

FUUSE *In Depth*

Welcome to the first edition of our newest publication "In Depth," planned as a quarterly offering of thoughts and perspectives from members of our congregation. Not only will this provide a counter balance to all the information and details we receive through weekly and monthly e-mails and Order of Service inserts, but we hope it will provide an opportunity to share our thoughts and ideas and reaffirm what makes FUUSE so special. You will notice that some of our contributors have elected to present their work under a pen name. This is to protect the privacy of personal thoughts and feeling as we make this publication easily accessible on our website.

We considered building each issue around a theme, but found that the creative flow is best left to meander where it will. So, we hope you will find meaning and renewal in the offerings herein, as we did.

The Communications Project Members ~
Gwen Kenney, Kathleen White & Pat Baker

FOR A RIVER SWIMMER

Swimming up hill, against the current,
you can get back to the source,
though most streams are tricky and have several.
You might, really, be better off to go the way
the stream goes,
out from its rocky beginnings,
joining always with another, and another
widening the grinning path of water
turning, moving through anything,
and always becoming the sea.
Ride that alluvial current
out until the warm river disperses into the
cold ocean.
Drop your silt and distribute yourself among
the salt.
Some storm will pull you up
and carry you back to the place the water
starts moving.

~ Kendra Ford

SUMMER TANGLES

Braving tall weeds takes courage
In the heat.
They prick and brush your face
And grab your feet.
And itch and stick;
Dog bane, Cat Briar and Beggar Tick.

And in the rain they wrap
Their clinging leaves,
Flap and drape, Sting scratches with their
wet;
Hard Hack, Burdock, Bouncing Bette.

Time passing, all those weeds
Will fade and shrink
To hidden roots
And scattered seeds.
For summer tangles
There'll be no regret;
Heal All, Heart's Ease and Bone Set.

~ Barbara Day Richards

THOUGHTS ON PEOPLE OF FAITH

by Paul Robinson

A candidate for public office often proclaims a “deep faith,” as though it were a requirement for the job. I immediately want to ask, “Faith in what?” There are many things one can have faith in (gravity, sunrise, aging) but these surely aren’t what the candidate had in mind. What instead, then? Faith in a God, perhaps? Faith in Jesus? Faith in the efficacy of being born again? Candidates never seem to define just what constitutes their faith. I say “Good!” It’s their business, not mine.

Why, then, does the candidate feel the need to declare that he or she has this faith? I think I’m expected to infer that a person of faith is somehow okay and acceptable; maybe even a more moral person than someone not of faith. But to assume that deep faith leads to high morals is a reach! Were the “holy” Crusaders admirable when they went on their rampages of raping and looting the Middle East?

Were the Inquisitors when they so willingly condemned to death those who differed from them? What about those who persecuted Jews over the centuries? Witch hanging in Salem; the entire slave industry, with its ensuing segregation and prejudice; the decimation of native Americans. All of these horrendous crimes

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UU ADVOCACY FOR EQUAL MARRIAGE

by David Weber

I grew up at a time when there were supposed to be only a relative handful of gay people in existence, more or less equally divided between Greenwich Village and San Francisco and more or less all fulfilling the demeaning stereotypes of the period. It was many years before I learned that one of my closest high school friends had moved to San Francisco, worked there on the public policy side of AIDS response, and died of AIDS in 1995; it was 2005 before I learned that one of my first cousins (born in 1953) is gay. By that time though I had begun to wise up and get involved, through the GSA (Gay-Straight Alliance) at PEA, the Welcoming Congregation Committee at FUUSE, and being on the board of NH Freedom to Marry.

I made these commitments not on a philosophical or religious basis but because of individuals I had come to know in the years between. One, now chaplain at Williams College, preached at FUUSE a few years ago. In the years between his being my student at the Academy in 1972 and perhaps fifteen years after that, he had become a sort of wisdom figure for me. Another led the GSA, did a Master's degree at Harvard Divinity School, and now teaches ethics at a secondary school in Indiana. As an Exeter senior she wrote a poem that she spoke aloud to the entire school. It was a statement of gratitude for having been able to attend high school in a place that accepted her whole self, and it ended:

Nothing between me
and the way God made me
ever again.

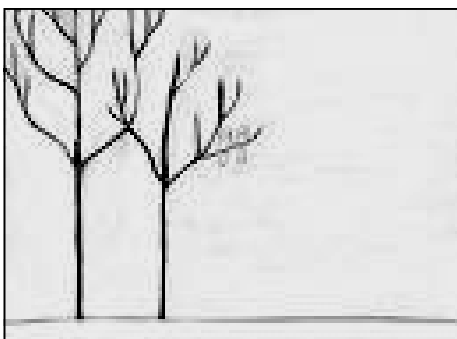
(Continued on page 3)

I could add many more names to this list of gay persons who are not only not disordered but are everything I can wish a person to be. But even if they weren't the principled, compassionate, loving, occasionally mischievous people they are, they would still, like everyone else, deserve equal rights.

In February (2009) I attended Judiciary Committee hearings in Concord on one bill that would have repealed civil unions, replacing them with a return to more substantial discrimination, and on another bill that eventually authorized civil marriage for same-sex couples. The testimony from those who continue to see gay identity as a violation of divine order has changed a little over the years. There were no cries of 'pedophilia' or 'bestiality.' Now the opponents of gay equality speak of "sexual complementarity" (if they are Catholic) or raise the specter of a slippery slope that leads straight to polygamy and marriage between brothers or sisters (if the arguer is fundamentalist). One asked the Committee if its members realized that to pass an equal marriage bill was to guarantee judgment and punishment from God.

At this point I had to choose between rolling my eyes and being a good UU. My visceral self wanted to stand up in the hearing room and say, "Where does your authoritative relationship with God come from? Christian doctrine has defended slavery; it has defended apartheid; it was the faith of many agents of the Third Reich. Now there are many Christians who read the same Bible you do and conclude that the Gospel doctrines of love and compassion take precedence over whatever verses record their time's recoil from same-sex relationships." When the opposing witness is secular (very few were), my anger says, Is the history of heterosexuality so glorious that it justifies us in demeaning another sexuality, even when it is monogamous, stable, respectful, and loving?

But if I am to keep my UUism with me on these occasions, I need to do better than that. I need to defeat the temptation to generalize about evangelical Christians; I need to extend to the opponents of same-sex marriage the same respect that we seek to preserve for all human beings. I need to remember my own failings (that shouldn't be difficult) and to ground my advocacy in affirmation, not anger. I will work at this, and I will do it better for being a member at FUUSE. But the advocacy itself will continue until the law, at least, if not the entire culture, reaches the enactment of its own professed values. I hope I will see that day, and I wish it had not been so long delayed for my friends and my cousin and millions of others.



Images of Change

I met a beautiful young woman who had survived cancer,
the same kind of cancer that killed her mother.
She was comforted by a book about motherless daughter trees. . .
She said, "loss is our legacy; insight is our gift; memory is our guide."

I grew up with a little sister.
One day a joyful, laughing, freckle-faced girl riding her bicycle. . .

until a car came at a certain moment
and she turned to look

and the fall was at a certain angle
which caused swelling.
A brain is fragile and can swell just one millimeter too much,
until the living person no longer exists.

Who will I be a big sister to, I thought?
Who will I be?

What can it mean?
How can such a short life be fair?
I felt cheated out of the only clear future I had envisioned, rocking in chairs
in old age with my two sisters by my side, laughing at Jenny's stories.
The sorrow weighed me down, like a suffocating blanket...

I studied

I walked with friends. . .

I breathed. . .

At church I met a new friend full of wisdom, joy, and laughter
who grew up during a slaughter of humanity we call "the Holocaust."

Large groups of living people were treated as if they were mere cardboard cutouts for target practice, as if they were pests, so many bugs to be dispensed with,
as if they were not a part of the human family at all.

This man survived to have a family of his own.
He loves his family.

He comes to church early with a beaming smile for the practicing choir.

I have seen him wearing a sweatshirt that looks like blue sky with clouds. . .

He is like a red rose blooming on top of a pile of grey rubble,

with rich soil still down deep.

If this man could wake up one day and feel lucky, then we all must be lucky.

Life is precious

A painful and joyful journey for us to savor. . . to breathe in...

When my daughter was five years old, she loved princesses - especially fairy princesses.
One day I bought her a pink tube of toothpaste, bubble-gum flavored
and she said, "Mamma, I love this toothpaste. This is the best day of my life!"

My daughter is a twinkling star on earth.

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Images of Change (Continued from page 4)

And I learn. . .

Any moment can truly be the best or the worst moment of life.

I won't see it coming.

If I don't keep my head up,
my eyes open,
my heart open,
my soul open,
I may miss it.

So I choose to sing
I choose to dance

I spin in the breeze and feel the sun on my face
I remember the summer smell of freshly laundered sheets on a clothesline

And I breathe. . .

On retreat with UU women I watch as a wise crown lifts her oxygen tank, steps gingerly toward the front

of the group, and proceeds to read one of the funniest stories I've ever heard
and I laugh so hard I almost pee my pants.

I envision myself in purple robes riding a whale, with my daughter flying beside me and my husband smiling on a nearby rock.

I am a swimmer in the big ocean

and I am a quilt growing new colored patches

I should know, and must remember:
Things can swell

Sorrow can swell

Love can swell too. . .

~ S.W. Chris

Thoughts on People of Faith (Continued from page 2)

involved at least the tacit approval of the Christian church, and often the explicit encouragement.

Note, however, that I willingly grant and applaud the countless good deeds that many religious people, people of faith, have achieved. My concern is the way we ignore the harmful acts, pretending they didn't happen, while assuming that only good comes from a person's having faith. Not so!

It is the horror stories that make me question the importance of a candidate's professing a deep faith. It seems to me that a person's faith is usually irrelevant to what he or she *does*. Let every candidate have their own faith, good, bad, or indifferent, but let it be private. And let us voting citizens judge each candidate not by whatever claim to professed faith is made, but by how he or she will act in office. Will the *actions* be admirable?

Editor's Note: A father-son duo in our church, **Caleb Ewing III and IV**, are interviewing congregational elders and writing summaries of their lives, with Caleb-the-younger doing the actual writing. Here then, an **IN DEPTH** look at

POLLY FRIEDRICHS

by Caleb Ewing IV

Polly Carlson Friedrichs is a kind, artistic, intelligent person. She lives at RiverWoods at Exeter retirement center with her husband Bob. Throughout her life, Polly has experienced everything from the joys of family, to the hardships of war. An outstanding quilter and an activist for peace, Polly has a great deal to share!

Polly was born in Whitewater, Wisconsin, on November 16th, 1928... a rather rough time in America's history. Growing up during the Great Depression, she was very fortunate for the supplies her family had. Her father was a college professor, so he had a reasonable income. They had things that many others didn't, like an oil burning furnace and an electric fridge. One time she slept over a friend's house and was shocked by how cold it was! She didn't freeze, she never starved, but like everyone, her family had limits.

Polly was 13 years old when World War II started. She still remembers the fateful day of the Japanese attack on pearl harbor. It was a cold winter day, she walked in her father's room and saw his scared face as he listened to President Roosevelt speak of the assault. The house was silent, everyone was crowded around the radio, misery hung in the air... Her brother, 18 years old at the time, was sent into the Pacific, and served until the war was over. Polly remembers the citizens' patriotism. Everyone hung flags in the window, families with sons in the military put up stars to show support. At the same time, families with members who died in the war hung gold stars. She was at a movie theater with her boyfriend when they got news that the war was over.

When Polly was 18, she had to overcome one of the biggest obstacles in her life, the death of her mother. Her brother had recently moved, thus Polly lived alone with her father. Both of them took the death very hard, but finally moved on. Her father's passion for teaching kept his spirits up; Polly remembers how his students dropped in on them from time to time for extra help, and in a sense, became part of the family.

Polly moved to Williamstown, Massachusetts where she taught Home Economics and found her love for quilting. Through quilting, Polly has the power to make fabric come to life. She is an outstanding quilter! Polly creates many of her quilts using tessellations, mathematical shapes that can be placed next to each other endlessly without overlapping. Every quilt she makes has meaning behind it, such as the one she worked on during the first Gulf War. Feelings of dismay encouraged her to incorporate lots of red fabric. Creativity flows through her stunning quilts "13 Moons" and her collection of seasons "Autumn, Winter, Spring and Summer". All of the beautiful quilts hanging up around church were made by Polly and her friends!

Polly has strong feelings for some of the choices our country has made over the years. For one, she thinks that our recent wars, Vietnam, Gulf, Afghanistan, and Iraq were all bad decisions. She believes that nothing positive whatsoever results from conflicts where countless lives and billions of dollars are wasted. Over the years she has protested against these inhumane acts of violence. She is a thoughtful, caring, loving member of this church... and we wouldn't be the same without her!