

Blessed Is the Need

Once again, we are in the midst of the Lenten Season. Lent can be thought of as a "wilderness time"; Lent reminds us that Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness in deep reflection and prayer. For us, the wilderness is usually metaphorical – a time when things feel uncertain, and maybe we feel out of sorts or even a bit like we've lost our bearings.

The congregation is going through a bit of an uncertain time, as any ministerial transition time is. But please never forget: you are not alone in the uncertainty. You have each other. Please, love each other. Support each other. Your ministry *to each other* is one of the most important parts of your commitment to the First Congregational Parish, Unitarian.

You will be making decisions in the coming months about professional ministry, and undoubtedly about other matters as well. The Parish Committee will be doing their best to lead and make good decisions, as will the Ad Hoc Task Force (see note in this newsletter). Your ideas and input are welcome. But please, give them with love and appreciation, knowing that these lay leaders are working hard and in good faith to guide the congregation at this time, consulting with outside help (e.g., the District and UUA) along the way.

John F. Kennedy famously said, "We all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future. And we are all mortal." In this vast cosmos, we really have *each other* and our profound connectedness and interdependence. Let us be especially loving with one another in this time of transition and uncertainty; let us really *be there* for each other.

I will close with words of George E. Odell, found in our hymnal:

We need one another when we mourn and would be comforted. We need one another when we are in trouble and afraid. We need one another when we are in despair, in temptation, and need to be recalled to our best selves again. We need one another when we would accomplish some great purpose, and cannot do it alone. We need one another in the hour of success, when we look for someone to share our triumphs. We need one another in the hour of defeat, when with encouragement we might endure, and stand again. We need one another when we come to die, and would have gentle hands prepare us for the journey. All our lives we are in need, and others are in need of us.

Blessed are we that we need each other.

In hope and love,

Lara



CHURCH CALENDAR

Sunday, April 3, 2011

10 a.m. ~ "Something Wonderful Touches Us", with Rev. Eliza Blanchard, guest preacher

Thursday, April 7, 2011

6:30 p.m. Parish Committee Meeting

Sunday, April 10, 2011

9 a.m. ~ Meet in front of church for carpooling to Leominster, Rev. Lara Hoke driving

Sunday, April 10, 2011

10 a.m. ~ "Leap of Faith,"
Regional Association Sunday in Leominster

Sunday, April 17, 2011

10 a.m. ~ Peace and Social Action Sunday

Thursday, April 21, 2011

4:30 p.m. Parish Committee Meeting

Sunday, April 24, 2011

10 a.m. ~ "Easter Sunday" with Rev. Lara Hoke

Friday, April 29, 2011

11:30 a.m. ~ Petersham Branch Alliance Annual Meeting

Sundays, 9:00 - 9:45 a.m.

Silent meditation in Davis Memorial

Worship Notes

On **April 3**, the sermon will be **"Something Wonderful Touches Us"** as we welcome guest preacher **Rev. Eliza Blanchard**. Rev. Eliza Blanchard taught English and writing for years, and

Sunday school, too. Time in religious community during RE week on Star Island cemented her call to the ministry, and she was ordained in 2004. She was the settled minister of the UU Society of Grafton and Upton for five years, and "retired" to focus on writing and on developing a chaplaincy for animal caregivers. She lives in Brookline with her husband and Morkie named Maisie. Mr. Isaac Bates will be back to play organ. Join us at 10 a.m. All are welcome!

On **April 10**, there will be a **historic joint service** at the First Church, Unitarian Universalist, in **Leominster**. Our Petersham congregation will join congregations from Ashby, Athol, Fitchburg, Gardner, Hubbardston, Leominster, Orange, and Winchendon for a service called **"Leap of Faith"**. This will be a **Regional Association Sunday** service, with guest preacher the Rev. Dr. Stephan Papa, Special Assistant to the President of the UUA and lead organizer of Association Sunday. His sermon title is "Celebrating 50 Years and the Future of Our Faith." He will talk about the history leading up to the merger and about the changes in Unitarian Universalism over these last 50 years. The service starts at 10 a.m. in Leominster. For those who would like to **carpool**, meet at 9 a.m. (sharp!) in front of our Petersham church; the Rev. Lara Hoke will be driving (and her driving record is very good!). Don't miss this historic gathering!

Please join us on **April 17** at 10 a.m. for **Peace and Social Action Sunday**. All are welcome!

On **April 24**, Rev. Lara Hoke will lead us in celebrating **Easter Sunday**, thinking about its message of hope and rising up into new life. Beautiful Easter

music will be played by Carolyn Holstein. Join us at 10 a.m.!

Notes from the Parish Committee

In accordance with our bylaws, we have set up an ***Ad Hoc Committee for Ministerial Selection***. Thank you to **Sally Sennott, Laura Webber, and Chip Bull** for volunteering to complete this task. They will be discussing our options with the UU Transitions Office, and with the Director of the Clara Barton District, then they will present their findings at a special Congregational Meeting.

Association Sunday is coming up on April 10th. This annual event is held at the Leominster UU church, and representatives from all of the area churches take part. It's a wonderful opportunity to meet other Unitarians in neighboring towns, and be part of an impressively large spiritual group. We'll be carpooling from the Common, so let us know if you would like a ride.

Easter Sunday is April 24th. This is our first Sunday back in the sanctuary, and we have a very special tradition of decorating the pulpit with Memorial Plants dedicated to loved ones who are no longer with us. You can bring your own plants to the church before Easter Sunday, or you can contact Pam Chevalier or Barbara Corey to request that we purchase a plant for you. A Remembrance Page will be included in the Easter order-of-service.

After a very long winter, spring is here - time to plant some bulbs! If you don't have an order form for our ***Spring Bulb Sale***, give Emily Arnold a call.

Pam Chevalier,
Parish Committee Secretary

Petersham Branch Alliance

Petersham Branch Alliance Annual Meeting and Luncheon on April 29th at 11.30 p.m. in the dining room of the Unitarian Church. Always a fun event. All women welcome!

Celebration of the Ministry of the Rev. Vance Frank

Dear Friends,

We are inviting you to a celebration of the ministry of the Rev Vance Frank. Ordained nearly sixty years ago, Vance served the First Universalist Church of Orange for 20 years as well as the Unitarian Churches in Athol, Petersham and North Orange. In his service to the community he ministered to many who were without a church home, performed numerous weddings and funerals and served on boards of several social agencies.

Please join us **Sunday, April 3 at 2 p.m.** for a celebration with stories and music at the church. At 3 p.m. we will hold a reception in the church hall. Since it is not possible for us to know everyone whom Vance has touched in his work we greatly appreciate extending this invitation to others you may know.

If you have music, a story or anecdote to share please contact Peg Robinson @ 249-9273 or Bonnie Frank @ 544-8197 or the Universalist Church 544-6501.

Please RSVP if you are able. We hope to see you there.

Respectfully Yours,

Bonnie Frank and Peg Robinson

Easter Memorial Plants **Sunday, April 24, 2011**

Each year on Easter, we like to decorate the sanctuary with blooming spring plants, in memory of loved ones who are no longer with us. If you would like to donate a plant, please contact Pam Chevalier or Barbara Corey, and we will pick one out for you. You can also buy your own plant and bring it to the church on the Saturday before Easter, so we can include it in this special arrangement. The names of loved ones will be listed in the Easter order-of-service. Please notify Jill Berry of the names of the persons to be honored, so the names can be listed in the order-of-service.

UU Advocacy Day on April 6 – Be a Part of It!

In the five years since Massachusetts Unitarian Universalists joined together for UU Advocacy Days, we've made a big impact. We've helped to:

- **Defend "Equal Marriage"** against legislative attacks;
- **Address Global Warming** by passing the "Global Warming Solutions Act" and the "Green Communities Act;"
- **Prevent Homelessness** by gaining \$10 million in new funding, protecting Rental Vouchers, and passing the "Foreclosure Bill."

Help add to our UU successes by attending the **5th Annual UU Advocacy Day on Wednesday, April 6th from 10-2**, (coffee at 9:30) organized by *UUMassAction* and UU Urban Ministry. Our theme this year: **"Standing On the Side of Love" by Protecting Our**

Most Vulnerable Citizens. Speakers include the Rev. Fred Small and the Rev. Catherine Senghas, with invocation by the Rev. Lara Hoke. Training starts at 10:00 at **UUA Headquarters at 25 Beacon Street in Boston**, we have lunch, and then we go right next door to visit our legislators at the State House. RSVP and reserve your \$10 lunch at:

www.UUMassAction.org or contact Sue at (978) 910-0190 or SueMassAction@gmail.com. Or let Rev. Lara Hoke (cell 508-615-1686, mlhoke@uuma.org) know you'd like to participate, and she'll help with the rest.



YOGA WITH LINDA

April 2011

Tuesdays and Thursdays at 10 a.m.:

April. 5, 7, 8, 12, 14, 19, 21 26 and 28

\$5 per class

For more information, contact Linda at:

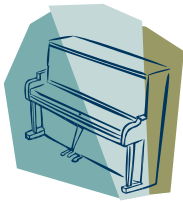
lckabo@verizon.net
978-434-1598

Care Packages

The Peace Group will continue sending care packages to the service people on a regular basis. Contributions are welcome, as are donations for postage for the packages.

Addresses for the soldiers to whom we are sending packages are available at the Davis Memorial.

There will be baskets for donations in the front entry of the church, and also in the Davis Memorial.



Free Piano

We need to move out the piano in the Davis Memorial and will give it to anyone willing to move it. It needs some work. Please call Kay Berry at 978-724-6610 if interested.

Newsletter

Material for the newsletter may be emailed to the firstparishnt@verizon.net, or can be placed in the wall file outside the Church office. Please make a note stating that the item is for the newsletter, or you can mail your item to: First Congregational Parish, News Team, PO Box 305, Petersham, MA 01366.

Friendly Reminder: Please send in your newsletter items **on or before** the **Monthly Deadline Date, which can be found on the front page of the newsletter.**

Our church newsletter is edited and mailed by volunteers. We are always happy and grateful to receive

contributions towards the expenses of paper, printing and mailing, as well as general news and news of families.

Thank You,
The Newsletter Team,
Kay Berry
Don Eaton
Robert Hall
Kathy Ballou ~ Editor

If you would like to receive your newsletter electronically instead of by regular mail, please email us at firstparishnt@verizon.net and let us know.