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First Church in Cambridge, Congregational
United Church of Christ
11 Garden Street
Cambridge, MA 02138



EVENT

Fall 2007

The Newsletter of First Church in Cambridge, Congregational, United Church of Christ
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Peace be with us all!

This year First Church's Regathering Sunday (September 9) will have a special resonance. As we do every year, we'll be celebrating a happy reunion after the traditional summer slowdown, when many folks go out of town or find other ways to worship. But Regathering Sunday will also mark the official close of our sabbatical time, mine and the congregation's.

Although I returned to active ministry on July 9 — and was richly blessed by the lovely warm welcome I received on my first Sunday in the pulpit, July 15 — owing to the summer's sparseness we have not been *all together* since the middle of February. That's a long time. I can't wait to see you all again!

I dearly hope that as many of you as possible will come to our festive, multigenerational morning worship that morning to say thanks for the many gifts our sabbaticals brought us and to recommit ourselves to the Way of Hospitality that is God's vision for us.

After morning worship we'll meet, greet, and, of course, we'll EAT! I'm not sure exactly what the lunch-planners are up to, but there's been a lot of giggling from that quarter ... something to do with Fenway Park? We'll see. Y'all come!

As we resume our ministry together, I am filled with grateful joy. The vitality and appeal of our congregation is palpable. One-time guests remark on it all the time. Several veteran pastors from other parts of the country who visited us over the summer have written to me with their appreciation for who we are. They feel something different, something very good, happening here. One said he was sinfully jealous, God forgive him!

Of course, this is exciting because it means that God's grace is not being poured out on First Church in vain. It seems that we are responding to it generously every day. But our vitality is more than merely exciting. It is also a little scary. Or I should say, it is shaping up as a big challenge — after all, "To whom much is given, much will be required," says Jesus in the scriptures.

I approach Regathering Sunday full of wonderment about what might be required of us, we who are growing so rich in spirit. I want to be ready for whatever God shows us next. I know you want to be ready too.

Let's start getting ready together on Sunday, September 9, Regathering Day.

Mary Luti

SUNDAYS IN SEPTEMBER

September 2. 14th Sunday after Pentecost

(Please note: Morning Worship time returns to 11:00 this Sunday)

- 11:00 a.m. Morning Worship, Holy Communion, Mary Luti, preaching
 1:00 p.m. Outdoor Church, on Cambridge Common
 5:30 p.m. Jazz and Gospel Service, in MJH, Nancy Weil, leading

September 9. 15th Sunday after Pentecost.

REGATHERING SUNDAY

- 10:00 a.m. Regathering Breakfast, in MJH, Godly Play/Church School orientation for teachers and parents, registration
 11:00 a.m. Morning Worship, A multigenerational celebration of the Open Door. Dan Smith and Mary Luti, leading No Children's Worship & Arts this morning
 12:30 p.m. Welcome Back Luncheon, in MJH, a post-sabbatical reunion for all!
 5:30 p.m. Jazz and Gospel Service, in MJH, Nancy Weil and Dan Smith, leading

September 16. 16th Sunday after Pentecost

- 10:00 a.m. Christian Formation for all ages begins
 11:00 a.m. Morning Worship, A celebration of Open Spirits, Mary Luti, preaching
 11:20 a.m. Children's Worship & Arts, in MJH
 5:30 p.m. Jazz and Gospel Service, in MJH, Dan Smith, leading
 Potluck supper follows the service

September 23. 17th Sunday after Pentecost

- 10:00 a.m. Christian Formation for all ages
 11:00 a.m. Morning Worship, A celebration of the Open Road, Dan Smith, preaching
 11:20 a.m. Children's Worship & Arts, in MJH
 12:30 p.m. Inquirers/New Members informational gathering and lunch, in the Hastings Room
 5:30 p.m. Jazz and Gospel Service, in MJH, Mary Luti, leading

September 30. 18th Sunday after Pentecost

- 10:00 a.m. Christian Formation for all ages
 11:00 a.m. Morning Worship, A Celebration of God's Creation: Blessing of the Animals, Sarah Higginbotham, Mary Luti, and Dan Smith, leading No CW&A this morning.
 12:30 p.m. Socially Responsible Investing/Divesting information session and lunch, in the Hastings Room
 5:30 p.m. Jazz and Gospel Service, in MJH, Nancy Weil, leading

SUNDAYS IN OCTOBER

October 7. 19th Sunday after Pentecost.

WORLD COMMUNION SUNDAY

- 10:00 a.m. Christian Formation for all ages
 11:00 a.m. Morning Worship, A celebration of the Open Table, multigenerational Holy Communion, Mary Luti, preaching
 11:20 a.m. Children's Worship & Arts, in MJH
 12:30 p.m. First Church Shelter 20th Anniversary Luncheon, in MJH, Todd Billings lecture
 1:00 p.m. Outdoor Church, on Cambridge Common
 5:30 p.m. Jazz and Gospel Service, in MJH, Dan Smith, leading

October 14. 20th Sunday after Pentecost

- 10:00 a.m. Christian Formation for all, a multigenerational exploration of the practice of stewardship
 11:00 a.m. Morning Worship, A Service of Healing Prayer, Dan Smith, preaching
 11:20 a.m. Children's Worship & Arts, in MJH
 12:30 p.m. Second Sunday Lunch, sponsored by the Nominating and Stewardship Committees
 5:30 p.m. Jazz and Gospel Service, in MJH, Nancy Weil and Dan Smith, leading

DÜNYA CONCERT

Saturday, September 15, 8:30 p.m.

DÜNYA, the widely acclaimed Turkish musical group whose participation was an important part of our Interfaith Forum series in March, will present a concert at First Church on **September 15 at 8:30 p.m.** Tickets will be \$20, \$15 for students. DÜNYA's program will be:

September 15, 1207 in Rumi's Anatolia: A musical glimpse into the life and times of a great Sufi poet



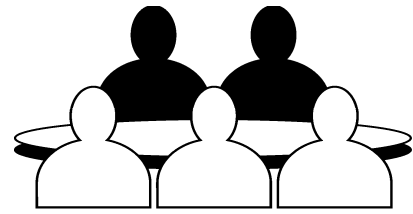
*"What shall I do, O Muslims? I do not recognize myself...
 I am neither Christian nor Jew, nor Magian, nor Muslim.
 I am not of the East, nor the West,
 not of the land, nor of the sea.
 I am not of nature's mine, nor from the circling stars"*
 Mevlana Celaleddin-i Rumi (1207-1273)

The year 2007 marks the 800th anniversary of the birth of Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi, one of the most influential and revered figures of Muslim mysticism (Sufism). This concert explores the rich mix of creeds and cultures of 13th century Anatolia, where Rumi spent most of his life, through a wide range of repertoires: Turkish sufi music (Bektasi and Mevlevi), Byzantine (Greek Orthodox) music, Jewish poetry set to Turkish melodies, Turkish secular music, and music of the "Frenk" — European Crusaders and traders passing through the region. Throughout the concert these distinct musical idioms, instruments, and languages interact in a continuous conversation which illuminates the tumultuous period in which Rumi lived, a period of war and political turmoil — a period not unlike our own. A highlight of the concert will be a musical meeting between Rumi, the learned poet of the Persian language, and his contemporary Yunus Emre, the humble poet of the Turkish countryside.

In recognition of the coincidence of the beginning of both Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) and Ramadan (Muslim holy month) on September 12 (the last time for 33 years), the concert will also follow the Turkish tradition of chanting part of the *Mevlid-i Serif* on important occasions. A masterpiece of Turkish literature, written in 1409, the *Mevlid* is a long poem commemorating the birth of the Prophet Mohammed.

Founded in 2004, DÜNYA (the Turkish, Arabic, and Persian word for "world") designs musical events in which separate communities of faith and nationality can come together for change. DÜNYA is also committed to presenting music in all its many forms — popular and classical, secular and sacred, old and new. It seeks to collaborate with a wide range of cultural and religious organizations and musical groups to present a contemporary view of a wide range of Turkish and other world music traditions through performance, publication, and other educational activities. Past collaborative projects have included *European Travelers and the Ottomans* (a tribute to Mozart, with Boston Camerata), *The Psalms of Ali Ufki*, *Armenian Composers of the Ottoman Period*, *Greek and Turkish Holy Days*, *The Music of Cyprus*, and *Let us Repeat the Names of God* (with The Silver Leaf Gospel Singers). While its aim is to honor difference, it takes as much pleasure in exploring the common threads that run through divergent musical traditions.

To learn more about DÜNYA, see its web site, www.dunyainc.org.



EXECUTIVE COUNCIL NOTES

At its June meeting Executive Council continued its series of ongoing discussions of leadership in the church. Dan Smith read Acts 14: 21-28, which describes the travels and activities of Paul and Barnabas after Paul was stoned in Lystra. This passage highlights the support Paul and the other disciples provided to the early Christian communities. Council members considered ways in which leaders at First Church support fellow congregants in their faith.

Dan Smith reminded Council that Parish Administrator (PA) Peter Johnston has submitted his 30-day notice of intent to take another position. For the short term, Summer Finnell is being trained as interim PA. For the longer term, staff and Buildings and Grounds Chair Guy Stuart are using this as an opportunity to review the structure and demands of parish administration. Dan noted that Peter used his tenure at First Church to streamline and expand the functions of the position, to increase building revenues beyond expectations, and to make vast improvements in the volume and quality of First Church communications. In discussing the expanded requirements for the PA position, staff have come to believe that more than one position might be required to fulfill administrative requirements. After some discussion of options, including a full time Administrator and a part-time assistant, or two part-time assistants, Council authorized funds sufficient to hire a new Administrator by September, with the expectation that the Administrator, working with staff and others, will recruit an Assistant Administrator at a later date.

Moderator Gaylen Morgan expressed Council's heartfelt thanks to Dan Smith for his skill, energy, leadership, and faithfulness during the time of Mary's sabbatical. She presented Dan a book (on the politics of faith in America), a card with thoughts and good wishes from Council members, and a prized bottle of

Peter Lugar Steak Sauce. Dan thanked Council for its trust and support, which allowed him to take on the responsibilities of pastoral leadership with confidence.

Peggy Stevens reported on the Social Justice Summit of 22 persons in the Tower Room on June 3. Attendees expressed their hopes and dreams and then reviewed the Open Road portion of the First Church Mission Statement to see if they and the congregation are "measuring up." "More communication" among social activists at First Church and between socially active individuals/organizations and the congregation was frequently mentioned as an important step. Methods discussed included the Internet (listservs) and a newsletter. A subset of this group then met on June 17 to discuss social action components of Regathering Sunday and a luncheon later in the fall. This group will meet again in October. The concept of "one-minute activism" received some attention. Sarah Higginbotham commented that for folks new to First Church the opportunity to do social activism in brief "pieces" rather than in major time commitments should be very attractive. Laurie Friedman suggested more such opportunities could be offered at coffee hour (postcards to legislators, petitions, etc.)

October 21. 21st Sunday after Pentecost

10:00 a.m. Christian Formation for all
 11:00 a.m. Morning Worship, Mary Luti, preaching
 11:20 a.m. Children's Worship & Arts, in MJH
 12:30 p.m. Inquirers/New Members exploration, in the Hastings Room
 5:30 p.m. Jazz and Gospel Service, in MJH, Nancy Weil, leading

October 28. 22nd Sunday after Pentecost. REFORMATION/UCC SUNDAY

10:00 a.m. Christian Formation for all
 11:00 a.m. Morning Worship, Rev. Wendy Vander Hart, Acting Associate Conference Minister, Massachusetts Conference, UCC, preaching, New members joining
 11:20 a.m. Children's Worship & Arts, in MJH
 12:30 p.m. Social Justice Coffee Hour/ Fellowship and information session
 5:30 p.m. Jazz and Gospel Service, in MJH, Dan Smith, leading

SUNDAYS IN NOVEMBER

November 4. 23rd Sunday after Pentecost

10:00 a.m. Christian Formation for all, small group meetings for adults
 11:00 a.m. Morning Worship, Multigenerational Holy Communion, Mary Luti, preaching
 11:20 a.m. Children's Worship & Arts
 12:30 p.m. Social Justice Coffee Hour
 1:00 p.m. Outdoor Church, on Cambridge Common
 5:30 p.m. Jazz and Gospel Service, in MJH, Nancy Weil, leading

November 11. 24th Sunday after Pentecost. STEWARDSHIP SUNDAY

10:00 a.m. Christian Formation for all
 11:00 a.m. Morning Worship, Dan Smith, preaching
 11:20 a.m. Children's Worship & Arts, in MJH
 12:30 p.m. Second Sunday Lunch, in MJH
 5:30 p.m. Jazz and Gospel Service, in MJH, Mary Luti, leading

November 18. 25th Sunday after Pentecost. ALL SAINTS SUNDAY, PLEDGE SUNDAY

10:00 a.m. Christian Formation for all
 11:00 a.m. Morning Worship, *Multigenerational Celebration of All the Saints, reception of pledges, Communion-in-the-Round*, Mary Luti, preaching
 12:30 p.m. First Church Shelter 20th Anniversary Luncheon, in MJH, Timothy Harris lecture
 5:30 p.m. Jazz and Gospel Service, in MJH, Nancy Weil, leading
 Potluck supper follows the service

November 25. 26th Sunday after Pentecost

10:00 a.m. Christian Formation for all
 11:00 a.m. Morning Worship, *A Celebration of Thanks*
 11:20 a.m. Children's Worship & Arts, in MJH
 5:30 p.m. Jazz and Gospel Service, in MJH, Nancy Weil, leading

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The due date for contributions for the Late Fall, 2007, issue of **EVENT** is October 8. This issue will cover activities and plans through Advent and Christmas.

REGATHERING SUNDAY AT FIRST CHURCH SEPTEMBER 9, 2007

10:00 A.M. REGATHERING BREAKFAST IN MARGARET JEWETT HALL

Join FC members and friends, young and young at heart, for breakfast and a joyful reconnection. Church School/Godly Play registration and orientation for teachers and parents. (No Children's Worship & Arts today.)

11:00 A.M. MULTIGENERATIONAL WORSHIP IN THE SANCTUARY

Everyone is invited to participate in worship, as we recommit ourselves to the vision of hospitality and a wide OPEN DOOR.

12:30 P.M. WELCOME BACK LUNCHEON IN MARGARET JEWETT HALL

FENWAY FOOD CELEBRATION — FIRST CHURCH STYLE! As our final sabbatical-ending event, our Second Sunday Lunch will resume on September 9 after Morning Worship. Join us as we welcome back Mary Luti — Red Sox style. We buy the peanuts and Cracker Jack, along with hot dogs, sausages, veggie burgers, and other picnic delights. Come one, come all — and wear your favorite team's hat or T-shirt! Even those who don't like baseball or who root for the team Johnny Damon's on are welcome at our table. Sponsored by the Sabbatical Planning Team and the Fellowship Committee.

5:30 JAZZ AND GOSPEL SERVICE IN MJH

Lively afternoon worship in a jazz and gospel style. Includes joyful holy communion and communal prayer.



SHARING YOUR GIFTS IN GODLY PLAY

Feeling called to teach? Interested in sharing your gifts with our children? First

Church is looking for adults who can commit two to three Sundays a month to engaging in Godly Play with our kids. Want to volunteer or hear more? Contact Mark Destler in person or at mdd@massed.net or 617-504-6021.

CHRISTIAN FORMATION

PRACTICING OUR FAITH 10 O'CLOCK HOUR SERIES ON SUNDAYS, SEPTEMBER 16, 23, AND 30 IN THE HASTINGS ROOM

Looking for ways to become a more thoughtful, more grounded, and better informed practitioner of faith? This fall First Church will embark on a community-wide study of *Practicing Our Faith*, a book edited by Dorothy Bass. Join Mary Luti and Dan Smith for an introduction to the book and its themes at **10:00 a.m. on Sundays, September 16, 23, and 30, in the Hastings Room.**

The book explores twelve central Christian practices — shared activities that address fundamental human need and that, woven together, form a distinctly Christian way of life. The book's contributors, including our own Stephanie Paulsell, explore each practice in depth by placing it in its own historical and biblical context, re-examining its relevance for our times, and showing how it gives depth and meaning to daily life.

The twelve practices are:

- ◆ Honoring the Body
- ◆ Hospitality
- ◆ Household Economics
- ◆ Saying Yes and Saying No
- ◆ Keeping Sabbath
- ◆ Testimony
- ◆ Discernment
- ◆ Shaping Communities
- ◆ Forgiveness
- ◆ Healing
- ◆ Dying Well
- ◆ Singing Our Lives

If you are interested in attending the sessions or being part of a subsequent small group (see next page), please pick up a copy of the book on Regathering Sunday, September 9, or in the church office. A limited number of copies will be available at no cost on a first come, first serve basis.



ON-LINE GIVING AT FIRST CHURCH Frequently Asked Questions

You can now give money to First Church through our own church web site — securely, quickly, efficiently,

and without paper or postage stamps. Just go to www.firstchurchcambridge.org, and click on the menu item "CONTRIBUTE." You can send a one-time contribution or set up an automatically recurring payment. You'll save a stamp and save a tree!

Great! But isn't this the same as the on-line bill-paying service my bank offers?

No. When you go on your own on-line banking web site and initiate an electronic payment to First Church, your bank takes the money out of your account electronically. But then a paper check needs to be printed and sent to First Church via US mail. When your check arrives, it is set aside and then added to the next Sunday's offering. This can be a cumbersome and lengthy process. Making a contribution or pledge payment through the First Church web site is direct — from your account to the church's — and that also makes it faster.

Is this PayPal?

No. Electronic giving via the First Church web site is a program of Webster Bank and is administered by First Church's financial staff person, Karen McArthur. There are no outside customer service reps, financial companies, or credit cards involved. So if you should need your password reset, for example, Karen will get the message and reset it. Whenever you have questions, you can call or e-mail Karen for help.

What if I need to change or cancel a payment?

It's easy, and up to you! Unlike other electronic systems, in which the church "pulls" money from donors (with their permission, of course!), our program is donor-controlled. You log on to your account and "push" money to the church. If you ever need to change an amount or cancel a payment, you may simply log on to your account and do so, as long

as it's at least 48 hours before the payment is scheduled.

Who else sees my bank account information?

Nobody! Although there is no information on your account that is not also on your ordinary paper checks, we have seen to it that your information is hidden from all, even from the administrator.

What if I can't quite figure it out?

We'll help you! If you'd like to schedule a phone call to walk through the simple registration process and on-line setup of your username, password, and bank account, just e-mail Karen McArthur at treasurer@firstchurchcambridge.org or leave her a message at 617-547-2724 x22.

I like to make an offering on Sundays when the plate is passed. It is an important discipline for me. If I give electronically, what will I put in the offering plate?

The Stewardship Committee has prepared reusable cards that say, "I contributed on-line at www.firstchurchcambridge.org." The cards are available on the back table in the sanctuary. Just pick up a card before morning worship begins, and place it in the offering basket during the offertory. It will represent the electronic gift(s) you have made.

What if I have other questions?

Ask away! We want to make on-line giving easy for you. Contact Karen McArthur, 617-547-2724 x22, or treasurer@firstchurchcambridge.org.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS
SUPPORT OF THE MISSION AND
MINISTRY OF FIRST CHURCH
CAMBRIDGE!**

FIRST CHURCH IN CAMBRIDGE: A WAY OF GENEROSITY

During the summer months the Stewardship Committee has been preparing enthusiastically for a new year of ministry at First Church. We have some great things in store for '07-'08!

Watch for more news, coming soon, about our Fall pledge effort, **Stewardship: The Heart of the Matter**, based on Luke 12: 32-34 — "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also!"

The primary mission of our team is to help the congregation grow in the Christian virtues of faith, freedom, gratitude, and generosity by means of the spiritual practice of stewardship.

Our secondary mission is to encourage the giving of money and other assets to the church, in order to finance and care for our people, ministries, and buildings.

We love what we do! It is a humbling privilege to challenge the church to learn and to discern, to dare and to give — not only each Fall when we ask everyone to make an annual pledge of financial support, but throughout the year as well.

And the church's response has been amazing! Together we pledged over \$321,000 for fiscal year 2007 — a record in annual pledging for our congregation! And this figure does not include a large sum of contributions that are given in plate offerings by our members and friends who choose not to pledge!

This is cause for celebration! And for mutual thanks. We know that this generosity is the fruit of the Spirit's work among us, opening our hearts to the secret joys of giving. May the Spirit continue to move among us, inspiring us to dare even greater things.

Thanks are due to all who give of themselves in any way to foster the life of our community. And thanks be to God!

— The Stewardship Committee

THANK YOU FOR YOUR 2007 PLEDGES OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR FIRST CHURCH CAMBRIDGE!

And thanks to so many of you for being up-to-date in paying those pledges! Look for a quarterly statement soon. If you find discrepancies between your records and ours, call or e-mail Karen McArthur, treasurer@firstchurchcambridge.org, or 617-547-2724 x22.

If you are a little (or a lot!) behind in your pledge contributions, we hope that you'll be back on track soon! If your circumstances have changed since you made your pledge, and you would like to speak to someone about it, you can contact Pam Pacelli or Joanne Paul, Stewardship Committee Co-Chairs. You may also speak privately with Dan or Mary at any time.

— The Stewardship Committee



Practicing Our Faith Small Groups – Coming Soon to a Neighborhood near You

How have you practiced your faith lately? Following on the above mentioned *Practicing our Faith* book study, we plan to launch several small groups in which participants will be invited to reflect on their daily lives in light of Christian faith practices. Our hope is that groups will meet roughly twice a month, once during our 10 o'clock hour on Sunday morning and then again in members' homes or at some other mutually convenient place and time. Ideally we will have enough hosts and facilitators to offer group meetings at a range of meeting times and places. The format of each group will include plenty of time for refreshments and fellowship and also for a guided check-in wherein participants will learn from shared experience ways of practicing our faith in daily life.

NEWS FROM CHILDREN'S WORSHIP & ARTS

This year Children's Worship & Arts (CW&A) will adopt First Church's focus on "Practicing our Faith" as its theme. Specifically what are the religious practices that we wish to teach our children? What are the special traditions, disciplines, and rituals of our First Church community and of the wider Christian community that we must pass on to our youngest members?

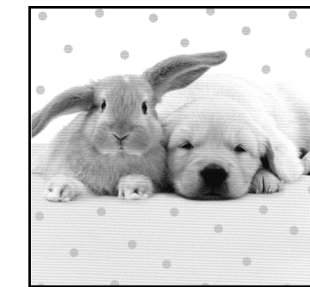
Using as our guide the Valparaiso Institute's definition of Christian practices, the creative work of CW&A will offer our children ways to "live one's way into believing" by teaching them the fundamental pieces of our communal life at First Church. Pre-Kindergarten through 5th graders will learn a few of the prayers, psalms, hymns, and litanies that our congregation holds dear. Children will then find themselves able to engage more fully in worship by declaring their developing faith through word and song.

On Regathering Sunday be sure to check out the corner of the sanctuary by the side door for a new and improved "Children's Worship Corner." The shelves will contain an expanded collection of books and supplies for writing and drawing. It is our hope that children and youth might find resources here that

encourage exploration of our rich Christian traditions. Families can use the Corner to help children engage in quiet reflection during more meditative moments of worship.

As always, if you would like to share your gifts with our children by participating in CW&A, do not hesitate to contact me, shigginb@firstchurchcambridge.org or 617-547-2724 x 42. Our children's faith formation can blossom and grow with the loving care and attention of the First Church community. Thank you for considering how you might join them on their journey.

— Sarah Higginbotham, CW&A Director



**ALL GOD'S CRITTERS
HAVE A PLACE IN THE
CHOIR!
BLESSING OUR ANIMAL
COMPANIONS — AT
MORNING WORSHIP ON
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 30**

On Sunday, **September 30**, our Morning Worship will celebrate and give thanks for God's creatures great and small, especially our animal companions — beloved household pets (or photos of pets) and favorite stuffed animals. More information about this special multigenerational service of praise for the creation will be coming soon, as well as recommendations for bringing animals to church safely and happily!

**ASSET DIVESTMENT
AS A MEANS TO SOCIAL JUSTICE**
Sunday, September 30, at 12:30 p.m.,
in the Hastings Room

An opportunity to learn about and discuss the timely topic of "Asset divestment as a means to social justice" will be offered on **September 30, at 12:30 p.m., in the Hastings Room.** The guest speaker, representing the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization, will be David Schreiber, a member of Temple Shir Tikvah, in Winchester. Lunch will be served preceding his presentation.

What has led to our pursuing this concern? During its May meeting the Executive Council considered a resolution brought by Alice and Dave Kidder on the humanitarian crisis in Darfur. The resolution commends First Church's Investment Committee for maintaining a portfolio with "substantially no" funds in the Sudan. The ensuing discussion raised many larger issues about the use of divestment as a tool to further social justice. It was decided to postpone a vote on this resolution until fall and to inform ourselves more fully on the issue of divestment in general. This is our opportunity.

Here is a sample of the ethical principles given by various faith communities for asset divestment and economic sanctions:

- ◆ Opposing violence through nonviolent means
- ◆ Avoiding taking material gain from the victimization of persons
- ◆ Putting pressure on companies to change policies which cause harm
- ◆ Encouraging compliance with international law
- ◆ Promoting justice in the equal treatment of persons
- ◆ Espousing support for affected faith communities
- ◆ Promoting the sanctity of life, both opposing genocide and supporting relief efforts

More detailed information with examples and ways to examine your own assets will be available at the lunch on September 30. Please join us.

— Gay Harter

**FIRST CHURCH SHELTER'S
20TH ANNIVERSARY:
Series on "Dissent"**

First Church Shelter will celebrate its 20th Anniversary this fall with a series of presentations on the theme of "Dissent":

» **Sunday, October 7, at 1:00 p.m., in Margaret Jewett Hall.** **Todd Billings** will be the guest speaker on "**Dissent and the Lord's Supper.**" Dr. Billings is Assistant Professor of Reformed Theology at Western Theological Seminary, Holland, MI, a seminary of the Reformed Church in America, and is a former First Church Shelter staff member. Luncheon will be provided preceding the presentation.

» **Sunday, November 18, at 1:00 p.m., in Margaret Jewett Hall.** **Timothy Harris** will be the guest speaker on "**Dissent: How to Really End Homelessness.**" Mr. Harris is executive director and founder of Seattle-based *Real Change*, a weekly street newspaper and advocate on homelessness issues. Previously he was founder of Boston's *Spare Change* and is also a former First Church Shelter staff member.

» **Monday, December 3, at 7:00 p.m., in the Hastings Room.** **Susan Dackerman** will be the guest speaker on "**Dissent and the Graphic Art of Sr. Coretta Kent.**" Dr. Dackerman is Carl A. Weyerhaeuser Curator of Prints at Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University. In her previous work at the Baltimore Museum of Art she was recognized for significant new research in painted prints in Northern Renaissance and Baroque engravings, etchings, and woodcuts. A **light meal at 6:00 p.m.** will precede the presentation.

» **Thursday, December 6, at 7:00 p.m., at the Parsonage, 44 Garden Street, Cambridge.** Author **Alfie Kohn** will speak on "**Raising Rebels: How Parents and Educators Can Help Students Challenge the Status Quo.**" Mr. Kohn writes and speaks widely on human behavior, education, and parenting. The latest of his eleven books are *The Homework Myth: Why Our Kids Get Too Much of a Bad Thing* (2006) and *Unconditional Parenting: Moving from Rewards and Punishments to Love and Reason* (2005).

Now, getting up to speed with each other is likely to catch us off guard now and then. There may be surprises as we adapt to each other's changes. Some will be delightful, some may be momentarily confusing, and some may be downright frustrating. But I'm confident that bumpy things will smooth out in good time, helped along by the characteristic good humor, resilience, and grace of this community.

And I'm certain of this because, although some things have changed in you and in me over the last few months, the most important things have not — our love for each other, our capacity for forbearance, our intention to shape a community of disciples mobilized for praise, inclusion, and justice in the world, and a healthy, honest directness that goes a long way toward building trust and preventing misunderstanding. How grateful I am that we can count on these things in our life together!

In fact I am overwhelmingly conscious of having been the undeserving object of a great and tender affection. And I hardly know what to do with all that mercy. And so I will say the only thing you can say when such sweetness descends without rhyme or reason — *Thank you.*

To the sabbatical planning teams that helped dream up our Lilly Endowment proposal, shape plans for the congregation's activities, and did so much to carry them out — thank you.

Thanks to The Lilly Endowment, the charitable foundation that gave our church nearly \$45,000 to "make our hearts sing." And sing they did! With grants like the one we received, Lilly has underwritten the rest and renewal of hundreds of American pastors and congregations over the years — an incalculable service. "The church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord," but Lilly is surely number two.

To Sarah Higginbotham and Peter Sykes, and all the pastoral, professional, and support staff of this church, for being so committed, cooperative, and competent, and for taking up a lot of slack while I was gone — thank you.

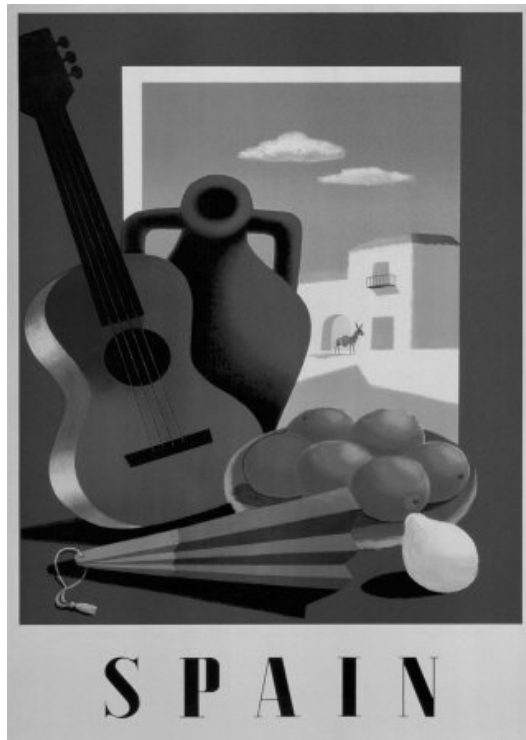
And thank you, dear congregation, for your generosity in granting me time away, for not skipping a beat in your life together as you took eager hold of the grace of sabbatical. It is the sign of a mature, healthy community that you did so, and I am both in awe of your faithfulness and not surprised by it at all.

To everyone who relieved me of worry by taking exemplary care of Anne after I left — God bless you. I can't express what it meant to us, nor the joy of knowing that the same comprehensive care is being extended now to others in our congregation who are in tough situations. You are setting a powerful example.

Thanks also to all the lay leaders whose steady service shapes, enriches, and strengthens our life together, especially our moderator, Gaylen Morgan, and the chair of the diaconate, Jenny Stuart, whose wisdom, strength, clarity of purpose, and creativity have been particularly on display during this sabbatical. Rarely has a church been so well served by such faithful disciples.

Dan Smith knows what I owe him, what we *all* owe him, but if he doesn't, it is because of his characteristic modesty. He is a man of great gifts and virtue whose partnership with me and with this congregation is one of the most important sources of our current congregational vitality. I don't know where we'd be without him, and I don't mean just during the sabbatical. Well done, good and faithful servant.

Well done, indeed, this gracious sabbatical time.



SOME END OF SABBATICAL REFLECTIONS

Mary Luti

[NB: These are heavily edited excerpts from Mary's sermon on July 15. If you would like to read the complete text, go to our web site, www.firstchurchcambridge.org. Click on "Sermons." You can also read the letters and stories Mary sent to the church during her time away by clicking on "Sabbatical Letters."]

A colleague asked me recently if sabbatical had ruined me forever — all that time away in such fabulous places, and everything from rental cars to Red Sox tickets paid for by the Lilly Endowment. Isn't coming back a huge letdown? Won't anything that happens from now on pale in comparison?

Well, if I said that sabbatical wasn't fabulous, I'd be lying. What's not to like about nearly five months during which the telephone rang — count 'em — *three* times? Except for Anne Minton breaking her hip and having to stay behind for the first seven weeks, I'd do it again in a heartbeat. It was *great*. But ruined for all time now that I'm back? Trust me, it wasn't *that* great! In fact, it's the sabbatical that pales in comparison when I hold it up against the joy of belonging to a church like this. If anything's a drag, it's going for a long time without the gift of a community like ours!

Another colleague said, "Beware of trying to summarize your sabbatical in a big 'What I Did on My Summer Vacation'-type sermon. For one thing, a lot of what you experienced is not tellable, nor should it be. For another, most people want to hear *some* of what you did, but very few want, or can stand, to hear it *all*." I would add this — Remember, Mary, that you are not the only one with stories to tell. The church was on sabbatical too.

During that time you became a different church. Truth to tell, I'm not exactly the same person you sent off for a rest either. But this is not something to be concerned about. In fact, it's a good thing, a sign that we did what we were supposed to do. If we'd all stayed exactly the same as before, it would mean that we squandered the huge opportunity that God so generously gave us, for God never gives us gifts so that we can remain comfortably ensconced or stubbornly stuck in the same old place. Grace is meant to move us along.

So now that I'm back, we won't be picking up where we left off. Of course, we really can't, even if we wanted to. But even if we could, it wouldn't be right. If we trust God, trust our leaders, and trust each other, we also trust that where the church is now is a good place. As I settle back in, one of my chief tasks is going to be to celebrate your progress, and adapt to it, not roll anything back.

He has been described in *Time* magazine as "perhaps the country's most outspoken critic of education's fixation on grades [and] test scores." A **light supper at 6:00 p.m.** will precede the presentation.

» **Saturday, December 15, at Carpenter Center, Harvard University. "Dissent and Film,"** a film program designed in cooperation with the Harvard Film Archive.

There is no charge for these events, but at each presentation donations for the work of the Shelter will be accepted.

PEACE AND JUSTICE IN ISRAEL/PALESTINE Sabeel Conference, Friday, October 26 - Saturday, October 27

A historic conference to be held **October 26-27 at Old South Church, 645 Boylston Street, Boston**, offers a valuable opportunity to learn more about the issues of peace and justice in the Middle East. Entitled "**The Apartheid Paradigm in Palestine-Israel: Issues of Justice and Equality**," the conference is hosted by Friends of Sabeel New England.

The keynote speaker will be Archbishop Desmond Tutu, former Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town and Nobel Peace Laureate. Joining him on the program are Naim Ateek, President and Founder of Sabeel Jerusalem; John Dugard, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Occupied Territories; Farid Esack, South African Muslim scholar and activist who was a speaker at our Lenten series this spring; and David Wildman, Executive Secretary for Human Rights and Racial Justice of the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church. The conference will include entertainment, a book fair, exhibits, and a documentary film. For more information about Sabeel or to register for the conference, go to the web site of Friends of Sabeel North America, www.fosna.org, and click on the conference.

Financial contributions toward the support of this exciting conference would be greatly appreciated. If you would like to help, please contact Gay Harter, 617-354-3512, or Susie Neubauer, 617-497-5969, or contribute through the registration site.

— Gay Harter

WHITHER OUR MIDDLE EAST CONVERSATION?



In May with the help of the Missions Committee we spent three Sundays exploring the Israel/Palestine conflict. Some of us heard the voices of diverse Israelis and Palestinians and their common yearning for peace through the film *Searching for Peace in the Middle East*, produced by the Foundation for Middle East Peace. (If you missed this film and would like to see it, contact Gay Harter, who has a DVD copy.) We also heard from members of the Daughters of Abraham, who reported on their experiences meeting with women members of interfaith peace groups in Israel/Palestine. In the final session of the series we examined and discussed the 2005 UCC General Synod resolution entitled "Concerning Use of Economic Leverage in Promoting Peace in the Middle East."

On June 17 we welcomed Catherine Nichols to the pulpit of First Church and to an after church discussion about her work. For the past two years she has been a Mission Partner sponsored by Global Ministries at the Sabeel Ecumenical Institute in Jerusalem. Cathy brought us insight into the painful realities for both Israelis and Palestinians and presented a model of how to discuss this difficult subject with compassion and non-inflammatory language.

Now the Missions Committee solicits your input on how to proceed with our conversation. How can we as a whole church engage in peacemaking with justice? What other narratives do we need to hear? What would be effective steps toward peace that a large part of the congregation could support? Some of you have asked for further education and a desire to hear other voices. We would welcome other suggestions. Please write to Sunessa Schettler, sunessa@hotmail.com, or Gay Harter, asharter@verizon.net, or find us after church. The Missions Committee will be meeting in mid-September to do further planning.

— Gay Harter

UPCOMING EVENTS IN THE MASSACHUSETTS CONFERENCE, UCC

Save the dates! These are exceptional opportunities for spiritual growth and formation! More details will be provided as they become available.

» **Rev. Dr. Thomas A. Long, "Beyond the Worship Wars: Building Vital and Faithful Worship," September 21-23, Wollaston Congregational Church, UCC, Quincy, MA**
Learn about the nine characteristics of congregations that make for vital and faithful worship. Includes a reception, pancake breakfast, workshop, and worship.

» **An Evening Conversation with Tony Robinson, Saturday, September 22, Norwell United Church of Christ, Norwell, MA**
Lay and clergy teams from local churches are invited to come to this free event and engage Tony Robinson in conversation on "What's Theology Got To Do With It?"

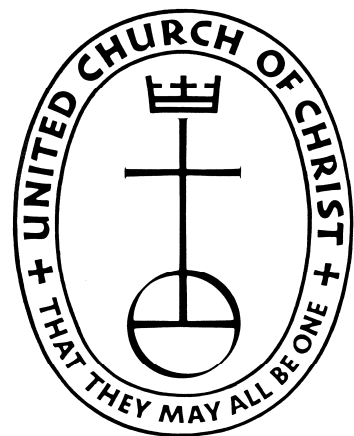
» **The Bluegrass Gospel Project in concert to benefit Ecclesia Ministries Common Cathedral, October 12, Old South Church, Boston, MA**
The Common Cathedral has been forming spiritual community with homeless people since 1994.

» **The Massachusetts Bible Society Harrell F. Beck Lectureship: Barbara Brown Taylor, "Sabbath Resistance: Treasures Left Lying in a Field," October 21, 2007, Weston, MA, and October 22, Boston and Northampton, MA**
Barbara Brown Taylor will speak on the failure of so many Christians to remember the Sabbath. The lectureship includes evening lectures and luncheons. Go to the Massachusetts Bible Society web site for complete information, www.massbible.org.

» **Rev. Dr. Thomas A. Long, "Testimony: Talking Ourselves Into Being Christian," Monday, November 19, First Congregational Church, UCC, Shrewsbury, MA**

Join Thomas Long for a discussion of the topic of Testimony. Dr. Long was named one of the twelve most effective preachers in the English-speaking world by Baylor University. He is the author of *Testimony: Talking Ourselves into Being Christian* and *Worship Wars: Building Vital and Faithful Worship*.

For further information see the Massachusetts Conference web site, www.macucc.org.



FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE

The Fellowship Committee would like to express our sincere appreciation for the work of Janet Lyman, cookie contribution solicitor extraordinaire! Without her faithful telephone calls, we would have a much poorer Morning Worship Hospitality Hour. We would also like to thank the Stewardship Committee for their sponsorship of after worship hospitality in June and the Deacons for their sponsorship in August. July was brought to you by yours truly — Adwoa, Alice, Amy, Anita, Evan, Jan, Jane, Laurie. And a warm welcome to our newest member, Patricia Gnazzo Pepper, who valiantly offered to try to fill the shoes of Tony Stankus. We would never say no to anyone who would like to join us. Feel free to contact our committee co-chairs, Jane Matthews or Laurie Friedman

— Laurie Friedman

SOCIAL JUSTICE NEWS

Social Justice Summit

Imagine a church where the hands, hearts, and feet of every member, young and old, are shaped for service, and a church that does not lack imagination about ways to use them.

These words are from the "Open Road" section of First Church's vision statement. A meeting held in June invited everyone interested in Social Justice work to share ideas and set goals to bring the church closer to reaching this vision.

First Church members representing the following groups attended this meeting: City Mission Society, Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries, CRISPAZ, Daughters of Abraham, Executive Council, Greater Boston Interfaith Organization, Harvard Square Meal Program, Just Peace Ministry, Missions Committee, Newcomers, Outdoor Church, Refugee Immigration Ministry, Shelter Oversight Committee, Solutions at Work, and those concerned with current political issues.

The group decided on the following goals:

- Broaden and strengthen the work of the social justice groups through collaboration of existing groups to create new ideas, new energy, and new participants.
- Establish more effective communication among groups and between all the groups and the congregation.
- Assess how the idea of letting new initiatives "bubble up" outside of the traditional committee structure has been working.

Social Justice Plans for Fall 2007

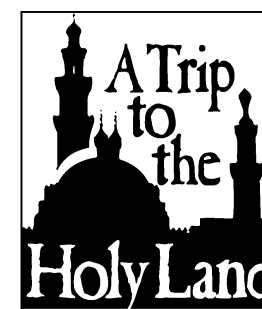
More information about the following plans and about Social Justice opportunities will be provided at the Regathering Breakfast, Sunday, September 9:

- A listserv and e-newsletter on social justice will be offered to the congregation. People who would like to receive timely notice of social justice opportunities would "opt in" to the listserv. A printed version of the e-newsletter with these

- opportunities would also be available at church.
- Moments of testimony about social justice/faith in action will be given during worship services periodically throughout the year.
- Groups will be developing opportunities to "dip your toe into the waters" of social justice. People will be able to try a variety of experiences to make a contribution to the lives of others without making a long-term commitment to the work of one group or initiative.

For more information about Social Justice at First Church, contact Rev. Dan Smith.

— Peggy Stevens



A CHRISTIAN PILGRIMAGE TO JERUSALEM

On **March 24 - April 4, 2008**, join countless pilgrims who for millennia have gone

expectantly up to the Holy City, seeking an encounter with God. Uncover the layers of history, devotion, hope, and human struggle that make it unique among the world's holy places. Our journey will immerse us in the Old City, take us on visits to other towns and landscapes associated with the ministry of Jesus, and provide structured opportunities to reflect on the importance of Jerusalem to all the children of Abraham. Our daily rhythm will also include learning and prayer, as we engage with the history, culture, politics, and faith-making of this remarkable place. We will be lodged at St. George's College in East Jerusalem (www.sgcjerusalem.org), well known for its safe, comfortable, and welcoming atmosphere. The pilgrimage will be led by Mary Luti and Anne Minton, with daily guidance from Dr. Henry Carse, Director of Special Programs at St George's College. Cost: \$1,955 for double occupancy; \$2,105 for single occupancy. Included: lodging for 10 nights, most meals, all tours, lectures, transportation, and many extras. Not included: airfare, transportation to and from Tel Aviv airport, a few meals. Interested in going to Jerusalem, but need to know more before deciding? Contact Mary Luti, or Anne Minton, amminton@comcast.net.