who come after us, about who we are, about what we believe, and to what we have dedicated ourselves?

Maybe the time has come for us to answer some of these questions.

Good things,

Cy O'Neil, President
pres@firstunitarianprov.org
401.272.9454



TOGETHER IN FELLOWSHIP

Planning a Variety of Events for Everyone

The Fellowship Committee has been busy planning events that you'll enjoy. In addition to our very popular Parish Suppers and Round-the-Table Dinners, you won't want to miss **A Taste of Transylvania** (please see page 9 for full details), and the **All-Church Picnic**, which will be after church on June 14.

Please call any of us with your ideas, questions or comments. We are all listed in the church directory and we all wear orange name tags on Sunday.

In Fellowship: Carol Adams, Jim Estey, Mary Frappier, Kate Menard, Janet Noble, Gerry Spremulli, Dave Spremulli

April All-Parish Supper – Friday, April 3

(note the date change – first Friday of the month)

5:45p Social Hour: Bring hors d'oeuvres to share and wine for your own party if you wish.

6:15p Potluck Dinner: Please bring a dish to share that serves at least 8 people. You can bring a main dish, a vegetable, a salad, or a dessert.



Program: The Annual First Unitarian Storytellers' Festival

This promises to be a wonderful evening of storytelling. It is designed to appeal to all ages: young children, older adults who are young in spirit, and all those who are in between. We are mak-

ing a special effort this year to make this program child-friendly, so bring the whole family.

Our talented storytellers will be Jeanne Bent, Len Cabral, and Marilyn Murphy Meardon – all celebrated Rhode Island storytellers who are members of our parish community and who have captivated us in the past with their fascinating tales.

The theme will be "Stories from Here to There and Back." Stories often take us on journeys, but then bring us back to what we think and feel about life. In the process, our outlook may be changed. Come to our Storytellers' Festival and see how your outlook on life is changed.

Reservations for the Parish Supper are strongly requested. Please fill out the sign-up form in the *Meeting House Times* and put it in the collection plate, or see Jim Estey at coffee hour, or call the church office at 401.421.7970.

SATURDAY SOCIALS

These Saturday evening potluck suppers are for adults, except where noted. Newcomers, old-timers and in-betweeners who would like to meet new friends in the congregation are all encouraged to attend.

Reservations: Space is limited and reservations are required. To reserve space and select a menu item to bring for either dinner, please call Kate Menard at 401.437.6322.

April Saturday Socials

Saturday, April 4

Hosts: Gail and Paul Brule
4 Hedge Road
Lincoln, Rhode Island

Time: 6:00p to 9:00p

Hosts: Rick Jardon
23 Wilson Drive
Narragansett, Rhode Island

Time: 6:00p to 9:00p

If you would like to host a future Saturday Social, please contact Carol Adams at 401.433.4365 or carol.adams6@cox.net

May All-Parish Supper – Friday, May 15

(note the date change – third Friday of the month)

A Visit From The Mayor: Providence Today and Tomorrow



Speaker: Mayor David N. Cicilline
How is the city of Providence doing? What are its main strengths and problems? What has been the effect of the recession? What is the extent of poverty

and unemployment? And what about its future? Come hear the mayor's views on the "state of the city."

Mayor Cicilline grew up in Providence, graduated from Brown University, and served four terms as state representative from Providence's East Side. He was elected mayor in 2002, re-elected in 2006, and plans to run again in 2010.

Save the Date for May's Round-the-Table Dinners



May 9, 6:00p – 9:00p

These are small dinners where 6 to 10 people are seated at one table. Guests are assigned to a dinner to optimize the chances that each guest will be comfortable, will get to know a few people better, and will meet at least one new person. To host, you need a table that will seat 6 to 10 and parking for guests. And, it's really, really fun. That's it.

Host Sign-Up: Sunday, April 5, 11:30a – 12:15p

**The Annual Meeting of the
First Unitarian Church of Providence**
Sunday, April 26, 2009 at 12:00p
Parish House Auditorium

In addition to our annual election of officers, the agenda will include votes on our status as a Welcoming Congregation and on the election of a new UUA president.

About the Annual Meeting

According to the by-laws of the First Unitarian Church of Providence, the Annual Meeting of the Church for the election of officers, members of the Prudential Committee, the Nominating Committee, and the Board of Deacons, and for the transaction of all other proper business shall be held on the Church premises during the Spring of each year.

Five percent of the most recently reported membership number to the Unitarian Universalist Association, or 25 voting members, whichever is greater, shall be necessary to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business, but a smaller number may adjourn from time to time.

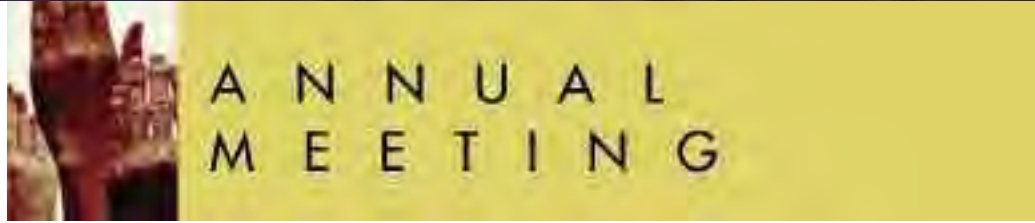
All questions at Church meetings, except as otherwise expressly provided for in the Articles of Incorporation or in the by-laws, shall be determined by a majority of those voting on such questions. Questions may not be voted on by proxy or absentee ballot. However, voting members who are disabled or incapacitated may apply for an absentee ballot seven days before a meeting. Absentee ballots must be received by the Clerk or his or her designee prior to the meeting.

Only those who have been members for more than three months, who are over sixteen years of age, and who in some recorded manner within the previous year shall have contributed to the financial support of the Church shall be entitled to vote.

If you have any questions about your eligibility to vote at the annual meeting, please call the Church office.

If you are not a voting member, you may still attend the annual meeting, but may not vote.

Robert's Rules of Order governs all duly called meetings of the Church.



**Nominees for New Elected Officers,
Deacons, and Committee Members**

The Nominating Committee submits to the congregation the following members to serve in the positions and for the terms indicated.

Current President-elect **Martha Rice Sanders** becomes **President** (1 year term) and current President Cy O'Neil becomes **Past President** (1 year term). All terms begin July 1, 2009.

Prudential Committee

Stewart Armstrong, President-Elect
(3-year term)

Stew is a graduate of Boston University, where he majored in Music Education, with a piano concentration. Before becoming a school administrator, Stew was a public school music teacher for 16 years. He holds a MEd from Plymouth State College and an EdD from Nova Southeastern University. A life-long UU (from Wellesley, Massachusetts), he was very active in the Concord, New Hampshire, UU Church—singing in the choir, serving as Volunteer Coordinator, and acting as Administrative Consultant. He has been a school administrator for 22 years in New Hampshire and Rhode Island. He has also been active in professional education organizations, most recently serving as President of the RI Association of School Principals (for three years). Currently, he is the Assistant Principal of Wickford Middle School in North Kingstown. Stew sang in the Providence Singers for five years and now with his wife, Beth, sings in the choir at First Unitarian. He most recently served on the Ministerial Search Committee and is actively engaged in the Lay Ministry Program. Stew looks forward to working with our new minister to develop First Unitarian's status as the flagship UU church of southern New England.

Gail Brule, Clerk (1-year term)

This will be Gail's fourth year as Clerk.

Tony Allen, Treasurer (1-year term)

This will be Tony's second year as Treasurer.

Pete Peterson, Assistant Treasurer
(1-year term)

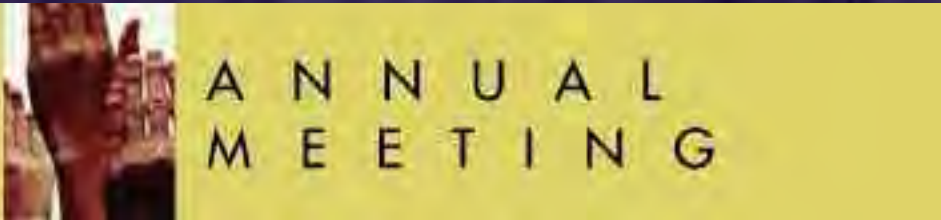
Although attending First Unitarian sporadically for about 12 years to keep his wife (the late Carrie Peterson) company, Pete only "signed the book" two years ago – after losing Carrie, his spiritual guide. He quickly became active, participating in Small Group Ministries, assisting with Building and Grounds, Membership, and other activity. As a small business owner, Pete's comfortable with bookkeeping and financial analysis. He says "I've found a spiritual home here, and I'm committed to giving it my full support. I admire the people in this congregation and would be honored to be elected to this position of trust."

Peter Gray, Director, Prudential Committee
(3-year term)

Peter's membership at First Unitarian spans 40 years, during which time he has served/chaired the Religious Education, Building and Grounds, Canvass, Cemetery, and Nominating Committees, the Allen House Restoration Committee, and two Capital Fund Drives. He has also previously served on the Prudential Committee and as President of the congregation. Peter feels that it was also an honor to serve on the Board of Deacons and extend the hand of fellowship to so many members and friends. Presently, Peter serves on the Personnel Committee and enjoys singing in the church choir. As a retired high school educator/administrator, he believes his organizational and interpersonal skills will enable him to help First Unitarian continue to be a source of inspiration and pride.

Anne Connor, Director, Prudential Committee
(3-year term)

Anne and her husband, Sean, signed the First Unitarian member book in 1990 and were formerly members of All Souls Unitarian Church in New York City, where they were married 26 years ago. Anne began her work career as a Brooklyn children's librarian and works as a paralegal in Providence. Her two children, Alex



(22) and Sarah (21), attended Sunday school classes, OWL and Coming of Age programs and wrote their credos. Anne was a Sunday school teacher for over ten years and discovered a “small group ministry” among the teachers. Anne helped with the annual canvass for several years and then became a mentor and eventually Mentor Coordinator of the Coming of Age Program. This year Anne is serving on the Religious Education Committee as liaison with the 7/8 grade, developing special Social Justice programs, and will continue leading Coming of Age next year. Anne thinks it seems like a perfect opportunity with our new minister settled to be of service to our congregation in grateful appreciation for all that First Unitarian means to her and her family.

Rita Rossi, Director, Prudential Committee (1-year, to fill an unexpired term)

Rita has been a Unitarian Universalist since 1996 and became a member of First Unitarian in 2003. Since then, she has been involved in church life at various times through teaching in the Religious Education program, chairing the Worship Committee, being a Small Group Ministry facilitator, volunteering time to the Community Food Share, and as a member of the most recent Ministerial Search Committee. In addition, she has led three Summer Services over the years. She currently works in a research department at Butler Hospital and, as much as is possible, spends her free time outdoors.

Deacons

Mary Frappier (5-year term)

Mary began attending First Unitarian in the late 1970s. She joined committees, pledged yearly, and then finally signed the book. First Unitarian has been a great growing place for her, a place where her views on the holy have been expanded. Over the years, she has served on the Prudential Committee, the Nominating Committee, and the Worship Committee. Presently, she is involved with Fellowship and the Lay Ministry. After 44 years of teaching, Mary continues to love working with early learners as

they constantly continue to expand her views of happiness.

David Spremulli (5-year term)

Dave, along with his wife Gerry, has been attending First Unitarian since 1997 and signed the book in 2000. Their son, Mark, joined later. Dave retired as the Town Assessor in East Greenwich in 2003 and is currently working part-time in health coverage administration. He has served on the Prudential Committee and the Adult Education Committee, and sorted groceries for the Food Pantry, as well as setting up for the potluck suppers, and was a member of the Earth Circle. He is currently serving on the newly created Fellowship Committee. Dave is a member of Silver Spring Country Club in East Providence and tries to occasionally sneak in a round of golf.

Nominating Committee

Carrollyn Grace (2-year term)

Carrollyn has been a member of the church since moving to Providence in 2000. Since then, she has served on the Lay Ministry and the Buildings and Grounds Committees, and also on an Installation Committee. She worked with Helen Haynes and Nancy Weiss-Fried to design and install the Meditation Garden and has been available for varied church activities over the years. Carrollyn maintains a private practice at Butler Hospital in psychotherapy and psychiatric education management. She is active with her five grandchildren, four of whom recently joined First Unitarian with their parents. She looks forward to serving the community in this next role.

Paul Gazin (2-year term)

Paul became a member of First Unitarian shortly after he began attending in 1995. Over the years, Paul has served on various committees, including the Prudential Committee, the Religious Education Committee, the Personnel Committee, and the Budget Committee. He has also taught Sunday School and has been involved in Small Group Ministry. A resident of

Cranston, Paul works as a math teacher at Moses Brown School. His two daughters, Jessica and Nicole, are both graduates of the Religious Education program, and they are currently both away at college, giving Paul a bit more time to become once again actively engaged in the life of the church. He is excited about the opportunity to help First Unitarian find and develop the leaders who will take us to new heights in the coming years.

Michael Currier (2-year term)

Michael went to his first UU service in Seattle in 1997. He promptly signed the book there and has been a member of churches everywhere he has since resided. Northampton, Boston, and Springfield, Massachusetts have all been stops on the way to finding his way back to Rhode Island. Since becoming a member of this community in 2006, he has served as an usher, led a summer service, and helped with the church’s move toward becoming a Welcoming Congregation. Michael is very excited by the sense of growth and potential in the air and is happy to see other new faces and hopes to help that trend continue.



NEWS AND NOTES

Election of a New UUA President Slated

This June, the UUA General Assembly (GA) in Salt Lake City will elect a new president to serve a four-year term. The two candidates are Laurel Hallman, of Dallas, Texas and Peter Morales, of Golden, Colorado.

Our congregation has been allocated nine ballots for this election. These ballots can be cast in person at GA by duly authorized delegates from our congregation, or by absentee ballot. It is the responsibility of the Prudential Committee to decide how to allocate the votes.

The PruComm saw the need to balance two goals: first, to empower those who invest the personal time and expense of going to GA to be able to vote based on the information gathered at GA, and second, to involve the congregation in larger UUA affairs.

The PruComm developed the following plan for allocating the votes:

Any members of our congregation (up to 9) who attend GA as delegates may use one of those nine ballots to vote their conscience at GA. Any remaining ballots will be allocated proportionally according to a congregational vote at the Annual Meeting on April 26. If you wish to be a GA delegate, please provide evidence of GA registration to the church office by April 20.

Here are the candidates' websites:

www.hallmanforuupresident.com/

www.moralesforuupresident.org/

UU World profiles of the candidates:

www.uuworld.org/news/articles/102213.shtml

www.uuworld.org/news/articles/102214.shtml

For a few weeks during Coffee Hour, we will have laptops playing videos from the candidates' websites. Please take the time to learn about the candidates, so that you will be an informed participant in the vote on April 26.

Social Justice Ministry Initiatives

Social justice projects and initiatives are alive and well at First Unitarian. The various committees and task forces involved in social justice projects met on March 10 to review and discuss their progress so far this year and discuss budget requests for next year.

The group agreed to discuss short- and long-term visions for social justice and plans for next year's programs and activities on Thursday, May 14 at 7:00p. All are welcome to attend.

CONGREGATIONAL
NEWS AND EVENTS**Write-a-Thon News to Celebrate!**

Ma Khin Khin Leh was one of the prisoners of conscience for whom we wrote appeals at the Write-a-thon in December. Amnesty International received news on February 22 that she had just been released from prison, on Saturday, February 21. She was a young mother and school teacher when she was arrested in 1999 for organizing a peaceful demonstration to protest the deteriorating economic and human rights environment in Burma. For this "crime," she was sentenced to life in prison, at the age of 33. When she was sent to prison, she left behind her daughter, then age three. Her sentence was unusually harsh, even by the standards of Burma's military government. While we celebrate her release, we should not forget that many more political prisoners remain in prison in Burma.

Many thanks to all who came to help and whose letters were part of a global effort on Human Rights Day in December.

— *Marcia Lieberman, for the World Affairs Committee and the Providence chapter of Amnesty International*

Welcoming Congregation: We're Ready to Vote

More than 200 First Unitarian members and friends filled out attitude questionnaires. The committee thanks you all! The questions demanded some self-examination, and we appreciate your honesty, time, and commitment.

The responses to the attitude questionnaire show that we are a congregation with a welcoming attitude. For nearly all of the questions, the favorable answers range between 95 and 99%. The committee unanimously agrees that we are ready to vote to take on the official status of a Welcoming Congregation. We are scheduling this vote for the upcoming congregational annual meeting on April 26.

Because some of us may still have questions, the committee has scheduled an open reception and informational meeting on April 19 after services. We'll be reviewing the results of the questionnaire and discussing Welcoming Congregation status and the upcoming vote.

Our questionnaires show that we experience some confusion about and resistance to transgender issues (10% on some of the questions). In the near future, the Welcoming Congregation committee will schedule a program on this topic. This will help us educate ourselves and dispel any ignorance or discomfort that might make us seem unwelcoming to a person who is transgendered.

Becoming a Welcoming Congregation has a number of benefits:

1. Human rights for bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgendered (BGLT) people is a social justice issue. Taking this step gives us the moral authority to speak out on these issues in the legislature and in the community at large.

2. Having this status tells the community that we have educated ourselves and have created a safe community where BGLT people will not encounter the hatred and homophobia they find in many religious organizations.

3. This is a first step in creating the diverse and open-hearted community so many of us long for. Many people are looking for us and our Unitarian Universalist spirituality but haven't yet learned of us. Adopting Welcoming Congregation status is the beginning of reaching out to the wider community.

The committee's next planning meeting is on Sunday, April 5, at 9:00a. Please join us!

Contact: Brian Paradis 617.827.2335 briananddeacon@comcast.net

Michael Currier 617.680.6083 mpcurrier@gmail.com

Jan Seymour-Ford 401.305.5361 seymourford@gmail.com



GETTING INVOLVED

Experience a Taste of Transylvania

Friday, May 1; social hour at 5:45p, dinner at 6:15p, program at 7:45p

The Transylvanian Partnership Church committee will host an evening fundraiser to help our partner church in Szentegyhaza build a steeple and expand their church. The evening will be highlighted by a traditional Transylvanian meal prepared by our very own chef, Tom Getz, and a cadre of sous chefs.

Appetizers will include assorted cheese-filled vegetables, tomato quarters, hard-cooked eggs, meats, sausages, sweet pickle gherkins, cheeses, cucumber slices, and crusty bread. A featured appetizer will be a Transylvanian specialty, *korozott*, which is a spread made of sheep cheese, butter, paprika, and caraway seed served on slices of bread and often decorated with slices of green or red pepper.

The main course will consist of chicken paprikash served over mounds of noodles. Vegetarian requests will be accommodated with lescó, sautéed peppers, onion, and tomatoes served over noodles. Dessert will be fruit strudel.

Tea, coffee, and water will be provided. Wine and alcoholic beverages are not part of the dinner but you may provide your own.

The after-dinner program will focus on the music, folktales, and history of Transylvania: the music of Kodaly and Bartok, performed by Tricia Kammerer and Alex Hinton; Transylvanian fairy tales recounted by storyteller Marilyn Murphy Meardon; and a presentation by the Transylvanian Travelers about the rich past, the historic struggles, and the bright future for Transylvania.

Tickets at \$15 (and which include a cookbook of Transylvanian recipes) will be on sale in the Atrium during Coffee Hours in April.

Wholly Rollers Get Ready to Ride in 2009

The Wholly Rollers is a program of the Social Justice Ministry at First Unitarian. It's fun, a challenge, fellowship, and a great opportunity to serve others. Wholly Rollers work together to raise funds for the Rhode Island Chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. Each Wholly Roller sets a personal goal for fund raising and cycling in two MS events: April 10 MS 25 Quick Ride in Narragansett or June 27-28 MS 150 Bike Tour from Narragansett to Connecticut College in New London, Connecticut, and return. Wholly Rollers prepare for the events by riding together on weekends from April to June.

There is much more information and great images of past rides on our website at www.silversmithing.com/whollyrollers/

Contact: Greg Kniseley, mkniseley2@cox.net

A Worship Committee Experiment, and Summer Planning

The Worship Committee has decided on an experiment, starting in April and running through the end of the "formal church year" in June. We will be introducing a "moment of greeting." It is common among UU churches to pause at some time early in the worship service to greet our neighbors, generally a wave, or a handshake, and perhaps a word or two. It is particularly meant to be a moment of welcoming for new folk, giving them a brief connection that might extend into a conversation during the Coffee Hour.

The committee is also beginning to plan the Summer Service schedule, with ten or eleven lay-led services this year. This summer's theme is Spiritual Journeys. If you've been thinking of something you might want to present, or know someone who's a good speaker on subjects of common interest, this is the time to tell the committee about it. The committee also seeks musicians who are willing to accompany hymns as well as play a prelude, meditation, offertory, and postlude.

Contact: Marilyn Eanet at meanet@cox.net

NEWS AND NOTICES

Easter Plants

If you wish to give plants at Easter, please complete the form below and return it to the church office by Monday, April 6. Donation: \$20.00 minimum per name. Donors can take plants at the end of Easter Sunday service.

In Memory or Celebration of
(please specify and print first and last name of each person):

Given by : _____
Telephone: _____

Going to General Assembly?

Salt Lake City, Utah, June 24-28

Registration for General Assembly (GA) is now open. GA is the annual meeting of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations.

A wealth of great programming is being sponsored by the GA Planning Committee, and UU University will be integrated into GA programming. This is a UUA presidential election year, and this year's Assembly will also vote on the adoption of a new Statement of Conscience on peacemaking.

For further information, please see the UUA website, www.uua.org/events/generalassembly

Spring Grounds Clean-up

Saturday, April 25, 8:00a

Join the Building and Grounds Committee for the Annual Grounds Clean-up. Come for as long as you can, and remember: many hands make light work.

Contact: Art Lusignan at alusig@cox.net or call the church office.

WOMEN'S ALLIANCE

Monday, April 6

11:00a Program: A presentation on immigration by William Shuey from the International Institute.

12:00p CATERED luncheon

(cost: \$9 or bring a sandwich)

**Benevolent Street Zendo:
An Ongoing Zen Meditation Group**
Every Monday at 7:00p

Boundless Way is an interfaith Zen community, maintaining close connections with the Soto Zen Buddhist Association and the American Zen Teachers Association. (All three of its senior teachers, including our minister, James Ford, are also Unitarian Universalists.)

Everyone is welcome. Brief instruction will be available to those who come at 6:45p.

Leaders: Jan Seymour-Ford and James Ford at benevolentstreetzendo@gmail.com
We are a member community of the Boundless Way Zen Sangha. More information: www.boundlesswayzen.org

Knitting Connection
Every Tuesday, 7:00p-9:00p

Join others in the congregation for an evening of knitting/crocheting and conversation. Bring your own project or work on our group project: knitting warm items for immigrant families in Olneyville. Beginners are always welcome!

No registration necessary.
Contact: Julie Meyers at kelmey@cox.net

Green Sanctuary at First Unitarian
Second Sunday, April 12, 9:30a

A Green Sanctuary congregation lives its commitment to the Earth by creating a sustainable lifestyle for its members as individuals and as a faith community. Our program goals include building awareness of societal environmental issues and injustices, motivating community action, and fostering a connection between spiritual practice and environmental consciousness.

No registration necessary.
Contact: Bekah Greenwald at bekah@apeiron.org or 401.521.3446

Spiritual Cinema
Spiritual Cinema will not meet in April.



**GROWING IN
WISDOM AND SPIRIT**

Reimagining Religion
*Second and fourth Tuesdays,
April 14 and 28, at 7:00p*

Reimagining Religion is an ongoing attempt to employ the best recent scholarship in coming to grips with issues raised by radically new developments in the study of religion and thereby achieving a fuller appreciation of what religious literacy entails in the twenty-first century.

The group's discussions draw on Lloyd Geering's autobiography, *Wrestling with God*.

No registration necessary.
Contact: Tom Hall at 401.647.2925
or tw2nd@aol.com

UU Women
Second Tuesday, April 14, 7:00p

Women are welcome to participate in a group of support and sisterhood. Meetings begin with a roundtable check-in, followed by the introduction of a topic or focus for the evening. This format is flexible and can be adapted to deal with more pressing issues brought to the group. All participants are encouraged to contribute ideas as to how our group can meaningfully flourish.

No registration necessary.
Contact: Terri Smith at 401.941.6865
or essceetee123@yahoo.com

UUMeN
*Third Sunday, April 19, 7:00p-9:00p
(note the date change to the third Sunday)*

Topic: The Burdens of Manhood
Part of being a male in society is to carry certain burdens or responsibilities. What are the burdens that you carry? How do you handle them? How do you feel about them? What burdens would you like to lay down? How and to what extent can we as men free our lives of burdens?

All interested men are welcome to join us.
No registration necessary.

Facilitator: Frank Vincent 401.421.7211

GAIA's HEARTH
Cornerstones of Wicca
Thursdays, April 2, 16 and 30, 7:00p-8:30p
April 2 Basic Ritual
April 16 Path - Celtic/Druid
April 30 Path - Roman/Greco

This ongoing class offers instruction in the basics tenets of Wicca as well as the practical techniques of magical work for an intensive, homework-oriented experience. Our members come from varied magical backgrounds and experiences.

Registration requested.
Leader/contact: Diane Donnelly
at dianednnly@yahoo.com

Sylvan Circle
Second Sunday, April 12, 12:30p-1:30p

At this family-friendly gathering, we all share, learn, and teach each other as we pass around a talking stick and explore all types of traditions. Each meeting starts with the Celtic Tree of the month and then "branch out" to explore and honor each other's paths. Children are welcome to participate, as sometimes they are the best teachers.

No registration necessary.
Leader/contact: Arte Ezikovich nimuix@cox.net



THIS MONTH @ FIRST UNITARIAN

April 2009

"The being cannot be termed rational or virtuous, who obeys any authority, but that of reason." — Mary Wollstonecraft

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			<u>1</u> Prudential Committee 6:00p	<u>2</u> Deacons 6:00p Wicca 7:00p	<u>3</u> Parish Supper 5:45p	<u>4</u> Saturday Social Suppers
			<u>5</u> Welcoming Congregation 9:00a Sunday Service 10:30a Membership 12:00p SGM Facilitators 12:15p Gaia's Hearth 12:15p	<u>6</u> Women's Alliance 11:00a R.E. Committee 6:30p Benevolent Street Zendo 7:00p	<u>7</u> Budget 7:00p Lay Ministry 7:00p Knitters 7:00p	<u>8</u> Worship Committee 6:30p
<u>12</u> Green Sanctuary 9:30a Easter Sunday Service 10:30a Sylvan Circle 12:30p	<u>13</u> Nominating Committee 7:00p Benevolent Street Zendo 7:00p	<u>14</u> Budget 7:00p Re-imagining Religion 7:00p UU Women 7:00p Knitters 7:00p	<u>15</u>	<u>16</u> Wicca 7:00p	<u>17</u>	<u>18</u> Path to Membership 9:00a - 12:00
<u>19</u> Sunday Service 10:30a Welcoming Congregation 11:30a Teacher Lunch 12:00p Membership 12:00p UU Men 7:00p	<u>20</u> Food Pantry 4:00p Benevolent Street Zendo 7:00p	<u>21</u> Budget 7:00p Knitters 7:00p	<u>22</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>25</u> Building and Grounds Clean-up starts at 8:00a
<u>26</u> Sunday Service 10:30a Annual Meeting 12:00p	<u>27</u> Benevolent Street Zendo 7:00p	<u>28</u> Re-imagining Religion 7:00p Knitters 7:00p	<u>29</u> Executive Committee 7:00p	<u>30</u> Wicca 7:00p		

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Easter Desserts

Instead of making a dessert for your Easter dinner, you can order one, freshly made, from the Alliance. Choose one of the following delicious desserts to surprise and please your guests.

Desserts will be ready to be picked up after Church on Easter Sunday. Please place your order at the Alliance table in the atrium during Coffee Hour.

Rustic Apple Pie Filled with more than three pounds of apples, this rustic, freeform pie is everything an apple pie should be: not too sweet and full of apple flavor. It will be baked Sunday morning, so it will be very fresh. Serves 8–10. \$16

Pear and Almond Tart Poached pears are nestled into a frangipane layer, making this tart a little different something to offer to your guests. Serves 8–10. \$17

Hummingbird Cake This is a pineapple-banana-spice cake with a delicious cream cheese frosting and decorated with dried pineapple rings. Serves 12 easily. \$22

Chocolate Decadence* The name says it all! This single layer, very chocolate cake is rich and smooth, perfect for the chocolate lover. Serving note: it's wonderful paired with ice cream or whipped cream. A raspberry sauce wouldn't be amiss, either. Serves 12–16. \$19

Cardamom Yogurt with Fragrant Orange Sauce* If perfume tasted as good as it does smell, this is what it would taste like. This is the perfect dessert after a large holiday meal. It is light, refreshing, and unbelievably delicious. It comes as individual servings of a panna cotta-like base with a container of the orange sauce to spoon over the top at serving time. 8 for \$20; 6 for \$16; 4 for \$12.

*Gluten-free

