

BELL STREET COLUMNS

NEWSLETTER FOR THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF BELL STREET CHAPEL



WORSHIP SERVICE SCHEDULE

SERVICES BEGIN AT 10 AM

TODDLER CARE AND SUNDAY SCHOOL AVAILABLE

2 | JANUARY

ZEN AND THE ART OF MOTORCYCLE MAINTENANCE

Audrey Greene, Kate Gillis and Ray Perreault

This 1974 classic about the notion of quality has been read by millions. Robert Pirsig explores Zen and quality, in our relationships with the people and objects that surround us. We will also celebrate our annual fire communion.

9 | JANUARY

UNA SOLA TRISTEZA

Rev. José Ballester

On the eve of a fact-finding trip to Arizona, this is an exploration of the intersection of Unitarian Universalism and social justice issues facing marginalized communities throughout the United States.

16 | JANUARY

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY

Ray Perreault

Each year we honor Dr. King with excerpts from his speeches and sermons and our own personal reflections on his doctrine of non-violence and love.

23 | JANUARY

THE DECLINE OF UNIVERSALISM

Dan Lawlor and Ray Perreault

Universalism was once the fastest growing faith in the United States. What can about today's decline in religion from the Universalism?

30 | JANUARY

CAN WE BE SAVED?

Rev. José Ballester

Unitarian Universalist congregations have often been compared to families. However what happens when there are disagreements in the congregation? What must be done to grow when we disagree?

FROM THE BOARD

Our mid-year congregational meeting is fast upon us. Like all years seem to, this one has gone by quickly, and we are already at the halfway point. Like so many years, this year we have accomplished much, and we have so much yet to accomplish. Our midyear meeting is an opportunity to reflect upon our plans from the fall and their progress. It is also a time to look forward to the future and chart new courses. Please join us after service on Jan. 30 for the midyear meeting to mark the past, to set a course for the future and to celebrate the present.

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| <p>MID-YEAR MEETING SUNDAY, JAN. 30 AFTER SERVICE</p> <p>All members asked to attend. Please bring potluck lunch item.</p> |
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This year we will be voting on the future of our ministry. We are in search to find a settled part-time minister. The Search Committee has done an incredible job helping Bell Street to become ready for a settled minister. As many of you know, it was our hope to call a full-time minister this fall, but because of our small size, we are not able to do so. It is still our goal to have full-time ministry, even though we will not be able to offer it this fall. Some churches have put into their ministerial agreements (contracts) a commitment to fund full-time ministry in a certain time period, often 5 years. These are often the churches that are most successful at growth. This year we will vote on whether to offer an agreement to a ministerial candidate that includes a commitment to fund full-time ministry.

We will also vote on our mission and vision statements. For the past year, Bell Street Chapel has been working toward a mission and vision statement, and we will vote on a drafted statement at our midyear meeting. While we have an opportunity of Jan. 9 to further shape our mission and vision statements, this will be our opportunity to clearly articulate who we are and where we hope to go in the future.

In addition, I will report from the Governing Board and will give an overview of the first half of the church year. We will also hear from Don Laliberte, chairperson of the Search Committee. Don will discuss the process of finding a settled minister, and what's expected of Bell Street in the next few months. Greg Greco, our Finance Committee chairperson, will discuss our financial health, and Steve Barreto, our House Committee chairperson, will report on our important steps toward greater accessibility.

Finally, thank you for your membership and your support for Bell Street. I have always thought of us as the little church that could, and that has been continually reinforced during my time as president. Please come to the meeting with an open mind and a loving heart. This meeting will be a potluck, so please bring a food item. I look forward to seeing you on the 30th.

In faith,
Dan Greco
President

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MINISTERS

REV. JOSÉ BALLESTER
 INTERIM MINISTER

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 To schedule an appointment contact him at
 joseballester@mac.com or (781) 264-3511*

REV. MARY MARGARET EARL
 COMMUNITY MINISTER

REV. BEN HALL
 COMMUNITY MINISTER

CHURCH STAFF

HEIDI GILKENSON, OFFICE MANAGER
*Office Hours:
 Monday, Friday – 7 a.m. to 11
 Tuesday and Thursday – by appointment only*

IRINA TCHANTCEVA, MUSIC DIRECTOR
NED FOSTER, SEXTON
IRENE ZABEK, CHILDCARE MANAGER

GOVERNING BOARD

DAN GRECO, PRESIDENT
KATE GILLIS, PRESIDENT-ELECT
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**MEMBERSHIP/CARING, CHAD WELCH,
 MEREDYTH WATERMAN**
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION, KATE GILLIS
PEACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE, CAROL CROWLEY
WORSHIP, RAY PERREAULT

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

EDITOR, MEREDYTH WATERMAN
COPY EDITOR, ELLEN SMITH
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CONGREGATIONAL AFFAIRS

MISSION AND VISION STATEMENT

Please join the mission and vision group on Jan. 9 after service to help shape the final drafts of Bell Street Chapel's mission and vision statements. The mission and vision statements are our opportunity to say, in clear language, who we are, what we believe in, and who we want to be. Churches that clearly articulate their missions are more united, have more focus, and grow more quickly than churches that don't. This will be the last opportunity to shape the mission and vision statements before the mid-year meeting.

BOARD BITS

The Bell Street Governing Board met on Dec. 14 and discussed the following topics:

- Set Jan. 30 as the date for the mid-year meeting and developed an agenda.
- Set Jan. 9, as an opportunity for the congregation to review the draft of our new vision and mission statements and make changes if desired before they are voted on at the mid-year meeting.
- Reviewed topics to be discussed at the meeting with the Bell Street Chapel Trustees Dec. 16.
- Heard a report on the Membership Committee from Meredyth Waterman and approved their request to get more chalice pins.
- Heard a report on the Search Committee from Don Laliberte. The Congregational Record has been put online for interested ministers to read. The Bell Street Chapel packet is nearly ready so it can be exchanged with ministers who express an interest in Bell Street. The next step is to exchange packets and look for a minister who will challenge us spiritually, draw inspiration for a variety of sources and be actively involved with social action issues.
- Expressed appreciation for the work that members and friends of Bell Street are doing to paint and fix up the Parish House.
- Made plans to cover the absences of the treasurer, Jim Gillis, and Music Director, Irina Tchantceva.
- Reviewed various requests and reports.

The next meeting is Jan. 11. You are welcome to join us or to contact Dan Greco if you would like to put something on the agenda. Let us know if you have any questions.

~Kate Gillis
 President-elect

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

The deadline for the next issue of *Bells Street Chapel Columns* is Jan. 16 at 8 p.m. Please submit your articles as a regular Word attachment (.doc, not .docx, please) to Meredyth Waterman at MeredythW@aol.com. Our newsletter is one of the most effective means of communicating with our members and friends, so don't miss out on this opportunity. And remember — it's not just for announcing events. If you have information like what your committee is working on, or other church-related information of interest that you'd like to share with the Bell Street community, please send it in.

~Meredyth Waterman

OUR MINISTRY



ON THE ROAD TO PROVIDENCE: EXPLANATIONS

The meeting of the Unitarian Universalist Association Ministerial Fellowship Committee (MFC) had concluded in Chicago. As a member of the UUA Board of Trustees, I served on the MFC as both liaison and a ministerial representative. We had been meeting for five days and I was anxious to return home. Although it had been snowing the night before and more snow was expected, my flight left O'Hare only half an hour late.

We were cruising at 33,000 feet, somewhere over the Midwest. For whatever the reason the flight was not full and passengers changed seats if they thought they could find one that was more comfortable. Night had transformed the landscape into small, sparkling blankets of yellow and blue points. In the dimmed cabin of the Boston-bound 757, weary travelers, returning students and the occasional parent who had managed to still their restless child, were in various stages of rest, relaxation or slumber.

Directly across from me was Dianne in 22C. Dianne could be best described as vivacious, exuberant and inquisitive. Simultaneously conversing with the occupants of 21C, 21D, 22A, 23A, 23C, 23D, Dianne managed to weave the various threads into an undulating cacophony that centered on her. Dozing in 22F, I would not have noted Dianne except for two unfortunate events: the young man in 22D had left for another part of the airplane and half-asleep I loudly chuckled at one of Dianna's comments.

"Well hello, sleepy," Dianne called across the empty seats, "glad you could join us." Desiring not to be rude, and determined not to disturb the other travelers I slid over to 22D. Dianne returned to trading stories, laced with sexual innuendos, with Roger (23C) and Sally (23A). Tom (21D) made a reference to a song by Natalie Imbruglia and Dianne corrected him, incorrectly. I defended Tom and cited similar performances by Sarah Brightman, Jeff Buckley and Sarah McLachlan.

"Are you in the music biz?" Dianne eagerly asked. "No," I replied, hoping to escape her attention, "but years ago I use to perform and so admire singers connected to stage and screen."

"Really!" Now Dianne's attention was fully focused in my direction. "What do you do now...wait, wait...let's see if we can guess." Dianne then orchestrated an impromptu session of "What's My Line?" Twenty questions stretched into 30 and soon everyone but Dianna wearied of the inquisition. Surrendering, I handed my business card around, but Dianne refused to believe I was a minister. "How can you be a minister? You seem so normal!"

Whether my casual manner confused her or her earlier off-color questions embarrassed her, it was obvious Dianna need some explanations. However my standard 30-second "elevator speech" about Unitarian Universalism failed, as did several other approaches. Sensing her growing frustration and being barraged by her questions/accusations I suddenly thought of a visual aid. Flipping through a magazine I had seen before, I found a recruitment ad for New York Life. It feature a photograph with a sign is posted at the entrance to their headquarters that read: "Do Not Close Minds To New Possibilities While On Premises."

"Our congregations follow such a sign, we keep our minds open to new possibilities and explore the various ways we better ourselves and the world. We are always looking to understand our place and mission in the world." I continued expanding this view, explaining the diversity of our beliefs and the hope of bringing about love, peace and justice. How we find comfort in our differences and see them as insights into new understanding.

Soon, the captain's instructions for preparing to land ended the conversations. We landed without incident and we parted our ways. I do not know if Dianne understood my explanations or found relief in my answers. I do not know, and seriously doubt I will ever see her again. But I have a hunch Roger (23C), Sally (23A), Tom (21D), Jean (21C), Ed (23D) and perhaps others within earshot, may be visiting a U.U. congregation in the near future.

SOCIAL JUSTICE



PSJ NEWS

The mission of the Peace and Social Justice Committee is to create opportunities for members and friends of the congregation to practice our Unitarian Universalist principles through activities that promote peace and understanding, as well as social, economic, and environmental justice in our community and the world.

It is hard to believe that another year is beginning! The PSJ Committee is looking to start 2011 with some renewed energy for our ongoing projects – gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, questioning advocacy; combating poverty and homelessness in our community; and prisoner literacy. We will continue our monthly Movie Night featuring films about sexual orientation and gender identity, our monthly lunch making for the clients of Crossroads and the collection of winter wear for the homeless.

Our Books Through Bars project will not be able to operate for a while

until we get some donations or do some fund raising for postage expenses. We are very sad to have to suspend operations, as we have hundreds of requests from inmates all over the country. We also have many donated books to send and sufficient eager, dedicated volunteers. But we need money for postage. If you think of any ways we might raise money for this worthy cause, please discuss your ideas with Carol Wiseman, who heads up this project.

The PSJ Committee will also be leading a worship service this winter and is hoping to organize a Valentine's Day project with the children in the Religious Education program.

We would love some new enthusiastic members on the committee. Why not make it your New Year's resolution to join the efforts of the Peace and Social Justice Committee!

~Carol Crowley, Chairperson

SHARE THE PLATE

The nonprofit organization with which we will share the undesignated cash offering during the month of January is the Women's Health and Education Fund. It is an all-volunteer organization that works with local health-care facilities to provide educational programs and financial assistance for the reproductive-health-care needs of low-income women in our state.



GUEST AT YOUR TABLE

Bell Street Chapel participates in the Guest at Your Table program, sponsored by the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee. Money collected is used to support social action programs around the world.

If you took a box, please take the money you have put in it and write a check for the amount to the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee. Bring it to Bell Street on Martin Luther King Sunday, give it to Kate Gillis, or mail directly. Envelopes are available in Eddy Hall.

UUSC membership rates are \$40 (one adult), \$75 (two adults), \$20 (Senior 65 and over) and \$10 (Youth/Student). Amounts of \$100 or more are eligible to be matched dollar for dollar by the UU Congregation at Shelter Rock in Manhasset, NY.

All contributions of any amount are welcome and used to make a difference in people's lives. For more information, contact Kate Gillis at ksgillis@netzero.net.

CONGREGATIONAL AFFAIRS

MINISTERIAL SEARCH

The Ministerial Search Committee is in the process of shifting gears after spending the better part of the fall compiling information about Bell Street Chapel for the Congregational Record and Packet. We have had some interest already from prospective candidates and have been reviewing their packets to determine to whom we would like to provide access to our Packet.

Many of you probably know of some of Carol Wiseman's talents, but adding to these talents is her ability as a website creator. She has persisted through numerous glitches and taken all the information and photos that have been compiled in recent months and created a wonderful congregational packet which will be made accessible to those candidates who, after a review of *their* packet, the committee feels may be suitable. The website is artistic, quirky, easy to use and informative

about Bell Street Chapel – its history and the Bell Street community – as well as about Providence and Rhode Island. We think it conveys a good sense of who we are and what we –YOU – are looking for in a minister.

In the coming months, we will be inviting prospective candidates out to Providence so we can meet in person. We are excited about this part of the process and about conveying this excitement to prospective candidates. Thanks for all the support you have provided to us through your insights in person, and on the questionnaires, as well as to those of you who have provided photographs. Happy New Year!

*On behalf of the Ministerial Search Committee,
Wendy Schwartz*



ADULT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Begin the new year with other Bell Streeters, learning, sharing and enriching your faith journey. Later this month we will begin a new Tapestry of Faith Program for adults in our congregation. These programs have been designed by the Unitarian Universalist Association to offer participants the space, time and community to explore their Unitarian Universalist spirituality. While there are a lot of wonderful choices for programs I have narrowed down our choices to either "Spirit of Life" or "Spirit in Practice."

"Spirit of Life" focuses on a different aspect of spiritual life, framed by the lyrics of Carolyn McDade's song, "Spirit of Life"-as in please turn to No. 123 in your hymnal.

"Spirit in Practice" was created to help Unitarian Universalists develop regular disciplines or practices of the spirit - practices that help us connect with the sacred ground of our beings, however we understand it.

Is there something in either program that speaks to you? You can find out more by accessing the Tapestry of Faith section of UUA.org. The program we choose will likely be run on a weeknight for about 6 to 8 weeks and will meet in the Parish House. I look forward to your feedback and questions about these programs. Please contact me via my e-mail, pegboyle@hotmail.com.

*In Spirit,
Peg Boyle*

CONGREGATIONAL AFFAIRS

AMONG US

In this column we celebrate milestones and other life events, request healing thoughts for those in need, and remember departed loved ones. If you or anyone you know is in need of assistance or support, please notify one of the Membership and Caring Committee co-chairpersons, Meredyth Waterman at MeredythW@aol.com or (401) 451-2322 and Chad Welch at cwelch@cox.net. Please contact Ellen Lenox Smith at ellen.smith2@gmail.com if you have any news to include in *Among Us*.

In this column we celebrate milestones and other life events, request healing thoughts for those in need, and remember departed loved ones. If you or anyone you know is in need of assistance or support, please notify the Membership and Caring Committee.

Jim Gillis has been having a difficult recovery from his surgery. He had to return back to the hospital for a spell but fortunately is now back home again. He would truly benefit from hearing from us – possibly a call, a card or even a visit would help to brighten these difficult days for him. He doesn't expect to be returning back to Bell Street until sometime in January or even February. Let's let him know how much we care!

Betty Lamora has been diagnosed with Stage 4 lunch cancer which has metastasized to her brain. She has completed radiation treatments and was scheduled to start chemo the last week of December. She has an appointment in January to find out how effective the radiation was at getting to the tumors. Her husband Tom says that despite her diagnosis, she is feeling pretty OK day to day. They were planning to spend Christ-

mas with their daughter in New Hampshire. He thanked Bell Streeters for their kind thoughts and asked that they continue to send positive energy their way.

We now have several members of our church and the occasional visitor who have to steer clear of foods containing gluten. Please consider bring in something gluten-free to coffee hour now and then to help them enjoy coffee hour as much as the rest of us and to let them know that we care about their needs.

Special thanks go out to the Brown family, as well as Peg Boyle, Ray Perreault and others who've been helping to fix up the Parish House. Painting in the conference room is nearly done, and will start in the hall soon. Things are looking much more cared for already!

Carl has been back to church a couple times recently. It's been nice to see him looking healthy and happy. We are thrilled for him to have such a wonderful new place to call home!

Congratulations to the following folks who will be celebrating January birthdays: Jim Ellison (Jan. 8), Pam Adams (Jan. 12), Steve Barreto (Jan. 13), Tom Lamora (Jan. 20), Bruce Bryan (Jan. 25) and Julie Friend (Jan. 30).

We hear the Julie and Mykl Friend will be celebrating their anniversary on Jan. 5! Congratulations to you two!

BOOK CLUB

Death and loss, that of loved ones and ultimately that of us, are part of the human experience. As in other painful situations, there is much to be gained from the wisdom and insight of others who have suffered loss and thought deeply about it. Many brilliant, articulate authors through the centuries have shared the details of their experiences in poetry, novels, memoirs, and other works of nonfiction.

All are invited to attend Bell Street Chapel's Book Club. It is NOT necessary to make a commitment to come every time. You can pick and choose the books you would like to read and discuss. Participants find that, far from being depressing, reading these wonderful works teaches us a lot about how we want to live – mindfully, joyfully, and involved.

Our next meeting will be on Wednesday, Jan. 12, at 6:30 p.m. The book we will discuss is "When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice for Difficult Times," written by the American-born Buddhist nun, Pema Chodron. It is a work of nonfiction.

For more information, please call or email Carol Crowley at ccrowley8@cox.net.

CONGREGATIONAL AFFAIRS



JANUARY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

PH=PARISH HOUSE | S=SANTUARY | EH=EDDY HALL | MPL=MEET IN PARKING LOT | OS=OFFSITE | RE=RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ROOM

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| | | | | | | New Year's Day 1 8 am meditation (EH) |
| 2 9 am Choir (S) 10 am Service (S) 11 am Social Hour (EH) 11:30 Crossroads | 3 6 pm Empire Review (S) | 4 6:30 Worship Committee (PH) | 5 6 pm Order of Service deadline 6:45 pm Search Committee (PH) | 6 7 pm Outside group (PH) | 7 | 8 8 am meditation (EH) |
| 9 9 am Choir (S) 10 am Service (S) 11 am Social Hour (EH) 11:30 Vision & Mission forum (EH) | 10 6 pm Empire Review (S) 6:30 pm Finance Committee (PH) | 11 6:45 pm Governing Board (PH) | 12 6 pm Order of Service deadline 6:30 pm Book Club (PH) | 13 7 pm Membership Committee (PH) | 14 6:30 pm Movie Night (EH) | 15 8 am meditation (EH) |
| 16 9 am Choir (S) 10 am Service (S) 11 am Social Hour 11:30 Discussion Group (PH) 8 pm newsletter | Martin Luther King Jr. Day 17 6 pm Empire Review (S) | 18 7:15 pm House Committee (PH) | 19 6 pm Order of Service deadline 6:45 pm Search Committee (PH) | 20 7 pm Gay Bingo (OS) | 21 7 pm Drum Circle (EH) | 22 |
| 23 9 am choir 9 am newsletter folding EH (1/30) 10 am Service (S) 11:30 Midyear Mtg (EH) (1/30) | 24 6 pm Empire Review (S) | 25 6 pm Peace & Social Justice (PH) | 26 7 pm RIIF Best of the Fest (EH) | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| 30 | 31 | | | | | |

MOVIE NIGHT

FRIDAY, JAN. 14, 6:30 P.M. EDDY HALL

For the past several years, Bell Street Chapel has sponsored a monthly movie night at which we view and discuss films with gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or gender-identity themes. In this way, we live out our commitment as a Unitarian Universalist Association Welcoming Congregation; we also have a good time together and share a delicious potluck dinner. Over the past few years, we have seen some spectacular films – dramas, comedies, musicals, and documentaries – all mainstream films, many of which have won awards. We show these films on a large screen donated by the Rhode Island International Film Festival, for which Bell Street Chapel is a venue.

The movie for this month, which our licensing agreement prohibits our citing by title, is a 2003 Irish film written and directed by David Gleeson. It concerns a conservative country youth who comes to the city of Limerick to work and settles into a flat with a gay art student. It is an honest look at contemporary youth and the problems and decisions they face as they define their identities.

So bring some food or beverage to share and join us at Movie Night!



The Religious Society of Bell Street Chapel

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**“Love is the spirit of our church
and service is its law.**

**This is our great covenant:
To dwell together in peace,
To seek the truth in love,
And to help one another.”**

