



The Old Meeting House

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April 2011 Newsletter

Letter from Rona Kinsley, Interim Pastor

Dear Friends,

On May 1st, the Old Meeting House Community will have the exciting opportunity of hearing Elissa Johnk, the Search Committee's candidate for settled pastor, preach and lead worship. (See the Search Committee report later in this newsletter). At the congregational meeting, after worship, you will be asked to affirm the Search Committee's choice, so I hope that you will all plan to be there. Elissa comes with many gifts and, as a young person relatively new to ministry, will, if called, bring energy and ideas that will help to move the OMH into the future.

It is interesting to me that this news comes to us as we approach Holy Week and Easter. Like any powerful symbol, the cross has been interpreted in many ways. One of the ways in which Christ's death and resurrection has been understood is as a symbol of the death that is often necessary, particularly in the natural world, in order to make way for new life. In congregations, too, there are endings, small deaths, that have to take place in order for the new thing that God is doing in our midst to become manifest.

This interim time has lasted longer than any of us initially expected, but I think it has been an important time to reflect and take stock, to let go of a beloved former pastor, and to learn who you are as a community without Susan's leadership. Throughout this time, the lay leaders of the church have done a fantastic job of keeping the OMH mission and ministries strong. David's passionate, and compassionate, commitment to the community has provided continuity during this time of transition, and his leadership and guidance have helped me in so many ways. I hope to finish up the special projects I've taken on and to leave things in good shape for your new pastor.

The last stage of the interim process is called "commitment to new directions in ministry." Philip G. Porcher, in a book on interim ministry titled *Temporary Shepherds*, speaks of how this last stage of a congregation's transition process really begins after the interim pastor has departed: *In the first six to twelve months of a new ministry, the congregation and new pastor usually go through a relationship phase commonly referred to as a honeymoon. Then they settle into reality and begin to face the changes and challenges of growing together. This is when the congregation and pastor become truly "engaged."*

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PREACHING SCHEDULE

April 17, Palm Sunday—
David Connor
April 21, Maundy Thursday—
Rona Kinsley (dinner at
6:30 p.m., followed by service)
April 24, Easter—Rona Kinsley
May 1—Elissa Johnk
(See Search Committee Report,
pages 2&3)
May 8—David Connor
May 15—Rona Kinsley

Revised Common Lectionary Readings

April 24:

Acts 10:34-43 or Jeremiah 31:1-6
Psalm 118: 1-2, 14-24
Colossians 3:1-4 or Acts 10:34-43
John 20:1-18 or Matthew 28:1-10

May 1:

Acts 2:14a, 22-32
Psalm 16
1 Peter 1:3-9
John 20:19-31

May 8:

Acts 2:14a, 36-41
Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19
1 Peter 1:17-23
Luke 24:13-35

May 15:

Acts 2:42-47
Psalm 23
1 Peter 2:19-25
John 10:1-10

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Letter from Rona Kinsley, Interim Pastor *(Continued from Page 1)*

Your task will be to engage with your new pastor in a ministerial partnership that honors what is wonderful about the OMH, as it is now, while staying open to all the possibilities of what it might become in the future.

In the meantime, our joint task is to say goodbye. Being your interim minister has been an extraordinary blessing, and I know that Brent and I will not be able to take our leave without at least a few tears. I've been asked if we can continue to be a part of the community, and I have replied that we need to stay away for year, although, after that, we'd love to be able to worship with you if we have a free Sunday. Once my pastorate ends,

I will also not engage with anyone in the OMH community in a pastoral way. If you are ill or grieving, you will certainly have my prayers, but not my presence, phone calls or emails. These rules may seem harsh, but they have arisen out of experience. When a congregation doesn't let go of a former pastor, and a pastor doesn't let go of a former congregation, it can be very difficult for the congregation and the new pastor to, as Porcher put it, *become truly "engaged."*

I pray that God will bless you, and bless you richly, as you enter into the next phase of this great and wonderful undertaking of being the Body of Christ in the world today.

Search Committee Report

At long last, we have a candidate to recommend to the congregation as the next settled pastor of the Old Meeting House Church! Her name is Elissa Johnk (pronounced like the name John with a k at the end). Elissa is currently serving her second year as pastoral resident at the Wellesley Village Church in Wellesley MA.

In her work at the Wellesley Village Church she is supported by the Lilly Endowment's Transition into Ministry program which is awarded to new seminary graduates of extraordinary promise to allow them to spend two years gaining experience in the full range of pastoral responsibilities. Previously Elissa served a ministerial internship at the Old South Church in Boston. Elissa has also served as a chaplain intern and worked with Habitat for Humanity. She is a graduate of Wellesley College (Summa Cum Laude honors BA in Religion and Political Science) and she earned her M.Div degree from the Harvard Divinity School.

In 2004 Elissa was a Fulbright ambassador to a Korean town, teaching English and studying the Korean rise of Christianity. Elissa grew up in Iowa but has roots here in Central Vermont as

well. Having grandparents in Barre provided her the opportunity to visit our fair state as a youngster and gain some familiarity with our beautiful part of the world. On a personal note, Elissa describes herself as an indiscriminate foodie with a penchant for chocolate and cheese, an individual who loves horseback riding, "furry thing enthusiast" (she has a dog named Hamlet), and an avid reader.

The Search Committee reviewed literally hundreds of applications over the past two and a half years. Our search has been thorough and thoughtful. It is with unanimity and enthusiasm that we recommend Elissa Johnk to the congregation of OMH. Elissa will lead our church service on Sunday, May 1. Following the service the Executive Council has warned a special meeting to affirm Elissa as our settled pastor. This vote requires a positive vote of two thirds of those present (quorum required). So please be there! There will also be some "get acquainted" time with Elissa. Assuming the vote is positive, Elissa will begin serving as our pastor on August 1.

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Search Committee Report *(Continued from Page 2)*

(By the way, Elissa will be looking for housing in Montpelier, so any leads would be appreciated. Send them my way.)

Most of the above information was announced in church on Sunday, April 10. We said thank you to our congregation on behalf of the Search Committee for your faithful support to this extended discernment process. In addition, two folks who really deserve our thanks are David and Rona. I think it is fair to say, that we emerge from this long interim process as strong as we were when it began (which is not always the case

for churches during an interim period) and with a deeper understanding of who we are and a firmer commitment to each other and the OMH church community. So much of the health of our church community is attributable to the pastoral skills, hard work, strong faith, and love that we've received from David and Rona. So, thank you, thank you. We would not be where we are without you. We love you both.

—*Lowell VanDerlip, on behalf of the OMH Pastoral Search Committee*

Notes from the Christian Education Committee

Pennies for Peace Finale

On April 4, the Sunday School wrapped up the Pennies for Peace unit with a traditional Pakistani and Afghani lunch prepared by Hannah and Joey Conner and served by our kids. A shared meal of tasty and exotic finger foods, tea, and chilled cucumber juice provided a wonderful finale to a unit about understanding and supporting children on the other side of the world. Donations were accepted, which enabled us to boost the contribution the children are making to Central Asia Institute, the organization founded by Greg Mortenson to build schools in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pennies are still being counted, so we'll report the total contribution in next month's newsletter. The Christian Education Committee is grateful, though, for the generous support that the OMH congregation provided to this project.

Children's Play on Christ's Miracles

As we move into the month of May, we'll change gears a bit and really dive into preparations for our now semi-traditional end of the school year OMH Sunday School dramatic extravaganza! This year, the children will put on a play centering on the miracles of Christ. If you have any direct experience with miracles in your own life or a special interest in this topic, please contact our dedicated director, Marianne Perchlik. She would share your insights with the

children as they prepare to bring Christ's miracles to life. The date for the play is not finalized yet, but it will likely be in early June.

Center Road Salamander Crossing

At a recent Christian Education Meeting, Marianne Perchlik shared some important information about the environment around the OMH. Here is Marianne's summary:

Did you know that Center Road is a priority salamander crossing for several kinds of frogs and salamanders including rare species? Frogs and salamanders live in the woods and often must cross roads to lay eggs in vernal pools. The amphibians then cross back over to their dwelling place in the woods. These small amphibians have a great role to play in soil production. This year, Holy Week, Earth Day and the Center Road Salamander Crossing are all converging! If it is a night above 40 degrees, raining (roads must be wet) and just after dark there will be salamanders on Center Road, especially at the area of the pond, but also up near the top of the road as well. Keep an eye out for Orchard Valley sixth graders and other volunteers who will be watching for the salamanders. Come join us when conditions are right during the next two weeks.

Wishing you all the joy of this joyous season!
Peace, *The Christian Education Committee*

Good Earth Friday: A Recollection by Marianne Perchlik

Recently at a Spiritual Life Committee meeting, it came to our attention that Earth Day coincides with Good Friday this year. No one could remember that ever happening before. I could. I was hesitant to recollect the memory of it in the spring of 2000 because it is a *long* story. It stands apart as the most hilarious day of our marriage, so I decided to memorialize it here as we prepare for another, Good Earth Friday.

In the spring of 2000 Earth Day also coincided with Good Friday. At that time I was pregnant with my second child, my son Wren. My husband Andy was just founding Renewable Energy Vermont. The fledgling Renewable Energy Business Association was preparing a display of renewable energy products for the state house lawn to help build recognition for Vermont's renewable energy business community as part of the local Earth Day celebration. There was skepticism in the legislature at the time about the viability of many of these technologies, and assumptions about the so-called businesses that many viewed as a few old hippies.

As a family we were not yet involved in a church community and we were struggling to articulate our emerging spiritual base. Both Andy and I had strong backgrounds in environmental policy, and it was certainly a distinct characteristic of our spiritual life. I, a Catholic, and Andy a Unitarian Universalist, visited various churches hoping to settle into a sense of home in one of the local churches, but had not found one yet. Suddenly I was struck by the opportunity of the Earth Day/Good Friday.

Visualize it with me! Dressed as Mother Earth, and pregnant, I would walk down State Street carrying a huge cross laden with facts and figures representing the environmental stress of the planet, ending at the steps of the Golden Dome. Isn't it just perfect? Mother Earth, bearing this cross, would then arrive and distribute daffodils to the passers by, even in her burdened state, on

the state house lawn. Do you remember it in the local news? Spring 2000?

Well, it is a testament to Andrew that he supported this venture of mine all while just starting out with his new group of employers. I began in March to create a giant paper mache cross. I had started the cross bar outside on my porch in an uncharacteristically warm and dry March. However, I moved the project indoors as the rains began to pour in April. I toiled over this cross day and night as the rain poured outside. I was sure the paper mache slop would remain dried and stuck to our living room floor for the rest of our years.

The moist air made the drying the paper mache particularly challenging. I spread out fans around the room. I decided that I would paint the cross white and then inscribe different facts in brightly colored markers. Facts about global warming, defense spending, rainforest and habitat destruction, water pollution, cancer rates, toxic waste...

As the rain continued, Andy and his group began worrying whether it would let up for the big display. I remember one display in particular featured a tea kettle that would theoretically sing with boiling water heated by the sun as one of Jim Grundy's Elemental Energy displays. (I have seen this work!) We also had the Lightning Bug coming—a solar powered portable stage from another fledgling organization, Solarfest, where we would host singers and performers throughout the day.

It was approximately 2 a.m. on Holy Thursday. The fans still had not effectively dried the paper mache, though I had forged on with the painting and the display of facts. Andy suddenly observed, "how are we going to get this thing to Montpelier?" We live in Marshfield. We looked on, realizing that the cross had become ...rather sizable. He continued to note the weather report

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Good Earth Friday: A Recollection *(Continued from Page 4)*

of continuous rainfall and said, “Even if I could fit this thing into the truck, the rain is going to destroy it. I don’t think they make a tarp big enough to protect it.”

As we stood there over the cross on Maundy Thursday keeping our own vigil, Andy further observed, “Marianne, I don’t think we will be able to get it through the door of the house.” We got out the tape measures and indeed, it appeared to us that it would not fit in our truck, nor any other truck that we could think of. The pouring rain would absolutely destroy it, and we could not get it out any door of the house.

I will never forget, and even in this recollection once again I find my eyes wet with tears of

laughter. The two of us sat down in our living room late that night over the cross of Mother Earth and we laughed with a wild hysteria that we have not equaled since.

It was a grey, wet Earth day in 2000. The tea kettle didn’t sing. Mother Earth set her cross down in our living room floor and Renewable Energy VT decided then and there to never host another outdoor Earth Day event again! Several days later we had to crack up the paper mache to squeeze it out the door so we might have a living room again. Still raining outdoors, we tried putting some tin over it but failed to keep it dry and the great burden of Mother Earth silently collapsed into mush. —*Marianne Perchlik*

Announcements

We are saddened to tell you of the passing of OMH members, **Ashley Hudson**, and **Ann Redpath**, and extend condolences to their family and friends. A service of thanksgiving for Ann’s life will be held on Saturday, April 16 at 11:00 at the Old Meeting House, followed by a reception at the Parish House.

Maundy Thursday, April 21—Once again, we plan to gather in the Parish House for a light supper followed by the moving service of Tenebrae. It would be helpful to have some idea of how many will attend the meal. Please let Rona know if you are interested in joining us (ronakinsley@wildblue.net).

Easter Vigil—Volunteers are still needed for the Easter Vigil (Thursday-Sunday, April 21-24). Sign up at the Parish House or contact Alex Brown (alex@printmark.net or 223-0430).

Easter Sunday Coffee Hour—Please bring lots of snacks or your favorite Easter goodies to share!

Kellogg-Hubbard Library brings Story Time to East Montpelier on Fridays, April 15-June 10, 10:00-11:00 a.m., at Four Corners School. Narratives, rhymes, finger plays, crafts, games, and snacks.

Community Sing-a-Long—Saturday, April 16, 6:00-8:00 p.m. (no pot luck, but bring refreshments)

Patti Casey CD Release Party for “Heart of a Waiting Boy.” Join Patti and friends on Sat., April 23, at the Vermont College Chapel, with special guest Bill McKibben. 6:30 p.m., local food and beer; show begins at 7:30. Tickets are \$12 in advance (Bear Pond Books or www.patticasey.com); \$15 at the door.

Food Preservation Workshop—Sunday, May 15, 2-4 p.m. at the Parish House.

An introductory workshop about the ancient art of lactic-acid fermenting of vegetables. Plant your garden for next winter’s abundance with samples from last season’s harvest, by Louise Frazier.

Montpelier Community Gospel Choir Spring Concerts—May 21, 7:00 p.m., Barre Unitarian Church, and May 22, 7:00 p.m., Bethany Church, Montpelier. A free-will basket will be passed.

Lost and Found —Many lost items have accumulated during the winter season. They are “on display” at the Parish House, and we will donate unclaimed items to the Salvation Army in a few weeks.

Meetings Schedule and OMH Events

Christian Education Committee—Monday, May 2, 5:45 p.m.
Trustees —Monday, May 2, 6:30 p.m. (*note time change*)
Spiritual Life Committee—Monday, May 2, 7:00 p.m.
Missions Committee— Sunday, May 8, 11:00 a.m.
Executive Board—Tuesday, May 10, 7:00 p.m. (*note date change*)
OMHAM—Tuesday, May 17, 6:00 p.m.

Coffee Hour—Sundays after church service
Centering Prayer—Tuesdays at 7:30 pm (*the group will not meet on May 10*)
Parish House Café—Wednesdays at noon (*last café is on April 27*)
Choir Practice—Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m.

The Parish House Cafe will conclude its season the last week of April. We will not meet over the summer, resuming again in the fall. A BIG thank you to Jessie Taylor and Victoria King for organizing the café, and to all helpers and diners. It was a great year! Joy to spring and have a great summer.

Spring Work Bee—Saturday, May 14, 9:00 a.m.-noon (rain date, May 21)

The Spring Work Bee is a good time to recover from the ravages of winter and take care of such basics as re-filling the wood room, washing windows, putting away the sand barrels, raking, and other chores as needed. Many hands make light work so we hope to see you all there (please come even if you can't stay the full three hours). Light refreshments will be available to fuel the workers.

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