



THE FIRST UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF ESSEX

MEMBER OF THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
ASSOCIATION OF CONGREGATIONS

OUR MINISTER

One of my very favorite moments in our very intimate sanctuary at First UU Essex occurs at the Christmas Eve service as we turn the lights out, one of our children (this year Julie Sauriol) passes the flame from her lit candle, the Gorman, Duff, Bairstow women sing "What Child is This," and when all of the candles are lit, the entire congregation of 150 or so sing "Silent Night." At this time a wonderful sense of calm and peace comes over me. Partly because the service is coming to a close and it seems to have worked again, but mostly because at that moment peace does pervade the little building. It is a fitting closure to our celebration of remembrance of the birth of the "Prince of Peace," Jesus of Nazareth, a Jewish baby born to peasant peoples from the rural community. And somehow, as the myth goes, this tiny infant represents enormous hope for a future of actual peace in the world. It's a long shot, as we have realized, yet I never get tired of renewing that hope.

Actually, maybe because of the visit of peace activist Bryan Wilson this past Fall, or maybe

because most of the troops are finally out of that misbegotten war in Iraq, or just because we are all weary of war and the death counts, I found myself meditating on the possibility of peace all through our Advent, Solstice (thank you Kathleen Miller for that wonderful "Earth Circles" ritual) and Christmas Eve and Christmas day services. It was all culminated by our remembering the "Christmas in the Trenches" story and song, about the very real truce on Christmas Eve during WWI.

As we prepare to join our North Shore Peace folks at Grant circle on New Year's Eve for our ongoing vigil for bringing the troops home and ending our wars, I am pondering some words from a former diplomat and current professor at the Kennedy School, Nicholas Burns, who asks in a recent article: "Why Isn't peace on anyone's platform?" Reflecting upon the current campaign for the Presidency, Burns bemoans the fact that peace does not seem on anyone's agenda. He ends his article by writing: "...here is a Christmas wish for peace on earth, in 2012 and beyond." Indeed, what could be more wonderful than an end to hostilities in Afghanistan and beyond in the coming months. Let's do all we can to get peace on our nation's agenda for 2012.

And a very Happy and Blessed
New Year to all.

| | |
|------------------|---|
| CALENDAR | 2 |
| ART/EDUCATION | 2 |
| CHURCH UPDATES | 3 |
| JUSTICE/OUTREACH | 4 |



- Tues. Jan. 3 PFLAG 7pm
- Thurs. Jan 5 February Frenzy Planning 7pm
- Sat. Jan. 7 Coffee House 8pm
- Sun. Jan. 8 Choir 9am
- Mon. Jan. 9 Membership Committee 7pm
- Tues. Jan. 10 ECCO-Gloucester 7pm
- Tues. Jan. 17 Board of Trustees 6pm
- Wed. Jan. 18 Book Club 7pm
- " " " " RE Committee 7pm
- Sun. Jan. 29 Choir 9am

UPCOMING:

- Look for Building Committee Meeting Date
- Coffee House, Bill Staines, Feb. 4
- Adult RE starts up week of Feb. 5
- Cook at Open Door, Thursday, Feb. 9
- February Frenzy, Saturday, February 11
- Paint Party for Front of building

FEBRUARY FRENZY

To counter winter doldrums, we initiated a new fundraising event last winter we called February Frenzy - it was more than successful; it was a blast. We filled the church hall and ate and laughed ourselves silly. As you remember, it involved a spaghetti meal and a talent show along with a silent auction. This year's date is Saturday, February 11, and our first planning meeting will take place on Thursday, January 5th, at 7pm, open to anyone wanting to help plan.

COFFEE HOUSE

For anyone who was there, our Kingston Trio evening at the coffee house was a huge success. Roger Pierce has put together a brand new group and rumor has it they may go on the road!!!! Next coffee house times and performers are: Saturday, January 7, Ina May Wool and Bev Grant; February 4, Bill Staines; March 17, Tom O'Carroll; April 21, Daisy Nell and Capt. Stan. Just to remind folks, the coffee house tries to pay a good wage to the performers, usually 60% or, occasionally more, the rest is a fundraiser for the church. Please think of supporting this great initiative, now in its 18th year!!!!

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

We have a problem with our children's RE program: we are running out of space! This is a problem we were hoping for some years back. We are in the process of rethinking how we use the current space and we'll look for input from anyone involved. Our next meeting of the committee will be Wednesday, January 18, at 7pm.



BOOK CLUB

The next gatherings and selections of the book club are: January 18, HEARTH & EAGLE, Anya Seton; February 15, COD, Mark Kurlansky; March 21, PEOPLE OF THE BOOK, Geraldine Brooks; April 18, LIKE COLOR TO THE BLIND, Donna Williams. The group meets at 7pm. All are welcome.

NEW FUNDRAISING INITIATIVE



From the desk of Barbara Corning-Davis: The Fundraising Committee has been exploring the idea of UU Bed & Breakfast, where members and friends offer their vacation homes or rooms in their homes to church members and friends, and a portion of the rental is donated to the church. Some may wish to participate in the broader UU B&B network. We are in the early stages of this idea and if you are interested in hosting or receiving these services, please answer the following survey questions. We are blessed to live in a beautiful part of the world, and many people travel long distances to enjoy our sunsets. We also have a wonderful church family and I would enjoy sharing our home as long as they do not mind some big, friendly dogs! <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/7DWSYG8>



Hello
My Name Is

You all have noticed that thanks to Cindy Cameron we have two new cloth hangings on the back wall of the Sanctuary with name tags attached. If you would like Sylvia Howe to make you a name tag, let her know. it really helps if people wear them as we have lots of new faces.

CHURCH RETREAT

We have been discussing the possibility of a church retreat (Friday night/Saturday, an entire weekend??) and we would like to have a meeting of interested people sometime early in the New Year. Let Art know of your interest.



SACRED SPACE

Although I know it is good theology to say the people are the church, the building is just a functional space to allow us to gather, it still matters that we make it as inviting and special as possible. Caring for that space matters. So I am grateful for all of the work done by the elves as they decorated for Christmas, and also grateful for the lovely donations for poinsettias that bring such color to the sanctuary. And, as the New Year approaches, I am grateful for the rejuvenated building committee that is working overtime to improve the space for its multiple uses. You'll all notice the new fans in the sanctuary to cool us in the Summer and better circulate the heat in the winter; you'll also notice the plastic covering of the windows to hold the heat in; what you won't see is some attic work done to make it a better space for storage. We can all look forward to one of our next projects of painting the sanctuary, likely sometime in 2012. We are surely rolling along with great contributions from so many.

The phoenix hope, can wing her way through the desert skies, and still defying fortune's spite; revive from ashes and rise



MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEES

We are in the process of rejuvenating our membership committee with the aim of bringing in new ideas and a job description. We'd like to meet on Monday, January 9th, 7pm in the church hall for old members and any new folks interested in participating.



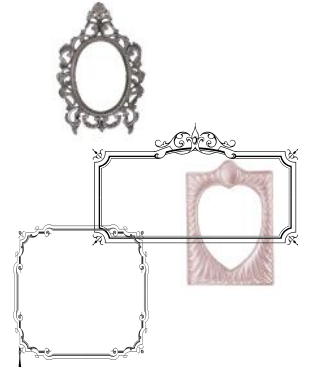
The GLOUCESTER ZONING BOARD temporarily **approved** an expansion of beds for the local homeless shelter at ACTION, INC. They will review this after the winter. Nevertheless, it was a victory for the shelter services' group, and **ECCO** and Cape Ann clergy helped support this effort.

Our next **ECCO** Cape ANN meeting is Tuesday, January 10, 7pm at the Gloucester Temple. ECCO is planning a major campaign this Spring and into the Fall. We'll begin by having a big clergy gathering in January, followed by a lay leaders' gathering in March/April, then an **issues' convention** to choose an issue to work on across the North Shore. Please think about attending our **January meeting**.

ECCO



We next cook at OPEN DOOR PANTRY on Thursday, Feb. 9th, 4-6pm.



Don't forget your GUEST AT YOUR TABLE boxes which support the UU Service Committee. Art will be collecting them in the next few weeks.



AIRPORT TRIPS

We are still looking for occasional drivers for our airport trip fundraising initiative. If you are willing to make the trip once a month or once every other month, let Debbie F or Art know. It's a great service and a great fundraiser.

The Cape Ann clergy initiative called GRACE CENTER, INC. is underway and two churches, with the possibility of a third, are open for business from 8:30am until 4:30pm, two days (potentially three) a week to meet the needs of Cape Ann, mostly Gloucester, residents. We are looking for volunteers and supervisors. I am on the executive committee and Diana Hughes has served as a volunteer. Talk to either one of us if you are interested. It's a great project and the commitment is one 4 hour segment each week, morning or afternoon.

