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From the Senior Minister

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Dear Friends,

David Hempton, the historian of religion, says, “Overall, I still think the mainline denominations are in for a lot of trouble unless they can add a compelling spiritual vision to their commendable espousal of just causes.”

According to The Association of Religion Data Archives membership in the UCC declined 39% between 1969 and 2006, or 57% if you correct for population growth. According to the Metropolitan Boston Association Area Minister the current average age of UCC members in the U.S. is 63. These numbers paint a disturbing picture of our churches in the last four decades. But what about Hempton’s diagnosis, that the lack of a compelling spiritual vision is at fault and forebodes a worrisome future?

He’s right, I think. At the end of the day, people involve themselves in church if it helps them grapple with spiritual issues, or said another way, with the intuition that most of us have that there’s more to life than meets the eye. To be compelling the church must

be the place where God is bigger than we can imagine, where the scriptures are richer than we can describe, where our worship reaches beyond what we can touch, and where our lives are transformed beyond what we can imagine. The purpose of God’s church must be to make us a new thing altogether.

I’ve been giving a lot of thinking to ways in which we might better engage our spiritual vision. It’s not that we don’t already do this, and pretty well at that. But I cannot help but think about, what would make things even better? And I would love your help. Let me know your ideas! How can we bring even more spiritual depth and vision to our life together?

Here are a few things already in the hopper. The Council voted to underwrite two experimental evening worship services called Worship with a Twist. These services will feature different forms of music and will emphasize exploring one’s spiritual path. We aim to make the services fun and inviting. Please plan to come and be sure to invite your friends. The first

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WOMEN’S COMMUNION SERVICE

MOTHER’S DAY, 9:00 ~ BREAKFAST, 9:45

Upcoming Events

May 10						
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30	31					

May

1 Saturday

10:00 AM Craft Making

2 Sunday

9:30 Choir Rehearsal
11:00 Worship - Rev. O'Brien
Carvelli Coffee Group

5 Wednesday

10:00 AM Knitwits (Knit and Crochet for the Homeless)
Cinco de Mayo

8 Saturday

10:00 AM Craft Making

9 Sunday

Mother's Day
9:00 Women's Communion
9:45 Breakfast for the Women
Sandwiches for Outdoor Church
11:00 Worship - Rev. Rose
Beyerman/Bodwell/McKeown Coffee Group

12 Wednesday

10:00 AM Knitwits (Knit and Crochet for the Homeless)

15 Saturday

10:00 AM Craft Making
Armed Forces Day
Pizza and Movie Night. Pizza at 6:00; Movie at 6:30

16 Sunday

9:30 Choir Rehearsal
Annual Meeting, 10:00
11:00 Worship - Rev. Rose
Ramsay/Parsons/Weinstein/Kelley Coffee Group

17 Monday

Newsletter Deadline

19 Wednesday

10:00 AM Knitwits (Knit and Crochet for the Homeless)
7:00 PM Worship with a Twist

20 Thursday

7:00 PM Trustees
7:30 PM Executive Council

22 Saturday

10:00 AM Craft Making

23 Sunday

9:30 Choir Rehearsal
11:00 Worship - Rev. Rose
Creativity Sunday
Addison Coffee Group
Pot-luck

June 10						
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July 10						
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August 10						
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31						

May

26 Wednesday

10:00 AM Knitwits (Knit and Crochet for the Homeless)

29 Saturday

10:00 AM Craft Making

30 Sunday

9:30 Choir Rehearsal
11:00 Worship - Rev. O'Brien

31 Monday

Memorial Day (Observed)

June

2 Wednesday

10:00 AM Knitwits (Knit and Crochet for the Homeless)

5 Saturday

10:00 AM Craft Making

6 Sunday

9:30 Choir Rehearsal
11:00 Worship - Rev. Rose
Carvelli Coffee Group

9 Wednesday

10:00 AM Knitwits (Knit and Crochet for the Homeless)
7:00 PM Worship with a Twist

12 Saturday

10:00 AM Craft Making

13 Sunday

9:30 Choir Rehearsal
Sandwiches for Outdoor Church
11:00 Worship - Rev. O'Brien
Beyerman/Bodwell/McKeown Coffee Group

14 Monday

Flag Day

16 Wednesday

10:00 AM Knitwits (Knit and Crochet for the Homeless)

17 Thursday

7:00 PM Trustees
7:30 PM Executive Council

19 Saturday

10:00 AM Craft Making
Pizza and Movie Night. Pizza at 6:00; Movie at 6:30

20 Sunday

Children's Sunday & Picnic
9:30 Choir Rehearsal
11:00 Worship - Rev. Rose
Father's Day

November 10						
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January 11						
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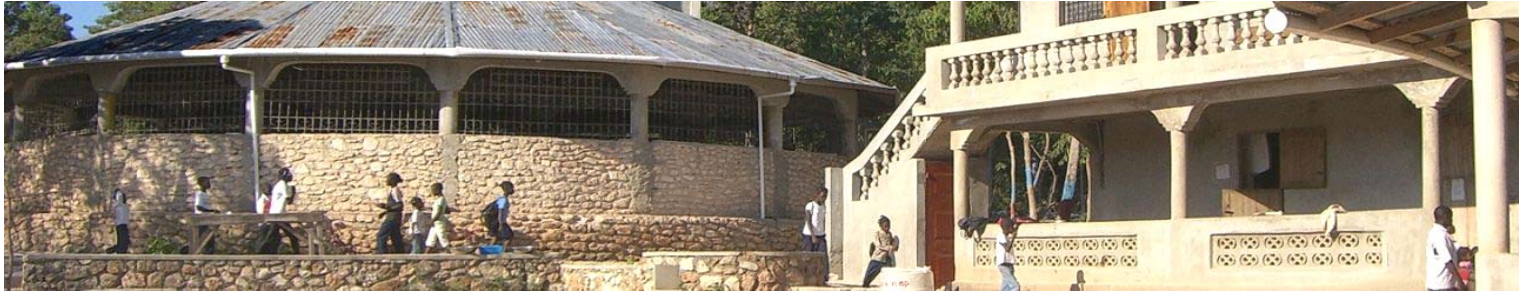
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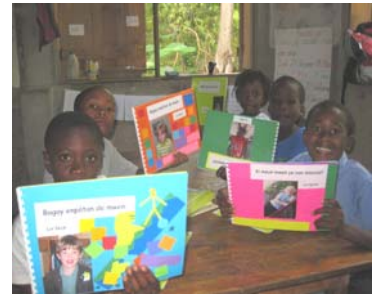
April 11						
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Matènwa Community Learning Center, Haiti

On Sunday, April 5, our church was invited to attend a potluck luncheon at the Clarendon Hill Presbyterian Church. After the luncheon there was a talk by volunteers recently returned from Haiti. With the use of slides, they told us about the Matenwa Community Learning Center located on an island 45 miles off the coast of Haiti. It is a rural community with no electricity or running water.



The mission of the Center is to provide a learning environment supported by the community and contributing to the life of the community. At the school, children learn basic skills plus research tools, critical thinking, problem solving, and democratic principles, such as respect for the rights of others. Creole is the mother-tongue in most of Haiti, but schoolchildren throughout are taught in French. In Matenwa, the children are taught in Creole, which makes the education more accessible but adds the challenge of few textbooks available in that language. The children write books about themselves in Creole.



There is a strong emphasis on self-sufficiency. Children help in the gardens providing locally grown food, which in turn feeds members of the community beyond the students. They are learning about ecology and how to protect the island environment with re-forestation. There is a women's group to promote safety for women, and an Art Center where women produce silk scarves and jewelry. The images for the scarves come from Haitian history, mythology and nature. Income from this artisans' collective provides much-needed cash income for families. Additional proceeds are reinvested to purchase supplies, stimulating the local economy. Women now see themselves as artists capable of making a contribution to their families and to the community.

Although the devastating earthquake affected the mainland more severely, many houses on the island of Lagonav had structural damage as a result. There is also a shortage of food due to the disruption of commerce and an influx of people from the mainland fleeing the conditions there. For more information about this vibrant community, see <http://matenwaclc.org/>. and to see some of the artisanal crafts, see <http://www.artmatenwa.org/artworks.html>.

Annual Meeting, Sunday May 16 at 10:00am

The annual meeting of North Prospect Union UCC will be held May 16, 2010, downstairs at 10:00. Coffee, juice and baked goods (volunteers, please) will be available.

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Worship with a Twist will be a Jazz service on Wednesday May 19 at 7:00 P.M. with Neil Helme on the bass and John Read on piano. John is Director of Music at The Congregational Church of Mansfield, and Neil is bassist with the trio at the Hope Central Church in Jamaica Plain. The second service will be on Wednesday June 9, and the music will be more meditative, with John Read and Elke Jahns, who plays classical and Native American flute. Incidentally, thinking of worship a little differently, we will hold the second Blessing of the Animals service on Saturday, June 26, at 1:30 in the afternoon.



The other idea is an on-line Bible study. It has become increasingly clear to me that many people in the church find it difficult to attend at-church study groups. Conflicts and over-scheduled lives are at least part of the problem. I have set up a section on the church website forum <http://www.northprospectchurch.org/community/forum/> to give it a try. Maybe we can start by working our way through one of the books of the Bible. Let me know if you have a book you would prefer to study. Once we decide on the book, I'll work out a schedule for reading, provide some suggested resources, and prime the pump with some questions or observations. The idea is that everyone can post questions, observations, ideas, etc. Just one note, you will need to register on the church website <http://www.northprospectchurch.org/> and then be logged in to post to the forum.

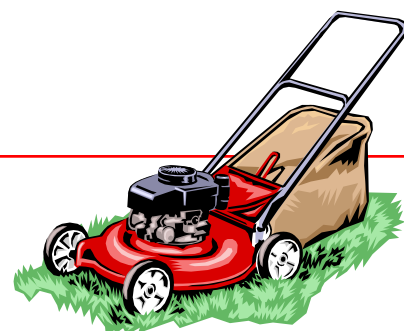
There are a number of online Bible Study resources on line, and I have put links to several of them on the Bible Study page of website <http://www.northprospectchurch.org/bible-mission-ministry/bible-study/> . You may also find it helpful to pick up a nice little book called How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth (the word its without the apostrophe is a play on words, not a mistake). It and other printed resources are available through Amazon at the church web-store: <http://astore.amazon.com/northprospecunit> .

I hope some of you will find these ideas interesting, but I really want to hear from you. From your perspective, what could we do or offer that would add to our spiritual depth and vision? You may speak to me about it, or we could even start an on-line conversation in the General section of the Forum. I look forward to hearing from you.

Blessings,

Dudley

It's time for lawn-mowing! The mower is tuned up and ready to go. The church saved a significant amount of money last year because volunteers did the yard work. Sign up on-line or at the church.



Council and Trustees Notes 4/14/10

- Locks for the backyard have been changed. Now available on a ring in Barbara's desk.
- Some modifications have been made to the front porch ceiling in an attempt to deter the sparrows who are gathering there. The Audubon did not have any suggestions.
- All the railings and decks have been sanded and stained
- We have not been able to sell the dishwasher. Bill will place an ad in "Big Ads."
- Vinny suggested that we have an appreciation coffee hour to acknowledge the time and effort spent by Bob and Penny.
- Fall Fair. There was a long discussion about whether people are interested in having the fair. Last year's take was about \$1200. What tables were profitable? Should we plan ahead for a fair next spring that might include 10,000 Villages, Fair Trade Coffee. It was agreed that the people most involved should be polled.
- The Massachusetts UCC Conference annual meeting is 6/19. Details are available from Cory.
- We have a 1926 \$5000 loan outstanding from the UCC. We are apparently not obligated to re-pay it but many thought we should. It was suggested that this raises the question of our relationship with the UCC about the church building. It will be explored.
 - o We agreed that we would not take action at this time but would include as part of other discussions with the conferences.
- Questions about the snow removal contract. It was agreed that we were satisfied with the current company and let it stand.
- The Budget was tweaked a bit and individuals responsible for various committees will be asked to submit any proposed changes.
 - o We will have a special Council meeting to finalize the budget on 04/29
- Somerville Community Chorus is having their 25th Anniversary Concert in May. A church ad will be funded by a donor.

CALENDAR

5/9 Mother's Day service and breakfast. Men are being recruited to help with the breakfast including clean-up.

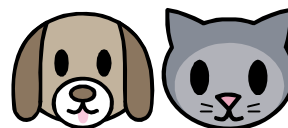
5/16 Annual Meeting at 10 downstairs

5/19 Worship with a Twist

5/23 Pot Luck

6/20 Children's Sunday and church cook-out

6/26 Blessing of the Animals



NPU has agreed to schedule 2 sessions of Worship with a Twist

There was some discussion about a bluegrass/BBQ, possibly with a band called Butterfly Fish, as a fund-raiser for the Matenwa Community Learning Center in Haiti.

From Our Student Minister

Dear Friends,

I want to thank all of you for the warmth, humor, and kindness that you have shared with me during my year of interning here. I also want to thank you for the beautiful card and the Amazon gift certificate, which I'll be using on several novels that I've been excited to read.



Jasmine with Bill Dunphy during breakfast Easter morning

I'm so grateful to have had the chance to get to know you as individuals and together as a congregation. My year here has left me not just with memories but also with powerful lessons about what a church can be in people's lives. I'll carry those lessons with me in the years to come.

It's unusual for a student minister to get to preach once a month, and I'm especially grateful for the chance to have done this. I have also appreciated the opportunity to get to work with you on sandwiches for Outdoor Church, to assist with special services, to see children baptized, to share conversation and laughter during coffee hour, and to visit with some of you in your homes.

In a few weeks, I'll be graduating from divinity school. At the end of May, I'll be starting a ten-week chaplaincy internship at The Chaplaincy Center in Providence, RI, where I'll be working at Hasbro Children's Hospital. After that, I will be heading to Chicago to be with Meg for the final weeks of her soccer season with the Chicago Red Stars. I'll be spending the coming year writing through a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts.

I'll carry many memories of this year with me, but what I'll remember most is the laughter and love that are so abundant here. I won't be a stranger, and I hope you won't either. You can reach me by email (available from the church office).

Yours,

Jasmine

Pot Luck ~ May 23



Joys & Concerns



From left, Deaconess (and grandmother) Nancy MacKinnon, Neldy and Bruce MacKinnon with George, Dudley Rose and Corey O'Brien during George's baptism. He is the fourth generation of his family to belong to this congregation.



MAY BIRTHDAYS
5/13-Bill Dunphy
5/17-Florence Carvelli
5/23-Liam Bodwell
Jasmine Beach-Ferarra
5/29-Alice Moyer
5/30-Amy Moyer

Is your birthday here? If not, please contact the office.

Good news from the Krebs family: A family friend visits David weekly in the rehab center, so has a decent idea of his progress since the fall last June. She reported this week that she found David joking and talkative, and that he looked really good and ate a "tremendous lunch." There is reason to think a medication adjustment would help speed up his progress even more.



Best wishes to Kim Bears and Kurt Polesky who were joined in holy matrimony on April 16. The evening ceremony was officiated by the Reverend Dudley Rose.

North Prospect Union UCC

*144 North Street
Medford, MA 02155*

Address Service Requested

Phone: (781) 396-8435

E-mail: office@northprospectchurch.org

www.northprospectchurch.org

May 2010

Worship with a Twist

**Wednesday
May 19
7:00 pm**

NORTH PROSPECT UNION UCC

144 North Street
Medford, MA 02155

781-396-8435
office@northprospectchurch.org

