

FIRST RELIGIOUS SOCIETY

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NEIGHBOURS & FELLOW CREATURES

The First Religious Society in Carlisle

Unitarian Universalist
A Welcoming Congregation

Volume XXXI, No. 8

December 18, 2006



WE ARE LOCATED IN CARLISLE CENTER OPPOSITE THE COMMON, JUST OFF ROUTE 225 AROUND THE CORNER FROM THE ONLY ROTARY IN TOWN. A CLASSIC NEW ENGLAND MEETING HOUSE WITH THE TOWN CLOCK IN THE STEEPLE. COME AS YOU ARE. "LOVE IS THE DOCTRINE OF THIS CHURCH, THE QUEST FOR TRUTH IS OUR SACRAMENT AND SERVICE IS OUR PRAYER."

Newsletter for December 18, 2006

CHURCH INFORMATION

Church Service and Sunday School: Sunday at 10:30 a.m.

Coffee Hour following services.

Dates and details of church events on the Calendar on page 7 in this newsletter.

Church Office: 978-369-5180; Fax no. 978-369-1891

Web site: www.uucarlisle.org **E-mail address:** frs@uucarlisle.org

Church Mailing Address: [including minister and all business]

PO Box 817, Carlisle, MA 01741-0817

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Email: uucleric@mindspring.com

Minister Emeritus: Dr. Eugene R. Widrick

Parish Committee Co-Chair: Suzanne Whitney Smith, 978-369-0922;

swsmeslrs@earthlink.net

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Office Administrator: Kathy Varney, 978-369-5180

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Minister of Music: Marguerite Shaw, 978-501-4220; Email: frsmusic@comcast.net

Collector of Funds: Charlie Davis, 978-371-2844; Email: cdavis@modavi.com

Lay Minister: Sally Hayen, 978-369-7591

Membership Contact: Sue Kirk, 978-371-0176

Coffee Committee: Gio DiNicola, Anne Ketchen, Richard Ketchen, Tom Rourk, Suzanne Whitney Smith, Jack O'Connor, Jenifer Bush

THE ECLECTIC CLERIC

One of the things I've been doing with the extra time freed-up by three Sundays in a row out of the pulpit is catching up with some of those "Important but not Urgent" tasks that pile up on one's desk over the course of a busy program year. For example, last month our congregation received two new DVDs from the Unitarian Universalist Association: the first on "Ideas for Growth: Welcoming the Newcomer" and a second profiling four "Breakthrough Congregations" honored at the 2006 General Assembly. Not exactly your typical Netflix wish list, I admit, but still things that, as a minister, I felt I ought to watch.

I generally hate this sort of thing, even though I often agree with most of the points they are trying to get across. The Welcoming Newcomers video in particular reminded me once again that membership growth is not really about mastering new and better "techniques" for attracting people into our churches. It's really just about faithfully following a few simple, basic principles, while at the same time cultivating a WHOLE NEW ATTITUDE around the importance of "radical hospitality" as an essential characteristic of our faith communities.

Here are some of the grim realities, as pointed out by the video. Nationwide our congregations attract thousands of first-time visitors every week. But our current growth rate is only about 1%, or approximately one net new member per congregation every year. Furthermore, most UU societies are either on a plateau or slightly shrinking in size: roughly two-thirds of our net membership growth as a denomination has taken place in only 6% of our congregations. Given those two statistics: thousands of visitors, and only 1% growth, the obvious question becomes "why don't more people connect with our churches?" or (perhaps more pointedly) "How can we stop repelling newcomers in droves?"

Here are a few of the basic principles I mentioned earlier:

Say "Hello" to people when they first arrive, and really mean it. By the time a new visitor shows up at our front door, they have typically already done a little homework, perhaps checked out our website, are favorably inclined to what they have seen, and eager to make a connection with "like-minded souls." AND they have already met us more than

THE ECLECTIC CLERIC *(continued)*

halfway by coming to where we are and expressing their interest! Now it's OUR TURN to welcome them warmly as guests in our spiritual home. Newcomers arrive on Sunday morning as anonymous strangers, but they should NEVER leave still feeling that way.

Show newcomers they really matter to us by taking a genuine interest in them, and following up. To use a metaphor (not part of the video), if we want there to be a second date, we'd better not be shy about asking them for their number, and then calling them back ...or at the very least sending a welcoming letter. If we think it's "too aggressive" to ask visitors for their contact information, we can pretty much count on them sitting home alone on Sunday mornings. But if we are willing to respond to their initiative by following up on their expressed interest, it might just be the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

Finally, we need to offer a clear pathway and extend a personal invitation to formal membership in our Religious Society. This generally means developing a intentional and structured process by which newcomers can first orient themselves to

our congregation and the UU faith tradition, share their own religious journeys while safely exploring how well they fit with us, and finally make an formal commitment to joining our church. This act of commitment is a Big Deal, and ought to be treated that way, with appropriate recognition and celebration by the entire congregation.

Lately in our denomination it has become popular to speak of the commitments and responsibilities of membership in terms of the "Three T's" of Time, Talent, and Treasure. I have a lot more to say about each of these some other time, but for now I'd just like to point out that it's difficult to expect newcomers to take these commitments seriously if the old-timers don't take them seriously as well. One of the most important responsibilities of being a member of any church is to set a good example for those who are still learning what it means to be "one of us." Membership growth begins with a commitment to spiritual growth, and to doing ourselves what we would have others do along with us.....twj

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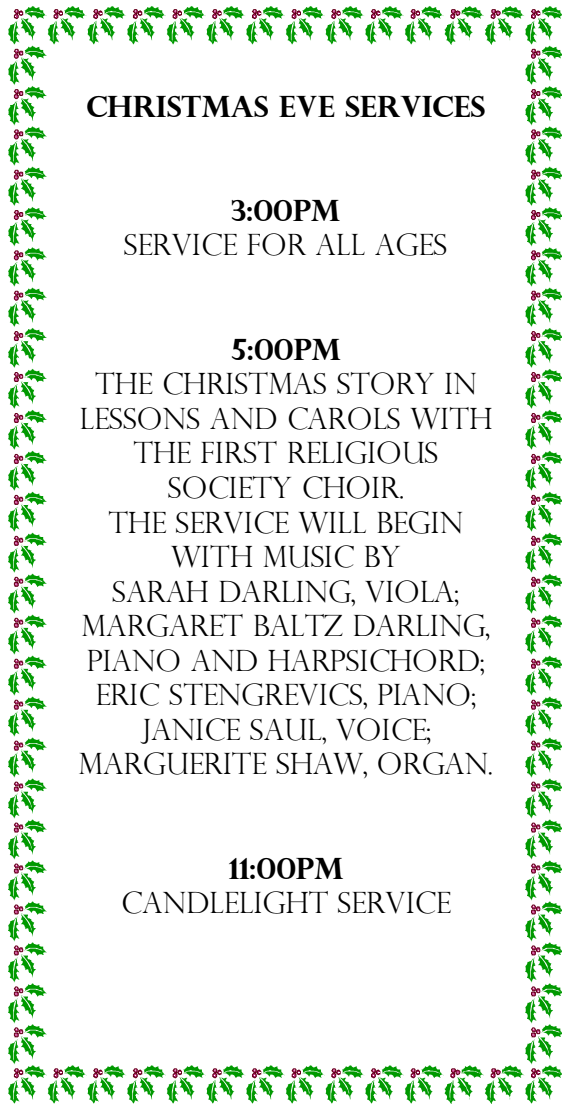
<p>December 24: Christmas Eve Services</p> <p>3:00 Service for All Ages 5:30 The Christmas Story 11:00 Candlelight Service</p> <p>Sunday, December 24 and Sunday, December 31 the church will be open for hospitality and meditation from 10:30am to 12:00 noon.</p>
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Please view the FRS calendar on our website under "Calendar".

All are welcome to attend Parish Committee meetings, except in cases of executive sessions

FRS Committee meetings are open to any interested party. To address a committee on a specific issue please contact the committee chair.

Next Newsletter Deadline is
If you would like to be added to or removed from the newsletter mailing list please call or email the church office.



CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

3:00PM
SERVICE FOR ALL AGES

5:00PM
THE CHRISTMAS STORY IN
LESSONS AND CAROLS WITH
THE FIRST RELIGIOUS
SOCIETY CHOIR.
THE SERVICE WILL BEGIN
WITH MUSIC BY
SARAH DARLING, VIOLA;
MARGARET BALTZ DARLING,
PIANO AND HARPSICHORD;
ERIC STENGREVIC, PIANO;
JANICE SAUL, VOICE;
MARGUERITE SHAW, ORGAN.

11:00PM
CANDLELIGHT SERVICE

STAFF AND OFFICE SCHEDULE

Church Office Hours: The church office will be open between the hours of 8:00am and 1:30pm on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. The office will be closed on Tuesdays.

Minister Office Hours: Tim is generally available at church most mornings when the church office is open and other times by appointment. It is always a good idea to call in advance. You can reach him at 978-369-0284 (study or home), 503-816-2859 (cell) or by email at uucleric@mindspring.com.

Director of Religious Education: Molly Sorrows, DRE and Youth Advisor, can be reached by email (frs_re@comcast.net) or phone (church, 978-369-5180; home, 978-371-2217).

Music Rehearsals Schedule

The Choir
Wednesdays at 7:30-9:00pm
Sundays at 9:45am

Handbell Ringing TBA

GREENS SALE by *Janice Kissinger*

Our annual Greens Sale was a tremendous success and I want to thank everyone who helped. The café was well managed by Annie Hill and Sue Kirk with what seemed like “a cast of thousands”. The lobster salad and roast beef sandwiches are always a highlight of the day. Mary Lou and Bob Koning drove 2 trucks to pickup the hundreds of wreaths. This is “one big job”! Donna Cantrill kept making fancy bows and running errands. Her advise along the way was most appreciated.

Dave and Natalie Ives did all the pre-orders and measured out the roping. Nadine and George Bishop arrived back from Greece in the nick of time to help their friends the Ives.

Margaret Darling and Marguerite Shaw orchestrated the bake goods table. Their idea of assorted cookies plates went over well saving our buyers hours in the kitchen.

Our fine designers made beautiful arrangements and decorated wreaths. They are Kathy Booth, Mary Lou Koning, Hannalore Munson, Annie Fredkin, Judy Richardson, Pam Cantrill, Alison Saylor, Barbara Ritz, Jeanne Reynolds and Pam Fox. We were having so much fun, we made a few extra and did sell all.

Ann Barber collected 10% of the profits from our vendors. They sold wonderful gift items. Charlie Davis was in charge of all monies and was most efficient.

Our Greens Sale is a special gift we give to Carlisle each year. We hope it has ignited the Christmas spirit in you. Merry Christmas, Janice Kissinger.

HOSPITALITY COMMITTEE
HERE AT FRS by *Kathy Varney*

The mission of our Hospitality Committee is to make members and newcomers feel welcome at The First Religious Society. The group includes the Coffee, Greeter, and Flower Committees. They provide a warm and welcoming environment for Sunday morning worship.

One of the things I do preparing the order of service for Sunday morning is to go to Union Hall and check the sign up sheet for coffee hour and flowers for the pulpit. When there are folks signed up I put their names in the program.

If you have seen the sign up sheets lately you might have noticed they are pretty bare.

When I send emails out looking for contributions to help these committees, members and friends are gracious and love to lend a hand.

Next time you are in Union Hall look for the sign up sheets on the bulletin board above where the coffee urn is usually found and just add your name to a date that will work for you. Or let me know if you would like to greet folks at the door (Kathy at 978-369-5180, frs@uucarlisle.org).

Or you can contact a committee member:
Coffee: Jenifer Bush, Gio DiNicola, Anne Ketchen, Richard Ketchen, Tom Rourk, Suzanne Whitney Smith, JackO’Connor.

Flowers: Kristy Erickson, Alison Saylor, George Bishop.

Greeters: Janet Oyer, Natalie Ives, Lee Lockwood, Tom Lockwood, Dave Ives.

The First Religious Society in Carlisle is an inclusive community bound together in the Unitarian Universalist tradition of friendship, free inquiry and service to humanity.

We recognize our commonality as spiritual seekers, and welcome and celebrate the participation of all people, without regard to age, race, religious heritage, political opinion, gender identity, sexual or affectional orientation, socio-economic status, disability or ethnicity.

We are committed to continual learning and growth toward affirmation of the enriching diversity of humankind, and to working to create a more just, sustainable and loving world.



ALL CHURCH VISIONING EVENT

February 10

Help plan for FRS in 2258!

On Saturday February 10 the Parish Committee is sponsoring an all church visioning event to explore your ideas for all that FRS needs and could provide going forward for the next 250 years. Whether you are a new visitor to FRS or a long standing member, part of our Youth Group or an occasional visitor, we hope you will participate in this event.

Think about what brought you to FRS and what keeps you here. What do your friends say about the future and what they need in their lives. How can we help our community for another 250 years?

We will gather the morning of February 10th to hear YOUR thoughts, forming a market place of ideas to be discussed in small groups. After a morning of these small group discussions, we will break for lunch and a summary of the group discussions.

It is our hope that these ideas and conversations will produce a framework for the future inspiration, activities and budgetary planning of our congregations going forward.

Save the date on your calendars NOW! Saturday, February 10th, 7:45AM to 2:00PM. We need to hear all your ideas!

The Parish Committee

PROGRAM NEWS

Pastoral Concerns Committee: We serve as a means of outreach to people in our church who need our special support and friendship. We will arrange rides, visits, childcare, meals or anything else that lends a helping hand during short or long-term crises. If you are or know of anyone in need of this support, please contact Sally Naumann at 978-369-3314 during the month of December and Anne Ketchen at 978-369-1661 during the month of January.

Christmas Eve Nativity Bell-Ringing Ceremony: Once again, as part of the 3:00 Christmas Eve service, we will honor the babies born to the FRS community during 2006 with the chiming of a bell as we read their names. If you are the parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, godparent or close friend of a baby born in the past 12 months, please send me the baby's name and date of birth, and we will recognize him or her in our Christmas Eve nativity recitation. Contact Nancy West at NancySWest@hughes.net.

Knitting for the Homeless Continues: A big thank you to all who have made so many warm and beautiful things so far! And it continues! **Here are the dates, 7:30 in the conference room at FRS: January 9, February 13, March 13.** Thank you for your enthusiasm for this project, Linda and Lauren.

Circle Dinner Extravaganza - Saturday, January 27th: Join us on Saturday, January 27th for our annual Circle Dinner Extravaganza which starts at Union Hall at 5:30 where we'll have appetizers together. After appetizers we'll head out to our hosts' homes for dinner. The hosts provide the main course, and guests bring the salad, bread, wine or dessert. It's a wonderful way to enjoy the company of old friends and meet new ones even during the cold wintry weather. Feel free to invite a neighbor, or someone you've met through a town activity or a colleague from work. The Membership Committee will make sure you are assigned to the same host. It's a great way to meet some new people. Sign-up sheets will be available at Coffee Hour throughout January. If you'd like to sign-up by phone or email or have any questions, please contact Sue Kirk at 978-371-0176 or sukirk@aol.com.

Christmas Eve Outreach: As we have for the past several years, a collection will be taken at each of the three Christmas Eve services and the money will be used for outreach projects. This year the money will be divided among three organizations long supported by the church, both financially and in volunteer hours -- The Sharing Foundation, Habitat for Humanity of Greater Lowell and The Open Pantry of Lowell.

Family Homelessness Prevention - Adult Basic Education Forum Presented by the Concord Acton Family Homelessness Advocacy Network and Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries.

Sunday, January 28, 2007
Trinity Episcopal Church, 81 Elm St., Concord
7:00pm - 8:45pm.