

BELL STREET COLUMNS

NEWSLETTER FOR THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF BELL STREET CHAPEL



WORSHIP SERVICE SCHEDULE

SERVICES BEGIN AT 10 A.M.

TODDLER CARE AND SUNDAY SCHOOL AVAILABLE

6 | SEPTEMBER

SPIRITUALITY AND WORK

Greg Greco

Most of us work at least one third of our waking hours. For many, work is a means to an end. Today we will explore ways to incorporate work into your greater spiritual practice, and to make work not just a means to an end, but a means to meaning and purpose.

13 | SEPTEMBER

WATER CEREMONY

Rev. José Ballester

Each September we begin the new Church year by sharing a part of ourselves by bringing water gathered from our various travels. This is a time of connecting with each other and with the greater world around us. Please remember to bring your water and your stories.

20 | SEPTEMBER

SACRED COVENANTS

Rev. José Ballester & The Behavioral Covenant Development Subcommittee

With civility in society in decline, congregations need to declare a higher standard of behavior for themselves. We will explore our covenantal society, what covenants are, and why they matter. There will be an information session held by the subcommittee in Eddy Hall after coffee hour for all those who are interested in learning about the process we're undertaking to draft a behavioral covenant.

27 | SEPTEMBER

THE PRODIGAL SON

Ray Perreault

Franz Kafka wrote, "All these parables really set out to say merely that the incomprehensible is incomprehensible, and we know that already." That may be, but we can glean the Universalist idea in at least one of them.

FROM THE GOVERNING BOARD — SUMMER IS COMING TO A CLOSE

The summer is coming to a close and our new church year is about to begin. It promises to be exciting.

This year we will be working to define our mission as a spiritual community. The Mission and Vision Committee will begin meeting with church members to gauge the current state of the Congregation to determine where we are and where our focus should be as we move ahead. In that spirit, the leadership retreat will address the spiritual nature of committee work. This will help us keep in mind the way we help each other grow in spirit even as we support worship and the social engagement of the church.

August 2009 marks the beginning of the Reverend Jose Ballester's second year as our Consulting Minister. Over the past year he has brought his rich experience and knowledge of the UUA to his sermons and to our committee meetings. He continues to work with us to become an ever more welcoming place and this coming year he will continue to help us improve our day to day functioning as a church. We also may begin some adult religious education classes, which can bring the ideas we hear at Sunday service into greater focus and create opportunities to learn from each other. The Trustees have agreed to match our funds for the chairlift to Eddy Hall which brings us much closer to making that a reality. It is the first step in making our building more accessible to members and visitors who have difficulties with our many stairs. It will make our beautiful 19th century building more useful and accommodating for church functions, concerts, theatre groups, film festivals, and the many other activities that help us celebrate life and bind us to the larger community.

Also, as of this writing, we are on the verge of purchasing a new sound system for the sanctuary. One of its features will allow members and visitors who have hearing difficulties to sit anywhere in the sanctuary and hear the service. Don Laliberte and Richard Corso worked with Jessica Wilson, Technical Operations Manager of the Rhode Island International Film Festival, to get the proper system at the best price.

This year will be a good one with opportunities to participate in all areas of church life. As we do so let us always remember to seek the truth in love and help one another.

Ray Perreault, At-Large

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CONSULTING MINISTER

*Rev. Ballester's office hours are by appointment.
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joseballester@mac.com or (781) 264-3511*

REV. MARY MARGARET EARL
COMMUNITY MINISTER

REV. BEN HALL
COMMUNITY MINISTER

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HEIDI GILKENSON, OFFICE MANAGER
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*Monday, Wednesday, Friday – 9 a.m. to noon
Tuesday and Thursday – by appointment only*

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

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JASMINE APPLEBERRY
MEMBERSHIP/CARING, RICHARD CORSO
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION, KATE GILLIS
PEACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE, CLARA HARDY
WORSHIP, AUDREY GREENE

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

EDITOR, RICHARD CORSO &
DON LALIBERTE
COPY EDITOR, ELLEN SMITH
ORIGINAL DESIGN BY TERRY BARBOUNIS

ON THE ROAD TO PROVIDENCE: INQUIRY

We were cruising at 33,000 feet, somewhere over the Midwest. Night had transformed the landscape into small, sparkling blankets of yellow and blue points. In the dimmed cabin of the east bound 757 weary travelers, vacationing youth and the occasional parent who had managed to still their restless child, were in various stages of rest, relaxation or slumber.

Except for the few aisles surrounding my seat. 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 thirty and soon everyone but Dianna wearied of the inquisition. Surrendering, I handed my 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 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 found a recruitment ad for New York Life. A sign was 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 parted 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 UU congregation in the near future.

~ Rev. José Ballester

A F F A I R S

PEACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE NEWS

BOARD BITS

The recipient for share the plate in September is Options Magazine. Half of the monthly offertory will be going to this organization.

Options is Rhode Island's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community newsmagazine. It has been published since 1982. Options informs, entertains and supports readers about an array of diverse topics – from equal rights efforts in Providence in the 1980's, to fair treatment at the state level and beyond. The newsmagazine has volunteers that run, write and edit for it. The readership and advertisers include members of the LGBT community and their supporters. As of August 2009 the monthly issues are now available by mail by donating funds to it at P.O. Box 6406, Providence, RI 02940. Dwindling advertising revenues in late 2008 and increased costs (supplies, printing and postage) has made this necessary. The issues are continuing to be available at select venues throughout the state (student unions, some bookshops and cafes, and the like.

Please remember that nomination forms for Share the Plate can be found in Eddy Hall or contact Clara Hardy (clarapvd@gmail.com) for more information.

BELL STREET CHAPEL AND THE SIERRA CLUB

Bell Street Chapel cordially invite you to meet Chris Wilhite, Director for the Sierra Club's Rhode Island Chapter. Chris will be available to discuss the Rhode Island Chapter's work toward bringing clean, affordable transportation choices to our communities. Chris will also be on hand to discuss climate recovery and renewable energies.

There will also be a showing of the documentary, "Taken for a Ride", which focuses on how the car companies have hindered the public transportation industry.

The event will take place on Sunday, September 13 2009 at 3pm at Bell Street Chapel.

Refreshments will be served.

In this monthly column we summarize the recent activities and decisions of the Governing Board of Bell Street Chapel. It is our goal to keep you as informed as possible about what we do at our meetings, as we represent and are answerable to you, the congregation. Also, we remind you that all our meetings are open. We would be happy if members of the congregation attended. If you would like to make suggestions for the agenda, speak to the president, Meredyth Waterman.

At our meeting on July 21, all Board members signed the Board Covenant, which describes our responsibilities to the congregation and to each other. A framed copy will be hung in the conference room of the parish house.

We will purchase a new sound system for which the Trustees will provide the funds. The Trustees will also fund the Plan for Growth for another year.

We are making progress with plans to install the chair lift to provide handicapped access to Eddy Hall. A city engineer needs to review and approve the plans. We have the funds to proceed with this initial step toward full accessibility.

We are planning to raise the necessary funds for chairlifts up to the Sanctuary. The Trustees have agreed to match the amount that we raise. A committee will be appointed to organize and implement this campaign.

Bell Street Chapel once again served as a venue for the GLBT-themed movies presented by the Rhode Island International Film Festival (RIIFF) during the first week of August. BSC received half of the money raised from admissions and all the profits from the sale of concessions.

The Board endorsed the National Equality March, which will take place in Washington, D.C., on October 11. Don Laliberte and Richard Corso will carry our banner.

That is a summary of the important work of your Board in July.

~Carol Crowley
Secretary

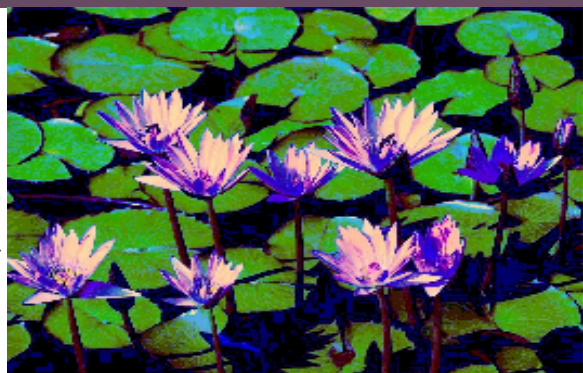


CONGREGATIONAL AFFAIRS

NEWSLETTER REMINDER

Please remember the deadline for the September newsletter is Sunday, September 13, at 8 p.m. Early submissions are encouraged and appreciated. Please do not wait until the last minute. Please e-mail your submissions as a Word attachment (in .doc format,) to Richard Corso at Richard-Corso@gmail.com. Thanks!

~Richard Corso, Columns Editor



COMMITTEE FAIR: SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

On Sunday, September 27th, immediately after the service, a Committee Fair will be held in Eddy Hall. This is a great time to learn why so many people say that committee work is one of their most meaningful experiences at Bell Street Chapel, and to find out exactly what each of the committees does. For those of you who are part of the committee experience already, this is a great time to share with others what is particularly rewarding and interesting about each of the different committees, and to welcome others who might be curious to learn more and to add their own voices. We celebrate all of the contributions of the community of Bell Street Chapel. This is an opportunity to express just why each of the committees is stimulating, spiritual, and fun, in its own way. Share your experiences, bring your ideas, and join us for a roomful of discussion, information, sharing, and possibilities.

-Jasmine Appleberry, Leadership Development Committee

LEADERSHIP RETREAT

The annual leadership retreat will be held at the beautiful Cedar Hill Retreat Center in Duxbury, Mass., from Friday, Sept. 11, (arrive any time after 3 p.m.) until the afternoon of Saturday, Sept. 12. We hope that this opportunity to be together in such a lovely place will be spiritually uplifting and will reconfirm our commitment to serve Bell Street Chapel. As usual, we also expect to have a great deal of fun together!

All members of the Governing Board and Leadership Development Committee, as well as the chairs of the standing committees and our consulting and community ministers, are invited and encouraged to participate.

The cost of the weekend will be \$35 per person (checks payable to Bell

Street Chapel and given or sent to Carol Crowley). We will also be asking for donations of food for the meals. Consider preparing our meals a bonding experience. It will be fun, honest!! We did it the last two years and the food was excellent.

If you are in one of the above-mentioned leadership positions, please contact Carol Crowley at ccrowley8@cox.net and let her know whether or not you are able to attend. Committee chairs unable to attend are requested to ask another committee member to participate. Details about what to bring, rules of the retreat center, and directions will be provided to those attending.

-The Governing Board

MARCH FOR GLBT EQUALITY—WASHINGTON DC OCTOBER 11

On October 10-11, 2009, people will gather in Washington DC from all across America to let our elected leaders know that now is the time for full equal rights for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people. We will gather. We will march. And we will leave energized and empowered to do the work that needs to be done in every community across the nation. Marriage Equality RI is organizing bus transportation to the march. Transportation information is available at www.marriageequalityri.org. For more information about the march, go to www.nationalequalitymarch.com.

-Richard Corso

CONGREGATIONAL AFFAIRS



Among Us

"I am not afraid of storms for I am learning how to sail my ship."

Louisa May Alcott

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 Carol Crowley (ccrowley8@cox.net).

Richard Corso has been invited to become a member of the Board of Marriage Equality Rhode Island (MERI). Richard's service on the MERI Board will further the mutually supportive relationship between Bell Street Chapel and MERI and will enable us to be better informed about MERI events. Thank you for taking on this role, Richard.

We were all saddened to learn of the unexpected and untimely death of Tom Mack's brother. Our sympathy goes to Tom and his family.

Bell Streeters celebrating birthdays in September include Liz Marsis (9/10), Rev. Mary Margaret Earl (9/24), Betty Lamora (9/25), and Luz Bravo-Gleicher (9/26). Happy Birthday to all.

It will be back to school soon for all the students and the teachers among us. Here's hoping for a terrific school year for all!

A generous member of the congregation has offered to provide rides to doctor appointments for anyone in need; if you would like to take advantage of this kind offer, contact Carol Crowley (ccrowley8@cox.net); she will pass on the information.

~From The Membership and Caring Committee

THE RHODE ISLAND COMMUNITY FOOD BANK

I have begun to volunteer at the Food Bank last Fall. I work on a production line sorting and inspecting items that are donated. There are several others doing the same work for each of the two daily shifts. We need to key in on such things as expiration dates, packaging integrity and the like. It is a fun job and it gives me the feeling that I am giving back. Other volunteers come weekly or daily or a few times a week.

The Food Bank occupies a 75,000 square foot facility. It has the capacity to hold 2 million pounds of food at one time. Food is received from local donations and food drives such as the Boy Scouts and Letter Carriers and local retailers. Some food is received from national sources such as Feeding America.

It is 90% privately funded, 8% state funded and 2% federally funded. The mission is to feed people facing hunger. \$.89 of every dollar donated is utilized for programs and hunger fighting initiatives.

During the Food Bank's last fiscal year (from July 1, 2008 through June 30, 2009) the Food Bank distributed a total of 9.5 million pounds of food. Some of the Food Bank's regular staple case items include canned vegetables, protein, canned fruit, grains, beverages, breakfast cereal, canned food and more.

The Food Bank provides food to local agencies across the state. Individuals needing food visit these agencies – meal sites, food pantries, shelters.

There are currently 285 programs within the network of member agencies serving the food needs of struggling Rhode Islanders. A complete list of member agencies is available online at: the Food Bank website, www.rifoodbank.org. or can be obtained by calling the Food Bank at 401 942 MEAL (6325) or by visiting the Food Bank at 200 Niantic Avenue, Providence, RI 02907. Hours are Monday through Friday from 8 am to 5 pm. To see how you can help visit: the Food Bank website..

Steve Kagan

MARCH FOR MARRIAGE EQUALITY—PROVIDENCE, SATURDAY OCTOBER 17

SAVE THE DATE! Supporters of same-sex marriage rights will march in support of marriage equality on Saturday October 17. The march, being organized by Marriage Equality RI will begin outside the Providence Performing Arts Center, and will end with a rally at the State House. More details will follow.

Join us as we show our support for equal marriage rights for all individuals.

-Richard Corso



CONGREGATIONAL AFFAIRS

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Bell Street will be having an intergenerational service on September 13th. Everyone is invited to bring water that represents something you enjoy about summer. Did your family water the garden, visit the beach or a lake, swim in a pool? Bring some water from the actual spot or some tap water representing the event or some virtual water. All the water will be collected together to represent our church family.

Stay tuned for more information about weekly church school programs for this year.

-Kate Gillis, Religious Education Chair

PAIN AWARENESS

In an effort to raise awareness about issues surrounding pain and the lack of access to pain care, Ellen and Stu Smith are hosting their first American Pain Foundation Community Event to honor Sept as National Pain Awareness month. This will be their first effort to raise awareness about issues surrounding pain and the lack of access to pain care. This campaign is to learn how to "Conquer Pain Together."

Event date: Sept 16, 2009

Time: 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Location: Miriam Hospital, Steve Baron Lecture Hall, Fain Building - directly across from the Emergency hospital entrance
 Guest Speaker: Dr. Pradeep Chopra, SNAPA pain clinic doctor - speaking about pain in this country as a national healthcare crisis. He will discuss pain being undertreated, the gender bias to treating it and how to get better quality in life dealing with pain.

Refreshments will be provided.

SAVE THE DATE! — BCD FALL CONFERENCE

SAVE THE DATE! The Ballou Channing District Fall Conference will be held at First Parish Church, Brewster on Saturday October 2 from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM. This year's theme is "Effective Congregations." The program is still being designed, but workshops are being planned on such topics as: volunteer management; growth and congregation vitality; outreach to young adults; leadership styles and function in congregations; ethical eating – exploring the current Study Action Issue; congregation presidents and ministers working together; compensation and personnel management; and an Idea Swap/Best Practices sharing session. All of this will be kicked off by an Opening Worship and Keynote Address. Cost is only \$15 and includes lunch!

FALL MARSH CLEANUP

Please join us for the autumn cleanup of Bell Street Chapel's adopted marsh on the Providence waterfront on Saturday, Sept. 19, at 9 a.m. A sign-up sheet will be available in Eddy Hall, or you can contact Meredyth Waterman at (401) 451-2322 or MeredythW@aol.com.

We clean up this marsh in collaboration with Save the Bay and the Audubon Society once in the fall and once in the summer, and we've found this event to be both fun and fulfilling. Our fall cleanup is held in conjunction with the International Coastal Cleanup (ICC), and that means free T-shirts! Make sure you specify your size when you sign up. It also means we will probably be joined by other friends of the ocean, since our cleanup will be listed online for those interested in taking part in the ICC. And it means we'll be meticulously recording what we pick up so the Ocean Conservancy can track pollution worldwide. It also means we're strongly encouraged to hold the cleanup at the appointed hour of 9 a.m., regardless of the fact that that's high tide at our site and all over Rhode Island (and it's also Rosh Hashanah). That's not ideal in terms of accessibility of our beach, but it probably means we'll be able to do a better job on the areas we can reach.

We will once again meet directly at the marsh (at the waterfront end of Oxford Street, Providence, off Allens Avenue). If you need directions, contact Meredyth. Please wear sturdy shoes or boots. Sunblock, hats and bottled water are also advised. We have only a few pairs of work gloves, so please bring yours if you have some. You should also bring rakes or shovels if you want them. Only if it rains very heavily (like a hurricane) will this event be rescheduled to the following Saturday, Oct. 3. If people are interested, we can finish off our cleanup with breakfast across the street at the Seaplane Diner. Once again, our cleanup will feature the popular Bell Street Biohazard Contest, which arguably makes otherwise unsavory discoveries a treat. Nonetheless, please do not bring small children to this event due to the dangerous nature of the rocks, the water and the items we find. Join us for this fun morning of helping the earth!

~Meredyth Waterman

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SEPTEMBER | CALENDAR OF EVENTS

PH=PARISH HOUSE | S=SANTUARY | EH=EDDY HALL | MPL=MEET IN PARKING LOT | MO=MINISTER'S OFFICE | OS=OFFSITE | L=LIBRARY

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 6:30 pm Worship Committee (PH) 7 pm PEAC (EH)	2 6 pm Order of Service deadline	3	4	5 8am Meditation (EH)
6 9 am Choir (S) 10 am Service (S) 11 am Coffee Hour (EH) 11:30 am Sandwiches (EH)	7 6 pm Empire Review rehearsal (S)	8 6:45 pm Governing Board (PH) 7 pm PEAC (EH)	9 6 pm Order of Service deadline	10	11 Leadership Retreat (OS)	12 Leadership Retreat (OS) 8 am Meditation (EH)
13 9 am Choir (S) 10 am Service (S) 11 am Coffee Hour (EH) 11:30 Cleaning 3 pm Sierra Club Film (EH) 8 pm Newsletter	14 6 pm Empire Review rehearsal (S) 6:30 pm Finance Committee (PH)	15 7 pm PEAC (EH) 7:15 pm House Committee (PH)	16 6 pm Order of Service deadline	17 7 pm Membership Committee (PH)	18 6:30 pm Movie Night (EH)	19 8 am Meditation (EH) 12 pm Marsh Clean Up (OS)
20 9 am Choir (S) 10 am Service (S) 11 am Coffee Hour (EH) 11:30 am Congregational Discussion	21 6 pm Empire Review rehearsal (S)	22 6:30 Peace and Social Justice Committee (PH) 7 pm PEAC (EH)	23 6 pm Order of Service deadline	24	25	26 10:30 am RISE tutoring (EH) 12:30 pm Peace and Social Justice Committee Retreat
27 9 am Newsletter Folding (EH) 9 am Choir (S) 10 am Service (S) 11 am Coffee Hour (EH) 11:30 am Religious Ed. comm. (RE) 11:30 pm Committee Fair (EH)	28 6 pm Empire Review rehearsal (S)	29 7 pm PEAC (EH)	30 6 pm Order of Service deadline			

MOVIE NIGHT IS BACK

The first Movie Night of the 2009-2010 church year will be on Friday, September 18 (a week later than usual because of the Leadership Retreat), at 6:30 PM in Eddy Hall. We will begin with our annual showing of a cult classic that always gets us off to a great start. The license that enables us to show copyrighted movies does not permit us to publicly announce the name of the film to be shown, but here's a hint – bring your water pistols, noisemakers, and toast (no rice please). We expect everyone to be up dancing the "time warp"! So bring some food or drink to share and

be there for the fun. All are welcome, so invite your friends.

Our plan is to broaden the scope of Movie Night to include all films with GLBTQ themes. If you would like to suggest a film for viewing and discussion, please let Carol Crowley or Brian Kovacs know.

~Carol Crowley and Brian Kovacs



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.”**

