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

Lent/Easter
2009

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

We've been talking about the economy at church lately. Allow me to offer a sample, in case you missed one of our "Conversations on the Economy" in February. At one point in the 10:00 hour meeting, I asked the practical question of how many people were in financial debt or had a dear loved one who was in debt. Every hand went up. For some it was student loans or car loans or mortgages; for others it was straight up credit card debts. This was a painful thing to see, though my guess is it's been the case in our community for years. The average American savings rate right now is a negative figure, and our nation as a whole is going into ever deeper debt, as we bailout our past missteps by borrowing from the future. This is scary to witness. Yet somehow through this pain and fear I find myself looking for poetry and waiting for some deeper truth to emerge.

I recently came across a poem by a favorite poet, Wislawa Szymborska. While not especially easy to take in, it offers an alternative view of our seemingly perpetual, even eternal, state of indebtedness. The poem takes its title from the first phrase, and boldly so. Szymborska writes:

*Nothing's a gift, it's all on loan.
I'm drowning in debts up to my ears.
I'll have to pay for myself
with my self,*

*give up my life for my life.
Here's how it's arranged:
The heart can be repossessed,
the liver, too,
and each single finger and toe.
Too late to tear up the terms,
my debts will be repaid,
and I'll be fleeced,
or, more precisely, flayed.
I move about the planet
in a crush of other debtors.
Some are saddled with the burden
of paying off their wings.
Others must, willy-nilly,
account for every leaf.
Every tissue in us lies
on the debit side.
Not a tentacle or tendril
is for keeps.
The inventory, infinitely detailed,
implies we'll be left
not just empty-handed
but handleless too.
I can't remember
where, when, and why
I let someone open
this account in my name.
We call the protest against this
the soul.
And it's the only item
not included on the list.*

While I'm not sure I buy every word, she's right on the money in one way at least. Even in the Lord's Prayer our indebtedness and others' indebtedness to us come

(continued on next page)

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across as a fact of life. In some ways we are all debtors, owing our relatively privileged lots in life to chance, providence, or some mixture thereof. More deeply, we are all debtors, because we owe our whole lives to God, the great giver of creation and all that is in it. If this is what she was after in these lines, then I say, "Debtors unite *and* souls protest!" We need to be able to start casting aside whatever guilt and shame and start speaking the truth of our individual and collective economic forecasts, as painful as it may be. Only by doing so will we come to a truth that will set us free. Free from debt? Probably not. Not for a long time, and maybe never. Free from what then? Perhaps it's the illusion that what we have or had was ever truly ours to begin with. Perhaps we can be free to live our lives all the more firmly in the midst of what ancient theologians once called the "economy of salvation." In the economy of salvation, much like our daily economy, we base our lives on transactions, though in this case we are not talking about market transactions but about transactions of divine love, which is always freely flowing and of which there is always enough.

This Lent I hope we can all read together a book of daily devotions by the Episcopal priest Martin Smith. Check out the article in this EVENT for more information about small groups and 10:00 hours and how to get a copy of the book. In the opening reflection written for Ash Wednesday, Smith reminds us that "freedom is gained only through the exposure to the truth...and truth happens to us when the coverings of illusion are stripped away and what is real emerges into the open." In the midst of all the usual belt-tightening striving to give things up for Lent or even to take things on (and I expect many will be considering practices that involve saving money!), Smith suggests a different tact for the season. He invites us to begin it by simply contemplating the word "surrender." He urges us to surrender to what is real, to surrender to the Spirit's truth that can and will set us free. This Lent I hope many of us can give this a shot. Surrender. Surrender the anxiety and the fear, the shame and the guilt. Surrender and trust that while the facts of the matter tell us that the market is crumbling and debts are rising, the truth of the matter is also rising, if only in the awareness that nothing that we have was ever truly ours in the first place, unless you're in Szyborska's camp. In that case this Lent

perhaps it will be enough to surrender and so to receive the gift that is your soul.

A good and meaningful Lent to you all.

Yours in faith,
Dan Smith

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The due date for contributions for the May/June issue of **EVENT** is April 20.

THEMES OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Ever wondered how the worship and community life we share here at First Church Cambridge connects to the wider United Church of Christ? Lean more about the UCC in this first installment of a six-part series on core themes of the UCC:

- 1) *We are people of God's extravagant welcome*
- 2) *We belong to Christ*
- 3) *We are people of a covenant: a united and uniting church*
- 4) *We are one at baptism and the table*
- 5) *We thank God by working for a just and loving world*
- 6) *We listen for the still-speaking God*

We are People of God's Extravagant Welcome

"Jesus didn't turn people away, neither do we." When you're gutsy enough to make such a claim, it's not always easy to make good on it. Following Jesus' lead, the United Church of Christ strives to keep doors open to all. By God's grace—in the past and today—we do what needs to be done to be bold people of God's welcome.

Jesus lived and breathed gracious hospitality. Even though there were powerful people who opposed Jesus' extravagant welcome, he still embraced those who were often shunned. In the reign of God that Jesus spoke of, he declared there is room for all—children (Luke 18:15-17) and those who are hungry, thirsty, homeless, ill, poor, grieving, persecuted, and in prison (Matthew 25: 31-46 and Luke 6:20-26). This kind of hospitality is characteristic of both God's faithfulness and, at our best, our faithfulness. God welcomes, and also feeds the hungry, forgives sins, stands with those who are poor and oppressed, comforts the suffering, and becomes home for those who wander. In gratitude, faithful people welcome strangers.

UCC churches express God's extravagant welcome in a variety of ways. Our welcome embraces both those we invite to participate in our congregations, as well as those outside the church, with whom we work for God's justice and compassion. That is our prayer, our hope. Who is welcome? Our churches are among those whose doors are open to God's children of

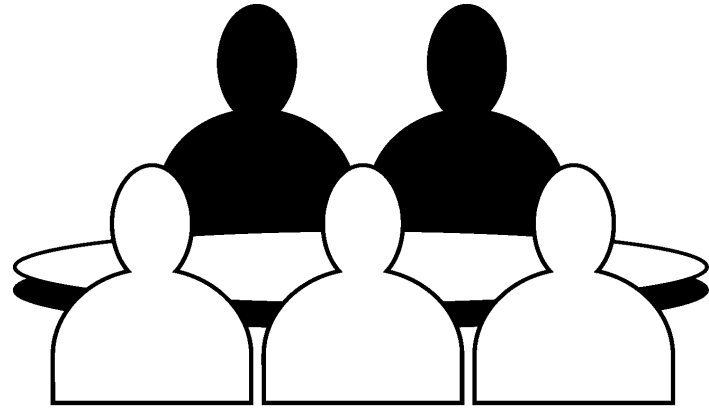
different cultures, races, genders, ages, sexual orientations, abilities, economic situations, and theological traditions. It isn't always easy to be so open. Each UCC congregation prayerfully discerns and expresses how wide their doors and arms are open. Some state it this way, "We are a multicultural and multiracial, open and affirming, accessible to all, and just peace church."

And once one enters the door, it's not a matter of "sit back, be quiet, speak only as we do." You, your heart's questions and your gifts, are vital to the congregation. Your distinct story of faith joins with centuries of stories that make up the Church, and specifically the United Church of Christ. In God's grace, you change and we change. We make a holy difference in each other's lives, and, together, in the world.

In gratitude, because God welcomes us, we are called to make bold stands. In behalf of and along with those who remain oppressed, suffering, alienated, and poor in God's world, we speak and act. "It's not an extravagant welcome to an 'anything-goes' religion, a comfortable form of Christianity, but to a costly form of discipleship," says John Thomas, current president and general minister of the UCC. Inspired by God's gift of hospitality, we work together for God's welcoming world of love and justice.

This article contains content from the United Church of Christ website. For more information on the themes of the UCC, please visit <http://www.ucc.org/vitality/what-matters/>.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL NOTES



beginning her work as Interim Minister.

Council heard farewell words of appreciation from Gaylen Morgan on stepping down from her position as Moderator and concluded with a ceremony of lighted candles, in which members expressed gratitude to Gaylen and others leaving their Council positions: Peter Ambler, Gay Harter, Jenny Stuart, and Jan Lo (Jan's representation on Council changing to that of Moderator).

At its regular meeting on **January 5** Executive Council devoted its attention initially to budgetary matters. Charts included in the Treasurer's report showed a positive picture of church attendance and pledging history, and the final budget figures for 2008 showed a balance. The Stewardship Committee gave a favorable report of pledges received for 2009, announcing that the amount thus far pledged came close to its \$375,000 goal. The Committee reported that it now expects to meet that goal and that the pledges received included an encouraging number of new pledges. Council approved the 2009 budget to be presented at Annual Meeting, giving special attention to its inclusion of shelter and capital reserve figures. It also approved for referral to congregational vote a proposal to raise authorization levels for church expenditures.

In further action Council approved for a vote at Annual Meeting the slate entitled "Ministries and Opportunities for Service" presented by the Gifts Discernment / Nominating Committee. Appreciation was expressed that, in addition to listing committee membership subject to vote, the slate gave such a full picture of the wide range of church ministries and services provided by members. Council's approval extended to the slate's proposed changes in the names of some committees.

In staff reports Sarah Higginbotham spoke of plans for Sunday 10:00 hour sessions, and Dan Smith spoke of the purpose of Sabbath Sundays and his welcoming of First Church guests at parsonage dinners. Karen McArthur mentioned a new church membership database, and Karin Case spoke of her pleasure in

SUNDAYS AT FIRST CHURCH

March 1. First 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, Karin Case, preaching (A time for healing prayer offered immediately following the service)
- 12:30 p.m. Confirmation Class, Room 204
- 1:00 p.m. Outdoor Church, Cambridge Common
- 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

March 8. 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, Dan Smith, preaching
- 11:20 a.m. Church School for PreK-7th Grade
- 2:00 p.m. Mental Health and Spirituality Group, Tower Room

March 15. 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, Dan Smith, preaching, Healing Service
- 11:20 a.m. Church School for PreK-7th Grade
- 12:30 p.m. Confirmation Class, Room 204
- 2:00 p.m. Mental Health and Spirituality Group, Tower Room

March 22. 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, Terry McKinney, preaching
- 11:20 a.m. Church School for PreK-7th Grade
- 12:30 p.m. Social Justice Forum, Hastings Room
- 2:00 p.m. Mental Health and Spirituality Group, Tower Room

March 29. 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-7th Grade
- 12:30 p.m. Confirmation Class, Room 204
- 2:00 p.m. Mental Health and Spirituality Group, Tower Room

April 5. 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, Karin Case, preaching
- 1:00 p.m. Outdoor Church, Cambridge Common
- 2:00 p.m. Mental Health and Spirituality Group, Tower Room

April 12. 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)
- 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 19. 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-7th Grade
- 2:00 p.m. Mental Health and Spirituality Group, Tower Room

April 26. 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, Dan Smith, preaching, Baptism of Isaac Alden Hinton
- 11:20 a.m. Church School for PreK-7th Grade
- 12:30 p.m. Confirmation Class, Room 204
- 2:00 p.m. Mental Health and Spirituality Group, Tower Room

LENT AND HOLY WEEK AT FIRST CHURCH

The forty days of Lent 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 25, 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.

Palm Sunday, April 5, 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 9, 8:00 p.m., in the 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 10, 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 12, 11:00 a.m. Morning Worship, 5:00 p.m. Jazz Service

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.

Lenten and Easter Jazz Services, Sunday, March 1, and Sunday, April 12, 5:00 p.m., MJH

Start and end Lent right with two nights 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. 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 services are decidedly laid back and informal, so by all means come as you are! All are welcome!

On March 1, the first Sunday of Lent, the service will have a more contemplative feel and will call us into the Lenten journey. Then on Easter Sunday, April 12, we'll pull out the brass for a celebration of the new life and joy that dawn again on Easter day! Both services will begin at 5:00 p.m., in Margaret Jewett Hall.



supporting three siblings from Congo, ages 9, 11, and 19 years old, as well as a family from Iraq including a mother, two adult sons, and a 12-year-old daughter. The Chelmsford cluster is supporting a single woman from Rwanda and one from Sierra Leone. The Malden/Melrose/Medford cluster is supporting a refugee from Eritrea and a family of four from Cameroon. Milton has just finished with a client from Rwanda. Other clusters are in the process of taking new clients. There is a waiting list of 12 asylum seekers looking for support from a cluster.

Each cluster consists of a group of churches that provide financial and hands on support to help build community with uprooted people. As First Church members we are all a part of this ministry. You are invited to participate in this ministry of welcoming the stranger. If you would like to become involved, please contact Audrey Bellinger or Pauline Fennel.

MINISTERIAL SEARCH COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Ministerial Search Committee is now meeting weekly to prepare a church profile and job description for the new minister to fill Dan Smith's previous position as Minister of Christian Discipleship. Beginning in early March, members of the committee will be contacting boards, committees, and other groups in the church with a questionnaire to seek input from members on the state of First Church and on what sort of person we should be seeking. Meanwhile you are invited to discuss your own concerns with a member of the committee: Dave Dwyer, Patricia Gnazzo Pepper, Erika Hanna, Devin Hansen, Ruth Hsiao, Doug Marshall, Dave McCann, Perry Neubauer, and Laurie Williams.

— Perry Neubauer



MIDDLE EAST TASK FORCE ACTION ALERT

First Church's **Middle East Task Force** invites all who may be interested in closer examination of the crucial issues of peace and justice in the Middle East to consider attending the **Annual Conference of Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP), Sunday, June 7, through Tuesday, June 9, in Washington, DC.** CMEP is an ecumenical agency devoted to helping American church members advocate in a knowledgeable, timely, and effective way their concerns about these issues as they affect all the peoples in the Middle East.

The first two days of the Conference will be devoted to workshops and speakers, and on the last day participants will lobby their Representatives on Capitol Hill. More details will be available later in the spring. For further information contact Gay Harter or Linda Ziebell.



GREATER BOSTON INTERFAITH ORGANIZATION (GBIO) NEWS

On February 26 about a dozen members of First Church gathered with leaders from congregations all over Greater Boston. Much like what President Obama is doing with his "Organizing for America" campaign, GBIO has launched its own "house meeting" campaign to hear stories about how the economic crisis is most deeply impacting folks in our

congregations. Throughout March and April GBIO will be collecting these stories and hosting interpretive sessions, so that we can know where there is common ground across our congregations and what issues are most pressing.

Based on that common ground, we can build relationships and build our power for broad-based public action. Though we're not sure just yet what shape that action will take — we have to do the listening first! — we are already beginning our research to find some specific, immediate, and winnable next steps. It could be working with other concerned groups toward a regional or statewide jobs program. Perhaps it's getting some legislation passed that could restrict the often usurious rates set by the credit card industry. We don't know yet, but we need all your stories to build this campaign and to build the power that comes with having organized people.

If you are interested in learning more about GBIO, or in participating in a "house meeting" at First Church, speak with a member of our growing GBIO Core Team — Alice and Dave Kidder, Jamie Bonney, Karen Anne Zien, Gaylen Morgan, and Dan Smith. Also stay tuned for more information on our ongoing "Conversations on the Economy."

REFUGEE IMMIGRATION MINISTRY (RIM)

RIM Cambridge cluster has now become the RIM Cambridge/Brookline cluster, as we have been joined by St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Brookline. Our cluster is currently working with five clients. We are celebrating the grant of asylum for a father and son from Iraq and a woman from Cameroon. We will be working with them on a declining model of financial support, as they seek employment. We have recently invited two young women from Rwanda to be our partners. They are living in Waltham and are taking English lessons, as they pursue asylum.

We are also part of a broader RIM ministry in the greater Boston area and have recently come together with other clusters to pool our resources to serve the community of asylum seekers. The current active clusters include the North Shore cluster that is

CHRISTIAN FORMATION OPPORTUNITIES

Sundays at 10:00 a.m.

A Season For The Spirit — Reading, Small Group, And Spiritual Formation Opportunities For Lent

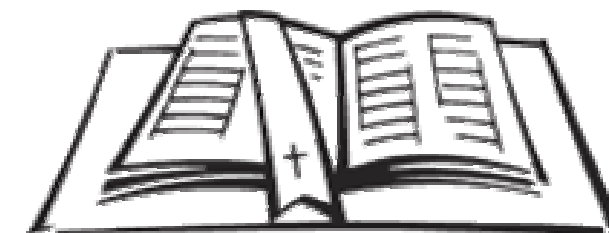
In 1991 Episcopal priest Martin Smith wrote a book of Lenten devotionals called *A Season for the Spirit: Readings for the Days of Lent*. Since that time Christians of every stripe have found his words to be a deeply provocative and trustworthy guide through the forty days of Lent. Blending keen insights into Scripture with personal and theological reflections and with a wide array of sacred and secular references, Rev. Smith gently invites readers into "a forty-day pilgrimage of self-discovery" that has proved for many to open new doors in their relationship with themselves and with God. For the past few years at First Church, small groups have read the book together, meeting weekly through Lent to share responses to Martin Smith's powerful reflections. This Lent his book will be made available to the entire congregation, along with opportunities for small group sharing and Sunday 10:00 hours primarily (though not exclusively) focused on the themes of the week's reading.

Small Groups

Several small groups have now formed and will be meeting weekly in members' homes, starting during the first week of March and continuing through Easter. These groups will offer time for soulful conversation, community building, and prayer. So far small group leaders include Lindsay Miller, Gay and Dick Harter, Evan Ingersoll, Jan Lo, and Kurt and Anita Winnika. We expect more groups to be forming soon. If you haven't signed up for a small group yet and would like to, or if you have any questions at all, contact Kurt or Anita Winikka, kwinikka@yahoo.com or awinikka@yahoo.com, or Dan Smith, dsmith@firstchurchcambridge.org.

Lenten Lectio Divina, Sundays, 10:00 a.m., Hastings Room

Following an introductory session on February 22, Dan Smith, Karin Case, and Terry McKinney will team up to lead a five-part Lenten series of conversation, prayer, and Scripture study during the 10:00 a.m. hour on Sundays in the Hastings Room. We will take time to explore some of the spiritual themes raised in each week's reading from Martin Smith and then enter into some "holy reading," or *Lectio Divina*, on key Lenten Scriptures. All are welcome to participate, even if you aren't reading the daily devotions from Rev. Smith. In the context of this "winter of our hardship" and in these hard economic times, come and feed your spirit with these weekly opportunities for spiritual growth, connection, and formation: Sundays, February 22, March 1, 8, 15, and 22.



Who Is Jesus? Sunday, March 15, 10:00 a.m., MJH

Who is Jesus? The First Church Middle Schoolers invite the whole church to join them on Sunday, March 15, at 10:00 a.m., in Margaret Jewett Hall, for reflection on this question. Our **Middle Schoolers will present a play, *Who Is Jesus?***, lead us in discussion, and teach us how to make triptychs that can help us explore the relationship of Jesus' life to our own. Please join us!



MEN'S BREAKFASTS

**First Saturdays, 7:30 a.m.,
Hastings Room**

Gentle men of First Church! Mark your calendars for these upcoming Saturday morning breakfasts: **March 7, April 4, May 2, June 6.** Join us for a hearty breakfast and even heartier conversations about topics that connect our faith to our lives and our world. The breakfasts are held **in the Hastings Room, 7:30 - 9:00 a.m.** Questions? Contact Perry Neubauer, pkneubauer@verizon.net. Newcomers are always welcome!

DINNERS AT THE PARSONAGE (are almost full)

We (Dan and Nancy) are thrilled that so many of you have signed up to come over and share a meal with us and a small group of other First Church folks. Our first dinner in February was great fun, and we look forward to the next one. If you haven't signed up yet, please consider yourself warmly invited to do so. Members and newcomers, visitors and First Church veterans, all are welcome. If we do fill up on the remaining dates (12 has proved to be a good number thus far), we'll find some other way to have you over as soon as possible! Perhaps a springtime bar-b-que as soon as the weather breaks! Thank you in advance for your patience. For now, though, there are still just a few spaces left in May and June! Contact Kirsten Manville,

parishadmin@firstchurchcambridge.org. Remaining dates are:

Friday, March 13
Wednesday, April 1
Friday, May 29
Wednesday, June 17

SOCIAL JUSTICE FORUM

**Sunday, March 22, 12:30 p.m.,
Hastings Room**

Imagine a church that cannot stay put, but takes God's welcome into the world. Imagine a church in conversation with other lives, other cultures, able to invite and be invited, to sit at other people's tables, to learn and share the inestimable riches of God, to build relationships outside its walls. 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...Imagine First Church in Cambridge!

— From our 2003 Vision Statement

The next Social Justice Forum will be held after Morning Worship on Sunday, March 22. This forum will include updates from our Refugee Immigration Ministry, from our new GBIO Core Team, and new information about a possible upcoming trip to Honduras! In addition, we will be learning about how we can be better supporting those within our own First Church community who are especially hurting through these hard economic times. Join us and bring your ideas for how First Church can be all the more out there on the "Open Road"! A light lunch will be provided, and childcare will be available.

"SACRED CONVERSATIONS" ON RACE

Would you like to help shape First Church's witness and action on issues of race and racism? Now is a

great time to get involved! In response to a desire within the congregation to address these issues of vital concern to our church and our world, we are planning some conversations and possibly events to take place at First Church later this spring. If you would like to be part of the planning team, please join us. We'd love to have your insights and ideas! If you'd simply like to express your thoughts but not take part in the planning, please contact Karin Case, karincase@firstchurchcambridge.org or 617-547-2724 x 26.

Here's the schedule for the next several meetings, all to be in Karin's office:

Thursday, February 26, at 8:30 a.m.
Thursday, March 12, at 8:30 a.m.
Thursday, March 26, at 8:30 a.m.

Watch the Sunday bulletins and *First Glance* for information on upcoming meetings.



WOMEN'S RETREAT *Faith & Community in Uncertain Times*

**Friday, March 20—Sunday,
March 22 Craigville Conference
Center**

The **31st Annual First Church Women's Retreat** will be held Friday evening, March 20, through Sunday afternoon, March 22, at **The Lodge**, Craigville Conference Center, Craigville Beach, on Cape Cod. This annual tradition is a wonderful way to get to know other First Church women in a time of fellowship, reflection, renewal, and sharing in discussion of this year's timely theme "**Faith & Community in Uncertain Times.**" If you are relatively new to the church and haven't previously

attended a Retreat, ask others about their experiences in past Retreats. We'd love to have you join us for a relaxing weekend on a bluff overlooking the ocean and a salt marsh.

We need forty attendees to stay Friday through Sunday, in order to guarantee reservation of our favorite lodging place, The Lodge. Initial non-refundable deposit is \$25. The full cost of \$175 (2 nights, 3 meals Saturday, 2 meals Sunday) is due by Sunday, March 8. Linen rental is \$8. To reserve your place for the Retreat, contact as soon as possible one of the members of the Planning Team: Peggy Bendroth, Karin Case, Pauline Fennel, Sarah Fujiwara, Adwoa Lewis-Wilson, and Carolyn White.

The **Janyce Jennings Fund** is available to help any who cannot afford the full cost. Speak to a member of the Planning Team to request scholarship assistance; money should not be a reason for anyone to skip this event. Additional **donations** to augment the Janyce Jennings Fund are also gratefully received.

FIRST CHURCH COMMUNICATIONS SURVEY FOLLOW-UP

We are pleased that so many of you took the time to complete our Communications Effectiveness Survey last month. The 100 responses we received were thoughtful and constructive contributions to our planning process toward making First Church communications as effective as possible. Thank you!

The basic feedback was that on the whole the communications are good, though there's room for improvement especially in electronic media. We will be making full use of your comments in this survey, as we pursue further developments.

— Chris Reynolds, Convener, Communications & Arts Group