

Conflict: A Price We Have to Pay

by **Doug Zelinski**,
Director of Leadership Development

I will confess to almost starting three email flame wars. If you are unfamiliar with the phrase, this is when one email triggers a nasty response from the recipient, who also shares it with others. As the interchange escalates, so do the number of people drawn into the demeaning, self-righteous, bitter and even shocking interchange. And, yes, this was church-related.

I don't actually know how email flame wars end because, fortunately, I never pressed the "send" button. I had indulged my own self-righteous anger long enough to write the scathing email but withdrew my finger from the trigger in time. What I remember most is how much time and energy that self-indulgence cost and how exhausted it all made me feel.

Conflict costs. Whether we trigger flame wars or suppress conflict with polite denials, it costs. The price we pay is our time, attention, and energy. Some members pay that price until they are spiritually wounded or even bankrupt. But other members have learned to leverage conflict so the time and energy it costs becomes their investment in the beloved community.

One critical sign of a vital congregation is not the absence of conflict but rather the presence of members who approach conflict as faith formation. Every conflict we encounter provides the opportunity for each of us to re-examine our relationship to the mission of the congregation and the values of our faith community. Better still, it then usually requires us to act on those values -- faith in action of the most personal kind.

Conflict is inevitable. In fact, it's normal. In the last five years, 65% of all congregations across denominations report having high levels of conflict. What matters is how we choose to pay the price -- on the road to bankruptcy or on the path to beloved community.

This piece, by Doug Zelinski, Director of Leadership Development - Clara Barton District who led our special ***"Ministerial Startup Workshop"*** takes the place of Rev. Michelle's usual column, while she is recuperating from a broken arm.

CHURCH CALENDAR

Wednesday, Feb. 1, 2012

6:00 p.m. Parish Committee Meeting

Sunday, Feb. 5, 2012

10:00 a.m. ~Worship with Rev. Michelle

2:00 p.m. Christian Unity Worship

At St. Peter's Church, N. Main St.

Sunday, Feb. 12, 2012

10:00 a.m. ~ "The Light of Love"

Anne Perkins, Penny Blum and Ellen Woodbury

11: 30 a.m. Chocolate Auction

Immediately following church service.

Sunday, Feb. 19, 2012

10:00 a.m. ~Worship with Rev. Michelle

11:30 a.m. Rev. Michelle will share her report on developmental ministry. Please join us for conversation and discussion.

Sunday, Feb. 26, 2012

10:00 a.m. ~"Peace and Social Action" Lay-led

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

Silent meditation in the Davis Memorial

Worship Notes

As part of the experiment in lay led services, Anne Perkins, Penny Blum and Ellen Woodbury are planning **"The Light of Love"** on Feb. 12. Music, stories, and readings will honor our deep connections to the Earth, Nature and all living creatures.

CHOCOLATE AUCTION 2012

Once again we will have our Chocolate Auction in February. This fun and mouth-watering event will be held on Sunday the 12th at 11:30 a.m. with Chip Bull as our auctioneer.

The Chocolate Auction, started several years ago by Rev. John Pastor, has grown in participation and innovative items since that time. We have had theme baskets, cookbooks, movies, and all kinds of chocolate concoctions. It's great to watch the bidding rivalry going on and then get to enjoy, and in some cases share, some great treats.

Please think of what you can offer for the auction and come have a great time. As this is just 2 days before St. Valentine's Day you may be able to find a special treat for a special someone.

Kay Berry

Radical Hospitality

The Membership Committee hosted a brainstorming session on Radical Hospitality on December 18th. The results were published in the January newsletter and are reprinted below. If you are interested in working on any of these ideas, please contact the Membership Committee and we will help you get in touch with others who are also interested. We want to thank everyone who participated and hope that some of these great ideas will blossom into ongoing events and programs.

Results of dot vote on Radical Hospitality:

1. Lecture series – 10 votes
2. Provide rides to church and other events – 6 votes
3. Coffee House – 5 votes

4. Install handrails on front steps – 5 votes
5. Provide activities for children – non church – 4 votes
6. Provide list of ingredients for food items at potlucks – 4 votes
7. Music events – 3 votes
8. Get the word out – everyone is welcome – 3 votes
9. Provide family events – 3 votes
10. Book Club on Spiritual Practice – 3 votes
11. Have events that meet on a regular basis – 3 votes
12. Multigenerational talent show – 2 votes
13. Hearing loss ministry – 1 vote
14. Ice cream social – 1 vote
15. Provide helpers for seniors – 1 vote

The Congregation's Developmental Goals:

- To increase attendance and membership with a diversity of ages
- To foster a spirit of reconciliation among all members and friends of the congregation
- To provide multigenerational experiences through worship, programs, and activities, sharing our liberal religious traditions and values

Card of Thanks

On behalf of the family of the late Evelyn (Bisbee) Richards, who passed away at the Quabbin Valley Health Center on Christmas morning, I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone

who sent caring e-mails, cards of sympathy, attended her calling hour, funeral, grave-side service and/or collation on December 28th.

Our special appreciation is extended to the Rev. Michelle LaGrave who attended and took part in Evelyn's service with the Rev. Marilyn Richards, minister of the First Church, Unitarian, of Athol, and also to Mrs. Annie LePoer who visited Evelyn numerous times at QVHC.

Sincerely,
Helen Kennedy
(Evelyn's youngest sister)

Officers and Committees

The Nominating Committee presented the following slate to the Annual Meeting. It was approved.

OFFICERS:

Moderator: Chip Bull (2013)
Clerk: Elizabeth Davis (2014)
Treasurer: open
Collector: Emily Arnold (2013)

Parish Committee:

Philip Hubbard (2014)
Penny Blum (2015)
Genevieve Fraser (2015)
Mick Huppert (2015)
Sally Sennott (2015)

Buildings and Grounds:

Chip Bull (2014)
Norman La Pointe (2013)
open

Finance:

Kathy Ballou (2014)
Anne Perkins (2014)
open

Flower:

Pam Chevalier (2014)
 Doris Coolidge (2014)
 Barbara Corey (2014)
 Chris Eaton (2014)
 Ashley Gabrenas (2014)
 Bruce Lockhardt (2014)
 Anne Perkins (2014)

Interfaith:

Chip Bull (2014)
 Genevieve Fraser (2014)
 Emily Arnold (2014)

Membership:

Anne Perkins (2014)
 Sally Sennott (2014)
 Open

Music:

Kay Berry (2014)
 Arthur Perkins (2013)
 open

Social Action:

3 open

Hospitality:

Pam Chevalier (2014)

House:

Doris Coolidge (2013)

Nominating:

Chip Bull (2013)
 Ellen Woodbury (2013)
 Anne Perkins (2013)

**YOGA WITH LINDA**

February 2012

Tuesdays and Thursdays at 10 a.m.

Feb. 2, 7, 9, 14, 16, 21, 23, and 28

Chair Yoga: Feb. 1, 8, 15, 22 and 29

\$5 per class

For more information, contact Linda at:

lckabo@verizon.net

978-434-1598

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, P.O. 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