

THE FIRST UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF ESSEX
 Member of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Sat., 1/30 Coffee House, 8pm**
- Sun., 1/31 Mid-Year potluck and**
- Tues., 2/2 PFLAG, 7pm**
- Wed., 2/3 Book Club, 7pm**
- Sun., 2/7 Choir, 9am**
- Tues., 2/9 ECCO, Gloucester, 7pm**
- Wed., 2/10 Church Fundraiser**
- Thurs., 2/11 Open Door, 4-6pm**
- " " " " Adult Ed., 7pm**
- Wed., 2/17 Ash Wed. Service, 7pm**
- Thurs., 2/18 Board of Trustees, 6pm**
- Sun., 2/21 Choir, 9am**
- Wed., 2/24 Lenten Meditation, 7pm**
- Thurs., 2/25 Adult Ed., 7pm**
- Sat., 2/27 Coffee House, 8pm**

OUR MINISTER

I just finished catching up on Sunday's Globe and read a wonderful article in the "Arts and Entertainment" section about a group of three architects who, after graduating from Notre Dame University, in 1987 set up a firm in downtown Boston with the following mission statement: "To focus primarily on building justice by creating pleasing environments for those in need."

These folks come from a Roman Catholic background and represent the best of Catholic social principles. They call their firm the Narrow Gate, an expression from Matthew's Gospel in which Jesus suggests the path to full life is not exactly wide, and that one needs to live certain values to be on the best path. The article is focused on a 50-unit housing development the group recently finished called Dudley Village in Dudley street in Boston.

A photo is included showing these very attractive units. I immediately shared this great story with one of our own socially conscious architects, Heather Dietrichson, who was excited to discover she knows and has worked with one of the firm's founders. In the midst of a time in our land where much

of the news is grim, it was so heart-warming to read this story of faith-driven professionals who have figured out how to make a living while serving an impoverished population.

I latched on to this story because I just finished preaching about values and the biblical tradition last Sunday, motivated by the fact that our children are studying biblical stories this month in their class. I shared that there is no theme that the Bible addresses more than that of poverty, and the poor, and riches. I tied this biblical theme into a reflection on the systemic problem of poverty in the developing world, most especially in the Western Hemisphere, the country of Haiti, currently suffering from a devastating earthquake.

But, I reminded us, the even bigger story in Haiti is a long history of impoverishment at the hands of colonial powers who have robbed Haiti of so much natural wealth and, at the same time, refused to recognize the new leadership of Haiti after the 1806 slave re-



INSIDE

- OUR MINISTER 1**
- SOCIAL JUSTICE 2**
- CHURCH UPDATES 3**
- ART AND EDUCATION 4**

bellion. If you want to know what the biblical tradition says about poverty and riches, read Deuteronomy, chapter 15, the so-called "Jubilee Year." It's very clear about God's concern for the impoverished, and the responsibility of the rest of us to make things right.

As Haiti rebuilds from this most recent devastation, maybe this time the world community, hopefully led by the U.S. will undo centuries of exploitation and bring justice to this tortured country. Meanwhile, the outpouring of humanitarian aid from all across the world, including our small but vital congregation, is heart warming as well.



We sent over \$350 to the UU Service Committee for the **"Guest at Your Table"** program, and nearly \$700 to the UUA/UUSC joint project on **Haitian relief**. We estimate that many more hundreds went from the congregation to other organizations such as Oxfam, Partners for Health, etc. As you know, the earthquake was devastating, and the need goes on.

ECCO recently turned over day to day operations of the **"Chill Zone"** in Gloucester (youth drop in center) to a local Gloucester group, but ECCO will continue to seek grant monies for this wonderful project of intervention with at risk youth. Also, we are always looking for volunteers to help out with the youth. Anyone interested?

At the same time, ECCO has been doing some work on educational issues, including a few dialogues with a group that has been approved to open a charter school. We recently met with the Mayor Kirk to brainstorm ways for us to support public education in Gloucester. We are also looking for other issues that concern our constituencies. I'll be seeking ideas at our mid-year meeting and beyond. What issues are important to you?

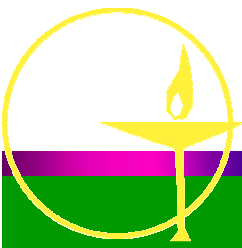
Please keep up the generous delivery of foodstuffs to church that I can take to the Open **Door Pantry**. The need is great. We cook on Thursday, February 11. We still need volunteers. There's a sign-up sheet in the church foyer.

Fair Trade Coffee sales have dropped. Don't forget, when you buy fair trade coffee, or our new item, **fair trade cocoa**, you help poor farmers receive a fair wage for their labors. The coffee and hot chocolate are in the church hall downstairs.

Our North Shore Justice and Peace group continues its stop-the-war vigils on Saturdays, as well as twice-monthly meetings in Ipswich at the **House of Peace**. We are constantly trying to lobby congress and do educational on the tragedy of war, Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as the conflict in the Middle East with Israel and the Palestinians. Ask Art for details.

The **Environmental Committee** is due to meet and start moving forward. See Max Schenk for details.

PFLAG meets every first Tuesday of the month (Feb. 2). It's a wonderful program of support for families of GLBT folks.



CHURCH UPDATES

MID-YEAR CHURCH MEETING

Don't miss our annual mid-year "town hall" type church gathering and potluck on January 31st. It's an opportunity to hear what's going on and offer ideas and input to the church leadership.

NEW LIFE

Congratulations to Lois and Bill Bairstow at the birth of Aiden. We can't wait to see Foster's brother in church! Lois will be taking a 6 week or so leave from Religious Education work, but the RE Committee will carry on. Ellen Attridge is coordinating an effort to provide the family with cooked meals 3 or 4 times a week. Ask Ellen if you'd like to help. Also, Jen and Terry Holmgren just announced their own expectations for new life due in August/September. Church growth is moving along nicely!

ART SPACE

The art space committee has formed and decided to set up a new display of art with different artists taking a month each to display their own work. If you would like to take a month, please contact Lynne, Jen H. or Sylvia. Also, we would also like more contributions of saleable items to the art corner in the church hall.

LENTEN MEDITATION

We will soon begin what has now become an annual practice, i.e., an Ash Wednesday service followed by weekly meditations on Wednesday evenings lasting about 1/2 an hour. You remember this is the season of preparation for Passover and Easter. We'll start on Ash Wednesday, February 17, at 7pm, and meet for every Wednesday leading up to these two celebrations in the Jewish and

Christian calendars. Passover with Rabbi Judy will be Tuesday, March 30, followed by Maundy/Holy Thursday with Communion on April 1, and Easter sunrise and traditional service on April 4.

BUILDING NEWS

We really did go over the top with our fundraising efforts to put in a new furnace. Though I don't have the final figures, I believe we raised about \$5000 as a congregation which covers the cost of the furnace. Our matching grant of \$2,400 will likely be used to enhance the entire heating system: overhead fans? separate unit in the church hall? window insulation? etc. The new furnace should be in by the time your read this newsletter. Of course, since our building is now approaching 60, we have other needs as well, e.g., front steps and railings, finish painting the steeple, painting the front of the church, and on and on! What fun. I bet building point person, Rick Sauriol, has other ideas as well. We'll keep everyone posted.

OUCH

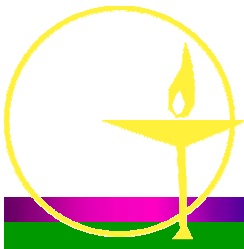
Our own Peter Kellerman broke an ankle this past week. Why not figure out a way to cheer him up. But at least keep Peter in your thoughts and prayers.

AIRPORT TRIPS, BOOKS, AND SNOW REMOVAL

Are these related?? Not really but remember: we still drive folks to the airport and the fees are donated to the church - call Debbie or Art if you need a ride. Books for a buck are in the church hall thanks to Diana and Alan. We are still trying to find folks who will be available to move snow from around the church when necessary - talk to Art.

NOTE: Any typos in the church contact list will be corrected via newsletter, feel free to send me (Dawn) any corrections at drobertson@accuscribeco.com (note correction!)





ART AND EDUCATION



ADULT EDUCATION

We are starting an adult education series on Thursdays, January 28, February 11 and 25, and March 4. The topic involves Faith, Religion, and Science. There will be articles plus a small book, "A Joyful Theology" for sale.

E-MAIL USE

At a recent board meeting we discussed the use of the church e-mail for announcements and special messages. We determined that too much is going out to our church list and that we need to get some ground rules established as to what is appropriate and necessary to share with the entire congregation, and what is an over use or an inappropriate use. Moderator Debbie F. will be drawing up such a policy and sharing it with us at the Mid-Year meeting. In the future, if you would like to share something with the entire congregation, send it to Debbie and she and I will determine whether to forward it to all. If you have questions about this, please talk with Debbie.

DINNER CIRCLES

If your dinner circle group hasn't met as of yet, pick a time. If you want to be part of a dinner circle group to meet church folks, see Cyndi Aldrich, Membership Coordinator. There is a list in the church hall.

ONE WORLD COFFEE HOUSE

We welcome Mary McCaslin on February 27 at 8pm and Eugene Byrne (St. Paddy's) on Saturday, March 20 at 8pm. Please spread the word about this great church project and bring your friends. The musicians we bring in are very high quality.

BOOK CLUB

February's gathering is Wednesday, the 3rd. *Traveling with Pomegranates*, by Sue Monk Kidd is the selection. March? Come and help decide!



FUNDRAISER AT POMODORI
Don't miss the next church fundraiser at Pomodori's, 146 High St., in Ipswich. It will take place on Wed, Feb. 10. They will donate 15% of your bill to the church. Invite your friends, bring the family, celebrate Valentine's or Mardi Gras, etc.