



THE FIRST UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF ESSEX

MEMBER OF THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
ASSOCIATION OF CONGREGATIONS

OUR MINISTER

As the Thanksgiving weekend winds down and I anticipate our own congregation's Thanksgiving celebration as we share leftovers from our individual celebrations on Thursday, I can't help but reflect on what I'm grateful for - so many, many people and experiences. But I must say a most recent one is especially on my mind.

I recently returned from a trip to New Orleans as part of a national clergy caucus with our community organizing affiliates from 36 states. This national gathering of community activist clergy was mostly focused on issues of economic and social inequality and the call for clergy from all religious faiths and denominations to commit to a transformation of our country. It was full of energy, great preaching, wonderfully analytical presentations, lively music and dance, and serious conversations and commitments. But the most memorable part of this very moving 4 days was actually an experience of extraordinary hospitality.

Turns out that one of our regional ministers in Brockton is from New Orleans. And even

though she was not able to attend the gathering, she contacted her 80 year old parents to ask them to offer us lodging. No problem, they responded, come ahead. We were 6 ministers and they had a big house that they love to share. When we arrived, they said: "only six?" I thought it was a joke and couldn't imagine how they could accommodate us. But accommodate they did! They were up each morning at 5 to make us breakfast. When we returned at night around 9pm, they had snacks and were eager to hear of the day's activities. Turns out they have been doing this all their lives and their energy was infectious.

Whatever they had was ours for the asking; whatever we needed, they figured out how to meet the need. This experience of generosity in a time of scarcity was like none I had ever experienced. It was a perfect prelude to the season of Thanksgiving and a gift I will carry forever. Whenever I'm feeling less than generous or protective of what I have, Ed and Vivian will come to mind as models of open hearts and minds, always ready for the next adventure. What a gift.

September--June 10am service

www.uessex.org

firstuessex@hotmail.com

CALENDAR

- Wed. Nov. Advent meditation, 7pm
- Thurs. Dec. 1 ECCO Annual Meeting, 6-8pm
- Sun. Dec. 4 Annual RIM Dinner, 5pm
- Tues. Dec. 6 PFLAG, 7pm
- Wed. Dec. 7 Advent meditation, 7pm
- Thurs. Dec. 8 Cook at Open Door, 4-6pm
- " " " " Zoning Hearing for Homeless, 7pm
- Fri. Dec. 9 Coffee House, 8pm
- Mon. Dec. Board of Trustees, 6pm
- Wed. Dec. Advent meditation, 7pm
- Thurs. Dec. Book Club, 7pm
- Wed. Dec. Advent meditation, 7pm
- Sat. Dec. 24 Christmas Eve service, 5pm
- Sun. Dec. 25 Christmas Day service, 10am



ART AND EDUCATION

COFFEE HOUSE

Don't miss the Kingston Trio night at our One World Coffee House on Friday (yes Friday!) evening, December 9th, at 8pm. Roger Pierce will head up this wonderful evening of folk songs from this famous group that starting singing in the 50s!

BOOK CLUB

An update on this month's book club: the group will meet on Thursday, December 15, at 7pm, and will be reading "Meetings with Remarkable Men" by G.I. Gurdjieff.

JENNY DUFF

Thanks to Jenny Duff for sharing her wonderful musical abilities by playing the prelude at a recent service. It was fantastic Jenny; Fran Pierce, our music director, will be tapping you soon for regular work!

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FUNDRAISING

Don't forget to turn in your collection boxes for Penn Westman's RE fundraising project. Keep looking for that spare change.

MEMBERSHIP/FUNDRAISING

EVENTS - FEBRUARY FRENZY

In early January we are hoping to call together a meeting of membership, fundraising and events to come up with a better structure and job description for folks who take on these responsibilities. And we are always looking for new talent! And mark your calendar's for this year's FEBRUARY FRENZY on SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11!

WE WILL BE COOKING AT OPEN DOOR PANTRY ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8, FROM 4-6PM. LOOK FOR THE SIGN-UP LIST.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS
 It's always a treat to bring new members into the fold. On November 6th we welcomed Dave and Louise Marsh, Sean Walsh and Alison Rosner, Eileen Duff and Tori Rosati.

CHURCH UPDATES

ADVENT MEDITATION

As has been our tradition now for several years leading up to Christmas, we will celebrate Advent with meditation on the four Wednesdays before Christmas at 7pm. Advent is that time of anticipation for what Christmas is all about: the birth of Jesus and the hope of new life and personal and social transformation.

HOLIDAY FAIR

Once again we had a wonderful holiday fair event starting Friday night and continuing into Saturday. We had lots of visitors both upstairs and down, as we displayed art and many handmaid goods, as well as white elephant items, books, food and furniture. So many, many people donated goods and volunteered that day; too many to thank. It was a wonderful team-congregational effort. But beyond serving as a fundraiser for our congregational life and activities, it's a blast to be part of, and we raised over \$2500!

CONGRATULATIONS, SYLVIA

About 15 or so of us were at the Beverly UU church to participate in the installation of our own Sylvia Howe as minister emerita of the Beverly church. Sylvia served that church for 10 years and left a wonderful legacy of ministerial leadership. Though an official member of our Essex church, Sylvia will likely be asked to be part of various aspects of the Beverly church faith life from time to time. It was a wonderful day for Sylvia and her friends from Essex.

NAME TAGS

If you want a name tag make sure you talk with Sylvia Howe. We encourage everyone to wear it as it makes it easier for new people to get to know us all. But don't forget to return it to the back of the church before you leave each Sunday!

PLEDGING

Treasurer Tom Duff reports that a little over half of us have responded to our pledge campaign. That's great but it could be better. If you have not been able to fill out the pledge form, or are reluctant for whatever reason, please consider doing it. Even if you are not able to make a financial pledge at this time, it still helps for us to receive the form as we plan the year and continue to develop into a full service congregation. Thanks to all of you for your generous spirit.

KIBOU: MUSIC OF HOPE

Thanks to great organizing of Max Schenk, and three wonderful musicians, our own Maria Benotti, Lynn Nowells and Naoka Sugiyama, about 45 people enjoyed a wonderful afternoon of music as a fundraiser for Japanese earthquake and tsunami victims. We raised about \$650 dollars. We hope to do more of this as the year goes on. Kathleen Miller and Peter Kellerman were also instrumental in making this a great event.

BUILDING COMMITTEE

Thanks to a great building committee steered by Mike Dyer, we now have new front steps and a painted front of the building! Next we will install overhead fans to keep the heat circulating in the sanctuary. Thanks, too, for all those who contributed to the front step project.

CHRISTMAS SERVICE

As always, we will celebrate Christmas Eve with a service of words and song on Saturday, December 24, at 5pm. The service is for all ages and lasts about 1 hour. We will have childcare for children up to age 5. As of this writing, we are also holding a 10am service on Christmas morning which falls on Sunday this year.

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SERVICE & OUTREACH

We delivered 160 pounds of food to **Open Door Pantry** this past week. For the year we have delivered approximately 800-1000 pounds of food. Though we can always do better, that is a sizable contribution from our congregation. We will continue to collect food in the baskets up front as Christmas nears. Open Door is happy to accept financial donations as well, as well as thrift shop items at their store in Gloucester.

The **ECCO annual Meeting** will take place on Thursday, December 1, from 6-8pm, in Lynn, at the United Methodist Church. I have committed to bringing 10 people! As of this moment I have 6 commitments; any other takers?

The **ACTION, INC** shelter for homeless folks needs permission from the city of Gloucester to add about 8 more beds beyond its current capacity. There will be a hearing at Gloucester City Hall on Thursday, December 8th, at 7pm, in front of the Zoning Board. We would love to have **lots of support** for this very important work. Please think about attending.

ECCO is developing a new strategy on the North Shore for its organizing which involves a regional approach, from Lynn to Rockport. We hope to bring together **30-40 clergy** in late January, then congregational lay leaders (5 from each congregation) in March/April, then work on an issue across the region. Hopefully, all of this will lead to a major action meeting in the Fall. With our new organizer, Daniel Lesser, it's a very exciting time for ECCO.

Why not join several of us for **RIM's annual international dinner** in Malden, on Sunday, December 4, at 5pm. RIM is the refugee project that several of us are linked to. Speak with Diana, Melanie, Tori or Tim if you have interest.

The **day resource center** that several of us Cape Ann clergy have been trying to initiate has taken a new turn. Locating an appropriate space for this winter has been challenging and unsuccessful to this point, so congregations on Middle street in Gloucester are planning on opening up for one day each week. Together with the **ACTION** shelter, which is open 3 days a week, the religious community will be able to provide information and fellowship for folks who need help during the day hours. We hope to begin sometime in December. Stay tuned.

PFLAG meets on Tuesday, December 6, at 7pm.

We will be circulating our annual Unitarian Universalist Service Committee **"Guest at Your Table"** boxes this week. Any coins or dollars that go into the boxes will be sent to support the good justice and service work the UUSC does and has done for over 60 years. We'll collect the boxes right after Christmas.

Thanks to Frank Carmada, with technical assistance from Charlie Dunne, for the showing of the environmental film, "End of Suburbia." A great discussion followed the film and there seems to be good energy for starting up an **environmental outreach group** soon.