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July/August 2018



The Record

Newsletter

First Parish Church in Berlin

A federated church, gathered 1779

United Church of Christ and Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
24 Central St. Berlin, Massachusetts 01503



It's a party!

Let's gather at 19 Carter for smiles and tears as we say goodbye to our wonderful interim, Rev. Frieda Gillespie!

Drinks and treats, July 17 (Tuesday), 7 - 9 pm... Bring something for the table if you can...otherwise just bring yourself and your family/friends for a lovely FPC gathering.

From the Minister *A love letter to First Parish (delivered July 1, Sunday)*

There is an oft-told story about leaving a church. It's about three brothers who walked to school together in a rural town. They didn't wear shoes in the good weather. There were a couple of ways to get to their house and one way was long but easy. The other way was a short-cut through a field of thistles. They would have to run through a thistle patch 20 feet or more wide to get through to a plowed field. The narrator of the story was the youngest of the boys and he always balked at doing that run. His brothers each took a hand and pulled him along as they ran. When they got to the cool soft earth of the plowed field on the other side, they would sit down and pull the thistles that remained out of their feet. They would compare how many they each got. Running through the thistles has become a metaphor for leaving a ministry as quickly as possible without stopping to consider any unfinished business. As Interim Ministers, we see this all the time. This kind of departure leaves work to be done to free up the congregation to embrace a new minister. And that is indeed part of the work we've done together.

I appreciate the quote we have for this service. The time we've spent together is full of small but precious moments and I thought I'd share just a few of them with you. This is not in chronological order rather just as things occurred to me.

Starting with the interview I had with Joni, Kim, and Beezy, for this position; I knew it would be interesting when Joni asked me the first question: "What book are you reading now?" What a great question! Jennifer and Julia met many of you before I even arrived. They went to the Plant sale and told me about how much they liked everyone and how warmly they were welcomed.

I enjoyed the Leadership retreat we had at the Edwards Center. And then the stop at the Framingham Beer Works afterwards. We all took our own cars and I didn't know it but Barry was told to follow me. I still feel bad that we lost Barry. Barry, we owe you a beer!

The Transition Team felt strongly that the first event we had should be a party to bring all the members together. It did bring many out that hadn't been seen for a while. We played a game where everyone wrote down something they thought no one would know about them. Then we guessed who they were. There were many surprises -baton twirlers, service women, world travelers, crane operators and immigrants. It was fun but very long because there were so many people there.

My favorite memories were the surprising ones like when we had the identity workshops using pictures from magazines to create collages of what you love and hope for about FP on blank cereal boxes. You worked in groups and Peter, Clive, and Jim were in one group. They were the

A love letter to First Parish continued

most organized and seamless in the way they worked together. It was as though they had done this many times before. In contrast, I'll not forget seeing Barry engrossed in a magazine article while the others in his group did all the work. They didn't seem to mind.

In the second workshop we tried to have, only a few people showed up but the sharing was deeper and quite meaningful. It gave me a window into how different everyone's view of God is.

Then there was the Fair. I was quite surprised at how beautifully arranged the Fair was because it seemed to me that it was put together in a few days the week before. At least, I was told about it a few days before. I might not have been told about it at all except someone called the office and asked about it. Since then I've learned that this is the way you work together, behind the scenes and seamlessly. I have Hostas that I bought that day in my garden that I broke apart from a big plant that came from Beezy's garden. They will be there for years to come a reminder of my time here.

I will remember Beezy's Easter sunrise service. How lovely it was and meaningful and how I almost kept it from happening. We had our little dog, Lil, with us through breakfast and the service. She was well behaved and we noticed that when we sang hymns or the choir sang, she stood up on her hind feet for the whole song. I didn't know what a church music fan she is.

I loved meeting your sweet pets at the Blessing of the Animals. As far as I'm concerned, they will remain blessed their whole lives. I think that's the way it works anyway.

I have a memory of someone telling me that one of you was feeling lonely and would I check in with her, which I did by phone. But when I asked about coming to see her ironically, we couldn't find a time because her calendar was so full. She has great friends that she gets together with to play cards. I attended/crashed one of these games at one of their houses, well I sat with them while they ate lunch. It was a very lively group and they made me feel like a welcome guest. I was reluctant to leave but I didn't want to prevent them starting their game.

The food ministry at FP is so strong. Another favorite memory is helping with food preparations for Pizza Night. It was satisfying to be useful for a change. The parade of special pizzas was amazing. They were so creative (I would never have thought to put some of those toppings together!) but really good! I don't think we made it to all of the Pizza Nights but we slogged through rush hour traffic and bad weather to get there as much as we could, the pizza was that good, and the kitchen crew that fun. In fact every food event was a success from our point of view, even the Spaghetti Dinner which you hoped would welcome more of the community, was a wonderful meal and did bring some new people in. You know how to create community and you do so generously without any expectation of "getting" people to come to church.

I enjoyed the Winter Solstice walk to the huge oak tree in the woods. It was magical. What a lovely way to celebrate. The Passover Seder that Joni and company created really felt like it was in someone's home. It was the best Seder experience that I've ever had. It was fun having the Christiansen boys reading parts too.

Thomas' services about civil rights were wonderful and insightful. His passion for history and the power of the fight for human rights was always riveting I'm glad I didn't miss any of them.

I don't know what went into Thursday night rehearsals of the choir but the end result was fulsome and befitting a much larger church. It was a joy to see all the regular church attendees on Sunday especially when you said something about the service to me afterwards.

We had some great discussions in the Build Your Own Theology class. As the numbers dwindled over time, it was fun getting to know Chet a little more.



A love letter to First Parish continued

The whole process of coming up with a mission statement was another way you voiced your thoughts, ideas and vision for the church. I hope you will use the statement to remind yourself of a central identity here: the fact of having multiple theologies, Christian and non-Christian, humanist and theist, even pagan folk among you. Many beliefs, stronger together.

Not least among memorable moments are the baby blessings and memorial services. Thank you for letting me officiate for your loved ones when they were starting and ending their lives. It was an honor.

I think there should be a celebration of all you've done; all the volunteer work you put in. Thank you for attending services and thank you for providing flowers and coffee. Thank you for all the setting up and taking down. For sharing your children with us. For sharing your joys and deep sorrows.

I hope that if you have any lingering feelings toward me, as I know I made some mistakes, that you will speak to me. I will listen. And if you have any good feelings, I'm open to comments about that too. I want very much for you to be free to give your full attention and heart to a new minister. There will be a new minister one of these days! Take the joy you've experienced when thinking about the church together and keep that enthusiasm alive in the interim. I hope they too will experience the sweetness, warmth, deliciousness and musical vibrancy this congregation offers.

By way of advice to you going forward, I know you want to grow this church and you see the necessity of doing that. There is one thing that would go a long way toward making that happen: You must invite other people to come to services and events. Friends, new acquaintances, people on elevators. You no doubt already know someone who would love this church. No minister can find them for you. You must do this. Whether you know it or not, you are the biggest attraction for a newcomer. You can start by making a point to talk to people who come to events here, Pizza Night, Irish Night, etc. Tell them what you like about the church and invite them to come. Find out what they are looking for and consider helping them. It's scary because it can feel like evangelizing but also because if they do come and get involved, they will mess up your seamless functioning. You have to be willing to let that happen and create new traditions with new people. I fervently hope that you will and that years from now, I will find you here still making delicious pizza and music and loving each other.

May you make it so.

Frieda



And, so now I thank you for letting me be your Interim Minister. Thank you for entrusting your pulpit to me and being willing to accept different ways of doing worship. And thank you for letting me into your lives. It's been a great joy. I hereby officially give the pulpit back to you with the knowledge that you will use it to bring more light and love into this world.

Saying goodbye doesn't mean anything. It's the time we spent together that matters, not how we left it.

Trey Parker



Summer Worship (Sundays, 9:30 am)

July 8th - Rev. Betsy Waters

July 15th - Rev. Karlene Griffiths Sekou

Karlene Griffiths Sekou is passionate about the equal dignity, sacred worth and flourishing of all persons. She is the Principle Consultant of the Dignity Project International, a transnational organization that focuses on human rights, public policy, and Governance. Karlene particularly focuses on strengthening social movements, land sovereignty, indigenous rights, gender justice, as well as interlinking Movements' solidarity networks. Ms. Griffiths Sekou is an transnational scholar, public speaker, public theologian, trainer/facilitator on cultural regeneration. She holds a Master of Public Health from Boston University, a Master of Theological Studies from Vanderbilt University, and an MDiv from Harvard Divinity School. Rev. Griffiths Sekou enjoys being in the sun, travel, ethnic foods, music, and her five-year old son Lalibela, who prefers to be called Lion.

July 22nd - Sierra-Marie Gerfao from the UU Christian Fellowship

July 29th - Rev. Ken Reeves

Being Yourself: The Spiritual Journey

One of the main themes of Unitarian Universalism is that life has a journey quality. This service explores the steps and stages of the spiritual journey: from the urge to explore the unknown, through the wilderness, to a rebirth with new strength and a healing message for the world.

August 5

August 12

August 19

August 26

Some Property Updates and Concerns

Some of you may be aware that the furnace in the Children's Church has failed, and must be replaced. The property committee has talked to three different heating contractors. No final bids have been received yet, but it is clear that the cost will be \$17,000-\$20,000. It is anticipated that a fund drive will need to be organized for this need.



Public water supply designation was awarded to the Children's Church water well a number of years ago. As a result, quarterly water testing must be performed, and a certified operator must be employed. Recently, the Department of Environmental Protection inspected various wells in the center of Berlin. The Meeting House water well is now required to have quarterly water testing. This will double our water testing expense from about \$3000 yearly to \$6000.



Beezy's Journal (continued from June Record) of Her Trip to Jhamtse Gatsal

May 27

And now begins my favorite part of this journey—the approximately 230 mile trip from Tezpur to Jhamtse Gatsal, typically a bone jarring 12 to 18 hour ride. Milan said, with his joyful smile, “You get total massage on this road.” As we slip-slide through deep mud, sometimes in dense fog, he said “The vehicle is dancing!” First stop was Bhalukpong, where my Protected Area Permit had to be submitted for me to cross from Assam to Arunachal Pradesh, beyond the turn-pike you can see in this photo.

Sonam presented me with a bunch of fresh leeches to enjoy along the way. Driving through dense jungle, always ascending, we soon could see the first of the mighty rivers that have carved the ridges and valley. My photos were mostly taken while driving, and it was raining off and on, so you will see some raindrops and reflections in the following photos.

The first part of the journey was through dense sub-tropical jungle, which gradually gave way to deciduous forest, some of which was cleared for agriculture.

The most notable event of this day's drive was a roadblock for about an hour and a half while a landslide was cleared. Fortunately, it was in an active construction area where the road was regularly blocked, so there was a backhoe right there to clear the road.

There was great indecision about where we would spend the night. The two options were Bomdila, about six hours from Tezpur, or Dirang, about two hours further along—all depending on road conditions and landslides. We planned to stay in Dirang, as the journey to Jhamtse Gatsal on the following day would be shorter. However, we were first told that there was no accommodation available in Dirang. So when we reached Bomdila, we inquired at the several hotels and guest houses Jhamtse folks sometimes use. There were no rooms available, so we continued on to Dirang, another phone call having assured us that there indeed were rooms for us. We arrived at the hotel that said they had room—and there was no room. But we were directed across the street to another hotel, where Sonam and I shared a large bed in a room with no window, and one very bright lightbulb, which we decided to leave on all night.

May 28

We awakened to a beautiful sunny day. The manager of the hotel, who turned out to be distantly related to Sonam, personally provided us with cups of fresh, creamy, hot milk before our 6:00 am start. Sonam especially admired the many flowers, and was given a white lily to take to Gen Lobsang la.

After about an hour we stopped at a small roadside restaurant that is typical for this area. The kitchen and eating area, as well as a small shop, are at the same level as the road, but the building is supported by pillars going down the mountainside. The small views between the floorboards can be a little disconcerting. Cooking is on either a propane burner or a clay stove, where guests often sit to eat or visit when it's chilly. I had a breakfast of tasty Ramen noodles with vegetable bits.

In a few hours we reached the highest point on the day's journey, Sela Pass, at nearly 14,000 feet. Signs warned us of “landslides and shooting stones,” but there was no obstruction we couldn't go around.

We ascended through evergreen forest, which gave way to rhododendron, blooming red, orange and pink, into tundra. There was still some snow on the highest peaks around us. A traditional gate welcomed us to Tawang district, where Jhamtse Gatsal is located, about three hours further along.

The glacial lake on the other side of the pass was surrounded with bright yellow primroses. There were many yaks on both sides of the pass today. We followed a tributary



Beezy's Journal (continued from June Record) of Her Trip to Jhamtse Gatsal



to Tawang Chu as we went down, passing a number of villages clinging to the mountainside. Signs of the Tibetan culture of this region abounded—prayer flags, sacred chortens, small shrines with prayer wheels, mani walls with Tibetan prayers embedded in them, and samkangs where fragrant branches like juniper are burned to make daily smoke offerings. We crossed the Tawang Chu, one of the two raging rivers that has shaped the ridge where Jhamtse Gatsal is located, and continued on to Jhamtse Gatsal, arriving just in time for lunch.

We were greeted, as usual, with a line of all the children and adults on campus—not as long a line as usual, because it is school vacation. The smaller children are visiting their villages, and some of the oldest ones are away taking exams for university. Some of the staff are with the older students, and others are on holiday. It was a great homecoming for me. I settled into the guest house, visited and rested all afternoon. Because I am the only guest at this time, two of the girls came to stay with me at night, giving me another wonderful leg massage.

From the Historical Committee

Following our very successful plant sale, the Historical Committee used a few left over geraniums to decorate graves of some people who contributed to our church over its life, and whose graves are not otherwise attended, as we have often in previous years.

In the Old Burying Ground:

Rev. Dr. Reuben Puffer Berlin's first minister who served for 48 years 1781-1829
Samuel Jones donor of the Meeting House Common where we continue to worship each week
Josiah Sawyer and James Goddard first deacons of the Berlin church
Chandler Carter donor of the Unitarian Society's Carter Fund
Silas Bacon student minister of the Unitarian Society 1941-42

In the South Cemetery:

Rev. William A. Houghton Minister of the Congregational Church for 25 years 1853-78
Rev. Frank E. Gale Minister of the Unitarian Society 1903-1912
Rev. James Z. Hanner Minister of First Parish Church 1962-66
Hartshorn family lot includes Ralph and Miss Lucinda Hartshorn donors of the Hartshorn Fund to First Parish in memory of their parents, Edward H. and Louisa S. Hartshorn, also buried there.
Harold and Annetta (Carter) Raymond Donors of the Unitarian Society's Raymond Fund

We would also note that the lot of Rev. Louis G. Hudson, who served the Congregational Church 1922-1947, has plants provided by a flower fund.

Barry Eager, Chair



Many Hands Awards Four Scholarships

One of the goals embedded in our Many Hands Thrift Shop mission statement is to re-institute the scholarship program for local graduates begun many years ago by the now-defunct Women's Evening Guild. We are so pleased to announce that we have been able to meet that goal this year for the first time!

Many Hands Thrift Shop has proudly awarded college scholarships to four high school seniors residing in Berlin. Seven seniors applied for the \$500 awards and the following students were chosen: Sam Pendergast-graduate of Mass Academy and planning to attend Georgia Tech; Emma Pendergast-graduate of Tahanto Regional and planning to attend Worcester State; Peter Doerr- graduate of Tahanto Regional and planning to attend Endicott College; and Emily Spellman- graduate of Assabet Valley Technical High School and planning to attend Westfield State.

Congratulations to these students on all of their accomplishments and best wishes for successful college experiences.



Hello!

I just wanted to thank you so much for your very generous help in the furthering of my education. This means so much to family and I and we are so grateful. Again, thank you so much!

Blessings,
Emma Pendergast

It's Never too Early to Prepare for the Fair!!

Summer is the perfect time to begin thinking about the Friendship Village Fair and Shoppe, which will again be held the first weekend in November.

Summer is the time to can relishes, jams and jellies; knit a pair or two of mittens; sew a quilt; sort through unwanted jewelry; find items for the yard sale or craft a project of your choice. If you like to pick berries, but aren't sure how to make jam, bag up your fruit into the freezer and we'll work together in the fall to use the fruit to make something yummy!

So save the date **November 3rd and 4th**... plan to volunteer and plan to shop!! Call 508-981-5815 with ideas or questions. Joni Bergen and Audrey McNickol have said "yes" to chairing the event, but we need all your energy, ideas, commitment, and items to make it a success. New ideas are always welcome!





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Minster's Office Hours
Tues, Thurs 10 - 2
or by appointment.
Administrator's hours
are flexible, so please
call ahead. 978-838-
2575

Sunday worship
9:30 am



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Thank you for a successful Plant Sale!

The first weekend in June saw another FPC Plant Sale blessed with fine weather, enough volunteers, and wonderful plant material. We thank everyone who shared divisions from their gardens, glorious in their variety and healthiness. We especially thank our local commercial growers who are very generous with their donations of beautiful, colorful blooms.

The plants, the food, the bake table brought in slightly more than \$4000. We deeply appreciate everyone's efforts.



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*Never Separate The life you
live from The words you
Speak.*

--Paul Wellstone