



Volume 331 • Issue 7 • March 2010

CRAFTING OUR COVENANT

*By Chris Pitt,
Parish Committee*

One of the principal activities of our First Parish congregation this year has been a gradual examination of the meaning of covenant, and preparation for the process of updating our own Covenant. Both Parisa and our recently-departed intern Eric Dawson have delivered sermons on the subject of covenanting, the Parish Committee has made the process of renewing our covenant a central focal point of the year, and the congregation has participated in another round of listening circles to provide input to the drafters – all designed to establish a context to inform our discussion of this important practice of declaration in the life of a liberal free church.

Sixty members of the congregation participated in eight Listening Circles in January. The results of these circles were organized into a report by Melinda Collins. An open parish discussion of the results and report, and brainstorming of language for the covenant, was held on February 24. Following that evening session, a drafting committee was convened, consisting of Parish Committee members Diane Fallon Johnson and Chris Pitt and at-large congregation members Elaine Craghead,

Cynthia Guise and Scott McIsaac. This group is meeting frequently during late February and early March to craft a first draft for presentation to the congregation. By the Ides of March (March 15), a draft will be circulated to the congregation for discussion. During the latter half of March, the Parish Committee will host 2-3 open forums to allow members of the congregation to discuss the draft. In early April, the drafting committee will reconvene to incorporate the comments from the congregational forums, finalize a draft and report to the Parish Committee. If (hopefully) there is consensus, the Parish Committee will vote to include the final draft in the Warrant for formal adoption at the Annual Meeting on Sunday, May 16.

This is your process. The result will be your covenant, our covenant. We, collectively and individually, have the opportunity to put words to our gathering together, to our “congregation”, to declare why it is that we exist, how we define our relationships with each other, with the outside world, with the divine. We each have a role to play in this process, a responsibility to participate. Please make that role an active one. We all look forward to hearing from you.

*Chris can be reached at cspitt@comcast.net
or 617.333.4992*

*The Parish Committee can be reached at
parishcommittee@fpmilton.org*

Membership Committee

*By Mike LaFleur and
Susan Monack
Co-Chairs, Membership
Committee*

Your Membership Committee has been busy this past month, and March promises to be even more exciting.

As you know, one of our primary roles – and hopefully yours, too – is welcoming newcomers at church and helping them learn more about who we are as individuals and church members. We also take time to get to know newcomers and introduce them to others with whom they may make a connection. One way we work to fulfill our goal is by hosting “**Coffee with the Minister.**” We held our first one on Jan. 24 after church in Parisa’s office. It was a lively meeting, with lots of questions concerning everything from RE and OWL to, “What is UU all about?” We held a second Coffee on Feb. 7 with a smaller group, and will be continuing these in the months ahead.

Continued on page 5

REFLECTIONS FROM THE MINISTER

Parisa Parsa



As many of you know, the Persian New Year – Now Ruz – is celebrated on the spring equinox, on or around March 21. Many of you also know that this is an important holiday in my own heritage, and a time I find suits me better for doing the kind of reflection U.S. culture expects us to squeeze in during the rush of the winter holidays. This year, especially with an infant in the house, I've been thinking a lot about growth – both visible and invisible.

Six years ago this month, I was invited by your search committee to be the candidate to serve as your settled minister. I arrived with Enrique and Kian in tow – Kian just having begun to walk on his own, Enrique just finishing his doctoral course work. We flew from temperate and always-blooming Oakland, California to snow-covered ground, the earth apparently oblivious to the fact that the calendar said it was the first day of spring. Thus began my – our – journey into this community as we went through the tumultuous week-long interview of the candidating process.

When I think about how much growth has taken place in these six years, I am moved to tears. If I were to catalog just the ways my own mind

and heart and spirit have grown – wider, deeper, stronger – over this time it could be my full-time occupation for a good month. I know similar things have happened within many, if not most, of you and certainly among us. It's impossible to pinpoint exactly what happened to whom and when to cause the deepening and broadening of our church community. We can make no claims to perfection, but we can certainly feel proud of the journey we are on, and the devotion we have to continuing it.

Spiritual teacher Parker Palmer defines truth as “an eternal conversation about things that matter, conducted with passion and discipline.” If this is the case, then we have made the seeking after truth a centerpiece of our journey together, and we are the richer for it. We have sought truth together in all kinds of ways, formal and informal, and we now have two very solid disciplines for practicing deep listening with one another. One is our small group ministry, which weaves our community together by opening space for members to be known and seen more fully. The other is the practice of listening circles, which we have used several times now to lift up truths by responding to powerful questions.

Our deep deliberation about covenant – what it means and what ours is – is coming to a close in the next couple of months. The work will be continued in earnest this month as a small group of thoughtful, committed folks will work to craft a workable draft for the consideration of the community as a whole. Because this process has been undergirded by the practice of dialogue, of listening, of truth-seeking and truth-speaking, I have every confidence that we will emerge from this journey even stronger, richer in spirit, and more fully aware of who we are and what we are called to be in the world.

We are about to reach the moment of the equinox, that brief moment of balance between day and night before we move toward days of greater light. Because of the practices and devotion among us, this in particular will be a year in which the same is true for this community. We have been enlightening one another each step of the way, making space for holy mystery as well as practical fact to work among us. May we be guided ever forward, remembering to stop and enjoy each new blossom of awareness as it blooms. Happy 1389!

Parisa

ENERGY CONSERVATION SEMINAR

**Sponsored by the Buildings & Grounds Committee
Friday, March 27 @ 7-8:30pm in the Parish Hall**

Come hear the results of our recent blower-door and thermal imaging energy audit. We'll talk to experts about how we can take affordable steps toward conservation and savings in our church and in our homes.

Paul Eldercamp, President of Byggmeister, a Newton, MA construction firm specializing in green building and

remodeling will be on hand to lead the presentation, conversation and answer questions.

If you are interested in lowering your energy bills, reducing carbon emissions, or working toward carbon neutrality, this is a can't miss evening.

Childcare will be available.

MINISTER'S HOURS

Mondays off

Tuesdays 9am-5pm

Wednesdays 11am-5pm

Thursdays 9am-5pm

Fridays 9am-4pm
(usually writing from home)

Sundays 8am-4pm

SUNDAYS IN MARCH

March 7 Off the Hook

The Rev. Parisa Parsa

Most of us have long lists of grievances for which we know we ought to offer forgiveness. And we also have a list of things for which we wish we could be forgiven. Having explored confession last week, today we ask ourselves: What does it look like to accept forgiveness?

March 14 Membership Sunday! A Faith that is Becoming

The Rev. Parisa Parsa

We don't usually welcome new members with stories of conversion. People often find our churches and then say that they were one of us all along, but didn't know it. We don't offer a special route to heaven or unique access to the sacred for those who join our faith. But the process of identifying oneself with any faith tradition involves a commitment, a change of heart, that is important to note and in our case sometimes hard to name. We'll try to do it this morning as we welcome our newest members and honor the significant commitments of longtime members.

March 21 Justice Sunday

See Social Action article on page 4.

March 28 Palm Sunday Bread for the World

The Rev. Parisa Parsa & the First Parish youth group

Sharing food is one of the most essential human rituals, and the most significant. Reflecting on the power of Jesus' ministry, this morning we will reflect on the lasting legacy of table fellowship through seder and communion. We will break bread together in communion at the end of worship.

April 1 Tenebrae/Maundy Thursday

7-8pm in the Children's Church

In this simple service, we will share in communion and reflect on the contemporary unjust sufferings of our world that mirror the passion of Jesus. This is a contemplative service, held in candle light and ending in darkness. It is not recommended for those under 12.

April 2 Passover Seder *info on page 5.*

April 4 Easter Sunday iPresente!

An intergenerational celebration of the Christian story of resurrection and the ways we can take up its power in our lives.

Featuring original music by Joel Hiller, performed by First Parish members and the Meetinghouse Choir singing the "Halleluia Chorus" from Handel's *Messiah*.

CARING COMMITTEE

By Tasha Bello,
Caring Committee

On behalf of the Caring Committee, I want to thank everyone for your response to our recent and frequent requests for cooked meals. Our Caring Committee members, as well as many, many other unheralded First Parish cooks, have worked particularly hard over the past several weeks to provide warm and nurturing meals in times of joy, deep sadness, and, most recently, during post-hospital stays. I'm hearing that my meal requests often arrive in your inboxes and on your voice message machines at times when you are already very busy, and am aware that many of you have reluctantly had to admit that you are simply "running on empty". I also know that many of you are already involved in other food-related church activities—which is yet another testament to the satisfaction and comfort that so many of us are working to provide others at this time.

Please know that we've greatly appreciated your direct help when the time was right (and be aware that we are always looking for more chefs), but also that we appreciate the good wishes and caring thoughts coming our way from those of you who are discovering that your lives are, for now, just too full.

Tasha can be reached at
tashakistler@hotmail.com
or 781-961-5872

The Caring Committee can be
reached at caring@spmilton.org

CONTRA DANCE ~ Early American Folk Dancing

Saturday, March 20, 7 PM

Tunes by Three Cats and a Dog

Caller, Linda Leslie

Our Contra Dance will feature live music, a Caller who tells you everything you need to know, and best of all it's done with your best and newest friends of all ages!

Positive energy, live music, smiling faces and fun!

Suggested Dress: Light, loose fitting clothing, soft soled shoes

Suggested Donation \$10
Family Max: \$30

Questions, contact Mike Lafleur @ 617-512-9262

SOCIAL ACTION

The Social Action Committee invites you to join us in church on March 21 for Justice Sunday, an opportunity to lift up an important human rights issue, learn more about it, and be inspired to take action. This year we will consider the topic of **Advancing Economic Justice**. The service will provide opportunities to reflect on our commitment to each other and the wider community in our roles as consumers, employers, and workers. The service will be interactive and inspirational, challenging us to consider our place in the economy and our willingness to seek to change where injustice exists. We will offer meaningful advocacy actions, so together we can put our UU principles into action and move the world closer to justice.

In the evening of March 21, please join us at 6:30 pm for dinner as we watch

a segment of the PBS series "Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?" with Harvard's Michael Sandel and have a lively discussion of some of the philosophies which inform how we think about issues of economic justice. We will provide pizza and dessert. Please RSVP to the office so we can order enough food.

The Social Action Committee can be reached at socialaction@fpmilton.org



Advancing Economic Justice

FRIDAY FIM

First Parish to Show Drama About Economic Hardship

Raining Stones, a film to be screened at First Parish on Friday, March 5, is a 17-year-old film that is well designed for these tough economic times.

Focusing on working-class people, *Raining Stones* lays bare the desperation of the many who failed to benefit from the trickle-down economic theories of the day. It tells the story of Bob, a young man trying to navigate a depressed job market.

When the film opens, Bob and his friend are stealing a sheep from a meadow. Lacking the nerve to bludgeon the animal, they deliver it to a butcher only to learn that, because it is mutton and not lamb, it can't be sold. Even after failing as a drain cleaner and a bouncer at a disco, Bob still clings to

his dream: to buy an expensive First Communion dress for his daughter.

Directed by Ken Loach, *Raining Stones* rates a rare 100% grade on *Rotten Tomatoes*, a well-known web aggregator of film reviews. Loach's work, the site explains, is "characterized by a particular view of realism ... He tries to make sure that actors express as genuinely as possible the feelings of their characters by filming the story in order, and crucially, not giving the actors the script until a few minutes before the filming. Frequently in a scene, only some of the actors will know what is going to happen—the others will often be able to express genuine surprise shock or sadness because they really are hit with the events of the scene...in *Raining Stones* one of the actresses visited at her house by a loan shark had no idea that he was going to force her to take off her wedding ring and give it to him as part payment."

Showtime is at 7 pm. Babysitting is available upon request.

Jeff Stoodt is the Friday Film Coordinator and can be reached at 617.696.9774 or jslw@comcast.net

VIEW FROM THE PEW

By Shareen Alsebai
11 years old

Being a member of this UU church I have enjoyed many things. First of all, I've met so many new people and friends, they're all nice and friendly making church fun to come to every Sunday. Not only do I like making new friends but I love the RE classes and my teachers. I can always share my problems freely and no one will make fun of them. Everyone understands and makes me feel better instead.

Another thing our church does well is involve children of all ages, we have pageants every year and plays to participate in, we even have a church just for us where we held our 1st talent show. We also meet with other children every Sunday and worship together.

Lastly is the games, on Sundays the children participate in games helping them remember what was learned in a fun way. With a huge congregation and so many things to learn I hate missing church on Sunday.

Cafe Blue Hills

Our ever-popular Open Mike returns on March 13th @ 7:30

Take your turn under the lights.

You get 2 songs or 10 minutes (whichever comes first) Please sign up via e-mail at info@cafebluehills.org

Suggested donation is \$10

A surprise guest feature at 8:30

Proceeds will benefit the Milton Residents Fuel Assistance Fund

MEMBERSHIP...

Continued from page 1

The Parish Committee will be voting in new members on Feb 28, and just two weeks later, on March 14, we officially welcome our new members at **Membership Sunday**. This is a very uplifting day when we celebrate our long-time members and the growth of our community. The service itself is a moving one, and will be followed by a delicious luncheon in the Parish Hall. This is a wonderful time to connect with new and old friends. It's truly a joy to reach out and talk with people you might not know very well, and this is a perfect time to do just that!

March 7th we will be holding an **Information Session** for newcomers and those who wish to pursue membership. This session will inform you more about the Unitarian-Universalist faith and the history of First Parish. Conversations will allow you to reflect on your own spiritual journey and what brought you to this church.

There's an additional opportunity to connect on Saturday, March 20 from 7 to 10 pm, at our **Contra Dance**. Linda Leslie will be back as our caller and the band will be Three Cats and a Dog! This will be our fourth dance, and the 30 people at the last one had great fun – and exercise. Beginners are strongly encouraged!

We appreciate seeing more people wearing their nametags every week! It helps everybody so much, and is an important part of making more connections.

The Membership Committee can be reached through Jeannine Heynes at membership@fpmilton.org or 617.698.6329

NOTES from the ORGAN LOFT Emma Jean Moulton



*By Emma Jean Moulton,
UUA Credentialed Music Director*

Leslie Kittel, our Hunsaker soprano soloist, resigned as of the end of January. She has gone home to Colorado to care for her grandfather who is bereaved after the death of his wife. The grandmother raised Leslie into adolescence, and was a very dear "mother" to her. Natalie Polito will be stepping in as Hunsaker soprano soloist in time for Palm Sunday. More about her in the April newsletter!

The Meetinghouse Choir welcomes new member Andrea Lee. Andrea sings soprano and lives in Braintree.

Special thanks to soloists Miguel Rodriguez, Jeff Stoodt, Brooke Larimer and the Meetinghouse Choir for the absolutely beautiful love songs in the February 14 (Valentine's Day) service!

Community notice: The 24th annual Milton Young Musicians' Festival will be held this year on Saturday, May 8. Application forms are available at the desk in the reference room of the Milton Public Library or online at www.miltonyoungmusicians.org For information, contact Emma Jean Moulton, Artistic Director.

*Emma Jean can be reached at
617.698.6329 or emmadon@aol.com*

SAVE THE DATE!

Commemorate Good Friday with a Multigenerational Seder at First Parish!

First Parishioners of all ages are invited to attend our modern, interfaith Passover Seder on Friday, April 2nd from 6:30 pm-9:00 pm in the Parish Hall. The Seder is a big family meal (similar to Thanksgiving in size and importance) with a prescribed service which is read out of a book called a Haggadah. Our First Parish Seder Haggadah, is adapted from "Oranges and Olives" by Nancy Cronk and

- Uses simple language so all ages can participate,
- Assumes no previous knowledge of Judaism or Passover,
- Has the traditional "feel" and order of a Reform Seder, with a few unexpected "twists",

- Allows for a wide range of spiritual beliefs and observances,
- Encourages everyone to participate with ritual, story and song,
- Is respectful of non-traditional family structures and adoption issues.

The service itself will take about an hour. Come with your family, or by yourself, but please come!

Childcare will be provided for babies and toddlers. Note: it may be helpful to know that Seders have a clear-cut beginning and end, so it is very important to be on time. Unlike other meals, the Seder does not begin until all of the expected guests have arrived.

**RSVP to Jeannine Heynes:
reassistant@fpmilton.org.**

If you have any questions,

*Robin Barraza can be contacted at
617.698.6329 or dre@fpmilton.org*

Alyson Allen can be reached at alyson.allen@ropesgray.com or 617.696.0383

EVERY SUNDAY

- 8:45 am –Meetinghouse Choir Rehearsal
- 9:00 am –Silent Prayer & Meditation: Children’s Church
- 10:30 am –Worship
- 11:30 am -Social Hour in the Parish Hall
- 11:45 am -Children’s Choir Rehearsal: Children’s Church

SPECIAL EVENTS

FRIDAY FILM

Friday, 3/5 @ 7pm in the Parish Hall

FIRST PARISH INFO SESSION

Saturday, 3/7 @ 12pm in the Parlor

CAFE BLUE HILLS

Saturday, 3/13 @ 7:30pm in the Parish Hall

OSTARA

Friday, 3/19 @ 7pm in the Parish Hall

CONTRA DANCE

Saturday, 3/20 @ 7pm in the Parish Hall

ENERGY CONSERVATION SEMINAR

Friday, 3/26 @ 7pm in the Parish Hall

SAVE THE DATE

TENEBRAE

Thursday, 4/1 @ 7:00 in the Children’s Church

SEDER

Friday, 4/2 @ 6:30 in the Parish Hall

SUNDAY

7

10:30 am, Children’s Church, Children’s Church

Noon, First Parish Information Session, Chase Parlor

11:45, Music Committee, Library

14

MEMBERSHIP SUNDAY

9:00 am, Buildings & Grounds Meeting, Library

12:00 noon, Religious Education Committee, Library

21

6:30 pm, Justice Sunday Film, Parish Hall

28

PALM SUNDAY

12:15 pm, Parish Committee, Chase Parlor

Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

1 7:15 pm, <u>Yoga, Parish Hall</u>	2 6:30 pm, <u>JR OWL, Youth Room</u>	3 7:00 pm, <u>YAC, Youth Room</u>	4 6:30 pm, <u>SR OWL, Youth Room</u> 7:00 pm, <u>Membership, Library</u>	5 7:00, <u>Friday Film, Parish Hall</u>	6
8 7:00 pm, <u>Social Action, Library</u> 7:15 pm, <u>Yoga, Parish Hall</u>	9 6:30 pm, <u>JR OWL, Youth Room</u>	10	11 6:30 pm, <u>SR OWL, Youth Room</u>	12	13 7:30pm, <u>Cafe Blue Hills, Parish Hall</u>
15 7:15 pm, <u>Yoga, Parish Hall</u>	16 6:30 pm, <u>JR OWL, Youth Room</u>	17	18 7:00 pm, <u>Caring Committee, Library</u> 7:30 pm, <u>Worship Committee, Activity Room</u>	19 7:00 pm, <u>Ostara, Parish Hall</u>	20 7:00 pm, <u>Contra Dance, Parish Hall</u>
22 7:15 pm, <u>Yoga, Parish Hall</u>	23 6:30 pm, <u>JR OWL, Youth Room</u>	24	25 6:30 pm, <u>SR OWL, Youth Room</u>	26 7:00 pm, <u>Energy Conservation Seminar, Parish Hall</u>	27
29	30				



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From The Planner

U = Usher
C = Chalice Lighter
F = Flowers
H = Host Team
A = Announcements

AT BAT

March 7

C: Rowan & Sadie Leggett
F: Pam Dorsey
U: Ruth Hannon & Charlie Franich
H: Susan Monack, JB & Dana Clancy
A: Melinda Collins

March 14

C: TBA
F: TBA
U: Jennifer Erbe-Leggett & David Leggett
H: Tracey Robinson, Marsha Maurer, Ruth Heiden
A: TBA

March 21

C: TBA
F: Cousineau Family
U: Allison Zippay, Patricia Gill
H: Laurie & Tat McCorry, Brian & Marianne Cummings
A: Jim May

March 28

C: TBA
F: Emma Jean & Donald Moulton
U: Donna Malliaros & Janet Ferone
H: Joe & Christa Ayoub, Claudia Wellington & Bill Flynn
A: Mike Grant

ON DECK

April 4

EASTER

C: TBA
F: Tim Fitzgerald
U: Tim Fitzgerald & TBA (Need 3)
A: Christa Ayoub

April 11

UNION SUNDAY

H: Ann White, Ann Hallett, Karin Mylod, Chris Mylod

April 18

C: TBA
F: Ann White
U: Jim May & Michael Chinman
H: Lisa White, Enrique Silva, Jeff Stoodt
A: Chris Pitt

April 25

C: TBA
F: Paul Levinson
U: Tom Kemp & Judith Darrell Kemp
H: Cynthia Guise, Beth Nohmy, Betsy & Michael Mulvey
A: Matthew Najarian