

EVENT

March/April
2010

The Newsletter of First Church in Cambridge, Congregational, United Church of Christ

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The important thing is this: to be able at any moment to sacrifice what we are for what we could become.

— Charles Du Bos

Dear Friends,

I came across the provocative quote above when reading a fascinating book called *The Way of Transition: Embracing Life's Most Difficult Moments*. It was written in 2001 by William Bridges, a former English professor who switched into the field of transition management in the mid-1970s. Though he writes the book from the perspective of one who recently lost his wife to cancer, it's written for any person or any group experiencing a life transition. In other words, it's written for all of us! Whether through divorce or a move, through a job change or loss of a loved one, my guess is everyone could relate to and find wisdom in his astute observations about what it's like to live through life's big changes, both voluntary and involuntary

One of Bridges' more moving assertions is that the way of transition carries us not simply from an "old" way of being to a "new" one, but also through a period he identifies as "the neutral zone," the time between the old and new. This neutral zone usually involves a sometimes difficult hanging on and an even more painful letting go, before it gives way to a time of opening up, when new hope and

possibilities emerge. The stretch can often seem unbearably disorienting, uncomfortable, and even endless, but being aware of it can make us more gentle and patient with ourselves while we are in it. Indeed, through this "neutral zone" we can learn to sacrifice what we are for what we could become.

This Lent we will be lifting up the theme of "Walking the Way." "The Way" is one expression Christians have used since biblical times to describe the path of discipleship. It's regularly used in the gospels, especially Mark. It was a common expression among leaders in the earliest churches. While the Way of Jesus might better be described as a way of transformation, there are elements in Bridges' book about transition that are instructive.

At the beginning of another Lent, a season given to reflection, are we feeling as though we are stuck in old patterns or, on the contrary, are we excited about some "new life" that is springing up? Or do we find ourselves somewhere "in the middle," in 40 days or more of disoriented wilderness, unsure of what comes next, wrestling with demons of doubt and disillusion. Are there people, places, or things that God is calling us to let go of — to let go and let God, as the saying goes? Is there some newness, possibility,

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or adventure for which God is preparing us next?

I said at our recent Annual Meeting that we are still very much a community "in transition" and in an interim time. The fact is that churches are always in transition, at least those that are seeking to walk the way of Jesus, who is constantly calling us to change our lives and to change the world. To put it another way, God is constantly inviting us to sacrifice what we are for what we could become. As we will study together this Lent, part of what it has meant for Christians to walk the way of Jesus is to die to one's old life and "to receive new life in Christ," and also to endure those in between times in the wilderness.

I thank God for the way of transition, and more for the way of transformation, and most of all for the Way of Jesus. And, as the choir will once again sing for us into our Lenten worship each Sunday, "I want Jesus to walk with me!" May it be so for all of us. May we seek to the walk the Way together.

Yours in faith,

Dan

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The due date for contributions for the April/May issue of **EVENT** is April 14. This issue will cover activities and plans through the months of March and April.

SUNDAYS AT FIRST CHURCH

9:00 a.m.	Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary
9:45 a.m.	Community Gathering Time, Margaret Jewett Hall
10:00 a.m.	Christian Formation for all ages
11:00 a.m.	Morning Worship, Dan Smith, preaching
11:20 a.m.	Church School for PreK-8 th Grade
12:30 p.m.	Shared Interest Luncheon, Hastings Room
2:00 p.m.	Mental Health and Spirituality Group, Tower Room
5:00 p.m.	Lenten Jazz Vesper Service, with Carolyn Wilkins and band, MJH

February 28. Second Sunday in Lent

9:00 a.m.	Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary
9:45 a.m.	Community Gathering Time, MJH
10:00 a.m.	Christian Formation for all ages
11:00 a.m.	Morning Worship, Karin Case, preaching, Healing Service
11:20 a.m.	Church School for PreK-8 th Grade
12:30 p.m.	GBIO "Economy Session"
2:00 p.m.	Mental Health and Spirituality Group, Tower Room

March 7. Third Sunday in Lent

9:00 a.m.	Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary
9:45 a.m.	Community Gathering Time, MJH
10:00 a.m.	Christian Formation for all ages
11:00 a.m.	Morning Worship, Multigenerational Holy Communion, Dan Smith, preaching (a time for healing prayer offered immediately following the service)
12:30 p.m.	Teacher Training Lunch, Hastings Room
12:45 p.m.	In-Care Team Meeting, Dan's Office
1:00 p.m.	Outdoor Church, Cambridge Common
2:00 p.m.	Mental Health and Spirituality Group, Tower Room

February 21. First Sunday in Lent

March 14. Fourth Sunday in Lent

- 9:00 a.m. Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary
 9:45 a.m. Community Gathering Time, MJH
 10:00 a.m. Christian Formation for all ages
 11:00 a.m. Morning Worship, Karin Case,
 preaching
 11:20 a.m. Church School for PreK-8th Grade
 12:30 p.m. Second Sunday Lunch, MJH
 2:00 p.m. Mental Health and Spirituality Group,
 Tower Room
 3:00 p.m. "A Prioress's Tale," Sanctuary

March 21. Fifth Sunday in Lent

- 9:00 a.m. Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary
 9:45 a.m. Community Gathering Time, MJH
 10:00 a.m. Christian Formation for all ages
 11:00 a.m. Morning Worship, Dan Smith,
 preaching
 11:20 a.m. Church School for PreK-8th Grade
 2:00 p.m. Mental Health and Spirituality Group,
 Tower Room

March 28. Palm Sunday

- 9:00 a.m. Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary
 10:00 a.m. All Church Palm Sunday Breakfast
 11:00 a.m. Multigenerational Morning Worship
 2:00 p.m. Mental Health and Spirituality Group,
 Tower Room

April 4. Easter Sunday

- 10:00 a.m. Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary
 11:00 a.m. Morning Worship, Multigenerational
 Holy Communion, Dan Smith,
 preaching (a time for healing prayer
 offered immediately following the
 service)
 1:00 p.m. Outdoor Church, Cambridge
 Common
 2:00 p.m. Mental Health and Spirituality Group,
 Tower Room
 5:00 p.m. Jazz Celebration of Easter, with
 Carolyn Wilkins and band, MJH

April 11. Second Sunday of Easter

- 9:00 a.m. Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary
 9:45 a.m. Community Gathering Time, MJH
 10:00 a.m. Christian Formation for all ages
 11:00 a.m. Morning Worship, Karin Case,
 preaching
 11:20 a.m. Church School for PreK-8th Grade
 2:00 p.m. Mental Health and Spirituality Group,
 Tower Room

April 18. Third Sunday of Easter

- 9:00 a.m. Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary
 9:45 a.m. Community Gathering Time, MJH
 10:00 a.m. Christian Formation for all ages
 11:00 a.m. Morning Worship, Mental Health and
 Spirituality Sunday, Terry
 McKinney, preaching, Baptism of
 Anna Cynthia Holshouser
 11:20 a.m. Church School for PreK-8th Grade
 12:30 p.m. Social Justice Forum, Hastings Room
 2:00 p.m. Mental Health and Spirituality Group,
 Tower Room

April 25. Fourth Sunday of Easter

- 9:00 a.m. Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary
 9:45 a.m. Community Gathering Time, MJH
 10:00 a.m. Christian Formation for all ages
 11:00 a.m. Morning Worship, Dan Smith,
 preaching
 11:20 a.m. Church School for PreK-8th Grade
 12:30 p.m. Pastoral Care Teams Lunch, Hastings
 Room
 2:00 p.m. Mental Health and Spirituality Group,
 Tower Room



LENT AND HOLY WEEK AT FIRST CHURCH

prepare us to live into the events at the end of Jesus' life on earth — his crucifixion and rising. Beginning with Ash Wednesday, Lenten worship faces us with our sins. We are called to let God's mercy change our hearts. The season is filled with images of wilderness, thirst, and conflict. In the ancient Church during Lent neophytes prepared for baptism with study, prayer, and fasting. Purple is Lent's color, signifying repentance and conversion.

Ash Wednesday, February 17, 8:00 p.m., Lindsay Chapel

First night of Lent. We acknowledge our origins in the dust, our brokenness, and our dependence on God, and receive ashes as a sign of mortality. Join us for worship and the Imposition of Ashes at 8:00 p.m., in Lindsay Chapel.

Lenten Jazz Service, Sunday, February 21, 5:00 p.m., MJH

Start Lent right with an evening of jazz worship and musical meditation. Pianist Carolyn Wilkins and her band will lead us through inspiring selections of African-American spirituals, Jazz standards, and Gospel songs. On this first Sunday of Lent, the service will have a contemplative feel and will call us into the Lenten journey. Come for the music! Come to hear a good and welcoming word! Come and break bread together, ready to join your hearts in prayer and song. The service is decidedly laid back and informal, so by all means come as you are! All are welcome!

Palm Sunday, March 28, 11:00 a.m. Worship (Procession begins at 10:45 in MJH)

Last Sunday of Lent. We remember Jesus' final entry into Jerusalem. We greet him with a "parade" of young and old, waving palms and singing traditional songs, as we enter the sanctuary to begin the morning worship service.

Maundy Thursday, April 1,

7:30 p.m., Ritual of Footwashing, under the dome in the sanctuary

8:00 p.m., Service of Communion and Tenebrae, sanctuary
We recall the new commandment Jesus gave his disciples, to love one another as he loved us. We also remember his last meal with his friends by celebrating Holy Communion. And in a darkened sanctuary we call

to mind Jesus' anguish and arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Good Friday, April 2, 8:00 p.m., Lindsay Chapel

We lament the world's pain and injustice, and we honor the death of the Lord on the cross of shame.

Easter Sunday, April 4, 11:00 a.m. Morning Worship

Christ is Risen! He is Risen, Indeed! We celebrate and rejoice in God's gift of new life through the Resurrection of Jesus. With joy-filled worship and special music we lift up the good news that not even death can separate us from the love of God in Christ.

Easter Jazz Service, Sunday, April 4, 5:00 p.m., MJH

On Easter Sunday we'll pull out the brass for a celebration of the new life and joy that dawn again on Easter day! Pianist Carolyn Wilkins and her band will lead us through inspiring selections of African-American spirituals, Jazz standards, and Gospel songs. Come for the music! Come and break bread together, ready to lift your voices, and join your hearts in prayer and song. The service is decidedly laid back and informal, so by all means come as you are! All are welcome!



Beginning February 21. Walking the Way: Ten

CHRISTIAN FORMATION IN LENT: *WALKING THE WAY*

o'clock hours for the Season of Lent

One of the hymns we sing during the season of Lent opens with the words, "I want Jesus to walk with me." What does it mean for us today to have Jesus by our side and *to walk with him* on our journey through life? What does it mean, especially in the season of Lent, to walk with Jesus on the road that leads to Jerusalem?

In the first century, before our emerging tradition was called "Christianity," Jesus' followers spoke of their practice and their path simply as "the Way." Our 10:00 adult formation hours will provide an opportunity to explore afresh this ancient path. We'll take a look at the historical Jesus, explore what it means to be a disciple, to be in the world as Jesus was, learning from his example, opening our hearts to one another and to God, and *walking the Way*.

Adults and children are invited to spend one or all of the 10:00 formation hours in artistic expression of *walking the Way*. Sarah Fujiwara, Sarah Higginbotham, and Pam Cochrane will lead us in the creation of new fabric art for our Communion table, based on our Lenten theme. Enrich your intellectual study with some "hands-on" artwork that will result in a communally-created piece for our worship space.

On February 21 we'll all meet together in Margaret Jewett Hall to begin "walking the way" together. On the following four Sundays, February 28, March 7, 10 and 21, we will split into two groups. A study and discussion group will gather in the Hastings Room while a hands-on, multigenerational experiential approach will be offered in Margaret Jewett Hall. Then on March 28 we'll regather and share our experiences over a 10:00 a.m. community-wide Palm Sunday breakfast in MJH.

Bread for the Journey (and Pie for Dessert!)

On **Wednesdays, February 24, March 10 and 24**, Dan and Nancy will be hosting **Lenten dinners at the parsonage**. All are welcome to gather and be nourished by good soup, good bread, and good

conversation. Come, sit by a fire, get to know one another better, and share what it means for you be "walking the way" during this Lenten season. Soup will be on as of 6:00 p.m. Come early or late, right through 7:30. Come to one or come to all. Please RSVP to Dan or Nancy if you can (but feel free to show up even if you haven't!). **44 Garden Street, Cambridge.**

Lenten Reading Suggestions

STILLSPEAKING Daily Devotional. This Lent we'll "go green" and try an on-line devotional resource from the United Church of Christ. A team of gifted UCC writers and pastors collaborate on this daily spiritual message. It will include a brief daily thought, a prayer, and a passage from scripture. Use it to center your thoughts, deepen your practice, and sink your roots deep into the Spirit during the season of Lent. There are three ways you can access this electronic resource.

- Read it on the UCC website by going to: <http://tinyurl.com/pdztwj>
- Register to receive it as a daily e-mail by going to: <http://tinyurl.com/ygteyx>
- Or visit the link on the First Church web page at: <http://firstchurchcambridge.org>

A new book for Lent! As we reflect together on how we walk the Way with Jesus, you may wish to read Barbara Brown Taylor's new book ***An Altar in the World: a Geography of Faith***. Taylor's lush reflections illuminate our encounters with the sacred in the small things we say and do — in practices such as walking, working, hanging the laundry, or simply making eye contact with people we meet in the course of our daily activities. Taylor also reflects on topics like meditation, prayer, and pronouncing blessing. Taylor writes, "My hope is that reading [these pages] will help you recognize some of the altars in the world — ordinary-looking places where human beings have met and may continue to meet up with the divine More that they sometimes call God." Copies of *An Altar to the World* will be available in the church office and at coffee hour following worship beginning Sunday, February 21.

MORE CREATIVE ARTS TIME IN CHURCH SCHOOL

We asked and parents answered. Families with elementary school-aged children are very pleased with our Godly Play program, especially in its 11:20 time slot. However, they wish their kids could have more opportunities for music, movement, and art at church. Since gathering a core group of children at 10:00 has proven challenging, we plan to add Creative Arts Sundays to our Godly Play schedule. On these Sundays we'll combine our three Godly Play classes (pre-K through 5th grade) for special activities and projects. First up on February 14 and 21 will be Music & Movement with Sarah Higginbotham. Stay tuned for more Creative Arts Sundays in April and May.

OUTDOOR CHURCH OFFERING PREPARATION NOW AT 11:20 A.M.

On Communion Sundays we prepare three dozen lunches for the Outdoor Church to distribute to those in need on the streets of Cambridge. For over four years the children of the church have led us in this discipline. In 2010 we are returning to the model of inviting children to leave worship at 11:20 a.m. on the first Sunday of each month and to return with the lunches in time for multigenerational Communion. As always, people of all ages are encouraged to participate by delivering the lunches to the Cambridge Common at 1:00 p.m. Contact Sarah Higginbotham if you'd like to get involved in this ongoing mission project.



MINISTER OF SPIRITUAL FORMATION: SEARCH COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Search Committee has been meeting for over a year and is making steady progress toward recommending a candidate to the congregation for consideration, possibly as early as April. With that earliest possible timeline in mind, a new minister might arrive during the summer and be ready to be fully involved by this fall.

We have read over 80 profiles from candidates (each one about 20 pages long), have selected about 20% for closer consideration, have conducted a dozen interviews, and have observed some candidates in action at sermons from a neutral pulpit.

The primary mission of the Minister of Spiritual Formation is leadership for the congregation's spiritual growth and development. It is viewed as a collaborative effort with the Senior Minister and the church staff. The job description includes preaching, teaching, pastoral care, and working with all the groups in the church. In the job description the Committee states that ministry at First Church is grounded in human and reflective spiritual character, depth of Christian faith, theological integrity, accessibility, honesty, accountability, vulnerability, trust, and love.

-Perry Neubauer, for the Search Committee, consisting of Laurie Williams, Dave McCann, Doug Marshall, Ruth Hsiao, Devin Hansen, Erika Hanna,

Patricia Gnazzo Pepper, and Dave Dyer.

MENTAL HEALTH SUNDAY, APRIL 18

Friends, too often faith communities fail to include people's mental health struggles in wondering about ways we might experience God's movement. We're fortunate here at First Church to have God's movement in our midst through the Mental Health and Spirituality Group as part of our practice of full inclusion. As part of that movement, Sunday, April 18, will include a special focus on how our mental health struggles can affect our faith — and even be a means to deeper faith. Come, consider and hold prayerfully this aspect of the entirety of our lives in which God comes to us.

— Terry McKinney



MEN'S BREAKFAST

First Saturday of each month,
7:30 a.m., Hastings Room

Gentle men of First Church! Here are the dates for our upcoming Saturday morning breakfasts: **March 6, April 3, May 1, June 5**. Mark your calendars now, and plan to join us regularly. Both body and soul will be replenished! The breakfasts are held **in the Hastings Room, 7:30 - 9:00 a.m.** One-time visitors, friends and newcomers are always welcome. Questions? Contact Peter Byerly, p.bylerly@comcast.net, or Paul Efthim, pwefthim@verizon.net. If you'd like to sign up for the Men's Breakfast e-mail list to receive monthly reminders, please e-mail Kirsten Manville, parishadmin@firstchurchcambridge.org.

THE PRIORESS'S TALE

Touring Chamber Opera
Performance
Sunday, March 14, 3:00 p.m.,
at First Church in Cambridge
in the Sanctuary

The Prioress's Tale is a 75-minute chamber opera in English by Boston-based composer Delvyn Case that explores issues of religious tolerance and anti-Semitism in a unique and powerful way. The operatic version of The Prioress's Tale is a radical re-imagining of Chaucer's infamous story, transforming it into a parable about the power of forgiveness to heal the wounds of religious intolerance. The premiere performances, which were supported by grants and donations from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, numerous churches, and Jewish and Christian individuals, received substantial media coverage, including feature articles in the *Boston Globe* and *South Shore Patriot-Ledger*. The performance, which features live performers in full costumes, a small number of set-pieces, and piano accompaniment, will be followed by an opportunity to discuss the issues raised in the opera. A suggested donation for First Church members is \$10.

Visit www.delvyncase.com for more information.





FIRST CHURCH WOMEN'S RETREAT, APRIL 9 - 11

All women of the First Church community are invited ~~to come for a weekend of fun, relaxation, reflection,~~ and worship, accented by arts projects, singing, stories, laughter, and walks on the beach. If you need some time away, some time with friends — old and new — or simply some time to rest and enjoy the beauty of the natural world, this is for you! The annual Women's Retreat will be held **Friday evening, April 9, through Sunday lunch, April 11, at Craigville Conference Center** on Cape Cod.

Registration begins Sunday, February 21. The nonrefundable registration fee is \$25, which is included in the total cost. Full payment is due by Palm Sunday, March 28. The charge is \$175 for the full event, \$110 for one overnight, and \$55 for Saturday only. As usual, scholarship funds are available and multiple car pools allow for plenty of transportation options. Come for the entire event or for a day. Donations to the Janyce Jennings Fund are greatly appreciated and can be made online to Restricted Funds or at the registration table during coffee hour.

The **Women's Retreat Planning Committee** welcomes additional members as well as recommendations for topics or activities. To contribute to planning the Retreat or for more information contact Carolyn White, 617-417-7177 or cawhitema@gmail.com, or any member of the planning team: Marian Smith, 607-748-0853 or

msmith829@gmail.com, Annika Walbert, 617-894-3852 or annika.walbert@gmail.com, Holly Marple, Sarah Fujiwara or Pam Cochrane, pccochrane@gmail.com

KIDS4PEACE SPRING EVENTS

Interfaith Friendship Day will be held on Sunday afternoon, March 7, 2:00 - 4:00 p.m., at Temple Beth Zion in Brookline. □ Jewish, Christian, and Muslim children in grades 4-6 will have the opportunity to learn about one another's religions through art, music, the sharing of stories, and discussion. Parents will also have opportunities for discussion and getting to know one another. The event is sponsored by Kids4Peace, an interfaith, cross-cultural program for children from the United States and the Middle East. Visit Kids4PeaceBoston.org to download a registration form and to get more information, or contact Peggy Stevens, peggy@Kids4PeaceBoston.org.

Interfaith Youth Service Day will be held on Sunday, April 18, in collaboration with Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries and a variety of religious communities and organizations. Kids4Peace Boston will be organizing age appropriate service projects for children and families that day, and there will also be service projects in Boston for middle school, high school, and college students. More information will be available in March at Kids4PeaceBoston.org.

MISSIONS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE UPDATE

We are excited to have held recently a Social Justice Summit focusing on Cambridge's response to climate change. We were honored to have Susan Redlich of First Church and Henrietta Davis from Cambridge's City Council here to share with us their experience of the United Nations Climate Change Conference, held in Copenhagen in December, 2009. The 20-25 people who attended shared in a lively discussion of

personal, congregational, city-wide, and collective responses to the climate crisis.

The **next Social Justice Summit** will be on **Sunday, April 18, at 12:30 p.m.**, and will focus on Middle East peace issues and local efforts.

Upcoming events on the Missions calendar include:

- **Ecumenical Advocacy Days**, an annual event sponsored by a number of American churches and church-related agencies including the UCC's Global Ministries, will be held March 19 - 22 in Washington, DC. Our own Devon Davidson plans to attend. For more details see below.
- In April we will have our annual **One Great Hour of Sharing** offering; Sunessa Schettler will spearhead this effort, including intergenerational activities planned for April 11 with the Creative Worship & Arts program.

Our committee meets regularly on the third Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m. in the church office. Join us! E-mail sunessa@gmail.com for more information.

— Sunesa Schettler, Co-Chair, Missions and Social Justice Committee

ECUMENICAL ADVOCACY DAYS, March 19 - 22, Washington, DC

The theme of this year's Ecumenical Advocacy Days is "A Place to Call Home: Immigrants, Refugees and Displaced Peoples."

Jesus had no place to lay his head. Neither do tens of millions of migrants, refugees, and displaced persons. Be part of an action weekend addressing this global injustice. Join hundreds of faith-based advocates in taking action on U.S. legislation that will welcome immigrants, protect refugees, and prevent displacement for millions. Worship, study, and dialogue with hundreds of people of faith at the annual Ecumenical Advocacy Days. Then join us as we go to Capitol Hill to advocate for our members of Congress to remedy these global injustices.

Ecumenical Advocacy Days is a movement of the

ecumenical Christian community, and its recognized partners and allies, grounded in biblical witness and our shared traditions of justice, peace, and the integrity of creation. Our goal, through worship, theological reflection, and opportunities for learning and witness, is to strengthen our Christian voice and to mobilize for advocacy on a wide variety of U.S. domestic and international policy issues.

Want to know more? Interested in forming a delegation from First Church? Contact Devon Davidson, 617-501-3230 or devon2020@gmail.com.



GREATER BOSTON



INTERFAITH ORGANIZATION (GBIO) NEWS

Usury is the charging of exorbitant interest rates on loaned money. It is forbidden by each of the Abrahamic faith traditions. It was prohibited for most of our nation's history. In 1776, at the birth of our nation, all the States in the Union adopted policies to limit usury. Interest rates were capped between 6 and 8% in each state. Interest rate caps were the norm until 1978, when the U. S. Supreme Court decided that national banks may export the state interest rate law of their home state into any state where they do business. In response South Dakota eliminated its interest rate caps, prompting several credit card issuing banks to move to South Dakota and operate nationally with no interest rate cap. The final blow came in 1980, during the Carter Administration, when Congress passed the Depository Institutions Deregulation and Monetary Control Act, exempting federally chartered savings banks, installment plan sellers, and chartered loan companies from state usury limits. This effectively overrode all state and local usury laws.

GBIO in Action

Economic Impact Sessions. Last spring we heard from our members all across Greater Boston in our house meetings, and the overwhelming message was that too many people are being crushed by student loan and credit card debt. In order to craft effective actions, we need specific stories of how our members are impacted by the high cost of usurious consumer lending and banking practices, so we will be holding sessions within our congregations and organizations to gather these stories. **First Church is holding one such session after church on Sunday, February 28.**

10% is enough. GBIO is working with 22 of our sister organizations in MetroIAF (Industrial Areas Foundation) to reinstate interest rate caps. Check out the website www.10percentisenough.org. MetroIAF believes that a 10% interest rate is enough to allow credit to flow to all appropriate borrowers. It is enough to allow bankers their fair share of profit. It is enough to protect families from

permanent indebtedness. And it is enough to divert our economy away from the speculative gambling that has caused our present economic crisis and back toward productive wealth creation. 10% is also enough to provoke a reaction and to begin a public conversation with politicians and industry leaders.

Restoring America's Commitment to Consumers Act (HR4300). Rep. Louise Slaughter (NY) and Rep. John Tierney (MA) are sponsoring this act which, if passed, would establish a 16% interest rate cap on all credit cards. This act has been co-sponsored by 71 members of Congress, including Reps: John Olver, Michael Capuano, Bill Delahunt, Stephen Lynch, James McGovern, and Niki Tsongas from Massachusetts. GBIO has been in conversation with several of these representatives and plans to offer testimony at upcoming Congressional hearings. Though 10% is enough, 16% is a start and is better than no caps at all.

Move the Money. GBIO is currently researching the viability and effectiveness of moving money out of predatory banks and into consumer friendly banks. Meetings are already underway with state and municipal treasurers' offices and also with denominational leaders. Stay tuned!

Access to Higher Education. As part of our house meetings last year, we also learned about the crushing weight of student loans. GBIO is researching action opportunities, including advocacy for the passage by the Senate of SAFRA (Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act, HR 3221). This legislation would cap interest rates on private student loans, making it possible for students who experience emergencies or hardship to declare bankruptcy, something which has not been possible since 2005.

For more information contact Dan Smith, dsmith6@firstchurchcambridge.org

On Sunday, January 24, ten new members were welcomed into First Church. To help us all become better acquainted, following are brief introductions of the new members:

Susan Abbott

NEW MEMBERS

Sue grew up in Connecticut and is a lifetime UCC member. She is an attorney at Goodwin Procter in Boston, where she specializes in estate planning and representation of nonprofit organizations. She lives in Charlestown with a dog and two cats and enjoys reading, travel, cooking, movies, and spending time with family and friends.

Anna Barnes

Anna lives in Arlington and is an artist. She loves to explore the connection between art and spirituality. She is a painter and is also very interested in drawing, both abstract and realistic. She loves to work with kids doing art projects and hopes to do some work with kids of First Church. Anna has longtime interest helping the poor and those experiencing homelessness and volunteers her time doing so. She is excited about joining such a lively and friendly congregation.

Christian and Valerie Blanc

Valerie, who has lived in Cambridge for nine years, grew up in a UCC community in North Andover, MA. She and her husband Chris have come to First Church to find a church community where their children can learn and build a strong spiritual foundation. Valerie is a dancer and dance therapist who works with children in the Boston area and around the world whose lives have been shaken by violence and trauma. Christian has proudly called Cambridge home since 1998. A lifelong Roman Catholic from Manchester, NH, Chris has a deep (yet yearning) faith in Christ. He has been searching for a church community and a special religious education for his children Emma (6) and James (4). Chris is a mechanical engineer from Rensselaer (RPI) who specializes in prototyping inventions. And he loves classic and 80s rock!

George Caponigro

George is semi-retired and serves on the Board of Directors of Home Start Inc., a homeless agency that works on housing and changing lives. He has been a homeless advocate for over a decade and a half at the local, state, and national levels. George has degrees in Business Management, Culinary Art, and Nutrition. He is single with two grown daughters and two grandchildren and as a hobby plays chess in Harvard Square.

John Firmin

John moved here from Washington, DC, and is a semi-retired attorney and business executive. He comes to the UCC as a lifetime Presbyterian and former Elder seeking a socially active outreach congregation. John is especially interested in working with the men's shelter and related activities.

Flavia Graf Reardon

Flavia lives on the Jamaica Plain/Roxbury border with her husband Tim and her two children Martina (4) and Felix (2). She is a teacher working part-time at the Boston Renaissance Charter School with 2nd and 3rd graders. Flavia has been attending First Church in Cambridge for well over a year and looks forward to joining this welcoming community in a more formal way. She loves to grow vegetables in her back yard, knit tidbits for babies, and spend time with her family!

Marcia Russell

Marcia is a doctoral student at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and also travels extensively doing work with schools. Her mother is a retired Presbyterian Army chaplain, and Marcia was active in the UCC church her grandparents attended in Arizona. Most recently Marcia moved from Huntington Beach, CA.

Evan and Kelly Whitney

Evan and Kelly are new parents to four-month old Tabitha and relatively recent newlyweds, having married in June, 2008. They are both in graduate school at Harvard, he part-time at the Extension School and she full-time at the Graduate School of Education. Evan has worked for Harvard's News Office for nearly fourteen years, while Kelly's background is in children's television. They are excited to make First Church officially their spiritual and religious home, having attended for quite some time now.

"First Church Profiles" is an EVENT feature highlighting the lives of some of our longer-term parishioners. While we regularly present brief bios of new members, many EVENT readers may not know very much about the extraordinary people who've been part of First Church for a longer time. These profiles enable us to know more

FIRST CHURCH PROFILES

about the important events in their lives, about how they came to First Church and what the church has meant to them, and about the important contributions they have made to the life of the wider community and the world.

The profile for this issue was prepared by Rob Cooper.

Bill & Ruth Hsiao

At First Church you never know who might be sitting next to you or where he or she has come from. If you were sharing a pew with either Bill or Ruth Hsiao, you'd be sitting next to someone who endured the effects of World War II in China and went on to attain a Ph.D. in the Boston area.

Bill was born in Beijing and Ruth in Shanghai before the war. Their fathers were both intellectuals and moved their families into central China away from Japanese Occupation. Bill's dad taught economics at Tsinghua University, and Ruth's dad was a biology teacher who worked at a silk factory in Szechuan Province. Bill's house was in the country, where it was safer, with no electricity or running water. He remembers watching Japanese planes flying low overhead to bomb the city where his father worked ... one coming so close he could see the pilot's face as he tried to machine-gun Bill and his friends ... even more scary was the sound of hungry wolves at night scratching at their windows. With no school his mother taught her five children how to read.

Ruth lived in a house with a piano and books from missionaries. Her mother exposed her to *Heidi* and *Jane Eyre*, reading to her in English, then translating into Chinese. Ruth's love of literature had begun. The family moved back to Shanghai, then on to Taiwan for Ruth's junior high. She then went to an American high school in Tokyo.

Bill moved to New York at age 12, when his father became an economic adviser to the Chinese delegation at the United Nations. Within six months his father died, and his mother contracted 3rd stage Tuberculosis. China had been taken over by the Communists, so they could not return. Neighbors helped them get jobs, Bill delivering papers before

school and groceries in the afternoon. As he didn't know much English, school was a struggle for Bill, but he showed great aptitude in math. At Forrest Hills High School he was already interested in international affairs. A teacher encouraged him to take a class in debating, which may be where he learned to be so good at it.

With the benefit of a sizable scholarship Bill attended Ohio Wesleyan University, where he majored in physics and math. Many of his friends there were pre-theological students and often talked about learning to know God. Though growing up agnostic, Bill began to study the Bible and eventually became the assistant minister for the college chaplain.

Ruth's family had been Christian for three generations and wanted her to go to a "safe" school in the U.S. They chose Mennonite Goshen College in Indiana, where she took her degree in Natural Sciences and looked for a job as a lab technician. She got an internship and then a job at Hartford Hospital, next door to Trinity College. There she took evening courses in American literature, her true scholarly passion. Meanwhile, Bill had decided that Actuarial Science would be a good use of his math skills and got a job with an insurance company.

They met at a party hosted by a Chinese professor at the University of Hartford. Ruth said Bill seemed like an "initiator" and she liked that. This would soon be proven true, as in two separate situations Bill organized groups to help care for a victim of a serious car accident and an attempted suicide who were members of the Chinese-American group in Hartford. He was quite taken by the good heart Ruth showed, as she moved in to help in both efforts. Within a year they were married at the Asylum Hill Congregational Church that Bill had been attending with his housemates.

After Bill completed ten exams to become a Fellow in the Society of Actuaries, and believing the Chinese tradition that government service is a higher calling than corporate work, he went to Washington to work for the Chief Actuary for the United States. When his boss was fired by President

Nixon, Bill became acting Chief Actuary, and his testimony to Congress on the viability of the Social Security System helped the Carter administration pass legislation to strengthen it.

Also believing that learning is a lifelong occupation, Bill took a sabbatical to study economics at Harvard. He never went back, staying to earn a Master's in Public Administration and a Ph.D. in economics. He was offered an Associate Professorship in the School of Public Health, where he is now the K.T. Li Professor of Economics. We sometimes don't see Bill in church, because he spends much time traveling to countries in both the developing and the developed world to advise in the areas of health care economics, policy, and social insurance. Bill also advises the World Bank, UNICEF, and the World Health Organization. To learn more about Bill's work, you can find him on Wikipedia.

As her two boys grew older, Ruth took courses in Chinese and English Literature at the Harvard Extension School and Wellesley Continuing Education. Eventually she received a Ph.D. from Tufts. After writing a proposal to establish a chair for Asian-American Literature, she filled that position until 2005 and helped it become permanently tenured.

In Cambridge the Hsiao's lived near First Church and visited when their children were in first grade. The deal was sealed when their children received a post card from Dick Harter, saying how much he'd enjoyed having them in his class. Bill and Ruth have been members for 38 years, often in the middle of the action. Ruth was a Deacon, taught Sunday School, served on the Christian Education and Nominating Committees, the Search Committee that brought us Mary Luti, and is now on the committee for a Minister of Spiritual Formation. In the 1970s Bill brought his organizational and financial management skills to a church that had become complacent and under-funded, living off of its endowment. Believing that stewardship is the responsibility of each church generation to pay its own way, Bill put into effect reforms to sort out the church's financial situation.

As chair of the Stewardship Committee, Bill tapped a committee member who was a marketing professional to increase pledges and worked to take

advantage of church facilities to bring in revenue: concerts in the Sanctuary; meetings in the Hastings Room; having the Newtowne School pay more of its own way; renting out office space in the basement; and even renting out the downstairs kitchen for the Coffee Connection to roast beans. This was not uncontroversial, as some members thought it not appropriate for a church to be in "business." However, Bill maintained his belief that "living off the generosity of the past" is even less appropriate for a Christian organization and the more excellent way would be for First Church to become self-sustaining. Through these efforts as well as his work in reforming the way the endowment was managed, creating an investment committee, improving financial reporting in the church, and making money-saving refurbishments as chairman of Buildings & Grounds, he has helped lay the foundation for the vibrant, more fiscally sound church we are part of today.

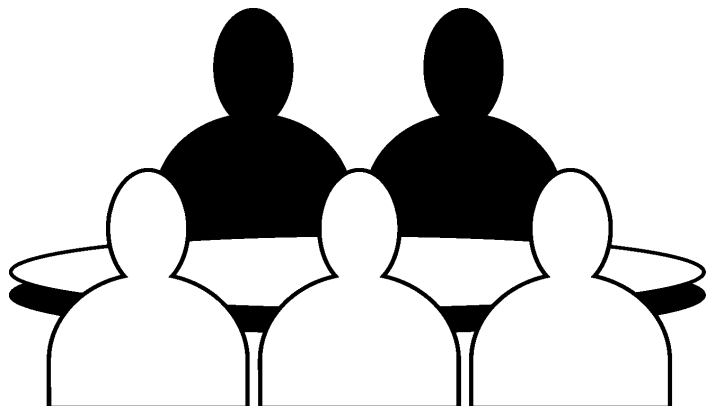
Asked his core religious belief, Bill said he believes that we should maintain our faith in God in all things, but we should also do the best we can to preserve and strengthen our church, using the skills we each have. Ruth said she believes we should do our best to discover, uncover, and use God's gifts for ourselves and in each other. She also said she thought First Church had "lightened up a lot" in their four decades here — literally in the sanctuary and also in the church's spirit. We're grateful they made it out of China and landed at First Church, where they've had such a big part in lightening and brightening our church lives.

January 4 meeting

After opening devotions the Executive Council:

Reviewed the proposed 2010 budget that

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL NOTES



Treasurer Brian James and the Stewardship Committee would be presenting at Annual Meeting, along with an “Alternative Budget Presentation” intended to allow church members another way of viewing how their donations are used. Council expressed appreciation for this second approach and approved the proposed 2010 budget for presentation to the congregation.

Looked over the slate of “officers, boards, and committees” proposed by the Gifts Discernment/ Nominating Committee for presentation at Annual Meeting, though with some committee slots yet to be filled. Council voted to accept the slate, subject to congregational approval.

Heard Rich Goode report for the Buildings and Grounds Committee on the estimated cost of roof repair and on possible options for proceeding with this project. Council looked over an outline of a “10-Year Capital Plan” that Rich distributed, with estimated roof repair costs included. Rich’s motion that Council endorse the spirit and intent of the ten-year capital plan and approve presentation of the plan at Annual Meeting was adopted, pending changes in roof repair figures after further investigation.

Heard staff reports. Pam Cochrane spoke of the welcome planned for Sarah Higginbotham on her return from maternity leave Sunday, January 10. Karin Case informed Council that, with the Sacred Conversations on Race film

series concluding, the Conversations would continue at three 10:00 hours in February and at the February Second Sunday Lunch. Dan Smith’s report included mention of the Ministerial Search Team, which was making good progress; the hiring of a new part-time sexton; a gathering of in-care seminarians; plans for Gary Brinn’s ordination at First Church on Sunday, February 7; the progress GBIO is making with its current campaigns, especially its push for caps on interest rates, which is receiving a good bit of media attention; and the good turnout recently at newcomer luncheons, with a number of newcomers expected to join the church on Sunday, January 24. Mention was also made of the Martin Luther King Day of Service taking place the following Saturday.

Gave recognition to members leaving Council and heard thanks expressed to all Council members for their service over the year.



EVENT

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