

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

6 | FEBRUARY

WHITMAN'S SAMPLER

The Worship Committee

The Worship Committee will present a service of poetry on the rather wide subject of love. While not reading every poem on the subject, we will aim for breadth in topic, treatment and tone. Suitable for everyone.

13 | FEBRUARY

STANDING ON THE SIDE OF LOVE

Rev. José Ballester

Every Sunday we claim the "Love is the spirit of this church." Our fellow Unitarian Universalist sisters and brothers are proclaiming this love by acting on behalf of others. Let us live our words.

20 | FEBRUARY

HOMELESSNESS

Philip Smith

I feel secure with four walls and a roof around me, heat and hot water. How about you? Learn about those who don't.

27 | FEBRUARY

WHERE IS OUR HOLY CHURCH?

Rev. José Ballester

Unitarian Universalism is adapting to the culture of a post modern world by exploring the streams of the Emerging Church. What does this mean for the local congregations and the faith of the individual?

ACCESSIBILITY

Some weeks ago, I was downstairs alone greeting and service had started, when a man stumbled into the doorway of the church. He was a shadow of his former self. As he proceeded to tell me his story, I had trouble holding back tears. Diagnosed with AIDS and suffering from severe complications, he had recently undergone an operation removing large portions of his stomach and making him incontinent. He was looking for answers, he said. "Why had this happened to him?" he asked. He talked about how much pride he had taken in his appearance and how he had never imagined he would look like this to anyone. He wanted to hear something from God. He wanted some relief. He wanted a place to rest. How easy it should have been for me to usher him to a discrete pew in the back of the chapel where he would have found some momentary peace and community. How appropriate for a house of worship...except he could not climb the stairs.

There is no goal that is more consistent with Bell Street's mission than making the beautiful and historic chapel fully accessible to all those who enter. Every service, individuals are excluded because their mobility limitations make it impractical or impossible to ascend those lovely winding stairs. Some members and guests are exhausted by the time they reach to top, and have to slowly pause before they enter the chapel to collect themselves. Attending a church service or a classical music performance shouldn't place such a burden on anyone. We Bell Streeters do our best, and every service, our members go above and beyond, in some cases, even physically lift those congregants who cannot ascend and are willing to take that risk.

What a jolt of positive energy it was, then, to see the new smaller stairlift to Eddy Hall finally installed! The price of this smaller unit: \$4,950 – money raised through fund-raisers, Ballou Channing District grant funding and a generous donation from Unitarian Church of Sharon, Mass., which collected for our accessibility project at the dedication of its own.

Accessibility doesn't come cheap. And it doesn't come without a substantial amount of labor involved in determining the right lift for our needs and our budget while finding the right



ELLEN SMITH RIDES THE NEW STAIRLIFT TO EDDY HALL — AT LAST!

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MINISTERS

REV. JOSÉ BALLESTER
 INTERIM MINISTER

*Rev. Ballester's office hours are by appointment.
 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

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NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

EDITOR, MEREDYTH WATERMAN
COPY EDITOR, ELLEN SMITH
 ORIGINAL DESIGN BY TERRY BARBOUNIS

CONGREGATIONAL AFFAIRS

CONVERSATION WITH THE BOARD

Please join the Governing Board for a Conversation with the Board on Thursday, Feb. 17, at 7 p.m. in the Parish House. The discussion is open to anyone, and on any topic related to Board activity. We look forward to seeing you there.

LEARNING MORE ABOUT U.U.

Interested in learning more about Unitarian Universalism or Bell Street Chapel? Want to talk about what brought you here and where you're spiritual path is headed? The Membership Committee will be offering a two-part discussion about the basic history of our religious movement, why we gather together here and the individual spiritual journeys we are all taking. Scheduled after service Feb. 13 and 27, this discussion is a must for anyone thinking of becoming a member, and is also open to any current members who'd like to be a part of it. For more info, please contact Membership Committee Co-chairperson Meredyth Waterman at MeredythW@aol.com or (401) 451-2322.

VALENTINE'S DAY SWING

Bell Street's Valentine Party Swing Lesson has been scheduled for Feb. 12 in Eddy Hall from 7 to 10 p.m. If you did not pay at the service auction and would like to join us, you may pay \$15 at the door.

Carleton Freese will be our instructor. If you would like to help with decorations, food, or music, call Ellen Kellner at (401) 949-3128 or e-mail her at odiebijou@cox.net.



NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

The deadline for the next issue of *Bells Street Chapel Columns* is Feb. 13 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

CONGREGATIONAL AFFAIRS



ON THE ROAD TO PROVIDENCE

“Breaking News – Mass Shooting in Tucson.” As those words flashed on the screen and details slowly evolved, one thought kept troubling me, “I hope the shooter is not Latino.” Part of me feels shameful that I have that thought, but I am realistic about what could happen. If it is a Latino that has gone on a rampage in Arizona, the backlash against all Latinos will be unimaginable. History has shown us what happens when someone from a particular ethnic group commits a horrendous act, who is punished; the Imperial Japanese Navy attacks Pearl Harbor and Japanese-Americans are imprisoned. It will not matter that Daniel Hernandez, a Latino aide to Representative Gabrielle Giffords was the hero who tended to Gabrielle and stayed by her side, if the shooter is Latino, Daniel Hernandez will be forgotten.

Truly I am ashamed of myself, this is not how I should think. I should be trying to find ways to help Gabrielle, not as a pastor, but as one who suffered a near fatal brain injury and survived. I should be sending her messages of encouragement, of letting her know that the way back may be painful and long, but she can make it. She must not lose hope; even if she has lost some abilities, she will learn strategies to cope and compensate. I should be encouraging her that even though rehabilitation will be slow and frustrating she needs to push herself. Even though you have to claw your way out of depression and the freighting nightmares, never give up.

I should be telling Gabrielle to remember her family. Although she will not remember it, her family is there by her bedside; anxiously waiting for any sign of recovery. They too will have their nightmares and they will be forever changed. Have patience with them, as they will over-compensate for you when you don't need them to, and they will not fully understand what you are going through. Remember they love you and they are scared.

I should be sending a message to the parents of Christina Green; not as a pastor, but as a parent. There is little that I can say to parents who outlive their children. To lose your child, never to watch them grow and become all they dreamed; to have your precious child torn from you is an unimaginable horror. There is nothing I can say to Christina's parents, I can only weep.

I should be sending a message to all those whose loved ones left home on a seemingly ordinary day and will never return; not as a pastor, but as one that has lost loved ones unexpectedly. There is nothing you could have done. Keep the good memories and if your last words were harsh or a situation was becoming tense, let it go. Forgive them and yourself as they would not want those thoughts to be their legacy.

I should be sending out a message, as a pastor and another fragile human among other fragile humans. This kind of violence is not to be tolerated. Too many families have been shattered because someone decided to deal with their demons with violence. The rhetoric of hatred and violence must stop or all we will bequeath to the future will be gravestones and the sounds of grief.

And then I find that my silent prayer has been answered: Thank God the shooter is not Latino.

~Rev. José Ballester

CONGREGATIONAL AFFAIRS

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.

In February the Peace and Social Justice Committee will focus on the issue of homelessness, which is an especially timely matter this cold, snowy winter. Statistics from the Rhode Island Coalition for the Homeless indicate that over 1,300 individuals are seeking shelter each month in Rhode Island. About 40 percent of these people are members of homeless families and over half are homeless for the first time in their lives.

The economic environment and the cold winter combine to make a very difficult situation for the homeless community and those who are trying to help them. The highlight of the month will be our PSJ-sponsored service on homeless issues. It will be conducted by Carl Freese and Jim

McCartin, with help from the committee. Brian Kovacs is our liaison to the Worship Committee. During the month of February, we will collect underwear and socks (new only, please!), blankets and hoodies (new or used) for the homeless. Please help!

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 (3wisemans@gmail.com), who heads up this project.

COMING SOON: BELL STREET T-SHIRTS AND MORE



Listen up for information on how you can get your own Bell Street Chapel T-shirts, sweatshirts, canvass bags, mugs, bibs, doggy shirts and lots of other stuff! David Whitty, fiancé of Board member and Membership Committee Co-chairperson Meredyth Waterman, created the original design at left, which will soon be available on all kinds of things through a shop on Cafepress.com. (Look carefully at the people in the design. You may recognize some!) The shop is still in the works, but when it's done, we'll be able to wear our Bell Street pride and help spread the word about our great church community. And a small portion of each sale will come back to Bell Street. Keep your eyes peeled for the upcoming news on how to get yours!

CONGREGATIONAL AFFAIRS

MINISTERIAL SEARCH

We have received a number of applications from potential ministers responding to our Congregational Record, and have narrowed down the pool. It is hitting all of us on the committee hard just how much responsibility the task of calling a minister holds.

Compiling information about Bell Street for the Congregational Record and Packet was one thing, but now we are dealing with *real people*. It seems like, one minute, a candidate looks perfect and, the next, doubts arise about some factor that sometimes seems minute and sometimes seems insurmountable. It's terrifying and exhilarating to consider each and every candidate – kind of like a first date. Indeed, in our consultations with José and Bill Zelazny, our District Executive from the Ballou Channing District of the Unitarian Universalist Association, over various aspects of the search process, this has been noted many times. There is a “Match.com element” to this whole process with all of you as the in-laws/best friends who get to make the final decision in one of those awful reality shows. Except that we are much more optimistic about the

result here than we might be about those couples on TV.

Our applicants have all been interesting and learned with varying degrees of experience. We have been conducting phone interviews over the course of January to determine who we would like to bring out for a weekend to interview in person and view in action in a neutral pulpit. Neutral pulpits – opportunities for committee members to see the candidate preach at a church other than ours or his or her own – will occur throughout the month of February. At that point, we will determine who we would like to bring out for a candidating week in the early spring for all of you to meet. Should we decide not to bring anyone out from this initial pool of candidates, we will have to wait for a second wave of candidates in March. We will keep you informed as we know more. Thanks to all of you for your support!

On behalf of the Search Committee,

Wendy Schwartz

ACCESSIBILITY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

contractor and manufacturer that will ensure that these tools will continue to do their job for years to come. Thanks go out to Stu Smith and Ray Perreault for their House Committee efforts and to Dan Greco for keeping this project on track with the Trustees. It took us a while and many fits and starts, but we are here now. And as everyone has noticed, the lift does little to intrude upon or deface the historic qualities of the building.

There is one more procedural hurdle. The lift to the Chapel must be approved by the Fire Marshal, but we have a plan and we are optimistic. More on this in the next few weeks.

So, if you thought it was a thrill to see the stairlift to Eddy Hall, imagine how exciting it will be to see the long and full curved stairlift ascend the stairs to the Chapel. Now IS the time. We have approximately \$2,000 left in our fund-raising account. With a match from the Trustees, another \$5000 from the congregation will put us over the top.

As we begin this New Year, let's make this dream a reality. Please consider a generous and immediate donation to our accessibility fund. The Board is working on finding a chair for the capital campaign, but please, don't wait. Now is the time. Once we have the funds, a lift can be installed in a day! Until a fund-raising chair is appointed, our president, Dan Greco will field any fund-raising questions you may have and direct those who wish to make a donation to the right person. If you wish to donate anonymously, just drop a check made out to “Bell Street Chapel, Accessibility Fund” into the basket at service or mail to the Chapel directed to Heidi.

Think about it: What really stands between us and making good on our invocation? What will it cost us to have provided a moment of respite for the man I met a few weeks back? Do we mean it when we begin every service with, “For this hour, you are a member of this congregation?” It is the equivalent of \$500 from 10 members or \$250 from 20 members or ...— you get the idea. Please do what you can to make it happen now!

~Steve Barreto, House Committee Chairperson

CONGREGATIONAL AFFAIRS

AMONG US

Happy Valentine's Day to all Bell Streeters, and here's hoping cabin fever doesn't get the best of any of us during this snowy winter.

Healing wishes are still going out to Jim Gillis, who is beginning to get back on his feet after his heart surgery.

While we're at it, send some of those healing thoughts to Peg Boyle, too, who had some minor surgery on her leg in January and is still in the process of recovery.

Best of luck to Ellen Smith, who with her husband Stu, is traveling for surgery at the beginning of the month. Ellen expects to be hospitalized for two weeks in another of the many surgeries that have been necessary to allow her to continue walking. It's been a struggle for her, but we all wish her the best and know that her loving Stu is a wonderful support for her.

Birthday wishes go out to John Tarrats (Feb. 6), Richard Muto (Feb. 7), Adah Bryan — who turns 8 on Feb. 9 — Clara Hardy (Feb. 13), Cindy Palmieri (Feb. 17) and Chad Welch (Feb. 23).

SHARE THE PLATE

The nonprofit organization with which we will share the undesignated cash offering during the month of February is ACCESS-RI, which provides services to the homeless population of Rhode Island. We will direct our donation specifically to the Emergency Winter Shelter on Mathewson Street in Providence, which provides a safe, warm place for 21 homeless men to spend the cold winter nights. We will also collect new or used hoodies and blankets and new socks and underwear for the clients of the shelter. Please bring your donations on any Sunday in February.

BOOK CLUB

Death and loss, that of loved ones and ultimately that of ourselves, 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 Thursday, Feb. 3, 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 non-fiction. We were snowed out in January and haven't yet discussed this book, so you all have another chance!

For more information, please contact Carol Crowley at (401) 272-2088 or ccrowley8@cox.net.

CONGREGATIONAL AFFAIRS



FEBRUARY 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 |
|--|--|---|---|--|--|--|
| | | 1 6:30 pm Worship Committee (PH) | Groundhog Day 2 6 pm Order of Service deadline 6:45 pm Search Committee (PH) | 3 7 pm Outside group (PH) 6:30 pm Book Club (PH) | 4 | 5 8 am meditation (EH) |
| 6 9 am Choir (S) 10 am Service (S) 11 am Social Hour (EH) 11:30 Crossroads | 7 6 pm Empire Review (S) | 8 6:45 pm Governing Board (PH) | 9 6 pm Order of Service deadline 6 pm Daydream auditions (EH) | 10 6 pm Daydream auditions (EH) 7 pm Member- ship Committee (PH) | 11 6:30 pm Movie Night (EH) | 12 8 am meditation (EH) 7 pm Valentine's Day Dance lesson (EH) |
| 13 9 am Choir (S) 10 am Service (S) 8 pm newsletter deadline 11:30 am UU/ BSC discussion (PH) | Valentine's Day 14 6 pm Empire Review (S) 6:30 pm Finance Committee (PH) | 15 7:15 pm House Committee (PH) | 16 6 pm Order of Service deadline 6:45 pm Search Committee (PH) | 17 7 pm Gay Bingo (OS) 7 pm Conversa- tion with the Board (PH) | 18 7 pm Drum Circle (EH) | 19 8 am meditation (EH) |
| 20 9 am Choir (S) 10 am Service (S) 11 am Social Hour 11:30 Discussion Group (PH) 6 pm Daydream | Presidents' Day 21 6 pm Empire Review (S) 6 pm Daydream Rehearsal (EH) | 22 6 pm Peace & So- cial Justice (PH) 6 pm Daydream Rehearsal (EH) | 23 6 pm Order of Service deadline 6:45 pm Search Committee (PH) | 24 | 25 | 26 8 am meditation (EH) |
| 27 9 am choir 9 am newsltr EH 10 am Service (S) 11:30 am UU/ BSC discuss (PH) 11:30 RE comm. (RE) 6 pm Daydream | 28 6 pm Empire Review (S) 6 pm Daydream Rehearsal (EH) | | | | | |

MOVIE NIGHT

FRIDAY, FEB. 11, 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.

This season we are focusing on foreign films. Films we have viewed so far include a French Canadian and an Irish film. The movie for February, which our licensing agreement prohibits our citing by title, is a 2004 Spanish film written and directed by Pedro Almodovar. It is an award-winning movie about the relationship among two boys, Ignacio and Enrique, who are classmates in a Catholic school, and the priest who sexually abuses one of them.

February 11 promises to be another wonderful night at the movies at Bell Street Chapel. 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.”**

