



# The Clapboardtree Spire

News From First Parish of Westwood, United Church  
340 Clapboardtree St., Westwood, MA 02090

## JANUARY, 2009

### Special Music: Amahl and the Night Visitors

During worship on Sunday, January 11<sup>th</sup>, First Parish will present the Epiphany-themed opera "Amahl and the Night Visitors", featuring the senior and junior choirs and guest musicians. Worship will be intergenerational, with an optional pre-school through grade 2 class for those church school children who do not wish to remain in worship for the entire service. Mark your calendars and bring the whole family – it will be a wonderful experience!

#### About the Composer:

You may remember this opera when it first appeared on TV (depending on your age, of course!). This short, one-act opera was commissioned for NBC TV in the early fifties. Gian Carlo Menotti was having a case of writer's block when he ran across this story of the three wise men on their way to worship the newborn king. In a burst of creativity, Menotti started composing on Thanksgiving Day – and it aired, live, on NBC on Christmas Day!

#### About the Story:

Although this story is often told around Christmas, we decided Epiphany was a more appropriate time. Amahl is a shep-

herd boy with a vivid imagination and a penchant for telling tall tales. You can imagine how Amahl's mother reacts to stories of a great star sweeping across the sky – or, even better, three kings knocking at their door in the middle of the night! This story of a "pit stop" on the way to the manger in Bethlehem carries a powerful message of faith and charity. Amahl and his mother, so poor that they may have to begin begging, find a way to offer a gift more valuable than gold, frankincense, or myrrh.

#### About the Performers:

Just as Amahl and the shepherds are visited by mysterious strangers from afar, so we at First Parish will welcome three guest soloists to sing the roles of the three kings. We will also have a guest pianist, filling in for Karen Westerfield Tucker who is recovering from shoulder surgery. The rest of the characters, including Amahl, his mother, the page, the shepherds and shepherdesses, will be sung by members of the choirs.

We hope you will join us on Jan. 11<sup>th</sup> for this unusual and special worship service!

### Annual Meeting Slated for Jan 25<sup>th</sup>

First Parish's Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday, January 25<sup>th</sup> in the Meeting-house immediately following the morning worship service. In the past, holding this important meeting early in the day has made it possible for more members of the congregation to attend, and we hope this will be true again this year.

Mark your calendars and plan to attend the meeting. Copies of the 2008 Annual Report will be available in the Meeting-house narthex on Sunday, Jan. 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Ministry Chairpersons and committee leaders are reminded that individual annual reports are needed in the church office no later than Sunday, Jan. 11<sup>th</sup>.**

### First Parish Ski Trip

The Senior High Youth Fellowship is organizing a ski trip for Jan. 30-Feb. 1st and has decided to open participation up to other members of the congregation.

If you would like to go on the trip, please contact Steve Hurley at [stphurley@comcast.net](mailto:stphurley@comcast.net).



### Birthdays

January 2	Isaiah Ritchey
January 3	Matthew Anderson Jack McCorkell Donna Schock
January 4	Matthew Hichar, Sophia Tempesta
January 5	Samuel Jacobson, Steven Larch Shelley Reeve, Karen Wagner
January 7	Alexander Adourian, Katie Holbrook
January 8	Shelby McKim
January 9	Jake Liebrock, Kelly Porter Megan Porter, Megan Rees
January 11	MaryAnn Archambo
January 13	Alex Archambo, Jim Ritchey
January 14	Kristin McDonough
January 15	Emily Werth
January 17	Brian Bayer, Ava Connaughton
January 19	Emily Christian, Gladys Dunsford Emily Wright
January 20	Jason Atkins
January 21	Bradford Rutan, Billy Storey
January 22	Katherine Millos
January 23	Elvin Fowell, Will Vaccaro
January 24	James Christian
January 25	Wyatt Ritchey, Stephen Werth Rebecca Whalen
January 26	Jacey Anderson
January 27	Drew Pfaff
January 28	Alexandra Brind
January 30	Michael Peterson
January 31	Matt McClellan

### Anniversaries

January 20	Charlie & Louise Domina
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## Lifetimes

### Pastoral Change:

- *Rev. David Stryker* concluded his 2 ½ year Interim Ministry at First Parish on Dec. 31<sup>st</sup>.
- *Rev. Christopher L. Dodge* began his ministry as First Parish's pastor on January 1, 2009.

### Deaths:

- On Nov. 28<sup>th</sup>, *Lola Miller*. A memorial service was held in Auburndale on Dec. 20<sup>th</sup>.
- On Dec. 21<sup>st</sup>, *Kitty Reiland*. A memorial service will be held at First Parish on Saturday, Jan. 10<sup>th</sup> at 11AM, followed by a reception in the Parish Hall.

## The Clapboardtree Spire

The Clapboardtree Spire is published monthly, September - June by and for The First Parish of Westwood, United Church. Material should be submitted to the church office by the third Friday of the prior month. Available monthly at [www.firstparishwestwood.org](http://www.firstparishwestwood.org), via email, and through the mail (by request only).

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## From Our Pastor



As this year ends and a new one begins, it is a time in which we are reminded to think about getting our new calendars for 2009. Maybe you wait for that “free one” that comes through the mail or the one you know you will get as a Christmas gift, or maybe you go to a store on a quest for your perfect calendar. (I am partial to calendars with Golden Retrievers.) These calendars, whatever the picture, shape or size, will help us to map out a year of appointments, holidays, birthdays, holy days, vacations, meetings, school events, kid’s games, etc.

As you embark on filling your calendar, consider this prayer from Walter Bruggeman:

Our times are in your hands:  
But we count our times for us;  
we count our days and fill them with us;  
we count our weeks and fill them with our busy-  
ness;  
we count our years and fill them with our fears.  
And then caught up short with your claim,  
Our times are in your hands!  
Take our times, times of love and times of wea-  
riness,  
Take them all, bless them and break them,  
give them to us again,  
slowed placed and eager,  
fixed in your readiness for neighbor.  
Occupy our calendars...

If we haven’t already, we will all probably catch ourselves saying, “I can’t believe another year has gone by”. With 2009 soon upon us, what will we make of our experiences in 2008? What kind of year was it for you? What kind of year was it for the church? What kind of year was it for our nation? What kind of year was it for the world? The answers will no doubt cover the whole spectrum from good to bad.

Whether it is in the realm of our world, our nation, our church or our own lives, how do we relate to the confession in Bruggeman’s prayer? Are our days filled with us; our weeks filled with our busyness; our years filled with our fears?

In this year ahead of us, may we be better at filling in our calendars - filling our days, weeks and year with God, with faithfulness and with hope. Let us truly invite God to take all our times and focus them for us on our building a better relationship with God and with neighbors. Let us live inviting God to occupy our calendars.

Blessed New Year!

*Pastor Chris*

### A Goodbye Message From Rev. Stryker

*I would like to thank everyone for the past 2 ½ years of ministering to you as Interim Pastor. You have been a gift to me, this church community and, through your outreach efforts, to those beyond the walls of First Parish.*

*God bless you and yours during this next transition time at First Parish. As they say in Calgary (circa the Calgary Stampede) – “Happy trails to you!”*

*Peace,  
David*

## Unsung Heroes

This month's Unsung Heroes are **Jim Aldinger** and **Sheldon Blaney**, two of our most cherished "go-to guys" without whom we would be lost.

Famous for always volunteering to help out, no matter what the task, Jim Aldinger gave up *all* of his Advent Sundays to act as chief photographer for our new Photo Directory (when it became clear that yours truly was having difficulty figuring out which button to push to make the camera work!); he was first in line to take on extra duties when the Dec. 28<sup>th</sup> reception for Rev. Stryker fell unexpectedly short of manpower; and he uncomplainingly stands outside in the freezing cold for *hours* each fall to supervise the White Elephant portion of Ye Olde Meeting-

house Fair. *And*, his technical expertise and calm demeanor have won him the dubious distinction of being our "technical guy", responsible for untangling all our offices' endless computer problems. His patience, kindness, and expertise have made him a hero indeed! The next time you see him somewhere on the church grounds when no one else is around, it's because he's there to help yet again. Thank him! He is definitely one of the heroes who make First Parish the great place it is.

Sheldon Blaney is dear to our hearts for many of the same reasons. Have you ever wondered why the chandelier in the church looks so beautiful on Christmas Eve? It's because Sheldon volunteers several

hours of his time every year to lower the chandelier, thoroughly clean it, and replace the worn out bulbs so it positively glows for Christmas Eve. Sheldon is also the first one we call whenever we need a really tall ladder climbed (firemen are so much braver than the rest of us!) or a heavy item lugged around (did you ever wonder how that huge Christmas tree in the Parish Hall gets in and out of the attic each year? Sheldon!) He is forever noticing things that need to be done around our grounds and quietly taking care of them, *and* is really generous with his truck - all of which certainly qualifies him for hero status around here So, the next time you run into Sheldon, thank him for all he does for your church!

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## Thank You Sheep Volunteers

Many, many thanks to all the wonderful volunteers who helped care for the sheep in the weeks preceding Christmas- and to Denis Wholey, Steve Hurley, Stuart Maynard and SHYF! Your time and loving care this season, through the good weather and the bad was invaluable. Thanks also to Joe Major and his Walpole 4-H group for their generosity again this year.

This year's volunteers are: *The Adourians, the Beans, the Blomquists, the Brinds, the Cannons, the Creesy/Doherty family, the Deiningers, the Dominas, the Ellis family, the Friedeborns, the Gaydos/Beaulieu family, the Genests, the Gettings/Lundgren family, the Holbrooks, the Linde/Marten family, the McMurrays, the Ostranders, the Ritcheys, the Robinsons, and the Sullivans.*

We hope you enjoyed your experience this year (we know the sheep did!) - and look forward to working with you again next winter!

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## Thank You, Gift Donors

Heartfelt thanks to all who bought gifts, wrapped, and/or contributed money this holiday season for the purchase of gifts and essential household items for our Christmas Outreach Families. Special thanks to Michael Gettings for coordinating this big project!

This is the 13<sup>th</sup> year that First Parish has shared Christmas joy with families struggling to survive the economic and physical demands of caring for a disabled child.

Thanks to you, several families in Norfolk County and children at the Massachusetts Hospital School wore bright smiles on Christmas Day! What you do really matters!

## Church School Update



### Sunday, Jan. 4:

- 10AM: Intergenerational Communion Worship (optional pre-school through grade 2 class)
- Rev. Chris Dodge's first Sunday as pastor!

### Sunday, Jan. 11:

- 10AM: Intergenerational Special Music Sunday: "Amahl & the Night Visitors" (optional pre-school through grade 2 class).

### Sunday, Jan. 18:

- 10AM worship & church school

### Sunday, Jan. 25:

- 10AM worship & church school
- 11AM Annual Meeting in the Meetinghouse

## 2009 Church School Calendar

January 4	Intergenerational worship / class for Preschool - grade 2 only
11	Special Music Sunday: intergenerational/class for Preschool-Gr. 2 only.
February 1	Intergenerational worship / No church school
15	K-8 Group Adventure
March 1	Intergenerational worship / No church school
April 5	Palm Sunday / class for Preschool - grade 2 only
12	EASTER / Intergenerational worship / no church school
19	K-8 Group Adventure
May 3	Mini-Walk for Hunger / during class time
24	K-8 Group Adventure
June 7	Intergenerational worship / no church school
14	rehearsal for June 21 service / during class time
21	Church School Sunday / Intergenerational / Children lead worship



**From Our  
Faith  
Community  
Nurse**

As we start the New Year with a new minister, I wanted to share with you the following ten points about healthy leadership that were shared with me by a fellow officer of the Health Ministry Association. I write this not only as the “church nurse” but also from my experience on the Search Committee. We are all spiritual leaders within First Parish, whatever our capacity and we need to share these gifts with Reverend Dodge in order for him to be a healthy leader. We are at a wonder-filled time at First Parish and as 2009 progresses; I pray that we will all become healthier leaders.

**Ten Things We Need to Know about Healthy Leadership**

By Michael Jinkins

We often assume leadership to be a positive trait, but in fact, it can be good or bad, constructive or destructive. Or, as I believe, healthy or unhealthy.

How do we distinguish healthy from unhealthy leadership?

I believe there are 10 characteristics of healthy leaders:

**1. They lead from spiritual and emotional health.**

Healthy leaders are spiritually and emotionally whole, rooted and grounded in relationship with God. They lead from a wholeness that is expressed in Micah 6:8: “What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?”

They are both reverent toward God and respectful of others. This means they are willing to listen, are open to criticism and desire more to help people succeed than to punish them when they fail.

**2. They are dedicated to the health of others.**

Saints of old were pictured with halos above their heads because they exuded a palpable sense of spiritual and emotional health. Such healthiness is contagious; leaders spread health among the people and the organizations they serve.

But just as a physician sometimes prescribes uncomfortable treatments to help a patient, so, too, must leaders act for the organization’s long-term well-being, even if it means incurring others’ disfavor.

**3. They represent the character and mission of their organization, but are also capable of objectivity.**

An organization’s leaders reflect its values, hopes, and beliefs, but also the ambivalence, conflicts, limitations and struggles within its soul.

Leaders are both priests and prophets. They not only value tradition, but also imagine a larger future. The healthy leader gathers the hopes and dreams of a people and articulates them as a viable and achievable plan.

**4. They understand the organization as a social system.**

Rabbi Edwin Friedman, a key figure in the application of family systems theory to congregational leadership, compared the relationship between an organization and its leader to that of a client and therapist. Both clients and organizations say to their therapist/leader, “We want you to help us get healthier, to grow and move forward, and we will resist you at every stage.”

Leaders must understand the therapeutic nature of leadership and their role in relation to the group. The leader must be able, graciously and tenaciously, to engage resistance and even sabotage, listening and responding to concerns, but clearly defining the organization’s direction. Healthy leader-

*(Continued on page 7)*

ship does not allow the organization's sickest and weakest members to hold it hostage.

#### **5. They provide a calming presence and emotionally well-differentiated leadership.**

Many people today use anxiety in order to motivate and manipulate others to do what they want. Anxiety may get people to fall into line from fear, but it shuts down people's ability to think constructively and creatively. When it comes to the qualities necessary for healthy leadership, courage is a much better foundation to build on than anxiety.

Courage *en-courages*. Courage begets courage. The courage of leaders makes it possible for others in an organization to take risks, try new things and think in new ways.

#### **6. They plan.**

Good leaders ask, "What are we trying to accomplish? Does that fit our mission? What are the necessary steps to move this organization from here to our goal? Who is responsible for what? How will we know we have accomplished what we set out to do? What are the hallmarks of success, and how will we know where we have failed?"

But planning is about more than simply the blueprint that is created. In fact, good planning is a continuous process, rolling on and on, adjusting to new realities, and changing course when necessary.

#### **7. They embrace the wisdom of deliberation.**

Our society loves the myth of the lone leader who has all the answers. But we are coming to appreciate the wisdom of what author James Surowiecki has called "the wisdom of crowds." Under the right circumstances, with sufficient diversity and independence of thought, groups consistently make better decisions than the most knowledgeable members of the group.

Healthy leaders support and strengthen the processes of deliberative decision-making. Unhealthy leaders undercut these processes by keeping secrets and behind-the-scenes manipulation of decision-making, whether through deals or threats.

#### **8. They are never too old to learn.**

In a study of professional wildfire fighters, Karl Weick, a professor of organizational behavior and psychology at the University of Michigan, found that most casualties occur among firefighters with only a year or two experience and those who had been fighting fires for more than 15 years. The novices, obviously, had not learned enough, but the death of veterans was more surprising. They tend to die in fires because they think they've seen it all, they think that fire has nothing new to teach them.

This is a crucial insight for leaders. It's important to remember that we're never too old – or too experienced – to learn. The fires of organizational leadership always have new things to teach us.

#### **9. They know what to pay attention to.**

Good leaders develop an intuition of knowing what to pay attention to, and what to leave to others. Scott Cormode, a principal at the Max De Pree Center for Leadership at Fuller Seminary, has observed that both beginning drivers and fledgling leaders make mistakes because they are paying attention to too many things.

#### **10. They enlist followers in change.**

There is a significant difference between purposeful, strategic change and mere movement. Healthy leaders use their influence and power to make sure their organization makes necessary and effective changes.

According to Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard, noted researchers and writers on leadership,

leaders should help the members of their organization know and understand the particular situation that is calling for change. Such knowledge can lead to a change in attitude among the group. The members of the organization will see that their own individual behavior needs to change to reflect their new understanding, and this will lead to changes in the group's behavior.

The leader, however, must be open and willing to allow the process to belong to the organization, which means the end result may not be precisely what he or she imagined.

### **A Closing Reflection**

Leadership is a remarkable calling, a demanding but rewarding vocation. As Frederick Buechner, a Presbyterian minister and novelist, has written, "The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."

May your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet in those places where you lead.

Michael Jenkins, Ph.D., is academic dean and professor of pastoral theology at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. The article is adapted from the "Need To Know" audio series produced by the College of Pastoral Leaders, an SPE project at the seminary. For more, read the [complete remarks](#) or order a [CD or MP3](#).

Have a Happy Healthy New Year!

Faithfully,  
*Margery Eramo*, RN, CHM, Faith Community Nurse

## **FIRST PARISH FELLOWSHIP**

### **Fox Hill Bible Study**

The first Fox Hill Bible Study meeting of Rev. Chris Dodge's ministry at First Parish will be on Thursday, January 15<sup>th</sup>, at 10:30 AM. All Fox Hill residents are invited to participate.

If you do not live at Fox Hill and would like to attend the meeting, please contact Rev. Dodge at 781-326-0135 for details.

### **Retired Men's Club**

The Retired Men's Club will meet on Thursday January 15<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 AM in the Parish Hall. The meeting will begin with a coffee & donut fellowship, followed by Guest Speaker T. P. Eliot Smith's annual lecture.

All meetings are held in the Parish hall at First Parish on the third Thursday of each month, from 9:30-11:30 am, unless otherwise noted in the schedule. All retired men in Westwood and surrounding communities are welcome to attend.

### **Senior Moments Fellowship**

The Senior Moments Fellowship Group will meet on Thursday, January 8<sup>th</sup> at 11:30 AM in the Parish Hall. All seniors are invited to bring a bag lunch – coffee and dessert are provided.

This is a great opportunity to gather together, just because it's fun! The group meets on the first Thursday of every month in the Parish Hall, unless otherwise noted. If you did not receive a postcard with the yearly schedule, please contact the church office and one will be mailed to you.

## Rosie's Place Volunteers

Monday, January 19, 2009

**NOTE:** Please make **ham & cheese on wheat bread**, with no condiments. Do not wrap individually.

### Drivers:

B. Jorgensen & T. Bruno

### Fruit (canned fruit cocktail; maximum \$5):

B. Jorgensen T. Bruno R. Dettbarn  
D. Lassen S. Dobra B. Macdonald

### Sandwiches (12-14 HAM & CHEESE ON WHEAT)

R. Dettbarn D. Lassen T. Bruno  
S. DeFeo B. Jorgensen S. Reeve  
J. Marsh C. Robinson P. Sullivan

# VOLUNTEERS AT FIRST PARISH

## Altar Flowers

### Sunday, Jan. 4:

Given by all the children of Clapboardtree Nursery School in appreciation of our wonderful facilities.

### Sunday, Jan. 11:

Given through the Endowed Memorial Flower Fund by the Dorey Family, in memory of Pearl & William Klingenberg.

### Sunday, Jan. 18:

Given by Jim & Betsy Dakin, in memory of loved ones.

### Sunday, Jan. 25:

Given by Louise Donovan & Family, in memory of Robin Asselstine

## Usher Schedule

### Sunday, Jan. 4:

Dave Blomquist (C)  
Chris Pfaff  
Dan & Karen Wagner  
Bonnie Blomquist

### Sunday, Jan. 18:

Fred Rice (C)  
Charlie Domina  
Peter Kane  
Nancy Hyde

### Sunday, Jan. 11:

Martha Crawford (C)  
Ron Arntz  
Stuart & Carol Maynard

### Sunday, Jan. 25:

Doug Hyde (C)  
Jerry Verzino  
Mike Gettings

## FIRST PARISH HOSPITALITY

### Coffee Volunteers

#### Sunday, Jan. 4:

Margaret Carr

#### Sunday, Jan. 11:

Donna Bertazzoni and Judy Holbrook

#### Sunday, Jan. 18:

The Underhills

#### Sunday, Jan. 25:

The Hurleys

### Worship Greeters

#### Sunday, Jan. 4:

?????????

#### Sunday, Jan. 11:

Jim McKenzie

#### Sunday, Jan. 18:

?????????

#### Sunday, Jan. 25:

?????????