

# 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 | MARCH MASQUERADE

*José Ballester*

At Mardi Gras time the celebrants wear masks freeing them to revel in anonymity. In the poetry of T.S. Elliot, Alfred J. Prufrock prepares a mask to meet the masks he will meet. Due we wear masks and for what reason?

### 13 | MARCH ON THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS

*Rev. José Ballester*

The writings of St. Paul have been the basis for many of the nurturing and loving elements of religion but also many of the hateful and destructive practices in religion. Unitarian Universalists simultaneously praise and vilify Paul or more accurately the interpretations and practices based on the Epistles.

### 20 | MARCH THE SPRING EQUINOX

*Raymond Perreault*

The Spring Equinox both a time of balance with an equal night and day, and the marker of a time of change and awakening. As we move forward as a church, how can this be a symbol for our journey.

### 27 | MARCH REBIRTH

*Sally Gabb, Audrey Greene*

We explore and rejoice in our constant opportunity to start anew.

## FROM THE BOARD - LIVING OUT OUR VALUES

Almost eight years ago, the members at Bell Street Chapel identified accessibility as a primary goal for our congregation. We made some small steps along the way. We created a section in the sanctuary for those who need hearing assistance. We created a perfume free section for those with allergies, and, most importantly, we started a restricted fund for increased access to our church. We held fundraisers and potlucks, we became a chalice lighter congregation, and we even got help from the First Unitarian Church of Sharon, who donated almost \$500. We raised almost \$8,000, and on New Year's eve, we installed a stairlift to Eddy Hall. Although the stairlift does not make Eddy Hall fully accessible, it greatly increases our accessibility and puts us one step closer to living out our values.

Now, we have an opportunity to provide the same access to the sanctuary that we have to Eddy Hall. We have identified a stairlift to the sanctuary that would cost approximately \$13,000. We still have almost \$3,000 in our account, and the trustees have generously agreed to match our fundraising efforts, which means we will have to raise about \$5,000 to install a stairlift to the sanctuary. Although this seems like large, especially for a congregation that is seeking to increase its professional ministry, it breaks down to under \$100 per member. An accessibility fundraising committee, comprised of Kate Gillis, Meredyth Waterman, and Stu and Ellen Smith, has been appointed by the Board and will seek to raise money from both inside and outside of our church walls.

Until we build the stairlift to Eddy Hall, we must live outside our values. As long as we continue to hold services in the sanctuary, we deny access to those who would be able to worship in Eddy Hall. We deny them the worth and dignity of access, and limit their search for truth and meaning. On the other hand, if we move our services to Eddy Hall, we increase access of our service to those who cannot attend at the sanctuary, but we lose a space many of us consider sacred, we lose the windows, the wonderful acoustics, the grand piano. We limit everyone's search for truth and meaning. We make our services less appealing at the very moment we want to sing and shine. Either way, it's a compromise that makes us less able to be the church we want to be.

This year, as we call a new minister to share our spiritual journey, let us do it as a religious community that lives out our values. Let's build a stairlift. Let's build a church.

In faith,

Dan Greco,  
President

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#### MINISTERS

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 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

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*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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**COPY EDITOR, ELLEN SMITH**  
 ORIGINAL DESIGN BY TERRY BARBOUNIS

# CONGREGATIONAL AFFAIRS

## WOMENSPHERE

Womensphere, the Ballou Channing District Women's Group, is excited to present a symposium, "AWAKENING the Dreamer, CHANGING the Dream," facilitated by Sisters of Mercy Mary Pendergast and Nancy Audette. The program will be held on April 30, from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the First Unitarian Church of New Bedford. This day of renewal for women provides an interactive transformational workshop that inspires participants to play a role in creating a new future: an environmentally sustainable, spiritually fulfilling, and socially just human presence on this planet. Through dynamic group interactions, leading-edge information and inspiring multimedia, participants are inspired to reconnect with their deep concern for our world and are empowered to make a difference. The cost is \$25 including lunch. Pre-registration necessary. Please contact [schmader@cox.net](mailto:schmader@cox.net).

## NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

The deadline for the next issue of *Bells Street Chapel Columns* is March 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](mailto: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: ISSUES

Lately there have been a number of issues in the forefront of my mind. First is the issue of growth in our Unitarian Universalist faith in general, and in the Religious Society of Bell Street Chapel in particular. All institutions go through cycles of growth and decline. Typically they begin with a somewhat rapid growth initially until they reach a point of stability that often lasts for a longer period. Then there is a barely noticeable decline either due to some change or simply stagnation. The Unitarian Universalist Association has been in a period of stability for years; while it has not significantly grown it has not lost declined as other religious organizations. However, while the adult membership in our member congregations has remained essentially the same, the location of our membership has shifted. The rapid growth of our congregations west of the Mississippi have been tempered by the decline of our congregations east of the Mississippi. Furthermore, there has been a significant decline in our church school enrollment and among our youth and young adults.

The Religious Society of Bell Street Chapel has experienced a decline in membership in recent years. Some of the decline may be attributed to the fact that the congregation has not had a settled, full-time pastor since 2007 but there may be other factors that mirror what is transpiring in the association. Statistically, all organizations follow the pattern of growth, stability, decline. The organizations that survive and flourish find ways to revive, renew and redevelop themselves at critical moments. Certainly the history of Bell Street Chapel exhibits this pattern. Twenty-six years ago the Sunday morning worship was down to a dozen individuals (including the choir) and although it had a full-time pastor, much of the cost of ministry was defrayed by the pastor living in a parsonage (the current Parish House). While the current search for a settled minister is for a half-time pastor, the congregation is committed to finding ways to eventually fund a full-time pastor. As to the other factors impacting growth these are being discussed on the national level and we are waiting for the findings and recommendations.

Secondly, the issue of universal human rights (civil, political, cultural, economical) for all people have been a "hot topic" in many discussions. Defending and guaranteeing those rights, especially for the LGBT community, has been a personal goal of my ministry and my life. While I sense that Rhode Island is finally making progress on Marriage Equality, and proud that members of Bell Street have been stalwart champions in this struggle, I am concerned that it may not be enough. If an individual loses their job or is denied housing or has their other rights violated due to their marriage we will not complete our faith's mission. Until all people, regardless of whom they

love, are assured of life, liberty and equality then the cause is incomplete.

Recently I traveled to Arizona because of another issue. While Arizona is not the only state wherein hatred and prejudice are officially and unofficially sanctioned, it certainly is in the forefront of the news in that regard. The anti-immigrant legislation; relaxation of firearms regulations; the raids on immigrant communities; the attempted assassination of a representative of congress; the attempt to remove citizenship from individuals born in the United States; the killing of a father and 9-year-old daughter in a robbery to fund an anti-immigrant group would be enough to raise my concern and ire. However, these were the issues that bothered me most while in Arizona. In fact, I was more concerned with the reaction of our sister and brother Unitarian Universalists. While it is commendable that we, as a faith movement, have responded to these examples of injustice, it is the conclusions and particular actions with which I have issues. Recognizing that much of the hatred and injustice has been directed at the Latino community and recognizing that Unitarian Universalists have in general failed to engage with this community, we have invested time and resources specifically to address the issues of the Latino community in Arizona.

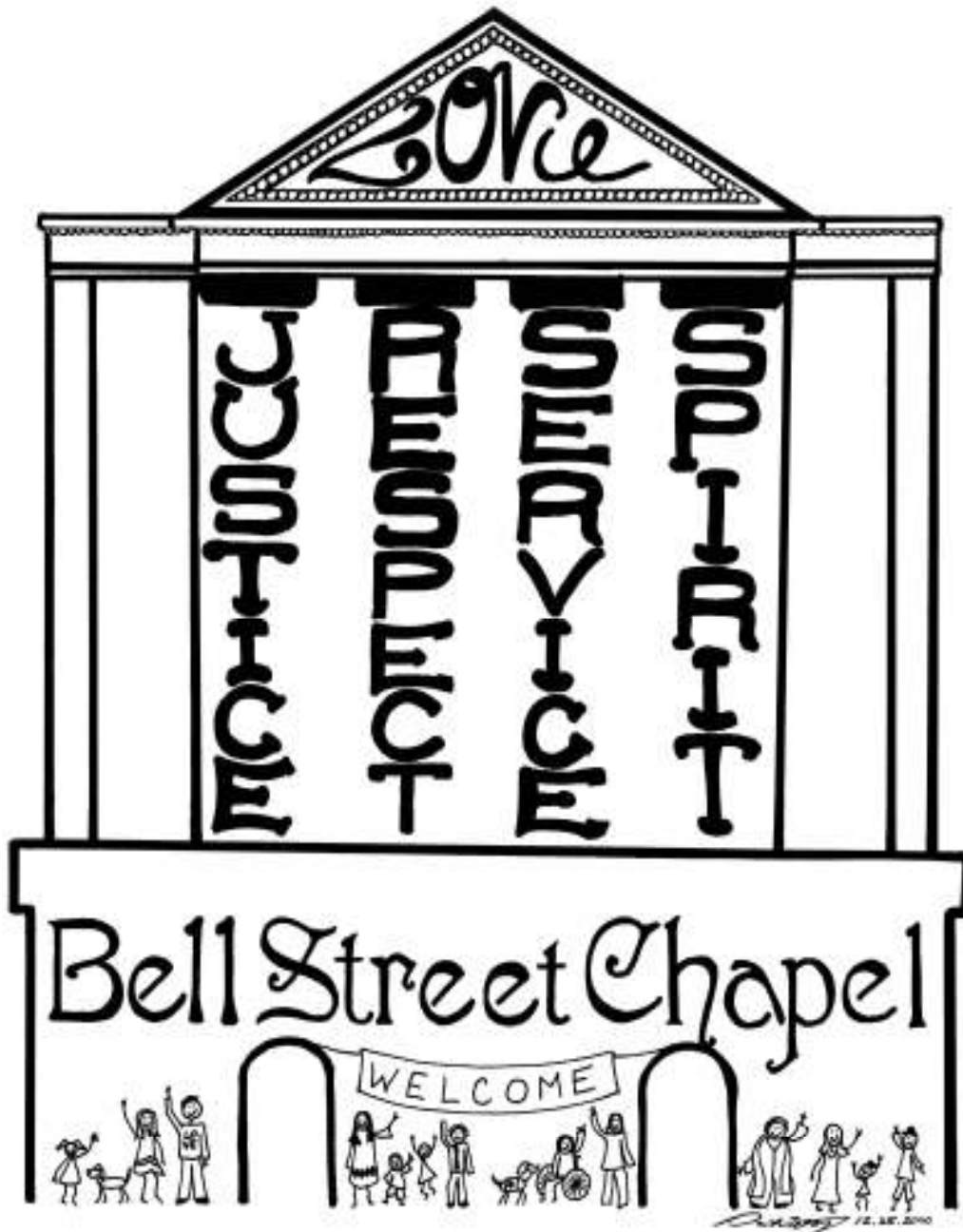
Furthermore, our leadership has recognized that the Latino community is the largest (15.2 percent of the U.S. population) minority segment and the fastest growing; while in our movement Latinos comprise only 3 percent of our membership. In order to rectify this imbalance, our leadership is attempting to increase our Latino presence by encouraging leaders to learn Spanish and translate elements of our worship and other material into Spanish. However, there are two major faults in our plans, which will impact our local congregations.

First, it is not enough to simply learn Spanish, as that will not give us insight into the Latino community; we need to explore the cultural differences such as the fact that church attendance is not large in the Latino community due to the view that churches are seen as institutions and not necessarily impacting one's personal faith. Secondly, not all Latinos are immigrants and do not necessarily speak Spanish. There is, and has been, a form of elitism in our faith movement. If we are to grow, numerically, personally and spiritually we need to have the courage to have the difficult conversations. Let's talk.

~Rev. José Ballester

# CONGREGATIONAL AFFAIRS

**NOW AVAILABLE: BELL STREET T-SHIRTS AND MORE**



Visit [www.cafepress.com/bellstreetchapel](http://www.cafepress.com/bellstreetchapel) and 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 is now available on all kinds of things through our Cafepress.com shop . (Look carefully at the people in the design. You may recognize some!)

And just to make a good thing even better, 10 percent of each sale comes back to Bell Street Chapel.

Wear your Bell Street pride and help spread the word about our great church community!

# CONGREGATIONAL AFFAIRS

## MINISTERIAL SEARCH

Not much to report from your committee, although this is where the exciting part really begins: We get to speak with and meet the ministerial candidates!

We have now received a number of packets from ministerial candidates and have conducted some phone interviews in an effort to decide who we would like to bring out for a weekend and meet in person.

Along the way, we have had some disappointments and a great deal of excitement. Despite the excitement, however, we are working hard to ensure as best we can that whatever candidate we may bring out in the next few months to present to the congregation for consideration has the potential to be the *right* candidate for Bell Street and not simply “good enough.” We want to reiterate that which was discussed in the midyear

meeting about this very issue.

As excited as we all are at this point to have a settled minister, finding the right person in the next few months (or year) is more important than finding the right person as soon as possible. With that said, there are some good prospects and we will keep you posted!

Finally, if you would like to view the Bell Street Chapel packet that we put together for ministerial candidates to peruse, you can find it at: <https://sites.google.com/site/bscsearchcommittee/>.

On behalf of the Ministerial Search Committee,

Wendy Schwartz

## AMONG US

Happy spring, Bell Streeters! (We here on the Membership and Caring Committee are positive thinkers. )

Great big congratulations go out to Ryan Brown, who last month became an Eagle Scout. This is the top honor a Boy Scout can earn, and this accomplishment is recognized throughout a man's life as a testament to his perseverance and dedication. Congratulations, Ryan! Bell Street is so proud of you!

After a long, cold winter, we are warmed by the return of our dear Jim Gillis, who after months of illness following his heart surgery, has been able to return to church. Jim is still recovering, but has made a valiant effort and returned not only to church, but to his job as our treasurer. We are very grateful to Jim, glad to see him feeling better and so happy to see his cheerful face among us again. Welcome back, Jim!

It's been quite a time for surgery in our church. Also making a triumphant return to church after surgery is Sally Gabb, who seems to be making a speedy recovery. Glad to have you back, Sally!

And one more surgery-recoverer: Ellen and Stu Smith are back from Wisconsin after another surgery for Ellen, and she is in good spirits. The week of this newsletter's publication, the Smiths are traveling to Washington, D.C. , for the Arthritis Summit. They were selected for this free trip as two of the top Ambassadors for the Arthritis Foundation. Congratulations, Ellen and Stu.

Happy birthday wishes go out to Ilse Bryan (March 2), Shelagh Goulis (March 13), Kate Gillis (March 30) and Jim Gillis (March 31). (No, Kate and Jim are not twins born across a midnight. They're not even related.) And March 22 is the anniversary of two of our couples: Don Laliberte and Richard Corso as well as Rev. José and Susan Ballester. Happy anniversary!

*Wishing you all the warmth and renewal of spring,  
The Membership and Caring Committee*

# CONGREGATIONAL AFFAIRS

## WISH LIST

Every now and then, we church leaders say, "Hey, I wish we had (fill in the blank)." And then we wonder if, perhaps, somebody at church has whatever goes in that blank, and would be willing to donate it.

So we've decided to put in a little column in the newsletter about these "blanks." It never hurts to ask! If you have something here that you'd like to donate, let me know. Or if you think of something our church or your committee needs that you'd like to put in this column, let me know that too. Contact me at [MeredythW@aol.com](mailto:MeredythW@aol.com), or (401) 451-2322. Church-related requests, only, please.

### Wanted:

- Two small cabinets, one for each bathroom, in which we can store a few rolls of extra toilet paper. This will prevent anyone from falling victim the unfortunate no-TP situation!
- Cloth tablecloths for Eddy Hall. We don't know where they've been going, but we're running out. And frankly, the ones we have are in rough shape. Preferably matching ones. Alternatively, if you have time and some sewing skills, we have a large bolt of cloth, and would love for someone to turn it into tablecloths.
- Card tables for Eddy Hall. Again, we seem to have lost some, but it may be that they were never ours to begin with. We could use three or four.

*Gratefully,  
Meredyth Waterman  
Past President*

## 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. .

All are invited to attend Bell Street Chapel's Book Club. It is NOT necessary to make a commitment to come every time. 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. on Thursday, March 24, at 6:30 p.m. The book we will discuss is a collection of 12 essays, "Learning to Fall: The Blessings of an Imperfect Life," by Philip Simmons. The author was a professor of English who was diagnosed with ALS, an incurable neurodegenerative disease in 1993.

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

## SHARE THE PLATE

The nonprofit organization with which we will share the undesignated cash offering during the month of March is the Rhode Island Coalition for the Homeless. The mission of this organization is to "promote and preserve the dignity and quality of life for men, women, and children by pursuing comprehensive and cooperative solutions to the problems of housing and homelessness." They do this through advocacy, education, collaboration, technical assistance, and selective direct services.

# CONGREGATIONAL AFFAIRS

## MARCH 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
		<b>1</b> 6 pm Daydream Rehearsal (EH) 6:30 pm Worship Committee (PH)	<b>2</b> 6 pm Order of Service deadline 6 pm Daydream Rehearsal (EH) 6:45 pm Search Committee (PH)	<b>3</b> 7 pm Outside group (PH)	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> 8 am meditation (EH)
<b>6</b> 9 am Choir (S) 10 am Service (S) 11 am Social Hour (EH) 11:30 Crossroads 3 pm Daydream Rehearsal (EH)	<b>7</b> 6 pm Empire Review (S) 6 pm Daydream Rehearsal (EH)	<b>8</b> 6:45 pm Governing Board (PH) 6 pm Daydream Rehearsal (EH)	<b>9</b> 6 pm Order of Service deadline 6 pm Daydream Rehearsal (EH)	<b>10</b> 7 pm Membership Committee (PH)	<b>11</b> 6:30 pm Movie Night (EH)	<b>12</b> 8 am meditation (EH)
Daylight Savings begins <b>13</b> 9 am Choir (S) 10 am Service (S) 8 pm newsletter deadline 3 pm Daydream Rehearsal (EH)	<b>14</b> 6 pm Empire Review (S) 6 pm Daydream Rehearsal (EH) 6:30 pm Finance Committee (PH)	<b>15</b> 7:15 pm House Committee (PH) 6 pm Daydream Rehearsal (EH)	<b>16</b> 6 pm Order of Service deadline 6 pm Daydream Rehearsal (EH) 6:45 pm Search Committee (PH)	St. Patrick's Day <b>17</b> 7 pm Gay Bingo (OS)	<b>18</b> 7 pm Drum Circle (EH)	<b>19</b> 8 am meditation (EH)
<b>20</b> 9 am Choir (S) 10 am Service (S) 11 am Social Hour 11:30 Discussion Group (PH) 3 pm Daydream	<b>21</b> 6 pm Empire Review (S) 6 pm Daydream Rehearsal (EH)	<b>22</b> 6 pm Peace & Social Justice (PH) 6 pm Daydream Rehearsal (EH)	<b>23</b> 6 pm Order of Service deadline 6 pm Daydream Rehearsal (EH) 6:45 pm Search Committee (PH)	<b>24</b> 6:30 pm Book Club (PH)	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b> 8 am meditation (EH)
<b>27</b> 9 am choir 9 am newsltr EH 10 am Service (S) 11:30 RE comm. (RE) 3 pm Daydream Rehearsal (EH)	<b>28</b> 6 pm Empire Review (S) 6 pm Daydream Rehearsal (EH)	<b>29</b> 6 pm Daydream Rehearsal (EH)	<b>30</b> 6 pm Daydream Rehearsal (EH) 7 pm RIIF Best of the Fest (EH)	<b>31</b> 8 pm Daydream Performance (EH)		

# MOVIE NIGHT

## FRIDAY, MARCH 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. Last month we saw a spectacular Spanish film written and directed by Pedro Almodovar. In March we will view a French-language Swiss film which is another “coming of age” story.

March 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.”**

